

Contributed.

JOTTINGS FROM THE LAND OF THE TELUGU—AND THE MISSIONARY.

WRITTEN FOR THE ATHENÆUM BY REV. M. B. SHAW.

The Telugu and the Missionary are both having a hard time of it this year. The unusually excessive heat and drought that are upon the land, make the latter long for a blast from "Greenland's icy mountains," and take all the enthusiasm out of the former in his "India's coral strands." In the whole Madras Presidency there is more than half a famine; in some parts of it cholera is making sad havoc with the starving people. The inhabitants literally live "from hand to mouth," they use implements of no more modern make than Adam had, in conveying their rice and curry, the staple dish of the country, to their mouths. If the rain-supply fails, rice cannot be produced, and there is nothing for large numbers but starvation. Relief measures are always inaugurated by the Government and by private individuals; but in such a teeming population, a considerable proportion of which at the best of times are beggars, it is impossible to reach more than a small proportion of the sufferers. The extravagant demands of the Brahmins, the Hindu priestly Caste, upon the substance of the people, constitute a large factor in the prevailing distress when troublous times come. The Hindu is taught that he must buy his way to happiness at every step. Each cobble-stone, figuratively speaking, in the road toward the Hindu abode of supposed relief from the ills of earth, costs the toiling way-farer its weight in gold. The oppressions of the Catholic Hierarchy, with which Americans are more familiar, upon its deluded followers, is as nothing compared to the methods employed by the heathen priesthood in squeezing the unfortunate devotees of Siva, Vishnu, and their unnumbered satellites. It has been computed that there are 30,000,000 gods in India. In the name of each the Brahmin has toll.

Brahminism, the religion of the Telugus, has for its corner-stone the doctrine that the priest is greater than the gods. The gods are considered to be in need of the offerings of men to carry out their purposes. In fact without prayer and sacrifice the gods cannot

rule the world. Prayer necessitates their fulfilling man's wishes. Concentrated devotion and penance are mightier than all the gods, and hence, the priest, the devotee, and the wise, are greater and more powerful than the gods themselves. The priest understand how to apply this doctrine most skillfully for their own advantage; but being human the people have learned that there is one element in the world greater even than the priest. Filthy lucre, a term most aptly describing the loose change of this country, will bring the priest to terms on all occasions. If at the birth of a child, he is forced for various reasons to declare it to have been born under an unlucky star, for a consideration, he is able to point out to the unhappy parents a way of escape from most of the impending ills. At a wedding, the time for which must be set by a priestly Astrologer, all the arrangements are controlled by the priest, who is able to just about size up the pile of the interested parties, and never fails to obtain possession of all of it that is loose, or capable of being loosened. At funerals the expense is absurdly out of proportion to the occasion and to the means of the mourners. I give below a list of expenses incurred during the eleven ceremonial days fixed by the law of Caste.

1.—The cow, gift to the Brahmin priest, the tail of which the dying man must grasp till life is extinct.

Rs. 15.

2.—Present in money to the priest.

—Rs. 3 to 1000.

3.—Gold ornaments for the legs, horns, ears, tail and neck of cow.—Rs. 5 to 8.

4.—Wood for the pyre.—Rs. 2.

5.—Wages to the four priests who carry the corpse at Rs. 2.—Rs. 8.

6.—Pay for the priest who leads the procession and carries the fire.—Rs. 2.

7.—Fresh sacred threads for the fire priests who are compelled to touch the corpse.—10 as.

8.—New water pots to be broken at the pyre.—2 as.

9.—Food for relatives and assistant priests for eleven days.—Rs. 200.

Total averaging the 2nd and 3rd items.—R733, 5 as.

A rupee is equivalent to about 35 cents of Canadian money. Besides this if the deceased was a parent the sons are bound to perform certain ceremonies, at every new moon, on the first day of the 6th lunar