

## Mission Field.

### An Opium Den in Central India.

Last evening, in company with Mr. Campbell and Dr. Woods, I visited an opium den, and here is an account of what I saw and heard:

It is one of a row of dwelling-houses near the centre of the city. The smoking room is a long low verandah closed in by a bamboo net work plastered with mud, and divided into two compartments by a screen, the first and smaller one being for the use of the sweeper caste, the other for caste Hindus and Mohammedans. The whole place looked dreary and wretched enough, mud walls and floor, smoke-begrimed ceiling, no furniture, one or two feeble lights, a few coarse mats for the use of the frequenters and the articles used in the process of preparing and smoking the opium, such constituted the environment.

As we approached the entrance we heard the loud voices of several talkers mingling in a characteristic confusion. We made our way unannounced through the low doorway, and found ourselves in the presence of a group of men squatting or lying around a heap of coals and hot ashes. There were low caste men, smoking *maulak*, a preparation of opium, said to be neither so costly nor so harmful as the *chandu*, which is supplied in the other division. They arose and politely saluted us as we passed to the other compartment. Here at one end were a number of men huddled together, reclining on each other in a circle around the little lamp, used for burning the opium; at the other were two decrepit figures engaged over a little fire-place.

We were at once recognized as the *Padre sahibs* (missionaries), and were invited to sit down on a low mud platform, at one side of the room. A few enquiries elicited the information that there is but one such licensed den in Rutlam, that it has been in existence for five or six years, that the contractor or keeper of the house pays six hundred rupees yearly for the privilege, that from one hundred to one hundred and fifty persons visit it daily, that there are some smokers in the city who at less cost, but at the risk of detection and punishment, indulge in their own houses, that some consumers, getting six rupees a month, spend an anna a day, or a third of their wages, and others proportionately to their income, and that the habit is usually acquired in youth through depraved companionship and the desire to stimulate lustful passions.

The smokers at the time of our visit were all Mohammedans. At another time the place might have been found occupied by Hindus. They come in groups as well as singly, and, having satisfied their craving, depart and make room for fresh comers.

None of the party present were drowsy or stupid from the drug. On the contrary, their eyes were bright though somewhat glazed, their intellects active and their tongues incessantly going. Most were young men, who, as lads, fourteen or fifteen years ago contracted the habit. They were for the most part emaciated and haggard, with the peculiar pinched expression of the opium smoker. One old man who had been a smoker for over thirty years told a pitiful tale of his descent from a position of trust, honour and influence to that in which we found him.

Scarcely had we been seated, when one and another began to describe the evils of opium smoking and to urge the closing of the place. One said, "Had we known what it would lead to we would never have begun to smoke, but before we knew it the habit was formed, and now we are helpless. Wife and children, house and business, everything must give place, and at the wretched time we must hasten here. At night we resolve not to return in the morning, and vow and pray to Allah, but when the morning comes we are dragged by our craving as a helpless struggling cow by a man with a rope around her horns. Though the burial of a father should be in progress we must leave it and come here. We are being destroyed and can't save ourselves. Can you not give us

medicine or get the government to close this place and punish all smokers?" Another said, "Deliver us from this habit and it will be giving us a new life and we will kiss your feet." They were unanimous in condemning the habit and bemoaning their condition. They had not a word to say in its defence. Were they in earnest? Did they, knowing our sentiments, say these things to please us and to excuse themselves? We cannot say, but they seemed intensely in earnest, and if they were deceiving us they were most skillful in the art. I believe they were in earnest. But their will power, never very strong perhaps, has been completely destroyed and they are now the helpless slaves of the habit. They know their misery but cannot face the pain necessary to break off. As the hour for taking the drug approaches, pains are felt through out the whole body, eyes and nose run water and an intense feeling of distress comes on which is relieved only by resorting to whiffs of the opium pipe. When we left the place two men followed us to the street, pleading with us to help them in some way to throw off their chains. Fortunately opium smoking is not yet largely indulged in by the people of India, though multitudes eat it in the crude form. Still in every large city one or more places are found where a few scores congregate to smoke, and it is much to be feared the habit is spreading, and every effort should be made to save India from that which is such a curse to China.

W. A. WILSON.

RUTLAM, Feb. 7th

### Indore Missionary College Our Hindoo Boy's Letter.

The following extracts are from a letter written to our Sabbath-school by Shripat Narayan, the boy we are maintaining in the "Boys' Home":

"MY DEAR FRIENDS IN BRUCCFIELD:-

"Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ I send my salaam to you. I was by caste a Brahmin. . . . All our family are cultivators of the soil, but as land proprietors.

My big brother is called Basist Narayan, and he did the work of clerk and record keeper in the court house, but he went to Bombay. From there he came to Indore, and there he became a Christian, sending word to us at home.

"At that time, mother, father, and the rest of us cried much and became very sad. . . . After some years he came home, when our caste people raised a great row, and tried to hinder him. At that time my brother returned to Indore, but he left in our house a copy of the Gospel and a book called 'Ram Triel.' I went to another place for some work in the court house, the same day Basist left home. When I returned home again, I found Narayan had gone, and I cried much, for I loved him much, so I began to read the books he left behind, but I did not fully understand them.

"When my brother returned a second time—when he was coming to Indore from the Theological School—I cried much, and so he said to me 'Don't cry: when you wish come to me.' I, therefore, after a few days, secretly left my home and came to my brother. That is three years ago almost. After some days I got a situation here in the State.

"I continued to read the Gospel my brother gave me, and my brother took me to church and tried to explain to me Christianity.

"One day, in the preaching of our missionary, I felt in my heart that Jesus Christ was our true Saviour, but I still felt it hard to leave my father and mother and also my caste, so I tried to secretly live as a Christian. But, one day, Mr. Wilkie spoke so strongly, of confessing Christ, and that Christ would not confess us before God, that I feared and determined that whatever would come, I would follow Christ and be baptised openly. I was therefore baptised after further conversations with Mr. Wilkie. . . . He kindly prayed for me, that I may get such grace and strength as will enable me to bring before others the glory of Jesus

Christ. Your young Christian Brother, SHRIPAT NARAYAN.

I give this touching letter especially for the use of S.S. teachers. To any teacher applying for it, I shall send a photograph of the boy, and a line or two of the original letter written in Indore. These along with the above letter read to the class, might wonderfully stir a healthful interest in the young hearts. After showing them, I would be glad to have them returned, for my supply, though considerable, is not unlimited. The "Boys' Home," in connection with the Indore College, is for the special training of those Christian boys, that they may become thorough Christians and intelligent workers. ANNA ROSS.

BRUCCFIELD, Ont., March 13th, 1891.

### Guolph Presbyterian Society.

THE Guolph Presbyterian Society of the W.F.M.S. held its ninth annual meeting in the Presbyterian church, Hespeler. By eleven o'clock the church was thronged with delegates and others from the academies and mission bands of the Presbytery. The forenoon was entirely devoted to business of the society and hearing reports. In the afternoon addresses were given by Miss McWilliams, who has recently returned from India, Mrs. Watt and Mrs. T. Goldie, of Guolph, and other ladies. Miss Jeanie Davidson, of Fergus, gave an appropriate recitation, "The Bride's Greeting," and Mrs. McCrae, of Guolph, conducted the question drawer. In the evening Rev. Mr. McVicar, of Homan, China; Rev. Dr. Wardrope, of Guolph, and Rev. Mr. Thomas gave interesting and instructive addresses while the Hespeler choir varied the programme with two anthems, very effectively rendered, and Rev. Mr. Strachan, of Hespeler, sang with feeling, Handel's "He shall feed His flock like a Shepherd."

To the ladies of Hespeler is due, in a very considerable measure, the success of the meeting. Their hospitality and kindness are deserving of much praise. The convenience and suitability of the pretty church in which the sessions were held, may also be mentioned as contributing to make the day of the Hespeler convention one of pleasant memories.

The treasurer's report shows cash contributions of last year amounting to \$2140.34. Fifteen hundred pounds of clothing were also sent to the Indian school at Birtle, Man.

The following is the result of the elections for 1894. President, Mrs. Mullen, Fergus; 1st vice-president, Mrs. McCrae, Guolph; 2nd vice-president, Mrs. Dickson, Galt; 3rd vice-president, Miss Snellie, Fergus; 4th vice-president, Mrs. Rae, Acton; treasurer, Miss Helen Cant, Galt; secretary, Miss Kerr, Galt; Letter Leaflet secretary, Miss McCrae, Guolph.

### Lanark and Renfrew Presbyterial Society.

AFTER the meeting of the Lanark and Renfrew Presbyterial Society the members met with the Presbyterial of the W. F. M. S. in St. Andrew's church. An abstract of the secretary's report was read by Rev. Mr. Crombie, clerk of the Presbytery, while Rev. Messrs. Currie and Buchanan moved and seconded it in most interesting addresses on different phases of mission work.

The report for the year was a most encouraging one, the ladies raising nearly \$4,000 for Foreign Missions. A paper on "Our Duty to Missions" was read by Miss Macdonald, of Perth, which was followed by a most excellent and practical address by Mrs. Shortreed, of Toronto, who is a pleasing speaker, and gave a great many practical hints to the ladies which will assist them in carrying on the work they are so enthusiastically engaged in.

The choir of St. Andrew's church rendered some anthems which enlivened the meeting. The hearty singing by the congregation (and it was hearty) of "Jesus, Lover of My Soul," without the organ when the electric light suddenly went out and left the audience in Egyptian darkness, repaid the little inconvenience caused by the occurrence.