September, 1926
No. 3

TIDINGS
FROM
A. B. F. M. SOCIETY
IN
BENGAL-ORISSA, INDIA.

Rev. J. A. Howard and family of Contai, Bengal, India.

Mrs. Howard is Editor of "Tidings." Your Bengal-Orissa Missionaries are Happy but Hungry. Very glad indeed to work for Jesus but have a deep craving to see souls saved. Your prayers are absolutely essential to their fruitfulness.

CUTTACK.
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## BENGAL-ORISSA FIELD DIRECTORY

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Four subscriptions $1.00.
Mr. Gilson, who took up this work upon the departure of Mr. Krause last April has, in addition to the burden of the new work, been able to study and pass his first examination in Oriya. He writes:

"There are many things very encouraging about our work for the last four months. One of the most encouraging is that we have enrolled 13 new Christian boys in the school, 3 from the villages of Balasore and 10 from outside. Many of these boys are very good material, quite above the average in education and character. Our boarding, which had begun to look rather empty with only 13 boys the first of April is now crowded to overflowing with 23.

Fortunately just at this time Mr. Frost is moving the high school boys into their new hostel and is letting us have three rooms in the old hostel which will help to relieve our crowded conditions.

We are very fortunate, also to have our chaplain, Horendra, come back to us after his leave of absence to take up his duties again on August first after four months in Midnapore. Now aside from his regular morning chapel exercises and looking after the sick boys, and the religious life of the boys generally, he is teaching three Bible classes a day, so that every boy and every mistry in the shop, Hindu and Christian alike, is getting at least one hour a week of Bible instruction, and all the lower classes three hours. This, with the increasing number of strong Christian boys, is giving more of a real Christian atmosphere to the school.

The steady flow of orders for our woodwork still continues, (I just
accepted a Rs.1000 order from the Government yesterday), so we have no lack of work to keep the boys busy at practical and profitable employment. We are now working on a more complete electric wiring of the compound, taking in the high school study rooms, Mr. Frost’s bungalow, and the new hostel. When this is complete everyone on the compound can have the lights and the per capita cost will be very small. This also provides some good practical work for the electrical class.

The motor driving and repair class is the most popular just at present, and is drawing a number of older and well educated boys, most of whom pay school fees for this work. Taking care of the mission cars, and doing all of our hawling gives them most of their practical work. We have found a new mistry to take charge of this work, which is probably part of the reason for the popularity at this time.

We are now starting in a plan of reorganizing the shop work and re-classifying the boys so as to give them their work and instruction in more progressive order. This will make the instruction more efficient, and we hope also the production. The plan has not been in practice enough yet to prove how well it will work, but it is somewhat of a modification of the factory plan now in operation to make it more of a real school, and we are hoping to have more satisfactory results in the training of the boys.”

A GREAT FESTIVAL

In the jungle about 30 miles South-West of Khargpur, on June the fifth every year, occurs a festival which shows a dark side of Hinduism.

On the night before, the air is seemingly electrified with the power god Shiv. The air was filled with the throbbing of drums and the patter of the feet of hurrying, talking pilgrims. In the morning as soon as it was light we started on the journey. We crossed a creek said to be haunted by a big mustard-oil stick. This stick, after eating people, hides where no one can find it. In another place people say there is a floating stone which stuns people so they sink into a watery grave. One
A Panjabi gave the stone an angry kick. It broken in two and disclosed a beautiful pearl of great value.

From a long distance we could hear the deafening roar of the drums and the hilarious yelling of the hundreds of drunken idol worshipers. Singing crowds from all sides were merrily approaching the festival grounds.

Under a number of wide spreading banyan trees were arranged a great variety of little shops. Sweet-meat stores predominated. In front of them on large brass trays were heaps of syrup-filled pretzels, squares of sweetened curd, crisp cookies, parched peas and popped rice covered with molasses. This little shop-keeper is selling shining brass pots, pans and plates. That tall man is trying to dispose of his store of small idols. To one side were a great number of rice-beer stands. In the very centre three large bands of a dozen drums each were setting up a deafening roar. One of the drummers wore a crown of silver paper on his head, a small looking-glass tied to his arm, and a pearl hung from his nose. The noise of the drums, the yelling and singing of the crowds and the wailing of two mothers combined to make a hubbub like that of the infernal regions.

This worship was in honour of the god Shiv. About a dozen purple-flower garlanded devotees gathered about a pile of burning charcoal. One of them fanned it 'till the coals were bright. A priest came near, and bowing, sprinkled milk over the coals and scattered rice about. Now the devotees will exhibit their courage! At a given signal they all took sticks and knocked the coals in all directions. A few that were left they picked up and threw at people. How the affair exhibited bravery was too deep for us.

All the devotees now went with a rush to the sacred tank. As their ablutions were performed they were carried back in triumph, some riding astride a man's neck, and some carried on bamboo stretchers with red canopies over them. The floor of these stretchers was formed of swords with their edges upturned. The devotees placed leaves on the sharp
edges and stood on the leaves proving their ability to endure painless pain.

On reaching the road they traveled back to the grounds by prostrations in the dust. They fell flat in the road. Stretching their arms in front of them they should make finger marks, get up, place their feet on the finger marks, fall flat again and keep up the process to the end of the journey. Instead of that these holy men reached out in front of them with sticks and had the sticks make the mark a long way ahead, thus their journey was rapidly and easily made.

Off at the right a juggler made a piece of bamboo climb a rope, played with a white cobra and brought to life a supposedly dead child.

The main feature of the festival was, however, the hanging act. This is what gives the festival the name Dol, or Swinging Festival. There were fourteen poles like telephone poles about twenty-five feet high. A cross-piece about fifteen feet long was fastened to the top of the telephone post like a turn-style. To one end of this cross-piece a man was tied by ropes which were fastened by hooks pierced through the skin of his back. This cruel practice is actually forbidden by government, so the modern performance is slightly modified. We trust it in no wise detracts from the merit obtained. The main weight of the man's body was supported by a heavy cloth under his arms and tied to the cross beam. While giving him a bloody back it was not as painful as it appeared for there was almost no strain on the hooks in his back.

Some of the men folded their hands in an attitude of prayer. They had promised Shiv that if he would fulfill a certain wish of theirs, they would hang from this pole. At the other end of the pole stood a man who whirled the one hanging around in the air. Some of the men as they whirled held canes or umbrellas, or wooden swords or big bunches of feathery grass which shed its fluff on the crowd below. As they whirled they put their hands to their mouths and made blood-curdling yells, kicked jirkingly and shook vigorously the clusters of bells about their ankles. It cost sixteen cents a swing. After an hour of rushing business things grew dull and the big whirligigs stopped.
But the most sickening sight of all was that of six groups of six men, each of whom was in the delirium of a drunken dance. Each group of six faced forward as in single file. Three holes were made in the skin of each arm. Three knotty cords ran through the holes in all the right arms and in like manner through all the left arms. As the men danced in unison the cords worked back and forth through the holes of flesh. Blood was streaming profusely down, and the skin of some arms was cut through by the wearing of the cords.

It was suffocatingly hot. To the rear of us was the foul odor of the rice-beer pots. In front from the frenzied drunken men came the stench of human blood. We could not endure it.

Think of what they were willing to endure for their god Shiv. Think of how he compares with our wonderful loving Saviour. His purity and beauty seem more real to us now. We told those poor souls of our Saviour and gave them many gospel tracts. O, that they might be saved to serve our Lord Christ. Your Bengal-Orissa missionaries are most emphatically dependent on your definite, faithful, spiritual support.

JOHN A. HOWARD.

"HOW SHALL THEY HEAR WITHOUT A PREACHER?"

I suppose some people at home might feel that that little spot on the map of India which they know as the Bengal-Orissa field may be over-stocked with missionaries. Or that perhaps there are so many Indian Christians now that missionaries are no longer needed. Well that spot is small compared to the rest of India or even to our other mission fields in India, Telugu land, Burma and Assam. But perhaps they hadn't realized that it was larger than the combined areas of Connecticut and Delaware with a population as large as that of Texas, over 4,000,000 people. Our Christian community of little less than 2,000, forms but one two-thousandth of the entire population. All our Christian villages could
be put into less than two square miles of the area, which would make the tiny fraction \( \frac{1}{3600} \) of the territory for which we alone are responsible, we, the eleven missionary families and six single ladies on the field, and you of the Northern Baptist churches in America. And as most of these eleven families and six ladies are engaged in School or Orphanage or evangelistic work in the towns, there is no one free to go about to preach to these other thousands. It is our great pleasure to plan to spend at least a few weeks of the cold season out "on tour," encouraging the scattered or lonely Christians and telling the gospel story to those who have never heard.

Miss Naomi Knapp, of Bhimpore, started out last New Year's Day with the Bible-women. After visiting two Christian villages, at the latter of which Mr. Kitchen baptised a man and his wife, they started out on a new road to find Telat. "Everybody we asked said, "O, Telat is just two miles farther on." We would go another two miles only to get the same answer. But we really did arrive there finally and at last.

When I climbed down from the cart one little boy ran to his father saying, "I won't go near that thing. It has lamps on its head." Before we left he had changed his mind and was even willing to come near enough to hear my watch tick. Our tents were raised near the home of the only Christian there.

We found the people very willing to listen and asking for more stories of the Christian way. The pastor took us to the homes of many who had been telling him they wanted to become Christians, but most of them were hindered by their love for rice-beer or by fear that their relatives would persecute them. Sonaton and his wife, before they became Christians, were threatened with all sorts of trouble, but in spite of opposition they were baptised. The two of them seemed so different from their neighbours that Miss Hill and I asked if they were different before or if Christianity had made the difference. The Bible-women who were there last year assured us that the change had been since they became Christians.
While we were there a little baby became very sick. After a few days the parents became very worried and tried everything they knew, even calling in the village women to find out who was responsible for the evil spirit which was eating the baby. We had gone to see the baby once or twice and when they had given up all hope they came to the Christians for any hope they could give. We were able to give suggestions which they followed even though they were against all their rules, and in a few days the baby was as well as ever. They were very happy. They called the baby mine. They put her in my arms. Then taking her away from me they gave me four pice. I asked why they were doing that. They replied, "You helped her to get well and so she is yours. Now we are buying her back, but when she is old enough we will send her to a Christian school."

The last Sunday we were there, several people came asking for a little of the Christians' rice. They thought if they ate rice cooked for the Christians all the evil spirits would have to leave their bodies. One morning an old woman came to the tent and said, "Last evening when you Christians were having prayers we saw an evil spirit coming across the field in this direction. But it couldn't come where the Christians were, so it turned and went in another direction while we all ran into the house and shut the door because we were afraid."

At the next village where we spent a week a woman was baptised. Others were almost ready. If only we could have people who were able to give more time to the places where we have small churches, I feel that many would soon come to the knowledge of the Saviour. They are not satisfied with what they have, they are anxious to hear about Jesus, but how can they hear without a preacher?

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MIDNAPORE SOCIAL NEWS

Since Miss Ruth Daniels and her mother returned home last spring, Dr. Mary Bacheler has held the fort of the Women's work alone. That
isn't quite the literal truth for Mrs. Long, in addition to the cares of her family of little children, helps in every way possible, overseeing the promising Girls' School and giving sympathetic ear and wise counsel to any who call upon her. "Dr. Mary" writes, "Last Saturday was quite an eventful day in Midnapore. The meeting for the election of officers in the local Women's Society was long over due. Mrs. Long decided on a combined gathering to include the Society meeting, a sale of the garments left over from Miss Daniels' Industrial Class, and a social tea. We had the usual prayer meeting with the singing of some of the old hymns in which all joined heartily. We began too late to have the election after all, so that was postponed. After the meeting the women adjourned to the next room where the pretty garments were temptingly displayed, and as each little group finished its purchases, it passed into the next room where tea and sweets were being served.

The whole affair passed off nicely and when it was over we hurried a little late to the next social affair which was the formal engagement of Mrs. Rachal Bose's second daughter to Mr. Biswas, one of the faculty of the Bible Training School. The prospective bridgroom's sister and five young women teaching in Calcutta came down, as well as Mrs. Bose's eldest daughter and her children from Cawnpore. After the engagement ceremony, two fine young men waited on the guests with sweets and sherbet.

These young men had come down from Calcutta to confer with Mr. Long about a Students' Camp.

We are looking forward to three weddings before the end of the year,—Khanto Bala Rai's and two daughters of Mrs. Bose, and we will lose two of the three, one to Madras and the other to Calcutta.

Since Mrs. Bose came from Balasore she has done valuable work acting, though quite unofficially, as pastor assistant. Her work has resulted in baptisms and the righting of some wrongs. She has charge of the bazaar schools, the teachers and Bible-women, and conducts a special Bible class for the workers.
We are having an unusual rainfall this season, already ten inches in excess of our average at this date. Vegetables are drowned out and the rice in the lowland is likely to be a complete failure, so we are suffering from the high price of living.

PARSONAGE FOR BHIMPORE

On July 22nd after prayer meeting, the congregation went to a site near the pastor’s old house where, after a short service, Mrs. L. C. Kitchen broke the ground for the new parsonage. This is to be a brick and plaster house, about three-fourths of the cost to be met by specifics given from home for this purpose, and the balance to be given by the church.

Rev. and Mrs. L. C. Kitchen and their two children are leaving for home August 28. Their going home six months earlier than they anticipated is necessitated by the precarious state of Mr. Kitchen’s health, he having suffered a serious breakdown in May. Now it is a case of “robbing Peter,” and probably Mr. Long, the only man is Midnapore, will have to go to Bhimpore to look after the important station work there until the arrival of reinforcements.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

Perhaps some of these “first impressions” have become tainted by second impressions, I am not sure, but some few stand out very clearly in my mind still. When a girl has been brought up, as I was, in the Middle West and never even seen the ocean until she was nearly ready to board a ship which was to be her home for over a month, there is quite a thrill involved in going on board. I was resolved not to be sea-sick (having been assured that it was at least partly a matter of will power), and the entire journey was utterly delightful, giving no one any real excuse for illness. Can you imagine what life aboard a ship as small as ours would
be like, where you had to walk 16 times around the deck to be sure you'd gone a mile? We got extremely well acquainted with every one,—you couldn't help it. Most of them were missionaries, old and new, of several different denominations, and I found that they were not at all superhuman, but quite ordinary people. Our Baptist crowd was not large, but I thought them decidedly the best, and was proud to be one of them.

There were certain "high points" as it were, along the way. One was when we passed through the Straits of Gibraltar, with Europe on one hand, Africa on the other the Atlantic behind, and the Mediterranean before us; and another was my first trip ashore, after three weeks of water, at Port Said, when I purchased my topee and had my first experience with native bargaining. I found that in the Orient you need not trouble your conscience about paying less than a thing is worth, for the merchant will not part with it unless he gets that much, and he will try for two or three times its value. As we approached the Equator in the Red Sea, I received my first ideas about heat. Everyone was hunting for a cool place, and there was no such thing during the middle of the day. At Aden the street watering system was most interesting to me,—coolies carrying a goat skin of water over their shoulder, emptying in on the road, then refilling it in the ocean nearby. Farther away there were large barrels mounted on two wheels, drawn by camels, used as sprinkling carts. My first glimpse of Indian village life was not in India, but there in Aden when we drove through crowded streets, over-run by goats, cows, or naked children. It is one thing to read of people and their stock sharing the same roof amicably, but it is quite another thing to see it, and it gives you a bit of a jar. Of course we were fairly hounded by beggars, some of whom looked very well fed, in spite of their cry of "hungry."

And finally I reached India itself, seeing it first at Karachi under a dazzling coat of white desert sand. The glare was very trying, and the heat as well, for they had just had a two-day sand storm blowing in from the Sind Desert. How different Bombay seemed, with its gorgeous stormy sunset and sudden night! When we were in the native bazar we wondered whether India and really been touched by Western civilization,
and yet one part of Bombay is markedly English. I saw both sides,—from the coolies at the dock, loading coal or taking off cargo, dirty, mouths and teeth stained by pan, and the red stains showing everywhere on the street; to the lovely drive along the sea front, lined with spacious compounds with cool gardens, all beautifully clean. We were almost frightened when we saw the native section full of filth, nakedness, sin and ignorance, and realized that these were the people we had come to work among. We were so helpless, and it didn’t seem possible to make any dent in it, but then I thought “with men this is impossible but with God all things are possible.”

You just have to ride in an Indian train to be able to understand what it is like. I thought I should never get used to them, but I have. Then Balasore gave me a taste of “the rains” at once, and it poured from the time we arrived until Sunday, I think. I know I stayed right in the house, and was continually amazed that so much rain could fall. Now that too, is an old story. The high ceilings of the bungalow made me feel at first as though I were in the Grand Central Station, but they are mighty nice to have in hot weather. For the first week or two I was often awakened by strange sounds, like some one in distress. It was the nightly chorus of jackals. Then morning and evening there was a weird note sounded, which was sustained on the same tone, ending abruptly, then repeated. I finally found out that it was a part of the puja or worship ceremony, produced by blowing on a conch shell. It seems to me that there are endless pujas for an endless number of gods or goddesses. They are almost daily reminders of the enormity of our task in evangelizing India. I had expected to find India very, very different from anything which I had known in America, but I was not prepared to find myself so decidedly in the minority as Christianity is here. I can’t describe the feelings which the sight of crowds of people worshipping the idols which they have made with their own hands, wearing the marks of Hinduism on their faces and bodies, the holy men who are anything but holy, and the condition of the mass of the people arouses in me.

The Christian community was another revelation to me. I wondered
at first why so much time had to be spent with the Christians themselves. Then I came to see that when a man becomes a Christian his children automatically belong to the Christian community, for they are no longer Hindu when their father breaks caste. If they are not truly converted, and brought into a knowledge of Christ as their Saviour, they become a blot on the name Christian by the lives they lead which are not what they should be. So the Christians, themselves, need constant "shepherding," that their lives may be the right kind of a witness to the Hindus and Mohammedans who press them so closely on all sides, and that their children may be brought into the fold.

There are so many other things which I should probably tell you about if I were talking to you, as for instance the contrast between the great natural beauty of the country and the sordidness which is man's contribution, both equally surprising to me. And I wish I could convey to you the impression of the vast multitude of things which are in desperate need of immediate attention all the time, everywhere. It seems as though one knotty problem is scarcely solved before there are two more waiting. I don't feel quite so utterly useless as I did at first, but I wish there were two of me, so that one could work while the other was getting the language.

MARY LAUGHLIN.