



THE HOME AT MEDICINE HAT.—(See page 103).

THE SORROWING LEPERS.

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WHEN the title for this paper was sent to me, I could not help thinking how appropriate it was, for a more sorrowful subject than that of lepers and leprosy can hardly be imagined. Throughout the world's history, the sad and bitter cry, "Unclean, unclean," has been echoing in every age and now, in this 19th century, the cry is constantly making itself heard in deeper and fuller tones and we can no longer close our ears to this wail of agony. We must ever look upon this disease with feelings of deep solemnity, when we remember that it is God's type of sin; sin which permeates the whole man and gradually destroys him member by member; sin which man's power cannot remove, and only God's hand can cleanse. In Isaiah i. 5-6, the figurative language clearly refers to this disease, "The whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint, from the sole of the foot, even unto the head. There is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores." Bonar says of this disease, "It is corrosive and penetrates unseen until it has wasted the substance like sin in the soul, eating out its beauty and its very life, while outwardly the sinner moves about as before. At last it bursts forth externally; the man becomes a skeleton and a mass of noisome corruption, and death is the sure end." Let us go back, in imagination, to the old Mosaic days and see the man who was suspected of leprosy, standing before God's

priest. Perchance the mark in his flesh was small, a slight ring, a bright spot; but he stood there trembling as to the verdict which should be pronounced. For seven days after he waited in lonely silence, then returned to the priest; again the swift searching glance and then the final decision. If the dreaded disease was in the man and spreading, the sentence of excommunication was passed on him, and with rent clothes, bare head and a covering on his upper lip (death in life personified), he went forth a lonely man, henceforth an outcast from the tents of Israel. So graphically described by N. P. Willis:

"Day after day he lay as if in sleep.
His skin grew dry and bloodless, and white
scales
Circled with livid purple covered him
And then his nails grew black and fell away
From the dull flesh about them, and the hues
Deepened beneath the hard unmoistened
scales
And from their edges grew the rank white hair,
And Helon was a leper."

The cleansing of the leper, if God's healing touch had come upon him, was a most beautiful ceremonial; the fragrant cedar; the wholesome hyssop; the scarlet wool; the colour of which may have signified life in the blood once more, no longer tainted, the running water; or, as in the Hebrew, "living water," and the two birds signifying death and resurrection. The first bird slain and then the living one dipped in the blood of its fellow and let loose to fly up towards heaven with its blood be-sprinkled wings,

"Dipped in its fellows blood
The living bird goes free."

reminding us of our ascended Lord, who "by His own blood has entered into the Holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us." No longer can we bring the leper to the earthly priest; but we can send to him the glad tidings of a great High Priest, who stands ever waiting to cleanse the leprosy of the soul, and with His own most precious blood to purify, and—though outwardly loathsome and defiled—He can present these poor creatures, pure and spotless, clothed in His robe of righteousness, before His Father's throne. A man full of leprosy, once came to Jesus. Jesus was moved with compassion and laid His hand on him. That touch was life and cleansing. Oh! that the divine compassion of the Master might fill the hearts of His disciples now. And though as yet no remedy has been found for the disease, may we not hope, in the light of recent discoveries, that God may give to man, through the researches of modern science, the power greatly to alleviate and it may be finally to exterminate the malady. Experiments are, I believe, being

* A Paper read before the Woman's Auxiliary, Montreal.