

The Lepers of Central India.

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Bent, decrepit, and diseased, with haggard, pain worn faces, and clothed in miserable rags, some crawling on hands and knees, some staggering along on crutches which they are hardly able to hold, lepers are to be seen on every crowded thoroughfare, at the gates of the temples, or on the market-place of all our larger cities in Central India.

One has to conquer repulsion even to stop and talk with them, for they are still more forbidding at nearer sight. The black, glazed stumps from which the toes have been rotted away, the maimed hands in all stages of decay, some with the first joints gone, some without fingers at all, and worse, the festering sores, bound with dirty rags, the scarred, decayed faces and blinded eyes—oh, how the weight of human suffering and human misery presses upon one's soul as he realizes the terrible condition of the lepers!

With their fatalistic ideas and the doctrine of transmigration, the Hindus regard the lepers as suffering the just result of their sin, either in this life or in some previous existence, and so no hand is outstretched to help them. There as elsewhere they are outcasts, wandering beggars, without friend or shelter. At times they are employed as watchmen over the fruit in the fields, but for the most part their disease forbids all manual labor and they are thrown on the cold charity of unfeeling India.

In the city of Ujjain (Central India), where they congregate in large numbers on account of its being a holy city, their haunts are the shallow alcoves by the river, through whose unprotected openings the damp mist pours in during the rainy season, and on whose inhospitable floors, with nothing to cover them but their thin cotton rags, they have to spend the long nights in the cold season. Even this miserable shelter is at times denied them, and out on the bare stones, or pressed up under the eaves against the wall, their fever-burned bodies seek some slight protection from the cold and rain. Perhaps there is none of the world's open sores more saddening or more typical of human misery than the lepers, especially in the ragged, dirty, poverty-stricken condition in which India's people have left them. Is it any wonder, then, that men have felt the sight of them haunt their dreams for days; that human nature turns from them in disgust; and that people have been known even to suggest that they should be committed to some lethal chamber and their miseries ended forever?

Like the peoples of the East, science and medical skill have abandoned the problem of leprosy to the incurable and impossible, and no hand is stretched out to save them but that of Christ. He, tho a Jew with all of the Jew's horror of the ceremoniously unclean, did not hesitate to put forth His hand and touch them to heal. And so it is to-day; the only heart that beats in sympathy with the leper is that of the follower of Christ. We may not be able to cure them, but we can lighten their sufferings, make life brighter, and bring them hope and joy for the life to come. We can gather them into homes and surround them with the Christ life; we can segregate and save their children; we can do with them as Christ did, and thus only shall the leper

problem be solved.

And what the lepers want is Jesus Christ and the Christ treatment—something of love and kindness, some one to care for them and bring them relief. There seems a peculiar hunger on the part of these poor souls for the Christ message, and a readiness to receive it, that is almost phenomenal. In two stations of the Mission to Lepers something has been done for them in giving food and clothing and a knowledge of God.

I remember well when the first applicants from among them were received for baptism. I was one of those who had the privilege of examining them. Strong and clear were their testimonies and unflinching their faith in the Christ whose followers were the only ones who had ever reached out to them the hand of love. The persistency with which these converts, dull witted on account of their disease, pored over their letters till they learned to read, their regularity at church service, their reverence for their Bibles, which they would wrap up so carefully in what little cloth they had to spare, their desire to proclaim the message and have others share in their joy, were sure signs that labor had not been spent on them in vain.

As yet, however, we have no hospital in Central India into which these poor sufferers can be gathered, nor is there any near enough to be of use even if it had room for the many who require help and shelter in our midst. There are in Central India probably five thousand lepers without a single place of refuge; they are still using the alcoves or sleeping out on the stones.

"The plan of the 'Mission to Lepers' seeks to help these unfortunates by segregating these people and their children. Nothing could be more ideal for the purpose than the neat and inexpensive leper hospitals erected in many parts of India by this mission. Hence they are fed and clothed, cared for, and instructed in the Gospel. Many and blessed are the touching incidents told in the history of these homes, of the souls brought to Christ, their earnestness and faithfulness. For instance, in one of these the story was lately told of how, when the agent of the Bible Society was visiting the asylum, the poor lepers went without food for a whole day that they might be able to give him something to spread the Gospel among their less fortunate countrymen.

* The "Mission to Lepers in India and the East" is the only agency devoting its whole energy to work among lepers. It is now at work at sixty-two stations in India, China, Japan, Burma, Ceylon, and Sumatra.

THE PORTER OF BAGDAD AND OTHER FANTASIES, by Archibald McMechan, is a well bound, though unostentatious looking volume. The following lines from Lowell serve as a preface and also explain the title of the first fantasy:

When I was a beggarly boy,
I lived in a cellar damp;
I had neither a friend nor a toy,
But I had Aladdin's Lamp.
When I could not sleep for cold,
I had fire enough in my brain;
And builded with roofs of gold,
My beautiful castles in Spain.

The sketches are of two score in number and the titles are indeed a little fantastic; but the spirit in which they are written, is delightful as is also the style. Prof. MacMechan is a lover of nature; and a love of nature pervades the book. George N. Morang and Company, Toronto.

McKay of Formosa.

In a recent sermon on the death of the great missionary, Rev. Dr. Mowatt, of Erskine church, Montreal, said:

In his death the church loses one of her mightiest living spiritual forces. It is not saying too much to say of him that he takes rank among the mighties of the foreign field—the Pauls, the Careys, the Livingstons, the Duffs, the Geddies, and others might be named. In him we see that the day of great men in the church, great missionaries, real up-to-date apostles, is not past. Let us not say to-day, as we see the mighty standard-bearer succumbing to death, that we have seen the last of the Lord's worthies, that a race of spiritual pigmies is to follow. Let us not say that. Want of faith says that. That is not the way to honor the ashes of the brave. They who thus speak despised McKay, when, thirty years ago, he offered his service. Let us believe that the future is to see grander men, then even the apostle of Formosa, going forth, because fuller than he of the Lord and His Spirit; and to see, too, grander triumphs of the gospel in heathen lands than have been seen even in North Formosa, for the Lord of hosts is on His throne, and the cause of missions must go on to its ultimate triumph.

Apostle of Formosa, the wish of years ago is fulfilled to thee, that when the day of service would be over, it might be granted thee to find a resting place amid the scene of thy labors, within sound of the surf of the Pacific Ocean beating on the shore, and under the shade of the bamboo! Rest, noble warrior of the cross; thou hast fought a good fight, and for thy head is the star-gemmed crown. If the hero of a hundred battles is honored, and the conqueror who has taken cities by the powers of arms, then thou art honored, for thou hast won cities to be for Thy King, and triumphed with a great triumph.

Literary Notes.

JOSEPH PARKER, D. D.; his Life and Ministry, by Albert Dawson. Boston: Pilgrim Press. The author of this attractive little book was formerly private secretary to Dr. Parker, but is not now connected with him, so that he has the double advantage of intimate acquaintance and complete independence in preparing his sketch. Dr. Parker makes very different impressions on different people, and there is a great deal of criticism and suspicion of him which is based upon slight information. But we have proverbial testimony that the valets of heroes do not worship them, and it must be about as hard to win unflinching admiration from a private secretary. Dr. Parker has accomplished this, and the book is the product of one who believes in the genuine greatness of the subject. The sketch makes no pretense of completeness or critical judgment, but aims to give an intimate glimpse of a notable figure. This aim it accomplishes in a discriminating and fascinating manner. Page 176. Price 75cts. net.

THE SUNDAY BOOK, by Elizabeth Bainbridge Boies, Boston: Pilgrim Press. Parents are more puzzled about the proper use of Sunday afternoon than about any other minor problem in the training of children. Any sensible help to the solution of the difficulty is always welcome. Such a help is found in this attractive and inexpensive little book. Its welcome is certain to be deep and hearty wherever it goes. Price 25c net.