

**PRISONERS RELEASED**

UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME :

*The Isles of the Western Sea.*

*The story of Methodist Missions in the West Indies and Central America. By the Rev. Amos Burnet.*

*Out of the Miry Clay.*

*The story of the Haidarabad Mission to the Outcastes. By the Rev. F. Colyer Sackett.*

*On Afric's Shore.*

*The story of the wonderful developments in West Africa. By F. Deaville Walker.*

UNIFORM WITH THIS VOLUME :

*The Isles of the Western Sea.*

*The story of Methodist Missions in the West Indies and Central America. By the Rev. Amos Burnet.*

*Out of the Miry Clay.*

*The story of the Haidarabad Mission to the Outcastes. By the Rev. F. Colyer Sackett.*

*On Afric's Shore.*

*The story of the wonderful developments in West Africa. By F. Deaville Walker.*



**Worth Saving ?**  
A Dom girl with waterpots

# PRISONERS RELEASED

THE REDEMPTION OF A CRIMINAL TRIBE

BY THE REV.

C. PHILLIPS CAPE

For some years Missionary to the Doms of Benares.  
Author of "Benares."

WITH FOREWORD

BY

ROBERT F. HORTON, D.D

LONDON

WESLEYAN METHODIST MISSIONARY SOCIETY  
24 BISHOPSGATE, E.C.4, & 7 CARLISLE AVENUE, E.C.3

To my Wife

---

*Wyman & Sons, Ltd., Printers, London, Reading and Fakenham.*

## PREFACE

I GAVE about ten years of my life to the Doms.<sup>1</sup> I think the work took more than ten years from my life. The service rendered was exacting, but a sense of humour, the prayers of many friends and the whole-hearted co-operation of colleagues, both Indian and European, helped me. I liked the Doms. Considering their disabilities they are wonderfully good.

Many have helped to win these people, but I must make mention of the Rev. Istefán Saadat-Ullah and the Rev. James Rathbone Hudson. I thank my God upon every remembrance of these brethren who are still ministering to the Doms of Benares.

Hinduism has done nothing for the outcastes but despise, degrade and despoil them. Jesus has shown Himself their dying, their undying Friend.

It is proper that I should acknowledge my indebtedness to Lord Meston for his deep interest in our mission to the Doms and for the encouragement he gave us when Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces. India owes much to Christian civilians and soldiers.

I am deeply indebted to Mr. F. Deaville Walker, editor of the *Foreign Field*, for writing several chapters and for valued help in some others.

C. PHILLIPS CAPE.

Birkenhead.

1924.

<sup>1</sup> Pronounced "Domes."

**To my Wife**

---

*Wyman & Sons, Ltd., Printers, London, Reading and Palenham.*



## PREFACE

I GAVE about ten years of my life to the Doms.<sup>1</sup> I think the work took more than ten years from my life. The service rendered was exacting, but a sense of humour, the prayers of many friends and the whole-hearted co-operation of colleagues, both Indian and European, helped me. I liked the Doms. Considering their disabilities they are wonderfully good.

Many have helped to win these people, but I must make mention of the Rev. Istefán Saadat-Ullah and the Rev. James Rathbone Hudson. I thank my God upon every remembrance of these brethren who are still ministering to the Doms of Benares.

Hinduism has done nothing for the outcastes but despise, degrade and despoil them. Jesus has shown Himself their dying, their undying Friend.

It is proper that I should acknowledge my indebtedness to Lord Meston for his deep interest in our mission to the Doms and for the encouragement he gave us when Lieutenant-Governor of the United Provinces. India owes much to Christian civilians and soldiers.

I am deeply indebted to Mr. F. Deaville Walker, editor of the *Foreign Field*, for writing several chapters and for valued help in some others.

C. PHILLIPS CAPE.

Birkenhead,

1924.

<sup>1</sup> Pronounced "Domea."

## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE OUTCASTES' HOPE - - - -	11
II. THE CITY DOMS - - - -	17
III. THE VILLAGE DOM - - - -	25
IV. THE GIPSY DOMS - - - -	29
V. BURNERS OF THE DEAD - - - -	33
VI. THE RELIGION OF THE DOMS - - - -	37
VII. THEIR RECREATIONS AND SONGS - - - -	42
VIII. "A CRIMINAL TRIBE" - - - -	47
IX. OUR MISSION TO THE DOMS : HOW IT BEGAN	53
X. THE PERSONAL TOUCH - - - -	61
XI. THE A.B.C. OF THE GOSPEL - - - -	64
XII. A SUNDAY SERVICE IN BENARES - - - -	68
XIII. <u>HUMAN DOCUMENTS</u> - - - -	73
XIV. BABES IN CHRIST - - - -	82
XV. FOES WE HAVE TO FIGHT : (1) DRINK - - - -	85
XVI. FOES WE HAVE TO FIGHT : (2) THEIR FEASTS	92
XVII. FOES WE HAVE TO FIGHT : (3) WITCHCRAFT AND MAGIC - - - -	98
XVIII. FOES WE HAVE TO FIGHT : (4) MARRIAGE CUSTOMS - - - -	107
XIX. FOES WE HAVE TO FIGHT : (5) ABJECT POVERTY - - - -	115
XX. MIRACLES OF GRACE - - - -	121
XXI. SAFE HOME - - - -	125
XXII. AMONG THE WOMEN AND GIRLS - - - -	128
XXIII. "TO JESUS THE MESSIAH BE VICTORY!" - - - -	132

## ILLUSTRATIONS

WORTH SAVING	-	-	-	-	-	<i>Frontispiece</i>
A TYPICAL DOM AND DOMIN	-	-	-	-	-	<i>to face page</i> II
A DOM SETTLEMENT IN BENARES	-	-	-	-	-	" " 17
A CHRISTIAN DOM IN HIS HOUSE	-	-	-	-	-	" " 49
IN ONE OF THE BENARES COLONIES	-	-	-	-	-	" " 64
METHODIST DOG-CATCHERS	-	-	-	-	-	" " 113
TWO DOM GIRLS	-	-	-	-	-	" " 128
A BAPTISMAL SERVICE	-	-	-	-	-	" " 136

## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. THE OUTCASTES' HOPE - - - -	II
II. THE CITY DOMS - - - -	17
III. THE VILLAGE DOM - - - -	25
IV. THE GIPSY DOMS - - - -	29
V. BURNERS OF THE DEAD - - - -	33
VI. THE RELIGION OF THE DOMS - - - -	37
VII. THEIR RECREATIONS AND SONGS - - - -	42
VIII. "A CRIMINAL TRIBE" - - - -	47
IX. OUR MISSION TO THE DOMS : HOW IT BEGAN	53
X. THE PERSONAL TOUCH - - - -	61
XI. THE A.B.C. OF THE GOSPEL - - - -	64
XII. A SUNDAY SERVICE IN BENARES - - - -	68
✓ XIII. <u>HUMAN DOCUMENTS</u> - - - -	73
XIV. BABES IN CHRIST - - - -	82
XV. FOES WE HAVE TO FIGHT : (1) DRINK -	85
XVI. FOES WE HAVE TO FIGHT : (2) THEIR FEASTS	92
XVII. FOES WE HAVE TO FIGHT : (3) WITCHCRAFT AND MAGIC - - - -	98
XVIII. FOES WE HAVE TO FIGHT : (4) MARRIAGE CUSTOMS - - - -	107
XIX. FOES WE HAVE TO FIGHT : (5) ABJECT POVERTY - - - -	115
XX. MIRACLES OF GRACE - - - -	121
XXI. SAFE HOME - - - -	125
XXII. AMONG THE WOMEN AND GIRLS - - - -	128
XXIII. "TO JESUS THE MESSIAH BE VICTORY!" -	132

## ILLUSTRATIONS

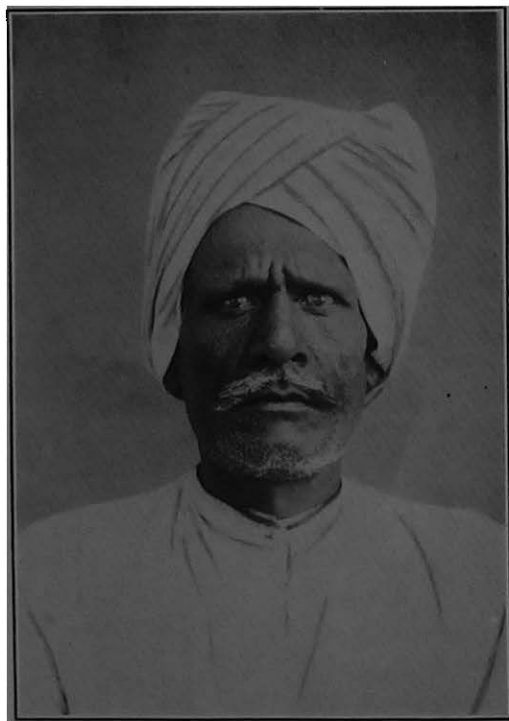
WORTH SAVING	-	-	-	-	-	<i>Frontispiece</i>
A TYPICAL DOM AND DOMIN	-	-	-	-	-	<i>to face page</i> II
A DOM SETTLEMENT IN BENARES	-	-	-	-	-	" " 17
A CHRISTIAN DOM IN HIS HOUSE	-	-	-	-	-	" " 49
IN ONE OF THE BENARES COLONIES	-	-	-	-	-	" " 64
METHODIST DOG-CATCHERS	-	-	-	-	-	" " 113
TWO DOM GIRLS	-	-	-	-	-	" " 128
A BAPTISMAL SERVICE	-	-	-	-	-	" " 136

# FOREWORD

BY

DR. ROBERT F. HORTON

THERE is no memory which stands out more vividly, of things I saw in India, than that of my visit to the Doms. I see the neglected and squalid quarter of the city in which they herd. I see the hovel of the public executioner with the text over the door, the bedstead brought out for us to sit upon, the little throng of these outcastes gathered around us. I hear still the hymns and texts which those unaccustomed lips uttered, and answers to questions put by my missionary guides. But clearest of all is the picture of the Evangelist, who stood there in touch with these untouchables, a Brahman, with the clear-cut features, the refinement and culture, of the highest Caste. That was the miracle—the Doms the outcastes of the outcastes—and that Brahman representing India's scorn of the outcastes—standing together, united by our Lord Jesus Christ. It seemed to me then, and seems now, the most marvellous manifestation of Christ that I saw in India, Christ who came to seek and to save that which is lost, Christ who is our peace, breaking down the middle wall of partition. Christ knocks unheard at the portals of those Hindu temples in Benares; He is unheeded by the Fakirs and the Sadhus and the Mystics who crowd the bathing ghats, and stand in the sacred waters of the Ganges; but He enters in at the door of the Doms, and is welcomed there: THIS MAN RECEIVETH SINNERS.



**A Typical Dom**



**A "Gipsy" Domin**

# PRISONERS RELEASED

## CHAPTER I

### THE OUTCASTES' HOPE

THE Dom is an outcaste. He is lower than the Shudras who are the lowest of the four great castes of Hinduism.

The chief authority on caste is the Code of Manu; and these are some of the declarations that law-book makes concerning the Shudras<sup>1</sup>:

"If a low-born man endeavours to sit down by the side of a high-born man, he should be banished after being branded on the hip, or (the king) may cause him to be cut off."

"One may not give advice to a Shudra, nor (give him) the remains of food, or (of) butter that has been offered, and one may not teach him the Law or enjoin upon him (religious) observances."

"For he who tells him the Law and he who enjoins upon him (religious) observances, he indeed, together with that (Shudra) sinks into the darkness of the hell called unbounded."

"A Brahman may take possession of the goods of a Shudra with perfect peace of mind, for, since nothing at all belongs to this (Shudra) as his own, he is one whose property may be taken away by his master."

Surely such verses, and many similar in other sacred books of the Hindus, are not known to the Theosophist who affirms that Hinduism teaches the brotherhood of humanity!

It must be remembered that the Dom is *lower* than the Shudra; he belongs to the great fifth class, the Outcastes, of whom there are about 50,000,000 in India.

<sup>1</sup> From the translation by Drs. Burnell and Hopkins.



These may be referred to in Manu's Code when he says :

" The dwelling of Chandálas and Svapacas (should be) outside the village ; they should be deprived of dishes ; their property consists of dogs and asses ; their clothes (should be) the garments of the dead, and their food (should be) in broken dishes ; their ornaments (should be) of iron, and they must constantly wander about."

" Their food (for which) they are dependent on others, should be given in a broken dish. They should carry out the corpse of one (who dies) without relatives. They shall always slay those who are to be slain in accordance with the King's orders. The clothes of those to be slain they may take, and (their) couches and ornaments."

The Dom is at the very bottom of the social scale in North India, though *he* concedes that distinctive position to the Dhobi, the washer of dirty clothes. Caste gives every man the sorry satisfaction of knowing that while he is despised by those above him, he in his turn can regard with equal or greater scorn those who are beneath him. There are outcastes who will fondle a pig but refuse to touch a Dom who needs their help.

The Chamár, who is a farm labourer and worker in leather, is himself a low caste man and cannot enter a temple ; but he considers the Dom his inferior beyond all reckoning. Many of the house servants of Europeans in the United Provinces are Chamárs. One day when one of these men was struggling to move a heavy piece of matting, a Dom servant was sent to help him. The moment the Dom touched the matting at one end, the Chamár dropped the other end, because he knew that a Chamár servant had been fined by his brotherhood when it was proved that a Dom had helped him in his work !

By the caste Hindu, the Dom is regarded as the very quintessence of filth, and a dozen Doms could empty the streets of Benares quicker than a British regiment. They have been effectively employed by a Co-operative

Society to recover money from caste Hindus! It is written in the Matsyasúktantra, that he who desires cleansing after contact with a Dom, must bathe and then recite the Gáyatry eight hundred times.

Some Doms are filthy in their habits ; but those who neither eat carrion nor do scavengers' work, are also hated, despised and feared by the Hindu. It is sometimes stated that caste exists in England, and we admit with shame that there is a haughty exclusive spirit which is the very negation of Christianity. But to say that caste in England is the same thing as caste in India, is to say what is not true.<sup>1</sup>

The "untouchable" knows how he is regarded, and it seems that he strives to merit the name and reputation assigned him. He is almost always utterly illiterate, and his surroundings and personal habits are often extremely offensive. Hinduism has succeeded in despoiling and degrading him. But he is human and therefore can be saved.

It is a remarkable fact that in spite of the crushing tyranny of the Hinduism, poets and religious teachers have come from the outcastes. Nábhá Ji's Bhakta Mála is famous in North India, and some say the author was a Dom.

Has Hinduism no gospel for the outcaste? Yes; it assures him of promotion to a higher caste in the next life, if he does well in this. So we have been told by pundits of Benares. But as the outcaste will have no recollection of a former existence, the reward will be lacking in moral value. Beside this, no man can be sure of such promotion. His spirit may find itself embodied in a holy bull or sacred peacock; in which case, he, she or it is not likely to possess a human consciousness at all. He may become a lion, or even a dandelion with the personality of a vegetable.

<sup>1</sup> See "Benares," Chap. XIV.

One day, when an ex-Dom was preaching in Benares, a passing Brahman asked him why he had become a Christian, and the evangelist replied that there was no salvation for him in Hinduism. "Oh, yes, there is!" cried the Brahman; call on Rám as your fathers did, and you shall have salvation (*mukti*) when you die." And the converted Dom replied, "But Jesus gives it now!"

Orthodox Hinduism can do little to rescue the outcaste from his degradation. It must however be admitted that it can show him a little sympathy—*once in ten years—at census time*. Early in 1911, just before the census, the pundits of Benares held a meeting. It was crowded—so the report said. Mahámahopadhyáya Pandit Shiva Kumár Shástri presided. "Many learned pandits attended, and Chamárs, Domras and other untouchables were present. The president quoted Manu, Yajnavalkya and other law-givers, and declared the untouchables, good Hindus." And this decision was reached, though these pariahs eat beef, and must not enter a temple or learn the sacred law.

At census time even an untouchable has some value. Returned as a Hindu, and not as an Animist, he helps to swell the total number of Hindus; and so the Hindus will be entitled to more privileges than the Muslims on councils and elsewhere. Therefore the outcaste may expect to receive the courteous attentions of the Brahmans, once in a decade.

But though the orthodox Hindu cannot do much to elevate the depressed classes, the unorthodox are not so seriously handicapped. The Árya Samájists, a reformed sect of Hindus, are making strenuous efforts to save the outcastes from the Christian missionary, and they have "purified" a considerable number of these people in the Punjáb and the United Provinces. It

remains to be seen whether there is any redeeming power in the Vedas as arbitrarily interpreted by these Samájists, who seem at times more interested in revolutionary propaganda and in fighting Christianity than in saving the lost.

There is a mission to the depressed classes operating in some parts of the country, and all lovers of India will wish well to every sincere effort made by Indians to improve the lot of their outcaste brethren. Such enterprise is the direct result of Christian missions, and it will have the sympathy of all who realise how seriously the Hindu social reformer is handicapped by his religion and traditions.

Some Doms have become Muslims, and it is reported in the Punjab that many outcastes have turned to Islám. But there is no evidence that this religion is making much progress in India. It is not clear that the adoption of Islám would elevate the outcastes. They could associate with low-class Muslims only, that is, with people whose moral standard is very defective; and no good could come to the convert from such society. Nor indeed is there in Islám any virtue which could elevate the depressed classes to the height to which Christianity can lift them. Sir Hall Caine has stated that apart from the special mission of Jesus Christ, there is no fundamental difference between Christianity and Islám. Such a statement cannot bear examination. The God of holy love is unknown in Islám. In the Qurán and in the Traditions no emphasis is placed on the holiness of God, that fundamental truth of Christianity. Neither in the Qurán, nor in the Traditions, nor in daily life has any Muslim ever called God "Father."

Again, Islám and Christianity are fundamentally different in their doctrines of sin and of redemption.

There is no sanctifying Spirit in Islám, and no provision for heart purity. And as to the future life, the Muslim's heaven is the Christian's hell, where he that is filthy may become yet more filthy.

The doctrine that God is One and Great, is not sufficient in itself to lead a man to hate sin: mere mathematics make no man moral. There is good in Islám, for it has borrowed from some good sources; and Muhammad was no false prophet when he denounced idolatry; but afterwards he basely stooped to conquer. There is no sinless Redeemer in Islám, no living Lord. It seems to be a fact of history that

"None but Jesus  
Can do helpless sinners good."

The Bible and the Bible alone is the Outcastes' Charter. He who received and sought the pariahs of Palestine is the outcastes' only hope in Hindustán. He alone has said, "Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of the least of these—Chamárs, Doms, Sweepers, Pariahs—My brethren, ye did it unto Me."

It should be widely known that many thousands of outcastes in India are now turning to Christianity; they are being received and they will be taught. If the Christian Church will enter the open door, then, in spite of many adversaries, there may be fifty million Christians in India before fifty years have gone. Rajah Sir Harnám Singh has said that "this movement will in the near future, under God's blessing, revolutionise the religious, social and political life of India."



### A Dom Settlement in Benares

These mean huts are all many Doms have to call home

*Photo by F. Deaville Walker*

## CHAPTER II

### THE CITY DOMS

THERE are several kinds of Doms, such as city Doms, village Doms, and gipsy Doms, each class being strikingly different from the rest. In Benares the city Doms reside in seven or eight colonies scattered throughout the city. Some of them live in little huts of straw or mud which are flooded in the rains. A few are accommodated in barracks recently erected by the municipality which employs them as scavengers, and now recognises its duty to shelter its sweepers as well as its buffaloes.

The Doms sweep the streets, clean drains, destroy stray dogs and dispose of the carcasses of horses, camels and other quadrupeds, and act as general scavengers. For this exceedingly important and distasteful labour they receive six, seven or even eight shillings a month.

The capturer of dogs is by no means an unskilled workman. He starts out in the morning with a cage on wheels and a lasso in his hands. It is not easy for him to approach the collarless dogs he espies, for the city dogs have somehow learnt the significance of the cage on wheels, and as it proceeds along the streets, it is greeted with disapproving barks by disappearing dogs. If however the Dom is able to get within reasonable length of a collarless cur, the lasso is flung, and the animal is jerked vigorously into the cage. Sometimes a dog seriously bites the hand of the Dom, and sometimes an outraged lover of dogs, or the owner of a particular animal, assaults the man. Occasionally he is

bribed to release a hound which may, not many days later, send someone to Kasauli for the Pasteur treatment. The dogs captured are kept in the cage till the sun goes down, and then, if unclaimed, are drowned in a municipal tank.

If a municipal sweeper leaves his employment without giving a month's notice, he may be sent to prison for four weeks. Such cases are tried by honorary magistrates who are not always famous for their impartiality toward Doms. No extra allowance is granted to the sweepers for the extra work they must perform when some are absent through sickness, or when the streets are made amazingly clean to deceive some distinguished visitor to the city.

Naturally enough, there is a great deal of bribery. Many of the municipal conservancy staff are underpaid, and, to compensate themselves, they demand offerings from the scavengers. A generous *douceur* must be given to the sanitary supervisors by every Dom seeking employment.

A lazy Dom may pay an inspector to mark him present when absent, and his work must be done by some more industrious man, unless he, too, bribes the inspector!

If, in their spare time, the Doms were not able to make baskets and fans, they could not live on their wages. The city fathers should remember that these people possess in their castes or brotherhoods, most effective machinery for a successful strike, which would prove effective within a week.

The city Doms have other sources of income; they beg regularly and persistently. Nor is this illegal, indeed it is the profession of millions of peripatetic ascetics in India. When a corpse is carried through the city, the mourners often scatter copper coin which the



Doms collect in inverted umbrellas. A few earn a living at the river, by pushing on the floating corpses, which, attracted by the suction of the pumps, try to enter the pipes which supply the city with water.

Tom Tulliver liked dogs ; that is, he liked throwing stones at them ; and the Dom is very fond of horses—when they are dead. He has a greater relish for horse flesh than the cats and dogs of England have. In this respect he differs from the English gipsy who, according to Leland, never eats horse-meat. If a horse has died of disease, the Doms will rob the vultures and jackals of their repast. If the horse has been dead for two days, the Dom will not pass it by. He prefers horse flesh to cow flesh, and certainly the horse is the cleaner feeder of the two.

When a Dom has found a dead horse, he eats as much of the flesh as he can contain and puts by the residue for future use. It is cut up into strips and hangs for days and weeks from a string in the roof of his hut. It can be made up into various dishes, and varies in flavour as the days go by. The Dom eats goat, he is fond of pork, but he dreams of horse.

Besides the flesh, there is the skin ; and the Dom is well aware that a Muslim in a certain bazaar will give him five rupees for a skin in good condition. It will be understood that five rupees is a consideration to the man who can earn only three annas a day as a servant of the municipality.

There are many Dom mouths to be filled in Benares, and horses do not die daily. Plague leaves them alone and attacks the rat. But even a Dom can find no use for a rat.

When food is at famine rates and horses refuse to die of disease, the criminal Dom is sorely tempted. He is an expert poisoner and knows of several drugs which

bribed to release a hound which may, not many days later, send someone to Kasauli for the Pasteur treatment. The dogs captured are kept in the cage till the sun goes down, and then, if unclaimed, are drowned in a municipal tank.

If a municipal sweeper leaves his employment without giving a month's notice, he may be sent to prison for four weeks. Such cases are tried by honorary magistrates who are not always famous for their impartiality toward Doms. No extra allowance is granted to the sweepers for the extra work they must perform when some are absent through sickness, or when the streets are made amazingly clean to deceive some distinguished visitor to the city.

Naturally enough, there is a great deal of bribery. Many of the municipal conservancy staff are underpaid, and, to compensate themselves, they demand offerings from the scavengers. A generous *douceur* must be given to the sanitary supervisors by every Dom seeking employment.

A lazy Dom may pay an inspector to mark him present when absent, and his work must be done by some more industrious man, unless he, too, bribes the inspector!

If, in their spare time, the Doms were not able to make baskets and fans, they could not live on their wages. The city fathers should remember that these people possess in their castes or brotherhoods, most effective machinery for a successful strike, which would prove effective within a week.

The city Doms have other sources of income; they beg regularly and persistently. Nor is this illegal, indeed it is the profession of millions of peripatetic ascetics in India. When a corpse is carried through the city, the mourners often scatter copper coin which the

Doms collect in inverted umbrellas. A few earn a living at the river, by pushing on the floating corpses, which, attracted by the suction of the pumps, try to enter the pipes which supply the city with water.

Tom Tulliver liked dogs ; that is, he liked throwing stones at them ; and the Dom is very fond of horses—when they are dead. He has a greater relish for horse flesh than the cats and dogs of England have. In this respect he differs from the English gipsy who, according to Leland, never eats horse-meat. If a horse has died of disease, the Doms will rob the vultures and jackals of their repast. If the horse has been dead for two days, the Dom will not pass it by. He prefers horse flesh to cow flesh, and certainly the horse is the cleaner feeder of the two.

When a Dom has found a dead horse, he eats as much of the flesh as he can contain and puts by the residue for future use. It is cut up into strips and hangs for days and weeks from a string in the roof of his hut. It can be made up into various dishes, and varies in flavour as the days go by. The Dom eats goat, he is fond of pork, but he dreams of horse.

Besides the flesh, there is the skin ; and the Dom is well aware that a Muslim in a certain bazaar will give him five rupees for a skin in good condition. It will be understood that five rupees is a consideration to the man who can earn only three annas a day as a servant of the municipality.

There are many Dom mouths to be filled in Benares, and horses do not die daily. Plague leaves them alone and attacks the rat. But even a Dom can find no use for a rat.

When food is at famine rates and horses refuse to die of disease, the criminal Dom is sorely tempted. He is an expert poisoner and knows of several drugs which

will save a horse from the ills that accompany old age. One is arsenic, which he calls *sankhiya*. He can buy this through a respectable friend from the licensed vendor in the city. He grinds it up, mixes it with the flour of barley, makes a pill (three cost him one rupee), covers it with *ghi* (clarified butter), warms it, and administers it to the horse when the coachman is absent or slumbering. It has never been known to fail.

There is another poison employed, which is efficacious but requires time, sometimes three or four days. It is the seeds of the *Abrus Precatorius*. These seeds are bright scarlet, with a black spot at one end. The people call them *ghumchi*. They are used as eyes for dolls, for necklaces, and for weights by the goldsmith. The Dom husks them, grinds them into powder, mixes them with flour, and carefully administers them. Another poison known to the Dom is *singiya mahur*. This is not the same as *sankhiya*, as Platts' Urdu dictionary suggests; it is aconite root and of course a very deadly poison (*mahur*). The Doms say that the Musahars collect the root and sell it to the licensed vendors. It is "indigenous in temperate and sub-alpine Himalaya," and much of it comes from Nepal. An ex-poisoner informed us that aconite was as useful as arsenic. He had tried both.

A sub-inspector of police stated that the municipality has made such careful arrangements for the disposal of dead horses, that no Dom is able to get the carcasses for his own purposes. The situation was explained to me by a Dom. He smiled. "Yes," he said, "when a horse dies, the Doms are told to remove it, and an inspector is ordered to see that the Doms bury the horse. On the way to the cemetery, a man appears and offers to relieve the official of his duty. The

inspector is not particularly anxious to witness the funeral of a horse in the company of Doms, and he will accept two rupees to stay away." Should the inspector insist upon witnessing the obsequies, the Doms return at night, and give the horse a speedy resurrection. All the experts of Scotland Yard could not trace it on the morrow!

It is not easy for the city Doms to commit crime, for they live under close police supervision. They are declared by Government to be "a criminal tribe," and as such every one is registered by their inveterate enemies the police. The Act compels them to be in their sleeping-place by dark, and the police go round to call the roll. All the adults are roused at night when the surveillance registers are marked. The Doms do not know when the police will come, and they cannot afford to be absent. When their names are called they are compelled to emerge from their huts; and in the rains and cold this arrangement is not appreciated by the Doms, although it may enable them to prove an alibi if charged with some crime in a distant part of the city—provided, of course, that the registers are marked correctly. If they do not at once emerge, they are abused by the Indian police, who, even in a land of obscene speech, are famous for their fluent filth.

The Hindu is quite unreasonable about these people and avoids them as if they were the plague. He objects to the Dom, who is a municipal servant, turning the iron handle of the municipal stand-pipe, to get water to wash with or to drink. And yet this Hindu is the very man who could not live in the city without scavengers to do the necessary work he himself would rather die than do. And when his mother dies, this Hindu will pay a Dom fifty rupees to supply the fire which consecrates the cremation!

Of course there is much that is unpleasant about such folk. Their aura is not the aroma of flowers. Nor can it be, seeing that they gorge on diseased horse, washed down with country liquor, and earn their living by cleaning out drains. It may be, it must be, possible to sweep an Indian lane to the glory of God, to remove dead dogs and cats, and rats that have died of plague, for the reward of threepence a day, without the loss of self-respect. But it must be hard. Someone must do the dirty work. If they suffer, it is for us they "blacken soul and sense in city slime." And after all, the scavengers are the saviours of the city. Their work is to make things clean.

It is not easy for these folk to be free from dirt, for the *dhobi* (washerman) refuses to touch their clothes, and of course they may not use the Hindu's well. No one can contemplate their disabilities without sympathy. Ruskin wrote of working people, "They may be what you have said, but if so, they are yet holier than we, who have left them thus." The Dom is a direct product of Hinduism.

We are sometimes asked: Who will do such menial tasks, when all the outcastes have become Christians? In India, as elsewhere, a more extensive application of labour-saving contrivances will reduce the need for scavengers. When it is recognised that men who serve the community as the scavengers do, deserve reasonable remuneration, it will be as easy to find sweepers in Benares as in Birmingham, in Lucknow as in London. In any case we cannot refuse our religion to men who turn to us, because its acceptance would free them from the disabilities which caste or custom have imposed.

Nowhere can it be right to keep men in ignorance that we may compel them to do our dirty work.

The Dom women merit special mention. It is a wise

Dom that knows his own father ; but every child knows his mother. She may have had five husbands—more or less ; sometimes more. When the husband and father goes to gaol, the woman cannot let her children starve. She needs a protector for herself and her little ones. You say she ought to be willing to starve ; *have you ever starved ?* You say she ought not to sin for her children's sake ; *have you ever heard your children cry for bread ?* She sweeps the streets seven hours a day, for twopence, until two days before her child is born. She is soon, too soon, back at work, with her baby in her arms. If her child falls ill, it is not neglected. To see a Dom woman hugging to her bosom her baby smitten dreadfully with small-pox, to see her hiding it under her one garment to shield it from the light, is to confess that the Dom mother has something to teach, as well as much to learn. She knows that "mother's love grows by giving." She goes to the Indian quack for help ; she will go to the wizards ; she may even take her child to the hospital. Sometimes she will take it to the mosque.

As in days of old the parents of Salem their children brought to Jesus that He might bless them, so do multitudes of parents in Káshi (Benares) take their loved ones to the men of prayer. When the light fails, the women bring their children to the mosque. They form up in double line outside, with the precious burdens in their arms. As the Muslims from the place of prayer pass through, they gently blow upon each child, to heal the sick and to ward off evil. Most of the women are Hindus or Muslims ; but Doms are waiting too, that the men of prayer may breathe an evening blessing on their children, keeping them from harm. People say there is special virtue in the breath of men fresh from intercourse with God.

The Dom mother teaches no religion to her child. As soon as he can talk, he learns to utter obscene abuse, at which the mother is amused. When he is a little older, she will teach him to steal brass vessels and the clothes of pilgrims. She will take him to the drinking den and let him sip the country spirits.

The Domin does not teach her child to lie ; he seems to do that naturally, as his instinct of self-defence is strong. The Dom mother is no Susannah Wesley ; but she can talk well and fight well, when influenced by drink or passion. She does not talk ; words pour from between her teeth. When greatly excited, her language is torrential—like the monsoon rain at Cherra Punji. The most voluble Dom is a mute in comparison with the most taciturn Domin.

And she can fight : she girds up her loins, takes a brick or a stick, and hurls herself on the enemy. A gipsy woman of Europe may beat her husband with her baby ; a Domin mad with drink would shrink from that. But when the wife anticipates a beating, she holds her infant up, or borrows one, and manipulates it with such skill that she stays the arm "uprear'd to execution."



## CHAPTER III

### THE VILLAGE DOM

THE village Dom is compelled by Hinduism to live outside the village. He lives in a hut which he made himself and which cost him about fifteen shillings. It has a thatched roof, mud walls, no windows, a doorway but no door. He fears no thief who might dig through and steal, for he has nothing to lose, and while no man of another caste would dream of entering his house, those of his own clan, though born thieves, will never rob a brother Dom.

If his house contains a bed, it cost him one shilling and fourpence. It may have been a gift, for the Dom provides the fire for the cremations, and if the dead man has died of cholera, small-pox or of plague, the relatives may not wish to take the bed on which he died back from the burning-ground to their home, and the Dom may have it as his perquisite.

He sits on the ground to eat, and needs neither table nor table-cloth, and as his hands are clean he dispenses with knife and fork. He may own one brass pot and a few mud vessels. Often he has no lamp, for he retires soon after sunset and sleeps till dawn. Should a lamp be needed, he is able to purchase one; indeed he can get two hundred and eighty-eight for one and sixpence! He calls his lamp a *diyā*; it is a little mud saucer dried in the sun and in it he burns mustard oil or castor oil.

His food consists of lentils and rice with a flat cake

made from some cheap grain. It is kept in mud vessels which fit into one another and swing from the branch of a tree to keep it from crows, dogs and small omnivorous children. He eats the leavings of his neighbours, and sometimes the rats of the fields. These are different from the rats of the river and the city rats.

He has no fire-place, so puts three lumps of dried mud or three large stones round a fire, and they support the cooking vessels. This is done outside the house when the wind and rain permit. Cowdung is the fuel, or, more often, broken pieces of wood gathered by his daughter.

He may own a pig or two which he need not feed as corn grows in unfenced fields and his neighbours generally, though not willingly, support his pigs, which are the village scavengers and swallow all the filth. The Dom keeps fowls till they are taken by cats, jackals or by some predatory wanderer.

By occupation the Dom is a worker in bamboo, which he cuts into the requisite lengths and shaves to the proper thickness for fans (*bend*), baskets (*pitara*) and winnowing implements (*sūp*), which he sells in the neighbouring villages. The bamboo work is done in the morning, and in the evening he takes round his wares for sale accompanied by his wife and children who are also expert at basket-making.

The Hindus invite him to their wedding feasts. Not that he may sit down with them at the banquet—the very thought of that would make a Hindu ill! He may come to the wedding and compete with the crows and pariah dogs for the debris of the feast. During the special marriage months the Doms get more rice from these dinners than they can eat; so they dry it in the sun and keep it in earthenware vessels for the rainy season when no Hindu marriages are solemnised.

The Doms will not eat monkeys or lizards. But they will eat a fowl found dead in a ditch. They are specially fond of horse-flesh, and will drive away the jackals and vultures from the carcass of a horse which has been dead for several days. The meat is sometimes cut in strips and suspended from the roof. And the Doms will eat it with avidity even when it is quite old.

The river gives him food. In the hot months the water is so hot that the very fish seek shelter in the crevices of the lime-stone reef. The Dom dives in, fumbles about with his fingers till he detects the presence of a fish; he seizes it between the spikes upon its back and throws it up on to the bank.

When the village Dom possesses a burning-ghát, he has another source of income. Not always does he supply the wood which the relatives may bring, but he and he alone can supply the fire, and after the cremation he takes the charcoal for cooking his food. Not all corpses are cremated by the Hindus. Some are too poor to buy wood for their dead. And those who have died of certain dread diseases are not cremated. The bodies are just thrown into the water. The current carries them along and the Dom watches their coming. The scouts are out—the vultures and the crows. They rest upon the body floating in the stream and consume their resting-place. The Dom swims out and brings the body in. He gets a few pence for the one garment which covered it. If in luck, he may find a bracelet of silver or of gold which the relatives were unable or unwilling to remove. With his sharp knife the dead hand is sliced away from the wrist and the ornament is removed. That is sold to the village goldsmith.

Occasionally he has a windfall—the corolla tubes of the *mahu's* (*Bassia latifolia*) blown down by the winds of spring; or the arrival of a friend from Bengal who

has been visiting the landed gentry and now requires a secluded spot for the disposal of their property.

There is not much to break the monotony of his life, but he has his memorable days—a visit from the police, and a journey under their escort to the city, the day of conviction and the day of release, the birth of a son, a marriage with its feasting and dancing, or a visit to the sacred city to relieve the unsuspecting pilgrim of his burden.

Though he may not enter the temples of Benares, this disability gives him no distress. He is not sure of God, but he is very sure of devils; most of his dead friends are now haunting, harassing revenants. One of them lives in the *nim* tree by his house and has been seen by some who were so stricken at the sight, that they could furnish no coherent description of the apparition.

The village Dom suffers sickness patiently. Here is a young mother with an awful abscess. She will not risk her life in the government hospital. So she stays at home and suffers and survives, thanks—she says—to the leaves of the healing *nim* (*Melia azadirachta*). Here is a Domin with a dreadful hand: it had been pierced and poisoned by a bamboo splinter, months before. It is a dead hand, large and loathsome. She will not submit to the operation which would bring relief. The fatalism of these people seems as admirable an anodyne as the faith of Nero's victims.

Where do the Doms think they go when they die? An old man tells us that after death he will haunt his house awhile in ghostly fashion. If his son will give a dinner for the dead and will put some aside for him, he will eat and drink and go away—he cannot tell you where.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE GIPSY DOMS

EARLY in 1914 information was received that a gang of gipsy Doms had encamped on the sacred Panchkosi road in Benares. We visited the vagrants. There were thirty-five women and children, one man, a pony, and a pig. The husbands and fathers were in the gaols of the United Provinces.

These people were born on the road and had lived on the road all their lives. They had never slept under a substantial roof, except in gaol. The police had escorted them day and night as if they were royalty. They were allowed to rest in one camp for a few days and were then driven on to another. The one concern of the police authorities was to get them out of their district ; like the man who thinks himself an expert in hygiene when he throws his rubbish into his neighbour's yard.

The police did not allow all the men to pass on ; they were sent to gaol for vagrancy. The court inspectors explained to the magistrates that these gipsy Doms were always committing crime. (If this was true, it was rather a reflection upon the police who watched them day and night !) We are told that five men came with the gang and four of them were at once sent to prison. We visited the magistrate and requested him to make over the gang to us. He consented, and also released the men in gaol.

Many of these gipsy Doms have come under our protection. They are a strong, wild, handsome folk.

At first they were very suspicious, like other wild creatures; but by the help of an evangelist, an ex-Brahman, who had learnt their jargon, we were able to win their confidence.

The municipality was glad to employ them as sweepers. They had never done honest work before; they had never been allowed. We asked them how they could steal with the police always with them, and this is what they told us: The men and women exchanged clothes and captivated the police with a wild dance. Two or three of the "women" (that is, the men dressed as women) would quietly steal away, and seldom returned with empty hands!

During the day, the women and children went into the towns and villages to beg, accompanied by a watchman. As this man was always sleepy when the gipsies wanted to beg, it was necessary to compensate him liberally for his lost repose. This they were able to do, as they could make sixpence a day each by begging. If a shopkeeper refused to help, the gipsy women would threaten to defile his wares. And it was no idle threat!

These people have not yet realised the nobility of underpaid labour. A gipsy Doms came home tired one evening, and as she threw herself on the ground, she cried, "O Mother! Mother! to think that my man could bring me home a hundred rupees in one dark night; and now I, his wife, have to work six hours for six farthings!"

These gipsies can make babies' rattles, which they sell for half a farthing each. They cannot make baskets and fans like the sedentary Doms, and it is not certain they can live honestly on their small municipal wage.

They tell me that their home was Báns Bareili in these provinces. They were ejected by the police and took

to the road. Most of the important towns of the United Provinces have been visited by them, and they have been to the Punjab as well.

They burn their dead, putting gold, silver, clarified butter and a *tulas* leaf into the mouth of the corpse. Leland says that some of the English gipsies "were buried with gold rings on their fingers."

They call themselves Harischanni Doms, and say they will not take food or marry with the settled Doms of Benares. They do not eat beef or horse-flesh, nor do they drink as heavily as the civilised Doms. Their women are more chaste than the Domins of Gorakhpur. They are not professional prostitutes, but will sometimes yield to solicitations in order to save their men from gaol.

Some time ago they had escaped the vigilance of the police and were travelling without escort, sampling the villages and towns as they went along. One night, while preparing their food, they were suddenly surrounded by the police, mostly Muslims. The women shrieked, and fastened themselves to the feet of the constables. The men picked up their pots of boiling pork and hurled them, along with the braziers, into the faces of their assailants, at whom they also discharged their vessels of country liquor. This accomplished, they slipped into the darkness. The police haul consisted of two or three white-headed back-bent men, obviously disqualified for crime. The head constable found his mother tongue inadequate to express his opinion of the Dom women, who had protested so strongly against such an unprovoked attack upon a band of innocent pilgrims!

These gipsies are expert thieves and burglars. The moon they call "dushman" (which is the Persian word for "enemy"); and a black night, "Lakshmi Ji" (the

Hindu goddess of prosperity). These people have the perfect teeth and glistening eyes of the gipsy races. The women are tattooed, that they may carry something with them when they leave the world.

A binding oath is on the *pīpal* tree ; they cut it with a knife and express their willingness to be so treated if they lie. They tell us that good Doms go to be with *Bhagwán* when they die ; a bad man becomes an evil spirit (*paun*) and inhabits bad men.

The Government of India has proclaimed these people as a criminal tribe, and attempts are made to restrict their movements, and to persuade them to renounce their vagrancy and criminal habits. The old system of keeping them on the road was stupid, brutal and ineffective. They are officially described as the *Khána ba dosh*—that is, "house on back" people. It is interesting to remember that Leland's little gipsy girl says to her brother, "Don't crush the snail, for he carries his tent on his back, like our old father."



## CHAPTER V

### BURNERS OF THE DEAD

THE Doms of the two famous burning gháts in Benares city are different in all but name from the other city Doms. They call themselves the Harischanni Doms, and disclaim connection with the Maghiyas, who are eaters of horse-flesh, and scavengers. They affirm that no connection has ever existed between themselves and other Doms; they have been separate "from the beginning of the world." And the Maghiya Doms agree!

There are only fifty families of the Harischanni Doms, and most of them live in Benares; but a few can be found in Mirzapur, Bindhāchal, Chunár and Rudauli. These Doms do not eat horse-flesh, beef or pork. They have a temple of their own at Assi ghát, sacred to Mahádeo (Shiva). Bráhmans, they say, attend their weddings, and on certain occasions recite *káthās* (sacred stories) to them. They have four *Chaudharis* (head men), one sardár, and one *chharibardár* (messenger); these being the officials of their *panchayat*, or clan-council. One of the head men told me that they came from no distant country; their ancestors lived in Benares before it was a city, and when there was nothing but jungle.

Beside attending to the burning gháts at Manikarnika and Assi, these people are expert divers, and call themselves the Ghotá Khor, the diving Doms. They praise the days that are gone, and say that formerly they

recovered much wealth from the river, the offerings of devout Hindus to Mother Ganga. I have seen Theosophical women from Australia and America casting coin into the Ganges, as an offering to the goddess. The head Dom complained that nowadays nothing of any value could be found in the river. The Hindus have a story concerning one of these divers. He had dived and dived, and groped and groped, and had found nothing but copper coins. So he made a vow and said : " O goddess, if I can find a rupee, I will give thee two annas for thyself." He went on diving, and at last found one. But it was old and rubbed and not worth sixteen annas ; he would get only fourteen annas for it in the bazaar. " O goddess ! " he exclaimed, " thou mightest have trusted me ; I see thou hast already taken thy two annas ! "

Some of these men have a great reputation as lifters of heavy weights and are well paid for their performances. But the chief business of these Doms is with the burning of the dead. They generally provide the wood, though it may be brought by the relatives. The Doms place several pieces of wood on the ground and then retire. They do not touch the corpse at all. The relatives put the dead man in the river with the bamboo ladder, to which he is tied, resting on the bank. The cloth is removed from the head and Ganges water poured into the mouth. The corpse is then taken from the river and released from the bamboo bier. The relatives place it on the wood and add more wood—if they can afford—till it is covered. Sandal wood is sometimes used in the cremation of a very wealthy man.

The pyre is now prepared. Straw is bought from the Doms, and the relatives approach them and, with clasped hands, humbly beg for fire. This the Doms

sell, and the charge is from two pice to a hundred rupees or more, according to the position of the mourners and the temper of the Doms. The fire is only the burnt wood taken from the water, and kept ignited. Holding the lighted straw, the son, or nearest male relative, walks five times round the pyre, and then applies the flame.

The mourners attend to the cremation and break the skull and other bones to help the fire to do its work. This is never done by the Doms, for although they alone can supply the purging fire, their touch would pollute a corpse. The remains are committed to the river by the friends and relatives; not by the Doms, as Pierre Loti and others have imagined. When all is over, earthenware pots are purchased, filled with water, and then broken on the ground.

The Doms demand the shroud, which may be worth many rupees, and sometimes they may be seen fighting with the stricken mourners for its possession. When the fire is cold, and the ashes have been cast into the river, the Doms may search for any melted ornaments of silver or of gold which the dead had worn.

The Doms say that certain persons are not cremated, but are fastened to stones and dropped into the river: children with unpierced ears, holy men, lepers and the victims of cholera and smallpox. These last have been possessed by the great mother, the goddess Sitala, and need no purification by fire. So they are cast as they are, in all their putridity, into the river which provides the drinking water of the people of Benares!

These Harischanni Doms are a law-abiding community and their head was greatly concerned that it should be widely known that they have no connection with the other Doms. "Our Guru," he said, "is Satna Baba, and we are the Harischanni Doms." And then he gave

me his version of the old and ever-beautiful story of the famous raja. In brief, this was the tale :

Raja Harishchandra was in debt to Supach, the owner of the cremation ground. Owing to famine, and his excessive munificence, he was so reduced in circumstances that he possessed no money and could not discharge his debt. So he went and hired himself to the Chandál, the outcaste Supach, and he sent him to help at the burning ghát.

A woman came with her dead child. The woman was his wife ; the dead child was his son. The woman said she was so poor she could not pay the fee. " But I am your wife, and this is your dead son," she pleaded.

" And I am my master's servant," her husband made reply;

" All I have is this one garment," cried the distracted wife.

" I cannot rob my master," said the raja.

As the woman with trembling hands fumbled with the knot of her one garment ; there came a voice from heaven, and Bhagawán, the supreme God, appeared. He restored their son to life, and took the three to heaven.

And so the Dom's story ended. But there is more to be told. The raja besought the Lord, that his master, the outcaste Supach, might be remembered too. And he as well, through the mercy of the great God, was taken up to heaven.

So runs one of the oldest and most beautiful of the stories of India. The Maghiya Doms regard Supach Bhagat as *their* great ancestor. Does that fact give us the reason why the Harischanni Dom did not complete the story ?

## CHAPTER VI

### THE RELIGION OF THE DOMS

AFTER their own fashion the Doms, degraded and simple though they be, believe in the Unseen, carefully observing the ancient rites of their people, performing numerous ceremonies, and, on occasion, even attempting to enter Hindu temples that are forbidden them. The gods they revere and the evil spirits they dread are mostly Hindu divinities or devils.

The Doms of Benares used to worship Ganga Mai (the River Ganges), Bindháchal, Káli Mai (wife of Shiva), Sítala Jí (wife of Rana), and Ráma. In their weddings they worshipped Ganga Jí by drinking from the stream, and by making a libation. Before cremation, they poured the sacred water into the mouth of their dead with the hope of thereby "helping them over," as they put it. They called God Rám or Bhagawán. They swore by the name of Rám, and took his name when carrying their dead to the burning-ground.

No temple in Benares was open to them, though in one Hindu temple dogs are welcome. They offered sacrifices for their dead to hasten their arrival in heaven (*baikunthi*). If a Dom's father died, the son would mourn for ten days. He was regarded as unclean and could touch no one. He slept on the ground, wore plain cloth on his head, and put an iron ring on his hand. At the end of the ten days, a Dom barber shaved his head, beard and moustache. As no Brahman would act, his sister's son would officiate as priest, and would

bathe the mourner. Then the son bought an earthen pot, and in it he put rice, resin, milk, and oil-seed. He made a fire of cow-dung, put the pot on it, and cooked the food for offering. When the food was cold, the son bathed again, and brought with him mud with which he made a little altar (*bedi*). From the soft, sticky food he made balls (*pinda*), ten in number. His sister's son made rings of the *kusa* grass, and told the mourner to wear one on the little finger of the right hand, one on the second finger of the left hand, one in his girdle, and the fourth in the sacred lock on his head. The nephew-priest instructs his uncle to put the ten balls on the ground with his right hand, while he pours water on them from the brass pot in his left hand, and recites the names of the ancestors he desires to help. Then the priest asks for pice, which are given to him. The mourner crushes the balls together, puts them in the pot and throws them in the tank or river. He then places his hands side by side on the ground, with the palms downwards, pushes them under the altar and turns it upside down. Then the mourner, the priest, and all their friends make for the nearest drink shop, where they pass the rest of the day.

Some of the Doms used to visit the famous city of Gaya, in Bihár, to perform this ceremony. They disguised themselves as Ahírs (caste Hindus), and thus gained admission to the Vishnu-pada temple. The origin of this practice of visiting Gaya is lost in obscurity, but it is probably connected with a Hindu legend that the great Vishnu, the preserver and friend of man, once promised that whosoever offered funeral cakes and performed the funeral ceremonies on that spot should, with their ancestors, be translated to the heaven of Brahma. Into that "whosoever" the despised Doms probably read themselves. Entrance being denied them,

they resolved to gain the blessing by strategy. The Gaya pilgrimage was an expensive one for a Dom, but it had this compensation, that he need never again offer *pinda* for his ancestors.

If a Dom child was smitten with smallpox, its parents would visit the temple of Sitala at the Dasashwamedh ghát in Benares. First they bathed in the Ganges. Then they bought flowers in a basket and gave them to the temple priest, who took money from them and made them sit down outside the shrine. Then the priest offered the flowers to the goddess, while the Dom outside prayed, "O Mother, O Sitala Ji, heal my child of the smallpox, of which thou art the goddess; accept my offerings, O Mother!" As he left, the father was told to make donations to the images which are sprinkled plentifully in every direction. The swarming beggars also pressed their claims.

When a Dom was in prison, he would sometimes make a vow to the goddess of Bindháchal, that if he got out alive, he would visit her shrine. On the day of his release he made another contract, that if she would help him to rob without detection, he would present her with offerings. As he had enjoyed intercourse with expert rogues in prison, he would probably be successful on his first attempt. That entailed a visit to Bindháchal. He would go in disguise and would be bathed by a priest of the famous shrine. The Dom crossed the threshold, and made his offerings of sweets, flowers, and five rupees to the priest, who little knew that a Dom was defiling his temple. Outside, a he-goat was sacrificed to Káli. The priest took the head, the Dom the body, the dogs the blood, and the goddess the essence and odour. The Dom and his friends ate all they could, and threw the remnants into the river.

Ghází Miyán's shrine in Benares was greatly venerated

by the Doms who longed for children. The history of this famous man is given in brief by the Rev. M. A. Sherring, in his book on Benares, which has been out of print for many years :

" The Gházi-Miyán Mela, held at the Gházi Miyán Dargáh, Bakariya Kund, is a Muhammadan festival, celebrated in honour of the nephew of the celebrated Sultán Mahmúd of Ghazni. This monarch sent his brother-in-law, Sálár Sábú, on a mission into India. On the journey, his wife, Satar-i-Mualla, gave birth to a child son, in the city of Ajmere, A.D. 1002. This child was called Sálár Másáúd ; and, being unfortunately killed in battle with the Hindus, in his nineteenth year, was buried in Baraich in Oudh, where the battle had been fought. As he was considered a martyr to the Muhammadan faith, after his death he was spoken of as Sultán-us-Shuhadá, chief of martyrs ; and Sultán Gházi, chief of knights of religion." The tomb which exists in Benares, is said to be an imitation of the shrine at Bahraich."

During the festival, standards are erected by the Muslims, who sing the fame of the Gházi. " Their songs produce a singular effect upon the female listeners," says Mr. Sherring, " as some of them spread out their hair, and turn their heads in a violent manner, so as to appear to be under the influence of a supernatural power."

The spectacle of the great crowds at this festival is most depressing, for it is difficult to discover any suggestion of good in connection with the worship. It is one of the many anomalies of India. The Hindu forsakes his own 330,000,000 gods for an alien—a cow-killing Muslim—and the Muslim sins by participating in forbidden rites, and by receiving the offerings of the idolatrous Hindu. But there is the fact that the common people believe that Gházi Miyán can help them better than all-embracing but inaccessible Parameshwar, or the far removed, lonely and loveless Alláh. Some regard the Muslim saint as an effective intercessor with the distant deities.



## THE RELIGION OF THE DOMS

41

Should a Dom desire a child, he promises the Gházi a cock or he-goat ; if a child is born, the promised offering is purchased, and the child's hair will not be cut till the vow is paid and the cock or goat slain. To please the Muslim saint, the Dom abstains from pork for fifteen days before the sacrifice.

## CHAPTER VII

### THEIR RECREATIONS AND SONGS

How do Doms use their spare time? They sleep, they sit, they sing, they smoke, they talk, they gamble, they drink, they fight—these are their recreations.

They have a great gift of sleep. They can sleep anywhere and at any time. When I was in India we employed one as a watchman, so we can speak from experience. They find rest on the earth when the ground is as hard as iron, and they enjoy the stone bed of the gaol as others enjoy a feather bed or spring mattress. They have no mosquito curtains, so they protect themselves from the attacks of the small, grey-coated gnats by sleeping under a blanket. Perhaps they imbibe so much oxygen during the day that they can dispense with it at night. Sometimes the Dom owns a bed of bamboo and string, which provides accommodation for the whole family. When they sleep, do they ever dream? Let us inquire. . . . A young man tells me that, when asleep, he sometimes sees his dead father, sometimes he is fighting with his bamboo stick, and sometimes he is in a liquor shop.

Conversation is another recreation. The Doms discuss betrothals, weddings, dinners, police, prisons, pleaders, cremations, witchcraft, sickness, dead horses, live pigs, magistrates, Calcutta, and the penal settlement in the Andaman Islands, not to mention the price and quality of spirits. They are unequal to the strain of abstract thought. No question do they quietly

consider. They live in the open air and acquire the habit of shouting—a good recreation for the lungs. When really excited, they talk in harsh and boisterous tones that would excite the envy of a town crier.

They greatly enjoy a smoke. A poet of Persia has said that the voice of the *huqqa* (pipe) is sweeter than the voice of the nightingale. The *huqqa* was a gift of heaven to the East; it has stopped the mouths of lions, has wrought reconciliations and prevented the effusion of blood. The Dom's *huqqa* merits description: it is an empty coco-nut with a hole in one side and another on the top. In the top hole is fitted a wooden tube on which is fixed the *chillam*, an earthenware cup. In the *chillam* is placed some gravel; on that the tobacco, and on the top of that the tiny fire of charcoal or cow-dung. Water is poured into the coco-nut, and the man smokes through the hole in its side. And to him the voice of the *huqqa*, the bubbling of the water, is sweeter than the voice of the nightingale. The smoker envies no man. He passes on the pipe to his visitor, for the *huqqa* is the outward and visible sign of friendliness and brotherhood. To be excommunicated from the caste is, in the idiom of the country, to have the *huqqa pânt band* (your pipe and water stopped).

The Dom spends about fourpence a month on tobacco, and it is money well expended. For a shilling he can buy 240 cigarettes, which are said to contain traces of tobacco.

Intoxicating drink is another recreation. It stimulates the imagination and makes the dumb man eloquent. What is the secret of its hold upon the Dom? It reveals and augments his latent powers, and it elevates him when he is depressed; it warms, it cools, it purifies—so the Doms believe.

Gambling is another recreation. Doms gamble with

cards and dice, and with cowrie shells apparently made for the purpose. Occasionally it is remunerative. It is always exciting, for the police are never far away when the law is being broken.

The Doms can sing, and have their songs of love and loot, which everybody knows. They greatly enjoy improvising poetry, which they sing to a well-known tune. The refrain comes first and is repeated after every stanza. Borrow, writing of the poetry of the Zincali, sung in Spain, says that most of it is extemporary. "Of course, the greater part of this species of poetry perishes as soon as born. A stanza, however, is sometimes caught up by the bystanders, and committed to memory; and being frequently repeated, makes in time the circuit of the country." This is true also of the poetry of the Doms.

They sing to the sound of clappers (*távi*) and the *huruk*, a small drum, shaped like an hour-glass. The wooden framework is made by Hindus and Muslims in the city, and can be bought for elevenpence. The owner then purchases some peritoneum (*jhilli*) from a butcher, which he stretches over the open ends of the drum, fastens it down with a circle of bamboo, and waits for it to dry. He ties a string to it in such a way, that when it hangs over his shoulder he can produce some variation in the sound of the drum, by tightening or relaxing the string and so making the skin slack or taut. The minstrel seizes the drum in the middle with one hand and strikes the skin with the fingers of the other hand. It emits a loud, staccato sound, not easy to describe. Call it by its name in Hindi, *huruk*, as fast and vehemently as possible, and you will have a faint idea of its melody. The word *huruk* means, *inter alia*, a drunken man, and the growl of a tiger. The sound of the drum is a blend of the two. It incites the Doms

to dance immodestly, and reveals "the measured malice of music."

The wooden clappers, struck with marvellous vehemence, reinforced by a violent clapping of hands, augment the activities of the shameless performers.

Here are some of the songs they sing :

I

I woke the sleeper when I had cut the gold coin from his neck.  
I showed one lamp in seven houses.

I will accept you when you open the loot in a lonely place.

I have brought a large nose-ring which I snatched in the market-place.

I will accept you when you bring good things from the bazaar.

Why delay ? To what country shall we go ?

I shall be willing when you load my hands and feet with jewellery.

I will fasten armlets on your arm.

Put a new thread in my new ornament.

When you have taken me by the arm you should live with me some days.

I am ready to be the slave of all your house.

I will serve you as long as I live.

When you die I will put you in the water in Rám's name.

I will give you a looking-glass and comb and my life as well.

I will do your hair with a comb from Azamgarh.

Let down your hair by the railway door.

I will fascinate the police officers with my lovely hair.

Play the drum and cymbals, Munshi Sahib, and I will sing to the tune.

Why do you try to deceive me by offering a brass necklace silver-plated ?

The worn-out coin wanders through the bazaar. (This has many applications).

The new coin falls into the publican's till.

Everybody knows that my soul lives in thee.

Having become pious, won't you break your rosary ?

II

THE DOMIN'S COMPLAINT

*Refrain—*

What has my husband done that you handcuff and take him off, O respected police officer ?

My husband is neither a dacoit nor an innkeeper, nor is he a thief.

Drunk with liquor my husband fell asleep on the road.

I will give an anna or two to the constables and ten to the head policeman.

I will give myself to the Sáhib if he will release my husband.

## PRISONERS RELEASED

## III

## THE MASTER

*Refrain—*

The master ordered good things to be brought.

The first good thing to bring, is wood, he said,  
But go not near the jungle or the hedge ;  
Leave wet wood lying in the forest bed,  
And bring the bundle home.

The next good thing, is water pure, he said ;  
But go not near the lake or water hole ;  
You have no need of rope or yet of pail,  
And bring the water in your beggar's bowl.

The third good thing is rice, the master said ;  
But go not near a village or a hut ;  
Yet bring a bundle home.

The fourth good thing, is fire, the master said,  
But go not thou a house or village near ;  
Yet bring some fire home in the baking-pan.

## MISCELLANEOUS VERSES

Live in humility, brother, for life is four days long.  
Live in humility, for the accuser is at hand.  
Why do you want to fight with me, O brother ?  
O my body, worship Rám.  
Never cease from praising Rám.

I cannot interpret this song, called "The Master."  
It was given to me by a wandering Dom ; the language  
was Urdu. It may have a religious significance, or the  
Master may be a Dom Fagin.

Most of the songs of the Doms are concerned with  
love and loot, and are sung at weddings and other  
public functions. Men are generally the singers.

## CHAPTER VIII

### " A CRIMINAL TRIBE "

THE Doms of the Benares District have been proclaimed as a criminal tribe by the Government, and a large percentage of the male adults have been to prison. They are thieves by training and tradition. They begin early. The proud father gazes upon his son and says to the mother, " Our boy is very clever ; he steals wherever he goes." And she replies, " The Dom's boy is indeed intelligent." A Sanskrit book discloses the fact that the Doms were thieves a thousand years ago.

Men are made or marred by their mothers, and it is the Dom's mother who makes her boy an expert thief. While he is quite a little child she teaches him to steal brass pots and other portable property of pilgrims. If he is caught in the act the mother knows that the boy, on account of his youth, will receive a light punishment. And a few weeks in prison will be a post-graduate course in crime.

To such expert thieves, no opportunity is lost, and no religious scruple deters them. They regard all alike as their legitimate victims.

That Dom by the river is watching one of the pilgrim-bathers. While the man is absorbed in worship, the Dom abstracts his clothes and culinary utensils—a painful reminder to the devotee of the transitory nature of all mundane objects.

The Dom's conscience does not accuse him unless he steals from a Dom. He always goes to the great

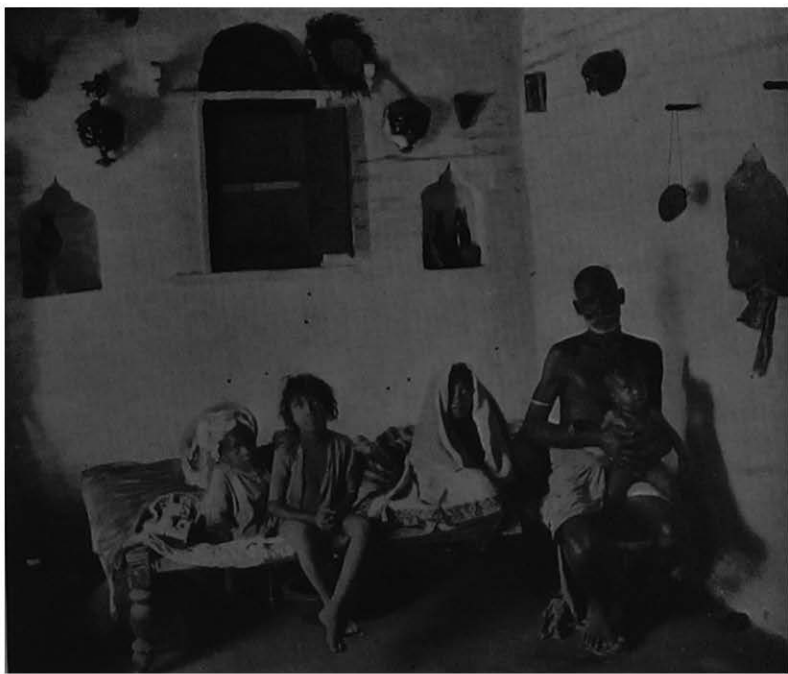
religious festivals, for the great crowds give him ample opportunity to ply his trade. Perhaps it is a bathing festival to celebrate an eclipse of the moon. He marks a woman with a gold ring in her nose. The multitudes watch the demon swallowing the moon. The light fails. The eyes of all are fixed on the sky above, or on the great river. Pen cannot picture the frenzy of the pilgrims. The Dom approaches the entranced woman. He tears the gold ring from her face, breaking it through flesh or cartilage. Her cry is swallowed up in the frenzied shouts of the bathers. Baptized in blood, she turns to seize her assailant, but is felled to the ground by a confederate, who quickly follows the thief into the darkness. Should her husband pursue, his pace is checked by the crowd; and a stranger is quickly lost in the byways of an Eastern city.

The pilgrims sleep by the side of the road and the river; they sleep like the dead they resemble as they lie prone on the ground. A Dom approaches as silently as a ghost: he passes between the sleepers; he pauses; he puts out a hand; a woman's cry shocks the silence; and she has lost for ever the silver *hansli* from her neck.

In the old days, the Dom, who was an expert diver, would watch the women bathing in the river. He dived, and a girl disappeared with a choking cry. The Dom removed her ornaments and then released the corpse. The relations held Mother Ganges or her crocodiles responsible for the deed. That was in the old days before the police patrolled the river.

The Dom is an expert at entering houses. He has but one tool, the *saburi*, his jemmy, and with this he digs through the mud walls of a house in an hour or two on a dark night, while the village watchman sleeps. Some of the Doms worship the instrument which has given them an entrance to many good houses.





*Photo by F. Deaville Walker*

**A Christian Dom who has built for himself a two-storied house**

A Dom will disguise herself as a caste Hindu and pass a night in the city serai. She not only assumes the garb but even the dialectical peculiarities of the women with whom she desires to be intimate for a season. While her companions sleep, she makes careful extracts from their boxes and bundles. Then, considerably refraining from rousing them to receive her farewell salutations, she takes her departure.

The Dom has not much learning, but he knows that silver-gilt is cheaper than gold though resembling it in appearance. He buys an obsolete silver coin and has it gilded and attached to a necklace. The coin can now be passed off as a gold *mohur*, worth about thirty rupees. The cost to the Dom has been three or four rupees. He shows it to a villager when no one else is near, and offers it for fifteen rupees. The villager quite understands why a Dom is willing to part with the ornament for half its value; so he pays the money and sets out with joy to his village. The Dom is satisfied with the transaction and yields himself to the magnetic influence of the nearest liquor shop. One day the villager takes his *mohur* to the goldsmith to leave as security for a loan, and there receives the information that his ornament is worth not thirty rupees, but three.

If two Doms go out to thief and one of them is caught while the other gets off with the loot, the unlucky man will claim his share when he comes out of gaol. If he has been kept in prison a long time, he may find his partner dead; in that case he claims his share from the dead man's son, and the claim (*jhol*) will be recognised as valid, though the point has not yet been referred to the High Court!

The Doms of Benares seldom commit burglaries in their own district; they prefer to exploit Bengal, where, they tell me, the people have much money, and

a great regard for human life when assailed by up-country men with long sticks. A Dom who has toured in Bengal is a man with six or seven aliases, and as many castes. If a Benares Dom is wanted by the local police, he takes a train—not a ticket—to Calcutta; where he changes his name and his caste, but not his occupation. If he really wishes to lead a new life until the police forget him, he obtains an appointment in one of the hospitals as a member of the sanitary staff. Jalpaiguri is a favourite temporary retreat of the defaulting Doms. They do not mind the police, but they find the climate trying, and return, as soon as they dare, to their beloved Benares.

In June, 1914, the local government decided to register the Doms of the Benares District, who had already been officially proclaimed as a criminal tribe. At the request of the District Magistrate, it was arranged that the authorities of the Wesleyan Mission should register the Doms under their care and include non-Christian Doms also.

All the Doms of the city were ordered to attend the mission house, where their finger impressions were taken by a staff of experts, and the new Act was explained to them. The print of each finger on both hands was taken separately, and then prints of the four fingers of both hands were taken simultaneously. This was done in duplicate, and as the height of each person was entered on each registration form, together with details of residence, relationship, and age, etc., and the prints were all most carefully examined and compared with the fingers by the head expert, several days elapsed before the work was finished.

When the work in the city was complete, arrangements were made for the registration of the village Doms. Our preacher's house at Moghal Serai, the

engineer's rest-house at Chandauli, and the police station at Baluán were centres to which the people came. And some of them came greatly fearing. The District Magistrate had wisely agreed that the police should be accompanied by a member of the Mission when they delivered the notices on the village Doms; but by some unfortunate oversight, this arrangement was ignored by the police, and a few of the Doms absented themselves through sheer fear of the unknown. Those who came were greatly relieved to see the missionary, and they begged him not to send them out of their country. They had heard that their finger marks would be placed in little boxes and sent through the air to some distant land; and by witchcraft they would be compelled to follow!

This registration took place under Section 10 (b) of the Criminal Tribes Act of 1911. The clause requires that before they change their place of residence they shall give notice at the nearest police station. "Residence" is defined as the place where they passed the night! On their arrival in the jurisdiction of another police inspector, they are again compelled to report themselves.

These points were carefully explained to the Doms, who at once declared that the new regulations would prevent them from living honestly. They made their baskets in the day and went round the villages selling them in the evening, and in some cases they could not return home before nightfall. During the hot months, when Hindus hold their marriage feasts, they had been accustomed to visit the festivals at night to collect the debris to which they were entitled. As some of them lived miles away from the nearest police station, the new regulations, they informed us, would make it impossible for them to get the food which had been an important part of their subsistence. We gave them

assurance that all these matters should receive the careful consideration of the authorities.

A tribute must be paid to the consideration shown by the finger-print staff to these illiterate villagers, whose clamour and impatience were often provoking. At one centre the expert received a shock. He was rubbing a woman's finger-tips, which were short and blunted, to see why they made a poor impression on the paper, when he suddenly noticed that her husband was exempted from registration because he was a leper !

When the Act began to operate, our trouble began. It was misinterpreted and misapplied by some of the police, until the arrival of competent and sympathetic officials removed the difficulties we were compelled to encounter in the beginning. The Government have appointed experienced officers of the Criminal Investigation Department to see to the proper working of the Act ; and if the local police are willing, it should prove a gain to the Doms themselves, as well as to the general public.

The Act would be more efficacious if it were also applied in Bengal, which is the happy hunting-ground of the most criminal of the Benares Doms.

## CHAPTER IX

### OUR MISSION TO THE DOMS : HOW IT BEGAN

EARLY in 1905 a Benares Dom heard our Indian minister preach in the bazaar. The Gospel message appealed to him; he sought an interview with the preacher and told him that he wished to become a Christian. This was his story. He had been with the British expedition to Tibet, as a sweeper attached to the hospital staff. On his return, he found that a medal and some money were due to him. The medal bore the image and superscription of the king-emperor, who remembers both Dom and Brahman. The money was the root of his anxiety. He told us that since the day he received it, he had received constant visits from some dishonest Indian police who promised to get him accommodated in gaol, if he did not adequately reward them. He was not willing to give them money he had earned by risking his life, and he thought he might escape their tyranny by becoming a Christian. We listened to his story, sympathised with him, and promised to help him. He was told he could not be baptized at once, as he had much to learn about the new "Way." Then we set to work to teach him the A.B.C. of the Gospel. He proved a ready learner, and at last, when we were convinced that he was sincere and knew what he was doing, we received him by baptism. That was a memorable day for him—and for us. In this way began a Christward movement among the Doms that has continued to the present time.

We do not attempt to disguise the fact that it was at first a desire to flee, not from the wrath to come, but from present tribulation, and especially from the police, that turned the Doms of Benares towards the missionary. When a Dom came from Calcutta, he had to pay a rupee before the police would let him settle in Benares. If he wished to leave, he had to square the police. If he wanted to give a dinner to his friends, he must first settle with the inspector. If a Dom wished to be free to roam at night he had to pay the police to mark him present. The village Doms were expected to provide the police with fans and fowls. The Doms did not object to pay the police for services rendered, but they did object to give something for nothing.

Our first convert had never been to prison, and saw no reason why he should pay the police for their attentions. Some of the Doms turned to us because they were wretchedly poor, and like the prodigal, hungered for bread. Some came because they thought we could help them to get honest work; some because they dimly understood, that only through Jesus Christ could they attain to manhood.

Were their motives base? Were they covetous? Surely a man who has nothing and desires something, who wishes for a chance to live his life, can hardly be charged with the great sin of covetousness! If it be a sin to covet honour, then one family of Doms who came to us to protect their girl from evil were most offending souls. Who dares to say that it is wrong for a starving man to covet bread, or an oppressed man to covet justice? We must recognise that "motives may be elementary, and may operate on a comparatively low plane of human impulse, without being unworthy or evil." Have we no "rice Christians" in England? —tradesmen who join a church with the hope of estab-

lishing a connection, men who find godliness profitable and generosity inconvenient, men who owe everything to Christianity, but ignore both God and men in their lust for gold !

When the first enquirer came to us for rescue from the police, he was told of a crueller tyranny still, the despotism of sin, of anger and of avarice. He has heard of One who can break the power of sin and set the captive free, the strong, loving Son of God. He soon brought his brother to us, and then other members of his family. His father, however, still refuses to be a Christian because he loves his country liquor and is not willing to surrender it. The sister-in-law of an early convert was a village girl, and through her the Doms of the villages came under our influence. At first these people were as timid as hares, and with great difficulty we won their confidence. But when we helped them in their sickness, and went before magistrates to secure them justice, their suspicions vanished, and they learned to regard us as friends. They did not resent our interference when we admonished and disciplined them for drunkenness and witchcraft ; for our friendship had gained us the right to intervene when necessary.

Because we wished to redeem the Doms and draw them from the mire of sin, we preached the Gospel to them. We told them of God's love. But it was most difficult for such persons to believe in *disinterested* love. All the superior persons they had known, hated or despised them. We acted on the principle that man can best "understand the manifestation of God in Christ by the manifestation of Christ in man" ; and we sought by kindness to help these friendless ones to believe in the philanthropy of God. Speaking of the spread of Christianity in the early centuries, Dr. Glover says : "The Christian came to the helpless and hope-



less, whom men despised, and of whom men despaired, with a message of the love and tenderness of God, and he brought it home by a new type of love and tenderness of his own." That proved the most effective way of winning the confidence of Doms. We helped them. They were so poor and improvident; they quickly became the prey of men who lent at three hundred per cent. per mensem. We granted small loans of money at reasonable interest. It is probable that some readers may object to money-lending as a missionary method. The fact is that the Doms were in such distressing circumstances that we felt impelled to help them in any and every way we could. It is probable that some day the Benares municipality will be in a position to introduce a co-operative lending society for their scavengers; and such a society will be highly beneficial to the Doms, and will relieve us of most of our responsibility in this matter.

We visited the Doms when they were in prison, and reminded them of God's regard for them; thus helping them to preserve the self-respect they possess. The prison system treated them as if they were simply criminals; we reminded them that they were men. Incidentally, it is impossible to measure the good that has come to Muslim and Hindu gaolers who have seen the missionary's concern for the criminal outcaste. Sometimes, when circumstances seemed to warrant our doing so, we interviewed the magistrates on behalf of our people.

When the day of release came, we met them at the prison gate, and conducted them to the mission compound. In the old days they were taken by their friends to the drink shop, to be sprinkled with the drink which is said to cleanse from the defilement of prison, and to be made drunk. We gave them tea

instead of spirits, and told them the things that had happened during their absence. It was a painful pleasure to see the ex-convict take his little children to his heart. Sometimes the wife was present on such an occasion; sometimes she was living with another man. One important part of our work was to persuade the women to remain faithful while their husbands were in prison. Often we reconciled offended husbands and insulted wives. One man, who had spent nearly twenty years in the penal settlement in the Andaman Islands, on his release returned to Benares to claim his wife. He found her the mother of three children by another man with whom she had been living for fifteen years. She was not willing to return to the ex-convict, who accordingly assaulted her and her paramour. The dispute was referred to the missionary for his decision. It was by no means an easy situation. But we always encouraged our Doms to come to us for advice.

It was of the highest importance that some regular employment should be found for the people who were slowly learning to look to us for help. The loose, unsettled lives they were living were conducive to sin. With the help of the municipal officials, we were able to secure work as city scavengers for those who were willing to undertake it. The payment was very low—only five rupees a month (i.e. six shillings and eight-pence)—but it was regular for those who gave satisfaction, and the industrious ones could make a little extra in some way or other. Among such a people, the "gospel of work" is a necessary part of the Christian message.

In our attempt to reform these people, we had the co-operation of the district magistrates, who generally refused to allow the police to make excessive use of the dangerous section of the Criminal Code. The

British magistrates and the missionaries are the best friends of the outcastes of India. The magistrates are always just, and the missionaries both just and friendly. Another way of helping our Doms to adopt a settled life was by helping them to get houses—only simple ones at best; but to have a little home of their own, "be it ever so humble," is a powerful inducement to cease to wander. In process of time some of them built for themselves capital little houses. One of them even rose to a second story. This was something new for a Dom! Another was discovered making a tiny garden beside his hut and trying to cultivate a few flowers "for beauty's sake"! To-day they live in five little colonies in the city of Behar, and also in the villages of the country around. But the gipsy Doms still cling to their wandering life, and they are the hardest to influence. We have had many a heart-break over them.

Naturally, there is a good deal of sickness and disease among Doms, owing, no doubt, largely to their unclean manner of life and the carrion they often eat. In the villages there are no hospitals, and the village "doctors" are often ignorant and superstitious in their treatment of such as risk seeking their aid. There are free hospitals in the city, but the Doms are sometimes unwilling to attend because, they say, they are not warmly welcomed, and they cannot get good medicine without a fee. The generous intentions of the Government of India are too often thwarted by the greed of subordinate Indian officials. As missionaries, we had to deal with these poor folk as we found them; so when they refused to go to the hospitals, we laid ourselves out to serve them as best we could. We slowly broke down their belief in witchcraft, by demonstrating the superior powers of quinine and castor oil!

One day when a Dom refused to enter the hospital,

I was compelled to open an abscess on his back. He recovered, and when convalescent, he called on me. "Sir," he cried, "I will serve you whenever I can; I will serve you to the end!" He is the official hangman! More of him anon.

These Doms suffer greatly from malarial fever, and we helped them by administering the quinine we received from the Health Officer, and from other friends. It may not be known that this drug is on sale at all post offices in British India, wrapped in packets containing directions for use. It is recognised by Government that in many villages every man must be his own physician. In such places anyone with a little knowledge of medicine and a little common sense, can be of much help to the sick.

In the hour of death we visited them and prayed with them. We went with the mourners to the place of burning on the river brink. We were always at their service. While we pitied their degradation, we remembered their fearful handicap in life, and we admired and praised such virtues as they had. We tried to understand their world, their circumstances, their outlook. We respected them for not being worse than they are; and encouraged ourselves by the thought of what they might become. We tried to look at them with the eyes of Christ and to love them with His tender heart.

In one of his suggestive books the late Dr. Gwatkin writes:

"When we have to reclaim and train to better things some degraded creature . . . we begin with neither the teachings of philosophy nor the service, of religion, nor with the commands of a law. These may all have their use later, and the last in particular may have a provisional use from the first, in keeping him from temptation and temptation from him; but our first and principal aim is to get him under the influence of a better man than himself. Till this is done, practically nothing is done.

Teaching is useless without example, feeling is empty till it has gathered round a living person, and obedience to right commonly begins with loyalty to one we love."—"The Knowledge of God.")

Such are the methods we attempted to use in our work among the Doms. By night and day, in heat and in the cold—for we have both in North India—we strove to serve these friendless folk. And as their little children greeted us with smiles and ran to hold our hands, we thanked God and took courage.

## CHAPTER X

### THE PERSONAL TOUCH

WHEN I began to work among the Doms I was fully convinced of the value of personal influence. To save such people I must have them near me. So I dismissed several of my servants and filled their places with Doms who were trying to lead a better life. One Dom I made a gardener, another a coachman, another a watchman, one became our sweeper, and another our house servant.

This experiment led to some strange experiences. The Dom I put in the garden I called Adam; but that did not make him a gardener. With some trouble I taught him to weed. He often complained of pains in the small of the back. He was not greedy, and was quite willing to let some of the orphan boys have a share in the pleasures of horticulture. I helped him in a police case, and then he left for Bengal. He was a remarkably expert robber, and was simply wasting his gifts in our garden!

The sweeper did his work as well as he could, but as he was lazy by birth and inclination, he never realised the dignity of his employment. Apart from his own deficiencies, the other servants were unable to work with him on account of his past. They gladly risked a strain rather than have his help in moving the piano. In the end he had to go.

The coachman knew something about horses—he had eaten several. And he knew something about driving, for he had driven a municipal buffalo. But he was a

marked failure as the coachman of our *Zenána gári* (carriage). Moreover, the lady in charge of our *Zenána* work found that to be driven by an ex-Dom created a very serious difficulty, for the Hindu ladies she visited objected to the presence of a Dom in their neighbourhood. We decided that the man must leave.

The bearer was only a boy, and we thought we could train him while he was young. He never wasted any of our time (or his own) in washing himself; but as he washed our cups and saucers, his hands were unavoidably clean at times. He was an inventive genius, and if no duster was close at hand when one was needed, he had no objection to using his shirt. The other servants tolerated him, because he could be made responsible for all damage done to crockery. He had special clothes to wear when waiting at table, and to prevent their being stolen he slept in them at noon and night. He was certainly unlucky; and at last it was decided that he was not born to be a bearer. . . .

The watchman is at the Mission House still, now an old man. He has proved his devotion to us—and, better still, to Jesus Christ. Burglars looted our neighbours, but they passed us by. On an average, at least a dozen ex-convicts, Doms, sleep in our compound every night. That explains why we were not robbed!

Of course, times out of number, our Doms have been suspected. One dark night the post office, which is close by, was entered by robbers; and the police almost lived in our compound, while the perpetrators, Panjábí gentlemen, were sampling another post office not far away. There were some serious burglaries in the neighbourhood, and the police made many visits to our mission; but our Doms were always present. Several of these people were out of prison on my security, so I made them sleep on the roof of the house, quite close

to my bed. Some of them even begged the privilege of sleeping at the police station, that they might not be unfairly accused of committing nocturnal crime !

Some of the men who live in our compound are reformed characters. One of them was a famous horse poisoner. Another is a murderer—though the crime was not premeditated. He complains that the dead man's skull was abnormally fragile !

Sometimes our Doms came into the compound intoxicated. They seldom do that now. One evening, on returning from the city, I discovered that a young man had put the whole compound to flight. A drunken Dom should certainly be avoided whenever possible. I took the stick from that young man and gave him a taste of it. He lives to thank me. During the war he was a Government scavenger in Mesopotamia.

When the women fought, they fought with their nails, with sticks, with bricks, with their feet and with their teeth. Family quarrels were a trouble to us. A man beats his wife with a thick stick ; he thrashes her on the back, the arms and the legs. He seizes a brick to hurl at her face. What is the matter ? Has she been unfaithful ? No ; she let a small dog sample his dinner while she was talking to a friend.

These Doms who have been in our compound, close to our house, are better than they were—much better. I think we did right to have them near us. They have turned to us for help in their sorrows and sicknesses. Men, women and children with bad eyes and ears, with wounds and bruises and putrefying sores, have looked to us for help. A little warm oil in the ear was often more useful than a whole chapter of the catechism !



## CHAPTER XI

### THE A.B.C. OF THE GOSPEL

IN the ways already mentioned we strove to get near to the Doms, to prove to them that we were their friends and thus win their confidence. Even the simplest teaching was above them ; like young children, they could not theorise or grasp abstract truth. Their first lessons had to be the very concrete ones of love in action.

But the other had to come. Believing with all our heart that—

“ None but Jesus  
Can do helpless sinners good,”

we set ourselves, from the very first, to lead the Doms to Him. It was a difficult task. There was so little that we could build upon ; but there was something. We tried to find what our modern psychologists call “ a point of contact.” They had a few religious ideas, vague perhaps, but quite real. They firmly believed in some kind of spiritual beings ; they recognised Rám and Káli and a few other gods. And from these conceptions we had to lead them on to understand that above all gods they have ever heard of there is One greater and more powerful—God alone—Who made them and loves them, and can help them. They have caught something of the Hindu idea that, to help man, certain gods have come to earth ; and we used this idea as an illustration of, the great message that “ God so



**In one of the Benares Colonies**

*Photo by F. Deaville Walker*

**Doms eke out their income with basket-making. The evangelist standing near the centre served in the War**

loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son " to come to earth to save man and to teach him about God, the Heavenly Father. Degraded as those Doms were, there was not one who did not know what it is to love their children ; and we used this sense of human fatherhood to help them to understand something of the Fatherhood and love of God.

It was even more difficult to teach them that God is holy, that He hates sin, that those who sin grieve this loving Heavenly Father and cannot dwell with Him while they are stained with its blackness and filth. Half a century of poverty, oppression and crime are not friendly to the divine in man. But we have found that the story of the Cross, of the passion of God for sinners, can touch some hearts, and make them anxious to be freed from ape and tiger that lay waste their lives.

But Doms do not take it in the first time they hear about it. However plain and simple we make the message, it is above their mental powers ; and it is only as we repeat it again and again that they begin to take it in—and even then they are apt to forget it, or to mix in with it some ideas of their own. And then we have to begin at the beginning, and tell them again, and yet again. Even we, who have been brought up in a Christian land, sometimes sing—and feel that we have need to sing—

" Tell me the Story slowly  
That I may take it in,  
The wonderful redemption,  
God's remedy for sin."

When we recalled the Father's patience with us, we learned to have patience with our poor, dull outcastes and to teach them slowly the A.B.C. of the Gospel—" precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little and there a little." Thus

we taught them the simplest truths about God, about the Lord Jesus, about the Cross.

In the same way we tried to lead them to understand what it means to be a Christian, how a Christian ought to live, and the things a Christian ought to strive to overcome. And we explained to them that their Heavenly Father could help them in the conflict with sin and make them victorious. Of course we taught them to say the Ten Commandments; but difficult as it was to teach them to memorise them, it was infinitely more difficult to help them to understand what those great Commandments mean. Some of our Doms broke every one of them again and again. And then we had to begin at the beginning again.

But the Ten Commandments were not enough for Doms. They do not cover the whole ground of Dom life; and we found it desirable to make a few more. Here are a couple of samples:

“Thou shalt not poison horses, even when thou art hungry.”

“Thou shalt not go with another man, even when thy husband is in prison.”

Hard lessons these—for Doms.

Naturally we found the children the readiest scholars and the most responsive. So, while doing everything in our power to help the older people, we specialised on the boys and girls. We opened schools for them, where they could learn to read and write their own language in the Roman character. But even here we found a difficulty, for these little ones can earn money by sweeping the streets, begging, and making baskets—the attendance at school is a real loss to the parent, who is too shortsighted to realise the compensation the future will bring. Sometimes we had to make good this loss to the parents in order to save their children. Nor

was it easy to handle children who were entirely unused to discipline of any kind, and would come to school regardless of time and filthily dirty. But as the months and years passed we began to mark progress. We taught them to sing hymns, and portions of the Bible, and the Catechism. They all learned to say the Lord's Prayer and the Commandments and the Creed. We cannot say they all understood them, but we did our best to make the meaning clear.

During the war the late Dr. James Hope Moulton visited Benares, and he afterwards wrote :

" Since the Doms are public servants, the Municipality has recognised, under Mr. Cape's persuasion, that they should house them. So, in some of their settlements, neat, simple dwellings have replaced the filthy hovels, and Dom housekeepers, as I can witness, know how to keep them clean.

" In the corner there is a school. The building is not elaborate—a sloping roof to keep off the sun, and a floor for the children to sit on—what more do you want? A score of bright-faced kiddies of both sorts are being instructed by an Indian schoolmistress, the excellent catechist's wife. There was promptly an inspection. Two or three lassies said the Creed, others answered questions in the Catechism, and others read aloud from the reading-book. All of them joined with immense vigour in singing a couple of hymns. . . . Fancy Doms reading and writing, while multitudes of Brahmans are illiterate! . . . I saw many strange and many beautiful sights in the Hindu metropolis, but one will outlast all others in my memory. It is only a lean-to roof and a clean mud floor and a lot of black-eyed gipsy children saying the Creed. India will yet say it after them! "

## CHAPTER XII

### A SUNDAY SERVICE IN BENARES

It is Sunday morning, and some sixty Doms are present at church. It is not easy for these people to attend service, for they work in the streets till ten o'clock, and when they return home they are dirty, tired and hungry. But this is their special service, and so they have come.

They sit on the floor, the men on one side and the women on the other, with the children in front. Some of the men bow their heads on entering—they have seen others do it. All feet are naked, for the few who possess shoes have left them outside. All the men remove their turbans; should a man omit to do this, a friendly neighbour knocks it off his head. A few of the people have proudly donned their Sunday best; but others, who have come straight from work, are very dirty and very scantily clothed. Two or three boys, who are unnecessarily dirty, are assisted to their feet and told to bathe at the nearest stand-pipe. The girls are advised to do their hair before they next come to church. Babies crawl or stagger about the floor, and signalise their arrival at some wished-for spot by a chuckle, a crow, or a scream of delight. A reddish dog, with a long, bent tail, enters the church, and, un baffled by the variety of odours, soon scents out its master, who either puts it to sleep or drives it into the compound.

*Bhajans* are sung: these are hymns in Hindi, set to Indian tunes. The children sing them lustily, generally finishing well ahead of the harmonium. At the ordinary

services, when respectable Indian Christians sing translations of Sankey's hymns, the harmonium is often first to finish, as it is played by a European who cannot easily accommodate his pace to the deliberate drawl of the Indian adult.

To-day there are to be some baptisms, and ten adults and several infants will be received into the Church. If the people have been under instruction for some time, they are able to reply to most of the simple questions that are put. They promise to give up drink, thieving, witchcraft, gambling, adultery; they will no longer call on their old gods, Rám or Káli, but will reckon themselves disciples of Jesus Christ. They are quite willing to receive instruction in the Christian religion. They consent to part with the chunni, or sacred lock, which links them to the very Hinduism which spurns them. Then they kneel. When they first begin to receive Christian instruction they do not know how to do it. They can stand and sit and lie down, but they must be shown how to kneel! The sacred locks are cut off, and they receive Christian baptism, while the congregation shouts, "Victory to Jesus Christ!" One of the most notable features of the service is that two ex-Brahmans take part in it.

Before the infants are baptized their parents are instructed in simple language: "If you gamble, your child will; if you thieve, your child will: these children belong to Jesus Christ; take care of them for Him." When told to name the child, the parents often reply that they prefer the Pádri Sáhib should do it. So a girl may be called Jessamine, Gazelle, Star-like, Princess, Mary, or Beloved; and a boy David, Lover of Christ, Servant of God, Gift of God, Calcutta-born, Benares-born, Peter, James, or John. In the former days a Dom would call his child Dung-beetle, Sorrow,

Tribulation, Cow-dung, Dumb, Mad-boy, Rám's Servant, or the Six-fingered One.

On one occasion when the Rev. S. H. Gregory, then General Superintendent, was conducting the service, a Dom baby was brought for baptism. It had been his invariable practice to kiss all the infants he baptized. But this baby had never been washed, and was covered only with oil. Osculation would be a perilous operation. He hesitated a moment, and then, taking the baby and his courage in both hands, bestowed a most audible kiss upon the little brown mite! When the service was over we discovered that a member of the congregation had brought his butting ram to give an exhibition of jumping and butting in honour of the occasion!

After the baptism, another *bhajan*; a few verses are read from the Outcastes' Charter—the Bible—and then the address. He must be a born preacher who can keep the attention of a Dom congregation while he speaks for their profit. Should a Dom tire of the discourse, he either indulges in a period of vocal sleep, or interpolates a yawn, so rich in inflexion and so intense in expression that it might be weariness itself protesting. The man who employs appropriate language—a mixture of Urdu and Hindi, with a few words in the Dom jargon by way of condiment, who is rich in simple, homely illustrations, who is not afraid of reiteration with variation, who really cares for the people and wants to help them, who is thoroughly alive himself—such a man will make a preacher to the Doms. The great aim should be to get one big new thought into the minds of the hearers. Probably (to be really helpful) it will be of necessity a very elementary thought—"Why a Christian must not beat his wife," or "Why it is wrong to tell lies," some new teaching about what Christ can do for us, or about how to ask



God to help us. These people are only in God's Primary Class; they are very dull, and learn very slowly.

Sometimes we test our congregations with questions. They usually sit in groups, colony by colony, and the children school by school. After a hymn, we ask all to stand and bow their heads for prayer while those from City Colony No. 1 say the Lord's Prayer. Then we call upon the children from such-and-such a school to say the first Commandment, those from another to say the second, and so on. One school may be asked to repeat the twenty-third Psalm, and the people from one of the colonies to sing a verse of a hymn. This has the effect of testing the people, and also of finding out if the evangelists are teaching them properly.

We make the most of the great festivals of the Church. Christmas and Easter are times of joy, and we make them as festive as lies in our power. The Hindus, the Muhammadans, and even the non-Christian Doms have their religious festivals, that come as holidays to break the drab monotony of life. We want to teach our Christian Doms that they too may have their seasons of joy and festivity, but on Christian lines, instead of the old festivals of sin and drunkenness. But the Church festivals serve a deeper purpose. We utilise them to make more vivid the great events they commemorate. The message of Christ's birth, of His Cross, of His Resurrection and Ascension become more real to our Doms as they sit in their church and listen to the story of the particular day in the Christian year.

Moreover, we use other festivals as aids to teaching those who are so simple and young in the faith. Picture the scene in one church on the day set apart for the Harvest Thanksgiving. The purpose has been explained beforehand, and as the people gather they bring with them their gifts to their new Lord, even as

of yore they took their offerings to the old gods. They bring the baskets they make to eke out their poor living—mats, fans and baskets of all kinds, and these are arranged round the pulpit and the communion rail. Then, in the service we help them to realise, in their simple way, why we should bring gifts to Jesus the Saviour.

Though such a service as we have described differs in many details from that conducted at Westminster Abbey or in Wesley's Chapel, London, it is adapted to the Dom's present capacity, and enables him to find some joy in worshipping the unseen God. With people so lowly as Doms, who have everything to learn from the beginning, it is best to regard the services as a school—a school of worship, in which they learn to behave properly, to revere the church as God's house, and, above all, learn the privilege and joy of Christian fellowship and worship.

## CHAPTER XIII

### HUMAN DOCUMENTS

MANY of our Doms can tell strange stories of the life they have lived. Some of these stories are terrible to listen to—records of sin and shame. Most of them have been in prison time after time. We keep a register of all our Doms, and in it we have a record of all their convictions and sentences. Those of our readers who have been to a Salvation Army testimony meeting in a slum district will have heard strange stories of life-tragedies. These are nothing to the experiences our Doms can relate. Let us listen to some of them while they tell their story. They do so without any trace of bravado, but rather with shame.

#### I.—THE LIFE STORY OF RAMESHWAR.

“I was born at Kánwar in the Benares District. My mother told me I was born in the year of the mutiny. My mother's name was Sulámi and my father's Dhondu. As a child I used to look after the goats and pigs; I was taught to make baskets and fans, and to help cremate the dead. In those days there were forty or fifty Doms at Kánwar.

“I married Gopi's sister when I was thirty. Some of the Doms committed burglary in the city, and when they were caught, one of them gave my name to the police, because he was afraid I might take his wife while he was in prison. Yes, I had joked with her. The Doms were prosecuted; some were flogged, three were sentenced to five years', and I and another to

seven years' imprisonment. Why did we get seven? It was Muryidhar's fault. When the judge sentenced him to five years, he threw his shoe at the judge. I was manacled to his chain, and they thought I had a hand in the outrage.

"I went to the central prison, Benares, for six months, and then to the Andaman Islands. I had good food and clothes and was better off than I am now. We could wander about during the day, but had to be in our rooms by eight o'clock at night. There was not much danger of our escaping, as we had the sea all round us. I saw the people of the country. They shot with arrows and killed fish and turtle and pigeons and pigs. While there, I lived with a Bengali woman for three years. I was shut up in prison for six months for fighting.

"I hanged about a hundred persons who had committed murder.

"After my release, I returned to Kánwar and began to work. My wife came to me with a child by another man, but I would not keep her. I took another and lived with her for five years.

"Then I was sent to prison with three other Doms for one year for being a vagrant and suspected person.

"After two years in Kánwar I was sent again to prison for one year. The police allowed me to live two more years at Kánwar, and then I was sentenced to twelve months.<sup>1</sup> Fear of the police kept my friends from going to court in my behalf. We had income from the burning ghát and from our pigs and poultry, and I was not a vagrant.

"I came into Benares to see a lunar eclipse. Some

<sup>1</sup> All these sentences were under Section 109 of the Criminal Procedure Code, which enables a magistrate to call upon a person to find security on the ground of his having no ostensible means of livelihood.

Doms stole a nose ring from a woman, and the police arrested me as well. I got three years.

"Then about five years ago I was sentenced to three years<sup>1</sup> because the police officer persuaded some men to swear I was not living honestly. That police officer died not long after and so did several of the witnesses.

"Can we get what we like in prison? Yes, by paying for it. You can get opium and *bháng* and the *muqqa*. The warders are told where your relatives live. They call on them and receive the money. They buy the things you want and are paid for their trouble. They keep four annas in the rupee.

"In prison I had to flog a lot of men. I used to let Doms off easily. I could flourish the stick and make much noise without doing much damage to the man I flogged. I had to hang several men. They would cry, 'Síta Rám! Síta Rám!' as they walked to the gallows. Yes, I confess I did many robberies; the largest was about six hundred rupees worth of stuff. The police never caught me. The charges for which I went to prison were usually false charges.

"Altogether I have had five wives. I shall not steal any more. I do not want to go to prison again. My wife and I both work as scavengers for the municipality, and we both earn a little extra money by basket-making. I promise I won't gamble again. If you catch me drinking again, may my punishment be the punishment of a thief!"

## II.—OLD POTAN TELLS HIS STORY

"I was born at Rajhát, on the other side, about

<sup>1</sup> Under Section 110 C.P.C. This law enables security to be taken from a person who is proved to be by common repute a habitual thief. It is a hard law and, like 109 C.P.C., can be used for oppressive purposes. It is often used in India. Excessive securities are demanded and the accused has to remain in gaol.

sixty years ago. My father's name was Raghubir, and he used to ferry a boat across the Ganges, where the big bridge now stands. I used to help him row the boat. Yes, all castes would come, for who can respect his caste in a ferry-boat? The boat was in the water and the water was the Ganges. My father used to keep goats and fowls. No, my father never went to prison. Both he and my mother died while I was young.

"One day the Doms of the city had a big drink and many got drunk. Then they began to fight and the police came and caught several of them. A man, through enmity, gave my name to the police and I was arrested. Nothing could be proved against me, so I was sent to prison, under Section 109. I don't know how old I was then—about eighteen or twenty. When I came out of prison I decided to throw my lot in with the thieves. We visited Bengal, and dug into many houses and got much. One night we broke into a raja's house—he was a small raja—and I got seven hundred rupees as my share of the booty. If there is any doubt as to what we get in a robbery, we have to take an oath in the name of Guru Sarpál, the patron of thieves.

"How did we get into the raja's house? We opened a window with a *sabari*. It is our special tool for this work, and is made privately by the ironsmith for two rupees. We generally went in small gangs: one man would enter the house and the other would watch. If a man roused, he would be knocked on the head with a stick. Yes, there are village watchmen; but on cold, dark nights they go round only once, and then we are free to begin. If a watchman happened to find us, we should knock him on the head with a stick. Why should I not tell you? I once killed a man. He woke when I was in his house and I hit him. No, his

death did not trouble my heart, for I did not mean to kill him. I hit him properly, but his skull was not as thick as it should have been. I stayed away from my friends for three months when I heard that the man was dead.

"What do we do with the loot? Many people will buy it from us. The jewellery we show to a goldsmith, who will give us five rupees for what is worth ten rupees. What do we do with the money? We spend it on food and clothes and drink and lawyer's fees and on the police. When we returned home to Benares we bribed the village watchman not to report our arrival. That is an easy thing to do, as a village watchman gets less than three rupees a month.

"I have been six or seven times in prison. I was in the Naini gaol for seven years. I entered the house of a wealthy man in Allahabad and he woke and caught me. I was taught no trade in prison, as I had to do sweeper's work. I was also ordered to flog prisoners. I have had five wives at different times.

"Just before my last release from gaol I was told that many Doms had become Christians and that there was much benefit in becoming a Christian. So when the prison sahib asked me where I should go when I left prison, I told him I should go to the pádri sahib's. When I came here you gave me some tea to drink and I heard some children sing, and you got me work. I have married Khargu's mother in your church, as you know. I am a municipal sweeper now, and I shall live and die here. I shall not go to prison again. I am too old to steal."

### III.—THE HISTORY OF RÁMGATI, *alias* ISÁ DÁS

"I was born in Balmol about twenty-three years ago. My father had land and kept many pigs. He

sixty years ago. My father's name was Raghubir, and he used to ferry a boat across the Ganges, where the big bridge now stands. I used to help him row the boat. Yes, all castes would come, for who can respect his caste in a ferry-boat? The boat was in the water and the water was the Ganges. My father used to keep goats and fowls. No, my father never went to prison. Both he and my mother died while I was young.

"One day the Doms of the city had a big drink and many got drunk. Then they began to fight and the police came and caught several of them. A man, through enmity, gave my name to the police and I was arrested. Nothing could be proved against me, so I was sent to prison, under Section 109. I don't know how old I was then—about eighteen or twenty. When I came out of prison I decided to throw my lot in with the thieves. We visited Bengal, and dug into many houses and got much. One night we broke into a raja's house—he was a small raja—and I got seven hundred rupees as my share of the booty. If there is any doubt as to what we get in a robbery, we have to take an oath in the name of Guru Sarpál, the patron of thieves.

"How did we get into the raja's house? We opened a window with a *sabari*. It is our special tool for this work, and is made privately by the ironsmith for two rupees. We generally went in small gangs: one man would enter the house and the other would watch. If a man roused, he would be knocked on the head with a stick. Yes, there are village watchmen; but on cold, dark nights they go round only once, and then we are free to begin. If a watchman happened to find us, we should knock him on the head with a stick. Why should I not tell you? I once killed a man. He woke when I was in his house and I hit him. No, his



death did not trouble my heart, for I did not mean to kill him. I hit him properly, but his skull was not as thick as it should have been. I stayed away from my friends for three months when I heard that the man was dead.

"What do we do with the loot? Many people will buy it from us. The jewellery we show to a goldsmith, who will give us five rupees for what is worth ten rupees. What do we do with the money? We spend it on food and clothes and drink and lawyer's fees and on the police. When we returned home to Benares we bribed the village watchman not to report our arrival. That is an easy thing to do, as a village watchman gets less than three rupees a month.

"I have been six or seven times in prison. I was in the Naini gaol for seven years. I entered the house of a wealthy man in Allahabad and he woke and caught me. I was taught no trade in prison, as I had to do sweeper's work. I was also ordered to flog prisoners. I have had five wives at different times.

"Just before my last release from gaol I was told that many Doms had become Christians and that there was much benefit in becoming a Christian. So when the prison sahib asked me where I should go when I left prison, I told him I should go to the pádri sahib's. When I came here you gave me some tea to drink and I heard some children sing, and you got me work. I have married Khargu's mother in your church, as you know. I am a municipal sweeper now, and I shall live and die here. I shall not go to prison again. I am too old to steal."

### III.—THE HISTORY OF RÁMGATI, *alias* ISÁ DÁS

"I was born in Balmol about twenty-three years ago. My father had land and kept many pigs. He

also had a large, fierce dog, which one day attacked the horse of an indigo planter. The planter shot the dog. My father said hard things to the man. To punish my father, he reported him to the police as a bad character, and as many of the Doms who lived with him were thieves, my father was sent to prison for harbouring them. When released he joined his robber friends and went with them to Bengal.

" I, with my mother, set out for a village near Benares, where we lived by ourselves. My father continued to steal, sometimes rupees, sometimes ornaments and sometimes vessels of brass. He was caught and sent to prison for one year. On coming out he began to rob again, and his work was very fruitful.

" He was able to build himself a house with a tiled roof. Then he sent for his wife and children, eleven of us altogether. My father's Dom thieves also lived there.

" I learnt to read and write a little. We called ourselves Dharkárs; not much notice is taken of caste in that country, so a high-caste man was willing to teach me. My father's friends went on with their thieving. Then, because the owners of fields and houses began to complain, my father decided to move. We went to D——, and there my father did a little farming, but his old friends found him out, and he was sent to prison for being a housebreaker by repute.

" My mother and her children wandered to M——, where the Doms were very kind, and one of them arranged that we should have four begging beats. The Hindus regard it as a part of their religion to give gifts to the poor. So at the weddings we got sweets, clothes, rupees, grain, and rice. This rice had been cooked. But as we could not eat all we got in the days of weddings, we dried it, and then put it in jars to be eaten in the months when the Hindus do not marry.

"Then my father came out of prison, and we all went to live at B——. My father knew no trade. He was a great drinker. He would go to the liquor shop with his friends, and would order a cauldron of drink; and they would all sit round and bail it out with their little earthen pots. My father was the steadiest drinker of them all. My grandfather died and left me 130 rupees. The police began to take an interest in me. My father thought it wise to go away. I offered the police thirty rupees to leave me alone.

"One day some Doms, who had stolen in a certain place, brought their goods to my house. The police arrested us all and I was sent up with the others as a suspected character, and got seven months in prison. The magistrate fixed my personal bond at twenty-five rupees and that I could have paid. But he also required a surety for the same amount—and who will be surety for a Dom?

"It was not proved that I had done wrong; I was sent to prison because I could not give the security required for good behaviour. In gaol I attended the school. I learnt to make rope and carpets. On Sundays we were weighed, and then we could see who was in prison with us. There were many Doms.

"The day I was released I was re-arrested and taken to Bengal, to the place where the robbery had been committed which got me my first imprisonment. I was prosecuted, with others, for belonging to a gang of thieves, and as it was proved I was my father's son, I was given three years, which were reduced to two on appeal. In the B—— gaol I again went to school, and was taught other industries.

"About this time my father was in the B—— gaol. Letters, opium, tobacco and money can be had by the prisoners inside. A friend walks about outside. A

gaoler approaches him and the terms are settled. The prison Doms sometimes do the flogging. The Doms like this. A clever man, for love of money, or brotherhood, can hit with much display and noise and little damage.

"On my release I returned to S— B—, where I did scavenger's work in the native infantry lines. My father received an extension of his term for fighting with his fellow-prisoners. He died in gaol a few months ago. One of my sisters has been twice in prison.

"In 1907 I was sentenced again,<sup>1</sup> although I had done no wrong. While I was working in the regiment many horses were poisoned, and no arrests were made. So the magistrate sent all the male Doms of our village to prison.<sup>1</sup> The poisoning ceased, so it is probable that one of our Doms was guilty; but the magistrate caused some innocent men to suffer with him. While in gaol, I heard that the Doms were becoming Christians. On my release I came at once to you, and you know the rest."

To-day, this man is an evangelist at one of our mission stations, where by his unwearied devotion, he has been instrumental in winning many members of a jungle tribe for Jesus Christ. His official history sheet demonstrates clearly how criminals are manufactured.

Sentenced in November, 1900, under 110 C.P.C., to seven months.

Sentenced in February, 1902, under 401 I.P.C., to three years.

Sentenced in July, 1904, under 110 C.P.C., to one year.

Sentenced in April, 1907, under 110 C.P.C., to one year.

Sentenced in June, 1908, under 110 C.P.C., to one year.

He was about sixteen years old when he received his first sentence for being an habitual offender! In 1902 he was sent to prison for belonging to a gang of

<sup>1</sup> Under Section 110.

thieves : he had the misfortune to be his father's son. In 1907 he was sentenced under 110 C.P.C., and before he had been three months out of prison he was arrested and again sentenced to one year under 110 C.P.C. And this in spite of the fact that the High Courts have clearly and frequently declared that the most abandoned criminal is entitled to a *locus pœnitentiæ*.

## CHAPTER XIV

### BABES IN CHRIST

THE tragic stories given in the last chapter will give an idea of the kind of material we had to work upon. It will be recognised at once how difficult was our task when these degraded people began to turn their faces Christward and to stretch out their hands to Him. We have already shown how very mixed, and often even sordid, were the motives that at first moved them. It was for us so to influence them that these low motives gave place to higher ones. And then, in ones and twos, and later in small groups, some of them received Holy Baptism at our hands.

Even then the work of training them was slow and tedious and often discouraging. We were constantly reminded of Myers' great lines :

" Let no man think that sudden, in a minute,  
All is accomplished and the work is done ;  
Though with thine earliest dawn thou shouldst begin it,  
Scarce were it ended in thy setting sun."

They were " babes in Christ " ; nothing more. They were weak, simple, ignorant. They fell scores of times, and we had to help them up again. It was pathetic—sometimes painful—to witness their struggles. When they needed instruction we taught them ; when they required rebuke, we rebuked them ; when the younger ones needed chastisement, we supplied it. " We have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us," said the author of *Hebrews* ; we had to stand in that same

relationship to more than one young transgressor, and between their sobs they have said, "You are our father and our mother!" The worker among Doms requires firmness, and even sternness, as well as love and patience.

In all our work we had a great deal of assistance from our devoted Indian helpers, some of whom lived very near to the Dom colonies, and by their sympathetic help won their confidence. Yea more, they did much to awaken in them a measure of self-respect. For years one of our best Indian helpers has been a convert from Islam, and another is an ex-Brahman. Think of it—a Brahman devoting his life to Doms! The sight of this brother sitting by the bedside of a sick Dom, tending him with his own hands, giving him milk and medicine, and teaching him the sacred Law, impresses both Caste and Outcaste. Not from India's sages did that ex-Brahman learn this spirit of self-denying service for the lowly and degraded.

Several years ago, at a meeting of Hindu notables in Benares, someone mentioned the mission to Doms, and thought it a fit subject for scornful laughter. This was overheard by the late Mr. Radice, then District Magistrate, and he replied: "For generations these Doms have been at your doors, and you have not even lifted a finger to save them. Now that Christians are doing this you laugh. Give the Christians a chance."

We have had our chance, and although progress has necessarily been slow, it is possible to point to definite and tangible results. Large numbers of Doms now realise that they are Christians, owing allegiance to their Great Deliverer. They know that there is a bond of brotherhood uniting them to their teachers. They appreciate the sincerity of our motives and willingly accept our discipline. They are seriously striving to

adjust themselves to a new standard of living. There is a marked increase of respect for the marriage tie, and the young people are now married according to our Christian rites instead of the old carnal unions that were once the general rule.

In our 1917 report we were able to write : " Very few of our Doms are now in gaol, and those who have been there have not hesitated to speak to their fellow prisoners of their new God . . . so that many prisoners have heard of Christ."

The time came when the prison authorities were obliged to engage and pay free Doms to do the scavenger work formerly done by Dom prisoners. A great sign of grace, that. It meant that old fetters were being broken. But the wonder has gone farther than that : quite a number of Doms have kept straight for years, and by order of a magistrate *their names have been crossed off the police register* we spoke of in a previous chapter ! Think of it—they are no longer obliged to answer the roll call every night !

Some of these babes in Christ show signs of growth. That is healthy. Some grow rapidly, others more slowly, and some do not grow at all. But patience will tell in the long run, and one day those who follow us will rejoice over those for whose welfare we have some-times been utterly spent.



## CHAPTER XV

### FOES WE HAVE TO FIGHT.—(I) DRINK

FOR the Dom, the Christian life is a fight—a good fight of faith, and courage, and perseverance. The old evil habits that beset him still dog his footsteps. Those nurtured in the atmosphere of Christian homes find it difficult to realise the force with which temptation assails the Dom who strives to follow Christ. Humanly speaking, everything is against him—age-long custom, personal habit, inducements innumerable and on every hand. If he wins through, it will be by the help of Jesus.

We have now to consider some of the chief besetments our Dom Christian has to face and which *we* have to help him to overcome. In these things the missionary must be Greatheart to the Dom pilgrim to the Celestial City—not only acting as his guide, but also fighting his foes for him until he is strong enough to do it for himself.

First there is the foe of strong drink. Some people say that Europeans taught the Indians to drink; but it is certain that the Doms knew how to drink intoxicating liquor before the coming of the British; and so, too, did many other castes and tribes.

The Dom begins to drink on the day of his birth; for the fond mother gives her child some drops of *dáru* (country liquor<sup>1</sup>) before it has tasted milk. When a child is born, the father drinks and gives to others. When the child is betrothed, he does the same. When

<sup>1</sup> Made from the flowers of the mahuá tree.

adjust themselves to a new standard of living. There is a marked increase of respect for the marriage tie, and the young people are now married according to our Christian rites instead of the old carnal unions that were once the general rule.

In our 1917 report we were able to write : " Very few of our Doms are now in gaol, and those who have been there have not hesitated to speak to their fellow prisoners of their new God . . . so that many prisoners have heard of Christ."

The time came when the prison authorities were obliged to engage and pay free Doms to do the scavenger work formerly done by Dom prisoners. A great sign of grace, that. It meant that old fetters were being broken. But the wonder has gone farther than that : quite a number of Doms have kept straight for years, and by order of a magistrate *their names have been crossed off the police register* we spoke of in a previous chapter ! Think of it—they are no longer obliged to answer the roll call every night !

Some of these babes in Christ show signs of growth. That is healthy. Some grow rapidly, others more slowly, and some do not grow at all. But patience will tell in the long run, and one day those who follow us will rejoice over those for whose welfare we have some-times been utterly spent.

## CHAPTER XV

### FOES WE HAVE TO FIGHT.—(I) DRINK

FOR the Dom, the Christian life is a fight—a good fight of faith, and courage, and perseverance. The old evil habits that beset him still dog his footsteps. Those nurtured in the atmosphere of Christian homes find it difficult to realise the force with which temptation assails the Dom who strives to follow Christ. Humanly speaking, everything is against him—age-long custom, personal habit, inducements innumerable and on every hand. If he wins through, it will be by the help of Jesus.

We have now to consider some of the chief besetments our Dom Christian has to face and which *we* have to help him to overcome. In these things the missionary must be Greatheart to the Dom pilgrim to the Celestial City—not only acting as his guide, but also fighting his foes for him until he is strong enough to do it for himself.

First there is the foe of strong drink. Some people say that Europeans taught the Indians to drink; but it is certain that the Doms knew how to drink intoxicating liquor before the coming of the British; and so, too, did many other castes and tribes.

The Dom begins to drink on the day of his birth; for the fond mother gives her child some drops of *dáru* (country liquor<sup>1</sup>) before it has tasted milk. When a child is born, the father drinks and gives to others. When the child is betrothed, he does the same. When

<sup>1</sup> Made from the flowers of the mahuá tree.

the child is married, he spends two months' pay on drink. When his father dies, the son rests and refreshes himself at every drink-shop on the way to the river. Into the dead man's mouth the Doms put molasses, a *tulasi* leaf, gold or silver, and some *dāru* and Ganges' water. The Dom's caste councils and discipline meetings (*panchayat*) are held in the drink-shops, where he sits and soaks and decides that the accused man shall supply free drinks to his judges! The holding of *panchayats* in drink-shops should be officially prohibited.

At his feasts, in his heathen state, the Dom drinks freely, and thus is enabled to dance indecently and to belch forth awful filth on his wife and daughter. He inflames his passions with *dāru*, and normally he lacks self-control. His children may be hungry and naked, but he must have his drink. The liquor makes him a danger to his family and to his neighbours, and it takes him to prison, where he bribes the warder to get him drink. On his release he goes straight to the nearest grog shop to drink, to concoct crime, and to be sprinkled with the *dāru* which is said to cleanse from the defilement of incarceration. When a friend from Calcutta visits him, he does his best to make him drunk. He steals and burgles to get his desire; and will break the cartilage and flesh of a woman's nose in his eagerness to snatch the ring which he can turn into *dāru*. Drink brutalises him, and makes him a man after the devil's own heart; and only a brute or a fool would wish him to drink this liquor which is manufactured in Government distilleries.

Why does he drink? He may have inherited the craving from an unbroken line of ancestors. His parents taught him to drink and to get drunk; all his friends and neighbours drink.

An American divine has said that "Let us forget" is the Recessional of Alcohol. That is true. "When I am sober, I am but a sweeper; when I am drunk, I am a raja," a friendly Dom told me one day.

The drink shops licensed by Government look like neglected cattle sheds; but a man pays six hundred pounds for the annual licence to sell *daru* in one of them. They are supposed to close at 9 p.m., and they are not supposed to sell to children; but as the solitary Excise Inspector must also attend to cocaine and opium cases, he cannot properly supervise the liquor shops. The Government should sanction further expenditure on preventive measures. Five lakhs of rupees (£33,333) were received during twelve months from the Benares city excise—drink and drugs—but only one per cent. was spent on establishment charges. The police are often too apathetic, or too deeply interested, to be of much assistance to the preventive staff. A late Commissioner of Excise for these provinces admitted that "with the staff on its present scale," preventive work cannot be done efficiently. If a liquor shop-keeper (*Kalwár*) is caught breaking the rules, and is convicted, he often escapes with an utterly inadequate fine, which is an encouragement to repeat the offence. Some of these drinkers declare that there can be no wrong in consuming liquor prepared by the Government.

It is disquieting to notice the number of poor people, beside Doms, who waste their money in the Benares *kalwariyas*. Because they will have their *daru* or *idri*, the wives and children must suffer the loss of necessary things; and such impoverishment cannot be for the good of the community, though excise officials regard an increase of revenue as a sure token of prosperity. It is dastardly to encourage people to spend their money on that which is injurious; and to grant facilities is to

encourage. It should be known that the drink habit is increasing among caste Hindus and Muslims, although it is condemned by their religions.

When the Hindus celebrate their *Holi* it almost seems as if "hell is empty and all the devils are here" in North India. It is the spring festival, and this is the way it is observed: The Hindus light fires at cross-roads; they squirt red water on neighbours and strangers; they smear their face with red powder; they sing lewd songs, make filthy gesticulations; and shout obscenity at women and girls. They drink and get drunk. They are "impetuous, insolent, unquenchable." The festival is a disgrace to the citizens of Benares, and to the authorities who tolerate its abuses.

During a celebration we visited a drink shop in the Bengali quarter. It is a sealed-bottle shop where country liquor (*daru*) is sold. The man was charging fifteen annas (pence) a bottle, and was passing the liquor as fast as he could take the money. The consumption from this shop must be enormous, for the owner has paid £746 for the annual licence. It was quite clear that children could buy the spirit, for we turned back several during the few minutes we were watching. Shops were visited where drink is consumed on the premises. They were packed with low-caste Hindus, many of whom were drunk, and singing lewd songs. Little children were present, and were being "treated" by their guardians.

I have seen a toddy shop filled with Muslims during one of their religious festivals, and drunken Muslims fighting savagely on the platform of a spirit saloon.

Some interested persons say there is no place for temperance reform in India because there is so little drunkenness; "faddists" must wait till things get

worse. Is it certain that cure is better than prevention ?  
 And who would undertake to cure a drunken India ?

It will be readily understood that the old drinking habit is a great power over our Dom Christians, an ever-present foe that must be overcome by those who follow Christ. We spare no effort to help our Doms to keep from drinking. We give them tabloid lectures ; here is one :

The drink shop is hell :

The drink is poison :

The seller of drink is a servant of the devil : (*Devilink Govt.*)

The buyer of drink is a fool.

This is crude and personal, but we have found it effective. We teach our Doms to recite : *Sharāb kharāb hai* (drink is damaging) ; *Dāru men ābru nahin* (drink destroys honour) ; and so on. At baptism the Dom promises not to drink, and we promise to help him to keep his promise. If we find him in a drink den we ask him to leave, and if he lingers, we expedite his departure. Sometimes we picket special drinking dens to keep a weak brother from yielding to the temptation to enter. The children are taught temperance songs and receive medals ; we promise them a beating if we catch them drinking.

We try to exorcise the drink devil with strong tea, in which cloves may be introduced to please the palate ; and we note with satisfaction that in many homes tea is displacing toddy.

The local Government at last decided that no liquor shop should be opened in inconvenient proximity to a settlement or colony of a criminal tribe ; for it recognised that these dens are more dangerous to such people than powder-magazines.

The Government also changed its attitude to temperance reformers, and began to treat them with courtesy

and respect, and even to solicit their co-operation. But temperance workers discovered that while highly-placed Government officials sympathised with their efforts and ideals, some subordinate officials remained apathetic or hostile.

Then came the great change. In 1921 the new Constitution came into operation; an Indian gentleman became the Minister of Excise, and at last the Administration made a serious attempt to deal with the drink menace. The Government of the United Provinces appointed a Committee to consider important matters of excise reform; and the author of this book was chosen to represent the temperance interests. Most of the recommendations of this Committee have been accepted by Government. Licensing Boards have been appointed with power to select licensees and to close drink and drug shops. There has been a drastic curtailment of the hours of sale. With a few exceptions country liquor, which is the dangerous drink, will not be obtainable before noon or after sunset. The bad system of selling the licences by auction to the highest bidder has been abolished and replaced by the system of graduated fees. All excise shops will be removed from all fairs and religious festivals, and liquor shops will be closed on the great day of the *Holi* feast. Excise officers will no longer try excise cases. No persons under sixteen will be permitted to enter liquor shops and the responsibility will rest with the drink-seller. Caste committee meetings (*panchayat*s) may no longer be held inside drink shops.

These temperance reforms will prove of great value to the whole community and particularly to those who work among the Doms. The Government have accepted the principle of Local Option and have declared officially that their excise policy in the future will be "the



subordination of considerations of revenue to the promotion of temperance." This formal declaration is a great moral victory. As the Indian comes to his own the drink evil is being expelled, and it is a pleasure to record that these excise reforms have been introduced in large part because of the support of the Excise Minister, the Honourable C. Y. Chintamani.

The Dom is also menaced by the common sale of *charas*, *bhang* and *ganja*—poisonous preparations of Indian hemp (*Cannabis sativa*). He is too poor to be tempted by the whisky which Scotch distillers export to India.

If the people were permitted to decide, a vast majority would vote for total and permanent prohibition of the drink traffic. God save India from England's curse! And may all in authority take action immediately—in the words of Lord Morley—"to prevent the spread of this dire, new, additional plague."

## CHAPTER XVI

### FOES WE HAVE TO FIGHT.—(2) THEIR FEASTS

ANOTHER very fruitful source of evil to our Dom Christians is the clan feast, which is one of their chief joys in life, but which provides opportunity for unlimited drunkenness and sin.

The Dom loves a feast. His life is very drab, and often food is scarce. When opportunity for a feast arises he throws himself into it with heart and soul—sometimes running seriously into debt in order to do so.

When a boy is born, his fond parents—if he is the fortunate possessor of two—call him, let us say, Gobar, which means cow-dung, an article employed by all Hindus for cleansing purposes. When Gobar is six months old, his parents invite all their friends to dine with them to celebrate the child's *non chikkhi*, or salt tasting. Some salt is put on a piece of pork and the pork is put in the infant's mouth, in the presence of all the guests, while the father says, "You see, brethren, I've called a few of you to my door to eat. Bhagawán (God) who gave us this child, has kept him alive for six months, and now he is able to eat salted pork and enter into our caste." I am informed that this ceremony roughly corresponds to the investiture of the Brahman lad with the sacred thread, and to the circumcision of the Muslim.

Sometimes the parents promise a goddess, like Bindháchal, as the Doms call her, that if she will preserve their child till he is five years old, they will shave his

head outside her shrine and offer a goat as a thank-offering, in expectation of further help. The goat's body will be carried home and the friends feasted. When the child is betrothed, the parents will give another feast, and another when he is married.

When his father dies, Gobar will give a feast for the dead. An earthenware saucer is filled with boiled rice and pork and pulse and placed in the house where the man died. Beside it is another earthenware vessel filled with water, and a third filled with *dáru* (spirits). In front are seated the friends and the *ojhas* (wizards) who tried to cure the man and were present when he died. Gobar will say to the wizards: "Will the one who collected my father's spirit when it left his body please give it some of this food?" One of the wizards makes a small circle on the ground and within it places cloves or barley or peas and calls to the spirit; he then turns to the other wizards and enquires if the spirit has arrived. They will all make a most careful inspection of the *gonta* or circle, and deliver a verdict. When they unanimously declare that the spirit has arrived—and they swear to speak the truth—the first wizard collects the cloves and the dead man's spirit and places them on the boiled rice. The three vessels are covered with a basket, the wizards and friends leave the house, and Gobar, the son, watches on the threshold. All the guests begin to dine. When they have finished, two or three enter the house and lift the basket to see that the spirit has had its share. Five pieces of flesh from the back of the pig and five pieces of its liver were placed on the saucer. Some have disappeared, some of the water has been drunk, and some of the *dáru* too. Then the friends will say, "See how good Bhagawán is, He has allowed the spirit to share in the dinner; the man was taken by God Himself." If nothing has been touched,

the wizards and friends agree that a *bhūt* (an evil spirit) has killed the man.

When there is to be a great feast of the clan, two or three hundred guests will be entertained. If it is a wedding feast, someone from the bridegroom's house will take round the invitations. He offers a pice (a farthing) to each one invited, and the pice is at once returned as a token of acceptance.

The provisions are purchased a day or two before the feast. Rice, pulse, garlic, pepper, salt, turmeric, cummin seed—all these can be bought at the *bantiya's* shop. The pig is purchased on the day of the feast. It is held down on its right side, and a long iron or sharp bamboo skewer is forced through its ribs into the heart. This method preserves its blood and is not cruel when carried out by an expert.

The pig is thrown into a wood fire and its long hairs are extracted and sold to the goldsmith or to some merchant who makes or needs brushes. The little hairs are scraped off with knives. The pig is washed in water, opened and cut into small pieces. There is no waste, and everything is eaten—everything.

The cooking of the rice is a somewhat lengthy process, because no pot is large enough to hold the quantity required. As the rice comes hot from the pot it is strained and placed on a large sheet on the ground; and this is repeated until all the rice has been cooked. It is cooled by boys who sit and fan it. These boys must be unmarried.

As the pork boils it is stirred with a long black piece of wood from the fire. While waiting, the guests amuse themselves by song contests. The leader of one band sings an improvised line on some topic of the day; and his companions repeat it, singing with great vigour. Then the other side invents a line,

as pungent as their hot spices, and sing it with fervour.

About two in the morning the feast begins. The men and boys are seated, facing, in two long lines, but they are unwilling to eat with women. The host provides plates for his guests which cost him fivepence a hundred; they are leaves fastened with bits of straw.

The bridegroom's father and his friends walk up and down the lines filling the plates with food. As hands are clean, knives, forks and spoons are not required. No one begins till all are served. They say what may perhaps be regarded as grace: "*Pancho, Lakshmi Narian!*" "O caste-fellows, eat with heaven's blessing," is a free translation. They are silent for a few minutes while they eat; and then they begin to criticise.

"Look here," says one, letting the pulse run through his fingers, "you call this pulse, I call it water." The host replies: "It is a great deal better than the stuff you gave when your father died, you blackguard!" One headman has been keenly inspecting the plate of a rival chief. He bellows for the host. "Look here," he cries. "Did you ask me here to insult me? That man has more pork than I have; give me more at once, or I shall go home with my family." The host takes the hint and gives him more. The guests have been waiting for hours, but the actual eating only lasts about ten minutes. Appetites are edged, and no time is frittered away in prandial pleasantries of speech. There is generally only one course, though sometimes a second helping for the guests who have spared their teeth at the cost of their stomachs, and are able to catch the waiters' ears.

The women keep themselves warm by sleeping

huddled together under tattered quilts, or by sitting close to shovels full of ashes from the big fire.

Then more food is cooked, the women are called, and sit down to the feast in the early morning. Crows and pariah dogs fight for the debris. Most of the men and many of the women are drunk; they drank on the way to the feast, and were supplied with liquor on their arrival. Here are two inebriated Doms staggering and bawling. One challenges another to plunge into a filthy pond. The challenge is accepted, and in they both go. A few of the guests have been compelled to eat separately as punishment for some misdemeanour. The *dáru* is doing its work, and they will fight for their honour. The quiet guests are dead drunk. One man's head was opened in a fight, and he sits and sings provocative songs. A dog smells the face of a sleeper, who awakes and drenches it with untranslatable abuse. The Doms are enjoying themselves. "*Sharáb aur suar ká kabáb yah meri zindagi hai.*" "I live for strong drink and roast pork," cried one of them one day in a tone of complete sincerity.

Worse follows. Then the police arrive and take the names of the adults; for these people are professional thieves, who may have cracked a crib or a pilgrim's head, on their way to the feast. Dom discipline committees are held, and one man stands convicted of an unnatural offence. He is beaten on the head with a shoe, five times, by a caste officer. The shaving of the head is the severest penalty inflicted upon a woman. Before the police leave, they arrest men who have been fighting savagely with sticks, and have no money to settle the case out of court.

None of these folk will be fit for their work in the morning, and the sanitary officials will curse the Doms and their dinners.

Such was a Dom feast before the coming of the missionary.

When large numbers of Doms became Christians such carousals became a very serious stumbling-block to them. One such feast might easily destroy a good work that had taken months to accomplish. We soon found that the caste feast was one of the foes to the Christian life, and as such we had to fight it.

But how was it to be done? To the Dom life is so drab, and it was undesirable to deprive him of recreations and pleasures which might be a most useful safety-valve for his natural emotions. We soon saw that the best and wisest course would be, not to attempt to prohibit feasts, but rather to control and reform them. When our Christian Doms organised a feast, we took good care to be present from beginning to end. We saw that there was no strong drink; we prohibited indecent dancing and acting. We assisted the police to preserve order and their own honour. When the meal was over, we were ready with the gramophone, the magic lantern or a few fireworks. We encouraged the children to sing their new hymns. And when the next day broke, we saw our Doms safely off to their work—*sobor!*

It usually meant our being on duty for twelve hours without a break—from 7 p.m. to 7 a.m.—but it was worth it.

## CHAPTER XVII

FOES WE HAVE TO FIGHT.—(3) WITCHCRAFT AND MAGIC

YET another enemy to the Christian life is the belief in witchcraft and magic that is deeply rooted in the Dom heart. Ignorance always exposes men to blind superstition; superstition, in turn, opens the way to many evils and abuses, and, when the superstition is connected with sickness, it often leads to unnecessary physical suffering. One of the problems of our Dom work has been—and still is—to fight this insidious foe. The task is by no means easy, for superstition is so woven into the very nature of these poor creatures that it lingers in the hearts of those who become Christians, and sometimes it is years before a man is wholly freed from the fear of *bhúts* (evil spirits).

We must first describe a few of the practices connected with this fear of spirits. If a Dom is ill, his wife is certain that the sickness is the work of a *bhút*, so she sends for an *ojhá* (wizard), and begs him to expel the demon.

The sick man lies on the ground, close to the exorcist, who produces a small earthenware lamp, some barley-corns, cloves and camphor, and some red and white flowers. All become silent. The wizard begins: "All hail, spirit-watcher of the village (*dih thákur*), from you I beg some land for the temporary location of a *bhút*; I entreat you, O great prince, to grant me the demon which torments this man." Two barley-corns are burnt in the lamp; they explode. "Thou hast



answered me, O great one," the sorcerer cries. The burnt barley is placed by the lamp and ordered to remain there. The exorcist speaks again: "O Parameshwari Bámát, if thou failest to expel this spirit, my teacher will be disgraced for ever."

Two barley-corns are offered to the flame; they explode. "I am answered." The blackened barley is placed by the lamp. Now the wizard addresses the great goddess of Bindháchal: "O mother goddess of Bindháchal, here in this assembly (*sabhá*) let justice be done; milk of milk, water of water, pure justice and naught beside."

More barley-corns make more explosions.

"Blessed be the word" (*dhanya terá bachan*), cries the sorcerer. Two cloves and a small piece of silver are placed beside the barley. "O spirit-protector of the village, with this money to-morrow I will make thee an offering." A thin piece of cloth, six or eight inches long, is produced, and a stone is tied to one end. The exorcist grasps the cloth and cries: "Who will sit on this? Who will sit on this? Will the great goddess?" The people gaze spellbound at the pendulum in the necromancer's hand.

"Will the spirit of my teacher sit here? Will the five spirits of my teacher sit here?" The pendulum is motionless.

"On this will Parameshwari Bámát sit?"

The magician makes an almost imperceptible movement of his hand, and the pendulum swings. The spectators understand that the spirit has arrived. "Stop!" cries the wizard, as he steadies the swinging stone. "Very good!" he exclaims; and proceeds to interrogate: "Is this sickness a visitation of God (Rám)? Is the man possessed?"

The pendulum swings assent.

"Will the sick man die?" No movement, and the man's wife gasps with relief. The crisis has come.

"If the sick man worships the goddess, will he recover?"

The pendulum swings.

"What must his offering be? Will one, two or three small pigs suffice?"

No answer.

"Will you be satisfied with a goat of one colour (*baran*)?"

The pendulum nods assent.

"What else? Some toddy?"

The spirit cannot be tempted.

"Two bottles of *dāru*?"

The pendulum swings violently.

The sorcerer puts the cloth and stone to his forehead, kisses them, and says: "Blessed be thy word; thou hast answered."

He now presents some twenty or thirty barley-corns to the spirits before the lamp. He makes a noise of kissing. Then he prays that their decision by barley may be welcome to all concerned. He counts the grain, two at a time. If there is one over, the sick man will quickly recover, if it works out even, the sickness will be severe, and other charmers may be required. The counting is done twice. The wizard clasps his hands before the spirit-possessed barley, and sings: "Every hour I call to thee: I will wipe the dust from thy feet" (*ghariye ghariyā hakya māro, jhārun tere charanua kā dhūl*).

The spirit invoked now descends upon the sorcerer, who shakes his hands violently as if he had pricked all his fingers. He cries: "Victory! Victory! Proclaim victory!" Someone asks: "Who has entered you, O sorcerer?" He replies: "I am the spirit-protector

of the village." Another asks: "Will you make the sick man well?" "Present offerings and he shall be healed," comes the quick response.

The exorcist now approaches the patient, and taking the barley grains between the finger and thumb of his right hand, waves both hands over the devil-possessed man. He then seizes him by the neck, clasps him round the waist, shakes him violently, and cries: "Come out! Come out! Come out! O vile one (*chanddl*)!"

The barley-corns are carefully placed on the ground, and appeal is made to another wizard. "Has it come out?" If, after examining the barley, he answers in the negative, the operation is repeated until the colleague is satisfied that the spirit has arrived.

The sorcerer strokes his own head with his right hand, makes a kissing sound, and places the demon-possessed barley on the ground. "How do you feel now?" inquires the magician. As the result of some alcoholic stimulant, or through fear of further treatment with enhanced fees, the patient may profess to be cured. If he still complains of pain, the sorcerer reminds him that after the removal of a thorn from the foot, full relief does not come at once; and in a similar way, when a devil has been extracted, the body feels bruised and sore for a season.

Another spirit may now be evoked. Or a man may ask: "Was the devil put into this sick man through the enmity (*ldg*) of a wizard?" As the answer to this inquiry may lead to bad feeling and violence, the friends of the sorcerers and the patient always take their long bamboo sticks to the consultation. "Will you make the man well?" is asked again, and the reply is given that generous offerings will be efficacious, if made without delay. An enthusiastic relative may

promise a goat ; but experience has taught the wizards that a bottle of beer in the hand is worth two goats in the bush.

The exorcised devils must not remain where they are, so the necromancer takes the spirit-possessed barley, with some cloves, in the palm of his hand and cries : " O Samaiya of Dehli, swallow up these *bhūts*, put their hands in handcuffs and their feet in fetters, put bamboo splinters beside their nails to prevent them scratching ; and cover up their eyes (*hath men hathkarī, gor men berī bāns bhar de : nahan khapāch bhar de : ankhēn tawakal (?) bharde.*."

The sorcerer smites his heart with his clenched fist in which he holds the devils, and cries : " Cause the evil ones to arrive !"

For his own safety he mutters : " In the left an evil spirit, to the right one also." He then kisses the barley-corn. Some sorcerers eat it, others throw it away, and a few keep the grains wrapped up in a cloth. " Have the demons arrived ? " he inquires, and the answer is always satisfactory.

The sorcerer's work is now complete, so he adorns himself with flowers. " Put the lamp on the shelf, and the demons in prison," is his last instruction, and all adjourn to the public-house.

• • • • •

A few more facts may be of interest. Sometimes the magician cuts his tongue with a knife and offers the blood to the spirits. Sometimes he exhales fire from his mouth like a common conjuror.

The man who wishes to be a wizard must serve a severe probation for six months. During this period he must not shave, he must refrain from pork, the leavings of others, and food cooked by women. Women

very seldom practise sorcery ; in fact, I am only acquainted with one, and she has not a large clientele.

No wizard is ever called to deal with a case of small-pox, which is said to be caused by the indwelling of the great goddess Sitala, the Mother, whom no sorcerer can expel.

A Dom magician was seen going through the following performance: he held a young pig by the mouth with his left hand, cut its throat with a knife in his right hand ; he then cut off its head and placed it on the ground. He placed the head in its blood and poured water over it ; when the head was convulsed, he made a kissing noise and said : " You have come, you have come." He then recited the following spell : " To whom I an evil spirit apply, to him may it apply ; whom I strike, may he die ; the demon I bind, may it be bound ; whom I release, may he be freed."

If a Domin's child dies at birth, the malignity of a demon is at once suspected. Should this happen more than once, the woman will endeavour to pass on the spirit to another woman. The child's body is buried at dead of night, with flowers, spices and cereal food, in an earthenware pot, where four roads meet. The first woman to walk over the spot in the morning is supposed to attract the demon to herself and to become possessed by it.

The following are princes among the devils : *Firinghi ki mart*, the spirit of a British soldier who was drowned in a pond in the cantonment. When operating with this demon, the wizard speaks in broken English, uses obscene language and offers the spirit English bread, cigarettes and beer.

*Pagal khána mart*, the demon of a man who died in the mad-house. *Korhiya Baram*, the ghost of a leper. *Qila ki mart*, a spirit whose head-quarters are Fort

William in Calcutta. *Jhúla Devi*, the famous goddess of Ranikhet, in the Himaláyas. *Bansapti* is an influential demon, whose abode is in the hills near Mirzapur. *Ashámini* (? Akásh . . .) and *Mohantí* are also known to the Doms; they are spirit-sisters of the air, and are specially invoked by the Nat who needs their help while he, during his acrobatic performances, balances himself high in the air at the end of a long bamboo.

Doms believe, with other tribes, that demons are afraid of iron, and a Domin will place the iron instrument for splitting bamboos on her bed, to protect herself and her new-born child from evil spirits.

The Dom sorcerers dominate their community to a very large extent. When the sorcerer is a money-lender, he threatens, in extreme cases, to put an evil spirit into the debtor who does not meet his liabilities. The terrified man will either steal to pay the debt, or he will suddenly leave for distant Bengal.

The heathen Dom is more sure of the power of the wizard than he is of the power of his gods (Khudá, or Rám, or Bhagawán). He has seen the wizard and his victims; he has not seen God, and is not at all sure that he does anything. The Dom who has no knowledge of the Heavenly Father believes with all his soul in malignant spirits who hunt and haunt him by day and night; and he thinks that their activities can be directed by the sorcerers. It is an act of simple humanity to tell him of the Name which charms our fears.

\* \* \* \* \*

Two Doms were fighting one day, and I elicited the surprising fact that they were sober. They were not fighting about a woman, or concerning the payment of debts, or the division of spoil. One man complained

that the other had robbed him of his *siyār singhi*. So I called him on one side and asked him to explain. And this is what Gopi told me :

" The *siyār singhi* is from the head of a jackal ; it is the horn of a jackal ; the ordinary jackal has no horn, but this is from an unusual animal, one in five hundred. It is a very small horn with hair attached to it. It came from a jackal which was head of the pack, and the first one to call at night. One day it rubs its head on the ground, and the little horn falls off. The Musahars, who are jungle people, find it and sell it for ten rupees.

" It has life in it and can drink milk. What do you say ? No it cannot eat meat, but I have seen it drink milk.

" What is the use of it ? It enables you to win your case when prosecuted by the police. You press it between your finger and thumb when you stand with your hands together before the magistrate. It is so small that no one can see it, and you must keep your hands like that while you are in the court.

" I cannot tell you how it acts. Some say it affects the magistrate and others think it helps the pleader. I think it should assist the prisoner to speak in his own defence. But the last time I used it I got three years."

It is possible that this may be an example of homœopathic or imitative magic, as described by Dr. J. G. Frazer : " Animals are often conceived to possess qualities which might be useful to men, and homœopathic or imitative magic seeks to communicate these properties to human beings in various ways." Perhaps the Dom hopes that the jackal's cunning may possess him when he appears in court.

The Doms are not alone in this use of the jackal's horn. I have met Musahars willing to sell a *siyār singhi* for six shillings and eightpence. They had three in their possession, which they allowed me to examine. They were, as the Dom had said, very minute horns, with hair attached to the base.

\* \* \* \* \*

There are several ways of fighting this foe of superstition. The one is education. In our schools we are

teaching the children the folly of fearing evil spirits ; and though the older people do not come to school in the way the children do, we lose no opportunity of giving to them also such instruction as they can receive. But it needs a prodigious amount of teaching to expel the fear of demons from the Dom soul.

One very effective way of undermining belief in witchcraft is to engage in medical work. Even the little I could do was remarkably useful. The very amateur treatment I was able to render proved more helpful than the incantations of the wizards. A fully trained doctor would be mighty in destroying belief in magic by demonstrating the superior power of scientific medical treatment. Happily Miss Spencer, of the Women's Auxiliary, who is now working among the Dom women, has had some medical training and a good deal of experience of dispensary work. She is rendering invaluable service in this and other ways.

To our Dom Christians we continually emphasise the thought that the Heavenly Father is mightier than evil spirits and can deliver from them. Usually the children are the first to grasp this great assurance, but some of the older people also are coming to understand it. To them the ninety-first Psalm has a wondrous appeal ; almost every sentence meets their need, and some of them are slowly learning to say :

“ I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge,  
My God, in Him will I trust.”



## CHAPTER XVIII

### FOES WE HAVE TO FIGHT.—(4) MARRIAGE CUSTOMS

OF all the degrading and sinful practices that beset the Doms, the most serious, and the most difficult for us to fight, are those connected with their matrimonial relationships. Their animal passions are exceedingly strong and undisciplined. A white life appears to be something quite beyond their conception; the very suggestion of it comes to them as a thought wholly new and quite impracticable. They have no idea of the sanctity of the marriage ceremony, and very little of the duty of fidelity.

While some of their marriage customs are harmless, and others are such as can be turned into right channels, some are wholly degrading and cannot be permitted in the Church of Christ.

There are four stages in a Dom's marriage. First there comes the *bat chit*, that is, a preliminary conversation and arrangement; then the *mangni*, or betrothal proper, which is followed by the *shadi*, or wedding; the consummation of which is called the *gaund*.

The *bat chit* is arranged by some friendly go-between, who visits the parents of the children concerned. The matter is discussed in the presence of the *chaudhari*, or headman. The *howli* or drink shop is the place chosen for the conversation, which is assisted by the consumption of *daru*, very strong drink.

Then comes the *mangni*, or formal betrothal. The

friends of the lad visit the bride's house with presents for the bride and her mother, which are invariably *luggas* (long pieces of cloth to be wrapped round the body and passed over the head). The bride's friends spend six shillings and the boy's representatives half a guinea on *dáru*.

When the boy is about fourteen and the girl ten or twelve, arrangements are made for the *shádt*, or wedding. The bridegroom sets out for the bride's house with the *barát*—the friends of the bridegroom, dressed in their best clothes, coloured in accordance with their individual fancy. They carry long bamboo sticks, and take rest and refreshment at every wayside inn. They know where these inns are located and arrange their journey so as to avoid as few of them as possible. With the Doms go the Chamárs, who are to furnish the music and the dancing. When the party is near the bride's house her friends approach and demand five lumps of coarse sugar, five *chilams* of tobacco, and five *btras* of *pán*. *Btra* "is a preparation of the areca-nut with spices and lime, wrapped in a leaf of the betel plant. It is given in confirmation of a pledge, promise and betrothal." The *chilam* is the part of a *hugga* which holds the tobacco and the fire.

The bridegroom's party replies that nothing will be given, but they will fight their way through to the bride's house. The present writer has seen this fighting and can vouch for its sincerity. On one occasion, within the first five minutes of the engagement, three men had broken heads and bloody faces. These bridal belligerents rejoice at such an opportunity for wiping out old scores. A bamboo (*máro*) is planted in the ground opposite the bride's door. Sooner or later the bridegroom fights through and seizes the bamboo. Then the combat ceases; the bamboos are piled, the

heads and faces are bound up with any dirty cloth that is handy, and the marriage proceeds. The bridegroom and his friends present the tobacco, the sugar and the betel leaf.

By the bamboo is placed an earthenware pot containing Ganges water and mango leaves; the jar is closed and on the cover is barley and rice. To the bamboo two artificial parrots are tied, one of each sex. They are made of wood and coloured green. The bridegroom's father bathes the feet of the girl with water from the jar, and the bride's father does the same to the bridegroom. The water is not thrown away; the girl's father takes some of it in his hand and puts it into the mouth of the father of the boy, who retaliates in a similar friendly fashion.

The bride's father presents the young man with a rupee or two, as a token of his pleasure, and the two fathers produce some *lawá* (parched grain), which they pour from their own baskets into one plate, as a sign of union. They then scramble for the grain amidst the laughter of those present. The bridegroom rubs some vermilion on the girl's forehead, in accordance with Hindu custom.

The bridegroom's elder brother puts a red thread round the bride's neck and from that moment he must not touch or even speak to her. The bride and bridegroom play with cowry shells; the one who throws *chit* (the open part of the shell) upwards, is said to win. If the girl wins there is great merriment.

The bridegroom's father fastens bracelets of white metal round the girl's wrists; meanwhile, the bride's girl friends are at liberty to joke with the bridegroom, and they avail themselves of the privilege in pleasantries that need not be translated.

The Chamars play, sing and perform. When the

spectators laugh, you know that the mime's vaudeville is obscene.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dom marriages are sometimes exciting almost to the point of tragedy. I well remember the day when a lad, bearing the distinguished name of Tulasi Dás, was married at Tiruán. Knowing that some Doms regard fighting as a necessary part of a wedding ceremony, we escorted the bridegroom's party all the way from Benares, about fifteen miles. When the Doms complained of fatigue and thirst it was a sure sign that a liquor shop was near.

We waited at the bride's house for the coming of the bridegroom. When the sound of drums was heard, the bride's party sprang to their feet and grasped their long bamboo *lathies* (sticks). We thought the time had come to make a collection of them; but the men refused to give, as they had no assurance, they said, that the other party had relinquished their weapons. We despatched a message to direct the guests to lay down their arms. They explained afterwards that they would have obeyed had they been quite sure that the bride's party was unarmed.

Then I went myself, but the friends of the bridegroom had scattered in the fields; and it was far from easy to ferret them out as they lay prone on the ground and were as black as the night that hid them.

Having made sundry protests and promises, we retired to the rear. There was silence for a moment, and then the swish, swish, thud, thud of *lathies*, and yells of rage and pain.

Two men ran to us, their faces bathed in blood: "O Presence, we obeyed you and laid down our sticks, but those bastards" (I take refuge in a euphemism)

"did not heed, and with their sticks have opened our heads!"

The men were bleeding lavishly; and if they had not worn thick turbans on heads of an Eastern pattern, at least two cremations would have followed the marriage. But when we had bound up their wounds and promised to punish the guilty, they made quick recovery. One of them grasped his *láthi* and hastened to do a little phlebotomy on his own account. The other sat on a bed and improvised poetry, which cannot appear here, but which greatly relieved the author as it was deliberately projected to wound the opposition.

We noticed that stones and clods of earth were falling in our direction. This was not playing the game, as immemorial custom has decreed that only *láthies* shall be used at marriage feasts. It was reported that some of the guests were taking advantage of the opportunity to wipe out old scores. As it seemed likely that they would wipe out the bride's party as well, we went to the front and ordered the attackers to retire; but it is not easy to regulate the traffic when Doms are out. They were thirsty for blood and continued to advance, so I gave them due warning and then fired. Doms can run as well as fight, and they got well ahead of the No. 8 shot which I scattered in their direction—over their heads of course. There were no casualties except some *láthi* wounds, but the bridegroom and his friends retired to a distant field, where they passed the night. They cheered themselves by the aid of little fires and a *hugqa*, which a friend in the enemy's camp smuggled into their lines.

The man on the bed composed more poetry and consoled himself and entertained his friends by singing it with a voice which reached the enemy's bivouac.

At three in the morning someone suggested that it might be as well to get on with the marriage. The man with the broken head and poetical gift objected; but it was possible to arrange a compromise. The bridegroom and his mother would be allowed to participate, but the guests must stay in the fields.

The bridegroom looked very miserable as he squatted on the ground; his anxious glances betraying his realisation of the difficulty of repelling an attack should the singer still seek for red revenge. He was unaware that it is "the man that hath no music in himself, nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds," who "is fit for treasons, stratagems and spoils."

This we knew, but we stood close at hand, and kept the bridegroom safe till morning light, when the marriage ceremony was concluded.

\* \* \* \* \*

The bride may not be sent away from her own home till two or three years have elapsed. When the parents come to an agreement, the bridegroom goes to the girl's house with a few friends; they all drink *daru*, and then the girl leaves her home in the custody of her husband. This is the *gauna* (the bringing home of the bride).

It should be noted that the Doms do not allow the marriage of cousins under any circumstances whatever, and regard such a connection as incestuous.

It would not be *quite* correct to say that Doms have no idea of the sanctity of the marriage tie. They unquestionably have, for unfaithfulness is usually held to be a grievance which the husband is entitled to resent—as is clear from several instances we have already quoted<sup>1</sup>—but it is appallingly common for all that. When her husband is in prison, it is quite the

<sup>1</sup> See Chaps. II, XIII, etc.



**Methodist Dog Catchers.** .(See pages 19 and 115)

*Photo by F. Deaville Walker*

usual thing for the wife to consort with another man ; and as some men go to prison pretty often, it is nothing unusual to find wives who have lived with a number of men. In a sort of way it is held to be an offence—in theory ; but there is no shame about it. At best it is regarded as nothing more than an infringement of the husband's rights, and the idea of chastity does not enter into it. It must be confessed that these poor creatures have terribly low moral standards.

What happens when they become Christians? This is one of the most difficult subjects missionaries have to deal with. Yet it must be dealt with very firmly if the rising Dom Church is to be worthy of the name of Christ. At all costs the Church must be pure. This is one reason why we are never in haste to baptize Doms who express a desire to become Christians. Their matrimonial entanglements are often so complex that it is difficult to know which is the proper course to take. Obviously a man's legal wife is the one he was formally married to ; but suppose she has been living for years with another man, and the woman now living with him is the mother of his children—must she be sent away to a certain life of sin ?

Under such circumstances it is exceedingly difficult to introduce the Christian form of marriage ; certainly it must only be done in safe cases, where it will be understood and honoured. Meanwhile we must teach—patiently yet firmly—what marriage means. The new Commandment we have previously referred to, "Thou shalt not go with another man, even when thy husband is in prison," must be repeatedly emphasised and explained, and, so far as is possible, enforced ; impurity of thought, word and deed must be fought step by step ; and Time—and *the Grace of God*—will work wonders. Public sentiment will undergo a



change ; as the men go less frequently to prison, there will be less temptation for their wives ; and as the Dom Christians grow in grace, the moral atmosphere of their colonies and homes will become more wholesome.

As in most things, our chief hope lies with the children. We are instilling into their minds new ideals of marriage and home life ; as they grow to young manhood and womanhood they will, we trust, enter upon Christian marriages, and this giant evil of immorality will diminish. Already we have solemnised some marriages that are worthy of the Church of Christ, and homes are being created that are a witness to His transforming power.

## CHAPTER XIX

### FOES WE HAVE TO FIGHT.—(5) ABJECT POVERTY

POVERTY lies at the root of most of the crime for which the Doms are responsible. They are not thieves by nature, but by necessity. Sometimes, when I have been trying to teach a little company to understand the command "Thou shalt not steal," someone has interrupted me with the anxious question: "But, Padri, how can *we live*?" And the difficulty is a very real one—and ever present.

Their means of subsistence are varied, but always precarious. Those who are municipal scavengers are paid a wage of six rupees a *month* (i.e. eight shillings), and even Doms cannot live on that miserable pittance. Others are public dog-catchers, whose duty it is to lasso stray dogs and put them into a sort of cage on wheels. Still others are employed to stand knee-deep in the yellow water of "Holy" Ganges to push corpses away from the mouth of the conduit that supplies the city with drinking water! Some supply the wood and fire for Hindu cremations. The income from all these employments is miserably insufficient and often uncertain. Many of them try to supplement it with basket-making—a practice we do all in our power to encourage. Even when to the income from more or less regular employment is added the proceeds of begging and the gifts of food left over from Hindu feasts, one word is indelibly stamped

over Dom life—POVERTY, abject, grinding, degrading poverty.

Let us examine their manner of life.

With the utmost industry the Dom can provide himself and his family with food and clothing. His domestic expenses are extremely low. He believes in thorough ventilation for his children, and spends nothing on their apparel. He does not lay out more than two or three rupees a year on clothing himself and his wife. The Domin never wears a hat or bonnet. Her one garment does for everything, but for all that she is more chastely clad than many English girls! Her *sári* (dress) never varies in shape; it is just one piece of cloth, a yard wide and about six yards long. The women of India have not changed their clothes for at least three thousand years. When a neighbour dies of plague or cholera, the Doms receive the raiment of the dead, if they remove the corpse; and in this way they can add to their scanty wardrobe.

Their manner of life is extremely simple. Their bedding consists of blankets and quilts which have been in the family for generations, and which were abstracted originally from a dust heap: they are stained, torn and densely populated.

The Dom can spend almost all he gets upon his food, for he contributes nothing to life-boat institutions and Royal societies. When recreation is necessary, he gambles with cowry shells—eighty a farthing. Birthday presents cost him nothing, for no Dom knows when he was born: it happened in the year of the Mutiny, or when the railway was building, or in the year of the great hailstorm. If his son merits a reward he can buy him a kite for the eighth of a farthing.

If it were not for weddings, cremations and feasts, witchcraft and drink, the Dom might manage to live

on his income. Witchcraft is necessary when sickness comes ; weddings and death cannot easily be avoided ; the feast is dear to his soul, and drink is paradise regained. Beyond these things, the Dom sometimes needs a little ready money to show his appreciation of the services rendered him by the police.

When a Dom is in pressing need of cash, he goes to a money-lender of his own caste. This is a man who is comparatively affluent, for he inherited money which his father saved by his knowledge of the ways of men, and his ignorance of the Ten Commandments. He is quite willing to lend money to a brother Dom ; he can have five rupees ; and as he is a brother Dom, he will charge him only three hundred per cent. per mensem. He demands no security, but he, or his children after him, will surely collect the money. He is always present on pay-day at the municipal or cantonment office.

If the debtor cannot pay, he may allow the debt to stand that the interest may grow. But if he is in need of cash, he tells his wife to make lucid and acid remarks to the defaulter about his pedigree. If the debtor's wife objects, the money-lender's wife or daughter will take her in hand, and try to remove her scalp or *sári*. The next few minutes are crowded ; but things get sorted out in time.

Should the debtor die, his wife and children must meet his liabilities. If the debtor loses himself in Bengal, the money-lender either waits for his return, or pays frequent visits to his wife and children.

If the Dom borrows from a merchant in the bazaar, he must furnish security, such as gold or silver jewellery —which belonged to his or someone else's grandmother —and he must pay two annas on each rupee, every month. He has other friends, the Aghas, who are Afghan traders from Kábul. They appear at the

beginning of the cold weather. They bring their wares with them and infest both city and village. They press their cloth upon unwilling customers but do not want their money till the spring harvest comes. This is a pleasant but expensive way of getting clothed. The purchaser pays nothing now for the rupee coat, but will have to pay considerably more than a rupee when the spring harvest comes! It is not agreeable to pay a rupee and a half for a rupee coat which is worse for the wear of six winter months. But the Dom pays; and that is a great compliment to the Agha. The fact is this, the Agha was born to collect debts. He is a tall handsome giant, with a fair face, long curly hair, baggy trousers and colossal self-esteem. He strides the street as if the world were his, and he regards the European as a very little thing. We always felt greatly elated if we could persuade an Agha to leave our compound when some of its inmates owed him money. He gets impatient if the hot wind blows before he has collected his dues, and often calls to his friends to assist him to recover his money. They surround the debtor, and advise him to pay if he loves life and length of days. They talk about his wife and daughters as if they knew them intimately. They assure him that he is no man, but the son of a dog, the offspring of a peccant pig. If he still vacillates, they cease their appeals to his better self, and proceed to extremes with their cudgels. The debtor calls his wife, who with great reluctance counts the money into the hands of the Agha. Some say that these Afgháns are the lost tribes of Israel; but it is difficult to believe that such people could lose themselves or anything else. . . .

We started a loan fund to rescue our Doms from the money-lenders; but it is a most difficult business. Sometimes we have even felt like sympathising with

the Aghas ! If we could only find a very newly converted one, not excessively converted, we might employ him as a debt collector ! But for all that, we have to lend ; with a people so poor it is impossible to do otherwise. Sometimes " borrowing dulls the edge of husbandry," and sometimes it saves a man from crime. If my readers could but know the Doms they would realise how great is the problem presented by the poverty of our people. We need patience and intense sympathy, truly ; but these have to be tempered with tact, experience, and great firmness.

But such help must of necessity be only a temporary expedient. It may help a family over a desperate need ; it cannot be a solution of the problem of their poverty. By some means or other we must find means of raising them to a position of self-support. This must be by the double process of (1) teaching them to reduce unnecessary expenditure by discarding such things as drink and witchcraft, and by reducing to a reasonable figure the outlay on weddings and feasts ; and (2) by preparing the young for more remunerative employment.

In this connection an industrial school for Dom boys became an imperative necessity. It is impossible to elevate such a tribe as the Doms without some form of industrial training. Our institution in Benares is only in its infancy, but it is already doing most useful work. It is not exclusively for Dom boys, but some sixteen or twenty of them are learning carpentry and cane-work, and a number are boarding in a hostel provided for them. It is a distinct advantage to have them rubbing shoulders with boys of other castes. They are making excellent progress, and orders for work are coming in freely.

Best of all, regular work and a disciplined life is working a transformation in the character of the boys

and already some of the seniors have been received into Church membership.

The Rev. J. R. Hudson, who took charge of the Dom work on my retirement, is hoping to develop this invaluable Industrial School. The chief difficulty lies in the reluctance of the Dom parents to spare their boys for a few years. At home, even the youngest children earn a little to help to provide food for the family, and it requires some sacrifice to forgo such help for the period the boy is undergoing training. It seems necessary to give a little assistance in a few very special cases, although for several reasons this is undesirable if it can possibly be avoided. In Haidarabad children are lured to school with prizes, and we have resorted to a similar plan in Benares. It is a great joy to know that the Missionary Society has resolved to develop the Industrial School on more adequate lines, and has appointed a specially trained lay missionary to take charge of it.

## CHAPTER XX

### MIRACLES OF GRACE

SOME fifty years ago an official writer on the Inferior Castes of India<sup>1</sup> described the Doms as "sunk and debased beyond recovery." That is a strong phrase. We have proved that it is not true. The experiences of the last fifteen years make it clear that Doms are *not* "beyond recovery." Touched by the mighty hand of God quite a number of them are transformed men and women. Hundreds of them have been baptized and are attempting to follow Jesus Christ, and though most of them are not yet much like the Master, and only a few have progressed so far as to be admitted to Church membership, it is beyond question that most, if not all, who have been baptized are different men and women from what they used to be. When we consider their past, and the tremendous forces against them, we are amazed at the progress they have made. Every year makes a difference, and some have "grown in grace" in a way that fills our hearts with thankfulness and hope.

We have read, in the reports of the Home Mission work of our Church, of bands of men known as "Miracles"—men who have been saved from a life of drunkenness and sin and are now working in connection with one or other of the Central Halls of Methodism. We too have our "miracles." We do not dare to call them by that name, or allow them to know all we think

<sup>1</sup> E. A. Reade, "Notes on the Inferior Castes."



of them. But they are miracles nevertheless—veritable miracles of the grace of God.

Think of hundreds of Doms, once believed to be "sunk and debased beyond recovery," trying to serve Jesus Christ, and through "failure, fault and fear," striving to live the new life. Is not that a miracle?

Think of quite a number of Dom Christians who have kept straight for years and have had their names crossed off the police register, by order of a magistrate. In scarcely a case has this confidence been misplaced. Is not this a miracle? What but the grace of God could do it?

When I remember Old Potan, our mission house watchman, once a hardened criminal now a sincere Christian, and Mangru the public hangman<sup>1</sup>, and many another, I cannot but regard such men as miracles of grace.

In June, 1915, the medical mobilisation officer of Lucknow requested the district magistrates to send him a company of scavengers willing to serve in France. The district magistrate of Benares referred the application to me as superintendent of the Wesleyan Mission. It was not easy to persuade our Dom scavengers to volunteer. They shared the Indian's horror of crossing the "black water," to go to a strange land; and some of the caste men of the bazaar considered it their duty to inform the Doms that no Indians ever returned from France.

Nor were the wives and mothers willing to lose their protectors, and persisted in asking who would fight their battles when their men folk were away. And some of the Doms were not quite sure that their wives could be trusted to remain faithful. But the fact that they were

<sup>1</sup> See Dr. Horton's statement in the "Foreword" to this book.

heavily in debt inclined them to make the venture, for the terms of service were most satisfactory: When we expressed our willingness to be responsible for the disbursement of the family allotments, and promised to supervise carefully the young wives, the men decided to go. Seventeen passed the doctor, and after a brief stay in Lucknow, left Bombay for "Wiláyat"—the Hindustani word for a foreign country. (Waláyatí or Bilátí means European, foreign, English, etc., hence the British soldier's "Blighty"!).

We were not ignorant of the dangers to which these very immature Christian Doms would be exposed in the army and in a far country, and we were anxious to make provision for their spiritual oversight.

One of our theological students was Pyáre Lál, an ex-Dom. His mother was dead—fortunately for him. His father, a dacoit in Bengal, was too much alive. We made known our fears to Pyáre Lál, and asked him to go with our Doms to France. When he enquired how this could be arranged, I told him there was but one way: *he would have to resume the sweeper's broom, and do the work of a scavenger again.* At first he recoiled from the suggestion; but when I reminded him of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ who for our sakes became poor, stripping Himself of His glory that He might serve others, he gladly consented to go. He gave up his theological studies and the work for which he was being prepared, and *to help his weaker brethren became a scavenger again, for Jesus' sake.* In this humble and despised position he went to France, where he served his friends by writing their letters and by praying for them, and by gathering them together for the singing of hymns, so that in their strange surroundings they might remain faithful to their new-found Saviour.

A year later, in a London "tube," several people were

speaking disparagingly of missionary work. An Army officer, a Major, interrupted them by saying: "Excuse me, before the war I should have agreed with you. But out in France we had some fellows called Doms, and they did us good service. I was told that in India they were a rotten lot, criminals, thieves, and the worst men in North India; but a man—a Wesleyan from Benares—had got hold of them and made Christians of them, and satisfactory Christians they proved. *I am bound to stand up for missionary work after what I saw in France.*"

In due course our Dom scavengers were transferred to Mesopotamia, where, greatly to their joy, they met an old friend, the Rev. George Spooner, a missionary they had known in Benares, and the very one who had seen them off when they left home. They told him how kindly they had been treated by the French people, how greatly they had been impressed by the French funerals, and how they had prayed at wayside shrines. Early in 1916 they were joined by twenty-five more of our Benares Doms, who had offered for service in Mesopotamia, where a ward servant or scavenger was worth his weight in gold, at the time of the great mismanagement. There they laboured, keeping things clean in "the Garden of Eden"! Pyáre Lál returned at the end of the war, having served in France, Egypt, Mesopotamia and Palestine. He resumed his studies and is to-day a fully accredited district evangelist, with a deep love for Jesus his Lord.

Surely when another chapter is written of the Acts of Christ the name of that eighteen-year old Dom lad should be remembered. Is he not a miracle of the Redeeming Grace of God?

And that same Power that has wrought the change in Pyáre Lál is to-day working in other hearts also.

## CHAPTER XXI

### SAFE HOME

CHHEDI's son was dead. Chhedi is one of our Christian Doms and is a scavenger in the cantonment. The little lad had been ill for a long time, and the doctor, the father, and the missionaries had done their best for him. He passed away quietly and unexpectedly just after midday gunfire. They told us the news, and one of our evangelists went to the stricken home.

A little bamboo ladder was made by the father and the friends and when the child's body had been bathed and covered in a shining cloth, it was fastened on the ladder, and taken away on the shoulders of the mourners; and in this way little Husani left his home. It was good for him to go; he had been in pain for many days, such pain as was perfect misery. His home was in the Sadar bazar—just a little mud hut with other mud huts on both sides. Many of the people round him were base in word and deed. Hell had been about him in his infancy, with some glimpses of heaven too; but he was greatly loved by his father, and he had heard of the Friend of little children.

As they carried him through Benares the Holy, they cried, "Victory to Jesus!"

Some years ago, when a Christian Dom was being taken to the place of burning, and his friends were crying, "Victory to Jesus, Jesus is true!" a Bráhmañ priest rebuked them saying, "Cry, Rám is true." *Bmt*

*the Doms would like to know what Rám has done for them that they should exalt his name !*

When we reached Masán ghát, we found the mourners waiting for the father. We passed him on the steps that lead down to the river. His head was bowed and bloody, for he had dashed himself upon the ground, and had beaten his forehead with a vessel of hard baked mud. He did not want to give his child to death. Now Chhedí has been a Christian for five years, and some will think he mourned excessively ; but I could not rebuke him, for I have not lost an only son. As we passed down the steps we told him we were glad his little Husani was free from pain.

On the brink of the river was the funeral pyre ; a few sticks on the ground, a few sticks above, and the child's body between, still clothed in the bright red cloth. And then we began to sing, " This is not the world for worldliness, for all things are insecure, and pass like water in the river."

Close to our feet the great river Ganges was hurrying to the sea ; and across the water, in the distance, the sun was picking out the gold and marble in the Maharaja's palace at Rámnagar. A small Muslim boy continued fishing near us. Many Hindus were listening to the Christian hymns ; and, wonderful to relate, a Bráhmaṇ approached the group of out-castes, and told us how to stanch the blood on the father's face.

As the flames seized the wood and licked the little body, the mother cried aloud and would not be comforted. A missionary once told his stricken wife that their lost child was safe in the arms of Jesus : " Yes, I know it, but I want her in mine, in mine," moaned the mother. Surely God will forgive us that our human hearts so greatly prize His gifts.

" You know, Chhedí," I said, " if I ask a Hindu, who

has been bereaved, where his friend has gone, he replies, 'Who knows? Rám knows, I cannot tell'; and he thinks that the soul of his son now animates some animal or reptile. Because the child died here in the holy city, its spirit may have been absorbed into the Great Spirit, and he will never meet his lad again. But you know that your son is with Jesus in heaven, where there is no fever, no pain, no grave and no funeral pile, no hearts made sad by separation. Death is behind him now, he has done with it for ever; and now he waits for you." And then we sang :

" Only Jesus can take me over ;  
 The boat is old and the storm is fierce,  
 Only Jesus can take me over ;  
 I cannot swim,  
 I cannot save myself,  
 Only Jesus can take me over ;  
 My boat will cross in safety  
 With Jesus at the helm,  
 Only Jesus can take me over."

Then one of the Doms prayed: he said, "O God, our Heavenly Father, Thou knowest why we are here to-day; Thou knowest that Chhedi's son is dead. We do not pray for Chhedi's son; he is with Jesus. O Heavenly Father, we pray for Chhedi, and for the mother of little Husani; they are weeping, they are in great trouble; O Father, give them comfort, for Jesus Christ's sake, Amen."

Through the cypress-trees Chhedi can see the shining of the stars.

## CHAPTER XXII

### AMONG THE WOMEN AND GIRLS

FROM the very beginning we have striven to help and redeem the Dom women as well as their menfolk. But it was evident that if this all-important side of the work was to be done satisfactorily, women workers would have to be set apart for it. Lady missionaries doing Zenana or educational work among the other sections of the city community could not possibly do what was so urgently necessary for Dom women. At last, in 1922, the Committee of the Women's Auxiliary of the W.M.M.S. found it possible definitely to undertake this work. They transferred Miss I. M. Spencer from Akbarpur (where she had been in charge of the dispensary and small hospital) to Benares, and a year later sent out Miss M. Langden, a new missionary from England, to help her.

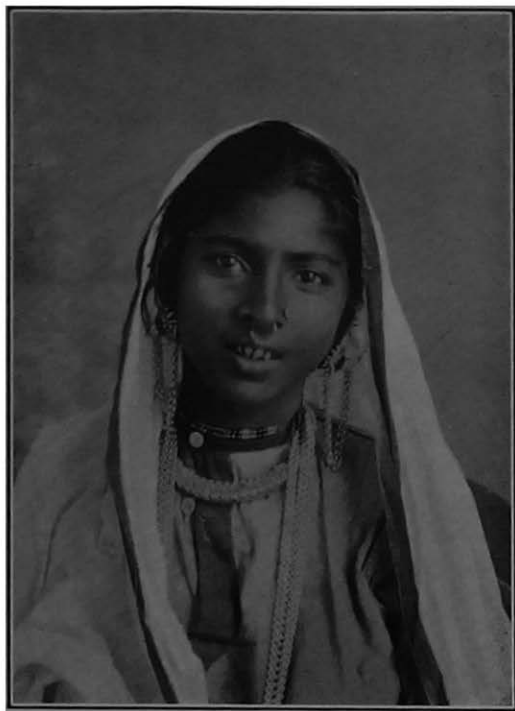
From what we have already written about Dom women<sup>1</sup> it will be clear to all that the men will never be uplifted and redeemed while their womenfolk remain what they are; and it is equally certain that only a strong, true Christian woman is capable of successfully tackling the difficult problem of Dom womanhood.

The Dom women are intensely ignorant and deeply superstitious. They are practically all illiterate, save a few of the younger ones who attended one of our schools for a while before they were married—and in many instances these have forgotten much of the

<sup>1</sup> See Chap. II, and elsewhere.



**Material for the Mission Boarding School**



**A Christian Dom girl**



little book learning they had received, though more practical lessons may have made a somewhat deeper impression.

With the help of three Indian teachers, Miss Spencer is now giving close attention to the regular visiting of the city colonies. Each settlement is visited at least once a week, "teaching the way of the Lord more perfectly, making friends with their pupils and getting to understand them and their way of thinking." The women who attended school before marriage are urged to begin again to read and are helped to do so. Miss Spencer's plan is to have at least one woman in each settlement who can read the Bible.

It is not easy to persuade these women to find time to learn to read. In the early morning they go to their appointed work of street sweeping or as city scavengers. After an interval in the middle of the day, they return to work. As soon as they get home they begin their domestic duties—preparing food or basket-making. "Whatever else they may be, they are not lazy," writes Miss Spencer. "Immediately on their return home they sit down to fan or basket-weaving. They have no thought for cleanliness of person or house. They sit quite happily on the rubbish-heap with their babies playing beside them, splitting their bamboo and weaving rough baskets. Baskets bring in money, but they do not realise that anything is to be gained by sweeping up their house, since they are not paid to do so. Is it any wonder, then, that they and their children are dreadfully unhealthy?"

This will give a very fair idea of some of the simpler problems Miss Spencer and her helpers have to face. Infinitely more difficult are those connected with the inculcating of ideas of self-control, purity of heart and habit, the expulsion of ingrained superstition and the

little book learning they had received, though more practical lessons may have made a somewhat deeper impression.

With the help of three Indian teachers, Miss Spencer is now giving close attention to the regular visiting of the city colonies. Each settlement is visited at least once a week, "teaching the way of the Lord more perfectly, making friends with their pupils and getting to understand them and their way of thinking." The women who attended school before marriage are urged to begin again to read and are helped to do so. Miss Spencer's plan is to have at least one woman in each settlement who can read the Bible.

It is not easy to persuade these women to find time to learn to read. In the early morning they go to their appointed work of street sweeping or as city scavengers. After an interval in the middle of the day, they return to work. As soon as they get home they begin their domestic duties—preparing food or basket-making. "Whatever else they may be, they are not lazy," writes Miss Spencer. "Immediately on their return home they sit down to fan or basket-weaving. They have no thought for cleanliness of person or house. They sit quite happily on the rubbish-heap with their babies playing beside them, splitting their bamboo and weaving rough baskets. Baskets bring in money, but they do not realise that anything is to be gained by sweeping up their house, since they are not paid to do so. Is it any wonder, then, that they and their children are dreadfully unhealthy?"

This will give a very fair idea of some of the simpler problems Miss Spencer and her helpers have to face. Infinitely more difficult are those connected with the inculcating of ideas of self-control, purity of heart and habit, the expulsion of ingrained superstition and the

substitution of real trust in God. To teach these women the elements of hygiene and domestic economy is difficult enough; teaching them what it means to be a Christian is infinitely more so. Yet it must be attempted—and, somehow, carried through.

It is a work calling for great skill and unlimited patience and firmness. Necessarily the results will be slow and uncertain. Such women cannot readily adjust their lives to such novel conceptions as the missionary lady talks about. But however illiterate the Domin may be, and however hard it may be for her to change her habits of life, she can understand and appreciate Christian sympathy and help. When her child is sick, and she is utterly unable to ease her darling's suffering, the Lady with the soothing, healing medicine is a friend in need. Or if the little one is taken from her, and her mother heart is bleeding, the kind voice and sympathetic word of hope brings some measure of comfort. When the White Lady sits by her side and speaks of the beautiful Home to which her little one has gone, and where she may one day meet her child again, and be free from sorrow and toil and poverty, in the presence of her Heavenly Father—ah! that is strange indeed, and a new impulse enters that poor dark soul. Miss Spencer finds her medical work a tremendous help. It gives her a unique position and influence. Dom women can scarcely ever be persuaded to go to a public hospital; there are several in the city, open and free to all; but they suspect that they would not receive fair treatment. To have a doctor lady all their own—that is wonderful.

But important as the work among the older women is, Miss Spencer naturally finds her most promising sphere among the girls and young women. They are not yet "set," and can be moulded by the skilful hand.

In three convenient centres there are schools for Dom children. They are all mixed schools. It is especially difficult to get little girls to attend as regularly, or for as long a period, as the boys. They are wanted at home; or, maybe, on coming to school must bring a baby with them. While still young, they are taken away to be married—or to help to earn money. Scholarships are offered as an inducement, to compensate the parents for what they lose by the child being at school for some hours each day. Those are dependent on regular attendance. One great inducement is the fact that literacy and good conduct may save them from having their names entered upon the dreaded criminal roll when they come to the age for that. Efforts are now being made to introduce some useful training into the schools, such as bamboo-work, so that the girls may remain longer in the school and afterwards be better able to earn money. Miss Spencer hopes greatly to improve the quality of fans and baskets they make. Arrangements are also being made for a more efficient girls' school, where it will be possible to do more thorough work than can be done in the present mixed schools.

When one sees the splendid girls' boarding schools that are working such transformations among the out-caste girls of Haidarabad and other districts, one longs for the day when the Women's Auxiliary will find it possible to inaugurate one for the Dom girls of Benares. Of course there are great difficulties in the way, and it may be some time before they are removed; but the sooner that day comes, the better it will be for the whole work.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### "TO JESUS THE MESSIAH BE VICTORY!"

EVERY one who has been in "Holy Benares" has heard the cry: "Ganga mai ki Jai! Ganga mai ki Jai!" It means: "To Mother Ganges be Victory." Sometimes the numerous pilgrims make the streets ring with it. They love to echo and re-echo that word "JAI!" (Victory!).

Realising the power of a slogan we determined to have one for our Dom Christians. How could we do better than utilise that pilgrim cry? So we transformed it to "Yisu Masih ki JAI!" (To Jesus the Messiah be Victory!). It soon became our watch-word and rallying cry. It became the salutation of our people. Now, instead of "salaam," their greeting is "Yisu Masih ki," and the response is a mighty "JAI!" When we had finished a service, or an informal talk in one of the colonies, we concluded with this cry. When we carried our departed ones to the burning-ground by the river-side, our Doms, marching behind the bier (sometimes two or three hundred strong) shouted in chorus: "To Jesus the Messiah be Victory!" At Hindu funerals the mourners shout: "Ram is true! Ram is true!" Our Dom Christians learned a better assurance, and they shouted: "Jesus is true! JAI!"

Again and again the streets of Benares have rung with that shout. To us it has seemed like the first note of the glad shout before the walls of Jericho.

\* \* \* \* \*

## "TO JESUS THE MESSIAH BE VICTORY!" 133

Verily, Jesus is getting to Himself victory among these despised outcastes, the rejects of Hinduism.

What is the position to-day?

There are now, roughly, some twelve hundred Doms in Benares, and of these about nine hundred or a thousand are trying to follow Jesus. We have in the city, eight little colonies, and there are five more in the villages. In his report for 1921, the Rev. J. R. Hudson wrote: "The bulk of the Doms in Benares and the surrounding villages have now been baptized, and the infant baptisms from among them are now more numerous than the adult. . . . In spite of many difficulties, the Dom work has entered upon its second stage." A year later he was able to write: "The progress among the old settled Doms is nothing short of remarkable."

The Government *Excise Report* of the United Provinces for 1922 contained the following remarkable statement—and it is all the more arresting because it is from a Government official and not from the pen of a missionary:

"The beneficent and devoted work of the Wesleyan Methodist Mission for many years amongst the submerged classes of the city of Benares may be quoted as an example which could, with advantage, be more widely followed."

This striking sentence refers primarily to the reduction of drunkenness, for, of course, it does not lie within the province of an Excise Report to deal with other points. But the progress has been equally notable in other directions also.

The Health Officer of the city (a British-trained Brahman) reports that our Doms, who are his servants, do their sweeping better now than in the old wild days. The District Magistrate has certified that as the result of our work, there has been "a marked diminution in the criminal practices of the Benares

Doms." Lombroso was mistaken. Our Christian Dom children are not specially inclined to steal. The superintendent of the two local gaols complains that he cannot now get sufficient sweepers for his institutions! The keepers of liquor-shops complain that our work has caused considerable loss to their trade. Indecent dancing has utterly ceased; the Doms themselves do not desire it. Saturnalia can still be found in India, but not at the dinners of our Doms.

The Christian Doms are cleaner than of yore. John Wesley gave directions to some of his converts for the destruction of vermin, and we do the same. The women do their hair and wash their clothes before they come to church. They mend their clothes while they mend their lives. The wizards are slowly losing ground. The ghosts of a leper and a madman are ceasing to haunt our people; and before long the Dom will understand that "The Universe is not dead and demoniacal, a charnel-house with spectres; but god-like, and my Father's!"

Do not misunderstand. We do not claim that our Doms are saints. We have helped them out of the pit; they have yet to be made clean. Some of them still fight, still drink, still steal, still have recourse to the wizards. But as a community they are "moving upward," and those who knew these Doms before they came to us, are astonished at the change. Hinduism gave them no chance; we have given them a chance—a proper chance; and some of them have taken it. We believed they could be saved, and some of them have believed in our belief. Once they were hopeless, now they know of a way to rise. Gradually they will understand "the Christian view of life, the Christian standard of values, their divine sonship, and their heavenly citizenship."

The work is not yet twenty years old, yet already some Doms have been admitted to Church membership, and eight are either accredited evangelists on our mission staff or are students in the Theological Institution preparing for similar service.

One great gain is that recently Mr. Hudson has been able to get from the magistrates, for any boy or girl he can recommend for good character, exemption from having their name entered upon the criminal register as required by the Criminal Tribes Act, already explained.

Half a dozen years ago, the whole work passed through a very severe test. We have in the United Provinces a very anti-Christian reformed sect of Hindus, known as the Arya Samáj. In many instances their hatred of Christ knows no bounds, and some of the literature they issue is scurrilous and blasphemous to a degree. These people were exceedingly perturbed at our growing influence among the Doms, and the thought of their becoming Christians made them angry. So by offering our people loans of money, ranging from five to fifty rupees, they won over these simple souls who, year in, year out, live so perilously near the starvation line. Nearly all of them succumbed to the proffered bribes. In spite of all Mr. Hudson and his helpers could do, they left us *en masse*. Only a few families remained faithful.

It was a great disappointment to our missionaries, and a severe test of faith. For the moment, the work of long years seemed to have been eclipsed. But it was only for a moment. The erring ones soon found that their new friends were not true friends; they did not take the same interest in them that the old ones did. The Aryas exercised no moral oversight or restraint over them, and soon the old evil passions had full sway. A great feast resulted in drunken revelry. Then conscience awoke—that conscience we had so long striven



substitution of real trust in God. To teach these women the elements of hygiene and domestic economy is difficult enough; teaching them what it means to be a Christian is infinitely more so. Yet it must be attempted—and, somehow, carried through.

It is a work calling for great skill and unlimited patience and firmness. Necessarily the results will be slow and uncertain. Such women cannot readily adjust their lives to such novel conceptions as the missionary lady talks about. But however illiterate the Domin may be, and however hard it may be for her to change her habits of life, she can understand and appreciate Christian sympathy and help. When her child is sick, and she is utterly unable to ease her darling's suffering, the Lady with the soothing, healing medicine is a friend in need. Or if the little one is taken from her, and her mother heart is bleeding, the kind voice and sympathetic word of hope brings some measure of comfort. When the White Lady sits by her side and speaks of the beautiful Home to which her little one has gone, and where she may one day meet her child again, and be free from sorrow and toil and poverty, in the presence of her Heavenly Father—ah! that is strange indeed, and a new impulse enters that poor dark soul. Miss Spencer finds her medical work a tremendous help. It gives her a unique position and influence. Dom women can scarcely ever be persuaded to go to a public hospital; there are several in the city, open and free to all; but they suspect that they would not receive fair treatment. To have a doctor lady all their own—that is wonderful.

But important as the work among the older women is, Miss Spencer naturally finds her most promising sphere among the girls and young women. They are not yet "set," and can be moulded by the skilful hand.

In three convenient centres there are schools for Dom children. They are all mixed schools. It is especially difficult to get little girls to attend as regularly, or for as long a period, as the boys. They are wanted at home; or, maybe, on coming to school must bring a baby with them. While still young, they are taken away to be married—or to help to earn money. Scholarships are offered as an inducement, to compensate the parents for what they lose by the child being at school for some hours each day. Those are dependent on regular attendance. One great inducement is the fact that literacy and good conduct may save them from having their names entered upon the dreaded criminal roll when they come to the age for that. Efforts are now being made to introduce some useful training into the schools, such as bamboo-work, so that the girls may remain longer in the school and afterwards be better able to earn money. Miss Spencer hopes greatly to improve the quality of fans and baskets they make. Arrangements are also being made for a more efficient girls' school, where it will be possible to do more thorough work than can be done in the present mixed schools.

When one sees the splendid girls' boarding schools that are working such transformations among the out-caste girls of Haidarabad and other districts, one longs for the day when the Women's Auxiliary will find it possible to inaugurate one for the Dom girls of Benares. Of course there are great difficulties in the way, and it may be some time before they are removed; but the sooner that day comes, the better it will be for the whole work.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### "TO JESUS THE MESSIAH BE VICTORY!"

EVERY one who has been in "Holy Benares" has heard the cry: "Ganga mai ki Jai! Ganga mai ki Jai!" It means: "To Mother Ganges be Victory." Sometimes the numerous pilgrims make the streets ring with it. They love to echo and re-echo that word "JAI!" (Victory!).

Realising the power of a slogan we determined to have one for our Dom Christians. How could we do better than utilise that pilgrim cry? So we transformed it to "Yisu Masih ki JAI!" (To Jesus the Messiah be Victory!). It soon became our watch-word and rallying cry. It became the salutation of our people. Now, instead of "salaam," their greeting is "Yisu Masih ki," and the response is a mighty "JAI!" When we had finished a service, or an informal talk in one of the colonies, we concluded with this cry. When we carried our departed ones to the burning-ground by the river-side, our Doms, marching behind the bier (sometimes two or three hundred strong) shouted in chorus: "To Jesus the Messiah be Victory!" At Hindu funerals the mourners shout: "Ram is true! Ram is true!" Our Dom Christians learned a better assurance, and they shouted: "Jesus is true! JAI!"

Again and again the streets of Benares have rung with that shout. To us it has seemed like the first note of the glad shout before the walls of Jericho.

\* \* \* \* \*

Verily, Jesus is getting to Himself victory among these despised outcastes, the rejects of Hinduism.

What is the position to-day?

There are now, roughly, some twelve hundred Doms in Benares, and of these about nine hundred or a thousand are trying to follow Jesus. We have in the city, eight little colonies, and there are five more in the villages. In his report for 1921, the Rev. J. R. Hudson wrote: "The bulk of the Doms in Benares and the surrounding villages have now been baptized, and the infant baptisms from among them are now more numerous than the adult. . . . In spite of many difficulties, the Dom work has entered upon its second stage." A year later he was able to write: "The progress among the old settled Doms is nothing short of remarkable."

The Government *Excise Report* of the United Provinces for 1922 contained the following remarkable statement—and it is all the more arresting because it is from a Government official and not from the pen of a missionary:

"The beneficent and devoted work of the Wesleyan Methodist Mission for many years amongst the submerged classes of the city of Benares may be quoted as an example which could, with advantage, be more widely followed."

This striking sentence refers primarily to the reduction of drunkenness, for, of course, it does not lie within the province of an Excise Report to deal with other points. But the progress has been equally notable in other directions also.

The Health Officer of the city (a British-trained Brahman) reports that our Doms, who are his servants, do their sweeping better now than in the old wild days. The District Magistrate has certified that as the result of our work, there has been "a marked diminution in the criminal practices of the Benares

Doms." Lombroso was mistaken. Our Christian Dom children are not specially inclined to steal. The superintendent of the two local gaols complains that he cannot now get sufficient sweepers for his institutions! The keepers of liquor-shops complain that our work has caused considerable loss to their trade. Indecent dancing has utterly ceased; the Doms themselves do not desire it. Saturnalia can still be found in India, but not at the dinners of our Doms.

The Christian Doms are cleaner than of yore. John Wesley gave directions to some of his converts for the destruction of vermin, and we do the same. The women do their hair and wash their clothes before they come to church. They mend their clothes while they mend their lives. The wizards are slowly losing ground. The ghosts of a leper and a madman are ceasing to haunt our people; and before long the Dom will understand that "The Universe is not dead and demoniacal, a charnel-house with spectres; but god-like, and my Father's!"

Do not misunderstand. We do not claim that our Doms are saints. We have helped them out of the pit; they have yet to be made clean. Some of them still fight, still drink, still steal, still have recourse to the wizards. But as a community they are "moving upward," and those who knew these Doms before they came to us, are astonished at the change. Hinduism gave them no chance; we have given them a chance—a proper chance; and some of them have taken it. We believed they could be saved, and some of them have believed in our belief. Once they were hopeless, now they know of a way to rise. Gradually they will understand "the Christian view of life, the Christian standard of values, their divine sonship, and their heavenly citizenship."

The work is not yet twenty years old, yet already some Doms have been admitted to Church membership, and eight are either accredited evangelists on our mission staff or are students in the Theological Institution preparing for similar service.

One great gain is that recently Mr. Hudson has been able to get from the magistrates, for any boy or girl he can recommend for good character, exemption from having their name entered upon the criminal register as required by the Criminal Tribes Act, already explained.

Half a dozen years ago, the whole work passed through a very severe test. We have in the United Provinces a very anti-Christian reformed sect of Hindus, known as the Arya Samáj. In many instances their hatred of Christ knows no bounds, and some of the literature they issue is scurrilous and blasphemous to a degree. These people were exceedingly perturbed at our growing influence among the Doms, and the thought of their becoming Christians made them angry. So by offering our people loans of money, ranging from five to fifty rupees, they won over these simple souls who, year in, year out, live so perilously near the starvation line. Nearly all of them succumbed to the proffered bribes. In spite of all Mr. Hudson and his helpers could do, they left us *en masse*. Only a few families remained faithful.

It was a great disappointment to our missionaries, and a severe test of faith. For the moment, the work of long years seemed to have been eclipsed. But it was only for a moment. The erring ones soon found that their new friends were not true friends; they did not take the same interest in them that the old ones did. The Aryas exercised no moral oversight or restraint over them, and soon the old evil passions had full sway. A great feast resulted in drunken revelry. Then conscience awoke—that conscience we had so long striven

to train—and the erring Doms realised who were their truest friends. In less time than our workers expected, the wanderers began to come penitently back, and before very long all save two or three families had returned to the fold from whence they had been beguiled. A year later, some of the Aryas went to our Indian minister, the Rev. Saádat-Ullah, and asked him if he would help them to recover their money from the Doms! The Aryas had burned their fingers.

In 1922 the Aryas made another effort to capture our Doms. They issued printed appeals to Hindus for funds to help them to "purify" these Doms who were so defiled with Christianity! But in the intervening years the Doms had learned more than one lesson, and Mr. Hudson was able to watch developments without any misgivings. The second Arya "purification campaign" was an utter failure.

The work among the Benares Doms is now established. The chief difficulty is with the gipsy Doms, whose wandering habits make work among them very difficult. What they do on their wanderings is only too evident from the police reports; but in spite of long terms of imprisonment they maintain their tribal habits. Yet even among these gipsy Doms some hopeful cases are noted. One man with ten convictions to his record has worked steadily and with a clean sheet since 1916. Several gipsy boys are in the Industrial School, and some bright children are constant in school attendance and are learning to sing and to enjoy Christian hymns. At the end of 1922 Mr. Hudson was able to write:

"Recently some of our worst Gipsy Doms have been transferred to a Salvation Army Settlement. The effect on the remainder has been salutary. We have found them much more amenable, and there has been a marked falling-off in drinking and crime. Marriages have taken place without the



**A Baptismal Service in a Dom Village**

*Photo by F. Deaville Walker*

The Rev. Istafán Saadat-Ullah—a converted Muhammedan—baptising a Dom baby



old fighting and secret or open drinking which formerly obtained. Also they are now readily giving to their Church and joining in the services. I asked our preachers what they thought of the prospects among these Gipsies, and *they answered, that even these most difficult folk are nearer to the Kingdom.*"

Methodism has cause to be thankful for the able and devoted men and women who are now in charge of the Dom work. For about seven years the Rev. James R. Hudson was at the head—a splendid missionary, of great physical strength and unreserved devotion, and his wife is a true missionary mem-sahib. He is seconded by the Rev. I. Saádat-Ullah, once a Muhammedan, who, as an Indian, can approach Indian peoples in a way a European can never do, especially in these days of misunderstanding and distrust. In addition to a great deal of evangelistic and pastoral work, Saádat-Ullah is the Principal of the Theological Institution. The Rev. George Spooner and the Rev. G. H. Kay have also served the Doms with deep devotion. On the women's side there is Miss I. M. Spencer, a Women's Auxiliary worker of first rank, of remarkable ability, good judgment and ripe experience. We cannot be sufficiently thankful that the Committee of the Auxiliary saw its way to station her in Benares, and last year sent out to help her Miss Margaret Langden. In addition to these, there are a number of Indian evangelists, Biblewomen and teachers.

\* \* \* \* \*

It has been suggested, and not by unfriendly critics, that our work among these outcastes prevents us from influencing the educated and high castes of Benares towards Christianity. There may be some truth in this. And yet if the publicans and sinners (the Doms and Chamárs) enter the Kingdom of Heaven before the Pharisees and Scribes (the Bráhmans and other caste

Hindus) we should not be altogether surprised. Men bruised and mangled by the Hindu social system are more likely to accept the emancipation offered by Christ, than those who seek to keep them in cruel bondage.

Again, it must be remembered that India is entering upon her renaissance, and the Indian who calls upon his countrymen to elevate the outcastes applauds the missionary for leading in this great work of social reform.

To go to those whose need is greatest, can never be to err; and to manifest the mind of the Master by serving the lowest, will win the heart of the intelligent Hindu, though his Shástras condemn such "undistinguishing regard."

Men of proud spirit may avoid a Church that labours to reclaim the ignorant and degraded. Must we wait, then, till the last Bráhman turns to Christ, before we go to the man beyond the pale? The Muslim and the Arya will not wait. Indeed, the Arya has done his best to mar our work among the Doms.

Our mission to the outcastes is a valuable object-lesson to the orthodox of the city, and this they themselves admit, for it teaches the supreme value of the individual, the chief lesson India has to learn. Temple priests have heard with amazement preachers who were Doms teaching religion to the Hindus and Muslims of Benares. The Dom Mission is an object-lesson to the whole city, and it is known to all, for it has not been done in a corner. The streets have rung with the cry: "To Jesus the Messiah be Victory," and in that we hear the first notes of the cry that shall one day be taken up by all men.

We do not boast. Much remains to be done, particularly in the villages, and twenty years is but a

**" TO JESUS THE MESSIAH BE VICTORY ! " 139**

moment in the history of a tribe. " It may be long before the best of them learn to stand alone ; and some of them may never learn to stand alone at all."

We do not know what the end will be ; we *do* know that He who was classed with criminals stretches out His pierced hands to the thieves, and some of them will be with Him in Paradise. They cannot understand much ; but a few of them already know with St. Joseph the slave that :

" The lion once had hold,  
And thought to make an end ;  
But One came by with wounded side,  
And for the sheep the Shepherd died."

## APPENDIX

### NOTE AS TO THE ORIGIN OF THE DOMS

Who are the Doms? Is anything known as to their origin and history? The subject is shrouded in mystery and there is a great deal of uncertainty. Certain indications, however, must be noted; though it would be unsafe to build any very definite conclusions upon them until we have more knowledge than we at present possess.

It has been suggested, e.g. by Dr. Caldwell, that the Doms and other low tribes of the Peninsular are the surviving representatives of an older, ruder, and blacker race who preceded the Dravidians in India. Some of these were driven by the Dravidian invasion to take refuge in mountain fastnesses and pestilential jungles, while others were reduced to perpetual servitude. Sir H. H. Risley states that :

“ The fact that for centuries past they have been condemned to the most menial duties and have served as the helots of the entire Hindu community, would of itself be sufficient to break down whatever tribal spirit they may once have possessed, and to obliterate all structural trace of their true origin.”

On the other hand, the Doms of Benares have a vague tradition that their ancestors were rajas, but they can furnish no details of their departed glories. They tell me that they became degraded because their great ancestor, Supach Bhagat, arriving late at a feast, devoured the fragments left by the other guests. In the “ Indian Antiquary,” Vol. XI, 1882, p. 10, there is a reference to an ancient Dom king, who was

powerful in cavalry. This was in the Haidarabad State.

According to the late Sir Henry M. Elliot :

" Tradition fixes their residence to the north of the Gogra River, touching the Bhars on the east, in the vicinity of Rohini. Several old forts testify to their former importance, and still retain the names of their founders, as, for instance, Domdiha and Doman-garh. Rámgarh and Sahankot, on the Rohini, are also Dom forts."

Writing in Hastings' " Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics," Mr. W. Crooke, a careful writer on these subjects, says :

" The Doms seem to be of diverse origin. They certainly belong to a large extent to one of the non-Aryan races ; but in many places they may be the descendants of the mixed race of serfs or slaves of the early conquerors. The Maghaiya Doms [including the Doms of Benares] take their name from the ancient kingdom of Magadha, or South Bihár. The Doms of North India may be divided into three territorial groups, the ethnological connection of which can only be a matter of speculation : (1) The Eastern branch in the plains districts east of the United Provinces and in Bihár ; (2) The Doms of the Himálayas ; (3) The Doms or Dom Mirásis of the Punjab."

The Police Commission Report (1891) affirms that :

" The Doms are a tribe of low mental type, aboriginal to Gorakhpur and the neighbouring districts of Bengal, with some traditions of descent from a race not altogether savage."

We must now consider a very attractive suggestion, made, e.g. by Sir George A. Grierson, that the Doms are the ancestors of the European gipsies, and that Rom, or Romany, is nothing more than a variant of Dom. (See Sir Herbert Risley's " People of India.") Leyland, too, in his " English Gipsies," says : " I would call particular attention to my suggestion that the Dom of India is the true parent of the Rom."

It is now generally accepted that the European gipsies are of Indian origin. Mr. W. Simson, in his " History of the Gipsies," has pointed out that in

searching for an Indian tribe from whom they might possibly have descended, it is necessary to give considerable weight to the instinct for thieving, not only in practice, but also from principle, which seems to be a deeply ingrained national propensity of the gipsies. Simson adds :

" I am convinced that this general propensity to plunder has been the chief cause of the gipsies concealing their origin, language, customs, and religious observances, at the time they entered the territories of civilized nations, and up to this time. The intelligent old gipsy, whose acquaintance I made at St. Boswell's, distinctly told me that his tribe were originally a nation of thieves and robbers ; and it is quite natural to suppose that, when they found theft and robbery punished with much severity in civilized society, everything relating to them would be kept a profound secret."

It may be only a coincidence, but Sanscrit literature discloses the fact that Doms have been thieves for many long centuries. The Dom is also a wanderer, and it is not difficult to believe that in the Middle Ages he may have strolled from India, through Afghánistán or Persia, into Europe. The dialect of some nomad gipsies of Europe has been found to contain a large proportion (39 per cent.) of words of Indian origin. (See a valuable paper on " The Indian Origin of the Gypsies in Europe," by Mr. A. C. Woolner, of Lahore University, in the Journal of the Punjab Historical Society, Vol. II, No. 2, pp. 97-184.)

Those who reject this " gipsy theory " affirm that the physiognomy of the typical Dom differs entirely from that of the gipsy of the West. The question requires the careful study of anthropologists, and the present writer is unable to dogmatise ; but it is certain that some of the peripatetic Doms who have visited Benares have the typical gipsy face.

\* The Doms are not the only Indian tribe that has been suggested as the possible ancestors of the European

gipsies. Simson selects the Nuts, or Bazegurs; others have supported the claims of the Changars, the Kanjars, the Mangs, the Mahars, or the Dheds. Crooke says: "These tribes practise the usual gipsy industries—mat and basket-making, knife grinding, and the like. The facility of their occupation makes it an easy cloak for more nefarious practices, as is the case with the European gipsy."

But the discovery by Professor R. A. Stewart Macalister of a nomadic race in Palestine, called Nawar, or Zutt, by strangers, but calling themselves Doms, has, with other evidence, satisfied many competent scholars that the Dom is the ancestor of the European gipsy.

Sir George A. Grierson, perhaps the most reliable authority, prefers to connect the gipsies of Europe with the Doms of the North-West of India, not with those of the East.