

OVERWEIGHTS OF JOY

BY

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WITH PREFACE BY

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C.M.S. South India

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செய்யவேண்டியது.

HE MUST REIGN

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To
Indraneela's Âtah

DOHNAVUR
TINNEVELLY DISTRICT
SOUTH INDIA

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Preface

I HAVE been frequently asked by readers of Miss Wilson-Carmichael's former book, *Things as They Are*, and sometimes with considerable incredulity, "But is it really true?"

I take this opportunity of saying, once for all, that, so far as my experience goes, after twenty years of Missionary work in Southern India, I can endorse it as quite true. An Indian civilian, whose duties lie in that part of this great continent with which the book specially deals, expressed to us his surprise that anyone should be startled by what they call its "sad revelations"; for, as he said, "they are commonplaces to many of us out here." Possibly he had seen things "under the surface," which do not lie patent to the view of all, whether missionaries or civilians. However that may be, I repeat my personal testimony that Miss Carmichael has accurately described "things as they are," writing from a special standpoint.

It is true, absolutely true, that indifference to the glad tidings of the Gospel is the order of the day among the multitude of non-Christians who surround us here. As Dr. Miller put it so well at the Keswick Convention of 1903, speaking of the people of Hausaland, "Make no mistake. They do not want the Gospel; but they sorely need the Gospel."

It is true again, absolutely true, that untold cruelties abound in heathendom. While we missionaries gladly recognise the good qualities of many of our Hindu friends, and love the people among whom we work, we should yet be criminally blind if we shut our eyes to ugly facts. The tyranny of caste leads to evils which are beyond words to tell. Why should the supporters of Foreign Missions, who quote and requote the text on Missionary platforms at home, "All the earth is full of darkness and cruel habitations," be startled and shocked when they are plied with facts, hot from actual experience, which after all are only concrete illustrations of the platform text?

It is true also, absolutely true, that here, in Southern India, we are "skirting the abyss," an abyss which is deep and foul beyond description, and yet is glorified, to Hindu eyes, by the sanctions of religion. Growing knowledge and accumulating information are only serving to make the awful darkness of that fell abyss more and more visible to view.

Once more, it is true, absolutely true, that the fight is an uphill one. With all my might would I emphasise this fact. India has not yet been won. Thank God for what has been done; and Miss Carmichael was not ignorant of it when she wrote her book, as will be clear to anyone who reads between the lines. But let there be no doubt about it; the upper ranks of Hindu society show a practically unbroken front. The Shah Najafs are not yet taken. The citadels of Hinduism and Mohammedanism frown down haughtily on our feeble and desultory attacks. What then? Have we no soldier-spirit in us? Shall we say, like some of Nehemiah's builders when difficulties loomed ahead, "The strength of the bearer of burdens is decayed, and there is much rubbish, so that we are not able to build the

wall?" Or shall we not rather say, with grand old Nehemiah himself, whose courage only rose with danger, "Be not afraid of them; remember the Lord which is great and terrible, and fight"?

When the "Black Week" in South Africa seemed to bring disaster on disaster to British arms, it only served to stimulate the courage of our people, and to nerve them for the fight. The whole Empire rose, as one man, in the strength of a firm determination, "This thing *must* be carried through." So be it with the Christian Church. Because the odds against us are so great, and because the task is so stupendous, and *because* "things as they are" seem otherwise than we had hoped, brothers! let us face the work in deadly earnest; let us "remember the Lord" and "*fight*."

The present volume is a sort of sequel to *Things as They Are*. Let me say of this book also, that you may rely on its accuracy; it is a description of facts; it is certainly true. It offers to sinking spirits something of a cordial in the shape of *Overweights of Joy*. But it is not intended, for a moment, to "tone down" the facts of its predecessor. It would not be true if it did. And Truth (with a capital "T") is the main thing. "We can do nothing against the Truth, but for the Truth."

T. WALKER, C.M.S.

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**“I have more than an
Overweight of Joy”**

II COR. vii. 4

Conybeare and Howson's Translation

The Photographs

THE photos of village and town's folk, usually typical of life and character on the plains, were taken by the comrade known as "The Picture-catching Missie Ammal." Those of our little children were given by another friend. Those of the mountains are the work of an expert in capturing the spirit of the wilds. Several of the photographs are rare, notably the one which shows the curious double-peaked shadow of the mountain from which the photo was taken. These mountains, the thousand mile range of the Western Ghats, whether South by our homestead at Dohnavur, or four hundred miles North where great arms branch off and form the Nilgiri (Blue Mountain) group, at all times, in all moods, are strength and inspiration to us, veritable Overweights of Joy. It would be ungrateful not to share what can be shared of them with you. But thoroughly to enjoy a scenery photo imagine yourself and your camera camping out on the mountains. Fill the forests with life, the clouds with movement. Flood all the wide spaces with light and with colour. Then let the wind blow over the uplands, and stir the grasses and the little mountain flowers at your feet.

OVERWEIGHTS OF JOY



CHAPTER I

“Before the gods will I sing”

THE main purpose of this book is single and simple. It is to let the song out before the gods in possession here. A sentence spoken in the Keswick Convention some years ago suggested the thought. The sentence, as it reached us in South India, ran thus :

“I will praise Thee with my whole heart ; before the gods will I sing praise unto Thee”—his (the Psalmist’s) glad resolve to sing praises unto his God, not in a clear and open atmosphere, but before the gods, the giant powers which lay behind the giant heathenism of his day. He, as it were, looked them in the face, and weighed their strength and force ; and although they seemed to suggest the hopelessness of the cause of God, he was not moved. “Before the gods will I sing praise unto Thee.”

If this book’s atmosphere is dark it is because the

gods, the giant powers which lie behind the subtle systems of our day, still exist in strength and force. The song is sung in the night: let no one dream the night has passed.

Here and there through the valley of Christendom in India there has been a noise and a shaking, and a Coming of the Breath. We have seen and heard something which in its mystery and spontaneity passes anything we knew before. But we have not seen India stirred. No movement in the valley has as yet affected those wastes of desolation that rise like mountains bare and bleak and utterly lifeless around us. “Bow Thy heavens, O Lord, and come down: touch the mountains and they shall smoke”—we have not seen that yet. We are waiting to see such a manifestation of Divine energy as shall convince the Hindu and Mohammedan world that the LORD is GOD. And now in the moment of pause before the coming of the Power, now while we wait, we sing.

The book is meant mainly for those who read *Things as They Are*, and were discouraged by it. We know there were some who in reading it did not catch the under-song that sang through the bitter battle. The Tamil words on the cover, “Victory to Jesus,” were not interpreted. They put the book down in despair—“if these things are so, is prayer answered at all? Is it worth while going on?” “Nay, do not wrong Him by thy heavy thought,” let *Overweights* answer earnestly. Prayer *is* being answered. It *is* worth while going on.

But though we would praise Him with our song, His

Word alone is the cause of our sure confidence. The song may brighten the day's work, and lighten the very night, but nothing short of the Word of the Lord stands strong through everything. This battle is His. The victory was won on the Resurrection morning. Christ our King is King of the ages. Although we could not sing we would still go on.

The "we" of the book refers usually to our small band here, Rev. T. Walker, Mrs. Walker, and our Indian comrades, who on the women's side are the faithful Golden, Pearl, and Blessing, and, of late years, Star, Joy, Gladness,¹ and others, without whose loyal co-operation the work that has grown among the Temple-children would have been impossible. But though for the sake of straightforward story-telling I explain the personnel, there is nothing we should so deprecate as the focusing of attention upon us. Rather overlook us, and look wherever in all the field you have a friend who would welcome the cheer of a freshened affection, and the sympathy which braces because it understands.

Perhaps in order to avoid needless misunderstanding it should be said at the outset that we write from Old India, and that we do not profess to touch upon aspects and problems affecting New India and India in transition, matters so delicate and intricate that they are better left to abler pens. Each phase of life as we find it here is a study in itself. Each is intensely interesting. But the voice that speaks through these pages, if indeed we have caught it clearly enough to make it articulate to others, is the voice of the old land: for of the three

¹ Translated names.

distinct voices sounding in India to-day, we have heard it longest and know it best.

Finally, we have tried to be true. We cannot say more. Those who have tried to be true know how difficult truth-telling is, perhaps because we see so little of the whole truth at a time. We found a large shell on the shore one day, blackened at the edges, iridescent above. It lay where the wave had washed it, wet and shining on the sand. The south-west monsoon had brought us many beautiful things. The sand was strewn with them. But this special shell for loveliness lay alone among them, and we stopped before we picked it up to look at it in its setting of sand, which on that part of the coast sparkles as if garnet dust had been sprinkled over it. Then we saw that the little crustacea had stopped to look at it too. They were crawling over it and into it and all about it; but they did not see it as a whole. They were too small. Truth is like that shell. We are like the infant crabs and beach fleas. Perhaps the most we can hope to do is to tell the changeful colours of the little bit of the shell we see, avoiding over-colouring as we would avoid a lie. And we can resist the temptation to omit all mention of the broken, blackened edges of the shell.

CHAPTER II

The Fort

IT was early afternoon on the edge of a South Indian town, at the place where it touches the desert. It was hot, but those happy little sun-birds, the children, darted about in the sunshine, or played in the doubtful shadow of the palms which border the Brahman street. There were vivid splashes of colour where the little children played, otherwise the street was colourless and empty, for the people who lend it life were out of sight in the close dark of windowless rooms, trying to feel cool. To the left of where we stood, above house-tops and palms, rose the central Temple tower, carved in stone for a hundred feet. A wall faced us, crossing the end of the street.

The wall was of clay, clumsily but massively built, rough with uneven additions and patches, the work of careless generations. It was bare and ugly, and covered, as all the world was then, with the dust of rainless months. The little flowers and grasses that had struggled for life on its ridges, in the last wet season, had been burnt up long ago. Only their famished shreds were left to tell how the poor wild things had tried to decorate man's prosaic. But green trees showed above it. We wondered what was inside.

A door was set deep in the wall, facing the Brahman street. We knocked, but no answer came. Then friendly voices called us from across the street, and we saw that friendly faces were watching us from verandah-shaded doorways. We crossed again, sat down gratefully in the shadowy recess of a verandah, and questioned our new friends about the place behind the wall. But India, though frank, is reticent. The door at which we had knocked was always locked. The Fort lay behind the wall. This was all they cared to say. So we talked of other things for awhile, until we had passed the first boundary-line fencing us off from their confidence, and they told us part of what they knew, the pith of which lay in the fact that there were people in the Fort whose ways were not as theirs, and therefore most uninteresting, unworthy our inquiry. The women, they told us, never came outside. Never till death was a woman seen out. And even then she was not seen. She was sewn in a sack and carried out by a gate in the wall on the other side. Two such gates lay on that side. By one dead women were carried out, and by the other, men. No townsman ever went into the Fort. All men of all castes were strictly forbidden, except the servants of the Fort who tilled the Fort lands outside. There was no stringent law about women; but no woman they knew had ever gone in. "May we go in?" we asked.

The question came as a surprise. Every face was a blank. They had never thought of going in. And yet they had lived all their lives within sound of a laugh or a cry from the walls. The East and the West meet often, but sometimes they walk apart. Perhaps the

Eastern way is the more dignified. Why should we pry into what, for probably excellent reasons, our neighbour has concealed?

Something a little less fine, may be, is mixed up with this sentiment; for the women's remarks hardly suggested the sublime. "Why go in? There is nothing to see. The people are not like us. They are mere animals; poor jungle creatures." Then after a pause came the hesitating after-thought: "Once, it is said, a white woman went in, and nothing evil befell her"—as if a thought of evil had ever crossed one's mind! "But this is foolish talking; you would be as a parrot watching the silk cotton pod [the pod ripens, the wind blows the light-winged seed away, the parrot gets nothing]; for even if they let you pass the wall, you might wait for a lifetime and never see a woman. Each lives in her house with the door fast shut."

There is a curious instinct in our race, which always wants to explore the unknown, and finds in discouragement impetus. This moved within us as the women talked. "It is hot, so hot," they repeated dissuadingly. "Why go out in such a heat?" But we went.

It was certainly hot. There was no shade. The wall seemed to concentrate heat, and throb it out to us. Below, the dust struck hot through one's shoes. Above, the sky overflowed with light, a clear white blaze of heat. There is a beautiful story in the "Ramayana" (one of India's epics) which tells how Rama, Prince of Oudh, and Lakshman, his noble young brother, while journeying with their spiritual guide through forest and plain, came to an arid desert, "so hot that the tongue would scorch

if it tried to describe it." But the guide taught the lads a certain charm, and as they chanted it the fiery ground changed for them into cool water springs. We thought of this old tale then. We have a Charm by which life's glowing sand becomes a pool, and even the common fiery ground to be trodden under common feet is cooled by the Charm for us. So, hardly minding about the heat, we traced the wall further, and came to a door fitted with huge locks and bars, and a hinge that looked centuries old. The door was open. We went in. A white-washed wall built half-way across intercepted the view. We stood there for a moment, and then went on, passed another wall, mud-built and broken, and saw fine tamarind trees shading the approach, and altars guarding it; beyond stood picturesque groups of red-roofed houses, and great stacks of straw. We had no time to see more; for before we reached the houses an old man met us, and leading us back to the door, asked us our business.

He was a very old man. From his ears hung long gold rings. His dress was the loin-cloth and scarf of the South. His manners were those of a chief. "These tidings," he said, after listening a little, "are excellent for those outside, the ignorant people of the town. But we of the Fort are different. We require nothing external. Nor do we desire it," he added, "so kindly swiftly retire."

A year passed before we had an opportunity of attempting the Fort again. But such a year need not be wasted, and we went with hope renewed. We tried to find the head of the Clan, to win his consent to our visiting it, but no one outside could direct us to him;

so believing we were meant to go in, and that the way would be otherwise opened, and asking that the very light might be spread as a covering for us to veil us from any who would disapprove, we walked quietly in.

This time we were not turned back. Unhindered we wandered through silent streets, so strangely silent that they seemed like streets in a city of the dead. The houses were solidly built, and often enclosed in courtyard walls. Their windows were few, and heavily barred. We stopped before one notable house, three-storied, built of stone and brick, coloured buff, terra-cotta, and blue. There was some fine wood-carving in the lower verandah, and the upper balcony was decorated with a pincapple device. There were small outhouses near, and a deep empty well, cut in a regular spiral. But not a woman or a child was visible anywhere. In the distance we saw men, but they did not see us. The blaze of noontide covered us as with a shining screen. We walked on unaccosted, down a short street, with four small quaint houses on either side, all shut up. They reminded one of a book often examined in childish days, which had a lock and key. What wonderful things must be inside, too wonderful for everyday reading, and so it is locked up we thought, never imagining then, as we handled it almost reverently, that the wonderful things concerned mere money matters. But here there was a difference. Wonderful things were most surely inside. Only the old house-book was locked, and the key hung out of reach. We sat down on one of the little stone verandahs, facing an iron-clamped door. No one saw us,

for no windows looked out on the street. The stillness was oppressive. Was the place asleep or dead?

At last the door opposite opened. A woman looked out. She was just going to slam it, dismayed, when a smile reassured her, and before she could make up her mind what to do, we were on the other side of the narrow street, persuading her to let us sit on her verandah, and to keep her door open six inches, and let us talk to her.

She was a pleasant-faced motherly woman, this product of a system considered exclusive even in exclusive India. She had the peculiar sweetness and grace of the typical Indian woman of gentle birth. There was the flash of quiet humour too. She was very human. Had she lost anything after all by her long exclusiveness? Perhaps her life had included life's essentials; she had her home. We talked with her, and after her first surprise had passed, she talked with us. Then we knew what she had lost.

For we had not come to play in the shallows, to study character or creed, or a new and suggestive problem. We had come to speak to the soul in the name of God about that which concerned it infinitely. The first thing, then, was to find the soul, and only those who have talked to one whose mind is as a fast closed outer room, know how much may hinder the finding of a way into the far more fast closed inner room we call the soul.

The woman listened as one asleep. The message we had brought was something so remote from anything she had heard before, that it fell on her ear as a strange

song sung to a bewildering tune. How could it be otherwise? The "murmur of the world" outside had never reached her. Her range of vision, mental as well as physical, was bounded almost absolutely by the wall that surrounded her house. It is true that the call that wakens often comes from within, but oftener surely it comes from without. This woman's world knew no without, and much of the meaning of the within was hidden from her. We do not realise until we think about it, how much we owe to the largeness of our environment. Think of the littleness of her's.

But even the narrowest Indian horizon is usually widened by something of the culture of the past. The nation has its mythical history handed down in poetry, sung rather, through the ages, the young voice catching up the song where the old fails. I listened to our sweeper woman the other day, as she crooned a lullaby. It was the story of Rama and his queen that she sang to the baby—a beautiful old-world tale. But that mud wall seemed to have shut out even the song. A reference to one of its illustrations, which, had this woman known it, would have lighted one of the words we were using, did not surprise her into the accustomed sign of recognition. There was the less to go upon, the fewer stepping-stones by which we might hope to pass from the known to the unknown in her experience. We found she knew almost nothing of her own religion. A South Indian wife and mother rarely feels her need of God. It is the childless wife, and the widow, who turn to something outside themselves, and seek by fastings and penance to propitiate that Something, or elude it, or persuade it, so to speak,

to look elsewhere. This woman was happy. Husband, children, plenty of jewels, she had all these; what more did she want?

Naturally, as always in such cases, we kept to the elementary. We told her that God loved her, and would save her from her sin. But God meant Siva to her, so that word needed much explanation. Love was a word she more perfectly understood. How glad we are to have that one word which belongs to the universal language. Sin meant ceremonial defilement, such as would be incurred by touching us, or eating food other than that prescribed by her caste. This word kept us a long time. Salvation meant temporal help. The thought had to be opened out before even a glimmer of its true meaning could dawn upon her. This development of idea took time. "Go and tell them God loves them" sounds beautiful and easy. It is beautiful, indeed; but so to do it that it shall be effective is not easy. The words may seem to be understood, and smiles and appreciative gestures often delude us into imagining the truth behind the words is being apprehended; whereas very probably each of the pivot words upon which our message turns conveys a wholly defective or, at least, inadequate idea, and the truth that would mean eternal life is not even within grasp. Praise God for the illuminating power of His Spirit, without whom our words were as idle tales. But if we would be accurate in thought we must abandon the idea, so hard to abandon, that instantaneous spiritual receptivity is something often seen. It is seen sometimes, and the day that shows it is marked by a crown in memory, and an Overweight of Joy. Such days

are rare. Most days are commonplace, uncrowned by any such discovery. But every sunrise shines with hope. We may find that soul to-day.

For nearly an hour we sat by that woman, gradually drawing nearer to her in the contact that comes with sympathy. And her dark eyes looked deep into ours, and stirred our hearts with strong desire that she should understand. Before we could be sure she did, the kindly covering was removed. Some men saw us, and hurried us out of the Fort.

And after we had gone away that woman's face came back to us with its dark, deep-gazing eyes. I felt as if I had seen it before, though I knew it could not have been so, for no Fort woman walks outside. But often, during the years that passed before we could enter the Fort again, I seemed to see that same face pass, and to hear a tone in another voice so like hers that it startled me, and haunted me like a haunting tune. But life is full of the definite. And the strange intangible influences that, shadow-like, cross and recross it at times fall for the most part unheeded.

CHAPTER III

He maketh the Stars

THE year of our first attempt upon the Fort was a year of organised opposition from the Hindus in our neighbourhood. They had been exceedingly friendly; but they had been alarmed by seeing several of their young people beginning to take an interest in Christianity, and while they were debating about what to do, one of these inquirers became a convert.

This clinched matters. The order went forth that every caste town and village within a working distance of our home was to be closed to us. Then all the district round became like a rock at low tide studded with limpet shells. Limpetwise, each little coterie resented the lightest touch on its shell, and showed its feelings by fastening the firmer to the rock. Those were the days when our appearance in the most offended villages brought handfuls of dust thrown from behind walls full in our faces. We did not mind the dust, but we did mind being shut out of the people's hearts. And yet we could not wonder at them. From their point of view it was the only thing to do.

Mr. Meredith Townsend's book, *Asia and Europe*, contains a careful study of Indian character. Attention is

drawn to the singular tenacity of will which, coexistent as it is with a surface flexibility, so often perplexes the observer. "The will of an Asiatic, once fairly roused, closes on its purpose with a grip to which nothing in the mind of a European can compare, a grip which seems too strong for the conscience, the judgment, and even the heart. The man is like one possessed, and cannot, even if he would, change his self-appointed course."

Shortly after the stir caused by a break in the serried ranks of caste, a young Brahman barrister whose interest in books had brought us into touch with him, remonstrated on our iniquity in receiving converts whose caste had forbidden them to have dealings with us. No one feels the misery of this necessity more keenly than the Missionary, and, longing that its cause should cease, we besought him to use his influence towards winning liberty of conscience for his people. "Why should they not be Christians at home?" we urged, fired with a sudden hope that this well-educated man who quoted the English poets in every second sentence, this platform orator, newspaper writer, social reformer, would come to the rescue, and in his home at least do something persuasive and brave. He looked at us fixedly for a moment, and something looked out from his eyes, and then with a concentration of scorn we shall never forget, he spoke the truth to us, "Liberty of conscience? Christians at home? There is absolutely nothing we would not do to prevent such a thing occurring." The will had closed there.

It was impossible to do much among the villages where the caste cabal had power. There were others open to us, so we went to them. All we wanted was

"The glory of going on," a commonplace glory truly, when going on means ploughing through deep sand in hot weather to reach dull little villages, where interesting things do not happen very often; but a glory all by itself because of the joy wrapped up in its heart. Then this was stopped. Fever came. The dull villages did not respond. News reached us of the declension of some for whom we had hoped great things. Everything seemed going wrong. It was during this time, which was night to us, that God lighted a star in our sky.

We knew nothing about it at first. We had left our headquarters and were itinerating outside the prescribed area, when we camped near a town whose citizens chiefly belong to a Clan notoriously turbulent and careless as to spiritual things. There is no large temple there. The people are immersed in the mundane. One evening we had a large open-air meeting. Looking back we see that day crowned.

For two heard then who believed. One was a lad of eighteen who had learnt in a mission school. At that meeting God met him and reversed his life-purpose. The other, and the first to come out as a Christian, was just a little girl. Star, we called her afterwards.

Sometimes when we are tired we spend an hour with the poets. Thought-music, word-music holds a charm like the music of moving waters, to soothe and heal. Sometimes rest comes otherwise. The mystery of mighty spaces, the splendour of great forces, or the magic of colour, the marvel of the loveliness about us seems to open suddenly as if another finer sense than sight perceived it, and one's very being thrills with

an incommunicable joy. Sometimes a different thing happens. One can hardly tell what. Only one knows that, through and through, one is strong and glad and well again. One has seen part of the Ways of God.

It was late evening, a year after that open-air meeting in the Clansmen's town. We were in camp. Our tents were pitched on a large expanse of white sea sand; far inland, but refreshingly suggestive of the sea. The day had been hot, and all day long people had been coming from the village near, not to listen, but to stare and talk. Our crowded little tents had been stifling. The noisy day, in which little of moment had been done, had left us tired. "Come," I said to Star, who was with us, "let us go out and cool." So we wandered hand in hand over the sand. Only the shadow of some stunted palms crossed its whiteness. Only the rustle of their leaves, as the light night-wind blew over the plain, broke its silence. We lay down on it and looked at the long ribs and ripples where the wind had played with it, and we let the moon-waves lap about us, and were still. "Amma," whispered Star at last, so gently that it might have been the night-wind speaking softly, "this reminds me of the first night I spoke with God." We had often wondered how it was that a child who had heard nothing before should so quickly understand and respond. "Tell me about it," I said; and she told me.

She had often asked her father to tell her who made her. She would look at her hands and feet, and realising that they must have been created by someone, she would go to her wise old father and weary him with questions about this unknown Creator. Was it the

heavenly Siva, whose ashes they all rubbed across their foreheads every morning after bathing? There were so many gods, she grew puzzled as she counted. Of all the gods, who was greatest? Was it Siva? Could he change dispositions? She felt if she could only find this out she would be satisfied, for the god who could change dispositions must be the greatest, and surely the greatest must be Creator. Her father did not seem to know, and tried to put her off. This disheartened her. But she would not give in. There was one way, she reflected, by which she could bring creatorship and sovereignty down to the test of practical life. She would discover the hidden being by a process of elimination. She would go through all the gods she knew, and find out which of them could change dispositions. She decided to begin with Siva, whose name her Clansmen bore. Had not her father gone to his temple month by month, with fasting and with prayer, pleading for children to be born to him? And had not the heavenly Siva granted him eleven? Her heart went out to Siva with a trustful expectation. He would change her disposition.

For she had a trying temper. Often when she was playing with other children she would get so overbearing that they would not play with her. She had tried to conquer the fault, but there it was, strong, and growing stronger in her. So she prayed to Siva, prostrating herself before him, crying her passionate broken prayer over and over into the air that never answered her back again. "O heavenly Siva, hear me! Change my disposition that other children may love me and

wish to play with me ! O heavenly Siva, hear me ! hear me ! hear me ! ”

“ And was your disposition changed ? ” “ Oh no, no, no. Not even was it moved towards changing. Then I used to go away alone where nobody would see me, far out into the jungle, and lay my head down on the ground, and stretch my arms out, and wonder if no one would come. And I tried some other gods, but I got tired of it. And I wondered the more who made me, and why I was made. And I wondered who I was. I said, I am I ; I am I. But how is it that I am I ? Then I got tired of wondering. And I got tired of wanting to be good, for I could not change my disposition, and I did not know who could.”

She went on, however, questioning any who would listen. The cousin who could have answered her questions never spoke to her, nor did she speak to him. It would not have been proper, each being who they were. So no one answered her questions. People thought them foolish, almost blasphemous, considered her peculiar, because she was unlike themselves. An uncomfortable child they thought her, as we gathered from what others told us ; a sort of feminine freak, not to be taken seriously. And they looked at her in a curious way, and talked about her among themselves, and pitied her mother. “ Being observed, when observation is not sympathy, is just being tortured.” The sensitive flower of our South Indian river banks folds up its petals and leaves at less than a touch. The shiver of a shadow is enough to rob it of the heart to look up. Poor little human sensitive flowers, growing only God knows where,

how often it must happen that they are chilled and hurt just when their petals open and smile up to the sky! The child repulsed made up her mind that she never would ask any questions again. But she thought the more. In this way she was being prepared to listen when the answer came, and to understand.

CHAPTER IV

“Lo! these are Parts of His Ways”

IT came unexpectedly. One evening she went for water as usual to the well from which her people drew, on the outskirts of the town. The little terra-cotta coloured vessel was under her arm. She had only one thought, to fill it and bring it home quickly, and run back for another. Then she might go and play. But she saw a crowd gathered near the well, and being only a little girl she forgot about her work, and stood on the wet stones by the well and looked and listened. “There were three white people, and a talking noise, and a singing noise, and a box which made a noise.” This was the first impression produced by ourselves and our baby organ, and the ardent singing of the half-dozen Indian helpers. It was all just a noise.

Presently she moved away. Then a madman came and tried to disturb the meeting. “See the white man beat the madman!” shouted the crowd with enthusiasm. This would be interesting. The child stopped and watched. But the white man only put his arm on the madman’s shoulder, and drew him gently out of the crowd, while the Indian brother continued speaking. This was a tame proceeding. She turned again to go.

22 "LO! THESE ARE PARTS OF HIS WAYS"

Just then a sentence repeated several times by the preacher caught her attention: "There is a living God. There is a living God: He turned me, a lion, into a lamb."

Then, with the suddenness of a new discovery, it flashed upon her that here at last was the answer to her questions. The God who could change a lion-man into a lamb was the God who could change dispositions, so the greatest God, so Creator. His being described as living implied that the rest were dead. "I will not worship a dead god," she almost spoke aloud in her eagerness. "Siva is a dead god. I will not rub his ashes on my forehead." Then she went slowly home, pondering those luminous words, "There is a living God: there is a living God." And in telling about it she added simply, "I did not want to sleep that night. I wanted to lie awake all night and talk to the living God."

Next morning, like the swift surprise of sunrise, a feeling of new happiness rose in her, and surrounded her, so that all the world looked different, and she danced as she walked. Being only such a little girl, she was free to go where she would, only not to defiling places, such as a Christian camp. She found her way to it notwithstanding, and sat on the floor of our tent among other village children, and learned a chorus, which struck her as remarkable because it was so easily understood. (The poetry to which she was accustomed was difficult to understand). But this was all so very new that she understood little of what she heard. "My heart was like a little room. It could not hold much then. Only I understood you said that the true God heard us when

we prayed, and very dearly loved us all. This entering in made room for itself." We knew nothing of the earnest little listener; did not even notice her among the others, for she kept in the background shyly, and ran home without speaking to us.

And as she ran home she resolved she would test this living God. She would ask Him for three things. If He should answer twice out of three times by doing just as she asked, she would be sure He really heard, and really dearly loved.

When she got home, her mother was standing on the doorstep with a switch in her hand. This meant a whipping. Quick as thought she prayed, "Living God, O Living God! do not let my mother whip me!"

Her mother caught her by the arm. "Where have you been, you naughty child? Oh, you evil one, come here! You are a perverse monkey cub! You have been to those low-caste people!" And a stinging swish of the switch on her little bare arms and shoulders was all the answer she saw to her prayer.

But she kept quiet. "A sort of peace was in my heart. I remembered you had said perhaps we would be punished for listening, but that God would be with us and help us to bear it; so I kept quite still. It was peace." But the mother, mistaking the peace for sullenness, and being provoked by the child's unwonted silence, exclaimed, "Those low-caste people have perverted you already! You have no feeling. You shall have a double whipping!" and administered it forthwith. Then, indeed, distressed and much bewildered at this first and most evident failure of the test, upon which somehow she felt

she had staked more than she quite understood, the poor child broke out into bitter sobs, and the mother relented and was kind. But she cried herself to sleep that night.

Next day saw her at the camp again, risking another whipping, she knew; but she did not mind that. Nor did her conscience prick her for disobedience; she regarded the whipping as quite scoring off her debt of duty to her mother. "I disobey: she whips me: we are quits."

This time she heard a chorus about Jesus' love, salvation, and power to keep, explained; and gathering that Jesus was the Living God, she prayed to Him as she ran home that evening, "O Jesus! Living God, out of three prayers answer two!",

Her way led through a road bordered by tamarind trees. The ripe fruit hung low. But it is stealing to gather fruit; you may only eat it if it falls of itself. She stopped, she prayed, "O Jesus! Living God! make the fruit fall." And a pod fell at her feet.

"One out of two; that leaves one to show for certain whether He really is hearing and loving," she thought as she ran along, quickly now, for it was dark, and punishment most probable. "Jesus! Living God!" she prayed, as she raced almost breathless up to the door, "don't let my mother whip me! Jesus! Living God, listen!"

"Oh, my heart thumped hard as I saw my mother standing on the step. She had not the switch in her hand. She met me. She drew me in. She said, 'I thought you were lost in the dark, my child! Come in and have your supper.' She did not whip me at all."

This settled the question for ever. The Living God,

Jesus, did hear prayer, did answer, did love. She would never doubt Him again, she told Him. She would worship no other, pray to no other.

It was a long story, but it did not seem long. The moon rode high overhead as we went back to camp. The night was alight with the beauty of it and the peace.

This was the child whose coming had been as star-rise to us a year ago. I looked back through the year that night. All along we had felt that she was not an ordinary child. There was always something intense about her. There was something unusual too in the way she had laid hold of each new truth as it was shown. She seemed to possess it at once. But enough of the inner story: God has put our soul somewhere out of sight, and our first conscious instinct is to pull the curtain closer round it, and cover it up from people's eyes. So the tale of the weeks that followed her first coming to us shall remain untold. We who taught her learned much ourselves. Our work was just to stand out of the light and let it shine full upon her. After a few weeks' teaching, suddenly she was snatched away.

CHAPTER V

“Yet”

EVEN in early childhood's days she had been an ardent little idolater. When others stood in worship, she knelt. When others knelt, she fell on her face. “So far did I worship my god,” she said sorrowfully in telling us of it. Her father and mother called it “the god.” She always called it “my god.” It was she who persuaded her father to spend large sums of money upon works of merit to the honour of their god. It was she who twisted the chickens' necks when the annual sacrifice was offered. She loved to see the goat's blood flow, because it belonged to her god. And now her parents had sent for her to take part in a family festival. She might return, they said, in four days, but she must come at once.

She had been staying near our home, with a relative, who had allowed her to spend most of her time with us. Her parents, who during the interval had become known to us, had not objected to our teaching her; they thought of her as a mere child. But stories of what she was saying and doing had floated out to them, and alarmed them. She must be recalled. The festival was made the pretext. The real intention, we felt,

was to get her out of our influence, and we feared a marriage would be arranged, and completed as quickly as possible.

But she had no such feelings and fears. "Only four days and I will be back!" And she danced about in delight. For she was still a happy child, with the careless confidence of a child, and all a child's love of excitement. Apart from the religious element, with which she was sure she would have nothing to do, the festival would be enchanting; new clothes, and new jewels, and such lovely decorations, and delicious things to eat. "I will not be forced to do anything wrong. I will say I am Jesus' child. I will tell them all about Him. It will be all right," she said as she opened the little Gospel of St. Mark which she had just begun to spell out slowly, and we settled down for our last talk. This was difficult to me. It is always difficult to say anything which might suggest disloyal thoughts to a child. But parenthood is so often lost in Hinduhood here, that one felt bound to prepare this little one, so fearless in her innocence, for what might lie before her. So we talked about the difference between the yieldedness of spirit where her own wishes were concerned, which would please her Lord and perhaps win her parents, and the weakness of will where His wishes were concerned, which would be fatal compromise. And then with her clinging hands in mine I committed her to His tenderness. But my heart sank as I saw her go.

The weeks that followed passed slowly. We heard nothing of our child. We knew she would have sent

a message had she not been prevented. We knew of one who, for a less fault than hers, had been kept in chains for three full years. We knew that if chains were in question now, any move on our part would only rivet them the more firmly. We could do nothing for her but pray and pray again.

Then came the most sorrowful day. News reached us at last. She had given in, we heard. A family council had been called. They had mocked the little lonely girl. She had been ordered to worship the idol she used to serve, and rub Siva's ashes on her forehead. She had refused. Punishment followed. She could not bear it. She yielded at last, bowed to the idol, rubbed on the ashes. She would soon be married and sent far away.

As our bullock cart rumbled back home over the broken road from the town where we had heard it, there was time to feel it all. Everything seemed to feel it too. The lake we skirted blazed in a still white fire of pain. The palms by the roadside drooped with it. The cart wheels ground it out of the sand. Life at such times is tense.

But there was one verse which came to us then, over and over again. We were, you remember, shut out from the homes of the people, because the coming of converts had closed their hearts against us. There was no sign of hope or joy anywhere just then ; no sheaf to lay at His feet : “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines ; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat ; the flocks shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls : **Yet** will I rejoice in the Lord ; I will joy in the God of my salvation.”

There was another **Yet**.

"No darkness is so deep but white
Wings of the angels through can pierce
Nor any chain such heaps lies in
But God's Own hand can hold it light ;
Nor is there any flame so fierce
But Christ Himself can stand therein."

We were to prove it true.

Every one assured us that it was perfectly impossible to do anything for the child. It was impossible she could be saved from what to her would be a daily death. The most we could ask for her was a quick release, and faith to the end. For nothing we heard could make us feel that her denial of her Lord was more than something wrested from her by deadly fear. So we prayed on these lines for a while. Then, in spite of all that was said, all the verses we had ever read about God's doing impossible things came crowding into our mind. We could not give up hope. Together we waited upon Him to do the impossible for her.

It was Sunday, a week later. We had heard nothing in the interval. I was alone in my room, reading before the first bell rang for morning service. Many verses had a voice, and that voice hers. "I am so fast in prison that I cannot get out." "Comfort the soul of Thy servant: for unto Thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. In the time of my trouble I will call upon Thee, for Thou hearest me. Among the gods there is none like unto Thee, O Lord: there is not one that can do as Thou doest." She had said so, all bore witness to it. If only she had not given in! But He would not forget

she had said it, and suffered for saying it. “Teach me Thy way, O Lord, and I will walk in Thy truth. Oh, knit my heart unto Thee!” And then one’s own heart found voice in the cry, hardly could it be called a prayer, for faith was tired that day, “Show some token upon me for good!” Oh, what a token for good it would be if our Star-child might come back to us!

Some quiet minutes passed. The bell began to ring, and I was just about to get ready for church, when there was a little sound at the door, a little hand pushed the sun-blind back—and we had our child again.

We never knew quite what had happened, for she was very ill for weeks; the overstrain had told. But some things became clear. There had been a family council, but she had not given in. God’s hand had lighted that little star. No storm could blow it out. All we had heard had been done, and more. She was so much gentler and more obedient than ever she had been before, that her parents had been encouraged to think she would not hold out long. But the strong old father found in the weakness of his child a strength made perfect. His allowing her to return to us is, to all who know South India, very wonderful. “There is not one who can do as Thou doest.”

I asked her what helped her most through those weeks. She knew so little of the Bible then, that I wondered what she would say. She told me she kept the Gospel of St. Mark tied up in her dress as long as she could. It was discovered, and taken from her. “So I had not the comforting feel of it,” she said. “But I remembered they could not take away Jesus, and I

remembered how He walked in the fire with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; and how the fire could not burn their bodies or anything upon them, except the cords. And I thought it was a good thing it burnt the cords, for they could not have walked in the fire with Jesus if the cords had not been burnt. So I asked Him to let the fire burn my cords. After that I don't remember anything. Only I think the fire got cool.”

There are some ancient stories which are wonderfully vivified by present-day experience. “Let them know that Thou art Lord, the only God, and glorious over the whole world.” So the Song of the Three Holy Children tells us they prayed. And “The angel of the Lord came down, and smote the flame of the fire out of the oven; and made the midst of the furnace as it had been a moist whistling wind so that the fire touched them not at all, neither hurt nor troubled them.” And even more brightly lighted up, the old words stand out alive and strong: “Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt.”

We keep the date of the coming to us of each girl and child as a birthday. There are feasts and flowers and little surprises, as on a birthday at home. And the fifth anniversary especially is held as a gala day. The Star-child, who is now Accâl (older sister) to a number of affectionate little ones, gives us a look into the loving ways of the East, through a letter written to a friend telling about her fifth coming day. “I never had a day like it. It was a day with a garland upon it. My little sisters said to me the evening before, ‘Call us

early in the morning, because we want to see you early, for to-morrow is a kind of little Christmas day.’ And in the morning they kissed me much, and they all came round me and said, ‘ Dear Accâ ! this is our joyful day, because it is your Coming-day.’ Then we went to the lake to bathe. And as we went through the wood the church bell rang for the schoolboys’ morning service. Then they all kissed me again and said, ‘ Are you very tired, Accâ, after your long, long walk ? ’ for it was to them as if I had walked that morning all the way from my father’s house. And as we went they wanted to tell some one about it. But we met no one in the wood. So they called to the sky, ‘ O sky, hear us ! This is our Accâ’s Coming-day ! ’ And they called to the palms, ‘ O palms, hear us ! This is our Accâ’s Coming-day ! ’ ”

Five years bound round with deliverances and answers to prayer : many a time the father had come to claim her and enforce his right to make her do as he willed. Each time, as if compelled to let go, he went away without her. We could have done nothing to keep her had he insisted. When he came, one of us always went away alone and continued waiting upon God till the conflict had found its conclusion in peace. Once as he went away he was heard to mutter, “ What is the matter with me ? My hands are strong to take her ! It is as if I were bound and held from touching her.”

Enough : we have told enough to sweeten some song in the night. If the angels care enough to sing over each saved one everywhere, well may we sing when even one star is lighted and kept alight. But our sky was not left long with only one little star in it. One by one,

just as the stars come out in the evening, dropping through the deepening blue, how, you hardly know, so these stars came; each the herald of another.

“Cursed be your feet that made the first track in the sand for these others to follow,” said the father, head of the Clan, incensed as he saw brothers and cousins and other young kinsmen turning the way she had gone. But the angels look at it differently.

CHAPTER VI

Opened

STAR, grown-up now, was with me when, six years after our last attempt, God opened the Fort to us.

She and I had been travelling together on the Eastern side of the district. Some of her relatives lived in the town to which the Fort belongs, and we had left our direct route home to visit them. But dearly though she loved them, Star found they and she had little in common. The sorrow of this discovery was upon her when we remembered the Fort; and it was with a quickened appreciation of the miracle of conversion where such souls are concerned, that we approached that little citadel, and once more sought an entrance in the name of the Lord.

We found the same door locked and the same door open, as before. Time seemed to have gone to sleep where the old Fort was concerned. All within appeared empty and silent, just as it had been before. We walked through the streets unchallenged.

On the far side we found a grey old temple enclosed by a high red and white wall. A tamarind tree is beside it, and glad to get out of the brilliant light, light beating down from unclouded blue, and light beating up from

the glittering sand, we stood in the cool green shade and prayed that some one might come to whom we could speak.

Soon from the distance voices came jangling irreverently through the universal silence. Then some field women strolled across the open and accosted us in the friendliest way, shouting all together in their astonishment at seeing us. They were the Fort people's servants, they said; they worked in the Fort fields outside, and did the rough work of the place. They applauded our wisdom in not knocking at any of the house doors. "It would have greatly disturbed the women. Why should you trouble them?" They advised us to go out again, because no one would let us in. "The evangelisation of the world in this generation" is our motto; but how are you to evangelise people when you cannot get at them? The women had work to do, and they left us under the tree.

We had not knocked at any door, partly lest we should startle the shy inhabitants, and partly because we were so anxious to be led to the heart prepared. More and more we feel that in work of this kind we need to be led to the one who, through some previous dealing of the Spirit, is ready to discern the truth. So once more we walked past the silent shut-up houses, looking for an open door.

We found one at last. Our call was answered by a girl's voice. We went in and found a young girl in possession. Her face struck me at once as familiar, though I could not have seen it before.

She was a young wife, tall and slight, with hair that

waved and curled round the smooth low brow. Her eyes shone when she spoke to us or smiled, but when she was only listening the light in them passed, and her normal expression seemed one of depression, sharpened by the keenness of some disappointment. She sighed as she sat down, after spreading a mat for us. And she sighed as she listened.

"Sister!" Star began in her simple earnest way, "we have come to bring good news to you. There is a living God who loves you. He has always loved you. He sent us here to tell you so." "Who loves me?" interrupted the girl. "I have no children."

We knew enough of the customs of the Fort to understand. The childless wife might any day become the childless widow. To such a one a terribly severe punishment is meted out. We had heard the smothered cry of one as we passed the house where she was confined in what a child, in describing it, called the "eighth (very innermost) room of the house."

It is not true, thank God, that confinement to an Indian girl is what it would be to an English girl. The free, open-air loving spirit is rarer here than at home. But no words can overstate the bitterness poured into many a cup. And the song—if such tear-words can make a song—that the Fort-widow sings is this: "Where it will may the river wander; where she will the wife may wander. Pent by its banks is the pool. Pent by her fate is the widow. I, the widow, am as the pool, as the pool that never may wander."

Only a thread withheld this from that girl. Should fate cut that thread, her husband's life, what an Indian

widow has quietly called "The cold fire" would be kindled for her. And all life was a fear to her because she had no children at seventeen.

For a moment the two girls looked at each other. One saw how very alike they were. They might have been sisters. But a world of difference lay between; one saw it and ached to see it as the Star-child leaning forward held out her hands beseechingly, "Take it! His love is all for you. Oh, sister, this news was beautiful to me and the joy of joys"—while the other, leaning back lest defiling hands should touch her, answered the eager words with a yawn. "Is that so?" she said at last, and rose; "I must go and do my cooking."

Had she the heart prepared? It did not seem like it. And yet one never knows. The seed strikes root sometimes in a narrow crevice in the rock.

We found another open door, and went in full of expectation. A mother was there, and a family of children; bonnie babies played on the floor, and the elder ones clustered about us close, but never close enough to touch, for that would be pollution.

It was the usual South Indian room, dark save for the shaft of light which fell from the open door. It was furnished with a great brass lamp, hung with oleander flowers; and there was one unusual thing, a bed of dark wood finely carved, of a quaint involved design. A pile of silk garments lay on it, crimson and a golden brown, and the shaft of sunlight fell on the pile, and lighted the room with colour. There was colour too in the group on the floor, where half in sight and half in

shadow, making unconscious pictures, the mother and children sat looking at us with that calm scrutiny which in India precedes speech, be the speech when it comes never so trivial. "Why have you got no jewels and no oil on your hair?" they asked at length, and launched into conversation.

One by one the women from the inner rooms came out. There was not a sound or a movement as we tried to show our Lord to them. Almost breathless in her eagerness, knowing she might never see them again, Star told them the wonderful story, and still there was silence as I continued, feeling afresh as one told it freshly to those who had never heard it, the infinite marvel of it. Oh for words to tell it as it deserves to be told! Could any heart resist it? How we longed to stay with these women, become Fort women to them, and tell them all about the love of Jesus over and over, till we could be sure they understood! But that could not be. Caste comes at once and makes a distance between us and those to whom we would fain be as sisters. We stayed as long as they cared we should, then left them regretfully. A man saw us as we left the house, but he took no notice of us; so far as getting in was concerned, the Fort was open at last, and we went where we would through the quiet streets and searched for our first friend, the one who had listened six years before; but we could not find her. Death had not waited outside those six years; that was a sobering thought. And we tried to find some trace of the seed sown years ago by the sister we knew had once gone in; but the seed had not been watered, how could it have lived? Perhaps

the seed that sister sowed was the seed-corn of prayer. Thank God that seed is imperishable. In the opening of the Fort we saw that seed in fruit.

But now that it is open who is there to go in? Our Mission is considered well manned and well organised. Everything is arranged in departments. There is a Biblewoman department, with, its natural sequence, a Converts' home. There is a Biblewoman in the town to which the Fort is attached. But the place lies some distance from her home; she has plenty of nearer work, she cannot undertake the Fort. There is no other woman in the town who can. And only a woman has the entrée to the Fort. So that the most it can have is an occasional visit. Not that it wants more, or as much. It is not asking for anything. There is no consciousness of need. Still, it is open so far, as we have shown. The narrowness of centuries is widening a little, the exclusiveness is a little less pronounced. And yet, in this "well-manned" Mission, the workers are still too few to allow of one being immediately set apart to buy up an opportunity, buyable now for the first time. The truth is that workers of the right sort are far too few to buy up one out of every hundred opportunities, here and everywhere.

CHAPTER VII

The Clan

“**T**HEY are a set of dare devils; we know them well”: this was the picturesque description the Superintendent of Police gave us when we asked him about the Clan. The people of the Clan dwell in two towns about six miles apart. They are as one man in sentiment and character, and they do not love the Christian religion.

The boy of eighteen, who, with his cousin Star, heard the Gospel preached in the open-air meeting by the well, kept silent at first as to his determination to be a Christian. His father, one of the wealthiest men in the place, would disinherit him he knew. He did not fear that. What he did fear was the abandonment of grief into which his action would plunge his family. Also, being a human boy, he feared being beaten. A beating in the Tamil country may mean anything, from a good whipping with a switch or rope up to cudgelling, from which even a grown man might shrink. So the boy was silent for a while.

Just at that time his town and its twin town were agitated over an event which had deeply affected a neighbouring village. A young girl belonging to a

much respected caste had confessed Christ openly, and been obliged to leave her home and take refuge elsewhere. Immediately following this, another girl, belonging to the twin town, took her stand as a Christian, by refusing to carry a pot, pierced with a thousand holes, which holes in Tamil are called eyes, as an offering to the goddess who had, as was believed, restored her eyesight. "It was the Christians' God Who healed my eyes. I will not carry the pot."

It is true that a girl is a thing of small consequence in the life of a Hindu town. It is also true that nothing creates more disturbance in that same life than any independent action on the part of a girl. The Clan, as head caste in the place, concerned itself in the case. The parents were encouraged to use extreme measures. The Clan promised to back them up in whatever they chose to do. One night, armed with a billhook and a knife, mother and father made a feint of attacking the girl, but she was not terrified though they almost beat her to death. All this was known to the Clan. "Go on! We shall see who will conquer," they said, "Siva or Christ." The parents went on. They won their way at last.

Then the Hindus were triumphant. All the town seemed to know about it. When we went there we felt the triumph in the very air. "Siva has conquered! Victory to Siva!" Some openly said it; everyone looked it. In a little dark room in the heart of the town we tasted the bitterness of it, slowly drank of it, hour after hour. And yet somehow, though far cast down, at first we were not afraid. We thought God

would work a miracle. He sometimes does. To us this seemed a suitable time: "Wherefore should the heathen say, where is now their God? Let Him be known among the heathen in our sight. O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? Shall the enemy blaspheme Thy name for ever? Why withdrawest Thou Thy hand, even Thy right hand? Pluck it out of Thy bosom! Arise, O God, plead Thine own cause." But we saw no sign in that dark little room, and as we drove away we looked back upon it with a sort of shuddering horror. We had seen there, with the smirch of his finger fresh upon it, the handiwork of the evil one. We had come into direct collision with him, and for the time had been terribly worsted. We reached home tired out, to find a convert waiting there.

Workers in hard places will know what that brief sentence means: the sudden swing from depth to height, the sudden revulsion of feeling, the inrush of exultant joy, shadowed though it was, and had to be—they will understand it. The boy who had given himself to a new service at that open-air meeting could not go on keeping silence. He confessed Christ at home. But he could not live as a Christian at home. He was forced to escape to us. He had arrived a few minutes before we came.

Immediately the storm broke round the mission-house. Crowds of relatives came, raged, pleaded, in turn. Sometimes they brought one skilled in speech to work upon him, till one felt, as one listened, influenced against one's will, by the almost hypnotic effect of that wonderfully persuasive oratory, and marvelled at the strength

that held him constant. Sometimes they painted the mother's sufferings so harrowingly that we to whom she was not mother could hardly bear it. But he bore it, though only God knows what it cost. The men of the Clan, who by supporting the parents in their iniquity concerning the young girl, were chiefly responsible for its result, came in wrath and humiliation, and we could not help wondering whether it ever occurred to them to connect their action in that with God's action in this. Gladly now would they have seen that insignificant young girl a baptized Christian ten times over rather than lose their noble boy.

For from their point of view he was irretrievably lost. He broke caste from the first, and took his stand as an out-and-out Christian, in a way which dismayed them, and made them feel the Clan had been humbled to the dust. "He has fallen into the pit, and we with him! O blind god, blind god!" they cried, "is it thus you requite your worshippers?" We heard no more of victory to Siva.

Suddenly this bright boy died. We were from home at the time, and when we heard the news it seemed to ring the knell to all our hopes for that special Clan and town. Nothing so daunts prospective inquirers as the death of a new convert. "Join the Way, and die," they say, ignoring the fact that those who do not join occasionally die. Death is the sign of God's frown. Were the people going to be able to think it was victory to Siva, after all?

The Christians who lived in the little house, in whose dark little room we waited that day in our weakness and

grief, wrote to us: "He died here; he died in the room where you prayed. The heathen crowded the street, and looked in, and we sang as he died, so that all should hear, 'Victory to Jesus' name. Victory to Jesus.' He had no fear. It was all victory, and peace. Many saw it and wondered. 'We do not die so,' they said; and with great astonishment they watched us, and listened."

Then indeed it seemed to us that in each detail and incident a Divine coincident lay. Had not God purposely chosen the place of our defeat to be the place where He should show forth His triumph over the last enemy to be destroyed? Had not even that very room come into His remembrance? The thought of it was good now. It had become a porch into the Presence chamber. The influence of that victorious death still works in the town. It is an argument none can controvert for the truth of our holy religion and the keeping power of God.

This alone would have been much. There is more to tell. We feared for the town, because we have often noticed that if a town, knowing what it is doing, shuts its doors and bars its windows to the breath of the Spirit, there is a withdrawal. The Spirit does not force an entrance. The town seems left. But to the glory of God we tell it, that town has stood out as an exception. From the day the people claimed victory for Siva, the town has never been for long without a seeker after truth. First from the most opposing Clan another was won, and another. Then to the heart of things the Spirit passed, and touched one connected with Temple-service. Then back to the indignant Clan, and another was drawn

out. The next came from a hamlet dependency. The next from the Clan again. And looking widely over His work it appears that He has most markedly worked in that special Clan which, whether in village or in town, is most strong in opposition.

“When Christianity assumes an aggressive attitude,” wrote George Bowen, “the first result is a great exhibition of Satanic power. Satan’s power to be manifested must be assaulted. There must necessarily be a complete exhibition of Satan’s power before there can be a complete revelation of the power of Christ. This last is the second result of Christian aggression. It is by what He conquers that Christ’s power is to be discovered.”

It is true that the little town as a whole, and especially its leading Clan, oppose as much as ever. There has been no general movement. Souls are saved one by one. May the day soon come when, by some great wave of irresistible Omnipotence, those who of all the world’s peoples are hardest to win, will be swept into the kingdom of God’s dear Son! Nothing less will effectually deal with Islam and with caste; our work is only the undermining of the walls of the ancient fortress of lies, that when at last the wave breaks on the shore, there may be the less to withstand it; till then may God keep us patient, “henceforth expecting.” But even now as we look through the years to that day, when we felt so heavy-laden, to that room where we saw not our signs, to that Clan of strong antipathies, to that town unshaken in its certainty of victory to Siva, and then turn, and look humbly but thankfully at what has happened since, can we fail to see and appropriate God’s Overweight of

Joy? "It is by what He conquers that Christ's power is to be discovered."

"Now thanks be unto God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" Oh to be more and more "stedfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as we know that our labour is not in vain in the Lord."

CHAPTER VIII

The Clue

OF all the people we had met in six or seven years' continuous itinerating work, none had drawn us more to pray, or followed us more persistently through those fugitive half-resemblances which so often suggested remembrance, than the secluded women of the Fort. But the conversion of a Fort woman still seems distant.

The genesis of anything is interesting. According to the folklore of the place, the Fort's story is briefly this :

Over eight hundred years ago it is said that two sisters and their retainers in journeying south quarrelled while fording the river which flows by the town near which the Fort is built. One sister held that convenience should rule in crossing rivers ; and she marched straight through the stream holding her garments so that they should not get wet. The other insisted that custom should ever be observed ; and she let her garments trail in the water.

The straw became a pillar, as the Tamils say ; the two sisters and their adherents parted never to meet again. The independent-minded sister travelled further and founded a township. The other stopped near the river, built a wall a mile in circumference, fifteen feet high

and six feet thick, pierced with four doors iron bossed and fitted with huge locks. Within this wall it was then ordained the women folk of that Clan must dwell in absolute seclusion. No woman born within should ever go out alive. No man born without should ever come in. Till they were eight or nine years old, the Fort's little girls might play freely in the open enclosure within the wall. After that age was passed they must live indoors. Once, a child, attracted by the sound of a procession passing through the street beyond the wall, ran out of her house, up to the wall, where the door stood open invitingly. And she looked out. Some one had seen her and followed. She was pulled in, and the people say she was instantly sawn asunder, and buried beside the door. Since then that door has been locked.

Once that great man, the Governor of the Province, rode up in state to the locked door and asked to be admitted. He was refused, and rode off with his suite. "If any of them," writes an I.C.S. friend, "gets into trouble, all you can do is to knock at the door and say he is wanted; and his friends hand him out to you. We have never known a case which would justify us in violating their scruples to the extent of forcing an entrance." The people to this day tell with relish the story of the Governor who turned back from the locked door. You can see their appreciation of the courtesy which respected their tradition, but overtopping that is pride in their glorious grooviness. "We are the People of the Fort."

But the Fort's existence has been jeopardised by certain of its laws. "Their treatment of the ladies is not, as

may be imagined, conducive to the longevity of that sex," is the laconic observation of the Civil Servant before quoted. One law enacted that no family might possess more than one daughter. This law has been repealed, but its long observance has denuded the Clan.

So these people have lived their lives for many generations, unaffected by the changes in the world outside their wall. India may pass from hand to hand. What does that matter to the people of the Fort? Storms and calms are nothing to the fossil in the rock. It may appear incredible to the strong commonsense of the West that the will should close on its purpose to bury its owner alive. In the East such things are not strange. The corpse is content in its coffin. That is the pity of it. But the coffin lid has smothered any sigh that may ever have risen, the world so close outside has never seen through that coffin lid, where the thing that was not a corpse may have moved. That is the tragedy of it.

After their altercation, the two branches of the Clan naturally fell apart, and considered themselves foes. No intermarriage was permitted. They were as two separate castes. The sister's descendants who settled outside increased and spread to a neighbouring town. "And it is affirmed that the characteristic shown by the sister at the ford, who dared to act as she chose apart from the rules of etiquette, still lingers in the family, for the women are brave and independent of spirit, and their men are very bold": so reads the Tamil manuscript from which the story comes, and ends.

For a moment I saw nothing, and put the paper down;

then suddenly I understood, caught at the fleeting floating clue that had eluded me so long, knew why that first Fort woman's face had followed me through all the years; knew too how prayer had wrought when it seemed as though it had fallen as the very foam of the spray beaten back by the great sea-wall.

The family famed for audacity and defiance of public opinion live eight thousand strong in the town where we held that ever-remembered open-air meeting by the well. Star and her cousin, the boy who bore glorious witness in his death, belonged to that special Clan. The town in which such battles were fought and in which the Spirit has wrought in power, proving Christ and not Siva reigns, is peopled by the same family, twin Clan to the Clan of the Fort.

"True prayer," says Westcott in his note on Hebrews v. 7, "the prayer which must be answered, is the personal recognition and acceptance of the Divine will. It follows that the hearing of prayer . . . is not so much the granting of a specific petition which is assumed by the petitioner to be the way to the end desired, but the assurance that what is granted does most effectively lead to the end."

Often the answer to our prayer comes as it were obliquely. We pray for one, and the prayed-for one goes on apparently unimpressed. But the prayer, if one may put it so, glances off the soul that has hardened itself, and falls like a shower on another, and that soul responds like a watered garden, and blossoms out in flower. Or where, as in the case of the Fort, and perhaps more often than we know, ignorance rather than

wilful refusal shuts off the fall of the showers for a while, the answer may be delayed, and we may count the time a void; not seeing that what is granted does most effectively lead to the end which is our heart's desire. But if, not seeing any light, we listen in stillness, we hear God say: "Fear not, look up, for My love works now, even before it is given full scope. See, I am filling the interval with shining answers to those prayers. Look and see them, star-like, strewn across the places you thought were void. There are no empty places here. Look up, and praise."

CHAPTER IX

The Shah Najaf

IF there is one thing more than another which the average Englishman abhors, that thing is cant.

We all agree about it. It is detestable. The man of the world, so called, keeps clear of it altogether. Are we who professedly belong to another world quite so clear? For example, we sincerely rejoice over stories of success from this and that quarter of the globe. But does it very much trouble us that Asia as a whole is practically an unconquered fort?

If it does trouble us, how much does it trouble us? How much are we prepared to sacrifice to win that fort? Missionaries at home on furlough are sometimes keenly disappointed in what is called an interest in missions. In some places it seems as if this same "interest" were treated as a sort of decorative afterthought to the otherwise quite complete church life. An absence of news (good news) from the front, and there is a perceptible cooling off; an honest story of defeat is told, and discouragement results. And yet we all profess to be soldiers, with a soldier's conscience about obedience and a soldier's courage in tackling the difficult. To the onlooker, at

least, it must sometimes seem that we are not in very burning earnest about our soldiership. And if we call ourselves soldiers, and sing, and pray, and talk on these lines, and yet are not in burning earnest, is it not possible that the thing we all agree to dislike is resident among us?

The fact is irrefutable, and the sooner we face it the better, that certain fields are “discouraging,” to quote the poor broken-backed word in use in such connections. Yet history is full of stories which rebuke the limp-souled courage based on prospects of an easy victory. We often recall these stories. One concerns the Shah Najaf in the days of the Indian mutiny.

The Shah Najaf was a tomb enclosed by masonry loopholed walls twenty-five feet high. Lord Roberts describes its assault and capture in his *Forty-one Years in India*. He says it was almost concealed in dense jungle, so that its strength was unsuspected till approached. The troops were marching to the relief of Lucknow. They could not leave the fort unconquered in their rear. The artillery, a battalion of detachments, fresh infantry, attacked in succession. They fell back, riddled by the deadly fire from the fort. Our guns were only a few yards distant, but they produced no impression. The enemy, encouraged by success, grew bolder. The one hope of the little British army fighting against 30,000 desperate mutineers was to continue to advance at all hazards. Sir Colin Campbell led his men straight to the walls. The narrow path through the jungle was choked with wounded officers and dead and struggling horses. No breach in the walls could be found. The

men had no scaling ladders. Passion, tumult, solid dogged steadfastness, lives wrecked upon a purpose hardly to be achieved, the hot night closing down, the foe all round, for all the North was a foe: see it, and you see stress and strain past telling, cause for immense discouragement.

We have our Shah Najaf. This ancient and highly developed creed is a tomb. The word suggests decadence, but a tomb may be strongly fortified, with a strength concealed till approached. We make little headway in our assault. The enemy is upon us. We cannot fight at night. The enemy sees this, knows with an accurate knowledge we do not possess what the odds against us are. And so, except in moments of panic, he is not afraid of us.

The critic of missions sees all this, and, marvelling at our madness in prolonging the unequal struggle, he tries to show us how very unequal it is. He laughs at what he calls our "inflated reports," and calmly sits down to calculate. So much expenditure all told, with its present net result. So much money, so many men, devoted to the winning of those who are confessedly hardest to win, with exactly what success. The walls of the Shah Najaf, he proves, are not even slightly cracked.

But why should his sums disturb us so? It is true that he omitted to tabulate results among peoples less strongly entrenched. He knew that these results are already familiar to students of missionary literature. Heaven's statistics were out of his reach, and possibly he may have forgotten the existence of the factor. Is his product therefore entirely wrong? Why should he for

his candour's sake be considered unpleasant, almost profane, a pricking brier and a grieving thorn in the sensitive missionary body? Perhaps there is some truth in what he says. We do not want to be either optimistic or pessimistic, but just true. Said the wise Zerubbabel, “ Great is the Truth and stronger than all things,” and proved his proposition. And all the people shouted, “ Great is the Truth and mighty above all things.” “ Truth beareth away the victory.” If there is a possible particle of truth in the critic's remarks should we not set to, and search it out, and honour it when we find it?

We should, and we will, say an increasing number of mission-loving men and women at home, and missionaries abroad; but some still fear, knowing human nature well, lest subscriptions should be lost and candidates deterred by a too detailed account of what is called “ the dark side ” of things. But surely God's silver and gold should not have to be dragged out of Christian pockets by force of tales of victory. It should be enough to know that the King requires the money for the prosecution of His wars. Our unselfish friends the collectors should not have to dread lest an inconvenient escape of facts make their hard work harder. And as for the missionary candidates, if the knowledge that the battle is not nearly won yet deters them in the least, let them be deterred. *The kind of candidate wanted will not be deterred.* What we need is more common honesty. God listens to our words however expressed, strips them bare of accessories, musical or devotional, peels off all the emotion; searches through for the pith at their heart,

caring just for the white thread of Truth. If we are, as we declare we are, not our own but wholly Another's, feeling will not affect duty either way.

The reports from the most hotly contested fields contain serious facts. A South Indian missionary lately wrote, that if our estimate of the progress made during the past twenty years in a certain Indian city were correct, we must admit that the Gospel we have been teaching does not appear to have had very much power in view of all that has been done. "We might well ask ourselves whether we really are preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ as He means we should." The weapons of our warfare are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. Why are they not oftener pulled down?

The soldiers before the Shah Najaf were repulsed till further attack seemed suicide. Then the tide of victory turned. Two men, searching along the wall, discovered a single opening, looked through, climbed through. They found the foe flying from the Shah Najaf.

We have the promise of triumph. The fortress of the high fort of those walls of creed and caste shall God bring down, lay low, and bring to the ground, even to the dust. We believe in God, Jehovah is His Name: that strengtheneth the spoiled against the strong, so that the spoiled shall come against the fortress. We have no right to be discouraged.

But, are we soldiers after all? What those soldiers could not tolerate, rushed on death rather than tolerate, we tolerate comfortably; thankful that things are no

worse than they are. Where is our enthusiasm for the kingdom of our Lord? If enthusiasm is love on fire, where, then, is our love? Do we count our lives too dear unto us to risk them under loopholed walls? Is Christ's battalion the only one in which it is counted too much to die? We would not conceal it, it does mean death. Reputation for soul-winning power dies under the walls of the Shah Najaf. All that the "I" in us loves should live, is sentenced to death at the Shah Najaf. "Except it fall into the ground and die"—the law of the seed is the soldier's law. "There is no gain except by loss, there is no life except by death. . . . And that eternal Passion saith, 'Be emptied of glory and right and name.'"

One more look: look at the two, solitary for the moment, as they search along that wall. They have found the gap, they are climbing through it into the fort: are they solitary now? No! for the Highlanders close behind, each man keen to be first to go through, needing no urging. Then look again at the other wall, at the few who are searching for the gap. Say, when your comrades find the gap will they have to go in alone?

Do we press all to come and join in the storming of the Shah Najaf? For answer, we quote words written in one of her last letters, by an Indian missionary, Louise Benedict Pierson, who received the victor's palm on the battlefield. It is a warrior's message to a brother, a comrade to be:

"I write words for you to ponder and pray over. Do not go to any foreign field until you know beyond a

doubt that God has Himself sent you to that particular field at that particular time. There is a romance or halo about being a missionary which disappears when you get on the field, I assure you. And, believe me, from the first moment you step upon shipboard upon your way to the field, the devil and all his agents will attack, and entice, and ensnare you, or try to do all these, in order to defeat the purpose for which you cut loose and launched out. Nothing but the fulness of the Holy Spirit will carry anyone through; and if you do not know that you have received this, do *not fail* to obey the command to 'tarry until you be endued with power from on high.'

"Believe me, the foreign field is already full enough of prophets that have run, and He did not send them. If you know beyond a doubt — and you may — that God is empowering and sending you there, and now, go and fear not; and when, through the days, months, and years of suffering, that are sure to be in this cross-bearing life, the question arises again and again, 'Why is this? Am I in God's plan and path?' the rock to which you will hold in this sea of questionings and distresses is, 'God sent me here, I know beyond a doubt; therefore I may go on fearing nothing, for He is responsible, and He alone.' But if you have to admit, 'I do not know whether He sent me or not,' you will be thrown into an awful distress of mind by the attacks of the great adversary, not knowing what will be the outcome, and you will find yourself crying out, 'Oh that it were time to go home. What a fool I was to run ahead of the Lord.' Do not think,

my brother, that God sends us to the field sweetly to tell the story of Jesus, and that is all. He sends us there to do what Jesus came into the world to do—to bear the cross. But we will be able to trudge on, though bowed under the weight of that cross of suffering, and even of shame, if our hearts are full of Him, and our eyes are ever looking upon the One who is invisible, the One who sent us forth, and therefore will carry us through.

“Forgive me for writing thus plainly. I pray that this message may shake in you all that can be shaken, that that which cannot be shaken may remain firm as the Rock of Ages.”

CHAPTER X

“Follow the Gleam”

DR. HORTON, in his *Life of Tennyson*, explains the Gleam to be that elusive truth or beauty which it is the function of the poet to seize and express. The poet's life must ever be a following of the Gleam.

To the missionary the Gleam is the joy set before him, the glory of his Master in the winning of souls. His whole life, if he is true, has for its motto, “Follow the Gleam.”

The rough battle view of things seen at the Shah Najaf sometimes tires. There are days when we want something less fierce. The noise of the shouting, the clash of creed on creed ceases, “quenched with quiet” at the passing of the Gleam.

The besetting sin of Evangelistic work is slackness. Our colleagues on the Educational side have certain incentives which we have not. The result is apparent. If you want to see Duty spelt with a capital letter, go to a well-worked mission school. Such a visit is a tonic.

Another tonic is to be found in the other wing, the Medical. There you can study the opposite of your own

defect, for a medical mission is nothing if it is not thorough. The punishment for slovenly work is sure and swift in the Medical as in the Educational. Only the thorough succeeds. In our Evangelistic work it is somewhat different. The result of a slack hour does not show at once. The stain it leaves on the conscience, the absence of something that might have been wrought in another soul, these are symptoms of decline often invisible to our eyes. Only God and the sorrowful Angels read them aright from the first.

As things are, then, it is good sometimes to break away from one's own sphere and go into another for a while. It helps to ensure against mental cramp. It draws the lowered standard up, and gives one a salutary shake. And because the Gleam is the same for Educational, Medical, and Evangelistic, one finds oneself still in one's own world with much to learn in every direction.

The nearest medical mission to us is the London Missionary Society's hospital at Neyoor, South Travancore, distant thirty-five miles. If one has a change of bulls, and spends much energy in hurrying them on, one may cover the distance in about the time it takes to reach Dublin from London. Our people from all over the district constantly travel to the Neyoor hospital, for in our C.M.S. Mission here we have no medical work, and the people often feel the need of the help the Neyoor hospital gives.

My introduction to Neyoor shows a side of medical mission work upon which the mission Report naturally does not dilate, it being only one of the little byways of

kindness familiar to Medicals everywhere, but it may be worth while telling it. We had an epidemic of ophthalmia in the village. Every morning a succession of suffering infants were brought to be attended to. Just when they were all beginning to mend, the trouble came to me. I thought nothing of it at first—it is a most common thing in India (the children immediately gave me the verse, "In all things it behoved Him to be made like unto His brethren")—but it soon forced one to think of it. Simple means failed. Help was sought from Palamcottah, but the Government doctor was miles away and could not come. We were reluctant to appeal to the overworked medical missionaries, but at last Mr. Walker telegraphed. Straight from the midst of what we afterwards knew was an abnormally heavy pressure of work, one of the two doctors stationed at Neyoor cycled out to us. That same night, as the blessed ease of respite from pain was felt, how I wished for a voice that would reach far to speak a clear word for medical missions!

The Neyoor hospital has thrown out offshoots into the fortunate surrounding country. One of these is a truly wonderful little place. It is a complete little hospital run on Western lines by an Indian medical evangelist. There you have the science of the West at work, with the touch of the East upon it.

When you wander round the Neyoor hospital, you see the East and West again in delightfully close company. Each patient has a friend or friends, and each of these seems to have friends. The result may not make for hospital discipline, but from a missionary view-point nothing

could be more satisfactory. The kitchen system is as Indian as possible. The kitchens look like caves yawning on the face of a cliff, for they open off a blank wall with a steep back-slanting roof; each caste has its own cave. Facing the wards and hospital buildings which run round the compound, Indian fashion, there is what looks like a neat little house, built of stone on a stone platform, with a high-pitched red-tiled roof. This is the operation room, the heart of the place.

To the lay mind, and most of us are only lay, the sound of the word "operation" suggests something sinister, and the operation table is a thing we prefer to forget. I was looking, half attracted, half repelled, at the various contrivances and instruments, when a shuffling noise proclaimed an arrival, and an old man, a cataract case, was helped up the steps, and into the room, and on to the table. Then I realised that my feelings were wholly those of aversion. The little knives that were waiting in a bath of solution looked cruel. They were waiting for that poor old man.

"Doctors revel in operations: I wonder if they remember that their victims are not equally injured. I wonder if bodies are just cases without feelings":—these were the thoughts that came at that moment, quite irrespective of reason. "He's nervous," said the doctor, who was vigorously scrubbing his hands. "You might talk to him: tell him it won't hurt." Some questions are quickly answered.

The patient was a thin old man. He lay like a corpse, with a quilt for a shroud, his blind eyes staring straight up, his lips tense. He was a Hindu from our district,

I found. The home voice seemed to reassure him. He lay more naturally.

There was prayer for a successful issue. The merciful cocaine had done its work. The eye was ready. The doctor began.

Being so very lay, we found our chief interest in the human element rather than the surgical, and stood a little aside watching the faces of the two or three concerned. There was something fascinating in their absorption, something inspiring too. And the sense of the barbarous wholly passed as a figment of gross ignorance. It was one man trying to help another, bending all his skill upon him, and all in the way of following the Gleam.

I had been through the wards, had talked with the people in bed and on the floor, for the hospital had overflowed its beds, and some had mats on the floor. Then I had mingled in the crowd of impotent folk in the outer hall, men and women of all castes and conditions, and I had visited that surprisingly cheerful place, the lepers' quarters. There had been a mixture of opposites; horrible things, beautiful things, heart-breaks and heart-rejoicing things were jumbled up close together, so that the impression left upon one's mind was more curious than clear. But everywhere I had found one single satisfying thing, unbounded opportunity to speak to people about Jesus Christ. "After it, follow it, follow the Gleam" might have been written all over the walls. Some poor sufferers naturally were too preoccupied to listen. Some were too careless. Some too hard. But the greater number were ready, and a few were even

eager. There was no need to search for a way to the heart. The approaches lay all open. Perhaps one has to be an Evangelistic missionary, unaccustomed to find sympathy ready created, and affection already awakened, to appreciate at its full value such an opportunity.

It was the effect of an evident cause. The cause was familiar enough. But, standing alongside that Cause at work, the familiar took edge and point, and its force was felt in a new fashion. We realised then as we had not before how much hung upon how little. One infinitesimal carelessness as to surgical cleanliness, one moment's diverted attention, one swerve of the knife in the doctor's hand, and that particular door of access to a soul for whom Christ died might be for ever barred. It was awesome to feel that such a tremendous consequence depended on something so delicate that when you would define it exactly, you could not. Viewed in this searching surgical light, everything short of the most scrupulous attention to even apparently unimportant minutiae, everything short of intense concentration, seemed criminal.

But only a few minutes had passed since the old man had lain down. "Look!" said the doctor, and I saw the yellow-ochre lens slip smooth like a ripe little seed from its cell. The doctor held up his fingers, "Count!" And the old man counted four. There was a moment of pure human pleasure then.

Later I saw that happy old man. He had a room to himself where his friends were allowed to wait on him. He was peaceful, had no pain, did not mind his bandages, wearied not at all. To one who finds half a day's idle

captivity pure misery, the patience of these people is rebuking. He made a perfect recovery, and it needs but a little imagination to see him as he truly is in his distant village to-day, a contented old man, an inspirer of hope to those in whose eyes "the cataract flower has fallen." He and his heard daily while in hospital about the great Eye Opener for whose sake that help was given. In his case the result is not known. But it is impossible to believe the story would leave no mark upon him. And could there be a kinder way of making a mark for Eternity?

Are any dispirited still, and still in perplexity as to our ways of trying to win souls for Jesus Christ? May I say, stop looking at us. Look instead at the Medical Missions. They are dotted about from the South to Cashmere. Focus upon one of them, and forget discouragement in giving some practical bit of help. Viewed every way, discouragement is surely a weak and cowardly thing, sign of a spiritual near-sightedness which must limit one all round. True work can never die. Let us believe it and be glad. We have only one thing to do: "This one thing I do. I press." Let us press on all together in the missionary enterprise, past the dull joy of discouragement, and through it, out into the clear air where we can see The Gleam.

CHAPTER XI

“The Grace of the People to come”

WHAT is the use of following the Gleam? Does it lead to anything definite? To which we would answer, Follow and know: follow and see that most tangible thing, a Christian home in a Hindu town.

The mountains which divide British India from Travancore fall into foothills north of us; a wild track leading through them opens into a plain with another encircling mountain guard. To save time and avoid heat we usually travel by night, but our bandy man, the bullock driver, believes the track is haunted by tigers (which, much to my disappointment, are always entirely invisible). So in a recent journey we travelled by day to escape the fabulous beasts, and arrived late in the evening at our destination, a town in the northern plain.

The house to which we were bound was reached at last, the warmest of welcomes was waiting there; but it was late to disturb our Indian friends, so we searched for a place to pitch a camp cot, and finally found a broken-down archway sometimes used as a cattle-pen.

I had a young convert girl with me. It was her first experience of a cow-house for a bedroom, and she did not appreciate it. But she remembered the manger,

and that changed the face of things. There is a special little joy in being allowed to tread, even so far off, in the very way He went. Happily, then, we swept up the straw, and piled it in a corner, and cleaned up generally, till by the light of our lantern the place looked possible, and almost comfortable. Soon three varieties of human snores mingled with the bulls' snores, and five weary creatures were at rest. The bandy man and cook boy were just outside the passage. They never stirred till morning. The girl, who was close to me, slept in the same steady determined fashion. I was not so fortunate, for the sounds around were persistent.

The archway ended in a courtyard. Next to it, separated only by a low mud wall, was another courtyard, very much inhabited. Some old men had settled themselves on the verandah and were talking. The thin cracked quavering voices wandered on in endless dissertations upon rupees, annas, pies. I found myself listening against my will, and got inextricably entangled in their financial complications. And I wondered at the mental arithmetic apparatus possessed by such very old gentlemen, for they revelled in the intricate, and dealt deeply in fractions. Their manipulation of the forty-eighth part of one and fourpence was a thing to remember; but it baffled me. Afterwards came betel-nut, the usual refreshment. Then more talk. Suddenly the voices fell to a chuckling mumble.

There are some sounds, like the squeak of a slate pencil, that seem to convert one into a piece of steel wire subjected to the operations of a leisurely file. Such a sound is continuous conversation on a hot night

after a journey. After a while the voices grew sharper, and I heard what wakened every nerve in me. They were discussing a lad who evidently wanted to be a Christian. They had settled upon some plan of action when they talked low. Now having settled upon it they were almost riotous. There was more talk. The voices, ancient as they were, grew keen and purposeful. One could only pray for the boy, whoever he was, as one thought of him sleeping peacefully somewhere near, unconscious of the plots they were weaving round him.

There was something uncomfortable in overhearing a conversation emphatically not meant for me. However, I reflected that I could not suitably make myself known to those men just then, and remembering how Gideon was caused to overhear a conversation once, I concluded God had said “Thou shalt hear what they say,” and was quiet. Next day I found out who the boy was, a young inquirer, too young to come out as a Christian. He was protected through all that followed. The plots fell harmless. Even so, even here,

“Standeth God within the shadow,
Keeping watch above His own.”

The night was not still even after the old men departed. About midnight some one began to chant praises to Siva, a blind man, we afterwards found, who had vowed to chant some hundred stanzas twice every night throughout his life. On and on he went in the plaintive minor of India's old prayer-music. While it was still dark before sunrise he began again, and this time there was a woman's voice faintly following.

It was a new experience to lie there and hear all this. And I felt that a night in a heathen town and almost in a heathen house was a revealing thing. "My principal grief was, and so it has continued to be, that I grieved so very little," said Ragland, years ago.

We had come to that town because Victory, one of our convert girls who had married Liegeman, one of Mr. Walker's convert boys, was in sore trouble over the serious illness of her little daughter. Up till then she and her husband had been spared all anxiety, and the peacefulness of that little home had been a thought of peace to us, and a wonder to the Hindus, who used one of their favourite names for heaven when describing it. As for Victory, they called her by a beautiful name. One day an old ascetic, proof to preaching, came in to see me when I was there. "She is gold, pure gold," he said to me, pointing to Victory, who was busy over her household work. And I found Pure Gold was her name among the Hindu neighbours.

But suddenly the blue skies clouded. One of the most fatal of tropical diseases had seized the little child, that bright home's little joy. She lay in great suffering and most pathetic weakness, knowing only that she wanted her mother's arms to be always round her, and her mother's face within reach of the touch of her little hands. That poor mother was worn out with night and day nursing and housework combined, for the convert has no relations to come and help at such times. The strain was almost too much for her, and the Hindus watched curiously. What would happen now? For days they watched, coming constantly to inquire, always

sympathetic, but always on the alert to notice what was going on. And through all the long trial the father and mother were strengthened to glorify God.

Perhaps what touched the Hindus most was a little incident which happened the day the child began to recover. Upon waking from a long refreshing sleep the white and red of an embroidered text fastened to a dark beam in the ceiling caught her attention, and she pointed to it. Her thankful mother could hardly see for the “water of joy” which filled her eyes, but she read the text aloud: “Great is Thy loving-kindness toward me.” To the reverent Indian mind this was a thing which appealed. The story was told all down the street, and opened the way for many conversations. “I will never water the baby’s milk; no, never again,” said the milk-woman, through whose activities in that direction the illness probably came. And she kept her word for a fortnight.

When you stay in such a home right among the Hindus, with whom as in the hospital you are friends already, half the difficulties of itinerating work are non-existent, and the other half are in abeyance. You are near the people, nearer than in bungalow or tent. They let you into their lives’ inner rooms, and you see strange things there. These things make you all the more thankful for the fact of these Christian homes scattered like light-seeds on the dark soil. In hours when the overwhelming forces of evil seem wholly in ascendance, “I take to witness the Grace of the people to come.” Such a witness is worth everything; it is strong with the promise of hope.

Life, with Indian fellow-Christians for one's companions, draws one very close to them, and makes that Grace a very shining quality. One writes after experience. Of course there are bound to be disappointments. There are everywhere. But the impress left upon me by a year of such life is a very loving impress. I cannot forget the sympathy when serious illness came to the bungalow, and took my fellow missionaries away. No touch is tenderer than the Indian touch in trouble. Their way of comforting is the child's way, the unconscious way that somehow helps without hurting. The patience of their kindness and their fealty are unfailing. To the Indian missionary, at least, it cannot be called sacrifice to lose one's English identity and let oneself be bound in the bundle of life with one's Indian brothers and sisters. But the more India becomes home, the more the longing burns within one that this land should be purified, swept clean from north to south as by a wave of fire; for if ever a people were created to be a crown of glory and a royal diadem, surely the people of India were. Sentiment, some will say, and smile. But to the one who writes, it seems true.

Much that may be seen and heard in ordinary converse in an ordinary Hindu home is natural and happy. Convention cannot kill nature. Theoretically the woman is nothing and nowhere. Practically she is by no means a nonentity. "*Aiyo, Aiyo!* it is a girl!" the new baby is unwelcome. But once the shock is over the baby-girl is loved. There is any amount of noisy quarrelling; if words were blows half the population would be extinct to-morrow. But on the other hand, when you consider

the compound family system, and recollect the close quarters in which such variety of disposition is packed, you will be amazed that so many people contrive to exist in tranquillity. The thing which in the main distinguishes life in such a community from life in England is, that here any moment you may suddenly come upon Sin sunning itself out in the open, all unashamed. And nobody is startled.

One afternoon some pleasant-faced women, after having finished their household work, sat down with me on the steps leading to the canal where they drew their water. The canal suggested reminiscences. "Yes," said one, alluding to another piece of water to which her neighbour had referred, "that tank used to be pure enough to bathe the god and goddess in, but one year it dried up, and they found it defiled with bones." Then she entered into details, only understood in India, which led off into a casual remark about a little girl who was ill, and therefore living with her father. Why "therefore?" Children sick or well usually live in their parents' homes, and I inquired about her, and heard this short true tale: Her father had married out of caste, and been outcasted in consequence, which caused him inconvenience. So one morning his wife was found with a poisoned rag across her mouth, and to cut clear of all complications the little daughter was sent elsewhere. I had no need to ask where. There are houses in Tinnevely town, and in every other Temple-town, where such little ones are welcome. But the child had been ill, and had been sent home to her father, who would return her when she was well. Was nothing done? What could be done? How obtain

sufficient proof? Besides, why concern oneself in another's business? So the double crime passed unrecorded except in the unsurprised memories of men.

How one gets to hate sin as if it were a physical foe who could be throttled to death if only he could be caught! I thought of that little innocent girl only eight years old, a bright intelligent child they said, and very affectionate. Slow crawled the waters of the canal like a stealthy brown snake at our feet. I thought of the things I had heard had been done on its banks. One could have better borne to see that child held under those waters, held till she struggled no longer, than face out what life might mean for her.

To hear about such a little one is to set every faculty to work to try to save her. But the hands that hold do not lightly let go. At such times, when baffled at every turn, almost despairing, though one will not despair, the only thing that shines is the Coming of the Lord. His Coming will end all the wickedness. "When will the evening be measured, the night be gone? We are full of tossings to and fro until the dawning of the day!" "Lord Jesus, take wide steps. O my Lord, come over mountains at one stride! Oh, if He would fold the heavens together like an old cloak, and shovel time and days out of the way, and make ready in haste the Lamb's wife for her Husband!"

How few want that to happen is something you realise when you search for a Christian house to which you have been directed through the labyrinth of a Hindu town. India is awake, the sanguine tell us, meaning that some few or many—the terms are relative

—of India's Christians are awake. Supposing all the Christians in the land were awake, it would not mean that India itself had awakened. The Christians of India are not India. There are a hundred millions of people in India to-day who have never even heard of Jesus Christ, and who as things are now have not the remotest chance to hear about Him. There are millions more who have heard very little, if anything; but, not counting those, there are a hundred millions who cannot possibly hear. The fact is overwhelming. It crushes down upon us. If we could realise its full force for one single minute it would crush us too much. It would break our hearts. But we do not realise it. We speak in a language we do not understand. We talk of millions. What are millions? When we stop and try to lay hold upon the word, and make it open to us, it closes up, or slips away, and we catch elusive glimpses of it: that is all.

A hundred millions: no effort of the imagination materially helps us to grasp that which is beyond our grasp. But look at this photograph. Look at it as a whole, and then in detail. Suppose yourself in the midst of it, in the thick of the press, jammed in by the car, with the glare and the glitter, and the overwhelming heat and noise beating and dancing and whirling about you. Make yourself slowly apprehend that the stream that seems to stretch so far is only the trickling of a drop from the great sea of Indian life; the mass that moves as a huge whole is hardly as a grain of dust from the heap of the population. How vast the sea, how immense the heap must be!

But alone in the quiet night the crush of the fact is

heaviest. You may listen then to the voice of one of the multitude. It has time to enter into you, with its separate and distinct note of invitation to stop again and think. One of the last nights spent in that Hindu town was as wakeful as the first; for the blind man, whose routine involved other streets than his own, seemed to spend longer than usual in his wanderings and prayers. On and on, hour after hour, now near and clear, now gradually distancing and softening, on and on untiringly rose the mournful monotone, "Siva-Sivah! Siva-Sivah!" till I almost held my breath to hear a voice that would answer him, almost strained my eyes to see a face that would lean to him through the dark. And then the night, with that strange power night has, took the sadness, and unrolled it to the full, took the sense of the drear and sharpened it, took the dark and magnified it till there was no room for any light. The soul of the land seemed out in the dark, wandering desolate up and down, crying ever over and over, "Siva-Sivah! Siva-Sivah!"

Perhaps the night served as foil for the morning, each detail stands out with such bright distinctness. A pair of sparrows had built in the kitchen, within hand's reach, but, of course, they had not been molested, and the fearless flying in and out of the birds, and the cheerful twittering of the nestlings, gave character to the house. It, too, was a nest. And now that the nestling was well again, the house-nest was full of happiness and little sounds of content. We spent the forenoon with the pastor's family, sharing their noontide meal; and again the bird's nest was suggested, for the house was

packed as closely as any nest with children, and the merry little things' vocal zeal on that hot day was inspiring.

"The Grace of the people to come, whose little ones rejoice in gladness," is a Grace all sunlit. Thank God for the true Christian homes which must multiply with the years, however few there are now. Surely India's future will be better than her past. "Howbeit this day be not Christ's, the morrow shall be His."

CHAPTER XII

Alone

ONE would like to write straight on of glad things now, without a break to the end. But that would not be true. And it is on my mind to win your help for our Indian comrades situated as Victory and her husband, and so very many are, alone among Hindus or Mohammedans, who, however friendly on the common plane of life, consider the Christian a mistake, and his religion a delusion or a sin, according to the intensity with which their own is held. To such there must come moments of peculiar loneliness. I realised this more acutely than one can easily describe, when not long ago I spent an afternoon alone with some opposing Hindus.

We had gone as a band of women to a neighbouring town, famous for its temple built into a rock. The separate castes live in separate quarters. We had divided two and two so as to reach as many as possible. The Brahman quarter had fallen to my share. My companion was a young convert girl.

We were walking quietly towards the Brahman street when a boy was sent to tell us that a deputation of Brahmans would wait upon me in the rest-house at the

entrance to the street. I could not refuse to go, for no man-missionary had visited that town for over two years. I could not expose a young girl to the gaze and remarks of the men. So I went alone.

The rest-house is a lofty stone-built room, with a raised dais on either side. It was crowded with men on one side. The other side was left for me. The door was open, and packed with spectators. They pointed to the empty side of the dais, and all fronted round facing me.

I found they knew a good deal about Christianity. Several had studied in Mission schools. All knew Christians; so there was something to go upon. But they began by asking why in the first instance we brought a message to India which India did not want. I told them how long ago their forefathers and ours lived as brothers on the northern tableland; how we and they had drifted apart, they travelling south, we west; how the Good Tidings came to us of the west; and how our ascended Redeemer and King had told us to share the great joy with others.

They were interested in this, and observed that such being the wish of our Guru, we as His disciples had no choice but to obey. (The East has much to teach the West upon the duty of obedience.) Only, they added, in the interval of separation, God the Supreme had divided their half of the brotherhood into many subdivisions, whereas ours had remained a homogeneous mass. The message we had brought would, they believed, tend to disorganise the existing order, and reduce their complex system into something as simple as ours—

in other words, do away with caste : and that therefore Christianity was not a desirable religion for India.

"The truth is," writes the keen observer quoted before, "that the Asiatics, like the Jews, dislike Christianity, see in it an ideal they do not love, a promise they do not desire, and a pulverising force which must shatter their civilisations." That is exactly how those men viewed it, and they spoke out the feeling of their race. I had no desire to attack their social system, or to defend ours (though a word of explanation seemed required). I only wanted to witness to a living, loving, personal Saviour. And I longed for more power and glow to show that love in its breadth, length, depth, height. Tamil is rich in words expressing almost every shade of thought. Our message never sounds more alluring than when told in a language which seems formed to convey spiritual ideas. So, confident in the promise that words would be given, and would, though spoken in weakness, be clothed in strength, and glad in the consciousness that I had brought them no foreign religion (the book is an Eastern book, permeated with the spirit of the East), and gladder still in the certainty that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation whether in East or West, I spoke and hoped with a great hope.

They listened splendidly. There is something in the story which draws. But even as they listened, leaning forward, watchful, silent, wholly attentive, their inscrutable faces told me nothing.

After listening patiently, as is the Eastern way, they spoke at some length. The message was wonderful, beautiful, excellent truly for those to whom it pertained.

But as for themselves, “ Why throw away the fruit in one’s hand, and long for the fruit on the tree ? ” Desire is *maya*, illusion ; virtue consists in cessation from desire. “ But we are glad,” they added, “ to form friendship with you. As our friend, we believe, you have come to our town.” And in the circumlocution of the courteous and leisurely East, many speeches followed, to which answers were allowed, till we came to closer quarters, and they spoke more directly what they meant. Like drops of icy water, dropping, dropping, fell their words on one’s hot hope.

“ If a heap of sugar were piled on the floor, would you have to call the ants to come ? They would come without any call. If your religion were good for this land, those best fitted to judge of its merits, we, the Brahmins, would have led the way to it. As it is, the undiscerning run. The poor and profoundly ignorant run. We are not found in your Way.”

“ Look at this town,” said another, pointing out through the door to the long stretching Brahmin street ; “ have you a Christian here ? ”

“ Yes, one ; but such a one ! And he is here for pay ! ”

“ Look at the next town, and the next.” They named half a dozen towns. “ Have you any living there who are not there for pay ? ”

“ And then,” continued a triumphant voice, “ look how your Christians live. Do your Christians never lie ? never steal ? never bear false witness ? And supposing they were exemplary, what are they worth after all ? How many belong to us ? ”

"Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on Him?" It was not a new question. As for the slur cast on the Christians' character, though one could not say all were true, one could name those who were. There was a confusion of conflicting voices, as the names were tossed about. "Your Christian poet! He was my father's friend. A great scholar, we know his poetry!" "Renegade! Renegade!" "No, poet!" Then, naming another of God's noblemen, one from the caste which has yielded most Christians, I set the ball rolling in an opposite direction; all there knew him and his stainless life, and had to confess it was good.

It is something to have such names to name; but no names, no facts, can compel a Hindu to come out in the open and face them. With him an argument consists in dodging about from tree to tree. You follow him to one, to find he is looking at you from round the slippery trunk of another. For in this interminable jungle the trees are palms with stems like poles. Nothing so four-square as an oak confronts you anywhere.

It was vain to follow from tree to tree, and seeing one could not be drawn to try, they came back to the first, and repeated that the nation (meaning themselves) had shown no appreciation of our religion. The ants avoided the sugar; which proved it was not sweet or nutritious to them, whatever it might be to us. There was another skirmish round divers inviting objections, but their final return to the argument based on an illustration, gave one the chance to explain why all who hear of Him do not taste and see that the Lord is good. The ants have nothing to leave behind in

order to taste the sugar. We have to leave our sin before we can truly taste the heavenly food.

This started questions. What is sin? When did it come into existence? Why is it allowed to continue? Which is stronger, good or evil? If good, then how is it that it is overcome by evil? If the doctrine of reincarnation, which teaches that suffering in this life is resultant from sin in a former birth, is untrue, how then do we account for the suffering of innocent children? If we answer that often they suffer for their parents' sin, how do we prove God just? What about the hereafter? How will those be dealt with who know nothing of the way which we affirm is the only way to bliss? These were a few of the questions showered upon us from all sides at once. One sympathised with the questioners, for the questions are as old as the mind of man.

So looking up for answers which should satisfy even where they could not explain, I began with the last question, and was reading that heart-resting word of the Lord: "But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes,"—when a voice broke in authoritatively:

"We cannot accept answers from that book. Your own Gurus are not agreed about it. Some say it is composed of legends and fables, mere myths at best. Yes," and he turned to the men, "there are Christian scholars who say so. The book is not to be regarded as entirely true."

It was evident he had read, and somewhat misunderstood, translations of certain English articles bearing

upon the inspiration of the Bible, which have begun to appear in India. One felt as if one had been hit by mistake by a shot from one's own side. I was not prepared to find this objection in a remote country town, and not wishing to get involved in such discussion, tried to lead them back to the great central truth upon which all Christians, whatever their opinion may be about other matters, are certainly agreed. But the men were impatient now. "You come to us with a mutilated book about which you differ among yourselves! You want us to introduce the religion which it teaches to our women! We will not have it. We do not want it. You are one, alone. We are the many; how can the one be right, and all the number wrong? We have our god. You see his temple there. We have our books, which your wise men greatly prize. Many of your sages are coming to see that ours, the ancient religion, is true, and yours, born but yesterday; is false." (They love this fallacious argument.) "Listen!" and they named the few converts won from nominal Christianity to nominal Hinduism. "Listen!" and they quoted the remarks of one, a Christian visitor to India, who, in his anxiety to show sympathy with the best there is in the higher Hinduism, seemed to these men, its votaries, almost to apologise to it for the vandalism of venturing to differ from it in anything.

There is much that is noble in ancient Hindu thought. Anything like an intolerant attitude towards it can only repel those whom we would win. God spoke to men in the old days. His light enlightened them. But the echoes have become confused, the light

blurred. And this is taking Hinduism at its best, as the Védas show it, as scholars think it. Very far different is its worst, as the masses know it and live it. But taking it at its best, is this blur and this confusion good enough for men who are brother-men with us? Go back if you will to the old books: can you find soul-food in them? Dare you die on them? Oh, there is only one Book which feeds, only one Book upon which we dare die! Lord, to whom shall this nation go? Lord, to whom shall we go, or they? Thou hast the words of eternal life.

There was some angry astonished talk among the men. Personally they were perfectly courteous, but the preposterous nature of our proposals roused them, much as a proposal made in all seriousness to a company of Englishmen to become Mohammedans would have roused them, had they stopped to consider it at all. They talked the more unrestrainedly because I, being only a woman, did not count as anybody, and if one had been detached enough to listen from an outside position it would have been wonderfully interesting. Chances for such character study are rare in the South. But one felt too much concerned in the issue of that conversation to be able to detach oneself. All I could see just then was this body of strong intelligent men, refusing our Lord Jesus Christ.

“You are alone,” said one at last, when the excitement had subsided, “and you see how many we are. This is how the case stands all over India. Who fill the highest positions open as yet to us? Hindus. Who then rule the land, though you white rulers do

not know it? Hindus. And who will rule it? Do you think your Lord Jesus Christ will rule it?" And they laughed in scorn. Outside in the street people pressed round the door. They caught the laugh, and passed it on, till it seemed as if the whole town were laughing that scornful laugh. One felt alone then.

Do you wonder at it? I wondered, when I thought of it, for of course I was not alone. And quickly the soothing of that knowledge came, and yet there was for the moment the sense of human loneliness. I searched through the long row of faces opposite, and then through the crowd of faces round the door, to find one with a look of recognition in it; but I did not find one. I listened as the many voices spoke, to hear one with a note of responsiveness in it, but I did not hear one. It was as if one's whole being were laid bare to the grief of seeing His love refused. Oh, that one could have shown Him more clearly, that there had been someone else to speak! But there was no one else to speak, no one else just then to care. That was the loneliness of it.

"The stars in their courses fought against Sisera," comes a voice to us from the brave new West. "It is foolish for you to be lonely. You and the stars are fighting together." And yet this loneliness, weak, foolish, unreasonable, what you will, is often the portion of our Indian comrades out in the firing line. We have your sympathy. Have they?

Had this day's work ended otherwise, you would have heard of it long ago. No effort of ours could have confined the rumour of it. For it is not usual in the history of Indian missions to find a company of Brahmans

receive the truth with intention to obey it. But we believe to see the unusual, and it never becomes a light thing to see in literal fact what the prophet foresaw, and the first great missionary experienced, the rejection of our Lord Jesus Christ by those best fitted to understand Him. There are places where He stands now, "all day long," with "hands stretched forth," and there still are those who push those hands away, or ignore them. Lord, we sympathise with Thee! Let us never be unresponsive to Thee. Let us never be a disappointment to Thee.

But even as one writes, the swift thought turns and flashes up. One is out in that scoffing crowd again, the tumult of voices is round one, as one stands now out in the street; and for the moment the blue above becomes, as it were, all transparent, cleft through by a sudden ray;

"Multitudes—multitudes—stood up in bliss,
Made equal to the angels, glorious, fair;
With harps, palms, wedding garments, kiss of peace,
And crowned and haloed hair.

"Tier above tier they rose and rose and rose
So high that it was dreadful, flames with flames,
No man could number them, no tongue disclose
Their sacred secret names.

"As though one pulse stirred all, one rush of blood
Fed all, one breath swept through them, myriad-voiced
They struck their harps, cast down their crowns, they stood
And worshipped and rejoiced."

Thank God for that flash through the blue. Thank God for the many in whom Love will have its way, for the great multitude of all nations and kindreds and peoples and tongues. But through the little while that may

intervene till we hear the loud voice saying in heaven, "Now is come salvation and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of His Christ," will you remember your Indian comrades who are often stationed in places where there is little upon which human hope can feed ; and will you ask for them that they may be filled with quenchless, abounding, victorious hope by the power of the Holy Ghost, and comforted in loneliness by the presence of our Lord ?

CHAPTER XIII

“No Beauty that we should desire Him”

“YOUR Christian poet ! he was my father’s friend ! a great scholar. We know his poetry.”

As the voice spoke I saw the man it named : a tall gaunt figure in white ; white-turbaned head ; eyes which observed ; face, olive in colouring, seamed and lined all over, furrowed deep across the forehead ; character in every movement of the long slender hands ; strong affection in the glance of the dark piercing eyes.

I saw him as he first photographed himself upon me. It was one of those days when one’s mental economy, instead of attending to its proper business, seems to lie out thin, like a sensitive film, intent on receiving impressions. It was the last day of my final examination in Tamil. The old scholar was one of the Examiners. He came early, seated himself comfortably, and put on his spectacles. We were alone for awhile ; beyond the salaam of greeting neither of us spoke : the victim on such occasions is not talkative. But the old man looked at me, and his keen eyes filled with sympathy. “Why this fear ?” he said, pointing up, “God is.”

Some words and some gestures live. That hand pointing upward, that voice saying “God is,” are as if hours,

not years, had passed since then. The overwhelming nervousness which had made the impending *viva voce* almost a physical impossibility passed in part at least. Oh, the faithlessness, the cowardice of fear, when God, the Doer, as the name he used suggested, is.

And again I saw him. He was dying; unconscious, it was thought. I had taken a card with "Jesus" written large in Tamil. "He will not know you; he cannot read now," said the watchers sadly. But he opened his eyes, and saw the Word, and it was as if a great light passed over his face. Never shall I forget that light and the smile that looked out of those loving old eyes as they lingered over the Word. Then we saw he was trying to lift his hand. Some one helped him, and the finger traced it as if writing it, character by character. No one spoke. He could not speak, but the trembling finger still traced the Word over and over. Then the lips moved, and the dark eyes, dim with death's dimness, shone. We knew he was speaking to Jesus. Then with a satisfied, rested look, like the look of a little tired child that finds itself safe in its mother's arms, and is so glad just to go to sleep, the old man turned, and fell asleep, his hand still touching caressingly the dear Word "JESUS."

We all have a room within us, hung with pictures. Sometimes when the people about us least know it, we leave them to talk, and go into that room, and shut the door very quietly. Then their voices sound a long way off, like the sound of the sea waves falling on a far-away other-world shore. And we look at our pictures. Time does not count in the Picture Room. There is no hurry-

ing of clocks, no beat of bells. But a moment may show a month's pictures, as moments and months are counted elsewhere; and we may look at the pictures of years, quite leisurely, between the “Don't you think so?” of the talker outside, and the “Yes” or “No” we hear ourselves say in answer. So I saw these pictures of our old friend, and many another distinctly, in the second of time between the shouts, “Renegade!” “No, poet!” Then I came out of the Picture Room, and the voices sounded near and loud, clashing, jarring.

What created the difference wide as space between that man and these? In race, environment, ideal, he was once as they are now.

It is seldom that such a question can be answered with any degree of detail, but Mr. Walker, the old man's friend, persuaded him to answer it in writing. This writing he translated, and one day when I was wishing I knew something more of one who had impressed me more than any Indian I had then met, he gave me the manuscript to read. It seems to me worth giving you. You will understand that it loses in translation. But the heart in sympathy will feel the heart beat through it, coldly though it must read, and heavily, in comparison with the warmth and lightness of the Indian original.

The manuscript is headed, “How I became a Christian: written in 1893.” Then the text, “Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear,” or as the Tamil has it, “with meekness and reverence.” With meekness and reverence, then, he begins: “If asked to state what was the Cause of my breaking off

with Hinduism to become a Christian, what Cause can I assign except only the tender compassion of Heavenly grace? At the same time I am ready to narrate the subsidiary means for so great a change, which that Heavenly grace employed from time to time, and to unite in order the events which proved conducive to my conversion."

A few strenuous words as to Hinduism preface this introduction. He writes as an Indian poet does, wrapping thoughts in tight bundles, which once unfastened refuse to be packed up again in as small compass. So that we cannot do justice to its compressed intensity. English sounds diffuse after such Tamil.

As a Hindu of the stricter type, his life, he says, was sin: sin which did not recognise its sinfulness. Uttermost darkness was around him and within him. Then came the tenderness of God's compassion, the grace which cares. As a hand it drew him, lifted him out of the abyss, set him in the Way, made him, once a Hindu and an alien, meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. Again and again in language which seems to be searching for words warm enough and bright enough to radiate forth the joy that is in him, he piles verse upon verse in praise of the Father who delivered him from the power of darkness, and translated him into the kingdom of His dear Son.

"I was a Hindu of the strict Vaishnavite sect." [Vaishnavites are votaries of Vishnu, the second person in the Hindu triad.] "I had only one brother, younger than myself. My father possessed in an eminent degree the excellent characteristics of benevolence, compassion,

merciful pity, and kindness to animals. With the exception of a few defects he was consistently a zealous votary of the Vaishnavite creed. He possessed great ability in understanding the meaning of the Tamil classics, and in expounding them to others. The study of these formed his mental pastime. He was neither very rich nor very poor; and he was held in high esteem by the scholars, Government officials, and magnates of his day. At the age of forty-seven the relinquishment of his body befell him, but before this he had sought out and married to me, then aged thirteen and a half, a small girl-child. Moreover, he had divided the family property so that there should be no room for trouble or disputes on the part of our relatives. This arrangement proved most serviceable to us boys, in the matter of our education. While my father still lived he had taught me the Ramayana, and my mother, who was a keen-minded woman, used to tell us the poem's story, and explain the meaning of the stanzas.

"It was during my father's lifetime that I was initiated. This Initiation includes the Sealing, or Branding, which means the branding of both shoulders of the votary by a golden discus, heated red-hot in the sacrificial fire, in token that he is a devotee, slave of Vishnu, that he will never henceforth break his fast without having first performed the prescribed daily ceremonies, and that he will faithfully observe such and such rites. I was only a small boy at the time, so two strong men gripped me firmly from behind, and held me tight. The heat and pain were intolerable: my eyes filled with tears. But it would have been disgrace and the height

of misdemeanour at such a moment to cry aloud. My father had some others branded with me, as a meritorious act of charity: the cost was one hundred rupees. I was the only one in our family on whom the rite was performed. It is now nearly fifty-two years since these brand marks were stamped upon me, but they are still only too clearly visible. I was then taught by our Guru to repeat the chief and fundamental mantra, which, being interpreted, means 'All adoration to Vishnu, the mystic Om.'

"When I was eighteen years of age I was a bitter foe not of Christianity as such, but of those who, according to the fashion of that period, wrote down their names as Christians, while they disgraced the glorious name of Christ. . . .

"From my eighteenth year, my brother and myself, instead of spending our time idly, studied carefully, by our own exertions, the Tamil classics. Not only so, but since printed copies of Tamil grammatical works were then unprocurable, we borrowed, from a respected senior, palm-leaf copies of the standard grammars (written in poetical form) and wrote out new copies for ourselves on palmyra leaves. At that time there were only two or three scholars in the whole district who were really versed in Tamil. One of these was a friend of my father. We took advantage of the fact, attached ourselves to him, and exerted ourselves to study. For a year and a half we rendered him the service of disciples, and so pursued our studies. Still later we worked with earnest ardour, and thus completed our grammatical studies. If I had not given myself thus to grammatical

study, how should I ever have become a Tamil Pandit? Had I not become a Tamil Pandit how should I ever have become closely acquainted with Christian truth? It is clear to me, therefore, that it was the doing of the Holy Mind, and that alone, which attracted me from early youth to Tamil studies."

Thus far the education of one who was to become pre-eminently the Christian Tamil scholar of South India. Those who are accustomed to look upon "the poor heathen" *en masse*, as ignorant barbarians, will read, with some surprise perhaps, this simple account of a cultured home, where the study of the classics was the pastime of the father, and the telling of beautiful old world tales to her little sons, the mother's pleasure. Such pastime and such pleasure imply a knowledge of the ancient language in which all poetry is written, and this in itself, as any scholar versed in it will acknowledge, is the study of a lifetime.

Both brothers became Pandits, Professors of Tamil, in missionary colleges, and thus came in contact for the first time with vital Christianity.

The story continues:

"Before I undertook this work, I knew nothing really of Christianity. True, when I was about ten years old, a tract called 'The Incarnation of Grace' fell into my hands. In it Vishnu's ten incarnations were described in order, and the abominations in each were dilated upon. But this was the only impression left on my mind. The closing part of it, describing the holy attributes and deeds of Him who is the Form of Salvation, had no effect on me at all.

"When I began my Pandit work the missionary to whom I gave lessons in the language treated me with considerable kindness, and used to speak to me about the Christian Way. Though his words upon this subject were as gall and wormwood to my Hindu soul, yet by degrees his excellent character and deeds won upon me, and induced me to listen to what he said without gain-saying. A little later I borrowed a copy of the Tamil Scriptures, and began to read it. I read as far as the twentieth chapter of Exodus, in order, from the beginning. From what I thus read I got it firmly fixed in my mind, that the creation of the world, the advent of sin, the Deluge, and other following incidents, are faithfully and truly narrated in the Bible, and that all the stories which occur in the Vaishnavite books about these subjects are inventions, baseless myths, and garnished pleasantries. Thus the daily ceremonies which I, as a Vaishnavite, scrupulously observed, my fastings, attendances at the religious festivals with which each month ends, and Caste etiquette and distinctions, palled upon my taste.

"It was at this juncture that my mind became deeply impressed with the consciousness that I should have to face the responsibility of my sins, and that the paltry subterfuges and atonements which are found in Hinduism were useless and vain. But what of this? Does not the poet remind us how the foolish cock, through sheer force of habit, continues its idiotic scratching on the rock, as if grains of rice were there? And so it was with me. The old inclinations refused to leave my mind (such as the inclination still to search in Hinduism for what was not there); and the sinful habits in which I had so long

indulged continued in unabated force. I therefore came to the conclusion that since association with Christians and the reading of their Book disturbed my mind, my best course was to cut clear of both; and accordingly I desisted entirely from such conversation and reading. If any Christian accosted me, I gave no room for conversation. Only when the missionary spoke did I go through the form of listening; but it was with a deaf ear. Some time so passed. Hard was my heart and dead."

With a few graphic words he closes this part of his story, telling in terse Tamil poetry how he "beat, bruised, and slew, slew, ay and buried," the living voice within him, which slain, still lived and spoke of Him who as yet had no form or comeliness to him, no beauty that he should desire Him.

CHAPTER XIV

“With His Stripes we are healed”

ABOUT this time his “Hindu soul” was stirred to its depths, and lashed into wrath, by the conversion of several of his friends. The first one to cross the line, and break for ever with life as it had been, was a fellow-Pandit, who as a fellow-student in old days had been “a fast heart-friend.” This was grief unspeakable. And worse followed; for shortly afterwards his own younger brother, together with two other friends, confessed themselves Christians, and were baptized.

“It would be impossible to describe all that followed this,” he writes: “the tumults which arose; the insults which the missionaries had to endure; the anguish which filled the hearts of the parents and relations of the newly baptized. No English mind can grasp the extent of the grief which my mother and I experienced on account of my brother’s conversion. However much I might say or write about it, it would still remain utterly beyond the ken of foreigners, and might only seem to them grotesque, extraordinary. I do not charge them with want of sympathy. I only say that it lies beyond the bounds of their experience.

“One of the two who had just been baptized had been

for years my bosom friend. Though he was younger than myself my mind rejoiced to regard his word as the word of a very guru, because of the ripeness of his knowledge, keenness of intellect, and nobility of character and life." All that was over now. In that hour of shock it seemed as if the friend dishonoured and defiled could be a friend no longer. The pain was poignant.

Between the brothers there was the same misery of estrangement. They had been united in a closeness of intimacy rare in the West: now seas divided them. And the mother, devoted as the Indian mother is with a devotion the more intense because the less diffused, had to see the son who was ever as the nursling to her heart, pass into another world with which hers held no communion. Night after night she wailed the death wail for him. To her love, to her care, he was dead.

And then while the wound was still too new to bear even the tenderest touch, the missionary touched it, by mistake. "Your brother has become a Christian, has he not? What is there now to hinder you?" This was to the Pandit. What was there to hinder? Only his mother's completed desolation, his young wife's woe. Was not the home stricken hard enough already? Stung to the quick the Pandit answered haughtily, left the room indignantly, and immediately sent in his resignation. The missionary recognised his mistake, would not accept the resignation, tried to explain where he could not console. But though he persuaded his Pandit to stay, and strove to show him he truly cared, he could not undo the effect of

those words, and one can understand how the two must have drifted apart.

It all happened years ago. Pandit and pupil have long been together in the land where forgiveness means forgetting. But the incident speaks to us of to-day. There are times when we can best help a soul through silence, not speech.

After a time the young Pandit and his special friend drew together, in spite of their divergence of views, and the friend understanding him could help him. He lent him *The Pilgrim's Progress* to read; the book became alluring to him, took hold of him, became at once his possession and possessor. In after years he translated or adapted it so finely in Tamil verse, that it has become the greatest of our Christian classics, judged from a higher Tamil point of view. "I have poured my life into that book," he said once. "My heart's deepest is in it." But that was later.

"My friend impressed it strongly upon me," the story continues, "that it was absolutely essential for me to forsake all known sin, otherwise it would be useless for me to read religious books, or indeed anything else. I acted upon his advice. I endeavoured to put away everything which I knew to be wrong in my life. Some glaring sins, my conscience being witness, I entirely forsook. Nevertheless, though an outward reformation took place to some extent, there was no inward cleansing from sin, neither was my mind constant and steadfast.

"When I met my friend later he told me to read the Gospel history in order, and to ask God to open my spirit-eyes. He taught me, too, how I should pray, and

I set to work to follow his instructions. But though I came in this way to understand clearly the doctrines of the Saviour’s holy incarnation, I was all in a haze of confusion as to how His atonement could bring salvation to man.”

I have hesitated about copying out the next paragraph: the wonderful way of salvation is so familiar to the reader. But it may be, one will read this page whose feet have not yet trodden that path, and perhaps the old scholar’s description of what was to him such unfamiliar ground may be like a light from the East, falling upon it, making the steps show clearer.

“One day, when that soul-friend and I were alone together, I told him all about my doubts and bewilderment, and asked him questions on the subject. He therefore explained to me how the Lord Christ, the Son of God, had become the Mediator between the holy God and sinful men, who had broken God’s law, and were in sin’s dark prison. He showed me how He, the Christ, had become Surety for men, and was incarnate as the Reconciler (the One who makes smooth the unevenness between justice and mercy); how He had kept the law for men, being pure in mind, word, deed; that is, pure in His whole nature. For we Hindus regard the essentials of being as threefold: there is the mind, source of thought; the tongue, which forms words, expression of thought; the body, producing action, thought made visible. Viewed from all points He was pure. My friend further showed me how the Lord had wrought out spotless righteousness, and had taken upon Himself all the sins of all mankind, with all the punish-

ment due to them; and how He had endured untold agony of soul and body on the cross, shedding His blood, and yielding up His life as a sacrifice for sin, and so providing for us most perfect merit. He went on to describe how He had risen victorious from the dead, and so finally procured eternal life for countless souls; and how He had ascended to Heaven, and taken up His glorious session on the right hand of the Father, there to intercede and bestow salvation on all believers. He explained, moreover, that since Christ was universal Lord, the salvation which He had purchased was available for all mankind, and that whosoever sincerely, with real contrition and repentance, believes that Christ alone is the Sin-Destroyer, the World-Saviour, and that He bore and put away his punishment,—is justified; and to him is imparted Christ's perfect merit. 'This is salvation,' said my friend. 'The one so saved is a liberated soul.'

Then followed the new-old miracle. "The Spirit of God sent home this truth to my heart then and there. That very day I knew the Lord Christ. That very day I learned to pray in His name. That very day the sins which had seemed sweet to me before became bitterness itself. That very day I resolved to be a Christian."

And that very day he who was to be known wherever the Tamil tongue is known as the Christian poet, sang his first song to the glory of the "Glorious Sea of Grace, bright Sun of Love, whose radiance makes the darkness flee." Thought on thought and word on word came running up, eager to tell what cannot be told of the light like the light of the morning when the sun rises, of the fairness like the fairness of the green tender

grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain, of the skyful of stars which all were suns that had suddenly opened above him. And he longed for power to express to his people the beauty and dearness of Christ Jesus his Redeemer, by whose stripes he was healed.

CHAPTER XV

“He shall see of the Travail of His Soul”

“**H**OW shall I tell what happened?” he writes, looking back on that illuminated day. “God opened my heart, and I opened my lips to praise Him for His love.” Simply told, is it not? “God opened my heart: I opened my lips.” Life henceforth was to be for him full of that opening of the lips which fills other lips with song.

But not quite yet. “Now, though none of my family knew of my change, they began to grow suspicious about me, because I discontinued my former religious observances; and they asked questions about it. I put them off with evasive answers. I used to pray on my mat, after all had retired. Sometimes my wife would come unexpectedly and ask me some question, and my silence increased her suspicions. I soon got tired of concealments, and calling her alone one day, I said a few words gently about Christianity. She at once began to cry and make a great noise, threatening to take her life.

“When I came to the decision to become a Christian, we had three little daughters under five years of age. My chief anxiety was lest, by becoming an open Christian, I should plunge my family in great grief and confusion;

and though my decision was not weakened by this, I had not the boldness to shake myself free from my fear, and take the open step. And so it came to pass that I spent some time like a man fast bound in prison.”

This will seem incredible to some. Had he not known the Lord Christ? To others it will seem only natural, indeed right. His mother had been already sorely stricken by her other son's defection; how could he raise his hand to strike her again? His wife trusted him; how could he wrong her trust? His relations, though not dependent upon him, were connected by closest ties of affection; uncles and aunts who had known him from childhood, cousins innumerable. In England families subdivide: in India they hold together. How could he, as he said, plunge all these people, who loved him, and whom he loved, into “great grief and confusion.” He could not wreck the home: all that was good in him rose and protested. So he did certain compromising things, and instead of the sword, there was peace. How could he do otherwise? someone asks with sympathy. “Things that appeared undoubted sins wear little crowns of light” (if we may misquote in thought), when we look at them from the human side, and sympathise first, with each other, and second, with God. “For the bravest sin that ere was praised, the King Eternal wore a crown of thorns”: that is how the matter looks from the other side. He realised this at last.

Then came the inevitable agony. Would God it need not be! To smooth it over a friend suggested that if he went quietly to Madras, then farther from his home than India is from England as regards journey-time, it

would be easier to confess Christ openly, and to persuade his wife to join him. Easier in every way, because the family would be among strangers, and not their own caste people. And so it was arranged. He left his wife and children with his mother, went to Madras, got work as Pandit, and wrote for his family to come and join him. Not knowing all, they consented; but, just as they were about to start, some one gave the alarm,—some "meddlesome old woman," he writes disgustedly,—and they refused to come. A month afterwards, when the news reached him, he felt he could delay no longer. He and two other young caste men from his own country, who also wanted to be Christians, clubbed together, went to church together, studied the Bible together, and finally decided to be baptized together. His heart went out to them in clinging affection.

But spies were on the track. They had thought themselves unnoticed in the great city; but the Caste confederation has eyes everywhere, they had been under observation all the time. It was reported that they consorted with Christians, ceased wearing Vishnu's marks, and were cooking for themselves, because their Hindu cook considered them reprobate. This brought two of the fathers in hot haste to Madras. Both sons yielded. The third had no father to come; the month's journey was too much for the frail old mother, so he was left unmolested, and he went quietly on.

There were crowds in the great city, but none of his own. It was an empty city to him. Most of us have known such times, when the sudden ceasing of some voice makes a silence that "aches round" us "like a

strong disease, and new." His was the poet nature, sensitive to suffering as to happiness. Behind him lay his home, and all good memories; before him the heaped-up pain of hurting further those whom he most dearly loved; and around him, closing heavily, the silence.

It was the most difficult time in his life. He was helped through it by a young missionary to whom he was teaching Tamil. "She talked to me most feelingly about the Saviour, and steadied me in Christ. The work I did for her was little; the work she did for me was much."

He saw his two friends occasionally, but most of his time was spent alone, and as he had no one to talk to he talked the more to his Lord. Conversations alone with Christ are wonderfully strengthening. Soon he felt himself urged with an inward urging to burn the bridge behind. He was baptized.

From this time onwards he was in truth a man in love with our Lord Jesus Christ. It pleased the Lord so to "line his heart with the love of his Lord Jesus," that in the years when we knew him he could not speak of Him without a kindling of expression and a fervour that recalled Samuel Rutherford, Ter Steegen, and Tauler. The same spirit burned in him, the warm love that is not afraid of being too warm. The Love that would not let him go, but followed and found and won him, had won him now to an abandonment of love that broke out in rivers of love songs. Oh, for more and more of that love! "Oh, that He would strike out windows, and fair and great lights in this old house, this fallen-down soul,

and then set the soul near-hand Christ, that the rays and beams of light and the soul-delighting glances of the fair, fair Godhead might shine in at the windows and fill the house! A fairer, and more near and direct sight of Christ would make room for His love; for we are but pinched and straitened in His love. Alas, it were easy to measure and weigh all the love that we have for Christ by inches and ounces. Alas, that we should love by measure and weight, and not rather have floods and feasts of Christ's love! Oh, that Christ would break down the old narrow vessels of these narrow and ebb souls, and make fair, deep, wide, and broad souls, to hold a sea and a full tide (flowing over all its banks) of Christ's love!"

And now one idea informed his life—the passion of the soul-winner was like a fire within him. He must return to his own house, and win his wife and mother. He left Madras, travelled southwards, eager, expectant, longing to see his dear ones again, and to tell them all. They received him with tears, with coldness, with bitter reproaches, and the turning away of the faces he loved.

"O Cross, that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from Thee;
I lay in dust life's glory dead,
And from the ground there blossoms red
Life that shall endless be."

"My mother's agony was boundless. It would be impossible to describe it. I know not the words." Things soften as we look back at them through the mist of many years. This thing, this pain, stands out unblurred in the sharpness of its outline, a cruel thing

and a bitter. The days that followed were like so many jagged-edged saws, sawing away relentlessly at the very nerves of his being. It is easy to be brave when our hearts are whole and well, but when they are cut and hurt, and strained all out of shape, then it is hard. “Strive to throng through the thorns of this life to be with Christ.” By God’s grace he thronged through, but for eighteen months it was a daily thronging through. His wife left him. He had two young children to see to. None of his womenfolk would help him. His old friends despised him. His people would have none of him.

After a while his mother relented, and helped him a little with the children. And the brother did what he could. But until his own wife came back to him he was desolate on the human side, though comforted as such must be: for “only heaven is better than to walk with Christ at midnight over moonless seas.”

He had kept the two little children in the hope that they would draw their mother back. She, widowed, according to Hindu feeling, held aloof in loneliness only second to his. But it was as he had hoped. She returned to the town, though not at first to her home. The children were sent to see her. After long waiting she was willing to return to her polluted home, for the sake of the mother-love that could not rest away. And he taught her patiently till at last she too found Christ.

After a time his old mother gave in, and several other members of his family were converted. He was greatly used in winning intelligent Hindus, men not easily

satisfied. He became known as the "Catcher of Men." No one since his time has exerted quite such an influence among young students and thinkers and caste-bound orthodox Hindus. It was not only his scholarship which all acknowledged and respected, it was his character. The Hindus studied him through the years of his outwardly uneventful life, and they recognised the man for what he was. So old age came quietly on, and then, as we have told it:

"To the light more clear than noon,
Passed a soul that grew to music
Till it was with God in tune."

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A Tamil manuscript has been sent to us by a lawyer, one of our leading Christians. He tells his story, as our poet told his, to the glory of God's grace. He went to study, he says, in the Christian school where the poet was Professor of Tamil. He had come from his Hindu home, and was full of prejudice against Christians. His mother had feared to let him go among Christians lest they would inject mind-deluding medicine into a plantain and persuade him to eat it, or otherwise tamper with him and beguile him. So, fortified by warnings, and inclined himself to be on guard, he approached Christianity cautiously. He boarded with his Tamil professor, for caste reasons. He studied him with a boy's keen eyes: "I never heard him tell a lie, never saw him confuse truth; in his God there must be a holy power," was his conclusion. That boy became a man noted for integrity of life. It will not be known till eternity shows up the secrets of time, how much our Church

owes to this one life, influenced at its source by that dear friend, who, while he influenced, never knew that he was doing anything.

One of the first Tamil scholars I knew was a keen teacher, whose lessons were valued by all of us. He taught me in his holiday time, and when I asked about the fee (for the hours were worth rupees to him), he would not hear of pay. "No," he said, and stuck to it, "it is the way by which I can help you to get quickly to my people." This man was won by the poet, led by him, as he told us, "to the Lotus feet of the Lover of souls."

Two out of many—God keeps the count—are enough to prove the poet did not live in vain. The Gospel which made him what he was, has not come here in vain. Nor have we come in vain if we may have fellowship with our Lord in His joy, when He sees of the travail of His soul even here, in a sorrowful land, where so often He has grief.

Part of the most enduring work our poet did was literary. He has left books which we can give to the most critical Hindu, knowing that so far as the choice of language is concerned it will not repel him, but appeal to the finer part of him, and put the message before him intelligently and winningly. Not long ago a Christian schoolmaster was travelling by train in the same compartment as a Brahman. He asked the Brahman if he had ever heard of Christianity. For answer the Brahman retired to the farther end of the carriage. The Christian waited, then asked, "Do you care for poetry?" If there is one word which charms and draws a cultured Hindu

it is the word *poetry*. The Brahman's eyes glistened. The Christian began to chant stanzas from our poet's *Pilgrim's Progress*. The poem follows Indian rules of art; to the trained ear the fall of its cadence is quite perfect. The Brahman listened, won to listen at first by the beauty of the poem. Sin, redemption, Christ's life and death, clear teaching about the way of salvation, outpourings of love and devotion,—still the Brahman listened. At last, after long chanting, broken by words of explanation here and there, the Christian stopped. "That is Christianity," he said. The Brahman was disarmed. For the first time he had listened to "the wooing note."

But looking back, as we do now, to the memory of our poet, we think of him most as our friend. The scholar lives by the work he did; the friend lives on in our hearts. The wise may talk of East and West, and how neither can ever meet or merge, because there will always be something between. In Christ there is no East and West; His love fuses the two into one. That old man was one of us; we were as one of his own to him. And when we meet in our real Home, where East and West are unspoken words, and all earth's divisions forgotten, he will welcome us as a father would welcome the children remembered name by name, parted from him for a little while.

CHAPTER XVI

“Not Peace, but a Sword”

THE two companions who were turned back watched their friend from a distance when he was baptized.

One of the two continued for many years more or less in sympathy; but he gradually drifted. The other was “caught in the delusive whirlpool of the Védantic philosophy,” and became a bitter foe. Not long ago a young student from this district, studying in Madras, was convinced of the truth of Christianity. He grew more and more earnest, till he was considered ripe for baptism. His father, upon hearing this, went straight to Madras. He kept his son with him for a few hours, then returned him to the missionary, broken. Sense of honour, will-power, all desire, had gone. No one knows what he did with the boy. He returned to Tinnevely, satisfied. This father was the poet’s friend. He and his son have dropped out of sight: we know no more of them. Those things, never the mere physical accidents of life, are the missionary’s hurts and heart-breaks. The cause is found in one word—*caste*.

There is a growing idea at home, caused by that perilous habit of generalising from an isolated incident, that caste is losing its power of grip. Where surface

relations are concerned it is true that its vigilance is relaxed. Education and all civilising agencies tend towards this. But go deeper, and you find caste is still a forceful thing, and individual conversion, where it rules, still means the knife at the heart.

A South Indian Christian paper, edited by a convert from the central citadel of Hinduism, lately addressed a series of questions bearing upon this subject to men of experience, Indian and English, in different parts of the country. From north to south the answers were remarkably similar. The consensus of opinion may be fairly summarised by two answers to one of the questions :

“In order for a Christian to retain his caste, is it necessary that he should in any way take part in the worship of idols, demons, or false gods?”

“Generally speaking, it is obligatory for a Hindu to worship idols in order to retain caste.”—Hon. Kanwar Sir Harnam Singh, K.C.S.I., Ahluwalia.

“A Hindu might, by doing nothing, retain his caste, at least for a considerable length of time; but if he moved in a distinctly Christian direction he would lose caste.”—Archdeacon Caley, Travancore.

A second question was: “A Hindu becomes a Christian, and is baptized. He claims that he can live a Christian life in his orthodox Hindu home. In your opinion is it practicable? Is it even possible?”

The answers, English and Indian, were decisive:

“A baptized Christian might very well live a Christian life in a Hindu home if *he were given freedom to do so.*

But in this part of India the attempt would not be tolerated. If he attempted it, he would either be expelled or speedily made away with.”—Rev. Edward P. Rice, L.M.S., Bangalore.

“No; the mere act of baptism is looked upon by the Hindu as putting a man out of caste. A baptized man is considered as having gone out of the Hindu fold.”—L. C. Williams Pillai, Inspector of Schools, Northern Circars.

“He cannot live a consistent Christian life.”—Mr. P. Krishna Murti, Vizagapatam.

“No Hindu will ever be allowed to lead a consistent Christian life.”—Gangaram Pantulu, B.A., Sub-Registrar, Bimlipatam.

“No, he will be outcasted. Theoretically, he can, but no one has yet succeeded in the attempt.”—Dr. Ramachandrayya, M.D., L.R., C.I.E., etc., Madras.

“It is impossible to live in Hindu homes as a consistent Christian. From a Hindu standpoint such persons as lead a consistent Christian life in their Hindu homes would be surely outcasted.”—J. Vekanna, B.A., Head Master, High School, Bimlipatam.

“If anything is impossible under the sun, it is this.”—Mr. J. M. Bhaktul, Head Master, High School, Chatrapur.

The position was fairly stated in a critique on *The Advanced Text-Book of Hindu Religion and Ethics*: “It appears to me that most Hindus are prepared to be tolerant when principles are merely being *discussed*. But when it is a matter of leaving a false position to take

up one rationally conceived and spiritually desired, to leave Hinduism for Christianity, we can no longer expect an indifferent toleration. Neo-Hinduism is ready enough to make a cheap identification of our religion with its own, and to hail Jesus Christ as an Eastern Muni and a Yogi of great powers; but the truth of its heart comes out when a Hindu claims to exercise his right of individual freedom, and to follow that Christ in the way He has ordained."

These extracts form a platform; the people in our story move up and down upon it.

After the disturbance which followed Victory's conversion several lads who seemed genuine in desire to become Christians came forward as inquirers. One of these was a young man who had been influenced at school. His relatives knew of it, and arranged a marriage for him with a speed which betrayed their alarm. His distress at the thought of causing them distress increased as the day drew nearer. His mother's beseeching face, his father's stern silence, weighed upon him till his very walk showed it. He stooped like an old man.

The day was fixed. The house was adorned. Strings of jessamine fastened from roof to roof and pillar to pillar filled the air with heavy scent. And the boy was entangled as if the strings had been wound about his soul, and dazed as if their scent possessed some fatal miasma.

On the evening before the wedding night we felt impelled to go to the house and try to see him.

When we arrived there it was dusk, and the courtyard, lighted with many lamps, was oppressively hot.

Servants were rushing about, friends were shouting directions. Children were playing in the midst of the confusion. Overhead, the red and white strips of the awning were interlaced with flowers withered already. Piles of flower balls lay in every available corner. All the lamps were smoking; not a breath of pure air could get in. One half wondered then, as one waited in that suffocating atmosphere, how anything could survive in it. If will-power withered with the flowers, who could wonder?

No one took any notice of us; we were lost in the crowd. After we had waited awhile the bridegroom-elect walked in, and we went out together into the cool, clear air.

It was impossible to talk in the street. We went straight to the bungalow; the boy followed. The people were kept from thinking about us.

Then for an hour Mr. Walker talked with him, while Mrs. Walker and we other workers waited on God in the next room. It was given to us in that hour to feel something of the value, the immeasurable value of a single soul.

The sound of voices ceased. There was a long silence. Then the door opened; we heard the boy go. He had gone back irresolute.

An irresolute boy among resolute men and women has a poor chance. A few hours later the preliminary noises attending a wedding of importance told us he had yielded.

But what if he had not? One stops at a loss for words to show what one can almost see: the devastation,

distress, disgrace ; the immediate cessation of the marriage ceremonies ; the indignation of the bride's relatives at what they would regard as an insupportable insult. Above all there would be the grief and horror of the parents ; the bitter, uncontrollable frenzied excitement of every one of the several hundred relations, and the scorn of the few thousand neighbours who made up that boy's world. It is not needful to speak of physical dangers and possible cruelties, because he might escape these by flight. We only mention unavoidable certainties.

The thought of it all unnerved the boy. The word was not spoken that night or next day. So the following night the conch shell's blare and the tomtom's beat insisted persistently, wearily, that his soul was entangled indeed ; the seductive influence had worked.

We saw him a few months later. The schoolboy carelessness had passed. He looked helpless and miserable. In the South all social ceremonies are connected with idolatry through the medium of caste customs, which have religious meanings. So the marriage had involved compromise. He was a hypocrite, and he knew it.

Day by day in fulfilling his duties he found himself more and more embarrassed. As a boy his conduct had not been much observed. As a man he must perform the rites pertaining to the husband. Direct idolatry might be evaded for a while, but the trident painted every morning freshly on his forehead related to Vishnu. He called it his caste mark, in feeble palliation, but names do not alter facts. He felt like a snared animal struggling in his snare.

Gradually this feeling passed, and gave place to inertia. He cared for nothing, would not let his little wife learn, went through idolatrous routine untroubled. Sometimes he came to the bungalow in a shamefaced, shuffling sort of fashion. But this ceased after a year or so. A coma settles upon the soul that however sorely pressed disobeys, and goes on disobeying.

Most missionaries could duplicate this story. It is such a common story, it seems superfluous to tell it. But we have told it because it is so common. If it were sporadic it would not be worth telling.

CHAPTER XVII

“At Variance”

OUR Lord said, “Not peace, but a sword; for I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother.” Do you feel that there must be something wrong if loyalty to Christ collides with “loyalty to God’s first law of human order, obedience in the home”? Something wrong in the missionary’s presentation of the Gospel when its acceptance produces such collision? Surely there is something wrong, something wholly out of course, a discord in the harmony which sounds through all the keys. But is the discord in the music, or in our rendering of it? “If thy friend which is as thine own soul entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods . . . thou shalt not consent unto him.” This chord of the seventh perplexes us, but what if the music were incomplete without it? Resolve it properly, and you find the chord which follows explains it; your ear is satisfied. Dare we leave the arresting note unstruck when we see it written in the manuscript? The refusal, however gentle, to “consent” comes into direct collision—must in the nature of things, if you are a Hindu—with the will of father, mother, friend who is as your own soul.

While the power of Hinduism remains unbroken, there must often be the sense of a false note somewhere, as if the instrument called life were out of tune.

Lotus became illuminated by hearing that God's light shone for her. So few things shone for her. I realised how few when one day, while we were with her, the sound of a tambourine and a fiddle out in the street made her eyes dance. It was the men's Itinerating Band which had come to her village, and was gathering a congregation by singing in the street. “Oh, if I could only see them!” cried Lotus; and flinging widows' rules to the winds, she ran out into the courtyard with the eagerness of a child, and looked over the wall, and for three blissful minutes drank in joy. “But it was so wrong of me!” and poor Lotus hid her face ashamed, as, startled at her audacity, she crouched in the darkest corner of the dark little room. “I forgot I ought never to have looked. But oh, I did want so much to see! I wish it were not wrong.”

Five years of repression of every natural instinct had not quenched the love of life in her. The human within us is a strange, strong thing. Compress it, it eludes you, and escapes you, and disappears, to reappear as it was made at first. Lotus had been fashioned for delight. A small mud-walled courtyard, two small windowless rooms, no outlook, nothing but a strip of ground about two yards long behind, is it much to serve for all your world? Lotus at seventeen is hot with life. Sometimes the low laugh breaks bounds, and ripples out, but always it is quickly checked, for Lotus is a widow.

She never really was a wife. Looking back, it is

confused. Crimson silk raiment edged with gold, numbers of new and glorious jewels, flowers round her neck and in her hair—the scent of jessamine brings it all back—cakes, delicious unlimited cakes; rides in a decorated car, with some one sitting opposite and little children at her knee, while men in front blew conch-shells, and men behind clanged cymbals, and all the delightful abandon of noise made a sea of sound about her. And in the evening many lights, and the subtle perfume of sandalwood, and the flower-ball game, while musicians twanged and sang their never-ending song, and otto of roses was sprinkled about, and everyone laughed and was glad. Then suddenly a thunderclap, a darkening down of everything, for she had become a widow. And the childish heart was frightened at first, for everyone looked at her and cried; and then, when they snatched her silks away, and tore off her jewels, all but two, spared in a moment of pity,—then she became rebellious. But they told her it was just her fate. Who fights fate? Be quiet, they said. And they gave her poorer food, as a punishment, she thought, which hurt her sore little heart the more, for she had not meant to do anything wrong; and she felt misunderstood. So all life's play passed far from her, and all life's sunshine too.

Three years afterwards we saw her for the first time, and told her about the sunshine stored up for her. At first it seemed too good to be true. But when at last she understood, her heart lost all its restlessness. The light brings peace.

Then, as it will, the light shone out on any within reach. The first to feel it was Brilliance, her cousin,

a childless and much despised young wife, who, though naturally bright, has become depressed and soured; for her life is dominated by a tyrannical mother-in-law, who considers Brilliance a failure and hardly worth her rice.

Brilliance certainly is sulky, but we felt that what would sweeten her was just what had lighted Lotus’ life, and this was denied her. “What has she to do with reading?” said the mother-in-law. Lotus quietly shone on her then, told her stories about Jesus, interested her in Him, got her to believe He loved her, though her mother-in-law did not. For a while she was unhindered in this gentle ministry.

Timidly, greatly fearing repulse, the light began to shine further. Not that Lotus could take it anywhere. The only place where she can shine is just the one place where she is, a room about eight feet square. But sometimes aunts and cousins come, and she does not hide her light.

One of those aunts is our friend, a motherly-hearted woman. One of our boys was very ill. We wanted a special herb to make medicine for him. It was not to be bought, but she had it, and hearing how we needed it, she sent it to us, refusing payment, “for friendship’s sake,” she said. There was a time when she was touched; she saw the beauty of our Lord, and was attracted by it. But her desire to know Him did not go deep enough. “I am a believing one,” she says, “like Lotus,” and sitting on her mat, with her dear little daughter beside her, just as she sits in the photo, she is fond of arguing at length that to be an inwardly believing one is quite enough. “You see no idol marks

on my forehead. I never do anything idolatrous. Every morning I pray ‘Have mercy on me, O Jesus Lord! make my way prosperous.’ What more could He require of me?”

But one evening alone in the moonlight, the choice of her heart was made manifest. It was the night of the street fire festival. Each householder worshipped apart. She stood outside her gate with the wood for making the fire in her hand, and offerings for sacrifice. She knew it was all vain; but if she refused, her caste would hear of it; she would lose her acknowledged position, and be looked upon askance. So she stood there in the moonlight, no firelight yet with its earth red came into conflict with that white light. And she weighed in the balance Christ and caste. Then she stooped and lighted the fire.

And as it blazed she turned and saw we were standing close to her. She started; she had not expected to see us there. We usually leave the place earlier; but the long streets with their rows of fires had been full of detaining things, for the magic of the East comes out in festival times at night.

The lane where her house stands is off the street. Hers was the only fire in it. And the palm behind rose black like a plume, and the archway under it framed the fire, and the moonlight filtered through the palm and tried to put the firelight out.

We stood there silent for a while. The woman was bending over the fire, her face was working. We could see it by the flame. Then it set. “I have chosen,” she said; “a thousand words—what

will they do?" But it was not the time for a thousand words.

After this it was more difficult for Lotus; but still, while any would listen, she spoke, till her liberty passed as life's play had passed, very suddenly.

An idolatrous rite was in progress. Lotus refused to take part in it. She had often talked to her mother and father, but they had taken no notice. Now it seemed to dawn upon them that this "Jesus doctrine talk" was more than talk, and they shut her up in a small back room, and locked the door.

Once we had asked her whether, beloved as she is by her parents, it would be possible for her to be baptized and live at home as a Christian. There is a deep square well at the end of the street where her home is. She pointed out in the well's direction: "My parents would rather see me under water, dead, than a Christian." Then her brown eyes filled with trouble: "It is not only that; it would grieve my mother. Because I am a widow she never goes out of the courtyard except before daylight and after dark. But she never taunts me; she loves me. Her love holds me back from grieving her."

For weeks after that open confession we saw nothing of Lotus, and heard nothing of her. Then one evening two of us were allowed in for a minute. Poor weary Lotus; she was sitting in the back, looking out. She had been allowed to sow a few seeds in the strip of ground, and she called it her garden, and found pleasure in it. Her Bible had been taken from her. She was not allowed to kneel in prayer,—not that it mattered, her

soul could kneel,—and she was forbidden ever to speak of Christ. Her mother's love had "turned sour." Her father was ashamed of her. Her relations constantly upbraided her. Her widowhood, they reminded her, was sufficient disgrace for the family, without any added affront. Was she the only one going to heaven? Her pride, they said, was most astonishing, and in a childless widow peculiarly revolting. There was only time to say a few words of sympathy and encouragement, and to urge her to look up through all, and show love through all. And then the mother called, and we had to hasten away.

There was a season of friendliness after this. We were allowed to visit her. But we were always shadowed by some member of the family, and no Bible-reading was allowed. This small indulgence, however, touched her very much. "My parents love me, they do love me," she whispered once, when for a moment the watchfulness was relaxed. "Oh, it is hard to grieve them. It is like treading on my own mother's heart."

The parents are pleasant people. We had a long talk with them one day. They told us Lotus had pined like a flower deprived of air and light when they shut her up and refused to let us visit her. They did not like to see her so cast down, and they had risked the scorn of the street by letting us see her again. Would we not on our side be thoughtful for them? If our influence led to her breaking caste, she must be confined to that one small room till she is old and wise. Let her follow her own customs and bring no dishonour on the caste. Then all would be well. We felt our position acutely. The parents' unusual frankness naturally made it all the

harder for us to keep true to the one object for which, as Christ's messengers, we were there. We explained to them how the matter stood, pleaded with them to let Lotus obey her conscience, and follow her Master. But in vain.

"God bless the missionaries; give them souls," you pray: God hears your prayer, and gives us souls. Then, if we are working among those for whom following Christ means, as it meant in earlier days, Variance, there must be the burning of the fire which our Lord saw already kindled.

"Ammâ," said Victory who had visited Lotus with us, "it brings all my own sorrow back." Then she told us that what held her through was the verse given her before she came out: "'*He endured as seeing Him who is invisible.*' One cannot endure if one does not see. That strong verse rested me."

Her words brought back the past. We remember how there was storm all about. The greyhaired mother lay on the floor and beat her head on her child's feet, then caught them in her hands, "O queen! My jewel! My mother!" she cried, using India's last love word as she broke into love's lamentation. Then as her child tried to raise her and kiss her, a sudden fury seized her. "Defiled! Defiled!" she screamed enraged, "would you stab me with your mouth? Ay, stab here! stab here!" and she tore her garment from her breast—"here where your head lay, my baby—stab here!" For seventeen years they had slept on one mat, mother and child together. They had shared one pillow, for they were one. Did a thorn prick the daughter's foot? it had

first pierced the mother's eye. This is a Tamil description of their love for one another. Now that daughter had to choose through all her pain: should she stab that mother's heart with her mouth, or drive another nail into the Hand that bore while it beckoned her? O God, when shall the need for such choice utterly cease? Can the world show anywhere a harder thing than this? Are all who pray prepared for it? It would seem that some are not. Perhaps this is natural. Would we ever rejoice in a victory won if we clearly saw the battlefield, where the wounded cry when the slaughter is made? We honour the martyrs of course, and count their age glorious. But then we forget what it meant to burn.

Sometimes, not content with the negative chill of silence, friends write disapproving of “such interference with family life,” and suggest a desirable compromise, and offer prudent counsel. “It is in truth an easy thing to stand aloof from pain, and lavish exhortation and advice on one sore vexed by it.” But when every nerve runs sore, for somehow you suffered, you could not help it, with both sides at once, what you need is different. Would those who so write, we wonder, have us teach that commands may change with changing times?—that we may follow the Crucified comfortably now—without His Cross?

Thank God for the comrades who never are chill. Their loving heart-warming sympathy reaches these souls in their great need, and helps them to be patient and brave. It is such a long patience. Only last week I saw the mother whose pitiful “Stab here! Stab here!”

had followed her child for nearly seven years. “Ammâ,” I said, longing to comfort her, “you have two dear little grandchildren now; and your daughter wants to welcome you; and your new son will welcome you. There is room in their home waiting for you. Your two little grandchildren call.” She tore at her scanty grey locks, and struck herself hard with her thin old hands: “She whom you name is no daughter of mine. He whom you name is no son. Grandchildren? I do not hear them call!” And she tore so ruthlessly at her hair that lest she should tear it all out, we fled.

This story, like the last, is very ordinary. Such is the atmosphere in which we sing our song. By reason of the multitude of oppressions the oppressed are made to cry; they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty: God giveth songs in the night. Cry and song intermingle in the hard prose of life as in the Psalms: “O my God, my soul is cast down within me. . . . In the night His song shall be with me.”

These facts call us to prayer. First to prayer of a national sort for the fall of the systems which create the conditions. Then to prayer which may be very personal. There are many like Lotus. They need energy and grand triumphant faith. They need no less the grace of a quiet love that never retaliates.

Lastly, and most hardly, we ask any to whom it is given not only to believe but also to suffer, to pray for those who are so hindered that they may press on to the heights of God, though the flints cut sharp and the feet bleed.

There are times in life when God gives us a choice.

Two ways open. Both lead homeward. But one is steeper than the other. The stones cut sharper. It is far more unknown. There is an impression—this is the way, and we walk in it. At first it seems a foolish choice, fruitless of any gain. But afterwards comes the consciousness that had we chosen otherwise we should have missed forever the rarest gift of joy. "Where grows the golden grain? Where faith? Where sympathy? In a furrow cut by pain."

There are those who thus have chosen, not pain for pain's sake, but the path that had to mean it, drawn by the passing of One before them up that way. There are those to whom there is no choice. The upward way must be the way that hurts the feet. Who can help them up that way? Surely only those who themselves are walking in it. Theirs must be the sympathy that understands and braces, the faith that cheers like a song. For heart may faint and questions crowd, "Is the Word true? Shall the faith stand? Is the work worth such woe as this? Can the day recompense the night?"

"Fight on and keep your hearts alive!

I have gone through where ye must go,

I have seen past the agony,

I behold God in heaven and strive."

And Christ walks with you even now while the flints cut sharp and the feet bleed.

Are such tales too sorrowful to tell? Should we suppress the sound of the cry lest it hurt the too sensitive ear? But the Sword means this: Variance means this. It is the existence of this attitude, this refusal to allow freedom of conscience where the

freedom would clash with caste, and the resultant strain of a drawing in opposite ways where two loves cannot but be opposite in their constraining, which cements the stones together in the walls of the Shah Najaf. Should you not know about it? You see Christ crowned, jewels in His diadem, wreaths of victory heaped about His feet. We see the vision too, and it inspires us.

But that we may the sooner see it, not by faith only but in splendid reality, let us follow with more sympathy all that happens in the deep mine underground, and in the workshop where the jewels must be chased. And as for the wreaths, let us understand there is more involved than gathering flowers. "God's choicest wreaths are always wet with tears."

CHAPTER XVIII

“All These Things”

IT may be that the hindrance to God's working mightily towards the demolition of the Shah Najaf is to be found in us. There may be weakness, compromise, lack of determination to keep the winning of souls to the front, the use of unconsecrated means, unsanctified ways of getting money, unconverted workers. There may be an absence of identification with the people for whose sake we are here, an unconscious aloofness not apostolic. Perhaps our love has cooled. Perhaps we know little of the power of the Holy Ghost, and hardly expect to see souls saved here and now, and are not broken down before the Lord because we see so few. God forgive us and make us far more in earnest, and fill us more and more with His own burning passion for souls.

Often here, as elsewhere probably, those who respond to the teaching are those for whom obedience is very difficult ; while those who are perfectly free to obey, and who could by their influence do immensely more than the young girl or lad, care nothing, see nothing in the Gospel to stir them to inquiry. In India certainly youth is the time for spiritual decision. But it is just to the youth of the land that action is so im-

possible. Sometimes this contrary aspect of things is very evident; a page from itinerating life affords many illustrations.

We spent a week lately in an outlying town which has never known a convert. We stayed in the native rest-house, a small stone building surrounded by a roughly kept jessamine garden. One small room was lent to us, the back half of which served as kitchen and the front as living room. The two halves opened on each other, after the fashion of a London drawing-room, only the arch between was not fitted with folding-doors. We had one door, a huge affair, hung so that you could see through the cracks between wall and wood. Sometimes when we were very tired, and yearned for unobserved repose, we used to shut the door. But there were those cracks and many holes. So that plan failed. Then we stuffed cracks and holes with newspaper, which lasted for a while. But the temptation usually proved too great to be resisted; the paper would be poked out, and an eye fitted carefully to each hole, and a perpendicular row of eyes adjusted to each crack enjoyed the situation.

We found this one room, double though it was, rather small and smoky, and asked if we might overflow into the next. But they told us it belonged to the idol to whom the rest-house was dedicated, and that as the god himself dwelt in the next room, we could not. The third and last room was a kitchen, fitted with enormous caldrons; for every afternoon some scores of poor people were fed there; so we could not use that room either. Our cooking would have desecrated even beggars' rice.

Those days in the rest-house were full of entertainment. To anyone who enjoys new experiences I would say, go and live behind the scenes for awhile—if you get the chance—in an Indian rest-house. The manner of hospitality was simple. Each recognised beggar, and any wayfarer who cared to claim the charity, went up to the verandah and held out a leaf cup, made of palm leaf folded and tied with its fibre at each end. The half-liquid food was ladled into this. Then the recipient retired to a quiet place in the garden, and squatting behind a bush, if possible, enjoyed the luxury of feeding unobserved. All sorts and conditions of people spent their leisurely afternoons in that garden and on the verandah. Sometimes bejewelled children, looking most unbeggarlike, would come and carry off food for their relations.

Feeding and being fed seem to be occupations conducive to good temper. There could not have been a pleasanter community to dwell among. They accepted us as their guests with guest rights, and never appeared to feel us in the way. We used to sit together in the end room in a circle on the floor, after the day's work was done, while the two elderly men who kept the place made flower balls and wreaths, and I played with a pariah pup to their constant wonder and pleasure. That poor little pup had never been played with before in his life, and at first could not understand it. But he soon began to come to me, and lay his skinny little head in my hand, and wriggle into my lap, and even his furtive-eyed mother got friendly, and ceased to snarl and snap. And then when the flower balls and garlands were finished the men would read aloud from our books,

and many an interesting talk we had about Indian affairs, which led on to talk of the things which are Jesus Christ's.

One evening I did not go to the end room, but instead had the Christians who lived near in ours. We were finishing an informal meeting when I was aware of a large form looming through the open door, and looking up saw a tall and very massive gentleman blocking out the view, while the crowd which had been in possession retired. I had no chair, only a clean mat, which, however, I hesitated to offer, as I could not assure him it had not been used. He reluctantly understood; the Indian is polite, he did not want to hurt my feelings; but concluding that feelings would recover, he finally carefully seated himself not on the mat but on the doorstep, the dust of which was less objectionable than that clean but contaminated mat.

All this time the Christians had been shuffling about uncomfortably. There was only the one door, so they could not get out, and they knew their presence there was an offence. I sat close beside them so as to share it with them as much as possible. And we all felt a very humble and despised little company.

But our visitor, Lotus' kinsman, was friendly, and had come with friendly purpose. He had heard I was staying at the rest-house, and as he was superintendent of the charity, he felt interested. He had not been prepared to see the Christians there, and left word that they must not be admitted again; but his Oriental gift of immobility stood him in good stead, and beyond entirely ignoring them he showed no sign of displeasure. For an

hour or so we talked amicably. It was impossible to get to anything of moment till he was willing for it. As we talked, evidence of his influence in many directions appeared. If only that man became a seeker after Truth the effect would be far-reaching. Nothing was further from his thoughts. "I have read part of your Bible," he said, "but I feel no inward attraction. Our religion is older by millenniums. It is an all-inclusive religion. Anything of worth in Christianity will in due time become incorporated with Hinduism. Thus we shall have the best of your religion without forsaking our own. As you worship Christ, so I worship Krishna. He satisfies me completely. My sin, by which I mean the entanglement of sense, is met by his merit. When I depart this life he will transport me to his heaven."

"I feel no inward attraction": the soul had grown to its prison. We thought of Lotus, as he bowed himself out, free to go where he would. She must stay where she was; she might beat herself against the bars till her heart broke. Who would care? So long as no bar was broken, who would care?

We spent the next morning in the Brahman street. In each verandah down both sides of the street ancient Brahmans sat chanting their prayers and adorations, or in some cases winding from quaint spinning-wheels the sacred three strand cord.

A cheerful voice greeted us as we passed. It was the temple musician, an old friend of ours, an artist in his line. When he plays you seem to see jungles full of curious creatures making noises to each other; rivulets flowing softly, with tree tops interlacing, while

little birds sing in the cool; jackal holes in the mountains, "Listen! don't you hear the beasts yell?" And the old man works himself into a frenzy till you almost imagine you do. And all the time there is the fine monotonous undertwang of swift thrumming on the strings, till there breaks through it a call, a cry, and you are away in the forest with Râma, listening as he mourns for his beautiful queen Seetha, watching as he searches through all the wild ways for her, feeling the heart of things throb, India's heart, kind and good as God made it and meant it to be.

The old musician had much to tell us of the depravity of the gentleman who had called to see us the previous evening, with whom he is not on speaking terms. It was rather a drop from the tenderness of the music, and we escaped as soon as we could, and found our way to a deep verandahed house, where a widow lives who is our friend.

We made friends with her first over her photograph,¹ which, however, proved disappointing. "Why did the box paint me *black*?" and she turned the photo over in much disgust, for she is not as brown as a walnut, and the black was a libel. So I promised that when the Picture-catching Missie Ammâl next came to see us the box would try to do better. And she was consoled.

She told me all her story: she had been betrothed at five and widowed at seven. As a widow, of course, she was forbidden to listen to "learning." But she had managed to pick up an immense amount of information, and even some English words, which she now wanted to

¹ *Things as They Are*, p. 145.

have explained. She knew pages of Tamil poetry off by heart, and chanted as many stanzas as I had time to listen to. She seemed in every way such an exceptionally capable woman, and was so exceptionally free, that one felt she might have been a power in her land,—if only !

But here we came to the parting of the way. We had had many talks and readings, she sitting at one end of the verandah, I at the other, lest by a breath or a shadow fall she should be defiled ; and so I was surprised to be invited into the house, and asked to partake of curry and rice, served on a leaf by her own hands. In some parts of India such hospitality is ordinary enough, but in the more conservative corners it is rare in Brahman houses ; and fearing lest she should suffer for it afterwards I hesitated. But she insisted, and I followed her into the front room, and feasted, or tried to, while she talked.

She had, as she said, examined the Gospel, “looked through it, all round it, over and under it.” And she had definitely made up her mind that the degradation involved in accepting it was too great to be seriously considered. The first bitter years of widowhood had passed. She is head of her house, and has younger women in charge. Everyone respects her for her strength of character and simple nobility, and she walks unashamed through her little world. Then there is her merit, piles of it, as she assured me, laid up to her account because of her arduous years of penance and fasting, and long pilgrimages. Every morning she paints the Vishnu mark on her brow, then bathes, and performs many ceremonies. Once every week she fasts, besides frequent extra fasts. She has relaxed the fasting of late,

as she felt she had merit in stock, and could take things easier. Lastly and chiefly, there is her caste, and no words can describe what a Brahman's caste is to her. Put these three things together,—the respect of all her people, her accumulated merit, her pinnacle of caste. Put on the other side what she would be the moment she turned from these to Christ,—a hissing and a byword, a scorn, a shame, an outcast for ever. It was too much.

And yet it was nothing; nothing in comparison to what the Indian wife and mother is compelled to face. All these social losses are hard to bear, but what must it be to the mother to face the loss of her child? We count these elderly childless widows as, comparatively speaking, disentangled people; free, as women's freedom goes, with a most blessed freedom.

“I stand alone,” said the Brahman widow, “but I stand strong, kept by the force of my own will. Being who I am, your Jesus Saviour is not necessary to me.”

But we who had come to love her could not accept this as her final word. She had asked me to visit her again. We had parted, as she would express it, in a unity as of one body and soul: so I went again. A child answered my call: “She is out. The Ammâl is out bathing,” she said. The door was wide open I could see the widow sitting with a mirror in her hand, carefully painting the Vishnu trident on her forehead.

It seemed better not to go for a while; so I waited the advent of the friends (one of whom had caught her picture), whom to see, she had assured me, would be heart-melting joy. We three went together.

There was no sign of her about the house, nor did any answer our call. We sat on the verandah and waited. Then, as still there was no movement in the house, I pushed the door a little open and looked in. There was a heap of what looked like rags in the corner of the room.

"Ammâ! Are you ill? The Picture-catching Missie Ammâl has come to see you." No answer. Another call, and the heap turned wearily over, and a voice so broken-spirited that I hardly recognised it, said, "Go away. I am ill. My caste is angry with me because I invited you in before. I disgraced my orthodox relations. They leave me alone here now."

There she lay, just ill enough to need tending. Not too ill to get up and walk out with us or anywhere she liked; free. But she did not feel free. She felt bound to lie there in misery, loneliness, and no love of ours could help her. "I have no need of anything," the tired voice said, as we waited by the door, "I still am a Brahman. I am pure. Your Jesus Saviour is not necessary to me." And she turned her face to the wall.

In the next street we have a Mohammedan friend. She had asked us wistfully one day to show her the way to heaven. Week by week one or other of us went and taught her and her younger sister. Both became interested, and began to talk about being Christians. Before the girl was old enough to think of coming out, she was married to a middle-aged man for whom she had a special aversion. She resented being compelled to marry him, and resisted up to the

very last with a childish desperateness that entertained her captors, who invited us one day to witness an imitation of the struggle. "He threw her over his shoulder, so, and her feet dangled and her anklets jingled. Oh, it was most amusing!" We looked anything but amused, and would not listen or look; and the narrator, with bangled arms thrown over her own shoulders in imitation of the poor child's feet, ran round the courtyard for her own diversion, laughing heartily as she cried, "This was how he did it, and this was what she did. Oh, how her anklets jingled!" The husband, his supremacy once established, had not been unkind, and his young wife had settled down to the inevitable fairly satisfied.

The elder sister went on learning. She was already married, and had three little children. She began to teach them what we taught her. Her husband forbade her to mention Christ to them. "*You* can do as you like," he told her casually, "I can easily get another cook. But remember you cannot take the children." She had hardly come to the point of facing leaving home. He brought her straight up to it. "You can't be a Christian in my house," he said, adding as before, "but remember, you cannot take the children." "Do you mean I cannot have my baby if I am a Christian?" He meant just that.

I remember her the day after he said it. She was sitting on her verandah, her month-old baby on her knee, the mark of such a bitter struggle in her face. "Try to win your husband," we urged. But our visits were forbidden. Bereft of the little help we could give

her, she lost heart and got cold. The unentangled widow with no desire at all; the much-entangled wife with at first so much desire: another of life's anomalies.

Do these stories weary you, I wonder? Or do you feel as we do, that it is better, after all, to share the day's life fairly with us, if you take the trouble to share it at all? On, then, to the next town; here we are less remote from the levelling influence of education, and so, sometimes we are welcome even in Brahman houses. We spent an hour a few weeks ago with some friendly Brahmans, who afterwards allowed us to visit their wives. It was early in the afternoon. Five old Brahmans were sitting on the verandah, content just to exist. There was the usual glance of appraisal: then “It is hot,” they murmured sleepily. “Why agitate yourself by wandering about?” We found they knew enough to negative any attempt to speak of Christ. They preferred, they said, to speak of one of their poets, beloved by all who read; and knowing that where the better Tamil poetry at least is concerned, “all thoughts, all searches, to this centre tend, all rays in this one focus meet,” we guided their choice to three stanzas, thus translated by Dr. Pope: “My mother bare me, left me here, and went to seek her mother, who in self-same manner has gone in search; and thus in ceaseless round goes on the mother quest. Such is the grace this world affords.”

“Unmasked men come, appear in the house as kinsmen, and then silently go. As the bird silently deserts the tree where its nest yet remains, and goes far off. So these leave but their body to their friends.”

"Severed are the ties of friendship; minished are the pleasant ones; love's bonds are loosened too; then look within and say, 'What profit is there in this joyous life of thine? The cry comes up as from a sinking ship.'"

Before long the men were interested, and were prepared to discuss, in the cool and detached manner of the philosopher, what exactly the poet meant by the mother quest, deserted nest, sinking ship. "We had the sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead. Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver us: in whom we trust that He will yet deliver us." The poet unconsciously pointed straight to this. "There is no record but doth hint of Thee." If only these men would give one hour out of their ample leisure to earnest consideration, if only they would allow themselves to be in earnest, surely they would be awakened by the view of their true position. What baffles one so is the lack of earnestness. There is something awful in the sight of immortal men playing ball with Truth. When we returned from their women folk they were still playing ball, blind to the words written over the balls, Life, Death, Judgment to come.

A stone's throw from that verandah scene we saw its opposite. A girl was wrestling in earnest with the power that purposed to hold her in bondage. Her true position was only too clear to her startled heart that day. She was almost sixteen. She had been waiting for the month to come which would, she believed, set her free to ask for baptism. It had almost come, but just before the

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earliest day she dare count herself free, the marriage, postponed till then, to her joy, had been suddenly planned by her parents, and there was no escape. She felt like a runner racing for life with a swifter, panting hard behind. The runner gained upon her, overtook her, caught her. No one listened to her protest. They pushed her through the wedding, and hurried her off to her husband's house.

We teach these girls about the inward liberty of the spirit, which no untoward circumstance can in the least affect. And as to physical liberty, we would not feel justified in refusing refuge to any wife of whose *bona fides* we were perfectly assured. But the complications created by marriage are obvious enough, and always there is the danger that the spiritual life, which after all was young and needed nourishing, should succumb when left unfed.

Our visitor in the rest house and his young kinswoman Lotus, the Brahman widow and the Mahommedan wife, the old men and the young girl—the three sets of contrasts could be duplicated by most who have worked among the more conservative castes. This chapter, with the two which precede it, touches only the usual.

The Sword and Variance; the laws of the land concerning women; custom more potential than any law,—all these things are against us. “*None of these things move us.*” The words rise like the chorus to a new strong song. These things were foreknown to the One who sent us to face them. A thing foreknown cannot militate against ultimate victory. “We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

It is true that the work is hard. Wherever the object

aimed at is to win to out-and-out allegiance to Christ, not the most easily won, but the most estranged, the most opposed, not in the far future of succeeding generations, but here and now—there, if letters from almost all over the world are proof, we find conflict, with exactly what the word connotes.

Granted it is hard, feel to the core of your soul how very hard it is; is there not something within us which leaps to meet the hardest? “The Joy of the Difficult Life” is the inspiring title of a recent article in an Indian magazine. We talk of our Anglo-Saxon blood—

“That is best blood that hath most iron in’t,
To edge resolve with.”

Should not the very difficulties, the sense of the impregnable, impossible, send us to our knees, and then out to the battle front?

CHAPTER XIX

Gardens by the River's Side

IT may be a relief to turn from these crooked and complicated things, even though they do not "move us." A river flows close to the town where we stayed at the beggars' rest-house, and gardens no man planted border its banks. Near by are some Christian houses. Life there, on the surface, at least, is straightforward and homely; commonplace, the hunter for excitement would probably call it; but domestic simplicity has a charm of its own. One of these Christian homes is a true little garden.

One day while we stayed at the rest-house, our Brahman widow friend woke hope in us by sending for me to come to see her. I went, but was told she was out. The message was a hoax. The Brahmans living in the street looked coldly, I thought, as I walked down their street, alone, for I had not been allowed to bring an Indian sister in. I went to the Christian quarter then, with a sense of rest and gladness that there was such a place to go to. Whatever the Christians are, they are not unkind and cold.

The half-dozen Christian houses are grouped round a small mud-built prayer-room, which was under repair,

so the school usually conducted in the prayer-room was in full swing in the catechist's house. Out tumbled the children to shout salaam in chorus. After them came the school-mistress, the catechist, his wife and family, a sickly looking widow and her family, and several sundries. These all poured in, after me, till we seemed wedged together in the very small space available, beyond all chance of doing anything. But the Oriental can work under adverse conditions. The twenty children were soon drawn up in class, repeating their lessons at the top of their voices. The young school-mistress managed to move among them, and tried to keep order, though there was hardly room enough to brandish her inoffensive cane. The widow and her family climbed the nearest verandah. The sundries, several stray women and young children, and two goats, talked to each other. The catechist calmly resumed the labour my advent had interrupted, letter-writing, requiring much consideration, to judge by his abstraction for the next half-hour. How he could concentrate on anything in the midst of such a racket was surprising, in spite of our familiarity with the wonderful Asiatic. One of our pastors, alone, in his native village, before his ordination, took his B.A. degree in mathematics, studying at one end of his verandah, screened off by nothing more substantial than a cocoanut-leaf mat, from the life of the house—and his seven young children.

The catechist's wife first got me milk, then sugar, plantains, and cocoanut water. She wanted to make coffee, and was hardly dissuaded from producing the family cot, a cane lounge much in use. "You are tired with walk-

ing up and down in the sun in that Brahman street. Ah ! When will the Sun of Righteousness shine in that street !” More reflections ; then, “ If only I had known you were coming there would have been coffee all ready !” And the dear motherly face looked concerned. Catechists’ wives are not rich ; but the best that house afforded, the coffee reserved for rare feasting days, was pressed upon me. This over, the catechist’s wife sat down happily in the midst of the school children, and, watching her opportunity, captured one of them, the disconsolate widow’s small son, who had slid into his place in the infants’ class. The infant was glistening all over. He had been lavishly oiled. The catechist’s wife secured him by holding firmly to the tuft of hair grown as a top knot. “ Should I not finish what I have begun, O my little parrot ? Wriggle not, O slippery one !” And she proceeded with further lubrications, explaining minutely the nature of his not very serious malady. “ And so, afflicted as he is, what could I do but this ? Such a little clever one ! Verses he knows by the score, and hymns :—Sing ‘ Jesus knows all about our troubles !’ ” It was sung with cheerfulness.

Now this, the care of another’s child, though so ordinary to tell, was not quite ordinary to happen. Any number of relations will come and camp in each others’ houses. But Love, the sick widow, was not a relation. She belonged to a different caste, and a caste which is to the catechist’s caste as a mongoose to a cobra, to quote an expressive idiom for blood feud. The story came out as I sat there, not that it was consciously told, it rather told itself.

Love had heard the gospel in an open-air meeting held by the Men's Itinerating Band some years ago. She called her husband to listen. He was converted. Immediately afterwards he died.

The heathen relations came to the usual conclusion, and expressed themselves in the usual way. Public opinion is wonderfully compelling. Most of us think as others think, not because we think at all, but simply by force of its influence. Love almost believed herself guilty. But she did not give way. Her sturdy independence of character was mistaken for heart conversion. She was baptized.

Then she became ill. It was a mysterious illness, and was, of course, referred direct to the action of the offended Powers. Love got more and more despondent; and though she never seems to have contemplated giving up Christianity, she was not in touch with Christ, and she sank into a grumbling condition not conducive to health. It was about this time that she came to live near the Christians. The catechist's wife tried to teach her to read, but teaching is not the good woman's forte. She tried to lead her to the Lord, but Love resented being considered anything other than thoroughly right. She tried to comfort her in her troubles, but Love was so sorry for herself that the kindly effort failed.

Many a Christian will preach and pray with truly delightful fervency, and a fluency most amazing. But when it comes to drawing water for a weakly woman, still more, actually cooking for her, it is a different matter. The catechist's wife was ready to do both these things for Love; but though Love is willing to

break her caste, and eat food cooked by all and sundry when she comes to stay with us, she had no wish to incur reproach when anywhere near her own people. The catechist's wife understood the situation. She would not like one of an unsuitable caste to cook for her. But she was very sorry for Love, who was not fit to look after herself and her children, so she did what she could. She keeps cows. Milk is not a prohibited food. She fed both mother and children on milk, and saw to the little ones' clothing and schooling, and all without fuss of any kind, but simply out of motherliness.

To appreciate the garden, look at the desert. Near us is a large, prosperous village. Its servants live in a hamlet near. An old coolie belonging to one of the leading families was ill. It was a simple trouble. A bone had stuck in his throat. He could not eat. His master in the village knew.

His people were ignorant. They did their best. But their doctor, the barber, failed in his efforts to dislodge the bone. The old man slowly starved to death. When the bearers went for him, he was light to carry.

Did his master grudge the two rupees it would have cost to hire a cart and take him to the nearest town? "It was not that," and the girl, who had known the old man, her father's servant, smiled, surprised; "my father never thought of it as his affair. Only our own caste people are our affair."

"Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir-tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle-tree; and it shall be to the Lord for a name."

One such notable reversal is surely proof that God

does completely reverse the things that were, and that He does it without necessarily any very long delay once He has taken the case in hand. Some tell us we must not expect to see such immediate reversal. But how far off must we postpone expectation? We know our Lord bears gently with the ignorant and erring, and it is not for us to judge how far the ignorance and error must reach before it passes the confines of His great lovingkindness. He knows the inner story, the limitations. He loves the weakest and dullest,—we feel in our hearts if this were not so He would not long love us, the weakest and dullest of all; but then we believe, and rejoice to believe, that not through slow processes only, but quickly, as by a word, He can so deal with character that the life changes to something manifestly different to what it was before, strongest where it was weakest, showing forth God’s “Instead.”

Such a life was lived in the sight of all the people by a grand old pastor, who was called by the Hindus The One-Word Man, because of his flawless truthfulness. Truthfulness is not the predominant characteristic of most Easterns. The old pastor belonged originally to a section of the community whose profession compels the cultivation of lying as an art; but the fir-tree and the myrtle grew so strong in him that it was hard to believe the thorn and the brier could ever have been there, and his bare word was accepted by Christians and Hindus alike as final. We know many so transformed. “Immediately she was made straight, and glorified God,” is not an obsolete text.

Numerous incidents are told of the way the Hindus

believed the pastor's word, and were guided by it. Once, when a prayer-room was being built by a congregation in his charge, within the domains of a certain opposing Hindu, the Hindus sent men to destroy it by force. A scrimmage ensued. The Christians were roughly handled, and a police case was the result. The Christians wanted their pastor to exaggerate the violence done to them. The magistrates heard the witnesses, who all contradicted each other, and then called upon the pastor to give evidence. He did so with absolute veracity. The magistrate saw he spoke the truth, without hiding the fault of his own party. He asked the lawyer on the Hindu side if he had any question to address to the pastor. The lawyer, who was unprepared for a perfectly truthful witness, replied that he had nothing to say. The case was decided then in favour of the Christians by that Hindu magistrate, upon the sole evidence of the man who was known to tell the truth.

I remember once seeing his word doubted. His wife had cataract. A quack was allowed to operate. His method was sure and simple. He had only to run a needle into the pupil of the eye, and immediately the offending particle within would wither up and disappear. Could anything be simpler? But though so simple, its successful performance required the greatest skill. Therefore the fee, to be paid in advance, was ten rupees.

The old pastor had not so much money at hand. His wife was eager for the operation. She would see an hour or two afterwards. Now that the blissful moment was so near, how could she wait? "Prick now; next week the money will come," said the old man, knowing

that it would. The operator demurred. He had good reason for doubting after-payment in such cases. “We are Christians,” said the pastor. “Cured or marred, the money shall be yours.” But still the doctor doubted, and they had to scrape the ten rupees together by borrowing from neighbours. We were returning from camp that afternoon, and the quack, fresh from operating, met us just outside the village. He brandished what looked like a rusty darning needle. “Look! this has given your pastor’s wife new eyes!” Horrified, we hastened on, and found the two old people in trouble. The old woman, because of the pain in her eyes, the old man because of the pain in his heart,—“The doctor did not believe our word.”

This dear old man, by his holy consistent life, had commended the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ for over seventy years, when, having walked so far with God, he was not, for God took him.

Many are asking, Are Missions worth while? Surely they are, if such souls are worth winning. But after all, does it greatly matter what we, the servants, think upon the subject? Is not our business rather to discover our Master’s thought, and then obey Him “unto all studious meeting of His wishes”?

CHAPTER XX

A Singing Bird in God's Garden

A NEW garden is in making on the hot plain under the mountains. We spent a day there lately, watching the work. But first we stayed for an hour or two in a place which is not a garden.

The Potters' quarter in Skywisdom's village is an untidy huddle of huts near a small old shrine. We took our stand near the shrine, beside the raised platform upon which, behind a grated door, the goddess sits in a dark cell. At one end of the platform there is an idol painted black. In front, leaning against the wall, was what I mistook for a clay model of the Virgin and Child. But it was a local Madonna; for Satan's travesty of the truth may be traced through the Hindu system straight back to the Babylonish Mysteries; and the holy Story of Bethlehem is parodied everywhere.

It was sunny outside, and the Potters let us mount the platform, which was shaded. They gathered in groups about the steps, and listened silently while we besought them to turn from these vanities unto the living God.

We were standing close to the clay goddess as we spoke, and inadvertently touched it, but no one minded.

“It does not matter. It has not received the Inspiration. It is still mere clay.” And they showed us the hole left in the back of such images by which the spirit it is meant to represent is intended to enter into it, when the ceremony of Inspiration is performed. “The hole will be closed up afterwards. *Then* we should not like you to touch it, for then it becomes a goddess like the one inside. We would not like you to touch our god,” pointing to the stone figure, “because in the days of the ancients he was made and inspired. He is now inhabited.” We assured them we would not touch it, and they were content.

Then two old champions¹ of the faith rose to defend a dogma which we had not attacked, for here, as in the question of demoniacal possession, we are on unknown ground, and are too ignorant to contradict those who have lived on it all their lives. “What would I say then? That an idol has any real being? . . . Not so; but I say that when the heathen offer sacrifices they sacrifice to demons and not to God”: so runs Conybeare and Howson’s translation of St. Paul’s words to the Corinthians. “Not so . . . But.” This inky black shape, with its gilt eyeballs protruding, its uplifted hand and club, and general impression of ferocity, has no real being, but it stands for that which has; and the sacrifices offered to it are offered to a real being, the demon who deceives these men and women who are talking round us now. This much at least we know.

“Oh, in the night he came. And he seized this brother,” pointing to one with bloodshot eyes and a

¹ For photographs of these two, see *Things as They Are*, p. 24.

raving expression, "and we cried 'Prophecy.' And he prophesied: he said, 'Shall not your mother's cousin's wife have a child within a year?' And she, who for seventeen years had had no child, possessed a son in eleven months. Then we gave cocoanuts, eggs, cakes, a goat, and fowls. All he desired we gave." Each of the men and women there was ready to confirm the truth of this story, and each was ready to add another, which like a blazing torch lit up the dark recess of many a life.

If Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil about the body of Moses durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but only said, "The Lord rebuke thee," much less dare we give free vent to our feelings, much more may we give pause when we meet the same defiance. There is calm in the confidence that the day of the Lord's rebuke will forever end this working of Satan. But in the meantime these souls are receiving not the love of the truth, but the workings of falsehood and deceit of unrighteousness, and we pleaded with them collectively and then individually to face the ignored facts of life and the hereafter; and we preached Jesus.

"Most excellent doctrine, excellent doctrine," said one of the old men; "I intend to think longer upon it." So he followed us all day. And in the evening, after much meditation, he made the following proposal: "For one hundred rupees, and free food for life, and the promise of care in my old age, and a worthy funeral, I will now embrace your religion." Such is the soil God takes and makes into gardens.

Straight from the Potters’ quarter we went to the Palm Climbers; and, surrounded by another crowd of far more intelligent people, heard a heart-rejoicing story.

It was told by a young wife whose beaming face bore witness to its truth. How astonished she would have been to hear that anywhere there were those who consider “religion” depressing. She evidently found it a most happy possession.

She had heard of Christianity before her marriage, but cared nothing for it. After her marriage she came to live in Skywisdom’s village, where a young schoolmaster, lately converted, had been stationed. Her husband knew about his life. The Indian is quick to detect a sham, and equally quick to recognise holiness. “He is God’s man,” was the husband’s verdict. The wife was interested and watched. But still she cared nothing. Her voice was eager as she continued :

“Then late one evening I heard there was preaching in the street, and all of us went and sat on the ground. There was a singing box, and a lantern set on the devil’s altar. And you all gathered round the altar and played the box and sang much. Do you remember?” And though we have had many an open-air meeting since then, we well remember that meeting, when the light shone out in the black night.

“Oftenest of all the songs you sang was one like this :

“Come to Jesus.
Come ! Come !
To the true Lord.
Come ! Come !”

She sang through the chorus with evident delight, and from this point on, her story was punctuated with choruses, lyrics, and hymns, sung to unrecognisable tunes, and with many variations as to words; for we found our choruses had grown, budded out into fresh verses to express new emotions. It was an interesting study in poetical evolution; and, by the way, in the evolution of a bit of ground from desert to garden.

In almost all our meetings we speak of sin and its inevitable outworking. This appeals to the people. The conscience in them confirms the truth of the words which are God's. The inner voice corresponds to the outer. The latent sense of right and wrong becomes active. You can see the truth grip. Then we speak of the way of deliverance from sin, and we find that the story of the love that passeth all knowledge, all telling, draws with a power that is only Divine. The Indian deep down is loving. He was created most lovable. If only he will let himself listen, something within him responds to that love, goes out to meet it insensibly. Alas for the many hindrances, the devil's devices coming between the soul and the clasp of that infinite love! But sometimes the love breaks through them all, bends over, lifts over the soul that sincerely has come out to meet it even a little way.

"As the Iyer spoke my heart quite broke: I saw my sins rise before my eyes as if a pile of water vessels were placed the one on the top of the other. And I saw those sins had been as nails nailing the Lord to the Cross. And I could not bear it. And I went home, and my sins followed me all the way, and they came

between me and the Lord, like a wall I could never climb over or pass. But the next night I came again. My husband came too, and sat with the men. But I—I was all alone in the crowd, alone with a voice that spoke to me, and said, ‘Oh, sinner, see your sin. It is thick between the Lord and you.’ And then the Iyer spoke.”

That evening the preaching was about the putting away of sin, and the same chorus was often sung, “Come to Jesus: come!” While it was being sung, suddenly, or gradually, she forgets now, it became clear to her that there was no hindrance to her coming. The hindering thing had been put away. Her sin was gone. That night both husband and wife were saved.

“Then life became all new to me. I heard a lyric about the sweetness of Jesus, ‘Sweeter than honey, Divine sweetness, is the sweetness of Jesus the Lord,’” and she sang it with enthusiasm. “And then I heard a song about His Coming again. ‘Oh, be ready! The Lord Jesus is coming! Oh, rest your souls (a new verse-bud, this) for Jesus is coming!’ And so no trouble could ever seem great, for as the dew when the sun looks upon it so are all troubles; they are passing! they are passing! And Jesus is coming, soon coming again. Now like the young rice seeing the rain, my heart rejoices,” she concluded, “and every day I am opening my mouth to taste more of the sweetness, sweeter than honey.”

I remembered the catechist’s testimony about her. “She sings as she goes to her work on the hills, and she

sings when she comes home in the evening. And she sings all the time she is working (except when she has to stop," he added truthfully), "she is always singing something. Her life is all sprinkled with songs." God has singing birds in His garden.

But this singing bird became slightly ill. The Christians of Skywisdom's village are working people. They start early for the mountains where their work is, and return late, and are, as one would expect, a hardy healthy race. Wisdom's Flower had never been the least ill before. She did not understand being ill, and she found the experience trying. One day she appeared at Dohnavur carrying a bundle of rice: "I have come for four days; I have brought rice for four days' food. Also I have brought four annas as a thankoffering for healing." And she dropped her bundle on the floor and the fourpence in my hand. "But will you not wait till you are healed, and then give your thankoffering?" "Why should I wait? I thank God now. This is my thanks beforehand."

Her trouble would have been easily cured. Out in the district, far from efficient medical help, we have constantly to do the best we can for all sorts of minor afflictions. This particular complaint is very familiar, and we gave the appropriate powder, which she received with prayer. But the medicine's activity disturbed her, and on the second day she came to us: "Ammâ, the Lord has healed my soul of the disease of sin"; and she laid her hand on the place where she believes her soul to be. "Now this organ" (naming it explicitly) "has a disease"; and she moved her hand a little lower down;

“why should not He who healed my soul heal my other organ also?”

She was young in the faith. We did not perplex her with grown-up arguments. She followed the leading she felt had been given; and to-day, healed and happy, God's bird is singing in His garden.

CHAPTER XXI

Dry Land

WE are often glad that India is not all a Shah Najaf. And though we feel strongly that it is time Christ's soldiers were in more earnest about winning the forts that are harder to win, it is good to know there are many less inaccessible places, such as Skywisdom's village, and a multitude of people for whom conversion need not necessarily mean complete social ostracism. When a village allows a Christian of its own clan to continue living within it, and to share its common life, there is hope for that village. The light can shine from within, instead of only from without. But even here, it is not a case of "come, see, and conquer"; the tactics of the enemy are different, his attack less ferocious; but he is there, though we may not see him distinctly at first.

Once more our story looks back to the year when the antagonistic town said "Victory to Siva," and saw victory to Christ. Six or seven miles east of that town there is a village where nothing of note had ever happened, so far as any one knew. Several nominal Christians lived there, and the villagers knew the main facts of Christianity, but they took no interest in it.

Their field of thought was small. All that makes life tense, vivid, was just not there, or at least was not apparent. If you want to know how circumscribed village life may be, sit down by the well in the early morning, and listen to the conversation. Then spend the forenoon in a friendly courtyard. You will find food for reflection.

The village was fast asleep, what the Bible calls dead. A real fight is exhilarating, but the stillness of the sleep of death has nothing exciting about it. In such places one's faith is apt to lie low, and one is inclined to be almost quiescent. We need to be roused and shamed out of our fatal content to live while souls are dead. We need to be re-inspired with the faith that accounts God able to raise them up even from the dead.

This slumberous village was not closed to us. It belonged to a caste which was not affected by the happenings elsewhere. We valued the opportunity to visit it and its allied villages during the hot season of that year, when distant itineration was impossible.

Imagine a waste of blazing sand; the reflected glow rises up through the hot air and heats it seven times hotter. You wonder how the cactus and the scrub can live in such hot sand. It burns the bare feet of a boy as he runs across it. But there is water near, and a perfect oasis of palm. You pass it, and cross a jungle belt. Your bullock cart presses its way through the thorns, and they scratch its roof vindictively. On you go, and the thorns grow still closer and tear at your mat roof more fiercely. At last you break through and find yourself in the village, whose name

means the Village of Sand, but which we call the Village of Shrines.

There are more shrines than houses. Small, pyramidal red mud altars stand under every scrubby tree. It is Athens in mud. But the contrast between marble and mud is as nothing compared with the contrast between those Athenians and these villagers, from whose mind nothing is further than the desire to hear or tell any new thing. The Tamils are a most intelligent race, and capable of almost anything; but you often come across hamlets like this one, buried in the country, whose inhabitants know little, and care less, about the movements of the world outside their encompassing jungle. One would have expected that so many shrines implied some keenness about religion; but if such a sentiment existed, it was most successfully concealed.

Stand now with us by these thorn bushes and look: you see tumble-down cottages, built anyhow and anywhere, surrounded by broken mud walls and half-finished fences. There is not a straight length of street, or a well-swept courtyard, or a thrifty-looking homestead in the place.

A chorus, sung lustily, if not musically, brings the women out into the sunshine, and, nothing loth, they loll about on their narrow verandah-ledges and gaze at us from afar. Another chorus, and they come a little closer. One of us, an Indian sister, speaks; they move off slowly, just out of earshot, and begin to talk to each other. The poor sister looks blank, expostulates, invites, in vain. Nobody has curiosity enough to listen, though they are willing to stare, for that does not involve an

exertion. So we scatter, and go to their houses, and talk to them one by one. Some drift off to their work; some listen a little. The Gospel of Christ is the Power of God, *the Power of God*, we say to ourselves over and over, and watch to see it lay hold on a soul, and, in spite of all seemings, believe to see. But just then and there we see nothing at all. And we work our way back through the thorns to the cart.

We went again; it was just the same. Repeated visits only deepened our disappointment. We might as well have spoken to their native sand for all the impression we appeared to create upon the people. The place was like a bit of primeval creation, for no plant of the field was yet in the earth, and no herb of the field had yet sprung up. It was just dry land, so dry and hard that we felt as if the little blade of the tender grass would be hurt and broken if it tried to win its way through, anywhere—till we remembered the mist that went up and watered the whole face of the ground; and the imagery of the 65th Psalm seemed illuminated in the tropical light: "Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it. Thou greatly enrichest it; the river of God is full of water: Thou providest them corn when Thou hast so prepared the earth. Thou waterest her furrows abundantly; Thou settlest the ridges thereof: Thou makest it soft with showers; Thou blessest the springing thereof." The very thought of it all brought cool in the midst of the heat.

But for months we worked on, and saw nothing. The people listened or did not listen, just as they felt inclined. They never argued or opposed. They were not alive

enough. They were perfectly content to be as they were. The vision that dissatisfied was not yet theirs. All workers in all lands know some such men and women; know, too, what it is to wonder whether there is any use in going on trying to arouse them.

At last we became aware of a certain sensible difference. There was a little feeble opposition, which gradually gathered force. Something was happening. We waited awhile before we could be sure that the something would develop into anything. Meanwhile, we went away on an itinerating tour. We returned to find the first blade through. A man and his wife in the Village of Shrines were genuinely converted. They had heard at an open-air meeting—the man at one, the woman at another. They knew very little, but they were sure of that little. From that time forth we had a welcome when we went.

Some months passed, and we had a Baptism day. Then it came out that the wife was a notable character. She had been a devil-dancer; and she had all the power and influence of one upon whom the afflatus falls; so her baptism made a certain stir. One could see a look upon the faces of the people as they saw her go down into the water—a wondering, almost frightened look. There was a breathless pause as she stood there, out in the shining of the sunset,—and then she came back radiant. And we lived in the thirteenth verse of our Psalm that day: "They shout for joy, they also sing."

But the Village of Shrines was still Athens in mud. Perhaps one little mud altar was knocked down that day. Scores of them still stood hot and red as we passed them week by week. The people do not belong

to a caste which refuses a Christian house-room in its midst, so our friends went back to their home, and witnessed bravely there. But two months passed blankly. Nobody stirred. The village seemed to have turned in its sleep, and to sleep all the sounder for having been roused.

One morning, shortly before we went, as we waited before the Lord about the place, we felt drawn to ask for the conversion of some one there that very day. And the name of one, of whom we knew, was brought to us as we prayed. We were pressed to ask for her. Everyone who knows what it is to be moved to pray in this way knows how solemn it is, and how easily a mistake may be made; and yet when the pressure comes we dare not resist it: so we prayed.

The one whose name was brought before us was not a woman we should have chosen. She was a Temple devotee, a widow with two children, very ignorant, and so far as we knew quite uninterested in Christianity. Moreover, we did not know that she was in the village, and we did not know where her house was. We knew that if we went and asked for her, she would promptly hide or be hidden. So there was nothing hopeful in the prospect from a human point of view. It looked impossible. But we have not to look at things from a human point of view, so that did not matter, and “we reckon on God who is at home in impossibilities.”

When this prayer was laid on us, there were two of our little band who felt puzzled. They said, “But how shall we find her?” As our cart broke through the thorn bushes, and we got out and stood on the sand, a

woman in white ran out of a house near by and flung herself down on the ground at our feet. It was this very woman. I had not seen her before; but I knew in a moment by the band sisters' faces that it must be she.

We drew her aside, and she followed as one in a trance. We got her into the prayer-room, and tried to find out what had brought her to us, for never before had we seen one come like that, unless she was in bodily need and eagerly craving help. She had nothing to say about it. Then we told her how we had prayed. She did not understand. There she sat on the floor, and we beside her, a dull, stupid, uninteresting woman, without the least apparent desire after God, yet "He died for desire of her." We looked at her, and read the writing on her forehead which no earth soil could quite obliterate, "For whom Christ died."

Stupid was what she seemed at first; imbecile was what she seemed after half an hour's endeavour to get one thought into her mind. Every few minutes she glanced at the door as if meditating an escape. We tried to put things before her in simple ways, using familiar illustrations to arrest her attention. But after a time we began to doubt whether she was capable of paying attention to anything. We almost gave up at last. She did not want to listen, she only wanted to get away. And yet she had come of her own accord. We were mystified. Then a bystander said something which threw a light upon it. I did not stop to think of all that was meant at that moment; but realising that talking was useless, and holding her lest she should slip away, we knelt down beside her and prayed.

CHAPTER XXII

“Let it bring forth tender Grass”

WHEN we rose from our knees we saw a change in the devotee's face and manner. Those who have seen such changes wrought will understand: to those who have not, all this tale will seem foolishness. There was no violent emotion; but something had gone, something had come. Rather, Some One had come.

She began to pray herself. What she said was a medley of heathen phrases mixed with a word of sense here and there. Wisdom, the ex-devil-dancer who had joined us, looked shocked. We told her God would wash the prayer clean and make it all right. But Wisdom drew us aside. “You do not know her as we know her,” she said, and amplified the word dropped by the bystander: “she is possessed by a strong demon. I used to serve devils. I know all about it. Sometimes I too was possessed. But she is different entirely. She sold herself to her demon, and he abides in her continually. Often he seizes her and makes her do terrible things in his name. She is helpless in his hands. Between times she is as you see her, like one without a mind. We think she is insane. This praying is not real. Do not believe in her. You will be disappointed afterwards.”

The only perplexity to Wisdom was the devotee's coming to us. All the rest was plain hypocrisy or stupidity, or both. Her coming in that strange way was inexplicable upon either theory. The devotee lived her life alone, and never went near the Christians.

But to me this fact was eloquent. I had not thought of her as possessed. As I saw her there was nothing of the special phenomena we associate with such inhabitation. She seemed to us the dullest of all the dull women we had seen in that dull village, the deadest of the dead. There was nothing uncanny about her, nothing impressive. The one remarkable thing was just her coming to us as she did, rushing straight for us when we appeared, falling down at our feet. "They arrived at the country of the Gadarenes. And when He went forth to land there met Him out of the city a certain man which had devils long time. When he saw Jesus he cried out and fell down before Him." Could her coming so be chance? Was it not that the Spirit before whom devils quail had drawn her to meet Him who had come to her village, and caused her to fall down before Him? For He must have been with us according to His promise as we stood on the sand by the cart. There are times when one feels that if a Voice spoke one's name, and one turned and saw Him—Rabboni, Master—it could hardly be a surprise.

Wisdom and her husband, who had returned from work, listened at first rather doubtfully. "The heavens touch the earth on the horizon of our vision, but it always seems farthest to the sky from the spot where we stand." It is easier to believe in miracles happening

a long way off than just here. But as we talked together it was as if we were all swung up to higher altitudes of faith and expectation. Husband and wife, our little band, and the bewildered devotee knelt down in Wisdom's courtyard, and praised God, and asked for perfect recovery, mental health, and spiritual health. And then putting the devotee's hand in Wisdom's we left her to her care. A few weeks afterwards the message reached us, “Come quickly. The devotee's only daughter is dead.”

A blow like this often follows the first turning towards Christ, and if the new convert is not staggered by it, another often follows confession in baptism. This is another of the facts we never concern ourselves to explain. We only know it happens so.

We went at once. We found the poor mother sitting quietly with Wisdom, in Wisdom's little house. She was in sore grief, but perfectly calm. “Jesus is holding me in His arms, as I held my child when she was a babe. He is hushing me,” she said. We could hardly believe that she was the one who had seemed so imbecile.

The heathen were jubilant, quite sure they would have her back. “Did we not warn you? Did we not tell you your demon would avenge himself? Now he has taken your golden girl. Next he will take your eye's jewel (her boy). Lastly, he will come for you. You will surely all be slain: and we shall see.”

There was cause for their words. In a neighbouring village a devil dancer of some note had recently publicly professed faith in Christ. Two days later her only son sickened with cholera and died. Trouble upon trouble

followed till she yielded; then all went well. So their talk stirred up every superstitious fear, and blew upon Wisdom's friend from all four sides at once. Would she stand? She stood. "For He is holding me," she said.

Months of trial followed. Her boy was a constant source of anxiety. Any little ailment seemed serious. "Is what they are saying true? Will he, too, die?" she asked us one day pitifully. But she learned to roll her burden off, and not to take it back. She was spared this crowning grief. Her boy was protected, her faith braced.

One of the wonderful things to watch in connection with the devotee was the change that passed over her face. It had been coarse. It became refined. That refinement of expression, which so occupies you as you look that you do not notice fleshly details, was hers now—"For soule is forme, and doth the bodie make." Her mind was renewed. It was good to see it clearing as the landscape clears in the morning. We read learned disquisitions on the impossibility of the Creative Word taking immediate and visible effect. "Let there be light: and there was light," is too simple for our wisdom now—or too profound? And we turn from the book's page straight to life's, and wonder as we look, spelling slowly out the words that are being written there, whether those who write in the other books have watched God writing His. Perhaps they have not the leisure of Manoah and his wife, who, when the Angel did wondrously, looked on.

God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth the things that are not as though they were, God whose Creative

Word does take immediate and visible effect upon that mysterious Thing, more mysterious than matter, which we call Soul: God, Creator, and Saviour, did wondrously; and we looked on.

The temple devotee was that no longer. She withdrew at once from all connection with the temple. Her boy had been trained to chant prayers and idol songs, for which service the priests paid well. She took him away and sent him to school. This left her poor; but she got some humble work in the village, and from the first spent her spare time in what she called “looking for lost sheep.” She and Wisdom talked to their neighbours, and went about where they could, telling any who would listen about Jesus.

CHAPTER XXIII

“And it was so”

THREE or four years after her conversion the devotee, Pearl Shell, got work in a market town some miles from her native village. Before she had been long there she heard of a young girl who was shut up in the town, and often mercilessly beaten because it was known that she wanted to be a Christian.

The year which we look back upon as the year of beginning of battles had been full of the sort of sorrow which battles mean. When the houses closed, as we told before, they closed upon eager, earnest, little hearts. Six children who, we knew, were much interested, lost all chance of hearing more. They were punished for wanting to hear. We heard of these punishments, and we felt as a mother would feel if her little ones were being badly hurt, and strong hands held her from running to them. One by one all the six gave way.

So often it is just like that: the plant is sending rootlets out: it will grip if it has time. Suddenly, fiercely downward sweeps a great wind from the wilderness, and we see what looks like our little plant flying with other frightened things in the dust before the storm. The great wind passes. We search for our

plant. We find it at last quite withered and dead, with dead white roots like tangled threads, lying limp on a heap of leaves, the débris of the storm. And only yesterday, perhaps, we were glad because it was alive.

There was one, a seventh, Sixfaced by name, whom we did not count, because she had not been properly taught. She had only heard a little in an open-air meeting. She came, after hearing that little, and asked us to keep her. She wanted to join our Way, she said. But she was much too young, and her knowledge of the Way she wished to join was so very limited that we did not seriously consider her proposal, but we sent her home, promising to call and ask her people to allow us to teach her.

We called as we promised, and we saw that child punished for having wished to be taught. The shock would hurt if we told how she was punished. Some of us have to stand such shocks, and they send us home tingling in every nerve, as if the blows had been twice our own, and they set our whole being crying to God, “How long? how long?”

After the punishment the child was hurried away to the town where Pearl Shell had found work. For three years we heard nothing of her. When Pearl Shell’s message reached us we felt sure that Sixfaced must be the girl in question. Inquiries proved it was so. We urged Pearl Shell to try to see her and to comfort her.

Pearl Shell found it difficult. Sixfaced was kept in what was virtually imprisonment. Occasionally the sound of blows and broken cries reached the outer world. Once the Hindu neighbours interfered. But such interference

is not popular nor often possible in India. The uncle in whose guardianship the girl was, had killed her mother in a fit of passion. Money had changed hands. The thing had been hushed up. But men feared him; the defenceless child was wholly in his power.

One day, she tells us now, he had held her down firmly with one hand, while he struck her with the other, shouting between each blow, “This is for daring to persist that you will join the Christian Way.” She had almost utterly given up hope of any deliverance reaching her, but a new hope shot through her. She would pray. She had only once seen a Christian pray. She tried to recall how we did it. But the excitement of those few hurried minutes, when, three years ago, she had pleaded with us to keep her, had blotted out memory of detail. She only remembered we spoke to the One we called Jesus, the Loving Saviour, and that we had assured her He heard. So she joined her hands in the heathen way, and, with wide-open eyes looking timidly round lest her dreaded uncle should see, she repeated often her single petition, “Keep my uncle from beating me.” She did not expect to hear a voice answer. No voice had answered when we spoke in the bungalow. But she waited a minute, and felt comforted, she says. The room in which she was had grown dark. She remembered a fragment of truth she knew, that this Jesus Saviour had once been beaten, and then fastened (how, she did not know) to a piece of wood till He died. As He had been beaten, He must know how very much it hurt. She let the strange comfort of this thought sink down to the depths of her weary heart. Then she

slipped out of the room. Her uncle was standing close to the door. She trembled as she saw him. But he did not speak to her. He never beat her again.

After this she seems to have understood she could pray about everything. Once a marriage seemed imminent: "Jesus, O Jesus! stop it. Do not let me be tied." The marriage fell through. Then the relatives tried to entangle her by means of a kind of lottery. On a certain day, always postponed, a large sum of money and some jewels would fall to her share: "Jesus, O Jesus! let not my heart become caught by money and jewels." And so she was kept.

But Sixfaced, by the time Pearl Shell after many vain attempts came in touch with her, was discouraged. She had waited through those three years in hope that we would come for her. We had told her, little thinking how eagerly she would remember it, that we could not protect her till she was sixteen. She believed herself sixteen now, and, not realising how impossible action on our part was, she could not understand our silence. For we had to be all but silent. We sent messages of love and sympathy to her through Pearl Shell, as soon as we knew where she was. But we could not say one word which could afterwards be translated into an invitation to come to us. We had no means of knowing that she was still steadfast, for much I have written was at that time unknown to us, and an Indian girl's strength is not a thing to be counted upon. But Pearl Shell determined to help her to escape, and she prayed with the simple courage of faith for guidance in this difficult matter.

It was most difficult. Sixfaced did not look sixteen. How was she to be proved over sixteen? She was an orphan. The uncle, her guardian, could easily “prove” her any age he wished. It is a criminal offence to concern oneself with a minor’s escape from her home. Pearl Shell knew little of legal complications, but she did know that the caste could kill her if she did it. And the town was full of eyes.

One day when she was praying she believed that she was told to go to a certain stream, where sometimes Sixfaced was sent to bathe, and there to arrange with her (the opportunity, she believed, would be given) to walk out of the town there and then, in faith that the eyes of the people they would meet would be kept from seeing them. To that poor ignorant woman the thought was overwhelming. How could she dare do such a thing? She did it.

She went to the stream, found Sixfaced there, had a chance for a word alone. The girl, in utmost simplicity, believed God would work a miracle and “blind the eyes” of the people, her caste men, she knew they were sure to meet. Together these two walked straight from that stream, through the streets, and out of the town. When we heard it we hardly believed it; it sounded so impossible.

For three long miles they walked along the highway leading from that town to the village where we used to live. There they were welcomed by the pastor and his wife. There they heard the good news that next day Mr. and Mrs. Walker were expected, en route for Dohnavur, from Ceylon. “Lord, thou knowest we cannot protect this girl, if her people come in strength,” the

pastor prayed, “hinder them that they may not come till the Iyer and the Ammâl arrive from Ceylon.” This prayer was answered. The uncle was hindered in his purpose to gather his castemen and carry his niece off by force. Knowing nothing of the circumstances, Mr. and Mrs. Walker came just in time to stand by Six-faced through the ordeal of facing her relations. Legal questions were not raised. Four days afterwards the joyful jingle of bullock bells brought us all out in expectancy. Such moments in missionary lives are Overweights of Joy.

Far more than Overweights! Oh, the joy that cannot be measured when the Shepherd says, “Rejoice with Me!” Can any words describe it? “I have such an intense recollection of the joy that comes in the work at times,” writes a Japanese missionary, “that I am half afraid of giving exaggerated impressions to people at home. Some people do seem to think it so extraordinary. Of course there are disappointments and discouraging times, which come very often. Still I don’t think there can be any other joy in the world quite like the joy of being with Christ when He finds a soul that has been out in the dark all its life.”

There was much to hear; and as we heard it told so simply, we felt as if this unknown one had sung her part in the martyr’s song—

“But I, amid the torture and the taunting,
 I have had Thee.
 Thy hand was holding my hand fast and faster,
 Thy voice was close to me;
 And glorious eyes said, ‘Follow Me, thy Master;
 Smile as I smile, thy faithfulness to see.’

Perhaps this is too noble a song to fit in lips so ignorant. She did not know enough to rise so high.

Sometimes so many agencies are used towards the conversion of a soul that we almost lose sight of the arm of the Lord for the sleeve which covers it. But here it was laid bare. Surely that child was kept and led by a Power most evidently Divine that all "may know that this is Thy hand; that Thou, Lord, hast done it."

Sixfaced (now called Gladness) had everything to learn. When for the first time she heard the full story of our Lord's crucifixion she was broken-hearted. We read it to her slowly, verse by verse, from the 19th chapter of St. John. She had never seen it pictured; but as the words of that ancient writing dropped into her soul, they became spirit and life; it was as if a picture were being drawn and coloured before her. Together we sat in silence at the foot of the Cross, looking.

C. H. Tyndall, in his book *Electricity and its Similitudes*, shows how the intellectual and physical deficiency which makes us insensible to the finer forms of electrical energy about us, is analogous to our spiritual insensitiveness. If only we had an "electric eye," an "electric sense," what a world of wonder would open to us. If only the spirit within us were more sensitive to spiritual impressions, what surprises God could give us, what passion of joy! Or perhaps an unspeakable awe would fall such as fell upon us then; for as we sat together, suddenly the denseness of the flesh seemed to become thin. Almost that keener sense was given, almost that vision

that pierces through sense, till, aware by some quick apprehension of a Presence moving somewhere near, our very soul trembled. The moment flashed for us and passed. No effort of will could recall it. Perhaps such moments long detained would be too intense for the mortal in us. We turned again to the usual. But that moment's mark has not passed.

The devotee to whose simple courage we owed so much did not feel courageous. She would have been astonished had she known we thought her so. She feared to return to the town. Some child might have seen her with the girl, though apparently no grown person had. A child can talk. She dreaded the vengeance of the caste. She knew only too well what a mob of infuriated men and women can do. She knew, too, what can be done without a mob, in secret. She, an unprotected widow, to live among those people! At first she felt she could not; it would be like living over a smouldering fire. But she prayed. Then she said in a quiet, matter-of-fact fashion: “He says He will go back with me”; and she went back. When we heard about it we thought it heroic.

Think of what she was. God called the dry land Earth. We described the dry land poorly:

“Fuller for him be the hours!
Give him emotion though pain!
Let him live. Let him feel *I have lived*.
Heap up his moments with life.
Triple his pulses with fame!”

Take these five lines. Divest them of every iota of force. Reverse them. Let them lie out languid,

nerveless. There you have the type we have tried to show—the lifeless, the dry land God called Earth.

God said, “Let the earth bring forth tender grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself. And it was so.”

CHAPTER XXIV

“Hold me on with a steady Pace”

WHEN a convert comes out, and especially after she is baptized, those who have faithfully prayed so far draw a breath of relief. She is safe now, they think, and relax. Intensity in anything is tiring. Intensity in prayer leaves us spent. But it is not safe to relax.

In the year 1897 a South Indian missionary, the leader of a men's Itinerancy, in writing to his committee about his Band, mentioned one especially as being very earnest. In compiling the year's report, attention was drawn to this man by a marginal note, "A successful soul-winner." "The leader," the text said, "knows few men who seem so wholly fitted as he is to point men to the Saviour." When this was written it was true. Before the printed report reached South India the successful soul-winner was back in Hinduism; to-day he is a Saivite, an avowed worshipper of Siva.

He was one of the first converts I knew intimately. He came with the men's Band to preach in the villages round our home. Every day at noon we used to teach the men new choruses, and the man who struck us most because of his keenness in learning the choruses and

delight in using them was Spiritual-Guide, as his name means, a man with a strong thoughtful face, and a kind, frank manner. The chorus which had helped Star, as a child, was the one he appropriated at once, "Jesus loves, saves, keeps." He used to sing it all over the compound, and once in a dry meeting of nominal Christians this convert from Hinduism startled the dulness by breaking out with his chorus, and then pleading with those cold hearts to let the love of Jesus in. For three years he worked in the men's Itinerancy. He had special access to the Brahmans because of his perfect command of the higher Tamil language, and once he had won a hearing, his fervency held them to listen to the end. He was beloved by the band's leader, and thoroughly trusted by all. Suddenly one day they missed him, found he had gone to the nearest great Saivite temple, and traced him home. He was last seen sitting on the ground as a Hindu guru, with a rosary of Siva's berries round his neck, and Siva's ashes smeared on his forehead.

In the midst of his student days M'Cheyne prayed, "God hold me on with a steady pace!" God hold us on with a steady pace in prayer for those who have lately come out of Hinduism, lest we stop before the goal is reached. It is safe to say that in India, at least, defection is a possible contingency which can never be ignored. There are fine threads woven round the newly won convert's soul which even his break from Hinduism has not wholly snapped: these threads can pull. He hears voices inaudible to us, or if audible, unmeaning; to him they are intense in meaning, wooing as siren

songs. There are influences about him of which we are not sensible. Oh for more discerning sympathy with those whose temptations, like their sorrows, pass the bounds of our experience!

A potent cause of declension where the truly earnest are concerned is found in the weariness of repulse day after day, as the message they are so eager to give is carelessly and often contemptuously refused. Christ lifted up does draw. A missionary on fire to see souls saved does see souls saved. But it is no less true that often the call is to enter deep into the fellowship of His sufferings. Then, if this aspect of things is forgotten, and we look around instead of up into the face of Jesus, we get hopeless, and cold and hard, uncaring that souls are perishing. From this the step is easy to slackness in effort for them and indolence in prayer. Then we get sidetracked, engrossed in something other than what makes for the winning of souls; and Satan, content, directs his attention elsewhere. Something of the same sort happens if the worker is a Christian born. If he is a convert he retrogrades often irreparably.

Perhaps the strain to which those for whom we now ask your special prayer are subjected, will be better understood if I tell you what has lately happened here.

About two miles from Dohnavur, across a bare bit of scorching plain, there is a small old-fashioned place called the Village of the Temple. None of us may walk down the Brahman street. When the men's Itinerating Band comes round it has to stand at the end of the street and speak down it to any who will condescend to listen. The women of this village were unevangelised when we

first went there. Two of the converts, Star and Joy, went regularly with an older woman for several months. Then the great heat of March and early April almost forced them to desist, for the plain is quite unshaded on that side, and they are not accustomed to exposure. But they would not give in, and toiled on till the following November, with only a six weeks' break when we went to the hills. The monsoon rains then threatened to stop them. They waded sometimes knee-deep through the morass rather than miss their afternoon for that village. They had their reward in winning an entrance to many houses there.

At last, to their delight, they saw what they believed was the first green blade. They almost ran as they came home to tell us of it. A girl of eighteen, unaccountably still unmarried, wanted to be a Christian; she had let her people know; they did not seem opposed. It sounded too good to be true. And another, lately married, had begun to talk to her husband, who also seemed interested. Two little slender blades of hope, but how precious to the sowers, to whom they were the earnest of a harvest that seemed to their quickened imagination quite near that day.

A few weeks passed; the two first to become impressed went on satisfactorily; others began to learn, others wanted to learn. One of these last was a young girl whose face, looking through a window, attracted them as they passed. They stopped at the door, and asked a middle-aged man who was working at a fine gold chain on the verandah if they might come in. He answered curtly that his sister had no time for conversation.

They passed on, but as they passed they caught another glimpse of the bright face with its dark sparkling eyes, and a curious quick sympathy sprang into life between them. Each drew to the other without the interchange of words.

Shortly afterwards I went to see the obdurate brother. Lean of soul he seemed, and stiff of mind. "Beautiful, my sister, is busy; she has no time to receive instruction." Pressed further, he declared himself adverse to this new-fangled teaching of women, "who are inferior beings, to whom religion does not pertain, whose whole duty consists in obedience. A woman's caste is her religion; her husband is her god."

Beautiful listened to her brother's tirade from a dark corner behind the door. She had heard it a hundred times before, saw nothing unnatural in it. But all the same she craved for more. She had been made for more than this. And through her cousin, the unmarried girl who had begun to be interested, she came to an understanding with our girls that sooner or later she would hear all they could tell her about Jesus. We think her idea was that, after her marriage, which was impending, she would be able to learn. But she was married into a family resident twenty miles distant. So that plan failed.

For some months after her marriage all went well. Her mother answered our questions as to her health and happiness with a smiling face. Beautiful had married well. The jewels she wore were magnificent. Her new relations were charmed with her; the mother was content. But suddenly, as things happen here,

we heard that Beautiful was dead,—had hanged herself.

Gradually the truth oozed out. Beautiful's caste, like all strict castes, forbids the eating of flesh food. But as a concession to the needs of young children, fish is allowed till the marriage day. After that, never. Beautiful conformed of course to the rules of her caste; but she was not strong, an uncontrollable craving for the food to which she had been accustomed took possession of her, and she appealed to her young husband to let her have it. He was surprised, and as she insisted, angry. The mother-in-law made mischief. The girl was punished. Her spirit was broken. One day she was left alone in a room. When her people returned, she was found hanging from a rope tied to a beam. They cut her down, but the pretty little head fell limp. Then they noticed her jewels were gone, and they searched and found them all in a packet marked for her husband. It was a sort of mute protestation that she had meant to be good.

When the story reached the Village of the Temple, the immediate result was that every girl who was learning with us was told to return her books. Beautiful had wanted to learn, and Beautiful had disgraced her caste. The inconsequence of the argument did not seem to strike anybody. The girl who had seemed so warm, cooled; the young wife ceased to read to her husband. Several girls who appeared to be drawing towards a vital interest in the things of Christ were hurriedly married and despatched to distant villages. The fear and the hurry would have been ludicrous if it had not been for the tragedy—that one young life so suddenly

ended; these many young lives pushed back into death.

The workers who had so patiently toiled through the heat, and the rain, and the burning heat again, for over a year, could not believe at first that the people would hold to their decision, and they continued going till convinced that it was useless. Not a house would open to them. They knew this phase would pass; leave the village for a year, and the people would forget; they would get in again. But in the meantime the natural sequence, the watering after the planting, would be wholly interrupted. It would be impossible to follow the various girls who would be married and sent to other places before the village would open again. The increase that follows true planting and watering seemed projected into a far-away future. “O Lord of the Harvest! we count upon Thee to water Thine own seeds Thyself,” they prayed: “we wanted to be Thy watering-pot, but we may not be even that. Let Thine own rain fall on Thy seeds.”

And yet, though they prayed so, they could not help sorrowing. Those who have learned to love their own generation cannot rest while that generation passes unblest. People tell us to be patient, and read us homilies on patience. We do indeed need the patience of God. “We will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.” But platitudes, however kindly offered, are as sawdust to hearts thirsty to see souls saved, not afterwards, but now. We could say all the nice-sounding things ourselves; they do not comfort us. We go to our Lord for sympathy. We find He under-

stands. "When He was come near, He beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace!" Thou, even thou: thou, and not another.

"O my God,
Thus let me weep at times and sigh to Thee,
Holding Thy feet; not desolate myself;
But for the desolate in every land:
Thus let me pray, embracing Thy dear cross,
For every banished soul—Thy banished ones
And mine."

Of the three workers, the one who had been the most in earnest about the Village of the Temple was now the most utterly broken-hearted. She came home crying bitterly the evening they heard about Beautiful's death, and she threw herself down beside me and buried her face in my lap. "O Ammâ, Ammâ! I never knew how it could hurt!" She was hurt all over, soul and body, and for a time lost that elasticity of spirit which helps us through our hurts. Then we feared for her lest she should lose tone. A change in the kind of work arranged for her saved her from that, and the healing touch of the Man of Sorrows, who understood her, put all right again. But as we lived through it with her we realised that if these young converts are to become soldiers strong to endure, someone must hold on for them long after baptism is passed: God hold us on with a steady pace.

CHAPTER XXV

Darkened Windows

WE have just returned from visiting Beautiful's mother. That house, with the usual illogical logic of the Old-world Indian village, is open to us though the others are all shut. Mother and daughters received us affectionately, let us share their grief with them, let us sit with our hands in theirs, and mourn with them. The daughters, Beautiful's sisters, had stopped weeping a fortnight ago. The mother's heart weeps longest. She wept on as if, in the language of the East, her eyes were fountains of tears, and always she ended with a sob that cut one's very heart, "Oh, my blossoming bud! my lotus flower! If only your head could have lain in my lap, and I could have tended you myself, I could have borne to let you go. But it was not so, it was not so."

"It is no use to try to comfort her," said the daughters, when we tried, "see, her heart is closed against comfort. The dropping of words is as moonlight on stone. There is no more comfort ever for her. There is none in our religion." And when we tried to open the comfort of ours to them, they said, "All we have left to us now is our own religion." Words did indeed seem useless, and

the sight of that sorrow that would not be comforted left us too sorrowful for words.

Evening was darkening the plain as we crossed it for home. We were all feeling heavy-hearted because of the perplexing way in which might had conquered right in a recent case in Palamcottah. A Hindu girl who had been taught in her own house, had waited patiently till she believed herself of age to become a Christian. Then she had come to the mission-house for protection, and had been received by our comrades there. The parents did their best, but could not persuade her to return home. Then they brought a charge against the missionaries, which was tried by the District magistrate, and thrown out as false. The girl's faith and courage, through all the painful ordeal of giving evidence in court, bore witness to her sincerity. Then the relatives filed a Civil suit. While the trial was proceeding, a crowd collected about the Court-house. When the missionaries and the girl came out, they were overpowered, and she was carried off by force. For three days it was known that she held out. On the fourth day she gave in. On the evening of that day, she was produced before the magistrate. She was willing then to go back with the man to whom in the interval she had been married. This in barest outline is the story which to live through has meant much. "Is Satan too strong?" the girls asked wistfully. "She bore so much before she gave in. Does he conquer everywhere? Why does God allow such things to happen?" Everything in us asks why?

"The secret things belong unto the Lord."

Then a deeper silence fell upon us. Beautiful's face, and her mother's grief, and the face of that convert girl, and our dear comrades' grief—these differing things all mingled together to trouble us. The secrets of God seemed to press all about us. All round us stretched the plain, reaching away into dimness like the dimness of an unknown land dark with those secrets. For question leads off into question; there is no end to it; and "Oft oppressive unto pain becomes the riddle of the earth." And the ways of God and the ways of the devil seem to become confused, till everything is a bewilderment, and all life just a labyrinth with the clue lost long ago. There is torture in the too persistent "Why?" There is torment in the questions that spring upon us from the blackness of second causes: "the dark enigma of permitted wrong" is terribly intense. And it faces us sometimes so nearly, and it lashes us with the sharpness of thoughts that are like whips.

"What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter."

A text taken out of its context, but a text that finds place in the greater context of life, it spoke to us then with a voice that was not void of power. We remembered how little we knew; we are like horses in training, running in circumscribed circles, thinking short-reaching thoughts. Beyond our utmost reach sweeps God's great thought-horizon. Sometime, somewhere, we shall understand, and even if we never might, it could make no real difference; we know enough of our God to know all must be well.

“I would rest
My head upon Thine, while Thy healing hands
Close covered both my eyes beside Thy breast,
Pressing the brain, which too much thought expands,
Back to its proper size again, and smoothing
Distortion down till every nerve had soothing
And all lay quiet, happy, and suppressed.”

Not to our guardian angel, but to the Lord of all the angels we said it, each in our own way. “O troubled and bearer of burdens, He answered,” so the Tamil reads, “come to Me; I will cool your weariness.” Not, I will answer your questions, but—“I will give you rest.”

The more we experience the heart-rest Jesus gives, the more we come to know Him as a personal near Friend, the more it grieves us to see so many people going on without Him. For the moment leave aside the sin of heathendom. Think only of its sorrow. Think of these lovable people, who are so kind and human, so like ourselves in capacity to suffer, going on, ever on, without the one thing which is everything to us. If Hinduism has a word of comfort for the mourner, that word has not reached the villages where most of its millions live. We are welcome now in all the towns and villages surrounding us, except in the few where something has for the moment alarmed the people, as in Beautiful's village. They seem to love us; we are often sorry because they care for us so much, and not at all for our Master. We want to be transparent windows through which they will see Jesus. When they stop and look at us we feel we are somehow clouding the glass. This intimacy with the people of almost all castes often brings us into close touch with them in their sorrows; and we have been

allowed to spend hours in the secluded women's quarters, listening to their life stories, sharing in their troubles. This has given us a rare opportunity to discover the best and the worst there is to know. The best, perhaps, is the marvellous patience of the people in their pain. You never hear murmuring. It is fate: resignation is virtuous, is the general impression. The worst, where sorrow is in question, is the heartless indifference sometimes engendered by this cold creed, and the utter absence of true comfort at all times.

South Indian life, as seen from outside, is cheerful. By comparison English life is sombre, like the drab of its clothes in comparison with our vivid reds, or the grey of its atmosphere in contrast to our clear blue. But truth lies in and under, not on the top of things. Look in and under in India and you see this:

"Can you give me back my sight?" She was a middle-aged woman, grown old too soon. She was poor, but her caste was exclusive, and she sat gathered up in a tight bunch lest my dress should touch her's as I sat on the narrow verandah beside her. She had crept out of the dark room behind, a few minutes earlier, drawn by the hope of help. Only a poor middle-aged woman, with nothing romantic or pathetic about her, quietly waiting for the call that would tell her we had come. I looked at her a minute before I sat down beside her, and I knew I was looking at one who had sorrowed uncomforted.

She told me all about it in a voice that was all monotone. "I gave my husband to death. He died. I gave my ten children to death, and they died. One by one I

saw them die. These eyes saw them fade and die. They did not die as little ones. No; I nourished them and cherished them, and each had grown up tall and strong, when, one by one, they went from me, and my arms had to let them go. And then I sat in my house and wept. I had nothing to do but weep. So my eyes have lost their power to see, and alone, alone, I am growing blind. Can you give me back my sight?"

One could see that she dreaded blindness with a dread unspeakable, and the loneliness was overwhelming her. There was fear in her face, and such entreaty, and yet she spoke so patiently, even the passion of appeal had no impatience in it. She had two terrible swollen sores, each bad enough to make her ill; but when I noticed them, she said, "Oh, never mind! They are nothing to me. What is pain and what are sores to one who is growing blind?"

The neighbours had gathered in little groups and listened while we talked; now they began to talk together to me. "She has sat for years alone in the dark!" "She only tastes food once a day!" "She never eats proper curry and rice!" "She never, no never ceases from tears!" "Never a day but she weeps many tears, and the tears have dissolved her eyes!"

As they spoke, the tears ran down her cheeks. She wiped them away with her old torn cloth, and looked out across the sunny street where the children of others played, and she strained her eyes as she looked at them, as if she almost hoped to see her own ten playing there. And then she looked up and clasped her hands, and held them high above her head. "Alone among the people I

sit and weep, and things are growing dim to me, and I am growing blind!" Then, breaking off, she held up her hands as if in eager but mute appeal to the distant, deaf, and pitiless power she thought of as her god.

To be blind and to be lonely—*without Jesus!* It was more than one could bear to think of for anybody. That so very many are blind and lonely—without Jesus—does not make it the less sorrowful for one of the many, and what we may not realise as we think of the many, becomes real indeed as we look at the one. I looked at this woman now—the thin form, thin with fasting, and the sores, fruit of that fasting, and the eyes, worn out with weeping—those years had left their mark. And I leaned my head against the pillar and turned my face away, and tried not to let them see how much I cared.

But they saw, and their exclamations told her; and with such a loving gesture, as if she would have thrown her arms round me, only her caste rules withheld her, she besought me not to trouble, not to have a thought about her. "For, indeed, I am not worth it. I am suffering for my sin." (She meant the sin of some previous birth.) "Joy and grief are a whirling wheel. Who can stay what has to be? The fate written in one's head is hidden by one's hair, but it is written, who can reverse it? As a sky without a moon am I, a sore without a salve. It is my fate. It is my fate." Then she stopped and looked tenderly towards me, and said, "Oh, Ammâ! trouble not for me. Have I not myself shed tears enough? Let none be shed for me!"

I suppose it is well for us that we do not, as we put it, "feel everything." The feeling faculty within us

seems to be usually overspread with a sort of merciful dulness, but sometimes it is as if it were skinned, and we do feel. I think if you had been there that day you would have felt this—to see her so suffering, to hear her trying to comfort you.

I tried to arrange for her to come in and have her eyes attended to, but caste interfered. And even if she could have come it is doubtful if much could have been done. Her eyes looked, as the women said, as if they had been “dissolved.”

She listened wistfully as I told her about Jesus, but I think her mind had no room for any thoughts save those which had filled it for so long.

And so an hour passed, and she was weak with long fasting and sitting in darkness, and the pain she counted as nothing overcame her, and she crept back into the little windowless room which opened off the verandah, and lay down on a mat spread in the corner, and we left her there alone.

A few weeks later we went again. She was somewhere toiling and worshipping; for a sudden desperation had seized her, and the calmness had passed, the people said. We waited till late, and she returned spent and weary, but loving still. “Dear Ammâ,” she said, as we told her again of the only comfort, “I have but one thing left to me; I have been bereft of all but it. Would you ask me to do that which you know would spoil the one thing left to me? You forget I have still my caste: I have kept it all these years. Would you have me believe your Jesus Lord, and lose the one thing left to me?” And then reproachfully she turned

those almost sightless eyes on me, and went into her house.

O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, have we come too late? Are life's fair colours forever covered over, its windows of agate darkened forever? Oh for the Voice to sound through the silence, for the Face to shine through the dimness, for the comforting touch of Christ!

And the question that came to me as we left her, was the question that never comes less urgently although it comes so often. The answer to that question lies between each one of us and God.

CHAPTER XXVI

Graves which appear not

TO such mourners life is a great waste place, and the Lord who comforts all our waste places is a God unknown. There is a call in this. There is something stronger than a call in what underlies it everywhere. The subsoil of most non-Christian lands is largely made of graves.

It is possible to lose all sense of truth, that stern uncompromising thing, in a kind of worshipping rhapsody over that which appeals to sentiment, and to love of the mysterious. Such rhapsodies are in fashion now. We are almost ashamed of the crude thoughts of years ago; like the crude woodcuts in our childhood's Missionary books, those thoughts were rather caricatures than seriously truthful. Or we ethercalise where we cannot deny. Our pictures showed us Jagannath cars and flaming piles, and babes flung into crocodiles' jaws. Granted there were such tragedies, the modern voice says softly, it was only love at its noblest, offering its all to its Love; and the glorious ecstasy carried the soul through pain. So we sit at the feet of the old gods created to satisfy at once both extremes in the nature of man. We forget the source of the highest in the ancient books. We explain away

the lowest. We wrap the result of our fine thoughts' work in a shining web of words. And we show this web of bewilderment. And we say, Look; this is Indian thought. This is India seen at last, understood by us at last. All who ever went before were too dull to understand. They had no sympathy, no intuition. We are the people who know.

And straight through it all, as if a hand had torn at the dew-bespangled web and shown the dead fly inside, come voices from India's own people, who have escaped from the snare:

“Dost thou blame

A soul that strives but to see plain, speak true,
Truth at all hazards? Oh, this false for real,
This emptiness which feigns solidity—
Ever some grey that's white, and dun that's black—
When shall we rest upon the thing itself,
Not on its semblance? Soul—too weak forsooth
To cope with fact—wants fiction everywhere!
Mine tires of falsehood: truth at any cost.”

The Pandita Rāmabai Dongre Medhavi is at Agra. She has seen, as all visitors see, those dreams of delight, the poems in marble there. She asks to be shown the dungeons underneath one of the Pleasure towers. The guide denies the existence of such places. A fee refreshes his memory. He opens a trap-door on one side of the palace, lets her in, shows her the many underground rooms where the queens who had incurred the king's displeasure were confined, tortured, starved. And he lights a torch and takes her to the further end of the prison. They are under the Jasmine tower. The room is dark, octagonal; in the centre is a pit, over the pit is a beam elaborately carved. Does the irony of it strike

you? Our gallows are not carved. From that beam the queens were hung. Into that pit their bodies fell. Then a stream of water caught them, carried them out to the Jumna. The crocodiles did the rest.

There are many voices talking in the Jasmine tower. A single voice is speaking from the dungeon underneath :

"I beg of my Western sisters not to be satisfied with looking on the outside beauty of the grand philosophies, and not to be charmed with hearing the long and interesting discourses of our educated men, but to open the trap-doors of the great monument of ancient Hindu intellect, and enter into the dark cellars where they will see the real working of the philosophies which they admire so much."

"The real working of the philosophies which they admire so much." These words, set in the thought of that underground room, and beam, and pit, came to me with forcefulness, when one day I trod on a grave which appeared not.

South India, as compared with North, is manifestly religious. The huge temples attest the fact. Benares is Hindu India's heart, but Benares' chief temple "is to the great temples of Tanjore, Madura, and Tinnevely, what a small village church is to St. Paul's Cathedral." Everywhere here we have Hinduism at its grandest, stateliest, and most imposing. Its holy places are most holy. No alien may, as in the North, approach the sacred symbol; great stone galleries and corridors, quadrangular courts and pillared halls guard the approaches to the room, where, as the Hindu believes, the deity is enshrined. Here, then, if anywhere, we should see the philosophy behind all this, wrought out in something

worthy such expression. Here, uninfluenced by Islam, uninjured by change of dynasty, we have Hinduism, Hindu thought, free to work as it will. How does it work ?

We had pitched our tents in a mango grove close to one of the southern towns, and were spending our days with the people. We had come to the last day, and were visiting in a quiet street, when we noticed an old lady of distinction who listened as one who understood. She was beautiful to look upon. A beautiful old face is seldom seen in South India ; perhaps the hot years tire the beauty out. The old lady fascinated me. She sat quietly listening, one fine hand fingering her rosary, brown berries set in chased gold, her eyes fixed upon me. I found myself speaking only for her, and when I had finished I asked her if we might go home with her. She hesitated. The women laughed. But eventually she led the way through blazing sunshine into a large courtyard, and through it into the dim half light of an old-fashioned Indian house. "Ah ! what sun ! It scorches one's very marrow," she said, and sighed with relief as we reached the cool.

Her house seemed to fit the old lady, who stood on the threshold for a moment, her white widow's dress showing against the soft shadowiness within. The floor was of brown tiles ; the walls were of dull red. The doors and lintels and all the pillars were wonderfully carved. Polished brass vessels stood in rows in one of the passages. There was none of the untidy litter of an ordinary house and courtyard. All was orderly.

In the outer verandah a young man wrapped in a seagreen scarf was chanting poetry. Another, swinging on a board hung by chains from the roof, was listening intently. Each wore the Vishnu mark. There were no children to be seen, and again the unusual orderliness of the place struck me as we followed the old lady into the women's apartment, the home of the house. There a servant appeared with a trayful of betel, the usual offer of courtesy. Plantains and limes were given to us. Then two young girls came forward and put garlands round our necks. We wondered how they happened to have all these things ready.

My fellow-worker of that afternoon had been recently converted. As nominal Christians, she and her husband had lived for years among the Hindus without ever visiting them like this. The old lady knew her, and not understanding why she came now, listened with a curious keenness, as if she were suspending judgment till the cause was laid out before her. After she had heard about her visitor's new found joy, she asked us to sing. We began at once with,

"What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus."

As we broke off to explain the verses, Tamil fashion, the girls interest quickened, and they asked questions which so engrossed us that we did not notice the change in the old face beside us, till suddenly I saw it. That face was like our mountain side, with the storm-cloud rolling down. "Stop! stop!" and the voice was like the rising of the wind as we have it on the

plain, rushing and deepening. “Stop! Who told you to sing that here? I know it well! I know it well! And your doctrine is thoroughly known to me, and I will have none of it here! Listen! Listen! Listen, I say, I will preach your doctrine!” And she poured forth a rapid summary of the parable of the prodigal son. “There, is not that your doctrine? Do not I well know whither it leads? And I will have none of it here!”

At the first sound of the hymn the chanting had ceased in the outer verandah; now a laugh broke in upon us, and the girls slipped away, as the two men sauntered into the room and stood surveying us. The old lady turned to them hurriedly. I can see that poor face now—wrath, fear, entreaty, defiance, such a mingling of emotions found expression there.

“Yes, I brought her,” she was saying; “woe is me that I did it. She shall go! But how could I know she would sing that song? Ah! be not angry with me. I want not her doctrine. I have said it: she shall go. See, she is going even now!”

The men did not answer. They talked to each other in undertones. We were puzzled. Why this outburst? We were ready to go, but the old lady took no notice of us. Lulled for the moment, she sang to herself:

“What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.”

We kept quiet. We were in the presence of something we did not understand. But God understood. His Spirit was there. Our whole thought then was to efface ourselves.

At last she looked at me, and answered as if I had spoken to her. It was as if a power compelled the truth to come and show itself.

"My life is all one sin," she said, "one long black sin. The thing I think, and speak, and do is sin. I know it. Oh, I know it. But," and the voice hardened, "what is that to you? If it is against your religion it is not against mine. My doctrine provides for the thing I do. It is holy, yea, holy." Then again the voice changed, fell to a whisper. "But it is sin: it is sin; all sin." When He is come He will convince of sin. He had come. She was convinced. No need of words of ours.

She stopped. The men listened amazed. They saw the tempest-tossed beautiful face. They looked at each other and at us, but, respecting the gesture that asked for silence, neither of them spoke.

The face was hidden now. "And darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters."

But the men grew impatient. She rose as if to go, then praying that we might speak in line with the awful, gentle Voice she had been listening to, I pleaded with her, and she softened for a moment. But not so easily are souls won. "*Aiyo! Aiyo!* I have heard enough. Too much have I heard for my peace of mind. Go! go! What I do is not sin in our Hindu religion. I am kind to the girls; I call them my daughters. Go!"

And as we went we heard the men laugh, and the hymn that had stirred her so strongly rang out in bitter raillery:

“What can wash away my sin?
Nothing but the blood of Jesus.”

It was all most startling; she seemed to know so much. Had “heaven’s light but revealed a track whereby to crawl away from heaven”? “My doctrine provides for the thing I do. It is holy. What I do is not sin in our Hindu religion. I am kind to the girls; I call them my daughters.” As she said it, we knew where we were: in a house on the way to hell, going down to the chambers of death. But what she said was true; what she was doing was “holy, yea holy,” judged by the very code that took shape in the Temple outside.

Some will find this incredible, unjustifiable, narrow, ignorant, intolerant; in short, just like a missionary devoid of imagination. There are those now who couple (God forgive us if the mere mention of such blasphemy is irreverent) the name of the Holy Child Jesus with one or other of the Hindu incarnations—Vishnu’s incarnation as Krishna, for example. “Krishna the Indian Christ,” they even dare to write, little knowing the inwardness of anything so lightly touched. All students of Indian literature acknowledge that the true and the beautiful are found in it. But should it be concealed that in the name of Krishna that house stands, that in his name stand many similar houses, and streets full of houses, that in his name the city of his reputed birth is to-day a polluted city? “*My doctrine provides for the thing I do.*”

“She misrepresented her doctrine, dragged its thought in the dust of her low desire, missed its meaning completely”; so some would tell us. Who knows best? She

lives at the heart of Krishna's things as no foreigner ever could. She holds to what she says; her doctrine cloaks the sin of her life, nay, rather crowns it, consecrates it. It is not sin.

A thought reveals itself in words. There are certain evil words engraved with iron style on the palm-leaf copies of ancient books. Words cut into the texture of a leaf when it is young cannot be erased when it is old; you cannot rub out a cut; the preservative saffron smeared over the leaf darkens into the lettering. Now comes the philosopher, considers this unpleasant fact, feels its incompatibility with his thought about Indian Thought. Such thought as these words indicate is a blot on the page of his philosophy. So he blows upon the blot, and lo, it vanishes! and floating out as from a cloud of new and mystical conceptions, conveyed in most subtle and exquisite language, we see emerge and evolve an Idea; these things, to put it boldly, bad things, said to be practised by Krishna, "are to be explained allegorically, and symbolise the longing of the human soul for union with the Supreme." Could anything be more natural? Not what those bad words seem to mean, but what we say they are to mean, is their meaning, says the philosopher.

But most of India's people are not philosophers, only simple people like ourselves. To them words mean just what they say, as in the main they do to us. And in this case the words are clear. The thought behind the words is clear. As our god did, so may we do; and as he did it, let us now deify the doing.

This is the real working of the philosophy which

some admire so much. Indian thought, like Indian character, is a study of contrast. The word “home” does not exist in our Tamil language, but perhaps nowhere is there more family affection. This contrast, or possibility of contrast, meets one at every turn. Things glorious and base, delicately sensitive and inexpressibly coarse, jostle one another, or lie alongside, everywhere. Take a single illustration from India’s literature. Read parts of one of the epics; all that is noble and very lovely blossoms as the lotus. Read other parts of the same poem—but you could not,—and it would be as if you had plunged down into the slime at the lotus root.

Who was the woman? What was her story? Who were the girls? How had she got them? Oh, the unanswered questions of a single afternoon!

Other questions come to be answered sometimes: “What a pity it is to meddle with so ancient an order of things. After all, is there much difference between heathendom and Christendom? Regrettable things occur at home, as of course you know. Probably their own religion is suited to the people of India.”

It is true that the order of things is ancient. But if the ancient is invariably best, why are we Christians to-day? As to the second contention, suppose it were possible to prove England on a level with India (which it is not) as regards practice, there would still be this difference in ideal. In England, when sin is exposed, the conscience of the nation speaks. Here it is drugged, mute. If ever a voice breaks the silence, it will be found to come from a quarter where some Christian influence, direct or reflex, is at work. In England, as in

all lands even nominally Christian, there is such a thing as reticence; the very daylight shames needless allusion to pitch. Here, nothing is too unseemly to discuss; life holds no sanctuary. We have vultures on these hills. You see a shadow on the grass, faint, undefined. You look up and see the form of a great bird, black in the blue. It swoops down in circles, drops heavily beside a dead buffalo, and gorges. But though it is so big and gross, the fall of its shadow, as it wheels, is light as a breath on the grass. When one tries to describe the contrast between a land where the nation's ideal is Christ, the pure and holy, and a land to whose favourite divinity that pitch, the thought of which defiles, is meat and drink, and pleasure, then one feels that words coined in the mint of a Christian language can never be truly expressive. The blackest words are too pale to paint even the faint undefined shadow of that strong contrast's shape.

Verily, there is a difference. It is caused by the difference in the Faith that informs the life. No other than the Faith of the Lord Jesus Christ can possibly be suited to those whose chief end, even as ours, is nothing less than to glorify God and to enjoy Him for ever. How can we, who "with Angels and Archangels, and with all the company of heaven, laud and magnify His glorious name, evermore praising Him and saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts, heaven and earth are full of Thy glory. Glory be to Thee, O Lord, most high"—how can we be indifferent to the fact that half the world is still shut out from its share in that majestic song? Can we sing on and not care?

“Oh, if our brother’s blood cry out to us,
How shall we meet Thee who hast loved us all,
Thee whom we never loved, not loving him?”

“God’s in His heaven. All’s right with the world;” two friends met on a hill top and said it. A town lies round the base of the hill. The level of red-tiled roofs is pierced by the spires of a mosque and a temple cupola. If those roofs had been made of glass instead of tiles, if mosque and temple and the houses close about them had been built of glass all through, and the two friends could have looked down, and through, and in, would they have said so? Yes, and no. Yes—for the Lord reigneth; no facts can touch that fact. No—for the prince of this world, though judged, has for the time being power; and though these towns are so sunshiny, so full of the careless joyousness of a people dwelling at ease, there are graves which appear not. And we who walk upon them are sometimes not aware of them till we have passed.

CHAPTER XXVII

“Dagon must Stoop”

GRAVES and gardens: Weights and Overweights. Sometimes we pass backwards and forwards from grave to garden; then the scales are poised just evenly. Sometimes the grave appears to encroach upon the garden; then life's equilibrium becomes disturbed. Sometimes what we thought was a grave blossoms into a garden; then there is an Overweight of Joy.

We were travelling home one evening, after a week's itineration, when we saw a group of people standing on the steep slope which led from a village we were passing to the river we were skirting. The men stood in silence. The women wailed. Then they stopped, uplifted long arms, and tossed them as if parting from their dead.

You cannot live for unbroken years of intercourse with the East without becoming in some measure Easternised. Your ear is filled with the sound of the East, and its sights are in your eyes. You have breathed of its atmosphere, drunk of its spirit; what appeals to it appeals to you. You find yourself thinking its thoughts with it, instinctively, unconsciously; and on some simple lines of thought, at least, the grave old

East thinks like a child. So we did what a child would have done—stopped the bandy, listened, looked, felt the appeal in the things sung, shared the hour's life with the people there.

Presently the little knot of white and brown straightened out. There was a burst of wailing from the women. It ceased as the men streamed down the bank. The last light of day fell full on them and the burden that they bore. It was a grey-haired woman. The head lay on a mass of flowers; flowers crowned it; drew round it, fell in long lines of colour down to the feet. But the dead face looked awful in the red glow; as it passed I remembered where I had seen it last, and saw, as if lit by that red glow, a stone verandah, an old woman sitting thereon, repeating Tamil poetry, a child in the street below, jumping up and down, and laughing as she quoted poetry.

This dead woman was that child's grandmother. She had trained her eldest daughter, as her mother had trained her, for the service of the gods. She had trained and given her grandchild to the service of the gods. Her whole long life from its very start had been bent towards evil of the darkest sort. She had left that little once-innocent child to carry on her work. The thought of it was unbearable. The horror of contact with the unclean was upon us. We tried to turn full from it. "Drive on," we said to the bandy-man. The light faded in the west, the clouds rolled up and blotted out the stars. Then from the river bank two tongues of yellow flame forked up where they were burning her. The bandy-man drove faster.

Before the ashes of that woman were cold on the bank, there was another funeral by the same river-side.

The Village of the Grove is built of mud or sand. Round it is a belt of jungle. Its people are yeomen, and accustomed to grapple with adverse circumstances, bare sand, scrub, and the like. Work in such places has an interest of its own.

Among the first there to respond to the teaching was a nominal Christian of some position. We call him Lighted Face now, because of the way the light shines out. Soon after his conversion he began to try to win others; and one of the first his brightened life attracted to enquire, was a young Hindu who for several years had been seeking the forgiveness of sins.

We so seldom meet anyone who feels his sins enough to seek forgiveness, that his story was a rare delight, and I give it as he told it to us before his baptism :

“I felt a burden like a great weight fastened to me, and I could not get it off. I went to my father, who had long before built a shrine wherein he worships every day. I asked him, ‘Father, what must one do to get one’s sins forgiven?’ Said my father, ‘Learn a thousand stanzas of our ancient Tamil poetry, then your sins will be forgiven.’ I learned the thousand stanzas, and many more than those. I meditated on the wisdom contained in them. But my sins were not forgiven. Then I went to my father again; I told him the burden was heavy, as heavy as before. He advised me to find an ascetic and propound my question to him. I found one and pressed him hard. Driven to tell the truth, he confessed to me that he knew his

own sins were not forgiven. Then I was indignant. Those who profess to know, know nothing. And I discontinued my search."

Someone gave him a Bible about this time. But the giver was one who beat out life's music harshly; the young man heard the discord. He hardly opened the book.

Then he met Lighted Face; the light drew him. The two men talked often together. Lighted Face persuaded him to listen outside the village prayer-room while hymns were sung, and the way he had sought in vain was shown. A chorus, repeatedly sung, charmed him, and he decided to find out who this Saviour so often mentioned really was, and what He could do. After the meeting Lighted Face led him to Mr. Walker's tent. He left it a free man: "I knew I was free from the burden."

After this, more nominal Christians and more Hindus were converted, and gradually a band of earnest young men gathered round Lighted Face, who proved to have powers of leadership folded up within him. The little band grew month by month, and became keen to win others.

The stir among the Christians led to a corresponding stir among the Hindus. They sent one of their number to be trained to read and explain the Ramayana. Evening by evening they met under an awning in the village square, and listened for hours to the singsong chant, broken by translation into colloquial Tamil. The Christians then organised public Bible readings on the same plan; the work went on in interesting and purely

Eastern fashion, and others, chiefly young men, were won.

Among the most vehement opposers was a lad of eighteen or twenty, notably strong in badness, and impossible to approach. He came to open-air meetings and public Bible readings and broke them up. He excelled in all sorts of crude wickedness. He feared nobody, and cared for nothing. So when one afternoon in the middle of an open-air meeting the whisper was passed, "That boy is here," we prayed, and the message went straight to his heart.

His baptism day stands out marked. Baptism with us is very simple. We all go down to the nearest water, and stand on the bank or shore while those about to be baptized witness in a few words to their Saviour. Then the one who is going to give baptism walks into the water, and those who are to be baptized follow him out, till the water is deep enough to cover them when they stoop as they do in their ordinary bathing. Nothing could be less distracting or more significant of the inner meaning of baptism. It is a thought clothed in a transparent deed. Out in the open air somehow formality seems shy of spoiling the service. It all feels living and real.

The nearest water to the Village of the Grove is the famous Copper-coloured river, counted sacred here. On the opposite bank a Brahman town brought its groups of spectators, clusters of women on the flat housetops, and groups of men on the steps leading down to the river. All the Christians came with the five new converts, and we stood together on the sand on the edge of

the sunset-tinted water. All nature seemed in sympathy. There was such a radiance of beauty in the light and the colour on the river. It was as if God were looking down and shining a smile through to us, and we could not help looking up and smiling back to Him.

For some months all went well. The Village of the Grove does not expel converts, but it persecutes them. The boy's conduct was so changed that the people despaired of ordinary means of coercion, and tried others ; he gave way, only a little, but enough to dull the edge of his joy and his confidence in God.

There is an Indian story of a king whose life was so blameless that no way could be found by which an evil spirit who wanted to ruin him could enter in. At last, one day when he was bathing, the king left one small spot unwashed. It was only the size of a thorn-tip, but it was all the demon asked. The story says he entered by it, and marred the good king's life. Some minute point was compromised by the boy. The Hindus boasted their victory. Then the boy sickened with fever, and his relations took possession of him, and would not let the Christians near. "He is ours now. His heart is ours. You will see no more of him," they said.

The Grove villagers do nothing by halves. The Christians knew that great pressure would be brought to bear upon the boy. He would need their help, they knew, and they could not go to him. A week or two passed, and most unsatisfactory accounts of his condition reached them. He had yielded to his people. He would die a true Hindu. A day or so later he died.

There are lines in Milton's *Samson Agonistes* which

often invigorate us. They are too strong to bear abbreviation, so I quote in full. Samson is speaking to his father before the last scene when he pulls the house down upon the Philistines :

"All the contest is now
'Twixt God and Dagon. Dagon hath presumed,
Me overthrown, to enter lists with God,
His deity comparing and preferring
Before the God of Abraham. He, be sure,
Will not connive, or linger, thus provoked ;
But will arise, and His great name assert :
Dagon must stoop, and shall ere long receive
Such a discomfit, as shall quite despoil him
Of all these boasted trophies won on me,
And with confusion blank his worshippers."

Manoah answers :

"With cause this hope relieves thee, and these words
I as a prophecy receive ; for God,
Nothing more certain, will not long defer
To vindicate the glory of His name
Against all competition, nor will long
Endure it, doubtful whether God be Lord,
Or Dagon."

We heard at once of the boy's death. There was nothing to show that God had conquered. It seemed far more probable that Dagon having won so much had won all.

But on the evening of the same day the Hindus went to the Christians and said, "Take away his body. Bury it with your Christian rites. We could do nothing with him. He belongs to your God and to you." They admitted they had wrestled with him up to the last. Weak, dying, he had struggled hard against them. They

had considered him defeated because he had given in at first. They found, to their confusion, they had entered lists with God. The Christians carried their brother forth and buried him with singing.

We felt it good to know it. Naturally the relatives would have suppressed the truth, which reflected no glory upon Dagon. But they told the truth; and we who had sorrowed, hurt by the doubt, rejoiced when we heard it. Perhaps somewhere there is a heart that is troubled though it need not be, hurt by a doubt that would pass if it knew all. We are children of limited vision, often distorted vision. God may see a garden where we only see a grave.

Sometimes two events or scenes are linked together in one's mind by very force of contrast. Those two so different funerals are like two pictures hung together in the Picture room. When the woman with her silent mouth seems to say hopeless things, the boy sings: Dagon having overthrown Samson has entered lists with God. Can we doubt as to the end of such a conflict? No smooth sayings can take away the fact of sin: the woman's face is dark. But the boy: look on, look on to the end. “The End crowns all.”

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Spaces between

DAGON must stoop. "With him is an arm of flesh ; but with us is the Lord our God to help us and fight our battles." As the splendid sentence falls we see as in a scroll unrolled the future history of the world written in clear characters. And yet, to-day, if we quietly contemplate a map and count the countries, cities, towns, villages, so far as a map shows them, which are under Dagon's dominion, those of us who have what Lord Selborne recently called an unholy thirst for statistics—of a somewhat different sort—will feel simply and utterly appalled.

Life is full of questions : even here—where happily much that perplexes it at home falls off like an encumbering garment—our uncomplicated day has its questions.

How is it, you ask yourself after studying things, so far as a Western may, from an Eastern point of view—how is it that everywhere the large East is being cramped into grooves wrought in the narrow West ? What is there of the Oriental in our manner or our spirit ? Why have we so systematically quenched the national, the natural ? What are we aiming at as a Church ? What is our hope for the future of these

people? How are we training them to meet that hope? Was no pattern ever shown to us as to Moses on the Mount? Or if we had a pattern have we lost it?

These last two questions came with persistency one Sunday morning during mid-service, to one who for some time had been out of the stream of English church life as it flows now in the main. Have you ever found yourself wondering, during such a service, what would happen if suddenly the Lord Jesus Christ walked in? Would His simplicity shame our ceremonial, or His radiance surprise our dulness? Would the little child taught to notice such things whisper to her mother, "How much better dressed we are than He." Would another say, "Why has everything stopped? Were we not speaking to Him before?" Or would everything go on just as if He were not there? What would really happen, I wonder, if Jesus came to church to-day?

But beyond these questions lie others concerning the unevangelised, and our relation to them. Try to evade any one of these questions, and it follows you, lays a detaining hand on your shoulder, wheels you round till you front it again. There is no escape from it if you think at all.

The South Indian plain to the east of the Ghauts is as flat as land knows how to lie. To the west of the mountains there is a garden that rises and dips and spreads itself out in most refreshing fashion. Look at Travancore from the heights, it is an undulating ocean of green. There is not much green and no undulation on the eastern side. In certain states of atmosphere it is like a sheet of pink blotting-paper.

Perpetual flatness has a curious effect upon the undisciplined soul. It creates a sort of impatience, an unreasonable feeling that somehow one must get up somewhere, and look down on something. Sometimes we yield to this animal instinct and bump across country for one hot hour, and reach the rocks that have tumbled down from the foothills, and scramble up one of them high enough to command the plain, and revel in the realisation that after months of crawling on it one has not evolved into an insect, but is still a human being with a sense to delight in the beauty of the world, and a heart that can dance with the joy of living in it. Will you climb the rock with us now, and share the pleasure of the mountain view; and then look through our eyes, across the plain to the east, where the sky lies low on the land?

From the rock you see mountains rising almost sheer for four or five thousand feet. Some slope finely, some curiously. There is a single great round-headed block of precipitous rock to the south. Sometimes the skyline is notched with rough-toothed granite. Sometimes the fall of the hills suggests the quiet folds round Derwentwater. There are forests climbing the ravines, and out-jutting crags, and furrowed scarps. There is all the familiar colouring of mountain scenery, enriched by the tropical brilliance of atmosphere which accentuates all colour. The plain upon which we look down at last, with feelings of such satisfaction, offers contrast in that round the rock foot it is dotted with the stiff myrtle green of palmyra palm, and squares of emerald where the young rice grows; but on the whole it harmonises

perfectly with the dominant colour note of the hills, blue in all its varying tones, for its prevailing tint is a soft terra-cotta, caused by the peroxide of iron in the soil where it is not under cultivation. Close to the southern mountain a little lakelet looks up at the hills and the sky and doubles all the beauty. There is stillness on the rock. Only the call of a shepherd boy, unseen in the palm wood below, floats up tremulously. The vulgar, and the noisy, and the petty ways of men seem very far away.

We have the eloquent among us who can reel off facts and figures till the very mind is giddy. "So-and-so is above detail," says the admiring friend, as he listens to another talk in broad sweeps of sentences, which mass continents together in most masterly fashion.

But millions, however ingeniously manipulated, resolve themselves into units when you come to deal with them. Eventually the unit is the important thing. So let us look at just three towns; and lest even only three should produce an indistinct impression, let us look at these three towns as I saw them first, one in sunshine, one in sunset, one in moonlight.

The first town lies in a pastorate where the Christians are too few to evangelise one-tenth of their villages and towns. Once in two years, if it can, the men's Itinerating band goes round and preaches in the village streets. The caste women, shut up in their houses, or if free, too shy to go near men, are not much reached by this. To the pastor's knowledge, no woman has ever worked among the women there. We had been invited to visit one who once heard the outline of the

Crucifixion story read aloud from a Christian school-book, which her boy had chanced upon in a friend's house. Through the friend she found out about us, and sent this word of appeal: "Where much food is, there no hunger is; where no food is, there is hunger." So, thankfully we went.

Look at the town as you see it from the upper room where for an hour we have had the joy of pouring out living water upon a thirsty soul. She has gone downstairs at her husband's call. She will return presently.

While we wait, look out on the red roofs in the quiver of noontide heat, on the shimmer of sunshine on the palms, on the sparkle of the river at their roots.

Her voice sounds on the stairs. It sounds lovingly, for she is speaking to her little sons; but there is a note of disappointment in it, and her face when you see it has lost something, it has lost hope. She draws you to the verandah that opens from the window. She points down to the roofs and the river. "My husband says he knows all about this religion. He says there never has been a Christian in this town. There is no place for a Christian in any house here. He says for me to listen is treason to my caste. My caste would be disgraced for ever if any of us became Christians."

But surely the conquering Light would penetrate if it were brought to bear upon this town persistently and patiently? That is work which is not being done. There is no one at present to do it.

It is evening when we reach the second town. We are on our way to the third, and cannot stop. But we sing as we pass through the streets; sometimes a

song carries far. As we drive through the Brahman street, a thoroughfare here, and open to all, some little schoolgirls run after the bandy, trying to pick up the words. Thereat a man rushes out upon them, disperses them, and orders us to drive faster. "Who wants Christian singing in this street?" The Temple gong booms out "Who"?

In one of the houses we are passing, some years ago a boy was confined and guarded night and day. He was beaten hard; drugs were mixed with his food. When he slept, Vishnu's mark was put on his forehead, and the filthy water called holy, in which the idols had been washed, was sprinkled upon him. He was treated as an idiot, and a green paste, supposed to cure the insane, was rubbed upon his head. One night his father in great wrath took a knife, intending to stab him. "I simply told him," he says, "the words of our Master, 'Fear not them that kill the body.'" Others interfered then, and withheld the father from killing his son. Violence having failed, it was proposed that a famous magician from Travancore, "who could make one paralysed, or truly insane, or possessed of a devil," should be sent for; wicked stories were told to the boy, in order to break down the gates of his will from another side. His sister and a little niece whom he dearly loved were brought to try to win him back. They fell at his feet, and clung to him, and wept. Orthodox Hindus, educated Hindus, and even a nominal Christian were brought to try to subvert his faith. They argued with him in vain. At last the father professed to agree to his being a Christian, reading his Bible,

praying, even attending church, if only he would consent to wear the Vishnu mark, the trident on his forehead, and the Brahman thread upon his shoulders. But God gave it to him to detect the snare in that delusive proposal, and braced him utterly to scorn it. After four months of confinement and mental strain, the boy was so reduced that it was thought he could not live long. It was very hot weather, and the jailers themselves found it irksome to keep guard in the little inner room ; so, thinking he was too weak to escape, they allowed him to sleep unfettered on the verandah. One early morning, in the dark before the dawn, he felt as if an angel awakened him out of his sleep. He rose up, knelt down, and prayed for strength to walk. He was surrounded by people, but they did not wake. He dropped silently down into the street ; strength came ; the morning star, he says, was shining over his path. He ran through the streets, across the plain eleven miles to the Mission-house, and was safe.

How forceful the darkness seems, as one thinks over such a story in the very town where it happened, and might happen again to-day ; how, as if it were living and wicked, it struggles to eclipse the light, and force it out to shine elsewhere. The glory of sunset rests on the temple tower, streams round the town, wraps it in beauty ; but the swiftly moving Eastern night is upon us before we are out of reach of the rumble of the gong, and the clang of the cymbal, and the rattle of the drum from the temple ; and these sounds of Vishnu's worship chase us out of the town.

The moon has risen when we reach the third town.

You can see the central temple tower outlined dark and sharp against the sky. The long streets stretch all silver white, the palms that line the Brahman street are like plumes of shining silver. It is all so purely silvery that the very town seems silver-washed, and the people in their white garments in the white light seem almost other-earthly, too pure for earth. But look closer. These many people who fill the streets at this late hour are returning from a festival. Each man has a mark on his brow. The moonlight shows it distinctly. It is the print of Vishnu's foot. Our spirit is stirred within us as we pass through the quiet crowd. Vishnu's foot is everywhere. Next morning, when we ask about the place, we hear that only two converts, young men, have ever been known to come out as Christians. Both found it impossible to live there afterwards. There is no witness from within where that town is concerned.

The Christian traveller naturally wishes to see the work that is being done. He is shown it and rejoices. He is rarely found studying life as it is outside the mission centre. The mind retains most vividly what the eye has seen most frequently, and so we usually find that the impression left upon the visitor is that India is a land studded with mission stations, netted with organization, sprinkled with stars.

And yet, if guided by one who knew, he had gone a little way from the beaten track, he would have seen many a wide expanse of country where little or nothing worth calling work is being done. He would have seen all his eye could hold of the millions who are quite out of reach of light, or else—and this is sadder still—strangely

unaffected by the light in their vicinity. He would have seen that we have hardly touched the thin fringe of the great darkness.

But perhaps, if he talked chiefly with those whose Missionary lot is cast on the inner side of the halo that circles the star-clusters God has scattered through this night, he would be puzzled by what seems contradiction in evidence. Those of us who live inside the little Christian circle are usually so engrossed by its many and pressing claims, that we are hardly likely to see far beyond its borders. This explains much he may hear. Let him, as we said, take a guide, and go out beyond the familiar constellations, and wander awhile in the spaces between. Then, if he has eyes to see, and a heart to feel at all, he will find his very soul scored with scars that never can be erased. God give us hearts that will care more, and eyes that are clearer to see past the edge of the halo rim, over the walls of our compounds, away up through His wide world, till we feel as we never felt before the overwhelming enormousness of the work that is not being done, in places where souls are sitting in a darkness which does not pass.

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We are up on the rock-top still, resting in the utter peace. The sun has set. It will soon be after-glow. The plain looks immense in the gloaming, the mountains very high. Five minutes pass. We watch the clouds slip down the bare slopes of the nearer hills. There is a hush as if mountains, plain, and sky, were waiting for something sure to come. It comes, gently at first, then with a majestic sweep as the pent-up

energy of light breaks forth and floods the atmosphere. Then the sky flames out in a fan of fire, and the russet reaches of burnt hill grass, and the patches of reddish earth on the plain, kindle suddenly, and the mountains, half emerging from clouds that are golden now, stand solemn in their purple. All the world seems full of song, with shapes and colours for music and words, as the sky grows blue in the east, and pales into opal above. To the west it still burns and flames, and the glory of it lingers on the plain as we come down. We almost quite forget the dark in this loveliness of light.

But it is there: we see it personified, down below. For set in a hollow, jutting jet black from the black of the shadow, with outstretched hand that grasps a knife, is a single hateful threatening form, the idol of the rock.

CHAPTER XXIX

Mosaic

ITINERATING work is a work without an evident end. It is full of fragments variously cut and coloured which sometimes seem to be strewn about to no purpose. And you want to retrace, and gather the pieces together, and fit them into something. But you probably find this is not your business. Occasionally, however, you are allowed to go back and see how God has been fitting into His great mosaic the pieces you thought scattered and lost, and you see how He thought of each little piece, when He formed the design at the first.

Star has recently lost her father. He had been drawing nearer to us all in friendliness, and had given up idolatry; but he had not accepted Christ, because as head of his caste he had so much to lose. And yet, as death came swiftly, he would not allow them to do anything idolatrous. "No, it is no use," he said. And almost his last thought was for the child he had cursed once, but forgiven. "Don't write to her till I am gone; she cannot come in time." And all his thoughts were kindly and gentle as he passed away.

When he passed the priest took possession. Every-

thing was done in style. Four hundred rupees were spent on the Brahmans and relations, who were sumptuously feasted for days. By the time we got there, things had settled down into a tired-out quietness. Even the poor mother had hardly spirit to rise to the customary wail, and the call of the little sisters, "Father! our sister has come!" sounded wearily.

It was a difficult day. Between those who love our Lord and those who do not, there is a separation which no affection can quite cross. Star could not do all they wanted her to do, so they thought her unfeeling. They did not know of the heart-broken crying, night after night, as she woke up dreaming about her father. She did not wail in the orthodox way, using unmeaning, untruthful expressions; so they thought she did not care.

There was loneliness outside, that curious loneliness which comes when you return to a place which once knew you well, and now knows you no more. The very houses and streets were dear, but they looked coldly upon her. She had sat among her own, indoors, and after the first greeting they had looked upon her askance. She went out to renew her friendship with the familiar things, and they said to her, "We do not belong to you." The little sisters ceased calling to their father to come, and began to talk of a wedding and jewels. "If you will marry according to caste, and wear suitable jewels, we will all join the Way." We were hospitably entertained, and treated with more than common kindness; they even let us share in the family meal (as they were mourning, caste rules were relaxed), and Star's mother insisted on feeding me with

her own hand, pressing dainty morsels rolled in moist balls into my mouth. But there was always the sense of separation, the chasm between. They would not let Star mention the Lord Jesus: "Have you not written us many letters? Is that not enough?" They pressed jewels upon her: "Your ear lobes ought to be dangling to your shoulders, and crammed with jewels. We are ashamed of your appearance." They filled the day with conversation about such matters, and Star's sore heart grew sorer. The house to her was full of her father, and they could talk of these trivial things. The day was shadowed in other ways; we were so often reminded that under all the colour of this colourful land there is something heavy and black.

Among Star's cousins is a young wife whose wistfulness told us at once that she had no little children. A childless wife is not honoured here; and a look grows into the face which tells the tale of the years. We went to her house; it is large and roomy, built to be filled, but empty. "Her husband deals in magic," some one explained, and we understood. Childlessness, according to tradition, is the price paid for possession of occult power. The magician's generation ceases with himself.

Then story after story was half whispered, half gestured; stories full of mystery, told with perfect simplicity and no sense of surprise or untruth, but always under breath, as if they feared the Power would overhear. These stories were all about the influence of a certain *curalai*, a medium belonging to the girl's husband; it was kept in a corner of the house where we

sat, and they offered to show it to me, but the thing, besides being in measure Satanic, was made of an infant's bones, and I had no desire to see it. "If *he* brought it out, and so willed it, he could mesmerise you perfectly," they all affirmed with confidence, and I felt half inclined to let him try, and prove the fallacy, but resisted the temptation; it would have done no good. The East is the home of spiritualism and hypnotism. The secrets connected with mental suggestion and sub-consciousness are open secrets here. But though this wonderful old land, with its wonderful old ways, lies all round us, most of us live in it without knowing much about it. It hides itself from us. Even its language has its hidden talk, an ingenious combination of vocals and consonants worked into the colloquial. India is a cabinet of drawers, and secret drawers. We only know enough to know that we do not know.

From this home we went to another where the parents of one of Mr. Walker's convert boys live. We were shown into a courtyard packed with servants teasing cotton. The air was full of the white fluff, and we found it difficult to speak. But the good-natured, laughter-loving people were ready to listen; it made a little diversion in their day. After we had finished with them, their master, our boy's father, led us up a narrow ladder to a loft at the top of the house. We had heard that loft described, and looked round it with interest. "Yes," said the old man, reading our thought, "this is the room I locked him in. For five days and five nights I kept him here. I tied him to that pillar. I locked up that window lest he should slip through it

out on the roof." All this frankness was surprising; one learns to look behind frankness in India. "But now all desire that he should be a Hindu has faded from my mind. I have not the least feeling of anything but complete satisfaction that he should be a Christian. I beseech you to tell the Iyer this, and to persuade him to send the boy home. See! his mother is pining to death for her son." And the mother was dramatically produced.

For a moment I smiled. The old man's ulterior object was so very evident. I wondered how he could expect us to be so easily caught. But a glance at the mother sent a pang through me. It was true: she was pining to death for her son. The Sword and Variance cut cruelly.

I dare not give the parents hope that the Iyer would send the boy back. It would have been too dangerous. "What happened last time your word was trusted and he was brought to see you?" "Ah, that was an unfortunate misadventure," and the old man waved his hand lightly as if waving off its memory. An hour or two later we passed the place where the "misadventure" occurred. One of our little party had been through it, and described it to me with spirit: "Hundreds of the boy's caste men, led by his father and mother, came rushing for us at once like a fury of great waters. See, here they seized the bulls and tore them out of the cart. And here the mother threw herself down on the ground and raved and would not stir. So many people pressing all round, and roaring, all their mouths open, and all their hands stretched out—and we in the

midst of it. Oh, such angry faces! Oh, how they shouted, and they hissed upon us like snakes. Then God came to our deliverance. For the aged Headman sent to his son and said, ‘ Years ago a white man helped me. There is a white man in trouble now. Go and help him in his need.’ But when the son came he was dismayed. ‘ The people are too strong for me. What can I do? I am but one.’ Then suddenly God bestowed courage upon him, and he threw up his arms and shouted, and he quelled the riot, and we passed through.”

That day, together in the bungalow, Mrs. Walker and I had read *Daily Light*, and found comfort in it: “ Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me.” We did not apprehend such danger, but we knew there was peril in the experiment of taking a bandy load of converts back to their own village to witness to their own people, even though we had the promise of safe conduct. But good came out of apparent harm. That day has its place in the mosaic.

We left Star’s home in the evening, and, some miles from it, came upon a patch of garden ground. Out on the great sand waste, where nothing grows but palm and scrub, there is a company of true believers led by a simple countryman, who, unknown to the preacher, was converted through an ordinary sermon in church. This man went home, started what would now be called a Prayer Circle, led it, went out witnessing to the surrounding villages, and so impressed the little group of Christians in his village with the immense importance of this witnessing work, that, out of their poverty, they

subscribed towards the expenses involved. In country, as in town, the number who receive the truth is small. Village after village, the pastor tells you sorrowfully, is without a single real Christian, and the towns stand almost unmoved. But the witness is being borne.

In the adjoining village we saw more of the mosaic. The pastor and his wife, the same who helped Gladness, are warm and most courageous where converts are concerned. Their brave influence has helped many. When we remembered how this came about, we wondered at the ways of God, who expends so much thought upon preparing one to help another, and then so works that those who need a certain sort of help are brought in touch with those prepared to give it. The mosaic is being fashioned everywhere.

Among those about whom we inquired, there were some whose stories seem like broken bits of a broken plan. As many have asked about them we mention them here. Treasure and Gold, two girls who once were almost martyrs for Jesus' sake, had been married to Hindus and sent far away. We went to the place on the lake, near its little temple, where Gold had been almost drowned. We stood on the same lake-side where Treasure stood to be scourged. They had been pressed too far. They had both quite given in.

The little child, the rose-bud crushed, had been forgotten by everyone; spoiled flowers are soon forgotten in this forgetful world. The child we last saw drugged was dead; her first year killed her, the woman said, and before I could stop them, they told me how. The story sickened us for days. What must the holy Son of God

have suffered in spirit day by day, all through those years of human life, as He saw life's sin, and heard its moan, and knew it never need have been.

But by far the most sorrow-laden hour was spent in the village from which the little child was taken to the temple near our house. We saw the relative whose word could have prevented it. He told us the child was in the village “lent by the temple.” We saw her, a child changed—most piteously changed. All we had feared had been done.

“They chained her fair young body to the cold and cruel stone ;
The beast begot of sea and slime had marked her for his own.
The callous world beheld the wrong, and left her there alone.
Base caitiffs who belied her, false kinsmen who denied her.
Ye left her there—alone.”

Married to the god, “tied to the stone,” it is their very idiom : oh, the burning, unspeakable wrong of it ! Cold, cold, one may try to be, and it is easy to be cold when one only reads of it ; but when one sees it, sees the changed child-face, sees the passing of the innocence that will never come again ; feels, as if one's own soul felt it, the brand of the iron, the sting of the shame, then it is not easy to be cold. India sees a pathetic picture in the lamb in the slaughter-house, “which crops the fragrant shoots that dangle from the slayer's hand.” When will she see something far more pathetic in the play of these small child lambs in the shambles within her Temple courts ?

But as I looked back to that heart-breaking sight, the sight of that little doomed lamb being led through the wood and away, it seemed as though I were looking

upon a piece of the mosaic, a blood-red bit meant to fit somewhere, even now fitting into its place. For have not many eyes followed that child in her walk through the wood? Have hearts not ached to run after her, and catch her, and save her, as she turned and waved her little hand? And the child they saw drugged on the floor? Have some not looked again and again, and then looked up in anguish, that found relief only in strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save? Has the pain all passed in vain? and the prayer? Is there no connection between that first breaking out of prayer and the beginning of what looks like an answer? Nine months after that first prayer, the word came unmistakably, "Come, search for the little lost lambs with Me." Since then, the search has gone on, and some have been found. Will not the Good Shepherd go on finding His lambs? Perhaps the Temple children's time has come at last.

The Fort lay on our homeward way. No one had visited it since we last went, though afterwards a sister missionary had a good entrance there. We had been travelling for days, and had a long journey before us that night, but the hope of an opened door braced us, as we went in. Again the unchanging silence. The very sunshine seemed stiller here than outside. We found our way as of old to the shadiest street, and waited awhile, but no one came; so we went on, found a deserted house in good repair, explored its rooms through barred windows; went on farther, saw shrines, near the temple, small shrines full of idols; saw traces everywhere of life, strong though so old, but saw no life: only a black goat

wandered free, and the sparrows chirped, and squirrels darted across the path.

We ventured to knock at last. The door suddenly opened, and as suddenly shut, then opened again, and a woman's voice called, “Whoever you are, by the way you came—Go! There is death here: go!”

We found an awning of mats, where four ways met, and waited, wondering if anyone would come. No woman would, we knew, but a man might. Presently one came. “Are you the pulse-feeling Missie Ammâl? The Government sent one here last week, and we showed her the kindness of allowing her to feel our women's pulses.” The questioner was a young man educated outside, as some of the younger generation are. He was interested in our message, and promised to influence his people to listen to it, or, as he put it, “learn.” The Headman, “Absolute Truth-speaker,” would, he was sure, put no obstacle in the way of the women and children being taught. We could not see him; he was mourning, as all the Fort was, because of the death of one of the Clan.

Several bright little girls came out very shyly, and we made friends with them. A servant passed, flattening himself against the wall before he got within contaminating radius. The children drew their small garments close about them lest his very shadow should fall and defile. The man seemed almost to shrivel up in his servility. The children glanced at him not unkindly, but the pride and the ignorance of centuries was painted as by an invisible hand upon their little faces then.

After a while they left us, and we went to one of the tamarind trees near the door of the Fort, and kneeling

there in the shade prayed for the place as we never prayed before. We left it then, wrapped in that strange hush, unbroken by even the sound of the chant they raise for their dead.

We travelled straight on that afternoon and night, stopping only at midnight to dine, and then chiefly because the bandy-man had lost his way. And as we sat there in the quiet dark, with the silence of the sky above us and the plain about us, the solemnity of life in this land pressed upon us, bore in upon us, penetrated us. The people pass across the plain so quickly. Oh, are we half in earnest to reach them before they pass?

CHAPTER XXX

Background

“**W**HAT you see in a thing depends very much upon its background.” The words bear a wide interpretation. You return from an itinerating tour thankful for any sign of victory, but heart-sore because of the triumph of evil, and foot-sore too, for so often you trod upon graves that appear not; sometimes such small child-graves that the pity of it appealed. If you have any voice left, you sing choruses of praise and gladness as your bullock-cart slowly trundles along, but through the choruses, often and often from somewhere very deep within you, the cry cuts its way out: “Oh, let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end!” The end seems far enough distant to-day. The sound of a shaken leaf shall chase them—yes, but when? Come, Lord Jesus! Come quickly!

The bullock-cart blunders through the village, and turns into the compound. There is a dab of colour at the gate. It moves, scatters, resolves itself into dancing dots of crimson and blue. Then there are shouts of welcome, sadly unmodulated probably, but very sincere. Little happy children are running all about, bewildering the bulls, climbing into the bandy, lifting up raptured

smaller ones to be pulled into the bandy and kissed. Dark in the distance is the background. Poor little child—

“They left thee in thy peril and thy pain,
The night that hath no morrow was brooding o’er the main.”

Strange background for any little child : the peril and the pain, and the night that has no morrow.

“But lo ! a light is breaking of hope for thee again” :

the foreground fills with the light ; and the joy you find in it is intensified by every throb of consciousness of what the background meant. The next few chapters are intended only for lovers of little children. They will be foreground. This chapter, by way of background, comes first.

One of our Temple-children workers was with me when, after several years absence from the place, I spent a few days near the village which used to be our home, and visited the house from which the Elf, our first Temple child, escaped.

It is a palm-leaf thatched cottage in a secluded street near the Temple. The woman I so well remembered, whose eyes seemed hypnotic in influence, met us outside the courtyard, and, to our surprise, half welcomed us. There were five children there. The two eldest, girls of about eleven and twelve, had come to the bungalow to coax the Elf to leave us ; they remembered me, and ran up in friendly fashion, full of questions. “Is she not married ? We were married two years ago !” And they pulled at their little garments and showed me the Temple marriage symbol fastened to their necklets. “Do you say she is not married yet ? Has she nice

jewels and silks? No jewels? no silks? Oh! Aiyo! Aiyo! Why does she not come back?”

A sweet shy child of six drew close to us, and laid a light little hand in mine. She reminded me of the Elf as she was when she came to us first, only the Elf was never shy. The others pointed to her as she stood in the grace of her childish beauty. “She is to be married next month, or the month after, to the god, you understand? Great Perumal! She will have better jewels than than these she is wearing now. Beautiful jewels like ours.”

At this point the woman interfered, and whispered something to the children about our having come to catch them by magic, as we had caught the Elf. This frightened them, and thereafter they peeped at us from behind the Temple woman, to whom we talked for a while. But the dear little younger one would not be frightened, she came quietly close again. “Chee!” said the Temple woman, and swept them all into the house.

We feared nothing could be done to save that little girl, whose grace and sweetness had won upon us so; but to make sure, we wrote to a friend in the Civil Service who would do anything in his power to save these children. We put the facts before him. His answer, written after consideration and inquiry, came to this:

As things are, you can do nothing. Not that there is no law bearing upon such a case, but that its provisions are inadequate and need considerable amendment, if prosecution is to issue in the salvation of the child.

It is two months since that day. The little girl of six years old is married to Perumal now. "One more devil's triumph, and sorrow for angels. One more wrong to man. One more insult to God."

In another house, belonging to another temple in the same village, we found a secular marriage in progress. The bride was the Temple woman's sister. Fate, as they would put it, chose out one of the family to belong to the god, the others live the usual life. The one chosen has adopted several little children, all of whom have now become family property. They will, as they grow up, call their adopted mother, "Mother," her relations will be aunts, uncles, cousins. Thus the entanglement becomes complete, and it is impossible to extricate such a child, as all claim it equally, and it believes it belongs to all. We saw four babies in that house. "My child," or "My sister's child," meaning her Temple-sister's, said the woman we knew, when we asked her about them. "My niece," said the little bride, as, tired of marriage solemnities, she relaxed and played with a babe.

We looked longingly at the little things, with their innocent eyes and soft fat hands that closed round one's finger as baby hands will. If only we could have drawn them out, just as they were, without letting go! It was impossible.

These babes grown up are everywhere still more impossible to save. They are too deeply involved in the life to which, apart from all choice of their own, they have been delivered by hands too strong to resist. We saw one such a week ago. We were led to her by a child of seven, who explained in detail who she was.

She lives alone in a handsome house, two storied, tile-roofed. Near was another Temple house, full to the doors with mother, daughters, and their children. That mother had told me wonderful stories about a Government rule which all obeyed: “No child may be married now before twelve: so when she is twelve we take her and say, ‘Will you be married to god or man?’ and as she says, so we do.” Then aside to the listening daughters, “Will she believe it, do you think?”

But it was the girl in the house alone whose face and ways will not be forgotten. She was beautiful, and very gentle. Her voice was low and she spoke with refinement, using choice expressions culled from books. She had been reading poetry before we came. The book was on her knee. The poetry was bad, but there was no hint of the debased in the quiet face and manner. If only we could have had her as a little child!

She told us the beginning of her story. Her mother had been the servant of a famous north-country god. She never remembered any other life. She was “married” at five—to the god. “There is pleasure, a kind of pleasure: there is that also which is not pleasure,” she said gravely, but with no wish awakened for a different life. Pleasure; for no orthodox ceremony of importance is complete without the consecrating presence of a Servant of the gods; nor would any orthodox Hindu feel other than blessed should he meet such a one at the beginning of a new undertaking; the omen is auspicious. Not pleasure; for the truer feeling of the people shows in many little ways. The Service of the gods, though so honoured, is dishonoured, and the sensitive girl-heart,

hardly knowing how she knows it, still feels it. Such is India, inconsistent with her higher self, creating a system, calling it sacred, at her best ashamed of it, yet perpetuating it. The father is sick. The mother vows as her choicest gift her eldest little daughter, should her husband recover. The father agrees. He recovers. Together they take the little child and offer her to the god. The priests receive her. The god accepts. No one protests. The thing is religious, meritorious. Yet afterwards no father who had not done this thing would like his little daughter to be mistaken for that dedicated child. Could extreme of contradiction find more direct expression? What has been done is good, right—the best that could be done. Its result, a thing despised, and yet a thing most cherished. In certain cases such a child is cruelly handled from the first, but not invariably. Oftener she is fêted, jewelled, petted, led in her wondering innocence through ways we may not trace, formed and fashioned day by day till all the child in her withers and dies. Then she is meet for the use of the Hindu ideal of God.

Such facts gather force as you sit by the side of a girl whose life they have crossed. We had to leave her as we found her, like a bird with its wings clipped, thrown on the ground. Only, unbird-like, she did not flutter; she had grown accustomed to the dust.

When first we began our search for Temple children, with the definite intention of trying to save them, we wrote to the only two missionaries known to us to be conversant with the facts concerning them. We found their experience tallied. The salvation of a *bona fide*

Temple child, or a child in danger of being appropriated by Temple people, is something more difficult of accomplishment than those who have not this special experience would readily believe. As a matter of fact we had to buy our own experience. No one could advise us how to set about saving the children. But we have had all possible sympathy from fellow-missionaries, and nothing they could do to help us has been left undone. A few extracts from letters recently received may be of interest here. They illustrate the search.

“J. (an Indian worker) is after a little girl of about seven years old, who is to be married to the god on the 27th. He is very keen to save her, but there are many difficulties in the way.” Shortly afterwards we heard that the child was married. Wedding cards were issued as for an ordinary marriage. We did not hear of this in time to secure a card, which if obtained would have been excellent proof of the fact of illegal action. Ceaseless efforts have been made for over a year to save this child, but in vain.

“Last Friday I heard of four little girls. They all belong to the Temple. Two are married to the god; two not. The married children’s people get a grant of sixty-two quarts of rice a month from the Temple. There are ten children in this Temple. One of the married children is just six years old (by ‘married’ is meant ceremonial marriage to the stone who represents the god). All these ten have been separately sought, but their guardians refuse to give them up. We consulted a lawyer, but were not encouraged to do anything. The required proof, as usual, is unobtainable; and we should have

against us not only the children's own parents, but the police bribed by the priests, and in fact the whole population."

"The family is very rich. The mother is in the profession. S. is such a dear, pretty little thing. There seems no hope of saving her."

"I saw the judge about the baby (going to be devoted to the god). He said nothing could be done. It would be impossible to get sufficient proof of the mother's future intentions."

"The girl is in the Temple, and lost. Her brother did not want her to go. We thought we might get her and send her to you, particularly as she herself did not want to go. But her parents were too strong for us. She was spirited off at night, and is now in the Temple. She was thirteen years of age, and well-nigh a Christian." Later, about the same child: "She is quite changed. Nothing can be done."

"P. is a pretty, fair girl of about nine, a pupil in our mission school. She is the daughter and granddaughter of Temple women, and is being brought up to the same life. G. is about ten years of age. Her mother told us she had married all her daughters as they grew up except G., who was to go to the Temple. It was the custom of their family that one girl should be so devoted, and they must do as their elders had done." Earnest efforts have been made to save these children, but in vain.

"The little child we wrote to you about was taken to the Temple last week. We went and inquired, but the people in the street said they knew nothing of her; and

beyond tracing her to the Temple we have been able to do nothing. We have not seen her since she was taken away; and we cannot find out whether she is still in the house or whether she has been sent elsewhere. The people in the street are ready to swear to anything the woman who has adopted the child tells them to say.”

“Little A. was sent to the Temple. We have just heard of her death. B. ran from the room with his hands over his ears to shut out the sound of her cries.” “So did his cruelty burn life about, and lay the ruin bare in dreadfulness.” Let these words for one moment flame out that story. Then let it drop back into the night.

“He (the Secretary of the Society for the Protection of Children in India, with headquarters in Calcutta) is right in what he says about future legislation being needed. But I don’t think it will be yet. We have not the men to enforce it if it were passed, at present.”

These extracts are chiefly from missionaries of different Societies working in British India and the Southern Native States. The last quotation is from an Indian Civil Servant. Other members of the Service have written to us from time to time with a strength of sympathy for which we, who have to grapple with these facts, are very grateful. We have friends in the Service upon whom we can count for any help within their power. Sometimes we feel the time must be near when something more will be done. In the meantime the children of this generation are passing in through those great gates that open inwards and then shut.

CHAPTER XXXI

Warped Land

SO far the Weight: thank God there is the Overweight; more than an Overweight of Joy.

The *Spectator* had something to do with its creation.

One day a small girl appeared on my verandah. "I want to be 'joined,'" she remarked. "Joined to what?" "To your preaching band," was the unexpected answer, with an upward turn of the eyes and a downward droop of the mouth.

We found she had a Christian relation, though her nearest were heathen. Her parents were dead. Her heathen relations had turned her adrift. She drifted to her Christian relation, who forwarded her to us. We interviewed these affectionate relatives, and found them all decided in refusing her. They could do nothing with her, they said. She was nine, and apparently naughty. Not quite a case for the band.

There were reasons which made us hesitate about adopting her. We had newly come to Dohnavur for a year's work, and were anxious not to do anything which would give colour to the rumours which had preceded us, that we were "Catchers of children." We had never

caught any; we had only sheltered a few converts who had come to us; but facts are not in question where such stories are concerned. Then, too, we felt the relations ought to do their obvious duty. We were puzzled about ours. In the meantime the little girl was fed. She was given a doll, at which she stared ungratefully. She was not satisfied with her food, and tried to steal other people's. She was altogether deplorable. After a few days' experience we could hardly wonder that nobody wanted her, except the One who always wants the naughtiest of us.

It was then that the *Spectator* came, an old copy which had done duty in several mission stations. In it was an article about Warping. "A recent writer on reclaiming land from the sea gives £40 per acre as the cost of making Warp land. Warping is the art of stealing land from the waters. Reclamation is forcible rescue by building a bank round ground already rising above sea level."

£40 for an acre of sand: some fancy set me working out the value of an acre of soul. Suppose we did everything for this child for ten years, according to the then purchasing power of the rupee, so far as I could make out the cost would be about £35. Allow £5 for contingencies. It came to £40.

This cold-blooded calculation may shock the mind which never descends to the mundane. Do not mission children subsist upon air? (Indian air being so nourishing.) And as for clothes, in the Tropics of course they are not required. But though sooner or later curry and rice and raiment, and even such a detail as education, have to be considered, I cannot say that at that moment, or ever

after in any case, questions affecting provision weighed in the very least. Our Father is our Treasurer. All we wanted was to know what He wanted us to do. The Warp land calculation was merely a freak; its result a "chance" coincidence. But when one is looking for light upon anything it is curious to notice how all manner of little side-lights bend little rays upon it, till the way in which one should walk is all lighted up. The *Spectator* suggested thoughts about the value of a little sand to man. From this we passed to thoughts about the value of a little soul to God. The value of the sand was measurable: £40 per acre. The value of a single little soul, in one sense at least, was measurable too: we know the price paid down to reclaim it. The question was settled that afternoon. And often since that afternoon the *Spectator* has repeated its message; when the little acre of soul has seemed unpromising we have remembered that the acre of sand is probably unpromising at first; and the thought of its worth to its Owner has come with inspiration over and over again.

Shortly after our return to the eastern side of the district the little Elf was brought to us. Her deliverance was wonderful enough to require a wonderful explanation, and the firm belief of our people is that the angel who delivered Peter had something to do with it. In all ways the Elf was a contrast to the Imp, as No. 1 was too easily called. She was very much wanted. We never felt her safe till we had settled in Dohnavur again.

Soon after God gave us the Elf He moved once more for the salvation of children in similar danger. Two

little girls, whose people were connected with Temple service, became members of our family. Deeper and deeper thereafter we found ourselves involved in what seems like another life-system far remote from our own. Sometimes the children have to be redeemed at cost. Always they are spoils won in battle between the strong man armed and the Stronger. The joy is that they are being won.

Another joy is found in the change that passes upon them after they are won. Sometimes they come to us looking like little women-girls. No light on the little faces, no natural child-expression. The photographs which illustrate this were not taken for that purpose. Nor are they perfect as illustrations, for the little girl shown here was never a Temple child. The strained, too-old expression, was the result of the extreme severity exercised by the child's father, a man of powerful will, who had beaten down resistance in his sons, and determined to do the same with his little daughter. But nevertheless the photo shows that happy thing, the growing younger of a child who has grown too old. So we let it tell its tale, which in the case of a Temple child is far more emphasised, for even the most unnatural Hindu home life cannot compare for unnaturalness with the life lived by the little Temple girl.

There was one—I wish we could show her photo—who, when she was brought to us a baby barely two years old, was more like a trapped wild animal than a little human child. She had changed hands four times within a few days. She was old enough to suffer pitifully. The little face with its terrified eyes told us that. For five

days that little child moaned and cried like a whipped puppy. She cried even in her sleep. Once, a week after she came to us, she saw a woman standing at the gate with a child in her arms. It must have wakened up some baby memory, for in a moment both little arms went out in wildest entreaty, and the child, who had never spoken to us in articulate words, suddenly cried, "There! there!" meaning she wanted to be taken there. And she sobbed for hours after that, over and over and over again, till we were heart-sick at the sound, the Tamil baby word for "Mother! Mother! Mother!"

That poor mother had refused to give her baby to the Temple women who wanted her. Something was done to force her, the particulars are not known, but she became mad, and tried to drown the little child. Then while she slept it was taken from her, and sent off to a Travancore Temple. The mother is wandering, no one knows where, quite mad.

This little child, such a happy child now, full of coaxing little ways and funny broken talk, was heard the other day teaching her junior, a small, very fat, curly-headed little tot, to repeat the few English words she, little Lotus, knows: "*Deah* Loleypoley! say 'ittle darr-ling!'"

Sometimes when the children come they are like the ghosts of little girls. One, who is now a sunny little maid, was like a child walking in her sleep for a whole month after her arrival, until we began to fear for her mind, she was so strange. She would sit for hours without moving, dazed and absent. She rarely spoke; she never smiled. She was a four-year-old Brahman

child from the Malabar coast, who, so far as we could learn, had been kidnapped by Temple scouts, and brought over to our side of the mountains for sale. Her ears had been cut to disguise her. Her little body had been burnt. The cuts and the burns had healed, but there must have been some inward hurt, and it was still unhealed. She told us nothing, never has told us anything; we hope she has forgotten all. To this day we can only guess what the shock must have been from which recovery was so slow. It came at last. The place in the compound where we were when first the child-nature woke and laughed, is marked by one of those bright marks memory makes sometimes. Leela—Lightsomeness, Playfulness—is her name now, and her nursery pet name is Little Laughter.

Lotus and Leela are helpful, when new children who look hopeless enough to discourage the most sanguine of us, come. After our experience with them we feel we have courage for anything. Two little girls were brought to us lately about whom we should have naturally despaired. But who could despair with Leela and Lotus in evidence? Every time we saw them at play we felt cheered in hope for the new two.

These two had a tragic story. Their father in a fit of passion killed their mother, while the little sisters looked on horrified. They fell into bad hands, and were taken to a Temple house. Finally they were brought to us. The year had left an ugly mark upon them. The ideal Temple child is refined in manner; that passes too often as the years pass, but the child at first is an attractive little thing. No other is of use. She is usually "fair,"

as the word goes here, anything from olive to hazel-nut colour. She has a certain manner and way of her own, and she is responsive to influence, keen-brained, bright. These two were the opposite of this. They were coarsened little beings, inside and out. They were extremely dull. It was not the dulness of drugging, as in little Leela's case. It may have been the result of abnormally severe treatment, for one of the children had been pinched through the skin as a punishment, and the other had been burnt with the flat side of a knife on either arm; the marks are still distinct. Whatever the cause, the children were most miserable, not pathetic or interestingly sorrowful, but just very cross. We felt inclined to call them Mumps and Grumps, but instead gave them names meaning Pleasure and Friendliness. I overheard a scrap of six praying by herself in a corner: "Help me to love the two new little girls just as if they were nice." This prayer expressed our feelings. Everything is different now. Six months' persistent anointing with cocoanut oil had a most smoothing effect on the roughened exterior. An equally softening inward effect was produced by six months' lavish love and happiness. It is an effort of memory now to recall the time when the two little girls were rude and glum and sulky, and almost made us call them Mumps and Grumps.

The dear little Firefly flew to us out of a similar background of darkness, but she never was depressed. The children called her Firefly from the first, because of her lightness and brightness. The beginning of her story was written in sorrow in the chapter¹ whose name

¹ Chapter xi.

contains a prophecy—"The Grace of the People to come." It did not seem possible then that she could be delivered : to-day she is with us, an Overweight of Joy.

But the children in detail would weary you, perhaps. There is nothing remarkable about them. They are chiefly interesting to their own, to whom in truth they become more interesting every day.

They are rejoicing now in possessing a nursery proper. For some time they were all cramped up in a room which had to serve for kitchen, dining, and bedroom. Then friends,—fellow-missionaries, chiefly,—sent us what built a fine long room with verandah closing on either end, and this, built so as to form a square with the old room for one side, makes a perfect nursery. In the centre is a courtyard garden, with a tulip tree, which, as the children firmly believe, God caused to be planted on purpose for us ; and flowers and creepers, and, above all, a swing, make this courtyard a place of delight.

The nursery children begin with the babies. The first to come to us was four hours old when she was taken to the Temple woman's house, and for ten days she was kept there, and considered, as the custom is, the daughter of the Temple woman who had adopted her. About the same time another tiny baby was adopted by a Temple woman known to us, and another baby-girl we had traced to a Temple house disappeared before we could reach her. It is most difficult in the first place to trace, and in the second place to prove our traces, where these babies are concerned. Then, too, as one of the letters quoted told, there are cases where the priest of the temple to which the child is eventually to belong,

supports the mother until the little one can be dedicated. So that every possible selfish feeling and consideration is ranged against us, and the devil fights for his minute prey as if each unconscious infant were a little queen. One cannot understand it till one remembers that if only he can hold on for the next few years, the child will become not only doubly his, but his for others' destruction. Touch a Temple child and you touch the heart of the system which has only one rival in all the world for its subjugating power. No wonder the devil fights.

A few nights before that baby of four hours old was taken to the temple, one of our pastors and an evangelist saw for the first time what we have so often seen, Temple women and children out in the street in the evening. The sight stirred them, and later, when the pastor heard of that baby, it moved him to try to save it. He worked hard and he prayed, and this child, the only one of the three, was saved.

We shall never forget the night she came : the little, old, tired baby face, the little, feeble, weary cry, the little hands moving restlessly as if feeling for a mother, none of us ever forget. She had travelled over a hundred miles, and she almost died on my knee that night ; but we did not know then how much she had been hurt, and we hardly understood what we had undertaken. The experienced say she cannot live to grow up, but her smiles "cool our hearts," and we hope much for her.

"What is she to be called, our very first Temple baby?" This important question came from all the children at once. The Elf ran off for her "gee-lit Bible," turned the pages hurriedly, found a verse and read it :

“‘The foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones.’ This is the stone I like ‘*The twelfth an Amethyst.*’ She was going to be a stone in Satan’s city wall, and now——” The Elf stopped and looked tentatively at me. We all thought it would do. So our first Temple baby is called Amethyst.

When the second came, the lovely laughing Rajput baby, saved by another pastor, the jewel verse was referred to again: “*The second a Sapphire.*” The name expresses the little one. There is the unclouded serenity as of deep blue skies about her. Indraneela (Sapphire), she is the joy of our hearts, such a whole round gift of joy.

Then came baby No. 3, terribly injured, whose wails at first were ceaseless. But a few months’ care worked a change that was good to see. Little Sunflower we call her, in faith that her life will be full of sunshine, in spite of its dark beginning. These three make the nursery the centre of things interesting, and I think we all have felt the fascination of the little loving things who ask for so much, get more than they ask, and give more so unconsciously.

CHAPTER XXXII

The Children's Hour

TORRENCE, the American poet, in verses entitled "The Conclusion of the Whole Matter," thus sums things up:

"In this rough field of earthly life
I have reaped cause for tears enough;
Yet after all I think I've gleaned
My modicum of laughing stuff."

Those of us who are allowed to live sometimes in the children's world find plenty of laughing stuff there. Only it is not the sort of stuff which can be packed up and sent anywhere.

From five o'clock till sunset is the children's hour. Their playground lies to the west, with the mountains in view, and a great expanse of sky. Here the happy little people play to their heart's content; and, as a grateful small girl put it, "Nobody says 'Be quiet.'"

Sometimes, but rarely, they are quiet. "Hush" (literally Breathe not!): "we have found a little birdling, and it is so homesick!" This quiets everybody; there is an eager crowding round the fortunate finder, and a dozen little hands are stretched out to stroke the "homesick" little bird. Sick birds and strayed birds

are our most usual pets. We have not the heart to shut up wild things in cages, except when they are invalided or too young to fend for themselves. When they are considered well enough or old enough to be set at liberty, there is general jubilation. But, alas! the little sunbird that has licked honey for a fortnight from affectionate fingers is apt to acquire too trustful a disposition for life in a world infested by hard pressed pariah dogs. "The babies are our longest lasting pets," one small mourner was heard confiding to another after the tragic deaths of several little favourites; "I am glad there is no wild beast that wants to eat them up." Animals would be much to the fore if only we could suitably have them. "When I am grown up," said one, undaunted by accidents, "I shall have twenty dogs and twenty cats, and they shall play with each other." Ten minutes after she had made this announcement I found her chuckling to herself, as with a child's vivid imagination she surveyed the diverting prospect.

In India we have various round games, graceful and quaint in their way, but these grow monotonous, and then romps are the order of the day. Rūkma (Radiance) is a born mimic, and as Indian life lends itself to caricature she has a fair field for her activities. Games are devised which would puzzle a Western. One of these includes an elephant made of slatey-blue raiment and children fastened together. This creature, with a bell, which tinkles in an agitated manner at every step, hung round its neck, stalks about the playground, waving his trunk hungrily in the direction of the younger juveniles, who never tire of the charming

horror of it. The joy of being allowed to shriek as the alarming shape approaches never seems to pall. "For when you make a very tremendous noise, you get a lovely *fearful* feeling," was the lucid explanation offered for the delirious rout.

Occasionally the dolls, who for the most part live in boxes, are produced and hung in cradles swung from the trees. The effect of a dozen or so of these little hammocks, made of bits over from their own little garments, is very comical. Houses are arranged for the sleepers, to be ready when they wake. These houses follow the bungalow type. There is a central room "for food and meetings," and two bedrooms, one on each side. There is a verandah, with steps, and a curl meant for decorative architecture finishes either side of the steps. The kitchen, Indian fashion, is at a little distance. As all this is made of mud, patted into shape, on the raised model plan, with very low walls and spaces for doors, you may easily make a mistake and overlook the walls when invited to pay a visit. Nothing more offends the general sense of propriety. "You have stepped over the wall. That is wall. The door is on the other side. Please come in by the door."

Grown-up people, though so stupid, have some redeeming features. It is they who give the dolls. Also they kindly mend them when, as often happens, limbs come off. Here, judging by previous experience, one would expect a great display of sympathy with the sorely injured treasure. There is nothing of the sort. Strong common sense comes to the rescue, and the most heroic operative measures are regarded with perfect

equanimity. The maternal mind thus disengaged has time to moralise. "Are you mending my doll's leg to the glory of God?" was a question put to Mrs. Walker one day, when, seeing a better way to repair the damage, she unpicked her first attempt and began again. I was told about it afterwards: "The Ammâl did it beautifully at first. I would not have unpicked it. I think she must truly have been mending my doll's leg to the glory of God."

There is a feeling among white people that brown people always admire them. This is a delusion. They do admire our colour, and an ivory-skinned child will be described as "like a white person's child," but they do not always admire our behaviour, and they are extremely observant. "Is she a different species?" was the question suggested by close observation of a lady in the train whose travelling manners were not of the finest. "She is not like the Ammâls I know," and an extensive list was enumerated. "Is she a real Ammâl, or is she a different species?"

Anything like condescension is at once detected and severely criticised. "Oh yes, perhaps she is very nice. But she looked so"—and an all too faithful reproduction of the air of languid interest, or distant kindness, follows. "Now So-and-so," naming another visitor, "was different. She is our friend. Ammâ, what made the difference at the first?"—a question striking at the difficult root of things. But the Indian mind, though critical enough, is very charitable. "Perhaps she couldn't help being so, being made so"; this being a kindly conclusion, satisfied everybody.

New light on old texts might be the safe and sober title to a chapterful of sundries. "Do you know about the devil's beginning?" This was Leela to the Firefly, whose eager "Tell me, Leela!" started Leela at a trot. The idea behind the story poured forth was evidently a Tamil reception, such as occurs on New Year's Day and other special occasions, when chairs are placed for us, and we have to sit and be fêted. The chief entertainment is singing. The village, or as much of it as can find room, swarms in round us, and sings vigorously. The children contrive to squeeze themselves beside us between the chairs, or to climb into our laps, and so receive the reflected glory of the fêting. Sometimes we have as many as a dozen such receptions in one day, for outside villages come in turn. Such days, the children would tell you, are very glorious.

"In the beginning," began Leela in unctuous tones, "the bad devil was good. He was an angel. He lived in heaven. One day all the angels came to sing to God. Then the devil was angry. He got angrier and angrier. He was very rude to God." Here Leela seemed to freeze all over, and her voice sounded quite deep and awful. Irreverence was far from her intention. "That bad, bad devil said: 'I won't stand before God's chair any more, and I won't sing to God any more. *I want to sit in God's chair, and make God sing to me!*'" There was a perfectly horrified pause, as the enormity of the transgression became evident. "So God took him, and tumbled him down out of heaven, and he was turned into the devil."

There was another solemn pause, then Leela continued cheerfully, "And we each have a little devil; he

says, ‘Tell lies, steal, be cross.’ And we each have a little Angel; he says, ‘Don’t tell lies, don’t steal, don’t be cross.’ That devil is a nasty little devil.” “Which is more necessary,” inquired the practical Firefly of the Elf who just then appeared, “our little Angel, or our Ammâl?” (“mother”). “Well,” returned the Elf impartially, “I think both are necessary. Our little Angel is very important; he looks at God’s face for us. But then Jesus knows we couldn’t do without a mother. So He gives us both.” There was a vehement raid upon me, and the book which was considered too absorbing was triumphantly carried off. “It was nice and kind of Jesus,” said little Leela in cooing tones; “when I see Him I will run up to Him fast, and give Him hugs and kisses.” “But He is God,” said one of the small elders soberly. “But He is our Lord Jesus too,” said another quickly, feeling for Leela, whose loving little heart had meant nothing wrong. Leela looked grateful, and afterwards confided that she always gave Him kisses in her prayers. Then from these heights there was a sudden drop. “I want to see the bad devil *a corpse*,” said the Firefly, with startling energy.

Lola to Leela, on the institution of the Sabbath, was as follows: “And it was Friday, and God finished making everything, and He was tired. So He made Saturday into a resting-day; and *it* was Sunday. But a long time afterwards it was changed. For Jesus was very, very tired. He had been hurt so dreadfully, that was why He was tired; and it was Friday. And He rested in a cave on Saturday, which was Sunday. And then on the next day He got up. And He changed that day into

Sunday. And I think it was because He wanted another day for resting, because he was so very, very tired. So *that* day is our Sunday now." Lola is a frivolous young person, wholly bent on the things of this life, but there was a note of sympathy in her voice as she mentioned the tiredness of Jesus; and Leela, who is a tender little soul, felt it at once, and her eyes filled. She was not comforted till I had told the story over again, somewhat otherwise. I wonder if the same thought has struck other children: the day of rest was changed because our Lord needed a second day's rest.

A Bible class in which room is given for questions and remarks is a very fruitful field. You feel the richer for an experience such as I had to-day over the first few verses of Genesis.

The light of the first day was made by the shining of God's face. This is evident, for the sun was not created then. The third day's work suggested tails. I had been explaining about the change of the great forest trees into coal, now dug out of mines. "That's where the people live who have tails," was the staggering interposition. I found they all shared the idea. Under the earth is a great hole, and the people who live there cultivate tails. As for the fourth day's work, as every town and village in the world requires its own sun and moon and stars, a complete sky system all to itself, that day must have been a very busy day. This was an equally general idea. How else could it be explained that the sun rises at different times in different places? Of course it is a different sun. When the fact, or as much of it as their small minds could grasp, dawned

upon the children, their astonishment was interesting. They looked at one another, counted up the different villages represented: "One sun to all these! What a big sun it must be!"

Rain is made by the angels: this was the last contribution to science. There is a great big well in Heaven, and when the angels see that the flowers of the world are thirsty, they go to the well and draw much water and pour it down. I expected the little voice would continue that the flowers, refreshed, looked up and thanked the angels, but it stopped short of this pretty conclusion, and added with deeper feeling: "Then the angels are all very happy because they are helping God."

But the time of all times to get into the very inside mind of an Indian child is in the wonderful sunset hour when all Nature breathes softly, and just a little later, when the stars come out. Sometimes one gets shocks. I had always thought children heard God's voice in the thunder and were awed. Not at all. "The clouds are quarrelling. If they don't take care they'll spill," was the painfully practical remark that blew the dust from my eyes. So even in the silent glory of sunset, and even under the solemn stars, one must be prepared for prose as well as poetry.

CHAPTER XXXIII

Green Clouds and the Lamps of God's Village

“YOU stopped so long to look at *that*!” said a boy to me one day. It was in a lane arched with palm. There was a well on one side, in an open space, fenced in by rough reed work. On the reeds in the sunshine sat a pair of kingfishers. The flash of blue on the brown in the sunshine by the old grey-walled well is a joy just to remember. But my stopping to look at it was something quite out of reach of the boy, who stood in the shadow side under the palms.

This is what most of our children are like when first they come to us; but very soon they begin to care for the lovely and curious strewn so lavishly over the plain of South Indian life. Often now an excited little creature comes flying in, impetuous, full of some new discovery. Once it was a beetle rolling a ball much bigger than himself to a hiding-place under a tree. The children wanted to help the beetle, and they made a smooth track for him; but he obstinately persisted in kicking it by the rough way of his choice. Once it was a weed, as we disrespectfully call our flower guests

who come without being invited. "It has thirteen different colours, not counting the stalk." Once it was a praying mantis, whose devotional manners charmed the whole community, and suggested any number of moral reflections. Often it is a new mimic insect, like a straw, or a leaf, or a bit of bark. Once it was green clouds.

"Green clouds! Oh, you little green girl!" I said not in the least believing. But the earnest, "*Indeed, they are green,*" and the tugging little hands prevailed. The clouds were really green; a sort of undefined sea-green, like the colour of a wave before it rolls over, just as the crest curls ready to break. They were lighted with lemon colour towards the under edge, and darkened into grey above, and they were floating in violet air. Then through that pure violet the sickle of the new moon curved, sharp against its transparency. Jupiter, at some seasons very large and brilliant here, shone above the moon; and the little filmy cloudlets swept across it, making halos as they passed.

The splendour and the silence of the movement held us still. I think we both felt we might miss something if we spoke. Slowly the lemon light faded; the cloud colours melted into a blue that was almost electric. Every moment the moon cut clearer, and the silver of the planet grew more radiant. And the little halos flying round it were like rainbows caught and twisted into rings.

At last the child spoke, her brown eyes fixed wistfully on the fading glory of the sky. "I thought He was coming back," she said. Then I found she had fancied to herself that our Lord went home on a sunset

cloud, pink and soft and beautiful, with gold from the inside shining through. "And whenever the clouds are just like that, I look to see if He is not there. And I have looked so often, and He hasn't come yet." But other little voices broke in upon us—"What is the sky made of? Is it a real roof? Look at the big star! Oh, it is *running*! Where is it running to? Why has it got a coloured crown?"

In the warm South land the spirit of the moonlight and the starlight need not be shut out unkindly. We sit outside with it, and sleep outside beside it. The toil and the littleness of the day pass out of memory in that large calm, as the heat that has passed is forgotten in the cool. The juniors generally go to bed early, but sometimes they break bounds and sit on the sand in the courtyard, in the starshine, very wide awake. Then, if you happen to be conveniently exhausted and unfit for conversation, the compassionate children will leave you in peace and forget your near existence. You have the chance then, if you care to take it, to drop for awhile into the world that is never far away, though we so seldom seem to find the little bypath into it.

"I want to string all the stars together on a thread and make a necklace." This was Lola. "You can't," said the Firefly, scandalised. "They aren't yours." "Whose are they?" Lola sounded defiant. "They're God's. They're the lamps of God's village." "Where is God's village?" "Up there." "What is it called?" "It's Heaven, of course." "And it's up there?" Lola pointed up with one fat forefinger, and looked searchingly at the Firefly, who answered with confidence,

"Yes, up there; high up." Then Lola, who at the date of this story was considerably younger than when she instructed Leela, as already narrated, gathered herself together and demanded, "How does it stay up?"

This was disconcerting. The Firefly, at that time also a recent arrival, realised her limitations. Only a few days previously she had been as puzzled as Lola over a similar problem. We were at the Harvest Festival. The people were bringing offerings of sacks of rice, huge baskets of solidified brown sugar, many fowls, and some goats. The Firefly was enjoying it thoroughly till a question smote her. "Who are all the things for?" Surprised, we told her they were for God. "But I thought He lived in Heaven. How are they going to get the things there?" So, feeling unequal to clear explanation as to how God's village stayed up, the Firefly appealed to the Mouse, who honestly answered that she did not know, and was proceeding to expatiate upon the spiritual joys of the better world, when Lola interrupted anxiously, "What do the people in God's village have to eat?"

The Mouse, unlike the Imp of old, is nine, and good. She cuddled Lola in her arms, and explained that she was rather young to understand all about Heaven. Even she, the elderly Mouse, did not understand everything. But one thing was perfectly clear: Heaven was a beautiful lovely place like a beautiful lovely garden. Lola wagged her head approvingly. "Are there plantains?" (bananas). The Mouse was not sure. There is a tree, and twelve different kinds of fruit grow on it—a gasp of joy from Lola. And every month the fruit ripens—another

gasp from Lola. And the wall all round God's village shines, and the gates are made of big glistening pearls, and the village streets are gold. "What are the plates made of?" was Lola's next, interjected as soon as she could find room. "And is the rice always hot? And how many kinds of curry?"

Lola's unchristian greed distressed the Mouse. "You shouldn't be always thinking about your food-bag, Lola," she said with some severity. "*Will* it be hot?" once more interposed the irreverent child. The other children were listening rather keenly. In the monsoon season they have hot rice twice a day. At other times only once. The other meals consist of cold rice with condiment. Hot rice always, with an appropriate variety of curry, would be bliss indeed. The Mouse hesitated. "I think if there is rice in Heaven it will be always hot. And I think if there is curry, there will be a great many kinds. But it isn't in the Bible, and I don't know. As for the plates," she added in a more decided tone, "it is very silly to ask about them at all. Who can tell what they are made of?" Nobody ventured a guess. Their vocabulary's top word, gold, having been already requisitioned to describe the mere streets, what word was left to describe the plates, which must be unspeakably superb.

But the Mouse was uncomfortable upon these lower levels, and she made a strenuous effort to drag the unwilling Lola up: "Listen, Lola!" she said, and gave that plump person a shake. "Jesus, our own Lord Jesus, will be there, and we shall see Him, and He will smile upon us, and that will make Heaven's sunshine. And God will stroke our faces—so—to take away all the marks

of crying from our faces. And nobody will have fever, and we shall never have to go to bed. And there is a beautiful river.”—“How do we get there? Are there steps?” inquired Lola, much impressed by this jumble. “No; Jesus comes and carries us up. Or the angels come: that’s what happened to a poor sick man Jesus tells us about; and that’s what people call dying. Or else Jesus will come for everybody all at once, and we won’t die, we will all rise quickly, and fly and fly straight up to Him, up and up!” “Shall we have wings? What sort of wings?” Lola was quite stirred. The children have not been brought up upon pictures, and so have not interpolated the idea of wings into the Bible narrative. But then, the act of flying is intimately connected with wings. There was a moment’s entanglement of talk, out of which the voice of the very sane Mouse emerged: “How would wings be fastened on? I don’t think we shall have wings. It says nothing about them in the Bible.” “If the angels who came down to the world had had wings,” remarked another sagely, “people wouldn’t have mistaken them for common people. But they could fly all right.” “And Jesus hadn’t wings, but He flew up into the cloud,” said another and more decided voice. “So wings aren’t necessary.” But Lola seemed disappointed. She wanted wings; white ducks’ wings.

Later the conversation turned to the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus, which fascinates Eastern children, to whom the dramatic appeals. The picture of Lazarus sitting happily on Abraham’s lap, as the Tamil puts it, had captivated them, and they considered gravely upon

whose lap they would choose to sit, "not counting our Lord Jesus, for of course we would all choose His." One chose Elijah's, because he was so brave. Another, Abraham's. "You can't; Lazarus has it," was crushing. Another chose John's, because he was a loving man. The Elf chose Ignatius, because he was a martyr. But the Firefly would have none of these. "I'm not going to *not* choose Jesus," she said sturdily, "He's the only One I know in Heaven." "Everybody will want His," somebody objected. The Firefly gave my hand a squeeze: "Won't He keep just a little room for me?"

The frankly realistic way these children deal with the unseen may rather startle some, and their strong religious and Biblical bent may perplex others. There is nothing perplexing in it. India is naturally devout; the Bible is the children's favourite story-book: these two facts explain much. We have not many good story-books in Tamil, and the few that we have often cross the frontier into the grown-up people's kingdom. The Bible stories the children know best never do. Then, too, the book is new to most of them, and till they know it thoroughly other books can wait. So it comes to pass that at present everything shapes that way. Everything is coloured by some Scriptural reflection—even punishments, as I found only yesterday; for five naughty little sinners had eaten forbidden berries, and to ward off possible consequences had a dose of quinine all round; which quinine, to enforce the moral, had to be slowly munched. Quinine, dry, is not delicious. The five made faces. Then the ringleader remarked: "After Adam and Eve had eaten the for-

bidden fruit I wonder if God filled it with powder to keep anybody else from eating it, and I wonder if that powder was quinine?"

Among the larger events of her early life the Elf reckons a sharp attack of enteric. "My typhoid," she calls it, with unchallenged sense of possession. The weary convalescence was brightened by a doll which opens and shuts its eyes. For some time after its arrival and delightful laborious unpacking, the Elf was speechless. By the time she recovered voice everyone was busy, so she addressed the treasure, which was propped up in bed beside her: "Ah, my doll, I am going to love you very much. Oh, I do love you, my dear doll"—sounds of kissing followed—"but I must not want to keep you for myself entirely. I must be willing to give you up. I must not listen to the feeling in my inside that you are my very own. But you really are my own"—more fervent kissing—"the Lady of the hills sent you to me to be my very own," the relief in the voice was unmistakable, "so it doesn't matter what that feeling says. . . . But I must not be like Haman. He wanted all good things to come only to him, so he got a great disappointment."

Here I lost the thread of the discourse which, I think, must have got into knots, and perhaps Haman's fate proved depressing, for the sermon closed abruptly with, "Now I must not be at all like that . . . But, ah, my doll, you *are* my doll! . . . But I will give you to my younger sisters when I die!"

One feels inclined to leave you with no more serious view of the children than their playground shows, but

they are too dear to be left like that. They are not children in a picture just to be looked at, or children in a story sure to end happily. They are living children, with more than merely childish faults. Each who was, or whose parents were, connected with Temple service as the word is understood here, is possessed of an inheritance unexplored as yet, but close at hand. Sometimes it is as if the Power to whom the child had been dedicated, suddenly fastened upon her, drew her over the dividing fence into that inheritance, worked upon her will till she wills to be there, reasserted its claim in fact, very really. These children come from "dim uttermost depths which no Angel hath known," nor any English woman, save those who go out with the Shepherd to seek the sheep that is most of all lost; and even they have not plumbed the abyss that opens under Satan's throne. There is a difference between those who ever were in that abyss and those who never were; and the grace and the victory wrought by our God, and the light when it illuminates are all the more to the praise of His glory and all the more a joy. But we ask you not to forget the background, and the possibility it holds.

One of Christina Rossetti's poems expresses so tenderly and so completely much that we desire for these little Temple children, that one cannot do better for them than copy it here. Just the few who are with us can pray the prayer for themselves, but the many not found yet need you to put yourself down quite low beside them, and pray the little prayer for them, as mothers do for babies too small to say the words:

“O Lord, seek us, O Lord, find us
 In Thy patient care;
 Be Thy Love before, behind us,
 Round us everywhere:
 Lest the god of this world blind us,
 Lest he speak us fair,
 Lest he forge a chain to bind us,
 Lest he bait a snare.
 Turn not from us, call to mind us,
 Find, embrace us, hear;
 Be Thy Love before, behind us,
 Round us everywhere.”

And to this will you add an earnest word, that each one saved may grow up to be a saviour of others, a blessing to India.

"If the Lord pull, you must not hold when He draweth."

SAMUEL RUTHERFORD.

(The sick baby to its mother.)

"O Mother, mother! loose thy prayer,
Christ's name hath made it strong,
It bindeth me, it holdeth me
With its most loving cruelty,
From floating my new soul along
The happy heavenly air.
It bindeth me, it holdeth me
In all this dark, upon this dull
Low earth, by only weepers trod,
It bindeth me, it holdeth me!
Mine Angel looketh sorrowful
Upon the face of God.'

.

Oh you

Earth's tender and impassioned few,
Take courage to entrust your love
To Him so named, Who guards above
Its ends, and shall fulfil!
Breaking the narrow prayers that may
Befit our narrow hearts, away
In His broad loving will."

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING.

From "Isobel's Child."

CHAPTER XXXIV

Loosed

NEARLY a year has passed since most of the foregoing chapters were written. Now the three babies who made the nursery such a busy place have left us, for what the children call "Jesus' upstairs nursery."

The two who went first, swept off by the first touch of a cold-weather epidemic, were so delicate that they could never have been as other children are. Little Amethyst never grew except in gladness, and the Sunflower seemed to wither as she grew. But we took such care of them that we thought in our ignorance death could not find a way in to reach them. Little Amethyst, our first Temple baby, went first. It was night. I had carried her out into the courtyard, as if relief from the clutch of the pain could be won for her outside. The light little body lay still in my arms, warm and breathing, but so still after the first sudden pain had passed, that I did not know the moment when she left me, did not know her gone till I looked down, and the moonlight showed so white on the empty little face. Then in that first moment a sudden doubt swept over, like a cold, cold wave—has never a mother known it?—Where has she

gone, my baby? Is it true she lives somewhere? Or is it all a myth, a dream? Is she nowhere, nothing, *dead*?

Next morning very early, a happy voice surprised me. I was not expecting happy voices, for this first break in our family had meant more to us all than some will understand. "Ammâ! have you seen it? Her verse comes in the reading!" It was Star, her face bright with the discovery that the Scripture Union portion held our baby's verse that day: "And the foundations of the city were garnished with precious stones . . . *The twelfth an Amethyst.*"

As we carried her that same morning to her little grave as if to her cot, the village people gathered to look at her; but they would hardly believe her dead, the little lips were so red and sweet, just curving in a smile. And we knew with an assurance beyond the reach of doubt, that the baby was not really dead but only lifted over to the sunny side of life. Safe, safe, alive and well, with Him that liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore. This, the first little Temple child, so far as is known, ever laid to rest as a Christian child, was sown as a seed that morning in sure and certain hope of the Resurrection to eternal life, through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Sunflower was lying between life and death when we carried our Amethyst babe to her grave. For a week longer, day and night we toiled to save that little life, but it passed from us and we felt bereft; and the only one left, our treasure child, became trebly a treasure to us all, and we held her tight, so tight, in our arms, as if our poor weak human arms could hold her when the word had come, "Loose her and let her go."

Up till the month of that fatal sickness she had been a perfectly healthy child, a bit of loveliness and joy, whole and dear, from the hand of God. On the last unshadowed day before the epidemic came, we made a feast in the new room. The children sat in rows on the floor, gay as a garden of living flowers. "Indraneela! Indraneela!" they kept calling from side to side and end to end, and the baby laughed and clapped her hands, and tried to walk to every one who called; the pretty little dancing feet were never a moment still. Everything seemed bright that day, for the delicate babes were fairly well, and all the children were good and well; and the treasure babe, who was always well, was fuller than ever of joyousness. The sweet little ways of a babe beloved, untroubled by any hurting thing, seemed sweeter than ever that happy day, as we played altogether, and all with her, and she held out her arms to one and another, and leaped and laughed and tried to talk, the merriest of us all. Then when the feast was over we went into the courtyard, and the baby clapped her little hands as the wind stirred the leaves of the tulip tree, and blew its flowers down upon her; and the children made a little crown, and crowned their baby queen. One sees it all so distinctly to-day: the gleeful children, the little child with brown eyes shining with excitement and delight, the little crown of pink blossoms on the fluffy dark hair.

Only a fortnight later, but it seemed as if years had passed since that bright evening, Indraneela lay too quietly upon my mother's knee. The baby loved her Âtah (baby word for grandmother), who had come to

stay with us for a year, and was nowhere more contented than on her Âtah's knee. That evening, as she lay watching everything we did, she almost seemed to understand, and to be trying to help us, so wise were all her little ways. Then when the sound of the children singing on their way home from school reached us in the nursery, she raised her hands as she always did at the sound of singing, and tried to clap. These little signs of intelligence helped to blind us to what was coming. And we went on hoping—hoping against hope.

So it was as if she tried to tell us. Six of the children were ill in another room. We divided the nursing; Star and I shared the early morning with the babe. Just before dawn she called, and, holding her little hand as high as she could reach, she pointed up. Then she pointed to a toy musical-box which we always kept beside her, and when it was given to her she turned the handle till the first notes came. She had often tried before, but never quite succeeded in turning the handle herself. Now she stopped and looked up with those joyous eyes, so unlike a baby's eyes in steadfastness of expression :

“Let me to my heaven go!
A little harp me waits thereby,
A harp whose strings are golden all,
And tuned to music spherical,
Hanging on the green life tree
Where no willows ever be.
Shall I miss that harp of mine?”

She held out her little hands to be kissed, and then, tired, fell asleep. . . .

“She was not an Earth-child,” said the kindly village

women as they came and looked at her, “we always said so. She was beautiful beyond our common children. She was a little Heaven-child who came down here to stay for awhile. And now she has gone to her own place.”

She was the child of an ancient royal race; every dainty way and pretty imperious gesture showed it. There was something very noble about the little child: she was our best. The children were not prepared for what had happened. We led them to the courtyard garden where they had crowned her queen. It opens off the nursery where she lay asleep, the little head half-turned upon the pillow, the little hands curled softly as in life. The children looked at the flowers—poor, sick nasturtiums which do not flourish here; blue convolvulus bells, hanging all over the trellis; and one single lily, the first we had ever had, which had blossomed that same morning. “If Jesus came to our garden to-day, what flower should we give to Him? A poor, little sick nasturtium which we do not want at all? or a pretty blue convolvulus which we would not miss very much?” But the children ran to the lily: “We would give Him *this*,” they said. Over and over it came to us, “We would give Him *this*: we would give Him *this*.” Thou art worthy, O Lord Jesus, to receive this, our Best.

The doubt that had chilled one’s heart before had not dared to come again. It was a dart from the enemy. “The twelfth an Amethyst” had come between, like a shield made of a jewel. But even as Indraneela passed, the memory of that simple consolation came to us, and that afternoon this happened:

That while I was resting in my room, trying to gather strength for the parting with the cherished little form that must be made before sunset, I listened, hardly listening, to Mr. Walker teaching his convert boys on the verandah. They were reading aloud: "And Aaron shall bear their names before the Lord upon his two shoulders for a memorial." Verses followed about the chain of pure gold, the wreathen work, the breastplate with its settings of stones, even four rows of stones: "The second row shall be an emerald, a *Sapphire*." Safe, safe for evermore, set on His breast, close to His heart, His Sapphire.

CHAPTER XXXV

Persist

“So look up, friends! You who indeed
Have possessed in your house a sweet piece
Of the Heaven which men strive for, must need
Be more earnest than others are,—speed
Where they loiter, persist where they cease.”

WE could not have uncovered so personal, and, after all, so common a hurt, had we not been pressed by the hope that the story of the loosing of these little lives might loose some prayers. Will not some who read entreat with a new intensity for the life of these innocent children, devoted in their infancy to the service of the gods? Most of us have little loved ones with Jesus. We “must need be more earnest than others are, speed where they loiter, persist where they cease.” So, at least, it seemed to us after the numbness of grief had passed, and we could think again.

At first it seemed as if it would never pass—as if comfort could never come. We just wanted Indraneela, nothing else. One day, some quaint words from old Samuel Rutherford came with such healing in them, that because there are so many sorrowful people in the world, and perhaps some sorrowful one may read this, I copy them:

"You have lost a child: nay, she is not lost to you who is found to Christ; she is not sent away, but only sent before, like unto a star, which, going out of our sight, doth not die or vanish, but shineth in another hemisphere. You see her not, yet she doth shine in another country. If her glass was but a short hour, what she wanteth of time that she hath gotten of eternity; and you have to rejoice that you have now some treasure laid up in Heaven. . . . *There is less of you out of Heaven than the child is there.*" We never understood before how true in its simplicity is the familiar verse: "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."

Another word that had comfort in it was Golden's. We were walking home together after church. Golden was speaking of little Lotus, who had been with my mother during the service: "You had not sore longing for her," she said, "although she was not with you." "Was it not different?" I answered, for the moment not seeing her thought: "I knew I should have her again as soon as the service was over." "Will you not have Indra-neela again as soon as the service is over?"

Sometimes a word lights up a truth. There had not been solid comfort in the view so often taken of a treasure lent reclaimed.

"Think what a present thou to God hast sent,
And render Him with patience what He lent,"

Milton's beautiful lines to a mother "On the death of a fair infant," had soothing in them, and yet there was somehow the inconsequence of an uncompleted thought. It was joy to have anything so dear to send; but had she been only *lent*?

“He lends not, but gives to the end
As He loves to the end. If it seem
That He draws back a gift, comprehend
’Tis to add to it rather, amend,
And finish it up to your dream.”

There is hearts-ease in the knowledge that the gifts of our God are without repentance—irrevocable. Often since then, when we have found ourselves picturing what she would have been by now, if we had been allowed to keep her here—such a bonnie little girl, just learning to talk—and winced with the sharp pain of it, we have pulled up, remembering how much sweeter than our picturing she must be there, where the Hands that fashioned her so perfectly at first have their way with her, unhindered by any touch of ours or any influence of earth. “’Tis to add to it rather, amend and finish it up to your dream”; the words mean much if they mean anything. And the gift will be all the dearer for such keeping until the service is over.

When we went back to the empty nursery, and folded up the babys’ little things and put them away, we felt as if we could not begin all over again. But we were shown that what we had been through was only meant to make us the more earnestly Persist. So we set apart the sixth of each month, the date of our little Indra-neela’s passing, as a Prayer day for the Temple children, that they may be found and redeemed from Temple service; and for ourselves that we may love them according to the love of the Lord. Sometimes in far-away places, upon that very day God has signally worked for the deliverance of a little one in danger, and always He has met us and renewed our strength. We have

never had another Indraneela, but our empty nursery has been filled to overflowing. "Impossible" things have been done. Children dedicated in suchwise that deliverance seemed, as the Tamil says, "out of hand's reach," are safely with us now. When such things happen we know Whose hand has worked.

Of late months a most helpful development has been effected through the comradeship of the medical missionaries at Neyoor. We have a branch nursery there now, with Ponammal (Golden) in charge of five nurses, and an absorbing family of the tiniest of our babies. The relief of knowing that, should they need it, all the help that skill and kindness can command will be given to those babies is something that perhaps only a mother who has known the anxiety of a large little family far away from reliable help will understand. We have no words to thank the medical missionaries and their Indian fellow-workers, whose kindness has no limits.

Another year lies between the last chapter and this. For we can only write in odd corners of time, and sometimes time does not seem to have any odd corners. Quiet is even rarer. Just now I am sharing a room with seven very young people—the middle-aged babies we call them—and the only possible quiet is when they all elect to go to sleep together, a happiness not granted every day. The year that has passed since Indraneela left us has held some rainy days. But perhaps the little seed of the Temple children's work must be watered much before it will spring and grow. Perhaps, if we only knew it, all sheaves have such rain at the root. But to-day, as I look up from the writing

to the dear little seven so kindly all asleep, and then through the western window with its glorious mountain view, to the other nursery where the older little ones are settling down to their midday rice and curry, and when I stop to remember just where each might have been to-day if things had been otherwise, then I feel no watering could be too costly, if only in the end there may be the joy of sheaves.

The joy of sheaves—we have had it already; and when the time comes to tell the South Indian Temple children's story in full, if God will, we will share it with you. The story is a story by itself. Before it can be told there must be much laborious digging in places out of sight. So we do not attempt more now than these few simple nursery chapters, written for the comfort of those, known and unknown, who are praying that something may be done. And there is larger comfort to offer: India is so great a word that in writing we confine ourselves on purpose to the South, but we rejoice to remember that elsewhere there are those whose eyes are open to look for these little children, and to work for them and save them. Soon we trust our dream will be fulfilled, and each Province where the need is found to exist will have its own nursery, and its own band of volunteer Indian searchers.

For, in the South at least, the actual work of discovering the children must be done by the Indian workers. Most emphatically, no one else can do it. Our part is to inspire others, to hope through all discouragement, to do the detail work behind the scenes, and to pray, and set all who have hearts to whom the

helplessness of a little child carries its own appeal, praying as they have never prayed for the life of these young children. Our great need then, is wise and earnest Indian fellow-workers. One by one those upon whom we can depend are being given to us, and now in many Temple towns and villages we have friends on the watch for little ones in danger. One of the Overweights of Joy to-day is the knowledge that the memory of our little Indraneela is being used to touch hearts to more purposeful effort, and a love that will not give in. One, a pastor's wife who lately helped in the salvation of a little child, writes: "I never knew how very difficult it would be to save these children until I began to try. Then I despaired. I found Satan at every point. I nearly gave up hope. I began to think it has gone on so long—this traffic—it will go on to the end. Who can stop it? What can we do? But then the remembrance of little Indraneela, and a letter I read about her, came to me, and revived my determination, for it made my whole heart tender for these little ones. And I could not bear to think they must go on perishing."

God make our hearts tender, and revive our determination, and give it to us to care so that we shall not be able to bear that the children go on perishing. And though for many of us hereafter the laughter of life must have tears at its heart, God give it to us to Persist.

CHAPTER XXXVI

The Song of the Lord

OUR story is told: how inadequately told no critic will see more clearly than the writer, who has stopped many times wishing some one else would finish. If we have shown things truly we have shown a battlefield. A hand has been lifted up against the throne of the Lord. We look to you, our comrades, to lift up other hands. "Explain the philosophy of prayer," write some in answer to our reiterated petition, Pray. How can we? Who can? We only know that "it came to pass when Moses held up his hand that Israel prevailed. And his hands were steady until the going down of the sun."

The *Gloriosa superba* is native to South India. During the autumn rains you find it shooting in the lane bordered thickly by huge cactus and aloë. Here and there you see it in the open field. In the field it will have a chance, you think; but in the lane, crowded down by cactus and aloë, great strong assertive things with most fierce thorn and spike, what can a poor lily do but give in and disappear? A few weeks afterwards you see a patch of colour on the field, you go and gather handfuls of lovely lilies, and you revel in the tangle of colour, a little bewilderment of delight. But the lane,

go to the lane. There you see something far more satisfying, not only entangled colour, but all the grace of form, God's full thought grown to perfection. Eight feet up in the clear air, bright against the luminous blue, unfurling its fire-flowers like banners of triumph, there is the lily victorious. Each little delicate bud and leaf seems as if filled with a separate keen little joy: the joy of just being beautiful and free.

The *Gloriosa* will exist in the field, as it will exist in the English hothouse, because it must. But it is not happy there. There is no proper development. Give it life, not just existence. Give it something to conquer. Give it the thorn and the spike.

Sometimes it may seem to us that our prayer-life would develop more easily under easier conditions. The open field with no obstacle near—there the lily will surely thrive. Look at the plant again. In itself it is very fragile, but each leaf tapers tendril-wise, and asks for something, however sharp, if only it may curl round it and climb. The cactus and the aloe are not hindrances. The straight smooth stick stuck into the pot in the hothouse will doubtless serve the same purpose. But something is lost. There is not the charm that springs from the sense of fine contrast. The easy and the ordinary carries no exhilaration.

God's flowers grow best in places where only an angel would have thought of planting them. Not pot-bound, tidily, properly trained, is the lily at its fairest. It wants to be where wild rough things crowd it round with ruthless feet. It will not shrink back at fear of their trample. It will touch them lightly, and laugh the

while, and at its touch the cactus and aloe show the purpose hidden within them. Ruthless feet are helping hands, lifting the lily up into the light. Perhaps if we could shut our eyes on the world's way of looking at things, and go to sleep with our head on a stone, we should see all the obstructing, all the impossible, changed as it were to a ladder beside us, set on the earth, the top reaching heaven.

We need the flower's brave faith and dauntless resolution when we set ourselves to pray. The battle is not mimic war. The evolution, intrigue, impact, are most tremendous realities. And yet, looking not at some little picked regiment, but widely over the army of God, does it not appear that a spirit foreign to the soldier has now infected us, and so dealt with us that what the first soldier-missionary meant by conflict, whether in service or prayer, is something we hardly understand, and the battle-cries of God's elder warriors sound harshly in our ears. Is there not something lacking in nerve, and sinew, and muscle, and bone? Do we not see some things through a mist and a glamour, knowing not, yea refusing to know it—for that spirit has dulled our soul's vision and obscured it—that it is but a mist and a glamour? If we give that influence its way we shall find before long that the foe behind the trenches looks like a friend in an interesting disguise. And the sword in our hand will shimmer away, like a sword-blade in a fairy tale, and the soldier-spirit will vanish :

“Braver souls for truth may bleed
 Ask us not of noble deed !
 Small our share in Christ's redemption—
 From His war we claim exemption.

Not for us the cup was drained;
Not for us the crown of thorn
On His bleeding brow was borne:
Not for us the spear was stained
With the blood from out His side;
Not for us the Crucified
Let His hands and feet be torn!
On the list we come but low:
Not for us the cross was taken,
Us no bugle call can waken
To the combat, soldier fashion."

We would not say it. We consider it bad taste. But do we never live it? Consider: let us view ourselves in the light of that most awful Sacrifice. Do we believe in Calvary? What difference does it make that we believe? How does this belief affect the spending of our one possession—life? Are we playing it away? Does it strike us as fanatical to do anything more serious? Are we too refined to be in earnest? Too polite to be strenuous? Too loose in our hold upon eternal verities to feel with real intensity? Too cool to burn? God open our eyes, and touch our hearts, and break us down with the thought of the Love that redeemed us, and a sight of souls as He sees them, and of ourselves as we are, and not as people suppose we are, lest we sail in some pleasure boat of our own devising over the gliding waters that glide to the river of death.

Ruskin once made a remark for which he was counted mad: "I cannot paint, nor read, nor look at minerals, nor do anything else that I like, and the very light of the morning sky has become hateful to me, because of the misery that I know of, and see signs of where I know it not, which no imagination can interpret too bitterly.

Therefore I will endure it no longer quietly; but henceforward, with any few or many who will help, do my poor best to abate this misery." And again came scathing words, almost forgotten now: "You might sooner get lightning out of incense smoke than true action or passion out of your modern English religion."

We have seldom touched on the deeper misery we know of and see signs of, because there are some notes which cannot bear to be struck twice: and because not pity, but obedience, is the staying force. We would not draw one to come by the slight thread of pity, or by the other, still more slender, sentimental love. The refrain of some sweet hymn, the touching description of sorrowful eyes, and a wistfulness inexpressible—these things have voices which call, but the power that holds is not in them. Those of us who have come to Moslem or heathen lands for life, if God will, know that what keeps us here is something stronger than sympathy. And yet, though we would not sound our strongest call through it, misery, which no imagination can interpret too bitterly, looks at us everywhere, and through everything, with its mute appeal. There is ultimately only one sure way to abate it. Are we showing the people this one sure way?

One of our older children lay very ill, unconscious. In the morning, the crisis past, she said to me quietly: "Last night I thought I was going to Heaven, and I was so glad to go. But I was suddenly sorry. I thought all the angels would look at me, and there would be tears in their eyes, because I had loved our Lord Jesus so long, and I had not brought one to Him." "So long"

meant then a year and nine months, and she had, though she did not know it, brought at least one to Him. Would the angels look at us "with tears" if we went Home to-night?

Would they look at us "with tears" because of our disobedience to our Master's clear command? I would not for a moment forget the work at home with its immeasurable needs; but writing as I do from the darkness, to those who are in what is, at least by comparison, light, can I help pleading for more light-bearers? What is it that keeps so many from coming? Is it fear that ties the feet? Need there be any fear in a coming unto Jesus? "Lord, if it be Thou"—if this drawing that I feel in my very heart be Thou—"bid me come unto Thee on the water. And He said, Come. . . . And he walked on the water to go to Jesus." And afterwards, always afterwards, it is just going on walking with Jesus.

Is the cord made of something far more powerful than fear? Is it human affection that holds us back? Then something is wrong which must be put right, if our Lord is not to miss us from the place where He means us to be. Oh that the cords that bind us, be they strong as the seven green withes that were never dried, may be as a thread of tow when it toucheth the fire, shrivelled in a moment and forever by the pure fire of that other Love that hath a most vehement flame!

Are we in utter earnest? Are we quiet enough to listen to the "sound of gentle stillness" which is the Voice of God? Do we see One coming toward us now, thorn-crowned, pierced, stricken, with a face "so marred, more

than any man"? Does He stoop and take the cord in His hand, and look up with a question in His eyes? Do we say, "O Lord, it cannot be; it would hurt too much to be borne! Not my own hurt, Thou knowest, Lord: it is their hurt that is holding me; I cannot ask them to let me go!" Does He turn His hand a little then, and show the print of the nail?

These words are not written lightly. They are not froth words. They rise slowly, burning their way out. This parting is a bitter thing, bitter as death itself to some. We live again through a long-passed hour, feel again the twilight about us, only the white of the snow outside makes a light in the little room. And the cold of the snow is upon us, and yet we are hot, and the snow flakes are lava flakes falling. And through the dimness and the coldness and the fire comes the Word as it came then: "Go ye . . . Go ye." But not only that one word: promise upon promise comes for those who must be asked to let go; till looking up steadfastly we see the glory of God, and Jesus.

Oh, more than an Overweight of Joy is theirs who give to the Giving One. Mothers and fathers who have given, do you not say so? For eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him well enough to pour out their treasure before Him. We fear to cause our dear ones pain. Should we not rather fear lest we hold them back from joy? It was when the Burnt-offering began that the Song of the Lord began also.

In teaching the converts once, we were struck by the

way in which the Song of the Lord is ever undertoned by pain. The Lamb was slain in the Father's heart from the foundation of the world, and He looks upon the daughter of Zion, brought out of her captivity redeemed with the precious blood, and sings: "He will rejoice over thee with joy. He will joy over thee with singing." The Shepherd seeks the wandering sheep, and suffers in the search; and then comes the song: "Rejoice with Me, for I have found My sheep which was lost." And the only time we read of the Holy Spirit's joy is when He speaks of the converts won "in much affliction." Would there ever have been this Joy of God had there been no sacrifice? Can we hold our dear ones back from singing their part in the Song? Can we hold back ourselves? Would it not be joy worth any cost if we could add even a bar, even a note, to the glorious Song of the Lord!

"Joy is not gush: joy is not jolliness." The words were spoken recently by one shortly afterwards called to live out his own words. "Joy is simply perfect acquiescence in God's will, because the soul delights itself in God Himself. Christ took God as His God and Father, and that brought Him at last to say, 'I delight to do Thy will,' though the cup was the cross, in such agony as no man knew. It cost Him blood. It cost Him blood . . . Oh, take the Fatherhood of God in the blessed Son the Saviour, and by the Holy Ghost rejoice, rejoice, rejoice in the will of God, and in nothing else. Bow down your heads and your hearts before God, and let the will, the blessed will of God, be done."

"Thy kingdom come; Thy will be done." We pray

it over every day. God means us to help to answer our own prayers. "He shall bear the glory," we read, "and shall sit and rule upon His throne. And they that are afar off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord." The vision closes with the words: "And this shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God." What if Time, as we look back upon it from "the land of far distances," will seem but a little hollow scooped out on the plain of Eternity, for the building work to be done? And what if somewhere in the temple wall there is something still unfinished which we were meant to do, and would be doing now if we were diligently obeying the voice of the Lord our God?

Some may read this who seem debarred from taking their share in the building work. Their walk is through the "common days and level stretches white with dust." There seems no outlet possible for the pent-up love and the longing:

"Lo amid the press,
The whirl and hum and pressure of my day,
I hear Thy garments sweep: Thy seamless dress;
And close beside my work and weariness
Discern Thy gracious form."

One so near as to be discernible will speak in words that can be understood, and tell the one who loves Him, how, even so, there is a way to build.

And some may read for whom four walls shut out all the busy world. There was one such who wrote:

"Down the lone pass of pain I found
Christ came, and made it holy ground."

Down the lone pass of pain he walked, and it led to a

room where no door ever opened to the outer world again. But something passed through the walls of that room, and out and away beyond all space, and the coming of the Kingdom is the nearer to-day for what happened in that room.

But others will read who know as they read that the call has come to rise and go to the further part of the hollow. Oh, let us be in earnest! Life is not play. There are playful moments in it, but taken as a whole it is an awful thing—this one brief life. Do not let us play away such an opportunity. **Master, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee upon the water . . . Lord, I come.**

And now, not in a clear and open atmosphere, but through the murk and the mist and the darkness "We praise Thee, O God, we acknowledge Thee to be the Lord. Thy name shall endure for ever. Thy name shall be continued as long as the sun: and men shall be blessed in Thee: all nations shall call Thee blessed. Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things. And blessed be His glorious name: and let the whole earth be filled with His glory; Amen and Amen."