

LETTER FROM REV. N. H. RUSSELL.

CANADIAN MISSION, DHAR, Jan. 21, 1896.

DEAR EDITOR,—Mrs. Russell and I have just come back from one of our nightly meetings in the *bazar*, and I take advantage of the time still left to write you a brief letter about the work for the Lord in Dhar.

The meeting we have just left is one of a series we have been holding nearly every night for several weeks. They were begun because we felt that the interest shown by so many of the people demanded that we should have not only our usual meetings, but that every night we must appeal to their hearts in this great matter of salvation, until failure of interest, or some other reason, should be offered for discontinuing. I am glad to say that the warning to stop has not yet come, and we pray that it may be far off.

Our circumstances here, surrounded though we are by so many opposing elements, are in some ways peculiarly favorable. Short as my experience of India has been, I have yet seen enough to know that in very few places does one find such eager listeners as here. Their attention is really wonderful. An hour, two hours, longer, even, do these half-clad people, many of them, stand out in the cold of these evenings (for even in India it can be cold), and listen with apparent eagerness to every word that is spoken. And though one is conscious that many of them are thinking of anything but the gospel message sounding in their ears, the intelligent interest shown by some is very encouraging, and we pray for fruit. These people have so few things to think about that a new thought takes some time to find root in their minds. Their daily pay, their homes, their holiday pleasures, such as they are—form the staple for reflection. Beyond these there is little that interests them.

The preaching of John the Baptist seems well adapted to these people. They have so little idea of the meaning of love, or the way in which love has found expression in the coming of Christ, that it seems best to make them feel their need of mercy by arousing their fears. I have seen a man dull and stupid under an earnest presentation of the love of God, awakened to a very lively interest when besieged with the terrors of hell. And I feel at times that night after night spent in the effort to make them understand the awfulness of offending God is time thoroughly well spent.

We preach in the *bazar*, as that is the only place available. I have been seeking for months, and our men with me, for some building in which to carry on our evangelistic work. But such a place is not to be found in Dhar. I am even now waiting for the funds with which to put up a building for this work—nothing at all elaborate, merely a place in the shape of a hall, to be built right on the side of the main *bazar*,

to hold a couple of hundred people, to whom we may tell the story of deliverance from sin. Such a building would be a great boon to our work, and, though I as yet see no indication of its being given, we know that it will be forthcoming when the need is well known.

We suffer from many distractions. Living in a tent as we are, Mrs. Russell and I, we are naturally anxious, with the hot weather coming on, to have the bungalow, which is now building, finished as soon as possible. But the work progresses slowly and takes a great deal of superintendence. Hourly my presence is needed or my opinion wanted in some building matter, and the time is rather grudgingly given from other work. But it will all be done in time.

I was glad to get some school work started this month. I had not done so before, as I had resolved to do without schools rather than employ heathen teachers; and suitable Christian teachers are not common. I have opened one school with a few children in one of the very poor mohullas (district) in a corner of the city where the people are beneath the notice of the State school, and where even our advent is viewed with suspicion, as the poor creatures, so accustomed to ill-treatment, cannot understand kindness of any kind, and are rather afraid of us. We shall overcome this fear in time. I have put in charge of the school a son of one of my assistants, in whom I have a good deal of confidence, and I look for good results. As teachers are obtained, I hope to open several other schools in places where the people have long been wanting them.

In the midst of more serious things, we occasionally have amusing incidents. The other day, while we were out preaching in one of the mohullas, one of my assistants was trying to impress on the simple minds of the people the meaning of sin. To make as clear as possible the universality of sin, he turned to me and said, "The sahib, too, is a sinner," which the people accepted readily enough. But when he asked them if they were not sinners also, they replied "no." The reason apparently was that they were afraid to claim anything that might possibly be the sahib's prerogative.

Miss Dougan has been receiving encouragement in her school work. Even in so short a time quite a considerable number have been added to the school. One drawback, affecting all the work alike, is the prospect of leaving the present building, which has served as dispensary, school, and preaching stand, and having no place in which to resume. The owner of the present house refuses to re-let it beyond this month. No other suitable place is forthcoming. I do not fear, however, for the work. It must go on, in spite of all drawbacks.

We want the prayers of the Church for our work here. It is new, and beginnings are critical.