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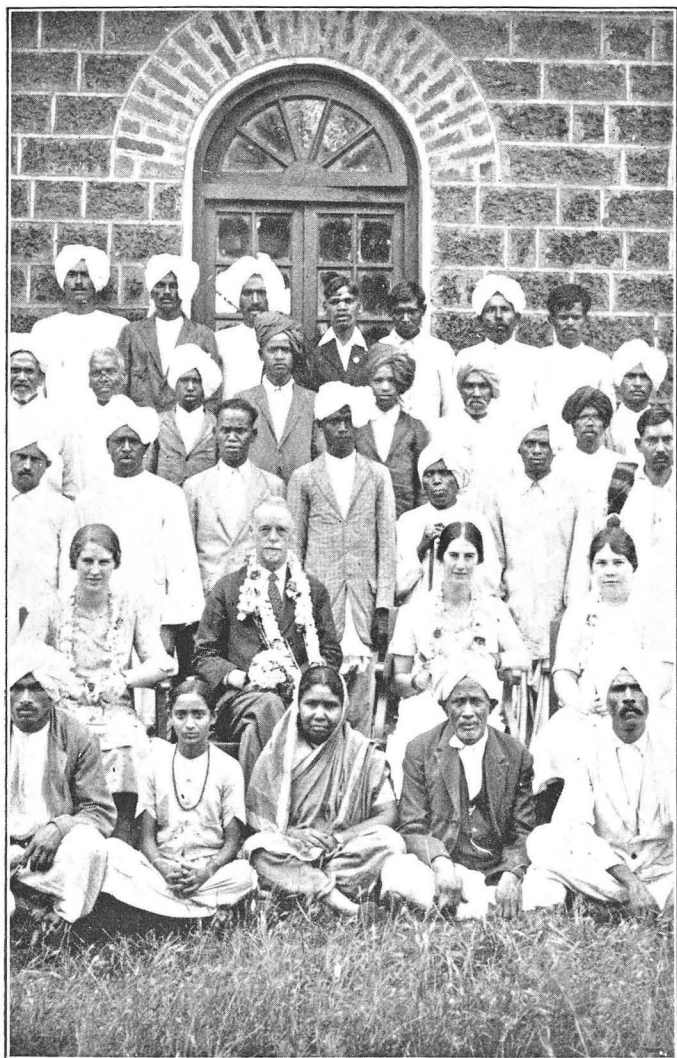


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MR. AND MISS IRVINE AND THE MISSES GARRETT

25 Years' Mission Work Among the Lepers of India

IN A MANNER BELIEVED
TO BE SCRIPTURAL

BY

WM. C. IRVINE

Hon. Superintendent of the Belgaum Leper Hospital

WITH A FOREWORD BY

LT.-COL. L. M. DAVIES

M.A., F.R.S.E., F.R.A.I., F.G.S.

A STATEMENT OF THE TREATMENT OF THE DISEASE BY

DR. ROBERT G. COCHRANE

Formerly Medical Adviser to the Mission to Lepers

PICKERING & INGLES, Ltd.

LONDON GLASGOW MANCHESTER LIVERPOOL EDINBURGH

WM. C. IRVINE, Belgaum, India

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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO
MY DEAR WIFE, WHO HAS
EVER HELPED TO SHOULDER
THE BURDEN, AND HAS STOOD
LOYALLY BY ME FOR SOME
THIRTY-FIVE YEARS IN INDIA.

Foreword

I HAD the privilege of seeing something of Mr. and Mrs. Irvine's work in Belgaum as long ago as 1922, and I am sure that the homely sincerity and vividness of this short account of that work will appeal to others as it does to myself. Mr. Irvine tells no rose-water story. Theirs has been, as the Commissioner remarked (see p. 55), the "dirty work" necessary to help the most wretched members of our race.

It is good to see how simple and straight is the line taken by these devoted Christian workers, and how thorough is the conversion and implicit the faith of those whom they win over to belief. What the barriers are against conversion, either of Mohammedan or Hindu, few can realise who have not lived in India. What the fruit of conversion is in the joy of the love of our incomparable Saviour, is seen in the gratitude of some of the converts

for the very sufferings which brought them to hear of that love. Physical assistance does much, but spiritual ministration alone can bring actual joy in the middle of such suffering. As our Lord did before them, the Irvines minister both to body and spirit, and the first for the sake of the second.

L. M. DAVIES, *Lt.-Col.*

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Introduction

THIS account of experiences covering twenty-five years of service in connection with our Leper friends, especially deals with the spiritual side rather than the physical.

The reader will find herein an article from the pen of Dr. Robert G. Cochrane, formerly Medical Adviser to the Mission to Lepers, giving useful and interesting information concerning the treatment of the disease. None is better equipped for so doing. I am grateful to him and the Mission to lepers for permitting me to make use of his article.

The writer's aim is to present his story in such a way as will enable the reader to realise that these "leper cases" are indeed real men and women; individuals whose precious souls are as worth-while winning as are those of the man in the street.

The Belgaum Leper Asylum, now called "Hospital," is the property of the Government,

which by agreement handed over the management to the Mission to Lepers. The property lies three miles to the west of Belgaum. This Mission requested our colleague, Dr. E. V. Hunter, to act as its first Hon. Superintendent, supplying him with funds to carry on the work. Since he left India in 1914, I have acted in the same capacity, and have ever found the Mission most courteous and considerate in all its dealings; not only supplying whatever grant was needed, but leaving me full liberty to carry on the spiritual side of the work in the manner I believe to be Scriptural.

The financial needs are met from four sources: The Mission to Lepers' Grant; Government Grant in Aid; a small annual Grant from the Belgaum Local Board; and Gifts from Christian Friends.

The narrative is not written strictly chronologically, but nearly so; the conversations recorded and the facts narrated are given as accurately as memory enables. The first lepers were received in 1912 or 1913.

I am greatly indebted to Mrs. Irvine and Miss C. M. Garrett for help given in the preparation of the MS. The latter carefully going through it and suggesting various alterations and additions.

WM. C. IRVINE.

BELGAUM, INDIA.

A Short Survey of Work Accomplished

LEPERS, the world over, owe more to Wellesley C. Bailey, the Founder of the Mission to Lepers, than to any other single individual. It was a source of great joy to him, and deep satisfaction to others, that he lived to see the Diamond Jubilee of the Mission he founded.

At the time Mr. Bailey commenced visiting that little company of lepers in Ambala in the Punjab, there was no organized work whatever being carried on in India on behalf of these poor sufferers. The Mission he founded in 1874 is now working at over 100 stations in 25 different countries! *What hath God wrought.*

To-day efforts to stamp out leprosy and to alleviate the sufferings of the leper are increasingly evident in every land where the disease is prevalent. Whilst it is impossible

to make more than a guess as to the number of lepers in the world—an estimate is given of between three and five million—it is to be feared that in some countries the disease is even yet increasing. In India, though the census figure is but a little over 100,000, it is generally estimated that there must be actually over one million lepers.

As in this volume we are specially interested in the lepers of India, it will suffice to give a few figures and facts showing what is being done here. The Mission to Lepers was first in the field, and is doing, we believe, far more on behalf of those afflicted people than any others interested.

The Mission had 43 Homes in 1935, with about 9500 inmates, for which it was wholly responsible—it is loyally aided by Government; in fact, so greatly is the work of the Mission valued by Government, that it now receives nearly half the expenses of the work in India from Government Grants-in-Aid. Besides this large number of Homes, it also is aiding 15 other Homes. Of the 9500 inmates

in 1935, nearly 7000 showed improvement, and about 750 in-patients were discharged, most of them without deformities. It also, through its out-patient clinics, was treating another 7500 patients. Besides all this, it is engaged in the splendid work of saving the untainted children of lepers, of whom in 1934 there were 800 in its Homes. This branch of the work—Children's Homes—is of the utmost importance, as will readily be understood.

The Mission to Lepers has sought to place and keep first things first, its purpose as described in its Constitution being:

“to provide for the spiritual instruction and temporal relief of lepers and the children of lepers in India and such other countries to which its operations have been or may be extended from time to time, and, in so far as lies in its power, to assist in bringing about the extinction of leprosy.”

In Calcutta, Government has an important School of Tropical Medicine, which at present is under the care of Dr. Muir. The School, we are told, is a model of its kind, and here a large

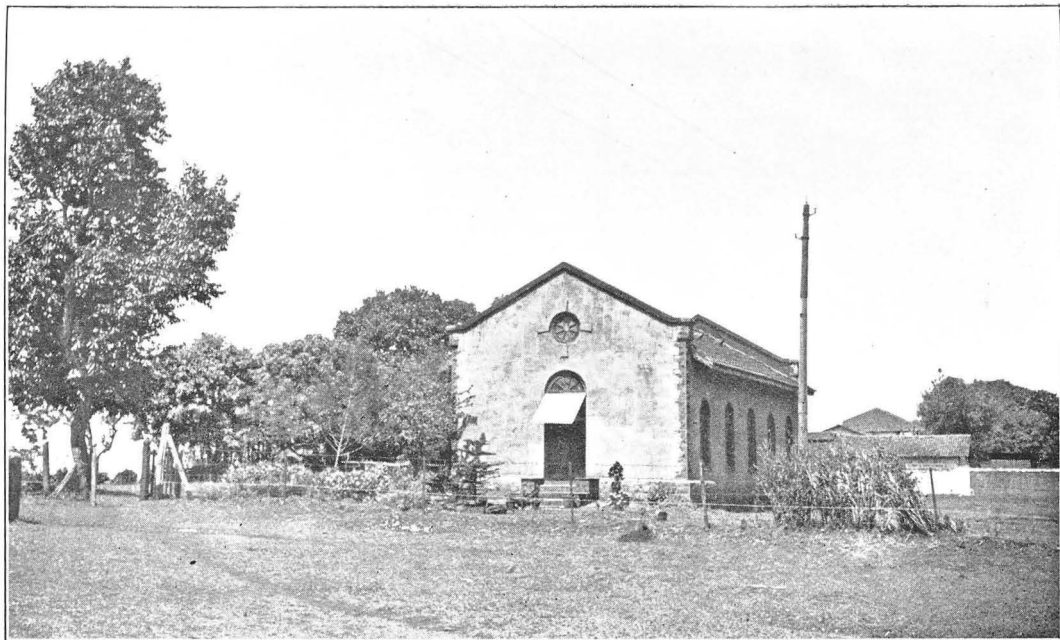
number of doctors have been trained to diagnose and treat the disease. Also throughout the country are to be found a few large Government Leper Homes or Hospitals in or near some of the large cities, such as Bombay (Matunga), Madras (Chingleput), and Ahmedabad. Government is also seeking to popularise outside clinics, which doubtless are a great help, though, of course, the patients thus treated do not respond to the treatment to the same extent as those in Institutions where good food, cleanliness, and care are assured.

Then there is the British Empire Leprosy Relief Association, which is doing a splendid work, publishing a Quarterly Magazine, and in many ways carrying on a most useful propaganda, enlightening the people of India concerning the disease by illustrated articles, both in the vernacular and in English; also in many ways supporting and furthering work already established.

Lastly, there is a certain amount of private effort by different missions and missionaries.

Whilst one is thankful for the immense

amount of work that has been done for the leper, it is abundantly evident that the great problem that leprosy presents has only just begun to be scientifically and efficiently tackled.



THE GOSPEL HALL IN THE LEPER ASYLUM GROUNDS

25 YEARS' MISSION WORK AMONG THE LEPERS OF INDIA

CHAPTER I

Our First Three Christians

SHORTLY after Dr. Hunter admitted his first leper, he asked me to commence and carry on meetings for the inmates. This was cheerfully undertaken, though for the first seven years or so we only had a room 18 ft. by 16 ft. for the purpose; and seeing as many as twenty would gather at times, it was not exactly wholesome in the hot months. We now have a fine Gospel Hall, which was built with money given in Australia and opened in 1921.

These meetings were carried on fairly regularly twice a week till 1914, when both Dr. Hunter and I went on furlough. I well remember the last meeting held at that time. After giving my message, I said with some feeling, how grieved I was that I had no grounds

for hope, should I die before my return to India or should Christ come for His people, that I would meet any of those present in Heaven.

The words had hardly left my lips when a voice at the back called out most confidently: "*But, Sahib, you will meet me.*" "Was that you, Balu, that spoke?" I said. "*Yes, you will meet me,*" he replied. I asked him why he thought that, and with great conviction he answered: "*I believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.*" Two or three others then chimed in saying: "*And you will meet me,*" "*And me.*"

There was such confidence in blind Balu's voice—for Balu was our one blind leper, and probably the first to really see—that my heart was cheered indeed.

On returning from New Zealand in September, 1915, I took over the work from Mr. A. E. Storrie, who had taken over from Mr. George Henderson, who had been caring for it in the absence of Dr. Hunter. Dr. Hunter did not return to India again. In the meantime Balu and two others had been baptised by Mr. Henderson.

Shortly after my return I spoke to Balu, Appiah, and Dongaru—the three who were baptised—as to whether they would like to remember the Lord in the breaking of bread. They were enthusiastic, so for some years we had the breaking of bread alternately on our Compound and at the Leper Home. The meeting was eventually held weekly at the Asylum, as at present.

It was not long before I realised something of the problem we were up against. Talking with the three Christians, I pled with them to do what they could to win their fellows. This they promised to do, and seemed in earnest.

One day when thus speaking with them, one of them said: "Sahib (sir), you do not understand. These men in the Refuge" (for that is the Marathi word we use for Asylum) "will never become Christians." "Why do you say that?" I asked. "Well, you see, we three were Mahars" (low caste, untouchables), "and most here are Marathas" (Marathas are farmers, caste people).

"Yes, that is true," and well I knew the

difficulty, "but we must not limit the Spirit of God." "But, Sahib," one of them said, "do you not see that if they became Christians they would have to eat and drink with us at the Lord's Table—a *Maratha* would never do that!" I sought to encourage them to expect great things, and reminded them that nothing was too hard for the Lord.

Some weeks after this, these three asked me whether they might not have beef instead of mutton—there was a small allowance of mutton given monthly. They pointed out that beef was cheaper and they said they preferred it to mutton. Very gently I pointed out to them that if they insisted in this matter, they would but make it harder for any of the other Hindus to become Christians—for the caste Hindu looks upon the cow as "holy," and hence abhors the thought of eating beef—and I read to them part of 1 Corinthians 8, especially dwelling on the last verse: "Wherefore, if meat make my brother to offend, I will eat no flesh while the world standeth, lest I make my brother to offend." Since that day to this no

request has been made for us to provide beef for any inmate of this Home!

Balu and Appiah became great friends—the latter was spoken of as the former's *eyes*, whilst Balu was called Appiah's *mouth*, for he was ever ready to act as spokesman. Once Balu asked for a "complete Bible." I naturally asked what he would do with it. "Oh," said he, "I want it for all the people." When I brought the Book—and the Marathi Bible is a big book—and placed it in the blind man's hands, he said: "What is this?" Someone near-by at once said in a reproachful tone of voice: "What, Balu, don't you know when the Sahib is giving you a Bible?" Quick as a flash Balu's blind eyes were turned heavenward, and as he held the Bible out as best he could, for nothing was left but parts of the palms of his poor hands, he prayed: "*Oh God, let me live till I hear all the words of this Holy Book.*"

Both Appiah and Balu have long ago passed away; both ran well and ended joyfully. Dongaru, now blind, is still with us, and will from time to time figure in the pages of this book.

CHAPTER II

Dhondibai—Our First Woman
Inmate

ONE Sunday after the worship meeting was over, as Mrs. Irvine and I were about to leave the Asylum for our bungalow, which lies a mile away, we saw three policemen and a woman waiting near the office. The business was explained; the police had brought the woman under the Leper Act, which, where applied, authorises the police to arrest pauper lepers and place them in an asylum. She was our first statutory leper inmate. The magistrate's warrant and the doctor's certificate were in order, and a letter acknowledging the reception of the leper, and our responsibility to keep and care for her till discharged according to the Act, was written and handed to the police. They departed, most thankful to be freed from their duty, which, as they left, they told us had been a very thankless one.

The woman was sitting on the ground near the little gate leading into the Women's Ward. All that she could see of the rooms was a long stone veranda, and two or three doors and windows piercing the long wall of the row of rooms.

I approached the poor woman, by name Dhondibai, telling her, as kindly as I could, that Government had sent her to us to care for, that I would give her blankets, cooking utensils and foodstuffs, and to follow me that I might show her her room. I opened the gate and walked through, but she made not the slightest attempt to move. "*Come along with me,*" I said; but without rising she replied: "Are there any other women down there?"

Now that was just the question I did not desire to hear, but I was compelled to do so. "No," said I, "not yet, but we hope any day that others will come." "Go down *there,*" she said, "all by myself! No!" And a very decided "No" it was. I tried again, but failed; so knowing something of the persuasive powers of my wife, I asked her to try.

On being again invited to come in by Mrs. Irvine, the poor creature said: "What sin have I committed that I should have to live *there* all by myself?" My wife also failed. We then talked with the house-father, who had been watching our endeavours, and he said he would go and get her in. He talked, scolded, implored, and so on, but the woman's reply persisted: "Go in there all by myself—No!"

Mrs. Irvine and I again jointly endeavoured to persuade her, for we felt our responsibility, and I began to regret having let the police go so easily. But no, she remained adamant. We couldn't leave her there, we had to go, for other work had to be done—we realised we were in a dilemma. "Go and get a blanket," I said to the house father. Very gently we put this round the poor woman, and then, before she knew where she was, she was inside. The gate was closed and padlocked before she realised the position. Then every one in the Home, and any passers-by within earshot, were acquainted with the fact—for she raised up her voice and wept.

As we walked homewards, for some distance we heard her cries. We had hardly reached the bungalow when a messenger arrived telling us that the woman had crept through the fence and was making her way towards Belgaum. However, the police brought her back, and most providentially another woman leper, Aukibai by name, arrived almost immediately. The two became great friends, though at times they were very quarrelsome.

About a year after the above incident, I had to speak to Dhondibai concerning some misbehaviour. After reprimanding her for her disobedience, I said to her: "Now, I cannot always be correcting you and warning you; if this occurs again I shall have to consider whether I should dismiss you." She looked up at me smiling sweetly, and said: "Sahib, when I came here, you had to bundle me in; but now I am in, you can't bundle me out." I left her feeling a good deal comforted. She evidently valued her home in the Refuge. This was our first and last attempt to use a little gentle force, and it did not succeed so badly.

Gradually other women came. A later chapter will narrate the tragical end of our first two women, Dhondi and Auki.

Our difficulty now is not having to compel them to come in, but rather the necessity of having to keep them waiting, for we have now a waiting list.

CHAPTER III

The Stage is Set : Caste or Christ

THE story narrated in this chapter is a long one, and carries us through days of crisis. Meetings continued and interest increased as the weeks and months fled by. Then there appeared to be a move among the dry bones. At the close of a Gospel service towards the end of 1916, one of the Marathas spoke up for the rest, asking whether I would listen to a petition they wished to make.

Having been assured that I would, he asked whether they might not have *two* meetings for the breaking of bread, one for the caste people, and one for those Christians who had come from the low castes. This I had, of course, to refuse. Another then spoke up: "Well, then, when the bread and wine are handed round, will you not give it to us first?"

Plainly, firmly, yet as kindly as I could, I

told them that caste could never be recognised in a Christian Church. Moreover, I pointed out that by the "new birth" men became brothers, and so belonged to one family, *God's family*, and that all such thoughts were repugnant to a true Christian.

They listened respectfully, quietly, and then one of them answered: "Then, Sahib, none of us will become Christians." I told them that the loss would be theirs.

The first battle was fought, and caste had triumphed.

Early in 1917, after our morning worship meeting, before the congregation was dismissed, a Maratha named Hariba spoke up, saying: "*Sahib, I want to be baptised*" (immersed). Not very conventional, you will say. No, we are not very conventional, true; doubtless it would cause some sensation in one of the home churches if after a service such a question rang out unannounced. On conversing with him later, I asked him why he wished to be baptised. He stated his short creed in the following words; "*Jesus Christ died for me,*

and I love Him.” To my ears this was a sweet-sounding declaration of belief. Great was the joy amongst the three Christians, for they had almost lost hope.

After two or three talks with Hariba I was satisfied that he was in earnest, and as he gave evidence of faith, and as the Christians were happy about him, the day for his baptism was fixed. The day before he was to be baptised I had a last talk with him. He assured me all was well. Then, very gently, he said: “I have but *one* request.”

“And what may that be?”

“Just this, that at the Lord’s Supper I sit one side and the others on the other side, and that you give me the bread and the wine first.”

Sadly I pointed out the impossibility of such a course, and as he persisted, I said: “If that is your last word, I cannot think of baptising you.”

He replied: “Very well, Sahib, as you wish.”

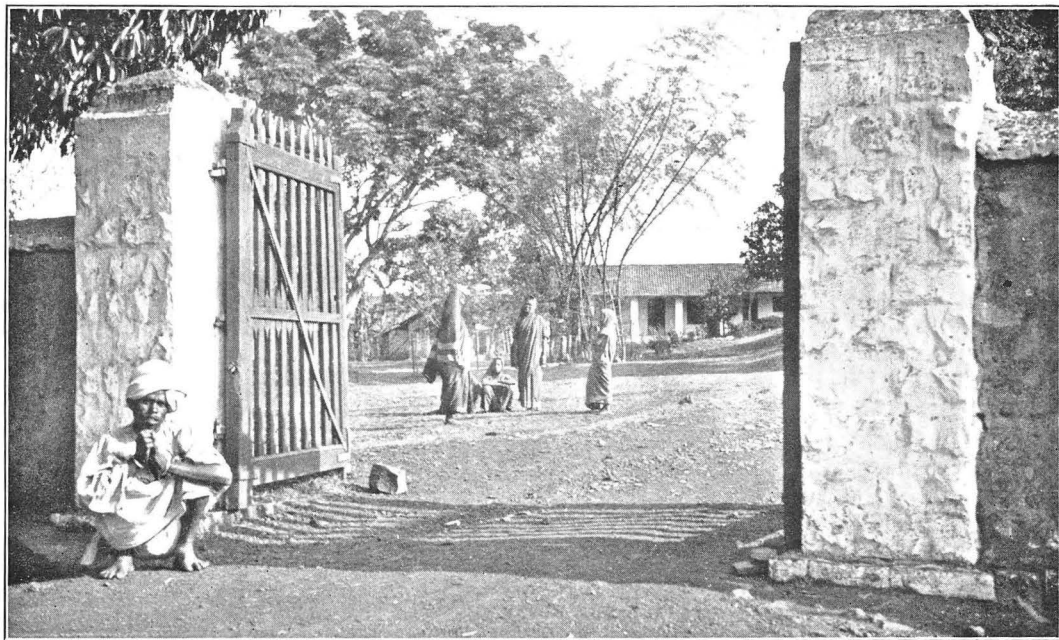
CASTE *had again come off victorious.*

In March of the same year two Marathas and

a Lingayat applied for baptism. The application of one of these, on account of his bad testimony, was at once turned down; but the others seemed real, and again the hopes of the Christians were raised.

From time to time I had quiet talks with these two men who assured me they cared nothing for caste, nor were they afraid of the consequences. I remember, after the day for their baptism was fixed, having a last talk with them. I reminded them how Hariba had acted and through fear had drawn back. They assured me that they would not, were there not two of them, did they not believe in Christ?

Midst much rejoicing among the Christians, these two—Makappa and Adwippa—were baptised, and two days after were found seated at the Lord's table. The bread was broken, thanks was given. Giving the first three each a broken piece of the loaf, I then gave it to the two new converts. Then the cup was passed in the same order, but on it coming to the last two, *they both refused to take it*. How that



THE FRONT GATE TO THE LEPER HOME WHERE A LEPER IS ASKING FOR ADMITTANCE

meeting closed I have no recollection. Our joy was turned into mourning, and the spirit of praise into heaviness.

After the meeting closed, on my expressing my sorrow and shame at their refusing the Lord's cup, I said that I feared that a great mistake had been made in baptising them. One of them humbly replied: "Sahib, you don't understand what it means for us to drink after a low caste man; we had intended when we came here to take the cup, but all our lives we have been taught to loathe their touch, and we simply couldn't take it. No, you have made no mistake. We have got our feet in, have patience, in two months' time we will get over it, and come right in."

CASTE again had triumphed, and the worst fears of the three Christians were confirmed.

Eight weary months passed by, Adwippa and Makappa, the two of whom I have been writing, attended the meetings, but could not bring themselves to partake of the Supper. When spoken to, they would reply: "Not yet, not yet; but we will do so."

In December, 1917, two more, Pascol, a Roman Catholic, and Mallaya, a low caste youth, confessed faith, the former at a meeting taken by Mr. A. E. Storrie. Before long they both asked for baptism. A few days later a Maratha, named Vithoba, from a village nearby, and a lad who had been in another Asylum, asked to be baptised with the two mentioned above.

Hearing that Vithoba was asking for baptism, Hariba at once requested the house-father to find someone else to cook for him—Hariba's hands being fingerless, Vithoba was acting as his cook. The next day I visited the Asylum and finding Hariba, said reproachfully:

“Hariba, how is it that you, who once said you believed in Christ, and even wished to be baptised, now object to Vithoba cooking your food, just because he's asked for baptism?”

He looked up at me and said: “Let him cook it.”

“Why, what does this mean? Did you not tell the house-father that you would not let Vithoba cook for you any longer?”

"Yes, I did. But let him cook for me."

"Come, Hariba, tell me what has happened."

"I'll tell you. Last night I fell asleep (very impressively), then I suddenly woke up. And there, near my cot, stood the Lord Jesus! He said, 'Hariba, fear not. Follow Me. I will take you under My arm, and I will take you up to the Heavenly Durbar.'" (the King's Court).

He paused. I said: "And what then?"

"Then He disappeared!"

After a moment's pause, Hariba looked up at me and said brightly, "Sahib, you must now baptise me with Vithoba and the others."

But I thought it well to let them wait. Pascol and Mallaya were baptised and the number of Christians in fellowship reached five. Three weeks later on January 18, 1918, Vithoba, Hariba, and the lad were baptised. As Hariba stood in the water, I said: "*Hariba, do you believe in Jesus Christ as your Saviour?*" He cried out loudly, "*Agadi wishwas,*" which

being interpreted means, "absolute faith." And then and there he was buried in the waters of baptism.

The following Lord's Day the five Christians, the three converts, the two who had been baptised before, but had refused to partake, and several others came to the worship meeting. A most solemn time of praise and prayer opened the meeting, and I must acknowledge that it was with some little trepidation I passed round the bread and the wine. Thank God, after the cup had passed from hand to hand of the first five, Vithoba without hesitation took it and drank from out of it; Hariba followed, and then the lad. With hearts overflowing with praise the meeting was continued and closed.

CHRIST *had at last triumphed over* CASTE. There was great joy in the camp of the Christians.

I believe a good foundation had been laid, and that the caste spirit was cast out, for it has given little trouble since. Not very long after this Adwippa and Makappa humbly

requested to be brought into fellowship, and were received.

When some two years ago a Brahmin was baptised and came into fellowship, it was a joy to see him sitting at the table of the Lord, with former low caste men, one on either side of him.

Hariba never shone as a Christian, but he never forgot his vision. He suffered greatly for some months, and became somewhat of a grumbler. Still he would brighten up at times. The last time I saw him alive, he was very sick indeed. He sat propped up on the veranda. "Well, Hariba," said I, "*and are you ready to go should Christ come for you?*" His whole face lit up, and he said exultingly, "Yes, I'm ready. Has He not said He would come for me, and take me under His arm to the Heavenly Durbar?" Two or three days after that he passed away.

CHAPTER IV

Armadas—The Mad Leper

WHILST we were on furlough a man named Armadas was admitted some time in September, 1914. The other inmates said he was mad, but as he gave no trouble, and as they were willing to help him and cook for him—having lost all his fingers and toes—he was admitted. He was from North India, and spoke Hindi, which is a sister language to Marathi.

As the months passed by one and another would tell me things about him. They said it was a sight to see him stumping along the veranda, which was a long one, calling out for his elephant, or his chariot, or his barge, as the humour took him. At such times they said that he imagined himself to be the Raja of Delhi. I myself saw him doing this once, and a most pitiable sight it was. Some of the men sat round laughing and making remarks.

Gradually stories of his pranks increased, and some of the inmates began to fear him. Later two or three of them asked that he might be sent to a mental asylum, as they feared he would be doing someone harm; they said he had struck one or two of them.

I applied to the Collector (Chief Magistrate) to see whether he could have him transferred. He wrote to several mental asylums, but one and all were "quite full"—in other words, they considered that a mad leper would be a little too much of a handful for them. The Collector strongly urged me to do what we could for the poor fellow.

More complaints being made, I arranged for him to be locked up at nights, and again wrote asking the Collector to relieve me of this burden, pointing out that many of the men were really afraid of him. A few days later the Collector visited the Leper Home by appointment, and went down to the men's ward, asking me to point out to him the so-called mad leper. I saw that he was evidently inclined to be sceptical.

Armadas was sitting quietly at the end of the long veranda. I pointed him out to our friend, who, going quite near to him, addressed him. Armadas took not the slightest notice whatever of the Collector, but on being spoken to again in a sharper tone, just looked up at him, and went on chewing whatever he may have had in his mouth. Now it must be understood that Collectors in India are men of very high position, and are used to being obeyed the moment they speak; so I was not surprised when he said a little angrily and indignantly: "*Do you not hear me? Get up and answer me.*" Armadas at once rose, and looking at him, without a moment's hesitation took two or three rapid steps towards him, and with the stumps of his hands prodded the Collector in the ribs! It was all so quickly done and so unexpected, that no one had time to intercept him, though one or two of the lepers close by immediately went to the rescue.

Needless to say, the Collector was converted on the spot—he no longer questioned the insanity of the poor man.

Armadas got worse as the days went by, until one day word was brought to the bungalow that he was missing. We sent out search parties, but not until the third day at even was the poor fellow found. He was sitting on the far side of a stream, waiting for his royal barge, as he told the house-father. While being helped across the water he bit one of the men on the hand, but ultimately was brought back safely.

A few weeks after this he died. As he seemed beyond help spiritually, we could not but thank God that at last this most trying inmate had been removed.

We had another mad leper man who was quite harmless, and when I visited the Asylum on my rounds, he used to make it a practice to sit in the doorway of the passage that I had to go through, in order to make his almost daily request, to be allowed to leave the Refuge. What is more, he would not take "No," and would sit on till one of the leper men came and removed him.

CHAPTER V

Bunchdas—The Bairagi

SOME time in the year 1917 a religious mendicant, by name Bunchdas, was received into the Home. He was badly crippled, partly due to rheumatism doubtless, as he had been, like all such men, much exposed to the elements. He had lost the power of his lower limbs, and was only able to move about in a sitting position, shuffling along with the aid of two wooden feet which he held in his hands.

He seemed distinctly interested for a while in the story of the Cross, and attended most of the meetings. After a while he discontinued coming, and I found out that he was giving the Christians a great deal of abuse, especially those who had been low caste men, more so if they happened to come near him whilst eating. Like most of such devotees he had learnt to know the value of cursing—to this day the people

of India fear the curse of these "holy men."

It seemed to please him to be rude to me, within bounds, when I paid visits to the Asylum; and he became so rude that I often passed him by with a mere "Salaam."

One day, many months after his admittance, as I was passing him, he cried: "Sahib! Sahib."

"Yes, Bunchdas," I said, "What do you want?" "*I want to be baptised*" he replied.

In view of all that had taken place I was more than surprised, and said rather severely: "Bunchdas, are you scoffing?"

"Scoffing!" he answered, "No, indeed, I mean it. Ask these Christians." Two or three Christians were standing close by, so I turned to them and inquired about him. "Yes," said one, "he is a changed man. He says he wants to be baptised." I must confess that I could hardly believe my ears.

Finding him some little while after in one of the rooms with several Hindus and one or two Christians, I asked him if it was still his mind to be baptised. He replied decidedly in the affirmative. I then said:

“But Bunchdas, what are you going to do about all your gods, Hari, Ram, Krishna, and all the others?”

“They are *not* gods, they are but dead idols. There is but one God.”

“Oh! But what about all the pilgrimages you have taken? And the temples and shrines at which you have worshipped?”

“It has all been in vain.”

“Well, but what about all the merit you have accumulated all these years?”

With real scorn in his voice he answered: “*Merit! It's not merit, it's sin.*”

The Christians were jubilant, and pressed that he should be baptised. Eventually being quite convinced that he was sincere, the date was fixed for the first of December, 1918.

But here again we were up against a problem. We baptise by immersion, and the ceremony takes place in a small tank near the well. If ever there was a case where circumstances call for compromise, surely here it presented itself. The man was impotent even to raise himself on to his feet—how could he be immersed? At

last we hit upon a plan. We rigged up two poles, one at either end of the tank, with a cross pole lashed to them stretching from one upright to the others. To this we fixed a pulley, and making a small platform on which Bunchdas could sit, we lowered him into the water, and after he had confessed his faith he was let down beneath the waters of baptism, and immediately drawn up again. Willing hands helped him out of the tank, and we all felt that everything had been carried out decently and in order.

This dear man lived till September, 1919, and his life and testimony was such that we never had reason to regret having received him. He was another trophy to be laid at the feet of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, and awaits the resurrection morn, when the dead in Christ shall rise first, and "we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air ; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4. 18).

CHAPTER VI

The Open-Air Meeting

IT was in the year 1919 that some of the Christians put their heads together and made request that they be permitted to sit by the roadside on Saturdays, as the villagers passed in groups on their way to Belgaum in the morning for the weekly bazaar, and back again at night.

That roadside testimony has been carried on ever since. Not all the Christians are willing to face the gibes of the villagers, but usually from five to ten will be found sitting on the inside of the wire fence on Saturday afternoons, singing, repeating Gospel texts, giving their testimony, and at times answering the villagers' questions.

A common retort, and a cruel one, is: "If Jesus Christ be the true Saviour, why does He not heal you?" Another is: "*If you are God's*

people, why are you lepers?" And a very common question is: "If God answers prayers, why do you not pray for rain now it is needed?"

Some years ago, one Saturday afternoon, I found several men sitting near by the little leper preaching hut—for they rejoice in an open shed built near the road, in which they can sit and sing in all weathers. They had prayed for money to build a shed and had obtained it.

Our blind leper was preaching very earnestly to the group, and with eager fervent words was preaching Christ and Him crucified—for as I learnt later, was not his brother one of the listeners! They listened with keen attention, and when our friend Dongaru was finished, I urged them to accept the Saviour Who was so dear to those proclaiming Him.

"We are but ignorant men," one of them replied.

"And are *we* among the learned—are *we* pundits? We, too, are ignorant men," came the reply from another inside the fence.

The blind man then continued warmly urg-



BUNCHDAS, A RELIGIOUS MENDICANT, WHO TOOK HIS STAND
NOBLY FOR CHRIST (Page 44)

ing, warning, and pleading. He paused, and another of the lepers spoke up.

"But, friends, it's Heaven or Hell! There is no other place. Accept Christ and all is well, you will obtain joy here and eternal life hereafter. Reject Christ and God will reject you. 'The Blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanseth us from all sin'" (1 John 1. 7).

Refreshed in soul I went on my way rejoicing. There can be no doubt whatever that the villagers listen and are exercised by what they hear. During 1936, with our house-father, we preached in a village along the road some three miles from the Asylum. Many of the people in this village regularly pass the Asylum on Saturdays on their way to the market. My brother, towards the close of one of his addresses, said:

"We are telling you no novel story. As you pass the Refuge weekly on Saturdays, do you not hear the lepers exhorting you to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ in order to be saved?"

"Yes," "Yes," came from several of them.

"And what do you do when so spoken to?"

No answer.

"I'll tell you what you do ; you roundly curse them for leaving their religion."

No one acknowledged the charge, but they looked uncomfortable.

"What!" said my friend, "is it not true, these ears of mine," pointing to them, "have again and again heard you."

Then two or three grudgingly assented. But my friend was not yet through. Said he: "And what do they do when you curse them? Do they curse you back?"

Three or four immediately replied: "No! No!" evidently not realising that by so answering they had brought themselves in guilty.

"And why is it," he persisted, "that instead of cursing you back they speak kindly to you?"

No answer was forthcoming.

"I'll tell you. It's because they have accepted Christ as their Saviour. He has come to dwell in their hearts, and He has changed their hearts."

Then the house-father exhorted them to accept the same One to be their Saviour.

CHAPTER VII

A Brush with the R.C's., and a
Visit from the Commissioner

ONE afternoon two priests drove up to the bungalow and asked for me. They asserted that they had called at the Leper Asylum and had asked to be allowed to go down to the people and talk with them; that our house-father had refused to let them go, and had told them that they must get leave through the Superintendent. They then asked me if I held that office.

On my replying in the affirmative, they complained of the way that they had been treated. "Did the house-father refuse to let you go and talk with the people?" I asked. "Yes," they said, "he would not let us go down into the wards." "Well," I replied, "he was quite right, and acted strictly according to orders." "But," one of them said, "according

to law we should be permitted to go and see and talk with the people which belong to our church." "True," I replied, "but not without permission from the Superintendent. If it is your desire to speak to any one belonging to your church, I will appoint a day and a place for you to see that one." But that didn't suit them; they desired to come when they wished, and speak to whom they wished, and to this I would not agree. One of them asked:

"Have you not a young man named Pascol in your Asylum?"

"Yes, we have a man of that name."

"Well, he belongs to our church."

"He used to be, but he has lately been converted."

"Converted!"—with real scorn—"You call it conversion, we call it perversion."

I smiled, and said: "You may call it what you like, but he has learnt to know and love the Lord Jesus as his personal Saviour."

They left in great dudgeon.

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Three or four weeks later a gentleman rode

up to the bungalow at 8 o'clock in the morning. After greeting him, I asked him in, recognising him to be the Commissioner, the Senior Government Officer over a large part of the country. He had at the commencement of the Leper work shown considerable interest in it, having had one or two interviews with Dr. Hunter and me about starting the work.

"Mr. Irvine," he commenced, "I have had a very serious charge made against you by two Roman Catholic priests." I smiled, remembering what had taken place, and said:

"What may that be, sir?"

"A few days ago they waited on me and told me how they had called at the Leper Asylum, were refused admittance to see their church members and had gone on to see you; and they said that you had also refused them permission. Now, Mr. Irvine, you probably know that in connection with jails, asylums, and all such places, priests and ministers have a right to see their own people. Why did you refuse to grant them their request?"

I, of course, explained exactly what had

happened, and how the priests had been told that if they desired to see anyone belonging to their church, I would make an appointment for them; but that that was not what they wanted, they desired to go amongst the people whenever they wished. I told him that so long as I superintended the work, *that* I would not allow.

Mr. B. said to me: "You were quite right; that puts an altogether different complexion on the matter." Then clenching his fist he said with a laugh: "You know, Mr. Irvine, had they you in their power they would put you on the rack and a fire underneath you." Well, I was quite pleased that they hadn't the power to do so.

"Now," said the Commissioner, "tell me, do you have any conversions?"

"Yes, certainly."

"About how many are converted?"

"Well, sir, let me answer that question in the words with which the Secretary of the Mission to Lepers in India answered a like question put to him recently by the Governor

of Bombay. He said: 'Taking our Asylums all through India, about one-third of the lepers who come to our Homes become Christians.' "

"Yes. But have *you* any conversions *here*?"

"There are about a dozen Christians here now. What do you think we are here for? Whilst we do for the leper inmate all we can do physically, personally I would not carry on this work were it not for the spiritual help we can minister. "

"Well, Mr. Irvine, if you do the dirty work, I certainly think you should have liberty to teach what you believe to be the truth. " And rising abruptly, he shook hands and left.

Afterwards I found out that he was a Jew by birth.

CHAPTER VIII

Dark Days

ALL workers for the Master sooner or later pass through times of trouble, or depression, or persecution. Probably missionaries writing of their work and speaking about it, are right in dwelling on the brighter side rather than stressing the darker side. Who cares to hear about our troubles and the loads we have to bear—not many!

If we missionaries were to tell of the unfaithfulness, and untruthfulness of the average indigenous helper and convert, their lack of character, carelessness and prayerlessness, many at home would lose interest and be quick to say: Is it worth while? Far happier is it to stress all the faithfulness, the patience, love, zeal, and joy that converts and workers manifest, and let love do its gracious work of hiding up their failings. Not only is that true, but how thankful are we that *our* failings, *our*

lack of earnestness, *our* prayerlessness at times is not blazoned abroad. For after all is said and done, what have *we* to boast in?

When we remember the circumstances of our birth, the environment of our childhood, the godly teachers we have sat under, the splendid literature we enjoy, the prayers of praying friends, and then contrast the surroundings in which our loved Indian Christian brethren were brought up, their restricted horizon, their lack of Christian friends who will pray for them—it is surprising that they stand as well as they do in lands which are Satan's strongholds, lands full of enmity for the One we and they love and seek to serve.

But this is a digression, for this chapter has little to do with the failings of missionaries or their Indian Christian brethren, rather it is written to give a little glimpse behind the scenes, probably showing a sidelight not often seen by those who read of the work amongst lepers or even visit the Homes, but which is nevertheless very real.

One Sunday afternoon, the Gospel meeting

being over, I was leaving the Institution when, as I passed through the gate, some men called me to see a woman whom they had brought in a bullock wagon. She was so ill that she couldn't sit up. They told me she was a leper, and that they had brought her a very long way. I asked them what was the use of bringing her here just to die. They said she had become much worse on the way, and what could they do? I said: "We have one very sick woman in the ward, and one old blind woman, so I do not know if we can look after another who is so sick."

On consulting with the women, Aukibai said: "How can we look after another? There is only Dhondi and I who can do anything, and we have our hands full as you know." It was true enough, for though there were two others, one was a young woman who had only been with us for a week and was quite untried; and the other, an old Marathi woman who had always refused to soil her hands for anyone. "Well," I said, "if you can't help, we must let her die on the roadside; she's not likely at

any rate to live long." This apparent heartlessness shocked them, and they agreed to have her brought in, and they would do what they could for her.

I had to call a couple of the men to lift her out of the cart—we made a bed for her on some straw in a small spare room. Next morning she was *dead*—and as is the custom in India, she was buried as quickly as we could arrange. The doctor from Belgaum, who attended the lepers, did not see her, but from our description considered she must have had pneumonia. Ten days later Dhondibai fell sick, she, too, had symptoms of pneumonia. Aukibai had now no one to help her. The young woman had fled as soon as ever she knew the woman with pneumonia had died. The other sick woman got worse, and Aukibai had to care as best she could for her, the old blind woman, and Dhondibai.

Dhondibai lingered on a fortnight or so and then died. Aukibai was inconsolable. Mrs. Irvine went down to comfort her, and on being quieted, she, midst her sobs, said: "My

Dhondi is in Heaven with Jesus." "And why do you think she is there?" my wife inquired. "Oh, she said she believed on Christ, and so do I."

Then Auki fell sick! Then began the days of unleavened bread! It was a heavy cross visiting the Home those days. There was no one to care for the sick women; we had to call in some of the men folk and get them to help as best they could—to cook and clean, and fetch water. They did their best, but it was a heart-breaking business, I hate to think of it even now.

When Aukibai fell sick, our doctor diagnosed her case as *pneumonic plague*. Much prayer was made that it should not spread.

Aukibai died. And shortly afterwards the other sick woman too. Just two old women, and one of them blind, were left, and they were terribly frightened, and implored us to let them use a room at the far end of the ward—this of course we did.

Thus ended the darkest days of our experience in the Leper Work.

CHAPTER IX

A Petition to the Collector and
What Came of It

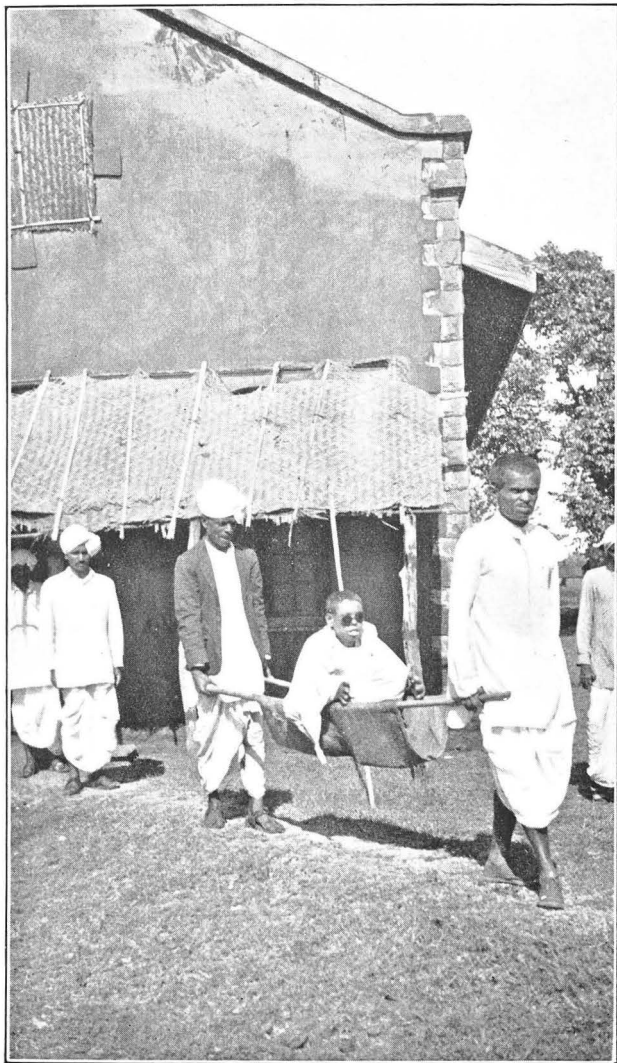
THERE had been some unrest and dissatisfaction in the Home. Some complained of the food, and some of how they had been treated by the house-father.

I received two anonymous letters through the post, written by one of the inmates in the Home, complaining that Mrs. Irvine—who weekly oversees their foodstuffs being given out—had cut down their *dal* (pulse), and that they were being ill-treated as above. We suspected the writer of the letter to be a young Brahmin who had lately come, and felt sure he was the ringleader. We had reason to know that this young fellow was causing discontent. I took no notice of the letter, seeing no name was attached.

Shortly after this one of the lepers came to

the bungalow saying that the house-father had sent him to me, as nine of the lepers had gone up to Belgaum to see the Collector and hand him a petition. I sent the messenger back and told him to tell the house-father not to attempt to stop them. It was very hot, and they did not return that night. I left word that on their return they were not to be admitted, but I was to be informed. Next afternoon we were informed that they had returned, and were waiting outside the gate. I sent word that they might take shelter from the rain in the cart shed inside the gate—for a heavy tropical storm was raging—and that they were to stay there till I came. About five in the afternoon Mrs. Irvine and I walked down to the Asylum. All the nine were there; they looked tired, forlorn, and hungry—a sad-looking crowd.

One of them handed me an envelope. "First of all," I said, "you (pointing to the young Brahmin) go outside. You must go away, I will no longer have you here. You are dismissed." Some will consider this treatment very brusque and severe—I'm inclined to



BEARING A BLIND BROTHER (AN EX-BRAHMIN) BACK
FROM THE SERVICE

agree with them, but I'm telling what happened. Very little sympathy was expressed for him. Then I spoke to the others. I found out that they had not seen the Collector (Chief Magistrate), but had been sent to the Mamlatdar (Second-Class Magistrate), who had spoken to them, advising them to return, and giving them the letter they had handed to me.

I told them how foolish it was to act as they had done, that not one of them had been man enough or had had the courage to come directly to me and ask me to put things right. I told them they deserved to lose their home, and might consider themselves fortunate that I did not dismiss them as I had the Brahmin. Very glad were they to be allowed to come back, for they had eaten nothing, they told us, since they had been away.

On looking into their grievances, I found that there was not much wrong, but that amongst them were two or three who were determined to get rid of the house-father, and I learnt later that one of them had openly

stated that he intended to do so. He had said: "He goes or I go."

Some time after this three of the nine waited on me, bringing a serious accusation against the house-father. They had seen him, they said, early in the morning, going down to the Women's Ward, and return with one of the women lepers, and go into the dispensary. They had overheard them conversing, and I was left to draw the inference.

The attack was so open, and the charge so serious, that I thought it well to try the case publicly. I formed a jury of some of the more responsible inmates, and called up the three, one by one, taking down their evidence, which proved to be somewhat conflicting. They showed us where they sat and heard the conversation. To test it, Mrs. Irvine went into the dispensary and carried on a conversation, not a word of which any of the jury or I, as we stood on the spot indicated, could hear—we just heard a low murmur, though Mrs. Irvine said she spoke quite loudly. Other proof was given that the whole charge was just a wicked

plot. It ended in the three lepers being sent away to another Home, where arrangements were made for their reception—two of them were cripples. *Of a truth Satan still finds work for idle hands to do.*

CHAPTER X

Lepers and Faith Healing

I HAVE *read* of cases where it is claimed that leprosy has been healed by faith; but no convincing evidence has come my way. It is not a popular field for "faith healers" to work on. However, it is my firm conviction, that in answer to believing prayer many of God's children have been healed of various ills.

It is of considerable interest to learn that despite all the efforts made to find a cure for leprosy, none has yet been discovered. True, lepers are cleansed of their sores, they are discharged from our Asylums or Hospitals as "symptom free," but none in the know dare to go beyond saying that the disease is *arrested*.

Let me here quote the greatest authority perhaps in India: "No real progress has been made in finding a cure for leprosy, but great strides have been made in its control and prevention."—Dr. ERNEST MUIR.

Jacob, a nominal Christian, had come to us from the South. He spoke Mallayalam, and a few words of Marathi. Like a good many others he was taught to read Marathi whilst with us. In the course of time he was converted, and for a while ran well. He had terrible sores on his feet, which gradually improved.

Well do I remember how one Lord's Day morning this dear young man led us in worship, and how in his prayer or pæan of praise, he mounted up as on the wings of an eagle: "Lord," he cried, "we jump for joy in Thy presence." My thoughts immediately turned to his poor crippled feet, and I glorified God for the grace given.

But of how many of us has it to be said, "Ye did run well." This dear man, after he had been a considerable time with us, and had paid one or two visits to his people in the South, one day told me that he believed the Lord had healed him. He had prayed, and the prayer of faith would heal the sick—*he believed God*. Well, no one else thought he was healed, and I warned him of the danger of his course,

yet he clung to it. Shortly after this I noticed his place empty on Lord's Day morning, and sought him out; I asked him how it was he had absented himself from the Table of the Lord. He would not give a satisfactory answer, but I learnt from the others that as he was "healed" (!) he feared to drink out of the cup from which the other lepers drank.

Again and again I spoke to him, but no, God had healed him. At long last even he was convinced that he was not healed—the reaction was disastrous. He commenced harbouring bitter thoughts, even speaking against the Word of God; his faith was shipwrecked, and he finally somehow or other secured a saffron coloured garment of a Hindu *gosavi* ("holy man"), and left the Home wearing it!

Yes, we saw him again. He returned with a leper woman he had been living with, and asked me to marry them. Once or twice again he arrived at the Home professing to be penitent; but for the sake of the others I felt that I could not take him back, though I still believe he is unquestionably a child of God.

Is Divine Healing in the Atonement?*

“The prayer of faith shall heal the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him” (James 5. 15).

The following are *seven reasons why I believe that Divine Healing is not in the Atonement*—as so many hold—*so far as this dispensation is concerned.*

(1) Had it been in the Atonement, the absence in the Epistles of clear teaching on so incomparable a boon would be utterly inconceivable. If our sickness as well as our sins were covered by the Atonement, why is it that in the Epistles (the Church's great Charter) the one subject (sin) is constantly connected with the blood, whilst the other is not?

(2) Had Divine Healing been in the Atonement there could have been no room or necessity for the “Gift of Healing” (1 Cor. 12. 9). In the Epistles we find no Gift of the Forgiveness of Sins, and the reason is that that is in the Atone-

*For a fuller discussion on this interesting subject, the reader is referred to the author's book: “The Riches of the Gentiles.” (Price 1/4 post free).

ment, hence forgiveness has but to be claimed in faith to be enjoyed on account of the efficacy of the Blood of Christ.

(3) Had Divine Healing been in the Atonement, James 5. 14-16 would never have been written: for elders would not have been needed, as the faith of the individual sufferer, not the prayers of the elders, would have brought healing. James 5. 14-16 seems to be written for such sinners as are found in 1 Corinthians 11. 13, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you"; and for any in our day, who are sick through the chastening hand of God, on account of some sin unconfessed. Let such by all means call the elders of the Church according to the Scriptures and let them confess their sins—"the prayer of faith" to-day "shall save the sick."

(4) Had Divine Healing been in the Atonement the Apostle Paul would not have commended Timothy to "use a little wine" for "his stomach's sake," but would have exhorted him to exercise faith in God for healing. Epaphroditus would not have lain sick (as

surely can be inferred from Phil. 2. 26-30), nor would it have been said that "God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow." Nor would the Apostle Paul have had to leave Trophimus sick at Miletum.

(5) Were Divine Healing in the Atonement, many more bed-ridden saints would have been raised up; for it is well-known to many, that not a few of the most saintly sufferers, as for instance, Frances Ridley Havergal, have sought healing with faith and tears at the hand of God, claiming it on account of the Atonement and *yet have not been healed*. On the contrary, no saint who has fallen into sin and who has confessed his sin, claiming the power of the Blood, but has ere long rejoiced in the sense of the knowledge of forgiveness.

(6) Were Divine Healing in the Atonement, I would have been healed whenever (as thank God is my experience in the case of sin) I claimed healing, and not as has been the case, only sometimes. How many can testify to a like experience!

(7) Were Divine Healing in the Atonement, then Pastor Blumhardt (the modern apostle of Divine Healing, if I may so call him) was entirely wrong in his *modus operandi*. That he was most successful with those he prayed for, is acknowledged by men of all schools.

CHAPTER XI

Gifts for Lepers

ONE of our daughters when seven years of age was talking about the lepers, and asking how we got them to come to us. We were travelling along the road towards Vengurla when the Collector's car flashed by. "Who was that?" she asked, and we told her. Then a bright idea struck her. Said she: "Father, does the Collector go round in his car collecting lepers?" It would have given me much pleasure to have told the Collector the story, but I forbore, not knowing him intimately.

I am not carefully preparing the way for taking up the collection—do not imagine that I am writing this to raise funds, my chief object is to arouse prayer-interest in the work amongst lepers the world over. Doubtless much better work is being done in some of the many Homes supported or aided by the Mission

to Lepers. This is but a sample. Some of the Homes have hundreds of lepers in their care. One, Purulia, had 850 in 1933, more to-day probably. Nevertheless in all Christian work funds *are* of some importance; and I think it will be of interest to tell of some of the gifts we have received in money and kind.

The largest single gift yet received from a private source came from a lady in the U.S.A., who sent \$400 (£80) to help us dig a well and so enable our inmates to enjoy green vegetables all the year round.

One of the smallest gifts came from another lady of the U.S.A., who from time to time sent a few picture cards for the lepers. We have not heard from her for many years. Whenever she wrote she always implored us not to reply, not even to acknowledge her letter or the cards; for, she would say, "While I greatly admire your heroism in living amongst the lepers, and your devotion; please do not write, as I fear I might get the disease."

My wife would not let me write and tell her we were not the heroes she took us to be, as

we do not live amongst the lepers, nor was she in the slightest danger whatever of contamination.

For many years a Sunday School in Balmain, Sydney, has piled up their pence, and sent them to us for the lepers. I have run through my cash books, commencing in 1924, and was more than surprised to find that between 1924 and 1936, this Sunday School had actually sent to us the immense sum of £163—what is more, I may have omitted to notice one or two of their gifts. How true is the old Scotch saying: "Mony a meikle maks a muckle."

Whilst in Sydney, when on furlough, I had the great privilege of speaking to this Sunday School; and rejoiced in learning that a good many of the scholars have through the years become disciples of Jesus Christ.

Another small Sunday School, which a lady friend teaches, composed of a few of the children of the élite of her city, has also become interested in this work. A few of the scholars have sent money for buying good spring cots, and one was donated in memory of a loved little

one in the Glory. This School also helped to build a shack to temporarily shelter any lepers who could not be taken in, and provided money for a bookcase which they stocked with books—a Bible, some New Testaments, and other books for reading.

One of the most interesting of all our gifts came in the form of a five rupee Treasury Note, under the signature of A.S.K. This began to come monthly, and we wondered who A.S.K. could be. It commenced coming in May, 1914, but though the postmark on the envelope was changed from time to time, we could obtain no clue as to whom it came from. A year or more after this, I believe on three or four occasions, the monthly gift was missing. We concluded that some one was intercepting it. As it came through a Branch Post Office suspicions were aroused; it, however, passed through other hands beside the Post Office officials, before it reached me. This was very distressing, and we began to pray that we might be able to trace the donor.

At last a letter came from A.S.K., with the



THIS COT WAS DONATED IN MEMORY OF A LOVED LITTLE
ONE IN THE GLORY (Page 79)

usual Rs.5 Treasury Note, bearing the post-mark of one of the Post Offices on a Bombay wharf. I at once wrote a letter addressing it to A.S.K., c/o — Wharf, Post Office, Bombay. In a little while a letter came back from the donor, and to our immense satisfaction he proved to be an old Belgaum boy, now a young man in Government service. Every month since then, through the intervening years, his gifts have reached us. The Lord has prospered him.

A Hindu lady, widow of a Belgaum doctor, whose husband had for years cared for our lepers in an honorary capacity, sent us, while she lived, Rs.5 per mensem, saying that it was part of the interest from moneys that her husband had left, which was hers so long as she lived.

Another gift must be recorded. It was perhaps the most extraordinary gift ever sent to any Christian worker. Early one Sunday morning I received a letter with a note from our house-father. The letter was from Major —, a military doctor, who told me that he

was sending some spittoons, and that he hoped they would be useful for our lepers; and please would I accept them as he did not know what to do with them. The house-father in his note implored me not to take them, as they were utterly useless and out of repair, and could not be cleaned. This is the only gift I can remember ever refusing. I'm sure the donor meant well; but who could do anything with *two cart loads* of old, broken spittoons!

I would also like to record that one of our house-fathers used to regularly put eight annas (about 10d.) weekly into the collection box. I never saw him doing it—it was always there. Before the meeting he always placed the box on the table and evidently quietly slipped it in; also on each occasion he received a rise in his salary, the additional sum went in for the first month.

In closing, I would mention the gifts of the inmates of our Home. I'm sorry to say that our Christians have not excelled in giving—though some give a little regularly. They, however, from time to time rise to the occasion,

and for special objects have shown generosity.

Two Homes of the Mission to Lepers were wrecked by the great earthquake in Bihar, in January, 1934—Musaffapur and Bhagalpur. Mr. Miller, the Secretary for India, wrote to the Leper Homes throughout India requesting help. We placed the matter before our inmates. On understanding the situation, and on it being suggested that one way they could help would be by foregoing their *sheep*—they get a sheep once in a month—all in favour were asked to put up their hands. A small forest of hands shot up. A lump came into my throat. "Carried unanimously."

"Very nice," you will say, and possibly may add, "and quite right that they should be willing to give up a good dinner for their less fortunate countrymen." Most true, but this meant unanimously, joyfully, and ungrudgingly giving up their *one meat dinner in a month*. Would I? Would you? And that was not all by any means. Rice, flour, dal (pulse) followed, and one Christian leper woman then

and there gave a rupee (1/5), and later four others eight annas each.

I would like to mention other gifts; they are recorded elsewhere, and will be rewarded in that day. I would just mention that we have received yearly a gift of £10 from the United Leper Fund, Belfast—a gift earmarked for luxuries for the lepers, which we greatly appreciate.

CHAPTER XII

Subrao—A Sketch

YEARS ago, Subrao's brother, who had belonged to the Police, asked for admission to our Home. He was a man with an uncontrollable temper, which often brought him into trouble; and on one occasion after beating one of the inmates with a stick, was sent away for three months. He came back and was eventually converted. There was marked improvement in his conduct, and before long he began to take part in the prayer meeting. He seldom, if ever concluded a prayer without alluding to the Lord's Coming! He eventually fell sick and a very kind-hearted Civil Surgeon took him to the Hospital and there operated on him for appendicitis. He died five days afterwards.

A couple of years or so after this, Subrao came to the Home. He was about twelve years of age—a real boy. On several occasions he

got into trouble with the men, playing some practical joke on one or another, which was not appreciated by some.

He became quickly interested in the meetings, and after a while asked for baptism. Chiefly on account of his youth, but partly because we did not feel too satisfied with him, we deferred his baptism.

Two or three years passed by and Subrao had gone on well. He had learnt to read, was quick and always respectful, and had grown less of a boy. One day I asked him whether he still wished to be baptised. To my surprise, he said he did not. I could get no reason as to why his attitude had changed. "Yes," he said, he did believe, "But——!" Later, after another talk or two with him and about him to one of our Christian men, I learnt the truth. A visiting doctor had been round and on account of what he said, coupled with the hopes raised by the new treatment, Subrao had renewed hope of getting his discharge, and the fears as to what would happen if he confessed Christ, damped his ardour. What would

he do? Where could he go, *as a Christian?* He comes from a caste family.

Perhaps a year or so later, I had another long talk with him. Yes, he did believe, but he still feared. He listened as I spoke of Christ bearing our sins on the Cross, and that we were now called upon to bear a cross for His dear sake. A few days afterwards he came to me with a smiling face declaring that he wished to be baptised. He was baptised.

Subrao grew. His behaviour during the past year had been all one could wish. He was a happy, and fairly intelligent Christian, having learnt to read well. About that time a young Christian had to be punished for talking with the women lepers, and his room was changed, as a window from it looked out on the women's compound. Fearing that Subrao and another Christian might fail in the same way, I got them on one side and talked kindly to them, warning them of the danger. They seemed to take it well. But——! my words, unknown to me, had entered as iron into Subrao's soul. Four days after, as I was

passing his cookhouse, he called to the house-father, who was with me, asking him to arrange for him to go elsewhere. I could hardly believe my ears, and called him. He came, but most reluctantly. The house-father whispered a few words in my ear, saying that after I had spoken to him he had cried for two whole days! I asked him what was the trouble. "Have I been here all this time and you doubt me? Send me away elsewhere," he blurted out, though not angrily. "What have I done that you should doubt me?" His grief was evident; my hand shot out and I caught his arm, and holding it, said: "Subrao, you have done nothing to cause me to doubt you. On the contrary, I love you much; but it was my duty, the duty of love to warn you," and many more words to that effect.

That evening, as in the dark I was making my way to the place of prayer, I heard a cry: "Sahib! Sahib!" I turned, recognising the voice. There was Subrao. All was changed! Brokenly he begged for forgiveness for the words spoken in the morning, and gladly was

the word given. Then he listened as I spoke to him of our duty one to another to warn in love.

The hall filled, and some eight or nine took part in prayer, amongst whom was Subrao. First he prayed for those who had not yet believed, and then acknowledged before God that he had erred and besought forgiveness. His hearty confession brought a very hearty "Amen" from more than one lip.

A year or two after this Subrao was discharged as one whose disease was "arrested"—the doctors declared him "symptom free."

He found it difficult indeed to get work. He went to his village about five miles from the Asylum, but had no living relations there who would do anything for a *Christian*. He eventually went to Nasik, from whence he wrote occasionally. We have not heard from him since our furlough in 1933.

CHAPTER XIII

A Mysterious Sickness

SOME of the women who succeeded the ones who were carried away by the pneumonic plague were a most quarrelsome set. Two or three of them had on several occasions to be actually separated. Two of them had to be sent away for a time. On their return things would improve a little, only to break out afresh. It was very trying for all, specially for the house-father and his wife, whose quarters are not far from them, though in a different building. Both Mrs. Irvine and I reasoned with them, pled with them, and though again and again they were disciplined, things grew worse.

About this time one of the women, a respectable, harmless, middle-aged Marathi woman fell sick. In a day or so she was better again. This happened two or three times at considerable intervals, and each time her con-

dition seemed to grow worse. Hearing that she was ill again, Mrs. Irvine went down to see her. The other women stood across the veranda saying: "You mustn't come here; it's too bad."

My wife told them she was determined to see her; they pled with her not to go. But on seeing her determination to go, they at last gave way. The poor thing looked demented, had bitten her arm badly, and her room was in a shocking state.

Mrs. Irvine gave orders that it was to be cleaned out, and phenyl liberally used. This was done, but whilst it was being seen to, the woman disappeared, and we never saw anything of her again. The above incident covers a considerable period, though it is told in but a few words.

Another of the women shortly afterwards had a sudden sickness with most alarming symptoms, and we wondered whether she, too, was going to become insane. One day about this time Mrs. Irvine was down at the Home on her weekly visit to see the rations being

given out, when the house-father took her into the dispensary and showed her some water in a vessel with a slight scum on it. He said one of the women had brought it to him, and charged P. (another of the women) with having put poison into her drinking water. He declared that when he saw the vessel where her drinking water was kept, it was clearly tinged with green.

P. would not come to get her foodstuffs that day, and when my wife confronted her with having tampered with S.'s drinking water, she of course denied all knowledge of it. These were the two who had given more trouble than any of the others. At long last she acknowledged she had put datura (Belladonna) leaves into the water—a very dangerous poison. They say it can, if skilfully used—and many Indians are past-masters in the art of using poisons—either cause temporary insanity, or insanity which may last for two or three days, or if given strong enough, cause permanent insanity.

Afterwards, Mrs. Irvine asked P. how she knew about the poison, and when she learnt

how to use it. She replied: "Oh, at —— I had plenty of practice." There was nothing to be done but to dismiss this heartless and dangerous young woman. And so eventually the mystery of the sickness of the first woman mentioned had been solved.

Amongst the men, too, there had been some quarrelling—and this will be the last time I will have to inflict the reader with such troubles. One afternoon the house-father's wife—he was away at the time—came puffing along, she was a very stout woman, and perspiration was pouring off her face when she arrived. As she drew near the bungalow, she commenced crying: "Murder! MURDER!!" As soon as she was sufficiently composed to talk coherently we learnt that there had been a bad scuffle in the men's ward, and sticks had been freely used, and that one of the men had been "murdered." It did not take long to start up the old Ford, and with the house-father's wife, I made good time to the Asylum.

Everything was quiet by the time we got there, but having gone through the passage

leading to the men's ward, I saw one of the inmates sitting on a log near the dispensary, his head, face and neck were all over blood, and from his head blood was running down in trickles to his waist. I quickly got some water and permanganate, and with a handful of cotton wool, soon had his head and neck cleaned up to some extent. As I was doing this, he was loudly protesting, partly because he did not like me to do it; but I also opine, he was anxious for the doctor to see him at his worst!

Very little harm had been done, just a few surface wounds; a good deal of blood had been spilt, but worse blood had been aroused.

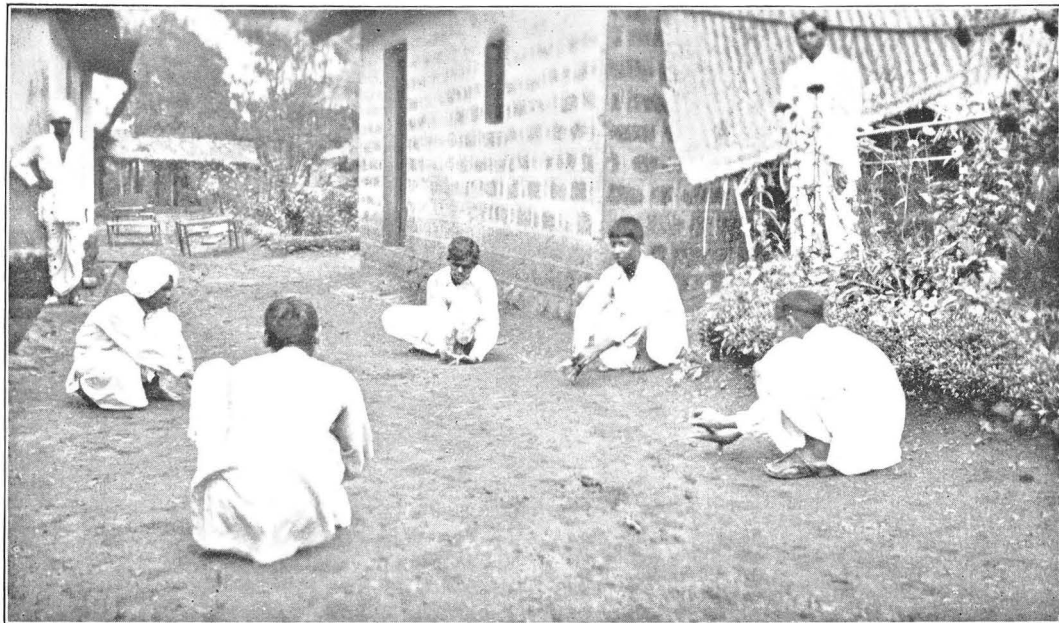
I made some inquiries on the spot, and found that beyond the two principals—alas, both Christians—the others had acted well, and had succeeded in separating them more than once. Next day I went down to settle up the quarrel, feeling that an example had to be made of the one who had so unmercifully belaboured his brother.

All the men were lined up, and I gave the

culprit the option of baring his back, and receiving stroke for stroke, or of leaving the Asylum for three months. Much to my relief he chose to go! He could not bring himself to face the ignominy of "eating a beating" before his fellows. (As a matter of fact I have never yet given corporal punishment to anyone in the Home.) He said that the other man was just as much to blame as he was, and probably he was not far wrong; but I pointed out that the other man had already had his punishment.

Before he returned, the "murdered" man had asked for leave. He went to another Asylum, and for three or four years wrote regularly asking to be taken back. Our friend who refused the beating, on returning after the three months were over, settled in quietly, and gave no further trouble of the kind.

Afterwards we looked up the Dictionary meaning of the word "murder" (*Khun*), "1, Murder. 2, Sometimes used in its proper sense, Blood." A more perfect knowledge of the language would have saved us considerable anxiety!



SOME OF THE LEPER BOYS PLAYING MARBLES

CHAPTER XIV

Miscellaneous Incidents

WITH some relief I turn from Memories of the last chapter to brighter scenes in this.

Bubonic Plague

Plague was prevalent in the villages around. Our doctor was not anxious to inoculate the inmates of the Home. The dreaded disease crept nearer. Rats, the carriers of the infection, abounded in the Home. As food is apt to be left about, traps had not proved very efficacious. Much prayer was made. Then plague broke out in Hindalge, a village a quarter of a mile away. We were at our wits' end. *Then* a cat came and took up her quarters amongst the men! She was a splendid ratter. Cats, we are told, become more attached to their homes than to their masters. This cat came by herself. Who sent her just as she was so desperately needed? Surely the One who caused a strong east wind to divide the Red

Sea so that there was dry land for the Children of Israel to cross over on; was it not He Who also "sent out a great wind into the sea" in Jonah's day, and prepared the "great fish" and the "gourd" and the "worm." The rats disappeared as if by magic, and great was the joy of the Christians, who had raised their voices in prayer and saw the answer.

Kashi

Govind was a great cripple, but bore his disabilities cheerfully. He was fairly well educated, far above the average in our Asylum; most of the inmates are totally illiterate. He soon became interested, and in course of time confessed his faith in Christ. This he did in a somewhat original way. He asked permission to publicly give his testimony, and the opportunity being given him, he brought out a sheet of foolscap, and read what probably most of our inmates must have considered a very learned discourse, giving reasons why he had rejected Hinduism, and why he had accepted Christ. The sentences were well rounded off,

and I now regret that I failed to secure a copy. Within a week or so, his profession was put to a severe test. His father came to see him. He said he was on his way to Kashi (Benares), the Queen Pilgrimage Resort for all Hindus; he wished to take Govind with him. I told him he might see his son, and that Govind had professed to accept Christ as his Saviour and Guru (teacher).

The interview lasted a long time, at last the father left *alone*, and Govind returned smiling, having turned down what to a Hindu would have been a big temptation as can well be imagined. Later, Govind was baptised, stayed with us for a while, and eventually left with permission, but did not return, as he went to another Asylum.

Proof Positive

An old Mohammedan had made confession of faith in Christ. I found him one afternoon in his room where several Christians and two or three Hindus were sitting about; I questioned him before them all, giving him an oppor-

tunity, which he was only too pleased to take, to show that he was not ashamed of Christ.

Among other questions I asked him was: "How can we be sure that God had accepted the sacrifice Christ made on Calvary's Cross?" "It says so in the Bible," he answered. "Very good," said I, "but have you any other answer to my question?" No, he could think of nothing else. I turned to some Hindus who were interestedly listening, but they could not answer. Then to two Christians, very simple and unlearned men, but they, too, were silent.

Pascal, who was interpreting for me—for the man spoke in Hindustani—was just bursting to give the answer, when a gruff voice from under the blankets of a bed close by spoke up: "By the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Had He not been raised we could never have known God had accepted His sacrifice." Turning to the bed on which Vithoba lay very ill, with the blankets now turned back, I said: "Is that your answer Vithoba?—*excellent.*"

Poor Vithoba, he did not live very long after

that, but what a glorious transformation—his poor leprous body to be changed and made like unto Christ's glorious body! Is it surprising that to the believing lepers the Blessed Hope of Christ's Advent with all it brings is surpassingly precious?

A Blind Witness

Two or three years ago the blind Christian leper, Dongaru, obtained leave to go to his village about some land business. He was away for ten days or so. On his return he told us of some of his experiences which were of interest. He is not one to hide his light under a bushel, and in his home village spoke to many. At our weekly prayer meeting he told us that his brother one day said that he was going to the nearby market, so he asked his brother to lead him there.

It was not long before a small crowd gathered round him and asked him what he was doing there—he is a man well known to the villagers. He explained that he had been given leave to go to the village, and then commenced to give

his testimony. Amongst other things, he says he told them that he formerly used to worship dead idols of wood and stone, but had learned to worship the true and living God, and to trust for his salvation in the shed Blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, God's Son. For quite a time they stood and listened to him.

What a sight for angels. A poor, blind, illiterate leper, once a low caste man, in the midst of a crowd of caste and low caste men and women, without the support of a single Christian companion—notwithstanding the Lord stood with him—lifting up the blood red banner of the Cross, and joyously testifying to salvation by grace through faith in a crucified yet risen Lord!

His face lighted up as he told us how the Lord had given him this opportunity to confess Christ before his Hindu acquaintances and neighbours.

A "Holy Man" Buys a Bible

Another of the Christians, an ex-high caste man, one of the present leaders of the little band of Christians in the Home, has a good

record. He was baptised some two years ago. Though he had been a believer for some time before that, he had been stumbled by the behaviour of one of the oldest Christians; but when exhorted to take his eyes off man and not to expect perfection down here, he said: "Oh, I have got my answer at one of the meetings, and am happy to be baptised." He now understood that his individual responsibility of confessing Christ had nothing to do with the inconsistencies of his brethren.

Later he obtained leave to visit his people. On his return I asked him if he had testified to them of his faith in Christ. Rather reproachfully he said: "Sahib, I read to them every day from the Scriptures." I listened with much interest as he told me how some listened, some scoffed, and some opposed. One day while several were sitting round, one of them said: "F., how is it that you do not worship M——?" The man mentioned was the "holy man" that his caste people recognise as their guru or teacher. "Because he is *man*, not God," was his laconic reply.

Then with splendid inconsistency the questioner said: "You fall at his feet early in the morning when there is no one to see you." He of course denied this, and the "holy man," coming in shortly after, was questioned on the point. He said: "No, F. does not fall at my feet; for he is a Christian. Christians only worship God."

As a circumstantial proof of the genuineness of the story, I would mention that F. produced a rupee which the "holy man" had given him to buy and send him a Bible. The Bible was duly sent, and an acknowledgement has been received. Under such circumstances may we not look for special blessing on it?

A Brother's Selflessness

A silent lad, a child of low caste parents, was received into the Home not long ago. He could not speak Marathi, but had learnt to read Kanarese, his mother tongue. He attended the weekly meetings, but was able to get practically no help from them, as they are carried on in Marathi; but he also was always

present when F. and his fellow-Christians held their two evening meetings in the big bedroom in the men's ward. There they have reading, singing, and prayer, and a talk together, and usually the meetings are bi-lingual—Marathi and Kanarese. Almost all the men attend these evening meetings.

One day this lad asked for leave, went to his village, and in due course returned. Shortly afterwards his younger brother, also a leper, arrived; but not only were we full up, but we had two or three men on our waiting list, so could not admit him. I pointed out the difficulty to the elder lad, and regretfully had to refuse to take the brother, who being two or three years younger, would be about 14 years of age. The elder lad took this greatly to heart, and they say wept for a whole day.

The next day he came to me with a request. He was the older of the two, and could, he said, take better care of himself—would I let his brother come in his place, and he would go. This I gladly agreed to, and being deeply affected by the selflessness of the elder boy,

was sad indeed that I could not also let him remain.

The story was told in Australia, and at the end of the meeting a gentleman and his wife told the speaker that they would be responsible for the support of the elder boy. This man communicated with me, and there being a vacancy meanwhile on the men's side, we communicated with the lad, who at once came back. He now claims to be a believer in Christ, and the men who share his room tell me that he is always reading the Bible.

CHAPTER XV

A Visit to the Asylum

ON more than one occasion when we were on furlough, and several times when we were at Ootacamund, the Hill Station, for a spell out of the heat, Mr. A. E. Storrie, of Chandgad, has stepped into the gap and carried on in our absence. The work owes much to him and his loving care.

Here is a short account of a visit he paid in May, 1933:

To visit a Christian Leper Asylum is a good tonic—it makes you count your blessings. However heavy your burden was, it appears light, after seeing the load these poor afflicted ones carry. I do not remember, in the course of many years, a case of a leper blaming God for his trouble, or of a single instance of an inmate murmuring *against God*; but I can distinctly remember some lepers who have thanked God that it was because of their leprosy they had been brought to the Asylum and here they had heard of the wonderful Saviour, Who brought light into their darkness, hope into their despair, joy into their pain, and liberty in their bondage.

Yes, if you are thinking you are the most ill-used individual in this world just pay a visit with me to the Belgaum Leper Asylum. We pass through the different wards until we come to a detached room in which we find a man (or part of a man) sitting up on his bedstead. His name is Vithoba. He was called this by his parents, after the most famous god of the Hindus in Western India. For some months now he has been suffering acute pain, he says that all his body, but especially his head, is "full of fire." All our Doctor has been able to do has been unavailing to relieve him.

We stand there beside him, and in Marathi pray to *our* heavenly Father and ask the Lord Jesus that if it is possible He will hasten the preparations that are going on in Heaven, so that Vithoba's mansion may be made ready a little sooner than was planned. After prayer we opened our eyes and there he sits before us. His hands have been so eaten away there are only the palms left, likewise his feet have so been taken away by the disease that he would find it impossible to walk upright, his eyes will never see the glorious light of the sun again. As I stand there I see there is blood in one of his ears. I suppose this is the result of his head being "full of fire." What a sight he is! A bit of cast off humanity, there is not a city in this world that would give *him* a welcome; there is not a drawing-room in Christendom that would receive Vithoba, for he does not smell too sweet, how can he, with this loathsome disease eating him away? But listen! What is this he is saying?

"Sahib," he says, "I am in this condition because of

this disease," he stops a moment and then continues, "But I am saved and have eternal life." To look at him there does not seem to be much life about him, but he has seen the Man of Calvary and through faith in Him Vithoba has become a child of God! Oh, praise be to God. Can you wonder that he longs for the day when the chariots of God will come and carry him to "Home, Sweet Home," made all clean by the precious Blood of Christ and clothed gloriously with the righteousness of Him Who ever did the Father's will? That will be glory for Vithoba!

But he is speaking again: "Give my salaams to Sahib and Madam Sahib" (Mr. and Mrs. Irvine). "I don't forget them."

After this I pass on to the Gospel meeting amongst all the inmates who care to attend. There have been many souls like Vithoba, "born again" in the Belgaum Leper Asylum (through the labours of Mr. and Mrs. Irvine), who shall live through eternity in their Father's Home.

"And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face; and His Name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign for ever and ever" (Rev. 20. 3-5).

CHAPTER XVI

Girzabai has Become a Leper

I REMEMBER hearing a missionary tell how on coming to India there was one thing he feared, that is, that he would become a leper. He told us how one night he suddenly woke up and felt a burning sensation on the back of his hand, and like an arrow the thought pierced his mind, that that was one of the early symptoms of leprosy! His young wife lay at his side, and he described the agony of mind that he experienced as for hours he pictured what pain it would cause them both when he told her. He also pictured the consequences—the giving up of his loved work, the comparative loneliness and separation from all he held dear. *Fortunately his fears proved groundless.*

Is it a wonder that many of these poor people seek to cover up the fact that they are lepers as long as they possibly can. The tragedy lies in another fact—the longer they

do this, the less likely is it that they will benefit much by the treatment.

One fine day the wife of our milkman, an old friend, came for a talk with Mrs. Irvine. She lives in the village nearby.

“Have you heard the news?” she asked.

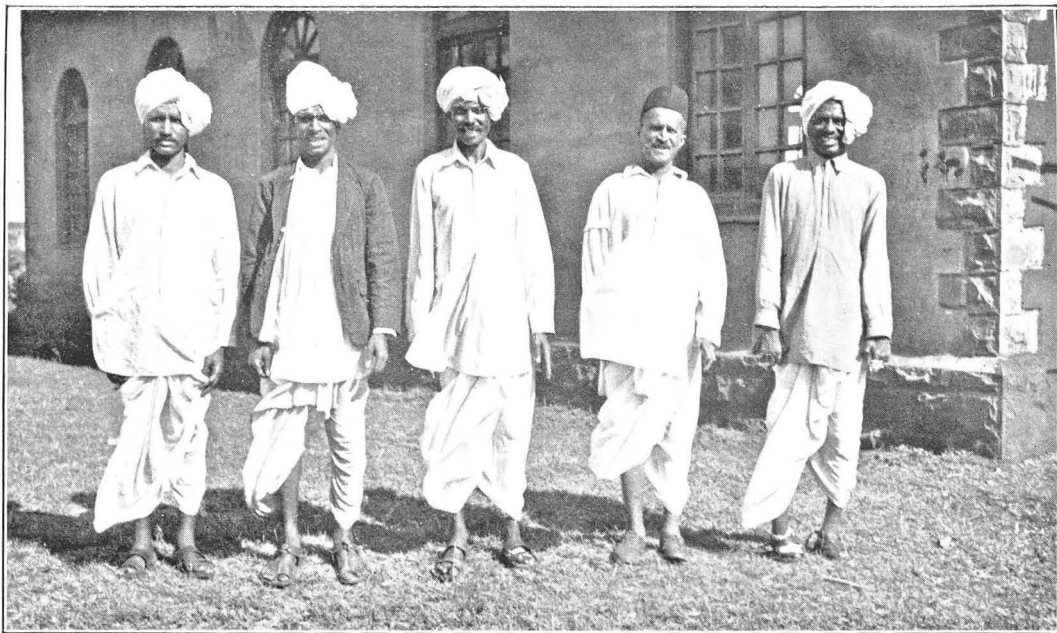
“No, what is it?” replied my wife.

“Oh, Girzabai has become a leper, and has been sent away.”

“And how did you find that out?”

“She used to come with us into the fields to work with the other women; and one day I noticed that she had some sores on her hand. I asked her if she had the disease. She replied, ‘You say’ (this was to divert the responsibility). She came once or twice after that, and then the other women began to complain, so she discontinued coming. Then we heard that the *Punch* (village elders) had held a meeting and had decreed that she must leave the village. They said, ‘*Send her away for the gods.*’ So her husband has sent her off.”

We heard later that she was cooking for a Parsee near Belgaum. Dreadful! Yes, but I’m



THE FIVE MEN, FOUR OF WHOM ARE MARATHAS (CASTE MEN), WHO TOOK THEIR STAND FOR CHRIST ON CHRISTMAS EVE, 1936. (Page 125)

afraid not very uncommon. One of the best known doctors in India once noticed that his butler had a sore toe, so told him to go to the dispensary next day. On examining the toe, it proved to be a leprous sore. One of my colleagues found out that his *milkman* was a leper. Oh, yes, he changed milkmen.

Then one day a message came to Mrs. Irvine that Girzabai was sitting near the bridge, a half-mile from the bungalow, and that she wanted to see her. It was midday, and very hot. I told my wife that she might save herself the trouble of going; but no, she had to go. When she got there the woman was gone.

Her husband had also been informed, and had got there first, as we afterwards learned. He had given her a rupee and sent her off. He said that he didn't want her in this Leper Home, as it was so close to her village—about a mile off—and as the children would be going to see their mother. It would also, he said, be a disgrace to them to have her so near. Doubtless, too, he was afraid that neighbours

would talk more, and it would make it more difficult to marry off the children.

Mrs. Irvine offered to get her a place in another Home, but, no; the real fear was that she would become a Christian, and bring disgrace on their household. For some two years we heard nothing of her, then she arrived at the Asylum asking to be admitted. She could no longer disguise the fact that she was a leper. We took her in.

On hearing that she had taken refuge in the Asylum, the mother-in-law several times seeing her near the gate, endeavoured to frighten her away. This not succeeding, she came to us at the bungalow, and did her best to make us send her off. Seeing how determined she was, I spoke severely to her, saying that if anything further was done to cause her to leave the Home, I would report the matter to the Collector. Here the matter ended.

Seeing she had been so definitely brought back in spite of the opposition of her people we had great hopes that she would be brought to the Lord. What is more, she paid good

attention at the meetings Mrs. Irvine was taking weekly for the women. Ultimately she made a profession of faith. Upon asking her why she thought she was a Christian, she said: "The verse says, 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.' I believe, therefore I have everlasting life."

We were never really happy about her profession, and subsequent events confirmed our fears. She is in another Home now, and we can but pray that she may eventually pass from death unto life.

CHAPTER XVII

Testimony of Three Lepers

ONE afternoon I asked three of our Christians if they would take the Gospel services between them, each one to give their testimony to their fellows. This they were very happy to do, and in due time the Sunday appointed came round. The following is a report of what they said, written a day or two afterwards. I give it almost word for word as then written.

DONGARU, the blind leper, was the first to speak. He asked that Luke 1. 50-53 be read, and told how he had found in Christ all he needed, and how his sorrow had been turned to joy. He then pleaded with all to accept Christ.

VITHOBA, a caste convert, followed, and spoke quietly and forcibly. In a very few words he told how he had obtained peace and rest by believing. He was suffering at the time

with pain in his eyes, and was going blind; but he spoke well, assuring the people that Christ did satisfy.

After a few verses of a hymn, PASCOL continued. He commenced by saying most emphatically: "I thank God that I ever became a leper. Yes, I do. Leprosy is a terrible disease, as you all know; it is feared more than any other disease—nevertheless I thank God I became a leper. If I had not, I would never have been saved. I did not come here in 1916 to get salvation. My one reason for coming here was to get rid of this terrible disease. But that was not God's purpose in bringing me here. He brought me here to show me that I had a far worse disease than leprosy—*sin*." He then spoke of what an awful disease sin was.

"I was born of Christian parents," he continued, "but they did not know the way of salvation, being very ignorant." He then told us how little by little after coming to the Home he was convinced of his need of a Saviour, and how eventually he accepted Christ. Just about that time a Roman Catholic priest came

to see him. Pascol said: "I told him I was going to become a Christian, and was to be baptised. He was very angry, and asked how I could be baptised. Were not my father and mother Christians, and had I not already been baptised? I said I must obey God rather than him or my parents. 'If you do,' said he, 'your life will become a misery, your disease will increase, your flesh will be consumed with worms, and you will be lost for ever.' He then left me."

Pascol then told us how he was afterwards baptised, and had enjoyed peace and forgiveness ever since. "When I was away," he continued (he had been given leave), "whilst in my house at Goa, many came to me; priests sometimes telling me I should go to the church and confess my sins to the priest. I used to get out my New Testament and read to them, telling them that when I sinned I confessed to God in Christ's Name, and received forgiveness; that I had no need for a priest, and that such had no authority to forgive me."

Then he made his appeal to the people. He

spoke with great power and animation. He told them how they had everything they needed in the Asylum, and owed it all to Jesus Christ. He reminded them how they daily heard God's way of salvation; how they were not ignorant like the people around; how their minds were filled with the story; and how much easier it was for them to confess Christ in the Asylum than in their villages, as there was no one here to make them afraid. He pointed out how terrible would be their judgment if they neglected God's salvation, and pled with them to come now, and accept Christ as their Saviour, assuring them that there was no other Saviour, and asked them who else could save them. He again warned them of the consequences of rejecting Christ.

I summed up, showing how all had spoken the same thing, and asked what they were going to do with this testimony. I pointed out that these three had spoken from experience, as all had been Christians for over fourteen years.

CHAPTER XVIII

Christmas Eve, 1936

THE Christmas season is looked forward to with great joy by the lepers throughout the Homes of the Mission to Lepers in India. We seek to make it a special time of spiritual blessing to our friends, as well as a welcome change in their somewhat monotonous and drab lives.

They, like all oriental peoples, as well as many others, love gay colours, and instead of decorating with evergreens and berries, they do so with coloured paper, which they skilfully cut into all kinds of flowers and frescoes to give the place a gala appearance. It makes no difference to them whether they celebrate on the supposed date of the Nativity, or a day earlier or later.

The great event, however, is the meeting, now held at night; and very pretty does the hall look to their eyes, lighted up with lamps

and candles and festoons of coloured paper. After the meeting some luxuries in the way of popped rice, cocoanuts, fruits, and sweets are handed all round, as well as their half-yearly allowance of clothing, which is supplemented by scarves and jackets, or other articles of clothing supplied by well-wishers.

The meeting is in the hands of our leper friends, and on arrival the house-father hands me the programme of events. After an opening prayer all unite in a hymn of praise concerning the birth of our blessed Lord. Then hymns are sung, verses concerning Christ's first advent, His birth, life, and sufferings are repeated, different ones reciting from one or two to nine or ten verses, as ability to learn by heart has suggested. This is always looked upon as a special item, as is the speech by one of themselves, in which their gratitude to God and His people is never forgotten. They choose their own speaker, and on the last two or three occasions they have chosen the same one.

This man, a Maratha, one of the leading spirits in the Home, and one whose conduct has

been exemplary, has been prayed for for many years; many are the talks I have had with him. Three years ago, when welcoming us back to India, he exhorted his fellows to give ear to the Gospel. Then at the Christmas meeting of 1935, he, amongst other things, told the people that all their privileges, the Refuge in which they lived, the care that was taken of them, they owed it all to Christ. It was the love of God which constrained His people to send gifts for the work, and others to serve them. As we listened, we were on the *qui vive* of expectation, again and again as he spoke eloquently (he is utterly illiterate, but has a natural gift as a speaker) of the love of God, we wondered whether he was going to declare himself a Christian. But no—he sat down without doing so. I spoke to him some days after. He said he believed and would confess Christ—but not yet!

Needless to say that this year as again he stood up to speak, our hearts went out in prayer, and we waited wonderingly as to what he would say. N. has a fine figure, is a typical

Maratha, and has a very happy way with him.

He commenced by saying that the only thing he could liken himself to was a "bull buffalo." "I've no learning, and am stupid as an animal" (this humbleness of speech is, indeed, an uncommon characteristic to display). Then he told his leper friends that they were indebted to the love of God—Christ's love—for all they enjoyed, for what they were about to receive, and all the benefits of the Home, and all the loving care bestowed on them, specially the last two years. That was a very nice compliment, and one well-earned by our new house-father, who has been here for that period. We thank God for him.

He then made an appeal to his fellows in the Home, closing with the words: "Who with me will to-night confess their faith in Christ?" He stood right in the front of the hall, with his back to his leper audience and face to the platform, where non-lepers sit. He waited, as if he expected some to say they would stand with him. Three, unseen by him, signified

their intention to acknowledge Christ as Saviour and Lord, by raising their hands.

Not seeing what had happened, he said: "Again I appeal to you, are there any here to-night who will take *their stand with me for Christ?*" This time four hands were outstretched. He waited, then said somewhat sorrowfully: "So no one will take their stand to-night with me," and was about to go to his seat when two or three of the Christians called out: "N., four (mentioning their names) have done so." He looked round, then with face lit up with a smile he said: "To-night M. and D. and B. and W., all have confessed their faith in Christ," and he sat down.

It had been a tense moment, one of the happiest in my life. Not that I imagined any of the four, or N. himself, had only that night accepted Christ as their Saviour. I knew better in at least three of the five individuals; but now they had taken a public stand, and that before all their companions. N. doubtless has believed a long time; M. had asked for baptism five or six years ago, but drew back; W. had

openly said he believed, though not publicly at the meeting, and we quite expected to baptise him; D. was somewhat of a surprise, and B. had only been with us a month.

We next had an address from one of our helpers, but I fear scant attention was given to what he said. I closed with a short talk expressing our joy, and our hopes that others would follow, and so this ever-to-be-remembered meeting was closed.

These dear men urgently pled that they might be baptised without delay; and as there seemed to be no reason why this should not be, I baptised them on New Year's Eve, Mr. Atkinson kindly coming in to give the address. The one who had only been with us for a month was asked to wait, and though very reluctant to do so, he of course agreed. Showing a steadiness of purpose and some spiritual understanding, he was baptised, with a young girl who has long said she was saved, in March, 1937.

Here we must leave our leper friends, and in closing I would ask the prayers of the readers of this book, that as the months and years pass

by, should the Lord tarry, Christ may be more and more magnified in this small Leper Asylum, and many more souls won for HIM. Also that God's richest blessing may continue to rest on the wide-flung work of The Mission to Lepers.

CHAPTER XIX

Leprosy and Its Treatment

BY

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Distribution of Leprosy

LEPROSY has been well called the patriarch of diseases. Its origin lies in the mists of antiquity and from time immemorial it has struck terror into the hearts of men. The leper with his hooded gown and wooden clappers was a common sight in the Middle Ages, but as the result of more hygienic methods of living the disease has ceased to terrorise the community. To-day, leprosy is found to be most prevalent in Africa—especially the equatorial belt from West to East Africa, China, Korea, Japan, India and South America. In Russia there are still foci of the disease. In the Baltic States of Esthonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and in certain parts of Spain, Portugal and the Italian and French Alps the disease is endemic. It is impossible to estimate

the total number in the world of those afflicted, but it must be in the neighbourhood of 3,000,000 to 5,000,000.

The Cause of Leprosy; not Hereditary

Leprosy, like most diseases, is caused by a germ—the *mycobacterium leprae*. This was discovered by Gerhard Armauer Hansen about the year 1868. In the early days the disease was considered to be hereditary, but not infectious. Later it was shown that it was not hereditary, but mildly contagious, being communicated through close contact with one in the infective stage of the disease. The most common way of acquiring the disease is undoubtedly close contact; *e.g.*, sleeping with an infected person, or wearing the clothes of one suffering from leprosy. In the infective stage large numbers of bacilli can be found in the skin, the lining membrane of the nose, etc. It is generally accepted that the healthy adult is resistant to the disease, and even those who are working in leprosy institutions and daily coming in contact with diseased persons seldom contract it.

Children Especially Susceptible

During recent years the importance of leprosy in children has been increasingly realised and a greater amount of attention is being given to young people who have become, or are liable to become, victims of the disease. In an endemic centre—that is an area where the disease is continuously present—the majority of those acquiring leprosy become infected in childhood and early adolescence. Some authorities maintain that over 50% acquire leprosy during this period. Be this as it may, every one recognises that it is particularly during the growing periods of life that the disease is liable to be acquired and spread. It is this danger to children and the long course which leprosy pursues, mutilating and not killing, which makes it the most poignant and terrible of all diseases. No disease known to man gives rise to such prolonged and terrible suffering. There are other diseases which are more infective, more acute in their painfulness; but mercifully they kill their victims in a comparatively short time. Even cancer with all its horrors

cannot compare in length of time to this the most dreadful of all diseases. The tragedy is, that it so readily attacks young people, and once the disease has been established in them, it is almost impossible to eradicate it. For these reasons then, the battle against leprosy must be waged mainly in the homes of the people; for where the disease prevails, young life is liable to be attacked in a way which is indeed pathetic, reducing as it does mere boys and girls to a caricature of humanity where age is obliterated. A young lad of twelve or fourteen may look like an old man, and a young girl's appearance will sometimes cause a shudder.

**All Children do not necessarily become
Badly Infected**

It has been discovered in recent years that all children do not necessarily pass into the more serious stages of the disease. In many (the percentage is unknown), the disease either becomes aborted, or the patch, or evidence of infection, becomes stationary and the child does not become mutilated or deformed. It is this tendency to self-healing that brings the

possibility of preventing the worst ravages of the disease. Certain factors are known, others remain to be discovered. The chief causes which tend to result in leprosy becoming disseminated in a child appear to be age and massive infection. The younger the child is when the first signs appear, the more likely is the disease to become serious. The closer and more prolonged the contact with an infective case, the greater likelihood of the disease becoming disseminated in the little one. Once a person has passed into adult life—25 to 30 years of age—the less likely is he, or she, to acquire leprosy; or if acquired, the chances of the disease passing into the infective stages are much diminished. Anything which tends to break down natural resistance, *e.g.*, ill health due to bad diet, economic conditions, concomitant illness, etc., will tend to prevent a child from resisting the spread of leprosy. These few remarks will emphasise the necessity for the careful study of childhood leprosy. The main slogan in leprosy preventative work should be, "Save the Children."

First Signs

There is a general desire to know what are the first signs of the disease. It is difficult to give an adequate idea, because the manifestations of leprosy are so varied. The disease usually shows itself in two main forms—there are, of course, many sub-types: (1) patches which are due to the infection affecting the nerve supply to the skin; (2) patches due to the actual invasion of the skin by bacilli. The former is described as neural leprosy; the latter, cutaneous leprosy. Generally speaking it is only the cutaneous form that is infective. Neural leprosy manifests itself in two ways; (1) by areas of anaesthesia; (2) by areas of hypopigmentation. The latter sign shows itself by loss of colour of the skin, but the patch does not become absolutely white. At first the signs may be so slight that they are unnoticed; a little loss of colour of some part of the skin, or a slight loss of feeling, and that is all. Cutaneous leprosy shows itself in so many forms that it can be mistaken for a large number of skin diseases. It is, however, comparatively

easy to diagnose by those who have some knowledge of the disease, because the bacilli can be found by standard methods of examination.

The Course of the Disease

The reasons for the disease advancing in an individual may not be due to the fact that he has not been treated. The first task of the physician is to discover the type of leprosy from which an individual suffers, for there are certain forms of leprosy which tend to clear up with little or no treatment. It is these relatively highly resistant cases that are comparatively easy to treat and that have given the lay public the impression that leprosy is now a curable disease. During the last ten years a clearer understanding of the disease has been obtained and the reason for the varied reports received from institutions is better understood. Apart from the personal factor which has always to be taken into account, one institution may record excellent results whereas in another the results may be correspondingly poor. In the former the majority of cases may belong to that type which naturally and spontaneously tends

to become arrested once the patients are placed in such conditions that the bodily resistance is enabled to overcome the disease. In the latter the very dissemination of the disease, and the massiveness of the infection may reduce the resistance to such a low ebb that it is virtually impossible to raise it. There are an innumerable number of factors which are still little understood, but the conclusion of the matter is, that, while leprosy in certain stages does become cured, we have still a long way to go before we can claim that we have "a cure"—meaning by this a special curative drug—for the disease.

Cause of Death

Leprosy is not one of the fatal diseases of mankind. If it were it would not be so universally dreaded. The sufferer seldom dies of the disease with which he has been infected. Nevertheless, once leprosy has spread throughout the body the general resistance is so lowered that it becomes a prey to many other infections. The diseases which usually attack the body in its devitalised state are:—tuberculosis, dysentery,

or some acute infection. Some patients die as a result of the weakness and debility produced by the periodic bouts of fever from which they are liable to suffer. That is they die from the effects of what is called "lepra reaction."

Termination of the Disease

As stated before, there are types of leprosy which become naturally arrested and leave little or no trace of the disease behind. In an endemic area the numbers that acquire leprosy and recover must be considerable. An analogy can be found in the sister disease of tuberculosis. Many, if not all, apparently healthy people have a focus of tuberculosis which long since has been healed by the naturally resistant body. So there is much evidence to show that individuals in a similar way may have a type of leprosy which becomes spontaneously and naturally healed. Hence the importance of discriminating between the comparatively innocuous type which frequently is healed as the resistance of the body increases, and the more serious form which is extremely difficult

to treat successfully. It may be said that it is not the number of cases of leprosy in a given community that matters; it is the number of cases which are infective or potentially infective. Thus the whole problem in the control of the disease largely reduces itself to the infective cases in adults and the active cases in children. Some authorities consider that non-infective leprosy in the adult is not a serious public health problem.

If, however, an individual passes into the more serious stages of the disease, in what way does it further develop? Should the patient survive the many bouts of fever associated with the periodic reactions, as many do, the bodily resistance gradually re-establishes itself and the signs of the disease tend very slowly to disappear. As the disease subsides, secondary changes take place in the body, and it is these changes which produce the disfigurement and deformity which is so often seen. For example in the endeavour to destroy the bacilli which have attacked the nerves, fibrous or scar tissue is formed in the nerve sheath. This contracts,

strangling as it were, the bacilli in the sheath of the nerve, but also destroying the nerve in its relentless grip. So in destroying the germs of leprosy the body destroys itself to a large extent. For when nerves are destroyed many things happen; fingers contract owing to muscular paralysis, ulcers form and if uncared for, extend to the bone which dies and is thrown off. Many, owing to the poor nerve supply, find the small bones of the hands and feet become soft, and a process of absorption sets in which leaves them with handless and footless stumps. The disease has now run its complete course, leaving the individual wrecked and mutilated beyond description. It is largely because of these disfiguring after-results that leprosy all down the ages has been the most dreaded of all diseases, and its victims so often outcasted and debarred from all social intercourse with their fellows. The utter misery and destitution of the outcast leper constitutes an irresistible appeal to bring to these unfortunate sufferers physical alleviation, and above all, the Redeeming Gospel of our Lord, for

without God they are of all men most miserable.

Importance of Observation and Treatment

While, however, it is our duty to help those who have been wrecked by the ravages of this terrible disease, we are not preventing this ever-recurring tragedy unless we endeavour to search for an early case and, more important, wherever possible prevent children from becoming infected. As someone has said, 'It is easy to prevent leprosy but difficult to treat it.' Because the nature of the disease is better understood and treatment is more effective, a great deal more can be done in this direction than formerly.

Essential Conditions

In considering the treatment of leprosy it must ever be kept in mind that the disease is most rife where economic conditions are poor and where the resistance of individuals has been lowered by dietetic and other factors. It is essentially a disease of the unhealthy person, and therefore before special treatment can become effective the bodily resistance must be

increased. It is necessary then to treat such diseases as syphilis, malaria, etc., when they occur; to give the patients plenty of exercise and good food; to keep their minds contented; and above all to satisfy their spiritual needs, for the soul of a man is blighted if he believes that he has fallen under a curse. It is only when all these conditions have been fulfilled that the special treatment of leprosy will have the best chance of success.

The Medical Treatment

For many centuries, chaulmoogra (hydno-
carpus) oil has been known to have some remedial effect on leprosy. Previously when the oil was taken by mouth it caused so much sickness and nausea that sufficiently large doses could not be given for it to be effective. Now, however, the oil can be obtained so pure that it can be given by mouth and it, or some derivative of it, can be introduced into the system by various methods of injection without causing much pain, or serious discomfort. The best recommended preparations at present are: (1) The ethyl esters of hydnocarpus oil with 0.5 per

cent. iodine, or 4 per cent. double distilled creosote; (2) the pure oil with 4 per cent. creosote, and (3) the sodium salts of the fatty acids of hydnocarpus oil. The various methods of injection followed are—the intradermal, subcutaneous, intramuscular or intravenous. The first method, by which the preparation used is injected actually into the skin, is one of the most popular to-day. The last method cannot be followed when the oil is used. The injections are given once or twice a week until all active signs or symptoms of the disease have disappeared. The treatment is seldom effective under a year and it may be six years or more before a patient can be discharged. It must be remembered that once the bacilli are widely disseminated the chances of recovery are not good.

Value of the Treatment

As the result of the work of recent years the value of treatment is becoming more correctly estimated, and we are beginning to appreciate how far the disease can be treated effectively. While many of the claims which were made in

the initial flush of enthusiasm cannot be substantiated, it may be said that many cases can be healed, others can be given a new lease of life and all can be alleviated to a considerable extent. While a large number of cases do not receive the benefit that was originally hoped from treatment, there is no doubt that modern methods of treatment not only prolong the lives of the patients but make their existence bearable. Recent work has shown that leprosy is an entirely preventable disease, and given correct measures, it should be controlled ultimately in any country where it is prevalent.

Institutional Work

The importance of institutional work cannot be too greatly emphasised in connection with the prevention of the disease. Whereas outpatient work must be carried on because it is manifestly impossible to deal with all cases in institutions, there is no doubt that those cases which are active have a very much better chance of recovery when they are under proper supervision than when only attending an outpatient centre. The routine and discipline of

the institution with the regular diet and care of the patient are the greatest factors in the healing of the disease.

Arresting without Deformity

By arresting the disease is meant staying its further progress so that the patient is not maimed in any way. For a patient to be healed of his disease is not enough if he be disfigured, blind and maimed. Such a result can be accomplished by nature unaided. Caution must be exercised when discharging patients who have acquired secondary contractures, for they will need to take the utmost care lest they return to their former miserable condition and become like their outcasted brothers.

Evangelistic Opportunities

Present-day treatment is opening up hitherto unreached spheres to the influence of the Gospel. Early cases who have been discharged from the homes and hospitals, and who have become whole in body and soul, are powerful witnesses among their own people to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.