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MISSION TO  
LEPERS  
IN INDIA AND  
THE EAST

*STORY OF NAINI ASYLUM  
AT ALLAHABAD, INDIA*

By  
S. HIGGINBOTTOM

# MISSION TO LEPERS IN INDIA AND THE EAST

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Contributions should be sent to the Treasurer but may be given to any local Auxiliary or to any of the officials named above. The Secretary and the Missionary will arrange for addresses on the work of the Mission; lantern lectures may also be given as requested. Literature and information will be freely sent. The quarterly publication of the Mission, "Without the Camp" costs 25 cents a year and gives interesting reports and facts about the Mission and the Lepers.

# Story of the Naini Leper Asylum Allahabad, India

BY S. HIGGINBOTTOM

## THE BEGINNING.

Before the Indian mutiny, the Presbyterian Missionary in Allahabad, was caring for a few lepers at his own expense. They finally became so numerous that the Allahabad Charitable Association took charge of them and put them in an asylum by themselves. In 1870 the city was growing so fast that the asylum was moved across the Jamna river and located near the village of Naini. The Charitable Association continued to support this work until January, 1905. For the last 15 years of this period the Mission to Lepers had been giving an annual grant.

## NEW BUILDINGS.

On January 1st, 1905, the Charitable Association handed over the asylum entirely to the Mission to Lepers and the old, dilapidated, mud houses, were remodeled or rebuilt of brick and tile, with iron girders and adequate ventilation, so that they are now sanitary, weather-proof, costing very little to keep in repair. The old thatched roofs harbored much vermin. In the women's quarters, for instance, in one week five cobra snakes were killed, not to speak of centipedes and scorpions; worse than either the snakes, centipedes or scorpions were the rats, which would come and while the lepers slept would often nibble their limbs, and if the patient had anaesthetic leprosy, the rats could nibble a great deal without awakening the patient. This horrible condition of affairs made it absolutely necessary to provide these new buildings.

The Government built an asylum next to

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the Mission Asylum and later gave it to the Mission, and now the two asylums are managed as one. The addition of the Government asylum makes segregation of the sexes possible.

The first new building erected was the hospital, which has three wards with accommodations for about twenty. None but the most hopeless and helpless are placed there. In a letter I received from the hospital assistant he said, "Please, sir, give me permission to turn some of these lepers away, because there are so many there on the veranda outside and the smell from them is so very overpowering, I cannot stay in the dispensary to do my work." I wrote back to manage some how as it had never been our custom to turn lepers away.

The last building to go up was the Church, a beautiful structure which has wire screens instead of doors and windows, and here the people come for their daily services, and for the preaching and the Sunday School on the Lord's Day.

### INTERESTING THE LEPERS

When I took charge of the asylum in 1904, there were about fifty lepers there, most of them very far gone with the disease. The accommodation provided was so poor that many of the lepers who were able to do so preferred to beg. The great problem then was to make the asylum a place in which the lepers would stay. The new buildings contributed very much to this, but lepers are human beings in spite of the awful ravages the disease makes upon the body, and more than new buildings was needed. They needed some interest in life. How to occupy the time of the leper was a problem before me. I decided to try gardening. Each leper now has his little plot of ground and is given seed and water for irrigation. Lemon trees, orange trees, mango trees, bananas and other Indian fruits have been planted and the produce all goes to the lepers. This has given them good, healthy outdoor exercise, and has also occupied their minds.

Formerly everything was given to the leper; all of his food, clothing, even the barber was paid for, so that the leper never received any money except what he begged. A little store was built in the asylum and here red peppers, and spices and pulse, which the Indian peasantry is so fond of, were placed on sale. Each man and woman is given 20 ounces of coarse ground wheat a day, and 8 cents a week. With this 8 cents they buy all their spices and red pepper and pulse and salt, pay for their barber and save something to buy shoes or headgear, or any luxury they can get out of 8 cents per week. Having money of their own to spend in this way, small though it be, gives them an interest in life, which the leper needs. Each leper cooks his own food. In case he has not sufficient hands left to cook with, some other leper cooks for him, and the sum fixed upon as adequate remuneration for this service, is 7 cents a month.

For clothing each man is given four yards of coarse, strong, cotton cloth, 40 inches wide, which costs about 30 cents; the women, who in that part of India, usually have headgear, receive about six yards of the same kind of cloth. In addition to this there is given a very coarse blanket costing about 50 cents. Of course such an amount of clothing is entirely inadequate, and must be supplemented in some way.

### THE SACRAMENT

Five years ago there were about a half dozen Christians in the asylum. Today there are about one hundred, most of whom have been received into the church membership upon confession of their faith in Jesus Christ. We have an orchestra of native instruments for the services, and while the music may be weird to American ears, it is very sweet to the Indian, and it would be very difficult indeed to see anywhere an orchestra and choir that throw themselves more completely into their work than these poor, hoarse-throated lepers. On Communion Sundays, the wine is passed by the Pastor, who is not a leper, and who takes it from the cup with

a teaspoon, and where the leper has sufficient hand left to hold wine, it is poured into his palm and the man drinks it; but if he has not sufficient hand left, he opens his mouth and a teaspoon of wine is given. This system allows those of us who are not lepers, but who attend the leper church, regularly, to share in this Sacrament.

### CHRISTIAN LEPERS.

God in His Providence, sent us a teacher for the men, a young fellow, married, with one little boy, who had just started out as a Bible Colporteur. When it was discovered that he was a leper, he left his wife and child, and came into the leper asylum; he has had a class daily and has proved himself a most sympathetic helper in everything. In like manner God sent a teacher for the women, a young girl, who had been trained in a Christian orphanage; she became tainted with this disease of leprosy and the superintendent of the orphanage wrote to ask if she could be admitted into the asylum. She was a girl of about seventeen, very bright and well educated; arrangements had been made for her marriage, but here the whole course of her life was changed by this disease. Her brother, who had just graduated from the Theological Seminary, brought her when she came in her beautiful white clothes into the old leper asylum. There she saw human beings who seemed to have lost every trace of womanliness; at sight of these poor creatures, she threw her head on her brother's shoulder and sobbed as if her heart would break, and cried out, "Am I to be like one of these?" Her brother had to go back to his work and she was left in the asylum. One day I went to her and said, "Miss Francis, you have had opportunities in life. You know there is something better than what you see here. Would you not take a class for these little children and for the women and try to teach them some of the things you know." She said she would, and began. My wife frequently went over to give her help and suggestions and encouragement and the change that came over the women was



truly remarkable. In place of the old, dirty, slovenly creatures are new beings, clean, neat and tidy. There came into their faces a look of hopefulness and today nearly every woman in the asylum is a member of the Church. When hot weather came so that my wife had to go to the hills with our little baby, I asked our lady doctor if she would take several other ladies over to the asylum and cheer these women up a bit. She went over one afternoon, and upon her return she told me that Miss Francis had opened her heart to her and that this Indian leper girl had said that when she first came into the asylum, she did not know whether there was any God or not, but she was sure that if there were a God He could not be a God to love, and afflict any person as He had afflicted her. "But now," the girl went on to say, "every day I thank God that He made me a leper, because by doing so He has given me an opportunity to work for Him, that I would not have had in any other way." Her life is back of this statement. She has transformed the women's quarters, and they love her.

### CHILDREN OF LEPERS.

For two or three years I was writing to friends in England and America, and it was being advertised in the paper, "Without the Camp," that a Children's Home was needed at Naini, but the money did not come in. There was one dear little boy especially, whose face will not fade from my memory. When I first knew him he was a bright, happy, little fellow, with no taint of the disease at all; but when the Children's Home came four years later, he was walking around the asylum with bent body and shrivelled skin and dull eyes, bearing unmistakable signs of the presence of this dread disease. There were also twin sisters, dear little girls of about ten. When examined by the civil surgeon, both were declared to be free from the disease. When finally the Home was built, the children were sent over to it, and the twins among them. But shortly afterwards the hospital assistant asked my wife to examine one of these twins. My

wife did so, and found that she was a leper, and for the first time in their lives, these two little girls were separated—the one to go back to a life of unspeakable misery and pain and the other to have a chance in life to become useful. Today there are twenty children in the Home who are being saved from contact with the disease, and if we have the experience that they have in other asylums, at least 95 per cent. of these children will escape.

Not long before we left India a mother very badly gone with the disease with very little of her feet left, hobbled painfully into the asylum with her little girl, a child between four and five years of age. They went into the women's quarters, and after they had been there some time, the woman said to my wife that she would like to become a Christian and give up her little girl to go with other children and be cared for. So the mother was received into the church membership, and the little child taken over to the Home. The child missed her mother very much and on the following Sunday in church saw her sitting among other women, and began to sob and wanted to go to her. My wife took the little child in her lap and kept her there until the services were over; then at the conclusion of the services, the parents crowded around the children but not to touch them; while my wife was engaged in conversation she heard a scream, and looking up she saw this mother hobbling away as fast as she could, her little child in pursuit, the mother crying out, "O, catch my child!" Her mother love was so great, although her heart was nearly breaking to take the little one to her breast, that because of the dread of communicating the disease to the child she turned away. One of the sweetest parts of the church services to me is when these little children of the lepers get up and sing in Hindustani, in their sweet, passionless voices, "Jesus Loves Me, This I Know."

## THE LEPERS' GIFTS.

Every Sunday in the church the lepers take up a collection, not to be spent on themselves, but to go to the spread of Christ's Kingdom among those who do not know Him. When the church was finished a committee of the lepers came to me and said, "Sir, whose church is this?" I said, "It is yours; it is the lepers' church." "Well then," they said, "If it is our church, we want to help; we want to buy a Pulpit Bible." I said, "You are very welcome to, but I am sure I do not know where you will get the money from." They said, "But, sir, we have been praying for this church, and saving up for it, so that now we want to have a part in it." They bought the Bible and also a clock because they did not like to be late for services, and they bought a bell to summon them to services. Last Christmas, when there were Christian Endeavor and Sunday School Conventions in Compoor, I offered to send the pastor, and one evening gave him the rupees for his railroad fare. The next morning on his way to the railroad station, he called at my bungalow and gave me back the money. I said, "What is this, are you not going?" He said, "Yes, but the lepers say that I am their pastor, and so they are going to pay my expenses," and they did. When we consider that these gifts come out of those 8 cents a week, we see what real sacrifice is involved on the part of these poor, unfortunate people.

## NEEDS

The Mission to Lepers is International and Interdenominational. It sends no missionaries of its own, but supplies to any Missionary in the field funds for the care and support of Lepers. It takes care of Lepers only. It co-operates now with thirty of the Missionary Societies of America and Europe. It has 78 stations and aids nearly 9000 lepers and their children throughout India, Burma, Siam, China, Japan and the Phillipines. It costs \$25.00 a year to maintain an adult leper in one of our asylums giving him his entire living and all medical care and nursing together with Christian teaching. It costs \$20.00 a year to support an untainted child of leper parents in one of our homes where they are free from the contagion of the disease and are reared in a Christian atmosphere. There is appalling need of new asylums and homes. Numberless lepers need such care as this Mission can give.

You can help by gifts; by taking one of our subscription books and soliciting enough to support a leper or a child; by arranging for addresses or giving literature. Will you write to the Secretary and offer your help?

"A very interesting illustrated pamphlet will be sent to any one on request. Can you send an address of some one who would like to hear about this work?"

"I am sure this is a blessed work and I trust that the hearts of God's people will be opened to respond to the call of these, the most afflicted of all classes among suffering men."

A. W. HALSEY,

Secretary of Presbyterian

Board of Foreign Missions





**MISS FRANCIS**  
**LEPER TEACHER IN WOMAN'S WARD AT NAINI ASYLUM, IN**

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