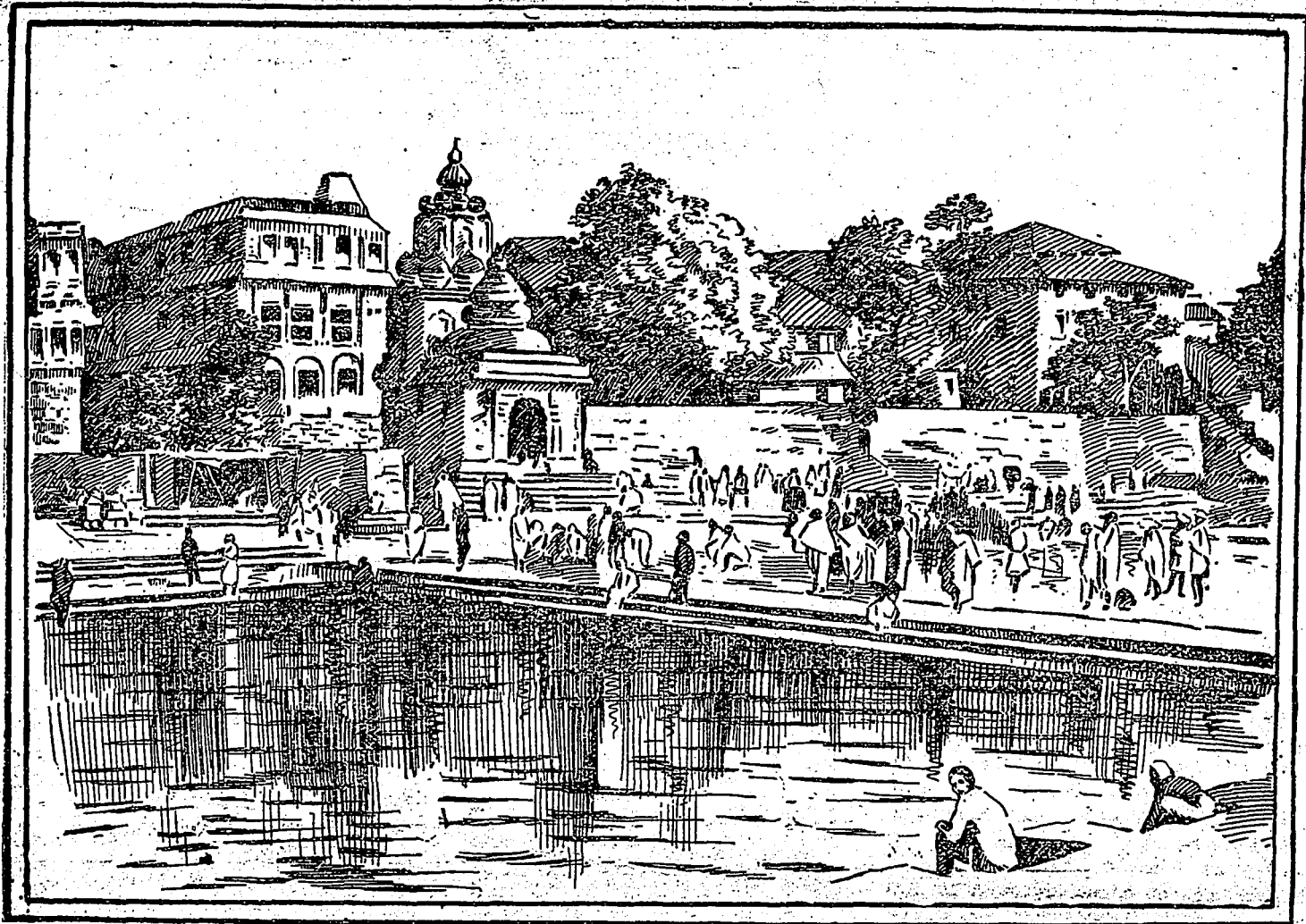


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THE GODAVERY, NASIK.

Nasik, in Western India.

(By the Rev. A. Manwaring, in 'The Church Missionary Gleaner'.)

The picture of the river Godavery, which rises near Nasik, and is especially 'sacred' there, represents the most popular form of modern Hinduism, viz., that of going on pilgrimage to a sacred river and bathing in it.

If a Christian were foolish enough in these days to believe in pilgrimages, he might imagine that a bath in the river Jordan would have the same effect on him as it had on Naaman; in order to go there he would have to give up a good deal of time, and if he attempted to walk there he would have to bear hardships and inconveniences on the way.

Hindus go in this manner to Nasik and Benares, and numberless other places, in all of which I think there is a sacred river or tank where they bathe and believe that they wash away their guilt. In Nasik the town people go to the river to perform their ordinary ablutions and to get from it their drinking water, for which purposes the banks are carefully built with stone steps. A little higher up than the point represented in the picture there are several khands, or tanks, some of them understood to be very sacred, where, we may say with all charity, that pilgrims are taken by the priest, not only to be bathed, but to be fleeced.

As an instance of the long distance which people come to wash away their sins in this sacred river, I remember an old man named Das-arathaboa, who was a religious teacher living in the north of Khandesh, nearly

two hundred miles away, who had been to Nasik on pilgrimage. He had there received a Bible which he took back to his home, and from it worked out for himself and his followers a peculiar form of Christianity, which included the offering of sacrifices! His history was described in the Annual Report for 1880-81, so I will not say more about him. But if one Bible accomplished this, may we not believe that the preaching there, and the distribution of Scriptures and tracts may have influenced many an unknown pilgrim?

On the left-hand side of the picture there may be seen a lamp-post with stone steps below it, where for many years missionaries and catechists have preached to large audiences; and as the small bridge crosses the river near it, and as it is a busy spot, especially on market days, we know that the seed of God's Word must have fallen into many a heart, and in due season will bear fruit.

When going over the bridge shown in the picture the people carry their sandals in their hands; they take their shoes from off their feet on what they believe to be holy ground. Perhaps also our readers will be interested to know that the gentleman seen standing on the bridge, wearing a sun-helmet, died in Nasik of cholera, and is buried in the Christian cemetery there.

During the rainy season the bridge and steps and temple are often under water.

The missionary's chief interest in Nasik centres in the Christian village, with its church and orphanages and industries. Here

many released African slaves were sent in the past; here Livingstone found the boys who went with him to Africa; here converts have often found shelter and instruction.

The missionary who lives in the village has the care of two orphanages, containing altogether about a hundred and thirty children, some of them being boarders. This is a serious responsibility, even in times of plenty; but when there is famine, or when plague is raging in the neighborhood, this responsibility becomes a very heavy one. We long for the time when a lady doctor will form part of the Zenana Mission staff in Nasik, because we hope she will be able to relieve the resident missionary of the work of physicing the sick. During the last famine, government officials handed over to us thirty orphan children who were reduced to such bad health that they had to be kept in a separate building and nursed for months before they were fit to live with the others.

Besides the charge of all these little ones, the missionary in the village helps to train a class of young men for the work of teaching; this is both an interesting and an important part of his work, because these young men are to be sent out to teach in various mission schools, and they can only help to extend the kingdom of our Lord if they are good and faithful. Many of these teachers, having served the office of a teacher, will pass on to be catechists and even pastors.

These occupations and many others of a