TWO TOMBS

BY FRED. W. SCHELANDER

Never was the glory of our Saviour’s empty tomb so brought home to our hearts as at this Eastertide. For almost on the very anniversary of His glorious resurrection we witnessed a festival in honour of a corpse. This corpse was that of a blind man, about thirty years old, Mahar by caste, who, through inability to earn a livelihood in any other way, had become a sadhu. A sadhu is a Hindu religious mendicant. Dressed, if possible, in a saffron-yellow robe, he is ready to give crude religious instruction in return for the alms he begs. Most sadhus are unworthy the name. They are usually lazy “spongers”, steeped in vice. But from all reports this particular blind sadhu was a good man. People said that never a foul or abusive word fell from his lips. He was just a poor, harmless, blind, good-natured, religious-minded beggar.

He had died a year ago, and on this day, the anniversary of his death, his body had been
exhumed. For a few minutes we joined the crowd at the mouth of that newly re-dug pit. He had been buried in a sitting position. Down the rough dirt steps descended the people. Young and old, men and women, boys and girls, each one had a few flowers at least to place upon his skull. Many brought offerings of foodstuffs, rice and cocoanuts particularly. The red *kunku* powder without which no Hindu ceremony seems complete, was very much in evidence. Whatever was exposed of the skeleton was soon covered by floral tributes, and still they came!

After depositing his offering each person would partially prostrate himself before the corpse in an attitude of worship. But do not imagine the scene as either a funeral or a church service! Solemnity and reverence as we understand them were lacking; the atmosphere was rather that of a holiday. Everyone was in his best attire. Vendors were peddling soft drinks and tobacco. The festivities of the occasion included two general meals and a night of music. We learned that a permanent tomb would soon be built over the grave (which would not be opened in future) and that this festival in honour of the blind beggar's death would become an annual event.
We had two opportunities to address these people (all Mahars) on this occasion. Once, in the pavilion tent, while the noon meal was preparing, we gave them a resumé of Dr. Ambedkar’s recent book, *The Annihilation of Caste*, and closed with Christ’s invitation to the heavy laden. (Dr. Ambedkar is the idol of the Mahars and champion of the “Depressed Classes” or untouchables. He has publicly renounced Hinduism and announced his intention of adopting some other religion.)

Then, the evening after their whole affair, we spoke, to those who were not too sleepy to listen, on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Giving the blind *sadhu* all the credit we could, we compared his opened grave, around which they had gathered to worship, with our Lord’s opened grave, around which the disciples gathered to wonder. The one opened by the spade, the other by an angel. The one containing a decaying skeleton, the other vacant burial clothes. The one, that of a man who had to beg from them in life and who could do still less to help them now that he was dead; the other, that of the tender, all-powerful Son of God who deliberately “tasted death.
for every man,” but who now ever liveth to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him.

Will you pray for victory in this village of Vihigaon? A spiritual battle is going on. A group of splendid young men desire to step out for Christ in baptism but their elders are bitterly opposing them. Chief among the persecutors are the relations of the above sadhu. Right now, though unbaptized as yet, this group of singers is voluntarily assisting one of our preachers in a summer evangelistic tour. There are budding preachers among them. Will you pray the Living Christ to set them free?
By A. C. EICHER

One hot afternoon in the cool season I was riding my cycle from our Mission school to the town of Akola. A man lying under a shade tree by the side of the road, with a downward wave of his hand, feebly motioned to me to come over to him.

For some days I had seen him under that tree, half way from our school to Akola. Over his body there was an old patched quilt. Beside him was a cruse of water, after the style used by religious mendicants. I took him for a "holy man."

Dismounting, I went over to him. I was amazed. Here was no mendicant, but a haggard, shrivelled, living skeleton. His name was Kanya Singh, a Rajput. Rajputs are a high, proud caste of Hindus. He told me he had had an operation, but on account of lack of nourishment his incision would not heal. He asked for food, or better still, for money to buy food. People travelling along the road would take the money and buy eatables for him. We do not usually consider it wise to give cash. Being on my cycle there was little I could do then except to give him a comforting word, tell him I cared, and that we would see what we could do for him.

Next morning, in our prayers, as we all sat cross-legged on the floor with the people of our compound, I told them of Kanya. Something had to be done. Would they take part in helping him? They would, gladly. They would give him cooked rice, breads, curry, and such other things as they had. We would
furnish him eggs and milk. We would all care for him on our compound.

Taking two young men to help with putting him into our trailer on an improvised stretcher, we set off next morning on our errand of mercy.

Kanya was there and seemed glad to see us. I told him briefly of our plan to help him. His face dropped. He answered, “Sahib, I will gladly accept the eggs and milk, but drink your water, or eat the cooked food—Why, I would be defiled! What would my caste men think of me?” I answered, “Look how much your caste men think of you now. They are leaving you to starve here by the highway!”

“No, no, Sahib. Give me money or uncooked eggs and milk, but I don’t want living on your compound or eating food cooked by Christians. Please send the milk and eggs to me here.”

I was amazed, and to be honest, a bit put out by the stiff terms this starving, sick man was trying to set. I thought it over and answered, “Kanya, you know my offer. When you are ready to accept it, send me word. We will gladly help you.” As I drove away with an empty trailer, Kanya’s face was a study in despair, but his feeble hand shook out a negative wave.

Two days passed. No news from Kanya.

Then came a wonderful day for the whole countryside, when a wealthy young man who had married an Akola lawyer’s daughter, returned with his bride to visit the town. He had a flying license, and came in the Aga Khan’s aeroplane which he borrowed for the
visit. Each morning and evening for three days he made demonstration flights which thousands of people flocked to see. They came from miles and miles around. The level field where the plane alighted was along the road beside which Kanya lay. Curious, holiday-making crowds are not much interested in charity, and poor Kanya could not make himself heard for even so much as a drink of water from the well which was only twenty-five feet away. Carts of all descriptions, motors, and crowds on foot thronged the road. Clouds of dust were choking. No water, no food, and the stifling dust had their effect.

The following day a messenger told me Kanya had sent word that he was willing now to accept our offer. Poor fellow! Immediately we set off again in the car and trailer. We stood considering how we could move him with the least discomfort when a Hindu walked up to me and asked where I was taking him. I told him to our bungalow. He said, “I am the quarantine ward servant in the Government hospital. Bring him to the hospital and tell them my name. If he is admitted, I will care for him.” I thanked him for his generous offer which I gladly accepted, as we really had poor facilities for treating the dying man.

Kanya lay under his old, filthy quilt. We took it off to lift him into the trailer. The poor fellow had discarded all his clothes as they were clotted with matter from three running sores—one in his side, one in his hip, and a third in his thigh. Having no relations who would help him or friends who would do any more than bring him water, and being unable to move more than a foot or two a day,
he had lain in the same place for days before ever he had called us to help him. The filth and stench covered by the quilt were appalling! Somehow, we lifted him into the trailer and took him to the hospital. The House Surgeon was kind, and admitted him to the quarantine ward, putting him in the care of the man who told us to bring him. The surgeon told me he was suffering from tubercular sores, and had had no operation at all. His case was absolutely hopeless, and there was much fear of infection of other patients. He told me that Kanya had got discouraged and disgruntled with the treatment he was receiving (all free), and after three months of it, had left the hospital of his own will to find asylum under the tree where we found him. We helped in what ways we could, and spoke to him of the gospel, but his mind was too deadened by his suffering to think straight. In eight days he was gone.

But every time we pass his tree now, we are glad that Kanya did not die there on a chill night in the cool season, or of thirst during the hot afternoon. But we ponder on the stranglehold that caste had on that pitiful, filth-enshrouded man who, when offered a home and cooked food declined, rather than be defiled ceremonially! "What would my caste men say?" Kanya asked in agonized tones when he was choosing between "defilement" and death.

"What will your Master say?" my friend, if you and I leave millions of others such as Kanya who, though they are not in his pitiful plight physically, are nevertheless in just as strongly welded bonds of caste. Caste is breaking, it is true, in larger cities, but Kanya is not an exception to what is still being found in India's villages where the great majority of the people live. There are millions in India who today would still choose Death rather than Defilement. Pray for India!

Comfort the poor, protect and shelter the weak, and with all thy might, right that which is wrong. Then shall the Lord love thee, and God Himself shall be thy great reward.

—ALFRED THE GREAT'S LAST WORDS.
The Young Brahmin

Some of you will remember the young Brahmin gentleman whom we mentioned a few months ago as being interested in the gospel. We thank those of you who have remembered to pray for him. We had a conversation with him today and he told us that he has been going on and not back. He asked us again to pray with him and after we had prayed in English he prayed in Marathi, humbly and, it seemed to us, in the Spirit. His eyes were swimming in tears when, afterwards, he said to us, "I rejoice in that every night before I go to sleep I have a conversation with God at my beside, and while my problems seem to grow greater, I have victory and joy as I go to Him." He ended his prayer with these words—"Thou wilt hear us because we ask in Jesus Christ's Name." Keep on praying that this choice character may come out fully and openly for Christ.

Explaining the Pictures

*Gateway of India* juts into the waters of Bombay Harbour. Viceroy's and other men, high in authority, often set their feet on Indian soil first at this spot or leave from here for the last time. *New Church Building* shows you the interior of the little Alliance chapel recently built in Badnera, near Amraoti City, Berar Province. Take a reading glass and try to decipher the Marathi Scripture verses, etc., on the front wall! *Being Buried* probably need not be explained, yet it is worthy of mention that the one who wants the answer of a good conscience by thus obeying the Scriptures, was won to Christ by what he saw at a Christian funeral. His own brother had died of cholera after but a day or two of illness. Before that brother died he spoke with confidence about the resurrection of Christ and was sure that he, too, would rise from the dead at Christ's coming. His son, through whom he had given his heart to Christ, conducted a simple little Christian service at his father's grave, just outside the heathen village, singing a hymn or two of Christian faith and reading from God's Word and praying in the name of Jesus. The man here being baptized, though an old man, had never
seen anything that resembled such victory over death and sorrow at a heathen grave. He was convinced that the One who could take away fear and grief at the graveside must be the world’s Redeemer. He believed and asked to be baptized. The scene is on the Purna River in Berar. Another Baptismal Scene depicts four young men of Akola with their pastor, about to be baptized, in the Murna River. Still Another Baptismal Scene shows four young women of Akola ready for baptism. Santa Barbara Boys shows you the “boys” on their way from the Akola Church—seen in the background—to a Young People’s meeting to be held in the Mission Compound. Pray for these promising lads and for Mr. and Mrs. A. C. Eicher who are over them in the Lord. Modern Bombay gives a view of the office building of the Bombay, Baroda and Central India Railway. Our missionaries who work in Gujarat travel to their field, north of Bombay, by this line.

NOTES

As this number of The India Alliance Bulletin “goes to press” we are rejoicing in gratitude for copious downpours of rain in all parts of India where rain is now normally due. The dust is laid; new verdure has taken the place of the withered plains; the birds in the trees are happy in song; and the frogs in the roadside pools are putting on their annual nocturnal broadcasts. We rejoice with praiseful nature and bless the name of Him whose mercy endures forever.

The Summer Schools for our Indian workers will be in progress when this issue of the Bulletin is in the hands of our readers. A special course in methods and principles of Sunday School work will be given to our Marathi workers by Miss Elizabeth Moreland of the Free Methodist Mission. Miss Moreland has given years of study to this important subject and is rich in experience of work in Indian Sunday Schools.

During the rainy season short-term Bible Schools will be held for village Christians in some of our districts.

Will our friends who read the Bulletin pray that during the
trying weather of the rainy months—July to October—the missionaries may be kept in health? Special prayer is asked for Miss Katherine Williams, Miss E. Lothian, Mrs. A. I. Garrison, Miss Helen Bushfield and Mr. C. A. Gustafson. All of these friends have lately been severely tested in body. Pray also for Miss Steed and Miss King, who are now on furlough. They were much in need of rest when they left India and we trust they may be upheld by the intercessory prayers of God’s children.

The new mass movements toward Christ among India’s “untouchables” still go on. Many of the converts have suffered persecution for Christ’s sake, but this, it appears, does not retard the progress of the movement. We pray and hope for still greater things.

Word comes that cholera has broken out in various sections of India. Pray that this pestilence that “walketh in darkness” may not come nigh God’s servants.

Special prayer is asked for God’s blessing upon a Young Peoples’ Rally which, it is hoped, may be held in Akola early this fall. A Spirit-anointed Indian evangelist will be present for a series of meetings at that time. Share in the blessing by presenting the matter believingly at the throne of grace.