

Contributors and Correspondents

For the Presbyterian.]

ORIENTAL OCCUPATIONS.—THE BUILDER.

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If we now look for a little within the house we will see, especially in the earlier and humbler class, that all is very simple, primitive and plain. Long nails or pins are driven in the wall upon which the kitchen utensils are hung. The fire is on the ground, the smoke escapes as best it may through a chimney, or more literally, a hole in the wall, oft leaving its impress on all within ere it escapes, hence David in allusion to this, says: "I am like a bottle in the smoke." A leathern bottle hanging on the wall, blackened and shrivelled. While we read of coal, this refers rather to charcoal than mineral coal, for in the better class of houses the rooms were warmed in winter by charcoal, while among others wood was used both for heating and cooking, and to this Isaiah allusively alludes when he speaks of the idolator choosing a tree, and of one part he makes a god to worship, and of the other he makes a fire to warm himself or cook his victuals. Besides these kinds of fuel there were the "thorns" crackling under the pot, and the "grass" that was cast into the oven. Their windows had no glass, but only lattice work, through which both light and air were admitted, while in winter the cold was kept out either by veils over the windows or by shutters with holes in them. The floors were frequently covered with mats, rugs, or carpets, and in the Jewish house the floors were always kept scrupulously clean. No one ever dreamed of entering a house with sandals or shoes on his feet, and there tobacco with all its unseemly of ceteras was utterly unknown, hence it was seldom necessary either to scrub or sweep. Instead of chairs there was a raised seat, about a foot high and three feet broad running all along the wall; on this, generally covered with skin or mat, the people sit cross legged like tailors when occasion requires during the day; and on there or on the floor with their outer garment as a covering, especially in the colder weather, they slept during the night. They generally slept on hard beds either of mat, or skin, and had neither feather bed nor bedstead such as we, so that the healed man could easily take up his bed and walk. The table of ancient times was nothing but a circular piece of leather or skin spread out upon the matted floor which served alike for table and table-cloth; near the edges were holes or hoops, through which a cord is drawn, so that when the meal is concluded, and what is left removed, it is drawn together by the cord and hung up like a bag on the wall. The nearest approach to what we call a table was a mere stool placed in the centre of this leathern spread, and its only use was to hold the principal dish or dishes. More frequently the dish stood on the leather, and instead of setting plates as with us, their setting was simply their round, coarse cakes, for they had not the semblance nor even the shadow of the crockery or the cookery which we have. After the captivity, however, higher tables somewhat like ours were not uncommon. When the Persian practice of reclining at meals was introduced, thier tables then formed three sides of an oblong square. These were served from within, while all around on the outside were couches, on which the guests reclined on their left side or elbow, using chiefly, if not only, the right hand. This shows how the woman could come behind and wash the feet of Jesus with her tears, and wipe them with the hair of her head, and also how "there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of His disciples" at the sacramental supper. Such a mode of eating is illustrative also of other passages of scripture. Women were never present at Jewish meals as guests. In Syria, instead of knives and forks, the guests use their fingers, the dishes are generally stews of rice, beans, or cracked wheat, with soups and sauces as the case may be, in deep dishes or bowls. Instead of spoons the bread which is thin is dipped into the dish, for all eat out of the same dish. Thus Ruth dipped her "morsel in the vinegar," and thus our Saviour "dipped the sop" or morsel and gave it to Judas. As their meat was cooked until it was ready to fall to pieces, no knife or fork is needed, and even the most polite of the guests may be seen tearing up the best bits to hand to his neighbour, or even put them in his mouth. Such being the case they were careful to wash, both before and after eating. This was done not as with us, but a servant with a towel either over his shoulder or around his loins poured water on the hands, and where there were no servants the inmates did it one for the other. Thus our Lord "girded himself with a towel," and washed the disciples feet, illustrative of the lesson he afterwards taught. In the East the houses were lighted with lamps, candles being then unknown, and candle and candlestick should be translated lamp and lampstand. Besides olive oil, pitch and wax were used to maintain the flame, while strips of cloth

soaked in these substances oft supplied the place of lamps. Many of these lamps were not unlike in form, the more primitive ones of our grandmother's time. The lamps of the Hebrews burned all night in their homes, since for the lamp to go out, or be put out was ominous of evil, and on this account the poorest family would deny themselves food rather than be without their lamp; frequent allusion is made to this in scripture, such as "the lamp of the wicked shall be put out," etc. It was customary also to carry a vessel of oil in the one hand and a lamp in the other, as we read in the parable of the virgins. Of the earlier cooking utensils of the Jews, but little that is certain or satisfactory is known, and while we read of boiling, baking, roasting, and frying, and while they had the frying-pan and the pot for their pottage, yet of their size, shape, or material, exceedingly little seems to be known. They had also pots of stone, or rather of stoneware, and these were carried full of water by females, sometimes on the head and sometimes on the shoulder. One of the earliest and most useful domestic articles was the bottle, not made of glass as ours, but by stripping off the skin of a lamb, kid or goat, without ripping it, all the openings being sewed up except the neck, through which the liquor was to be received and discharged, and which was fastened by a string like a bag. In such is carried water, milk, or wine, which is kept more fresh and sweet than in any other way. When these bottles are old they become hard and are easily burst by any undue pressure from within; for this reason new wine is not put in old bottles, because as the wine fermented they would not stretch and in consequence would burst. A no less early and indispensable article is the hand-mill. In the first ages it appears that people paroled or roasted their grain and thus ate it, a practice which was long continued; subsequently they bruised it in a mortar, and in the time of the manna in the wilderness both the mill and the mortar were used. The mill-stones resembled in shape and size two ordinary grindstones placed one above the other, while the lower one was stationary the upper one was driven rapidly round by a wooden handle fixed upright in a hole near the circumference, and in the centre another and a larger hole receives the grain to be ground. As in the time of our Lord, so now, "two women" grind at the mill; they sit opposite each other on the ground, and while each has hold of the handle with the one hand, driving rapidly the stone, with the other the grain is fed into the stones. It is a tedious and fatiguing operation, yet as one of the household duties it devolves upon the women. They are up and at it by break of day, as it is well known that they require to bake every day, and they generally grind their meal as it is wanted, lightening their labour with song, the whole process being promotive of thrift, health, and happiness. The grinding at the mill was often imposed on captives taken in war, as was the case of Samson. These mills resembled the old Scotch quern which was until lately, if not still, in use in some parts of the Highlands. As the mill was essential to the welfare of every family it was forbidden to take the upper or the nether mill-stone for a pledge. These stones were evidently very hard, for to be "hard as the nether mill-stone" implied hardness itself. In the east grain is ground every morning, and ere twenty minutes elapse from the commencement of the operation it is baked into bread. For this purpose they had their kneading-troughs, not indeed the cumbersome utensils to which we give the same name, but simply as some suppose, comparatively small wooden dishes similar to those of the modern Arabs, who after kneading their dough in them make use of them as dishes out of which they eat their victuals. Others suppose that the kneading was done upon a circular piece of leather such as is now used in Persia, and thus the Israelites in their departure from Egypt could easily roll up their dough in these and carry it with them, for we read that in their hurry and dread "the people took their dough before it was leavened, their kneading-troughs being bound up in their clothes upon their shoulders. The leavened bread was made round and about an inch thick, not like our loaves but rather like what we call scones. The unleavened bread was quite thin and was broken when used, not out. They had various modes of baking their bread. We read that Sarah made "cakes upon the hearth," which was done by kindling a fire either upon the bare hearth, or upon a circle of small stones, until sufficiently heated, and thereon the dough was laid, and then being overlaid with hot ashes and coals was soon baked. Elijah, too speaks of a cake "baked on the coals," and probably in a somewhat similar way. Another mode of baking was by means of an earthenware pot in which fire is put to heat it, and when sufficiently heated the dough is thinly spread on the outside and almost immediately baked. The bread made in this way is sweet, clean, and white. The oven to which our Lord refers when He speaks of the grass being "cast into the oven," was a round hole in the earth into which stones are first put and a

fire is kindled thereon with dried grass or other herbage, and when heated sufficiently the ashes are removed, the bread placed upon the stones, and the mouth covered up until the process was completed. While bread was promised and water made sure, yet wells had to be dug. In those days they had no pumps, and in consequence the water was obtained in various ways. When the well was not very deep they went down to the water by a flight of steps as is sometimes still seen in some of the older wells in Scotland, but when wells were deep it was common to draw the water with a swing-pole and bucket, as was usual in this country in the olden time, and is still customary in the East at the present day. The Jews were forbidden to cook any victuals on the Sabbath, and in the time of our Lord they did not eat their breakfast till between nine and ten o'clock, as in Scotland still nine o'clock is the mechanic's breakfast hour, working generally three hours before it, and commencing their forenoon's work at ten. Among the Jews the dinner was but a light meal or lunch of fruit, milk, cheese, and similar simple articles of food which were partaken of about eleven o'clock; their principal meal was supper, hence a supper among the Jews was of somewhat similar importance as a dinner is among us, and hence great feasts and entertainments were always provided in the evening; they were suppers. Before and after meals it was customary not only to wash the hands, but what was of still more importance, before and after each meal a short prayer or tribute of thanks was offered to God, at once acknowledging his goodness in giving and seeking his blessing with the gift. Our Saviour also did so, and doubtless this seemly and sacred custom was handed down from the earliest times, a custom, alike honouring to God and beneficial to man.

LETTER FROM INDIA.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN
MY DEAR SIR,—It may prove interesting to your readers, and the Church generally, to hear a little of our doings and prospects for mission work in Central India. We do not desire to burden your pages with any description of our sea voyage. Such descriptions, however interesting to immediate friends, have but little interest to the public generally in these days of travel and traffic on the highway of the seas. Our journey on the whole was quiet and calm. We were much cheered and profited by the companionship of twelve missionaries all bound for India. Six of them were returning to their fields of labor. We had regular services on board the S. S. Europa. In connection with them the Lord gave us manifestations of His gracious presence, and they proved a blessing to several of our fellow-passengers. Our services concluded with the observance of the communion feast, in which all the Christians on board united.
We reached Bombay on the 22nd of December. The Rev. A. Stothert, successor to the lamented Dr. Wilson in the Free Church Institution, came on board and gave the representative of the Canadian Church a most hearty and glad welcome to the mission field in India. We met with just as warm a reception from Rev. D. McPherson, of the Church of Scotland. On Christmas Sabbath we preached in St. Andrew's in the morning, and the Free Church in the evening. Both churches are elegant, and the congregations good, composed chiefly of Europeans and Eurasians. Having completed our business, we set out early in the week for the city of Allahabad. Here we received a like welcome from the brethren of the American Presbyterian Church on the morning of the 29th. We suffered much from cold during the two nights we spent on the train in passing through the Central Provinces. We were soon, however, settled in the Jumna Mission House, and had the pleasure of meeting several devoted Presbyterian missionaries, and among them the venerable Dr. Warren, who is now I believe lying at the point of death from repeated attacks of heart disease. None were more glad to see us than our own lady missionaries, Misses Roger and Fairweather. Although much attached to their former work, they were delighted with the prospect of soon entering upon Canadian mission work proper. Miss Roger has suffered from exposure to the sun during the last hot season. The change, however, to the more moderate climate of Indore will be much in her favor.
Various reports were onrrent in Bombay that Holker would not allow street preaching in his city. Indeed we received a letter from a certain quarter to that effect. It has since proved to be an evident attempt of the High Church party to turn us aside from our purpose for reasons which we will at some future time explain. These reports, we are thankful to state, have proved baseless, but for the time being they gave us not a little anxiety.
We immediately set about negotiations for a tour of inspection, and determined to put the whole matter to the test. The Allahabad mission offered to lend me one of

their most clever and experienced catechists for two months. The Rev. J. F. Balowb offered to accompany me with his catechist. Preparations were made, and tent accommodations secured, but it was evident we could not set out till after the excitement of the great darbar, or proclamation of the Queen's title at Delhi was past. In the meantime we were fully occupied with the study of the language, and a daily attendance on the mission services at the Melah, where the Hindoos annually assemble to wash their sins away by bathing at the junction of the river Jumna with the Ganges. As many as twenty-five thousand people have been known to visit this place in a single day, and the bathing period lasts for two weeks. There is special merit in shaving the head at this period, and stacks of human hair may be seen on the banks of the river. This is afterwards sold to British merchants by the ton. It is sincerely to be hoped that none of it is displayed in the Christian congregations of Canada. Here we had the daily opportunity of witnessing Hindooism in all its wildest extravagances. The people are mad upon this idolatry. It was a busy season for all the mission associations, and a golden opportunity of sending the Gospel into distant places as pilgrims came from hundreds of miles around. On the Sabbath we did duty in the city churches.

On the evening of the 19th January we set out for Central India, a part of the empire concerning which very little is known either in Bombay or Allahabad by mission circles. It was a time of most serious thought to me in view of all that was depending upon the result. Our prayer was: "If thy presence go not up with us, carry us not up hence." We were much strengthened by the assurance that many of God's dear children in Canada, in Edinburgh, Liverpool and London were exercised in prayer to the Living God on our behalf.

On our way down the valley of Nerbuda we visited several towns of considerable size and importance, such as Halangabad, Hoodah and Khandwah, in which places services were held as we had opportunity, and generally got a patient hearing. These places, however interesting and necessitous, were not suitable for a mission centre such as we desire to occupy. This valley is one of the finest wheat growing countries in the whole Empire. Beautiful wheat crops were to be seen as far as the eye could reach to the base of the Vindhyn Mountains on the one hand, and to the Saupoons on the other. Enormous quantities of excellent wheat were piled up in bags at every railway station—from 9,000 to 80,000 bags at each place, all waiting to be conveyed to the famine district in the south-west.

On the morning of the 28rd we were on our way for Mhow by Holkar's Narrow Gauge Railway, running up a heavy grade to Choral Choro, at the base of the Vindhyn. Here is the terminus at present. The travelling of these Ghauts, though nearly completed, will not be formally opened till June next; thus there will be railway communication from Bombay to Rajputana. It now runs as far as Neemuch, and when completed to Jypoor we will have direct communication to Oashmere. This will then become the great highway of travel from the north-east to the seashore. The opening of this line will greatly enhance the value of Holkar's State, and open the whole interior. The mode of conveyance from Choral to Mhow is by bullock tonga—a distance of twenty miles. The mountain scenery was very interesting, and the Government road was excellent. So we passed through this home of the tiger without alarm or danger, and reached Mhow the same night. Here my letters of introduction did us good service. Major Van Hoythysen warmly received us in the name of the Lord, declaring that we were the answer to his many prayers. He was brought to the knowledge of the truth during Moody's visit to London. Himself, his lady, and daughter are eminently Christians, full of zeal and love.

On the evening of the 25th we entered the city of Indore. The dream vanished in the presence of stern reality, and it was an evening of deep emotion to me. It was a solemn thought—a lone missionary in a heathen city of 70,000 inhabitants, but when God holds us by the right hand, His own right of power is free to execute his will, and minister unto us. How precious the truth becomes in such circumstances. We soon made the acquaintance of the European Banker, a native of Dundee, Scotland, and a Presbyterian. Through him we effected an arrangement with the Civil Engineer for rooms in the "Public Works Department." It was to us a striking providence that the very day we entered the Executive Engineer should be packing up for a two years' leave in Europe. Thus the Lord, thanks be to His name, had prepared the way before us, and appointed the place of our habitation. Here we have secured accommodation also for the ladies. The compartments are small, but comfortable. Our catechist preaches every day in the city, and frequently standing in the shade

of Holker's Palace with a crowd of patient hearers around listening, most of them for the first time, to the overlasting Gospel of the Blessed God. The people buy our books and tracts most willingly. We have disposed of one box already, and have got a fresh supply. Several of the Babni in Government employ have called on me and expressed their good wishes. Prince Wulhuddin, at present resident here, has sent me word that he intends to call, and express his good wishes. We have many matters of interesting detail which we reserve for a further communication. Our ideas of the climate are fully realized. Every Sabbath we are preached in Mhow to the Presbyterians of the 17th Regiment who were long stationed in Toronto. They gave a good report of our land to the people here. Misses Roger and Fairweather I expect here next week. The prospect for their work is also encouraging.

Let the Christians of the Dominion daily commit this infant Mission to God in believing prayer, and He will assuredly magnify His great name in the sight of the heathen. Yours most sincerely,
JAMES M. DOUGLAS.
Central India, Indore, Feb. 28, 1877.

At Home.

Religion at home is more precious than at church, or in the world. Every day each family should worship as regularly as they eat. Have thy time to eat? Let the soul have food. Open the Bible and have God talk to the family; pray and praise in song, and on bended knees ask mercies. A family without work is a domestic orphanage, and a school of unbelief, sensuality, and sin. Without spiritual life at home, it will be wholly lacking or exceedingly thin abroad. Children will grow up Christless; physical objects and carnal life will absorb attention and engross affection. With pure, sincere, tender religion at home, children will begin to be Christians so soon as they learn of the Saviour's love, and never know rebellion. Why should the offspring of saints be for one moment exposed to condemnation? Why should they not know the Saviour so soon as they know sin? Generally they will if Christ is honoured at the family altar. But He is not honoured. Thousands upon thousands of church members live like infidels at home. The Bible is unread, praises never sung, prayer never heard. Can they not read? Why not let God speak to them out of His word? Can they not pray? The Lord's prayer can at least be repeated in concert. Is there no time? It will save time to take counsel of God. It is waste of time and waste of life to ignore God. We can have no real home without Him. It requires a Heavenly Father as well as earthly parents to make a sweet, healthful, absolute home.—Bavist Union.

Random Readings.

Do not forget the loving character of faith.
HELL is but the consummation of impitenency.
My dear hearers, God's threatenings are God's works.
THE work of Jesus would be nothing if it did not rest upon His Godhead.
When a man has his heart opened he will never quarrel with God's sovereignty.
WHERE is the neutral ground? If you know where it is, the Bible knows it not!
To be assured of our salvation is no arrogant stoutness, it is our faith. It is no presumption; it is God's promise. It is no pride; it is devotion.—Augustine.
If you are led in simple faith to put your cause into the hands of this Councilor, it proves that He is your surety—that He has paid your debt.
Love is its own perennial fount of strength. The strength of affection is a proof not of the worthiness of the object; but of the largeness of the soul which loves.—Rowland Hill.
THE children of God desire to walk with God. If you are expecting salvation any other way, the Lord will give you grace to see the end of your way. Going onwards, it is the bottomless pit.
Though deep humility is always the best clothing for the Lord's people, yet, there is a sense in which they can depreciate the work of the spirit within them, and think lightly of what He has done.
HE who blames others the most, is usually the most to be blamed. A quick eye to detect the faults of another has usually a blind side to its own. A sharp tongue is moved by an unquiet spirit, and an unquiet spirit wanteth not words and complainings.
BACKSLIDING is generally gradual—like the ebbing tide, wave after wave breaks upon the shore at apparently the same point, and it seems impossible to tell, by any two or three separate waves, whether it is the ebb or flow; but watch a few moments, and the outgoing waters soon tell their own tale.
PRAYER is the rustling of the wings of the angels that are on their way bringing us the boons of heaven. Even as a cloud foreshadoweth rain, so prayer foreshadoweth the blessing; even as the green blade is the beginning of the harvest, so is prayer the prophecy of the blessing that is about to come.—Spurgeon.
THE hope and safety of the Church, humanly speaking, are found evermore in its humble praying men and women. It is surprising to observe how its vagaries, follies and heresies are led off by its accredited leaders, its men of note and ambition. The process is continual. Such lapses create a ripple and a foam immediately around them. It soon dissipates. And the Church of Christ holds on, its course, steered by the living faith and love of the great company of its unknown but faithful praying members.