

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

SEVEN YEARS IN THE INDIAN MISSION FIELD.

(Continued.)

The State of Indore boasts two first-rate Government highways, called respectively the Agra and Bombay roads, all others are mere unmade waggon tracks across country. When the holes become too deep from wear and the rains combined, a new path beside the old one is started, but no one ever dreams of repairing the old except by order of Government. The way to nearly all the villages about Indore, therefore, is over these unmade roads. To reach them by means of ox carts is excessively fatiguing, and besides that the rate of travelling is necessarily slow. To walk four, five, or six miles before sunrise, and preach for an hour or two, and then return on foot in the heat, is too much for either European or catechist, especially as we continued this work during the entire year—it being only partially stopped during the rains. The deep, sliding, hot dust of the country roadways is very hard on the feet, and the sides are not always safe because of reptiles.

Under the joint system of work carried on by the resident missionary and myself, with the two catechists, over one hundred and forty villages had the Gospel preached to them, and all within a radius of twelve miles from Indore city. These villages we took in rotation; in most of them the name of Jesus, as the Saviour of men, had never before been heard, and the attentive manner with which the people listened, both to the reading of the Scriptures and the explanations given, was most encouraging to us all. Especially were they delighted when we gave them a service of song, which we usually did before leaving a village. The question is asked, how do you account for so many villages being found so close to Indore, a large and thriving city? I will try to explain, and in so doing give some account of the Indian village system so firmly rooted in the hearts of the people. Long ago the Aryan patriarchs led their people with their flocks along the pleasant valleys of the Oxus. Ruddy and fair of complexion were these wandering northmen, energetic, brave and intelligent. The patriarch was their honoured and acknowledged head, both in government and religion. Under him the people were divided into three great branches, each branch being composed of a certain number of tribes, each tribe of so many clans, each under its respective chieftain; each clan again consisting of families, each led by the householder or father, supported by his sons. We can now see how it came to be such a matter of rejoicing when a son was born in an eastern household as the importance and position of a house depended on the number of its male members, and ranked accordingly. They spoke a common though a complex and cultivated language, the Sanscrit, the sacred language of India. Previous to their emigration southward the Aryans had made very considerable progress in the various departments of philosophy, medicine, astronomy, astrology and commerce. They acknowledged a grounded belief in the spiritual and in the power of religious ritual. The whole social atmosphere was pervaded by the religious ideal, often indistinct and undefined, yet, nevertheless, sincerely and lovingly cherished. Their prayers were mostly of a temporal and personal description, for food, wealth, horses, cows, oxen, protection from enemies, etc., with occasional rare expressions of a hope of immortality, a hatred of sin and of falsehood. Land was measured by a rod. The plough was used in tillage, and ripened grain was brought home in carts. Barley is mentioned as one of the cultivated grains. They understood the art of weaving. The women adorned themselves with ear and finger rings. Of them, as a class, little is recorded but enough to shew that they lived "free and natural lives." The wife of the chief often accompanied her husband on midnight plundering expeditions, etc., and was said to throw the javelin with great skill. They spun cotton and silk on wheels sometimes made of gold, as were also ox yokes for the chariots of the nobles. In shape these spinning wheels resemble the low foot wheel often to be met with in Scotland. Iron was known and valued. Cowrie shells were used as dice for gambling, but we do not read of minted coin. Their riches consisted of pure metal by weight, and jewels. Instead of depositing in banks they hid their riches in chests which

they buried in the earth or built into the sides of wells. This custom still prevails in the strictly native states. When the British took Poona ten lakhs of rupees were found built into the side of a well. The treasure belonged to the Peshwa. A later example is that of the buried treasure of Cabul, unearthed only a few months ago. Caste is not mentioned as being in existence. Hydropathy in medical treatment was most admired and practised. Such were the Aryan people when they left their pleasant pasture grounds in the north to cross the Himalaya mountains and the "Sindhu" (Indus) river.

Before the heglia of the Aryans, however, India had already been invaded and over-run by a conquering people, of mixed Mongolian and Scythian origin. By them the country was named "Bhartha." Compared with the Aryans they were short of stature, black and uncemely, yet they knew well how to defend the mud dwellings they called "home," like gallant men. They had some wealth though little culture. They knew no caste. They ate flesh and drank fermented liquor (the famous soma juice of the Vedas). They buried their dead. Their widows were married by the nearest kin to the dead husband. They offered sacrifices, both human and animal, which they often accompanied with the most horrible orgies and debauches. They could neither read nor write and they spoke a language in no way resembling Sanscrit. Of the three grand divisions of the Aryans, one crossed the Hellespont and entered Europe. A second occupied Persia, while the third advanced towards Hindustan.

Conquering chiefs with their clans descended from the mountains at intervals and with forces of varying strength. They first advanced along the great water-courses of the Indus, Ganges, Jumna, etc., and a systematic heptarchical war of aggression was commenced which lasted over a period of from four to five hundred years. The Mongolians offered a most heroic resistance but the tide of fortune was with the Aryans. Battles were fought in which, while many were slain, more were enslaved, those who would not submit fled to the mountains and jungles of Central India, where they have remained free and distinct even to the present day. Such are the Bheels and Gondes of the Vindhya mountains, and their territory approaches within ten miles of Indore city. They are still distinct from the Hindoos in language, customs, race, dress, and religious ritual. They are confessed thieves, and the life of no foreigner is safe within their territory. English surveyors and others, who are obliged to enter the Bheel country, always go fully armed. After the battle, which gave an Aryan tribe the conqueror's privileges, their first work was to build for themselves villages. The ground being selected by the head of a family, the houses were built facing inward on a hollow square, the outer walls joining to form a palisade. One large arched gateway formed the only entrance. The gate itself was composed of two folding doors fastened upon one another. In one of the doors was cut a smaller one for foot passengers, which might be used later than the great gateway, which closed immediately on the bringing in of the cattle at nightfall by the village herd. A mock gateway was also built in the village wall directly opposite the real one, and was called the "jawab," or "answer." The houses in the centre of a village were set down without much regard to plan or order. One house in each village was distinguished by its greater height and size than any of the others; it was the fort or residence of the head man who was termed Raja in the larger, and Zamindar or land-owner in the smaller villages. The rooms of a house are on the same plan as the village itself, that is they are arranged on the principle of a hollow square. The rooms extend around on three sides of the square, the other side contains the gateway or big door of the house. The rooms are side by side around the wall and contain no windows, only a low, narrow door opening to the inner court, and a wide verandah goes the whole round of the square. This is really the living room of the family. In the centre is sometimes found a well, always a cesspool, where the whole filth of the house is thrown and from thence carried off by scavengers, called "sweeper-men" beyond the village gates.

Next they set fire to the land and burned it, thus taking into possession as much as they deemed necessary for cultivation, while all the cattle of the villagers were sent into the jungle to be fed, guarded by a herd, who, receiving a trifle as remuneration from each villager, thus obtained a very comfortable living. An-

other village functionary paid by common contribution was the "chowkadar" or night-watchman, who walked about the walls at night to give the alarm in case of the attack of enemies or plunderers, and whose home during the day was the side rooms or the great gateway or a straw hut in the fields beyond. As villages grew crowded in time, numbers of families were told off to construct for themselves new villages in the vicinity. It will thus be seen how it is that we have in India nothing resembling the farm house of England or America, but one or two great land owners with their families and servants about them, build a village and together dwell in it as masters and servants, resembling the castle and hamlet system of England's feudal days. The village government is exclusively in the hands of the chief with a council of four men, which is called a "panchayat" (from panch, five), or council of five. There is always a village temple with its attendant priest who subsists on the bounty of the people. He demands for his necessities, and in return blesses or curses, but never thanks. Very slightly, indeed, have the years and centuries changed the customs of these simple village folk. More secure now than of old from petty feuds and wars, they have allowed, in many instances, the great gateway to fall into decay, but we see little change otherwise from these earlier times.

The grain is cut by means of sickles, and stored in dry wells. The threshing floor where the muzzled oxen tread out the corn, as is spoken of in our Bible, is seen there now as then. The grain also is cleansed by the fan in the hand, and the two women at the nandmill sing, as they grind just enough of the golden grain for the unleavened cakes which serve for the day's necessities.

One of the gravest complaints that these country people make against English rule (and to them it appears serious and reasonable) is that we administer the same justice to a woman which we do to a man. This they declare argues a great lack of self-respect in Englishmen.

M. FAIRWEATHER.

(To be continued.)

FORMER DAYS.

In 1843, that year of stirring events in the ecclesiastical world, we left Scotland. Dr. John Bayne, so well known for his ministerial labours, had gone to the old country, in a former year, for a time, and was endeavouring to procure missionaries for Canada, and, having succeeded with some, I, among others, after our arrangements with the Colonial Committee of the Church of Scotland were made, left for the western world with the view of supplying the Galt congregation till his return from Britain. The others that he procured came over some time afterward.

The good old ship on which we had embarked, the "George Washington," sailed from Liverpool, and, after a few weeks, arrived in safety at New York. There was quite a variety of passengers, and among them one quite young, who afterward became a useful minister in one of the towns of Ontario, then known by the name of Canada West. What changes in Galt since the time when its first ministers officiated, and Mr. John Guinlock taught in the common school! As for Dundas and Hamilton they look almost like new places since those days, there has been such an increase of population, extension of trade, and so many fine structures erected.

After leaving Galt I was sent as a missionary to London, Ontario. The tabernacle was then in the wilderness, comparatively speaking, and though it now looks like a city of cathedrals—as one of the speakers on the day when the corner stone of the new church was laid, happily expressed it—formerly the stumps were near by, while the interior of the building was seated in a very primitive way. If Galt had its characters in its early history such as John Duke Campbell, etc., so had the vicinity of London in "Squire" McKenzie, who considered that he did more for his orchard than Adam did for Paradise, as he had brought with him the seeds from a distant province. It were almost superfluous to state that London has made rapid progress since that period in a variety of ways, and that her Annual Western Agricultural Exhibition almost rivals for extent, attendance, and splendour the Provincial Show. She has many loyal citizens now, none more so, in his day, than the deceased gentleman already referred to. The various railways to the city and the discovery of sulphur water have added greatly to the number of its visitors.