

Family Reading.

MISSIONARY INCIDENTS.—THE DEVOTEE.—By Mrs. M. B. INGALLS.

I had often observed an old shed on the bank of the Irrawadi river, and had asked my boatmen concerning it, but they could not satisfy my curiosity, so I determined to go and see for myself. The morning was foggy, as it often is in Burmah, and ere I was aware I reached the shed. I had not considered what to do, but hearing a noise or rustling inside, inquired, "Is there any one here?" I received no answer, but waited a little, when a haggard, attenuated old man protruded his head out of the door, but seeing a strange face, he disappeared at once, and though I called, and told him I was a friend, he would not come out. At last I became weary, and, as the rising sunbeams danced upon the waters, I went down and sat by the river side, and looked upon the morning's gladness. My companions had gone another way; and after I had drank in the beauties of the scene before me, I took one of our tracts and began to read, but soon hearing a stir in the shed, I returned there again.

The man sat in his door, and inquired of me, as I came up, what I wanted. I told him of our God, and the freeness of the Gospel, but he said he did not care anything about our God. He had worshipped *Gaudama* and his idols for many years, and did not wish to lose all of his merit. As I could not reach his heart in this way, I asked him if he could not tell me his history, but he hesitated until I told him a little of mine. When I reached the part where I left land and kindred, he stopped me, and said, "Ah! you have made a sacrifice; our hearts are alike." Seeing his coldness changing, I pleaded with him to tell me of his past life. He hesitated again, then pressing his hand upon his forehead, as if to call back the memories of bygone years, he said: "When I was a young man my parents died, and left me with a handsome sum of gold. I was very proud. You look at me with surprise; but my bare head was once covered with long tresses, the envy of many. I was handsome, and dressed in rich garments; and in a few years I married a beautiful girl—one whose hand had been sought by the governor's secretary. After this I gave sumptuous feasts, and thought I was very happy; but one night I dreamed that the King of Death called me, and I went to a place where I became a snake. This dream very much troubled me; and not long after I went and consulted with an astrologer, who marked on his board, and then went into an awful spasm. I begged him to read me my fate, but he refused, saying it made him very ill even to look upon it. I gave him more money, but he would only tell me that my future was an awful one, and directed me to the priests to procure a way of escape. I had not often been to the priests, but they greeted me, and I told them my trouble. The old priest was very much affected when I told him my dream, and sent me away, saying he would go to the astrologer, who might tell *him* what he saw. The next day I went to the priest, who said it was an awful fate, but I could be released therefrom. The way was open; that if I made many idols, gave away my riches and fine dress, together with all my comforts, I might escape the dreaded fate. At first I thought I could not do all this; but my dream haunted me so that I could not sleep. I became ill, and at last I made the sacrifice. I have performed long pilgrimages, counted many beads, and strictly kept all of the gods' rules, and I hope *that* fate will be averted."

"But are you happy here?" I inquired.

"Oh, yes," returned the old man, his eye flashing forth with some beauty, "I have dreams of a fairy country where I shall be young again, and have my beautiful wife and great riches."

"But tell me what became of your wife?"

"Oh!" said the old man, as his bosom heaved a sigh, "she died a few months