

MORE FROM THE BHEEL MISSION.

REV. DR. BUCHANAN TO HIS FATHER.

RUTLAM GODRA R.R., INDIA,

Jan. 23, 1896.

MY DEAR FATHER,—We are still here in the same place having a kind of waiting time.

The British official of Sirdarpore, who was expecting to get us land from the State, has written privately as follows:

"I have been called upon to state whether the people of the country appear anxious for you, and also whether there are any chances of political difficulties. I have received a petition from some muafiders, who say very plainly that they do not want the mission, and that they anticipate difficulties if you come," etc.

So, you see, the evil one is at work. Col. Gainsford, the agent, ends his letter as follows:

"This petition I shall have to forward to the government of India, where the case is being referred by the Political Agent, and I very much fear it will prevent you being given even that bare patch near Jhabua."

Two spots had been pointed out. One was at Thandla, the other at Jhabua. Now there appears to be a hitch, but we know that God is ruling in all and will bring all to pass for the glory of his own name and the good of the people. Hence we need to be waiting on Him. "Put not your trust in princes" is a lesson we learn.

Of course it is not surprising if the few Hindoos here should not be "anxious" for us to come, and I can very well understand how those who have been holding the poor Bhils down as little better than slaves should fear political difficulties if the oppressed are taught to read and write, lest there might be exposure of their evil deeds.

These people are openly made to do all kinds of work, public and private, for the officials, even the most petty policeman, and at the close of the day are told to go. The simple word "abhi jao" (now get) is all the bread they often receive for such services.

When I was having the tents put up here I had a lot of Bhils called. A policeman brought them. There were 24 in all. In addition to having them help with the tents, I wanted to have them gathered around us so that in their work they would see us and some of their timidity disappear. They stayed till nearly noon.

Then, though the head man of the village was there, a Thakur, I told the Bhils to stand in a line, had a little talk to them, counted them and said I was going to give them two annas apiece.

As I did not have the change, I took out three rupees (48 annas), say 80 cents in Canadian coin, and asked them to which one of themselves I should give it for distribution. They pointed out the head man of the Bhils, by name Charr, and

asked me to give it to him. Hence he got the money to divide in their presence. I gave the policeman four annas for his work, and I supposed all was satisfactorily settled.

Now I hear that the Thakur took the money, and that the people have not got a pice of it.

With such deeds of darkness common, it is no wonder if these tyrants (headmen and officials) resist any entrance of light into the state.

God has called us to preach the gospel to these poor, oppressed, downtrodden people, and by the help of God we shall go forward, with land, or, until it shall please Him, without land.

It seems to me that there may be a work to do of a more or less political character for the mission here, and it may be that this is the way the Lord has of making us feel perfectly free to expose evil wherever we find it.

Have not the words of Is. 58: 6, 7, a political sense for us? "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked, that thou cover him?"

These people are naked, afflicted, oppressed and robbed. Pray for the opening up of the will of God here.

A Roman Catholic missionary passed through here two days ago on his way to Jhabua. What he may be doing, I don't know, but it is likely that they, too, see the desirability of this section for mission work. However, they are probably not ready for active work here as yet, and this trip may be to see what we are doing.

The Roman Catholics are notorious for crowding in where the Protestants have been preaching and made a start. It would be sad if these outcasts, who have been ground down for ages, should come under the section of the Christian church which believes in grinding down the poor in ignorance.

I must just give you another sample of the way the Bhils are regularly loaded with heavy burdens. The bania (money lender of India) gives the people corn for sowing. For every maund, the Bhil has, after the crop comes off, about four months later, to give back to the bania one and a-half maunds. That is about 150 per cent. they have to pay. The tax-gatherer comes along and makes them pay as much as he can get out of them, so that it is quite impossible for them to save any grain for the next year and so avoid this enormous interest. What wonder, then, with their little comforts and gross ignorance, they seek, with every penny they can get, to drown their woe in the drink pot!

The tent life is doing our children an immense amount of good. They are rosy and red, full of life and fun.