

The Paisley M. Circle is improving. Our prayer meeting, we are sorry to say, keeps some of the sisters away, but those who come are more interested. We had several readings, music, and a paper—the first of a series—on the Life of Judson, by Miss McGillivray, which will fire us with more zeal. *Vice-President*, Mrs. Buchanan; *Secretary*, Miss Mary McGillivray; *Asst. Secretary*, Mrs. J. H. Whyte; *Treasurer*, Mrs. P. Kennedy. There are about thirty-five. Amount of money raised for Home and Foreign work, over twenty dollars.

ASST.-SEC.

YOUNG PEOPLE'S DEPARTMENT.

The Goddess Gunga; or The River Ganges.

A missionary in the East Indies met an old brahmin, or priest, an asked him how old he was? "About eighty," was the reply. "In that time you must have committed many sins," said the missionary. "Yes," replied the brahmin, "a great many." "And how do you expect to have your sins forgiven? you are too old to live much longer; where will you be after death?" "My hope," said the old priest, "is in the river Ganges."

One day, a gentleman, when taking a walk in India, met some priests, who led him to a place where many of the learned brahmins lived, in a college, or school for training young men as priests. He sat down on a mat in the midst of a large assembly. After they had talked together for some time, he asked if they could tell him how he was to get pardon for his sins. They said he must wash in the Ganges, and the water would quite wash away all his sin. "But," observed the gentleman, "does not sin darken and defile the mind? Can washing the body cleanse the soul? Do you go down into the river with a mind dark through sin, and come up with a mind full of light through the Ganges?" They did not know what to answer. The Christian gentleman then showed them that sin defiles the soul, and that no outward washing of water can take away the evil of sin. It is not, as the apostle Peter says, "the putting away of the filth of the flesh;" it is only the blood of Jesus Christ that can take away the guilt of sin, while his Holy Spirit subdues the power of it, and makes us holy, by working in us a new nature.

The Ganges is one of the largest rivers in the world; it is more than two thousand miles in length. It flows through the finest part of the East Indies. The banks present a lovely sight: cottages made of bamboo are seen amidst groves of tamarind, palm, and banyan trees; the fields are always green, and shrubs and flowers are seen of almost every colour.

Here every prospect pleases,
And only man is vile.

What though with lavish kindness
The gifts of God are strewn;
The heathen, in his blindness,
Bows down to wood and stone.

The heathen not only flock to worship the idols in the temples that crowd its banks, but also to offer their prayers to the great river itself, which they regard as a goddess, named Gunga. Not only do they look upon the water as holy; but the fish, frogs, snakes, snails, leeches, and even the mud, are held to be sacred. In one of the Hindoo writings it is said, "O goddess, the owl that lodges in the hollow of a tree on thy banks is exalted beyond measure; while the king whose palace is far from thee, though he may possess a million of stately elephants, is nothing." The sight of it is said to do good;

and daily bathing in it makes a man happy in this world and in the world to come. In courts of justice the witnesses are bound to speak the truth by holding a basin of Ganges water in their hands.

On one day in the year many thousands of the people come from all parts to the river. They carry with them rice, cloth, fruit and sweet-meats, and hang rows of beautiful flowers across the river. After they have bathed, a priest casts the fruit and rice into the river; and they worship the fishes, frogs, and other creatures that live in the Ganges. Lamps of melted butter are floated on the water: they then bow to the river, and return to their homes. At other times, they make small rafts of straw, and fix on them little earthen vessels of oil; and when it grows dark they light the lamps, and send the rafts floating down the river. As they light thousands at once, the river seems blazing with stars. It looks very pretty; but it is shocking to think that such things are trusted in for the salvation of their souls!

Fathers and mothers bring their children, and make them kneel to the brahmins, who mark their foreheads with mud, with the mark of the particular god they worship; and they used frequently to throw their children into the river to be drown, or drown themselves, as a sacrifice to the Ganges. This is happily now forbidden, but they sometimes contrive to do it. Not long ago, at Benares, a father snatched his own baby from its mother's arms, and threw it into the Ganges. They are very willing to do 'some great thing' to save their souls; but no one is willing naturally to trust to Jesus, and by faith in Him to wash in His blood, and be clean."

Some cities built by the side of the Ganges are said to be more holy than others. Benares is very famous and crowds of Hindoos travel to this "holy city," though it is, in fact a place of great wickedness. Where the banks of the river are steep, flights of steps are made down to the river; and it is thought to be a very holy act for any rich man to be at the expense of making such steps for the use of the people.

At the time of an eclipse great multitudes flock to Benares. We know that an eclipse of the sun is caused by the moon coming between the earth and the sun, so that its light is kept away from us for a short time; and an eclipse of the moon arises from the earth passing between the sun and it, so that the shadow of the earth is cast upon the moon. But the ignorant Hindoos are taught that eclipses arise from a great monster, whom they call Rah, who chases the sun and moon, and when he gets up to one he catches it in his mouth. Now, they say if the people on earth bathe in the Ganges, and give money to the priests, the sun or moon will come out of Rah's throat, and they shall get their sins forgiven. As soon as the shadow of the earth touches the moon, all the people, upon a signal given by the brahmins, plunge at once into the stream; and, from the pressure of the water, a mighty wave rolls towards the opposite shore, which sometimes upsets boats filled with people.

The Ganges is the dying bed and the grave of the Hindoo. When a native appears near death, his bed is swung upon long canes, and he is carried to the side of the river to die. The dying man, if he be poor, is laid on the muddy banks, often without a mat beneath him, or a rag to cover him; and there he lies, exposed to the burning sun by day, and the chill damps of night, until he dies.

A Christian missionary has described the sad scenes that are beheld by the side of this river-god. In one spot a wretched creature is seen in agony. The missionary offers some drink or medicine to relieve the sufferer. It