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Religious Intelligence.

HINDOO WORSHIP.

The following letter from the Rev. R. Cooley, Free Will Baptist Missionary in India, describes some of the cruel rites of Heathenism.—[Ed.]

JELLASORE, INDIA.

During the few days past, I have attended three swinging festivals—or "jattas," as they are called—within two miles of Bro. Philips' house—and witnessed the horrible scenes of those occasions. They constitute a part of the worship performed to Mahadab, the third person in the Hindoo's Theology—the destroying power. I am informed that annually about this season of the year, a month is especially devoted to Mahadab. Any one who wishes to, lays aside his common avocation, and devotes himself to that work for the month. Mahadab's wife, Kalee, is considered the most beautiful of all goddesses, though she is a fury. She is his executive power—and is represented as wearing a necklace of human skulls, of those whom she has slaughtered—and as being delighted with human sacrifices.

During the month devoted to the service of Mahadab, various kinds of idolatrous services are performed. And near the close of the month comes the swinging festival, which is a "wonderful" and "mysterious" thing, and which is a "mystery" to the people assembled. Some were dancing, or making all sorts of theatrical motions, while others were engaged in making harsh sounds of discord, which they call music, while some were bearing flags or ensigns. In one direction might be seen several men strung together in file, by small cords thrust through each side. In some instances these cords were twenty-five or thirty feet in length, with a man at each end, who held them, while those who were strung together, were jumping and dancing like maniacs, as the blood ran down their sides. In another direction might be seen a train of natives with iron apparatuses, somewhat resembling a pair of small fire shovels, with the handles sharpened and thrust into their sides, and the blades brought together in front, and suspended to the neck by a string. On the shovel blades, fire was placed and kept burning by means of resinous substances, reminding one of the smoke of "the bottomless pit." Some were standing upon the edge of knives and swords—others with their backs placed upon iron spikes—some had iron rods thrust through their tongues and other parts of the body. All of whom were hideously decorated, resembling, according to my imagination, as much as any thing, the subjects of Plato's dominions. I could but think of what one writer that says, when he remarks, "that he never witnessed an Indian procession without its presenting to him the very image of hell."

Should I follow my feelings, I should at once close my remarks on these revolting scenes, and turn my thoughts to other things. But the people at home need to understand what heathenism is—and what it calls its votaries to do. I now call your attention to the swing. It was rudely constructed, much resembling a country well-sweep, with ropes attached to each end, by means of which it was managed. Then the man who was to swing, had two iron hooks thrust into his back between the shoulders, one each side of the vertebra, and fastened to the end of the sweep by a rope. He was then elevated twenty-five or thirty feet from the ground, and made to revolve horizontally, being attached to nothing but the hooks, and much resembling a man flying. Hence the native call it the "flying jatta." The one who swings, often carries a child in his arms. Mrs. Cooley accompanied me to the first jatta, and we had tarried until four had swung, when the scene became so revolting to her feelings, that she desired to leave, so we turned away from beholding it.

A few days since we saw two men pass here, measuring their way to Jeggernath, by prostrating their length on the ground.

Oh, who but God can know all the horrors of heathenism, and has witnessed all of its abominations in this land for more than twenty centuries past! How can we love our fellow men as ourselves, and at the same time know that they are perishing in darkness, while we have the lamp of life in our hands, and neglect to bear it to them.

Yours affectionately,
R. COOLEY.

Mr. Wright, in his letters on India, thus describes scenes he witnessed at of Siva's or Mahadab's festivals, where there was an army of forty or fifty thousand persons:

"Processions, accompanied by music, were passing and repassing in every direction. Hundreds were inflicting self-torture. In one procession, I saw ten persons, each with more than a hundred pins inserted in the flesh. In another, each devotee a cluster of artificial serpents, fastened with iron pins his naked back. In other processions, many had their arms perforated, for the insertion of rods from five to fifteen feet in length. These rods were kept in constant and jerk motion through the flesh to increase the pain. Some had their tongues pierced for the insertion of similar rods which were occasionally drawn rapidly up and down through the tongue. One man, having a rod fifteen ft. long, and at the largest end, near one inch in diameter, commencing with the smaller end, drew the whole rod through his tongue, and after whipping the blood from it upon his garment, thrust it again into his tongue. Others were drawing living serpents through their tongues and dancing round like maniacs. In the streets through which the processions passed, were devotees with their sides pierced a rope passed through each incision, and the ends of the ropes were fastened to four stakes, driven into the earth. In this condition, the infuriated creatures danced backward and forward, drawing the ropes at each movement through their lacerated flesh. On the afternoon of the next day, swinging machines were erected at the places of concourse. * * * From these, many of the worshippers were suspended by ropes attached to iron hooks, inserted into the muscular parts of their backs. * * * Thousands and tens of thousands annually are thus cruelly tortured on these machines."

Such is the religion of the people, and such its rites, where our missionaries are now preaching the gospel of Christ.

"THE FOOLS' PENCE."—The second house in the Dingle the missionary entered. He asked if the husband had been addicted to drunkenness? He answered, "Yes; but whilst reading the tract you sent me, entitled 'The Fools' Pence,' I determined the publicans should have no more of my pence. I would rather give my money to support the Christian Society, which, through God's blessing, I have joined, by reading that tract: Mr. J.—is the leader, and I pray to have grace to beat least a sober man." "Do you delight in reading and hearing God's holy word?" "Yes," said he, "and I feel determined, by God's grace, to live to his glory. I read at home; and I have begun to pray with my family, and hope to continue to do so; and I desire the salvation of others." I asked him, "In what way do you expect to get to heaven?" He answered, "If I get to heaven, it will be through the atonement of Christ. Bless God, I feel it now that Christ is the way alone, and therefore on him I rely. How much happier it is to be religious than rebellious." "Then you are happier now than you were before?" "Yes; I feel when I get into my closet with my heavenly Father, I know he will bless me indeed. I look to the Lord, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift." His wife said, "I wish to follow my husband's steps; that, like Zacharias and Elizabeth, we may be both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." He has since opened his cottage for weekly meetings.—*Working Man's Local Mission.*

CANAL BOATMEN.—"Early in the morning (says the Rev. J. T. Jeffery), while reading the Holy Scriptures, my mind was deeply impressed with Eccles. xi. 1, 'Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days.' I determined, in the fear of God, if spared through this day, to give all its hours to boatmen and their families, on the numerous branches of canal that intersect 'the Iron Country,' as the district between Bilston and Smethwick is frequently designated. It is impossible to describe every thing that passed under my observation while visiting thirty-four vessels, and conversing with the people by whom they were navigated. In seven of the boats I found twenty persons, men, women, and children, who knew not a letter in the alphabet. The parents promised, whenever they tied up their boats in future in this district, to send their children to Sunday-school. In five boats, which were managed by twelve men, two women, and three boys, eight persons could read, four with difficulty, verses in the Book of Psalms and the New Testament. One young man most thankfully received a spelling book, saying, 'I do know my letters, and can make out easy words; if any one can learn himself to read, I'll be the man; everybody is now talking about THE BIBLE, and I think it is a shame for a man not to know something about that good book.' In twenty two of the narrow vessels, I found one hundred and three persons; five of these boats were the only homes of twenty-nine souls. It was gratifying to know that one person at least in each vessel could read the Scriptures. Fourteen boats had

Bibles among their cabin stores, which the steersmen had received as grants from the Naval and Military Bible Society. You may be anxious to know how I was received by the poor people, as boatmen are often represented as depraved, rough, and unkind. Three men sullenly refused to receive tracts; these poor fellows were Papists, at least so it was said by their fellow-labourers. Upon the whole, it was one of the most interesting days of my life. The poor people welcomed me to their boats, listened respectfully to my exhortations, and those who could read received my books with thankfulness. Three of the boats that I visited near a coal-pit, were 'tied up' enlone of the branches of the Birmingham Canal. The wife of one of the steersmen was dangerously ill; her husband sat in the cabin with the youngest child, a little girl between three and four years of age, in his arms. 'My wife,' said the cannalman, 'is very bad; she says she is afraid to die, she thinks she shall not go to heaven, and is always saying she is a sinner—a very great sinner.' The poor woman certainly was suffering greatly both in body and mind. 'I am miserable, miserable—I have sinned—sinned against God.' 'Mother is sick again,' lisped the little girl, who tried with her infant hand to wipe off the tears which rolled down the face of her distressed father. A woman and a stout lad entered the cabin; they had been to Dudley for medicine for the sick woman. It was, I thought, right to take advantage of this event, and speak of the Great Physician, and the rich medicine provided by our God for the dying children of men. I repeated 1 Tim. i. 15; John iii. 16, 17; read a part of Isa. liii., and then commended the boatman and his afflicted wife, by a short prayer, to the gracious protection of Almighty God. It was about one o'clock when I left the boat, and as I still had much work to do, and was anxious to improve the whole of this beautiful summer day, I promised to visit the sick woman again about eight o'clock in the evening. The sun was going down when I visited the boat a second time. The western sky was richly coloured with purple and gold. The evening was very calm; scarcely a leaf or a blade of grass moved. Sixteen persons were collected near the boat, where a few hours before I had tried to set before the sick woman the consolations of the gospel. 'We were,' said the poor people, 'sure you would come; we knew you would keep your word, and we told Hannah so.' I stood at the door of the cabin in which lay the sick woman, and read Acts. x. Never had a minister of our holy religion a more attentive congregation; it was an hour ever to be remembered. The Divine promise (never to be doubted) was fulfilled; God was present, and it was found no vain thing to wait at the footstool of the Most High. Even the sick woman was comforted, and tried to express her gratitude. The husband, with the little girl in his arms, and some of the boat people, walked with me a short distance. 'Don't say,' said the grateful man, 'I must not thank you, the words from the Bible have done my wife so much good.' 'They have done good to us all,' said one of the cannalmen; 'we ought to think of what we have heard as long as we live.' Perhaps before I finish this letter I ought to say, that I could not, during this interesting day, confine my labours wholly to boatmen; among colliers and persons connected with locks and wharves I distributed more than 500 children's books and tracts.—*Id.*

AUSTRALIA.—A clergyman in Australia thus writes to the Colonial Church Society:

"Dec. 16.—This evening one of my communicants called upon me prior to going to the mines for a month. I believe him to be a child of God. Such has been the testimony of his life and conversation. I exhorted him to prayer and watchfulness whilst at the mines. I furnished him with a supply of the Tract Society's tracts, to circulate amongst the miners. He received them gladly, and went forth followed by our earnest prayers. About five weeks afterwards he returned, and called to tell me how he had disposed of the tracts. On the sabbath day he went forth, and read or gave tracts wherever he had an opportunity. By some he was mocked, by others he was slighted. He related to me instances in which he had reason to hope seed had been sown with some effect. In one case he met with a party to whom he presented his tracts. All refused but one individual, to whom he offered the tract headed 'My Mother's Prayer.' The title seemed to call up reminiscences which subdued the young man's mind, and the tear appeared to start from his eye whilst he thought, doubtless, of his own parent's prayers. The report of this devoted man's zeal was confirmed to me by the Rev. Mr. Gregory and the Rev. Mr. Strong, who have both been officiating at the 'Diggings.'"

The Rev. J. A. Clowes, of Collingwood, Melbourne, refers as follows to the usefulness of the tract, "Andrew Dunn." "This tract has been made a blessing to a Roman Catholic young woman. I cannot speak positively as to her real change of heart, but I can as to her conviction of the corruptions of Popery. She attends our service; and although persecuted and taunted by many rigid Papists, her former associates, she still maintains her conviction and