

## Victorian India Orphan Society.

### ACCOUNT OF THE WORK DONE AT DHAR.

#### Mr. Russell's Report.

The following interesting report by the Rev. Frank Russell, of the work done by the Victorian India Orphan Society at Dhar, Central India, was read at the recent annual meeting of the Society in Winnipeg:

At the beginning of the year, Dr. Nugent, who has been in charge of the work at Dhar during my absence, was removed to Ujjain, to take up work there, and the Rev. A. P. Ledingham was appointed to Dhar in his place. Shortly after his arrival, 35 of the boys who had been gathered in from the recent famine, were sent to take up the trade of rug making. This change was made on account of the large number of boys and the difficulty of providing suitable occupation for them all. The remaining 55 boys were at the same time removed from the V. I. O. S. building, which they had hitherto occupied, to the building on the mission compound, which had been erected during the famine of 1897, and the girls who had been living in the mission hospital were taken over to the V. I. O. S. building, where they now reside.

During the year the number of the boys was increased by occasional additions, and a few were lost through death. The latter were boys who had been sickly from the first, and had never recovered from the terribly emaciated condition to which the famine had reduced them. The full number of boys in the orphanage at the close of the year is 65. This includes a number who, though practically independent, still maintain their connection with the orphanage, and are under its supervision and discipline.

On my return to Dhar in November, 1901, I found that of the boys who had been brought up in the orphanage under our care, three had been offered and accepted positions in the native state of Ali Rajpur, which is largely a Bhiel state; of these, two boys were originally Bhiels, so that they are quite at home among their own people, and are in a position to exercise a good influence over them, and do good work among them. Their work is in connection with the forest department of the state, and is under the supervision of a British official, who has taken considerable interest in the boys, and was instrumental in obtaining these positions for them. In the course of their work they are brought constantly into contact with Mohammedan police and others, while their immediate superior is also a Mohammedan, so that they have to endure a certain amount of persecution on account of their being Christians. But they have encouragement and assistance from the presence near them of a number of Christian people, as their work is in the vicinity of one of our mission stations, 'Amkhut,' which they regularly visit. These three boys, or young men as they really are now, have been recently married to three of our oldest Bhiel girls, and have, therefore, now settled homes down amongst their own people, where we trust they will be a means of much blessing. Their present pay is small, but their positions are assured and permanent so long as they do faithful work, and they have the prospect of regular increase in pay, with a retiring pension after twenty-years' service.

Of the other boys who are no longer a burden on the orphanage, one who had been taught the work of a 'syce' (one who has the care of horses), accompanied Dr. Nu-

gent to Ujjain. We frequently hear reports of his work and progress, and are assured that he is a faithful and efficient worker.

Two other boys are doing the same work here in Dhar, and though not thoroughly fitted for it yet are under training, and will doubtless become more efficient as time goes on. They are at present receiving a pay that renders them independent of the Orphanage for food and clothing, and as they become more proficient their rate of pay will be increased accordingly. Two others are under training as domestics, one of them has been for a long time now independent of the Orphanage, but maintains his connection with it, as he has in the meantime no other home.

Since my return six other boys have been given positions which make them wage earners, and so place them beyond the need of support from the Orphanage, though they have not been separated from it. Two of these boys have become fairly proficient in the work of tailoring, and can cut out and put together the suits of native clothing in a very creditable manner. In a recent contest in this line, in which a prize was offered in Calcutta, for the best made native kurta, or native coat, our two boys succeeded in obtaining the only prizes that were given. As they are expert in the use of the sewing machine, we hope that they will go on to more elaborate and better paying work, though even now they are quite able to support themselves. Much of the success which the two boys who have undertaken the tailoring work have achieved is due to the work and care bestowed on them by Mrs. Ledingham, who during the time of her stay in Dhar, took this part of the work under her own charge, and taught the boys not only the making of native garments, but a certain amount of English tailoring as well.

The four remaining boys are now old enough and sufficiently advanced in their work, that of gardening, to be able to support themselves, and they have been made independent with a regular wage, which is necessarily small at first, but quite enough for their need, and it will be increased as they gain in experience and ability. We hope that these boys will soon be able to undertake work for themselves, if sufficient land for the purpose can be obtained. Of the other boys in the Orphanage, a large number are so small as yet, that no steady or severe work can be expected of them. Many of them are employed to assist the larger ones in the gardening, while a considerable number work at durrie weaving. The durrie is a sort of carpet, much used by the natives, and our boys have succeeded in turning out some very good work of its kind. This is not intended, however, as a permanent occupation, but is mostly taught as something to which the boys may turn when occasion offers. The knowledge of a trade of this kind, which any of them may carry on in their own homes in connection with the other work, will always prove helpful.

#### SCHOOL WORK.

During the year the school work has been carried on as usual; a number of the boys have made marked progress, while others are still in the elementary stages. They are in school for two and a half hours daily; some in the mornings, others again in the afternoon. Of the present number on the roll, four are in the fourth book, four in the third, twelve in the second, and the remainder in the first book and alphabet class. The fourth class has recently lost more than half its number, as the boys who have been taken out of school and given permanent work were of this class. They can all read fluently any ordinary book in Hindu, and are especially ready in the Bible, and as they had nothing to gain by remaining any longer in school, their connection with it has been severed. Two of the older boys, who gave promise of exceptional ability in this direction, have been retained in school, as under teachers, and will in due time, if they make good progress, be fitted for the regular work of teaching.

The spiritual interests of the boys have been a first care. I have continued the Bible class, carried on by Mr. Ledingham, and find the boys interested and eager to learn. The larger boys receive an hour's teaching daily and the smaller boys are with me for half an hour or so. Those of the large boys are able to take part intelli-

gently in public meetings, and are very faithful in their attention to this part of their work. In the absence of their instructor in the Bible for a short time during the year, they carried on the class as best they could amongst themselves, thus showing how much they valued the teaching they had received.

Since the beginning of the year eight boys have been baptized as Christians, and have shown generally by their conduct the reality of their profession. In the examination for all India on the International Sabbath School Lessons for the year five of our boys obtained first class certificates, seven of them second class, and one a third class certificate.

Girls.—During the time the girls were living at the Mission hospital they were merely taught verses of scripture, hymns, etc., as it was impossible to make proper provision there for school teaching. But on their removal to the Orphanage building, school was instituted for them, and they have since received regular teaching for five hours a day, with the result that there are now twenty-two girls in the second book, and the remainder in the first. Within the short time some of the girls have made really wonderful progress.

Out of school their time is taken up with the work that usually falls to the lot of girls in this land. They, of course do all their own sewing, and in addition to grinding their grain and doing their own cooking, they have lately undertaken to do the cooking for the boys as well, much to the satisfaction of the latter. The bread for the boys is baked twice a day and carried over by the girls on their way to school morning and afternoon.

In addition to the ordinary sewing ten of the girls are being taught drawn thread work, and already several of them have developed quite a talent for this sort of work. Their work has been admired by all who have seen it, and finds a ready sale.

The girls are all accustomed from their earliest years to work in the open air, and during the rainy season they were busy, all their spare time in the garden round about the orphanage building, planting trees, among them being quite a variety of fruit trees, and also putting in a hedge between the orphanage ground and the neighboring garden.

During the year, too, the well which was begun some time ago was finished, and built up in brick and mortar, so that we now have a well about fifteen feet in diameter, and fifty feet deep, with a supply of water for the needs of the orphanage.

The girls as well as the boys have made good progress in Bible study. They receive an hour's instruction every morning from Miss O'Hara, and the more advanced come to me for half an hour's teaching as well. They are particularly assiduous in their study of the Sunday school lesson, and in the examination, to which reference has already been made, one of the girls received a first-class certificate and three others a third-class certificate. During the year 18 girls were baptized on profession of faith.

We expected to build a new dormitory last summer and hope to do so in the near future, as there is most special need for it.

For most of the information given in the above report I am indebted to Miss Dr. O'Hara, who I need not say has been indefatigable in her efforts on behalf of the orphan children, especially the girls, of whom she has the whole care. The progress they have made in every direction has been entirely due, under God, to her untiring interest and zeal.

We close the year with devout thankfulness to God, for his many blessings, and manifest guidance, and with the prayer that during the year upon which we have now entered we shall see even greater and more blessed results of the work that is being done for those orphan children of India.

Yours faithfully,

(Sgd.) F. H. RUSSELL.

Dhar, Central India, Jan. 16, 1902.

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