6d.

THE CHALLENGE SERIES

Also :

Lightening the Lepers' Load *By* Thomas Bridson

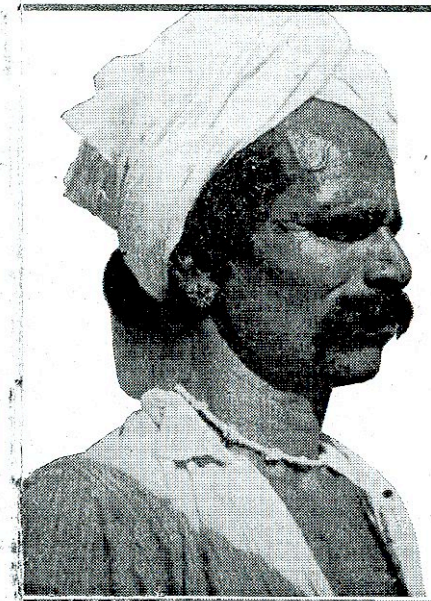
Triumphs of the Cross in Travancore *By* Narayana Muthiah

Other Booklets in preparation

Pictures on front of cover

Top: A familiar figure at The Salvation Army's Stuartpuram Criminal Tribes Settlement

Bottom: Crims in an Army Colony listening to Gospel proclamation



CAPTURING CRIMS FOR CHRIST

By

H. Pimm Smith

Capturing Crims for Christ

'HALLO, Roshan, from where have you run away now? '

'I haven't run away from anywhere; I have just come to see my people.'

'But you must have run away, or you would have a police escort with you.'

'No, I don't need an escort now. I belong to The Salvation Army, and with the Salvation Army Manager's pass I am allowed to travel alone.'

That was a statement Roshan's fellow-tribesman could scarcely believe, yet it was perfectly true. Roshan was a Dom (pronounced like the English word 'dome'; the feminine is Domin), a member of a criminal tribe, and for long years it had been the rule that no Dom should be allowed to travel, either afoot or by train, unless he was accompanied by an escort furnished by the police carrying a document signed by the Police Superintendent giving permission for the Dom so to travel.

Recently, however, the Doms of the Gorakhpore District had been placed under the care of The Salvation Army, and one of the privileges they had gained by this was that if the Salvation Army Manager considered that a man was fit to be trusted to travel without escort he could give the man a pass to that effect and the police had not any authority over him while he was on his journey. Roshan was one of the earliest to merit and to take advantage of this privilege, hence his fellow-tribesman's surprise at seeing him arrive among his own people without an escort and yet to hear him say that he was not a runaway.

When Roshan asked me for this pass I had been somewhat fearful of allowing him to go, for he had been a desperate

1945

character—a drunkard, a gambler, and a cunning, practised thief. His career over a long spell of years had been one of in and out of prison, much more in than out; when out, he was a menace not only to society in general, but to the physical safety of any policeman venturing to handle him; he was sturdily built, lithe and strong, and not afraid of any one. However, Roshan had become a changed man by the power of God, and while I wondered whether mingling with old associates might not cause him to turn aside from his newly chosen way of life, he assured me that he would be all right. 'God can keep me there just as He can here,' he said; so he got his pass and went off happily to display his new-found freedom to his old friends.

Roshan's leave was for about a week, and punctually to time he arrived back at the Settlement at Gorakhpore. I see him now, striding across the compound, his face wreathed in glad smiles, his pass in his hand. I greeted him with, 'Well, Roshan, you are back.'

'Yes,' he said, 'and all safe and well.'

'How did you get on?' I asked.

'Splendidly,' he said, telling me of the conversation related above. 'I told the people that in The Salvation Army we have a Meeting each night; we gather for Roll Call, sing and pray and listen to the Bible being read; so I called them together and did the same there as we do here. One night I told them the story of the Prodigal Son, another night the story of the healing of the man with the withered hand, and so on.'

'Did you take your Bible with you?' I asked him.

'No,' he answered, 'I know all these stories in my heart.'

And so the one-time hardened criminal had become a herald of the Good News.

The Criminal Tribes people of India, numbering well over 3,000,000, are of numerous types and are widely scattered. Some

of them live in villages and some wander about like gipsies. They are called 'criminal tribes' because thieving is their normal way of gaining a livelihood. They are registered as criminals, every baby born of criminal parents automatically going on the police register as a criminal. Some of the Crims followed certain simple lines of work, but generally that was but a cloak for their ordinary practice of thieving. With many of them the mode of procedure was to make small articles from bamboo or something of that sort, then go round a village offering the articles for sale and at the same time begging. Really they were taking stock of the houses and what there was in them and studying how best to plunder them when the folk were asleep.

For long years the Government had tried in one way or another to reform the Crims. Their efforts had been almost entirely unsuccessful. The Crims felt that they had a grievance in that, they said, they had been people of importance, but having been robbed of all their rights, they thought, 'it is only fair that we should rob others.' The Government planned to help them, but their plans did not work. They asked the Crims, 'Why don't you live honestly like other people?'

'Ah,' replied the Crims, 'other people have land; we have not any.'

When grants of land were made, the Crims rented it out to near-by farmers, drew the rent and went on stealing. Reproved for this, they excused themselves by asking, 'What is the good of land if we have not bullocks to plough it?' Bullocks were given; they were sold and the money was pocketed by the Crims, their excuse for this being that it was not any use ploughing if they had not any seed-corn to sow. Seed-corn was given to them, but they ground it into flour, made it into bread, and still went on stealing. What could be done with such incorrigibles?

At length, in 1908, Sir John Hewett, then Lieut.-Governor of the United Provinces, arranged for The Salvation Army to

take in hand the work of reforming the Criminal Tribes people,* making a start by opening a Settlement for the Doms of Gorakhpore District. A set of buildings which had been Police Lines was placed at the disposal of The Army and there this branch of Salvation Army operations had its beginning. At that time a fairly large number of Doms was living in Gorakhpore city, a place of about 60,000 inhabitants. They were housed in two or three barrack-like compounds called Domrakhanas. Every night the police called the roll, locked up the place, and returned the next morning to unlock and again call the roll. But it would be a very unskilful Dom who could not get out of a Domrakhana after roll call, spend the night in silently robbing houses which had been prospected already, and be safely back in the Domrakhana before roll call next morning.

It was at one of these Domrakhana, a place known as Jatashankar, that Commissioner and Mrs. Booth-Tucker had their first interview with the Doms. They found the Doms to be a dirty, rowdy, evil-smelling crowd. I have heard Mrs. Booth-Tucker say that never in her life had she experienced such pandemonium as was there that day. The Doms danced and sang and shouted, apparently with the intention of terrifying their visitors and so causing them to give up their effort; but the Commissioners' quiet patience was an over-match for the Doms' noisy turbulence; in the end the Doms became quiet and settled down to hear what the Commissioners had to say. The suggestion that they should come to The Army and be taught how to earn their living by work was met with cries of disapproval; they did not want work. After a while they listened when they were told that

* Sir John Hewett maintained throughout his life a lively and sympathetic interest in the work. Eleven years after its inception, speaking before a learned Society in London, he told them how some Indian members of his Council had questioned the fairness of employing a Christian agency in preference to Indian agencies. The majority of the Council members, however, were of the opinion that The Salvation Army was the best body of people to have control of the Criminal Tribes. Every Mohammedan voted in favour of the Government's proposal and an influential Brahmin spoke on the same side. The result of the voting was over forty for to about seven against.

honest work was honourable and that they would be paid for what they did. They asked, 'How much shall we be paid?' Four annas (fourpence) a day was mentioned, the usual rate then for coolie work. Then the storm arose again.

'Four annas!' they shouted, 'four annas; and we can go out any night and get a thousand rupees (over sixty pounds) without working. No, what do you think!' However, after much talk and explanation a few promised to come into the Settlement, and so a start was made with a small number.

Those who came found life in a Salvation Army Settlement so much to their liking that they soon told others how happy they were; they met with understanding, kindness and help and were treated as human beings, something quite new to them. An Indian official in a Government office said to me one day, 'I don't know how you can bear to live and work among these people; to us they are cattle, just cattle.'

'But, sir,' I told him, 'to us they are immortal souls.' He could not understand such a point of view.

If I were asked which factor above all others was the most powerful in helping The Salvation Army to change the Crims I should without hesitation say, 'The religion of Jesus Christ.' It was that religion—believed in, practised and taught—which, more than anything else, changed so many of these desperadoes in crime into honest, peaceful, law-abiding citizens. It was not an easy thing to approach these people from the standpoint of the religion of Jesus Christ. They knew nothing of Christ or of the Bible. The very terms used in the Christian religion were strange to them; they had to be taught from the very beginning, and that was more difficult than teaching babies, for the minds of these people were occupied with evil, foul things connected with spiritism, which needed to be exorcised.

Here was a splendid opportunity for proving 'the expulsive power of a new affection,' and in life after life it was done. Those

who had sat in darkness and in the shadow of death saw the great light and walked in it. It was a moving sight to see these lifelong criminals sitting in a Meeting listening to stories of Jesus, and it was grand to hear them unitedly repeating the prayer which Jesus taught—'Our Father.' The very thought of God as Father was to them a marvellous thing. As an old Indian woman put it: 'To think of God as One instead of millions of gods and spirits is in itself restful.'

A Christian man who was staying with us for a few days asked me, 'What are you doing for the Doms to-night?' I told him we should have a Holiness Meeting. In consternation he exclaimed, 'A Holiness Meeting! Holiness for Crims?'

'Yes,' I said, 'some of them have professed conversion; we must lead them on to the higher things of the Christian life.' It reminds one of the astonishment of the Jews when they learned that 'on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.' When you have told people that God loves them and that all the rich fullness of God's grace is for them, you cannot keep back from them those things which you believe God has wrought in your own heart and life. You must pass them on.

The Doms had been so accustomed to dirt that it was not easy to get them to appreciate the blessing of cleanliness. Many of them never washed their clothes (they had not much to wash); they would wear them until they were worn out and then buy, beg or steal a fresh piece of cloth. When it was first suggested to the men that they ought to wash their clothes they indignantly asked, 'Do you take us for washermen?' And when they were told that their wives might wash them for them they replied, 'No, that would spoil the taste of our food.' However, in this, as in other matters, patience won and the week-end would present a busy scene about the well, with both men and women washing clothes.

One of the difficulties of those early days was that of the

home and family life of the Doms. When the husband and father went to jail, as often happened for some petty crime or other, the custom was for the wife and mother left at home to take to herself another husband, as she said, 'to protect her virtue.' When the first husband came out of jail he would ask to have back his place in the home, but if the fresh husband did not want to leave then the men would fight the matter out and he who won the battle won the wife.

Such domestic arrangements led to much confusion in regard to the parentage of children. At one time we had a girl in the Dom Boarding School who was claimed by two fathers and two mothers. Mahadaya, the girl, did not mind, for on visiting day (Sunday afternoon) each of the four would bring her some little present of fruit or sweetmeat and all four would sit round her chatting to each other and to her quite happily.

The Doms were inveterate gamblers. They played with small shells called *cowries*. If the shells on being tossed up fell one way it was a win, if another way it was a loss. So fond of gambling were they that their idea of bliss in a future life was that they would be where they would be able to gamble all day and there would not be any police to capture them. It was the practice when a Dom died to put a coin in the fist, or a tiny bit of gold in the mouth, as a token that there would be something with which to start gambling on the other side of the dark river.

The first Dom funeral my wife and I attended was that of Asalia, the wife of Nazira. The corpse was wrapped in a bit of new cloth and laid on a small bier made from bamboo and string, and taken to the river to be consigned to its waters. At the river-side we conducted a short service, then Nazira put a bit of gold in Asalia's mouth, plastered up the mouth with soft sweetmeat and said, 'Good!'

The bier was pushed out upon the water and at once turtles and crocodiles, with which the river abounded, were tugging at

the body from below, while huge vultures swooped upon it from above. It was a sad sight! A woman who had been despised and cast off by society while living was being fought for and devoured by vulture, crocodile and turtle now she was dead.

That way of disposing of dead Doms was one of the things which was altered. A burying-ground was provided for them and they were laid away with Christian decency.

One of the first things to be considered in connection with the reclamation of the Crims was finding suitable work for them. Many of the Gorakhpore Doms took up scavenging, and, unpleasant a task as that is, it was work most of them did not mind doing. For several terms we had a contract with the municipality for the cleansing work of the cantonment area, so I became a sort of sanitary inspector, following up the Doms to see that their work was done properly. Some took to weaving various kinds of cotton cloth and, after a while, we introduced the weaving of silk cloth for suitings; the best weavers were given this class of work and the cloth became popular in the cantonment. The hand-looms used for this work were of the type invented by one of our Officers, Major Frank Maxwell,* looms with an automatic picking motion, easy to work and much quicker in production than the ordinary village loom. Cloth up to a width of about a hundred inches could be woven on them.

Dhurri (cotton carpet) making, which the Doms had learned in jail, was another popular line of work. Some of our Doms were experts at making dhurri. When Commissioner Booth-Tucker arranged a Salvation Army Exhibition in Simla I took up some of our work as samples of what could be done. The Vicereine, who opened the exhibition, purchased these samples; they were so satisfactory that we were asked to supply a big order of dhurries for Government House at Dehra Dun.

Another profitable branch of work was the making of

* *Voiceless Inventor*, by S. C. Gauntlett.

treasury bags, used for the conveyance of coin from a central treasury to branches. Most of these bags were made of hessian cloth and some of knitted cotton string. This was work which women could do in their own homes and so was suitable for mothers with children to look after.

Often we had requests for the Doms to do odd jobs in the city, such as the removing of dead animals, and so on. One day we were asked to supply about eight men to carry away to the river the carcase of a horse which had died in the camp of the Gorakhpore Light Horse. It has been said that 'the Dom eats goat, he is fond of pork, but he dreams of horse.' We had not any difficulty in getting a group of men to remove a dead horse, they left the Settlement as merry as a group of boys out for a lark. The dead horse was taken away, but I don't think it ever reached the river; it would go to make up many a tasty curry for Dom families.

At some of the Settlements agricultural work was done; as, for instance, at the Settlement for Yerikulas near Bapatla, in the Madras Presidency, where about 1,500 acres of land was placed at The Army's disposal, some of it sandy, suitable for growing a kind of millet, and some swampy, suitable for growing rice. Adjutant Robilliard, a Channel Islander, who had been a planter in the Straits Settlements, was the Officer here; his technical knowledge was just what was required to make the Settlement an agricultural success.

At the Chauterwa Settlement the work undertaken was on behalf of a very difficult set of Maghaya Doms. Some leading Government officials had given special care to these people, but on the whole the results had been disappointing. Then a Salvation Army Officer—a Norwegian, now retired Brigadier Niels Corneliusen—took the work in hand. The results of his efforts called forth unstinted praise in a lengthy article in *The Times of India*. Corneliusen cultivated a model holding himself, parcelled

out the land among the settlers, guided them in their early efforts at cultivation and so far succeeded that a planter who saw what had been done confirmed the statement that the fields had become veritable gardens. Not only so, but there was little bad behaviour within the Settlement, and no complaints against the settlers from without.

At Bezwada, in the Madras Presidency, stone-quarrying found occupation for a large number of Crims, while at other Settlements carpentry and various handicrafts, poultry raising, silk reeling, needlework and other useful forms of labour were taken up.

At Changa Manga in the Punjab the work was that of felling trees and cutting up and stacking timber to be sold by the Government for firewood. Changa Manga is a forest of about ten square miles, principally of mulberry and shisha trees. The mulberry is a quick-growing tree and makes excellent firewood, so the Government does a good trade in that commodity. The forest takes its name from two brothers, Changa and Manga, who were daring dacoits and who, until eventually captured by the police, made the depths of the forest their hiding-place. What could be a better transformation than to turn the erstwhile den of dacoits into a place for capturing criminals for Christ!

Here Commissioner Booth-Tucker made his largest experiment in the rearing of silkworms. One hundred ounces of eggs were brought in from France (30,000 eggs to the ounce, a total of 3,000,000), long sheds built of bamboo and dried grass, the forest supplied the mulberry leaves for food, Kashmiri silkworm experts were brought in to see that the technical side of the experiment was on sound lines, some of the Crims helped, nearby villagers lent a hand, my wife and I were there with our Boarding School boys from Lahore and other boys were there from Bareilly. At their most active stage the worms were eating about seventy hundredweights of leaves a day. When the climax of the

experiment was approaching and some of the worms were making their cocoons, Sir Michael O'Dwyer, Governor of the Punjab, with a large party paid the camp a visit and was highly pleased with all that was being done. Here, indeed, was beauty for ashes—the beauty of silk replacing the ashes of crime.

We had a good chance of knowing our flock, for not only did we live right in the midst of our people, but we had to carry out a complete re-registration of them—parents and children, old and young. This meant taking the man's thumb and finger impressions, recording name, father's name, age (generally guessed), crime career, occupation (invariably this was given as 'beggar'), any deformity, wound or birthmark. As this had to be written out by hand in triplicate it readily may be conceived that we knew the physical features of our flock quite intimately. Even that was an easier matter than to learn the thoughts of their minds. And the secrets of their hearts who could tell? Or their regrets for past sins, or their springing hopes for a better future!

The Crims came to The Salvation Army in various ways. Some came of their own free will, glad to find a settled place of shelter and an atmosphere of friendliness in place of the uncertain wanderings to which they had been accustomed and the constant suspicion and harassment of the police. Generally, however, they liked to be ordered to come. They had been used to the commands, 'Go,' 'Come,' 'Do this,' 'Don't do that,' so when the Government gave them an order, 'Go to The Salvation Army,' they took it as a matter of course. That seemed to them a much more reasonable thing than to expect them of their own free will to leave a life of liberty (or licence) for the comparatively disciplined and orderly life of domicile in a Settlement.

The police did not find it an easy task to move any considerable body of Crims from, say, a country place to a distant,

enclosed Settlement. There was a colony of fifty Doms at Barhalganj, a place within the Gorakhpore District, but about forty miles from the city. It was decided that these people should be brought into the Settlement. The police brought them in by road. Of the fifty there were but twelve able-bodied men and these were roped together in ranks, with a rope from each man's waist fastened to the man directly behind him in the next rank; anything in the nature of a get-away would have been impossible, for twelve men tied together cannot move as one man. The remainder of the fifty were either aged and infirm men and women carried by bullock-carts, or young women walking with babies in their arms. Can it be believed that to guard these people and to prevent their escape no fewer than 136 Indian policemen were provided? These 'dangerous' criminals were brought to the Settlement, signed over to The Army's charge and their imposing police guard given the 'Fall in' by the supervising sub-inspector; while five Salvation Army Officers, who already had about 250 Crims to care for, took the responsibility for them.

When plans were afoot for opening the Saidpur Settlement in Eastern Bengal, my wife and I were appointed there to prepare for the coming of the Crims. These were people of a tribe known as Karwal Nats, many of whom were at that time in Rangpur Jail. A piece of land was allotted to The Army upon which Settlement buildings were to be erected. Those of the clan who were not in jail were encamped just outside the town. We went to see them there and talked to them about future arrangements. I went to Rangpur to see those who were in jail. The head jailer there expressed great surprise when I told him what was proposed to be done with the Nats. 'Why,' he exclaimed, 'we cannot keep them in order in this jail; they are quarrelling and fighting all day long. However will you be able to control them?'

Eventually it was arranged that twenty-six people should be allowed to come and camp on our land until such time as the Settlement was ready. In the meantime we were to move in and out among them and get to know them. Unfortunately, 'somebody blundered,' and instead of twenty-six coming, exactly 126 came; and what a procession they made! Men, women and children—dirty, ragged, wretched-looking; buffaloes, donkeys, dogs, pigs and fowl. The noise, the dust, the smell and the woebegone aspect of the people almost overwhelmed us. It took a long while to get Saidpur Settlement in good running order, and *we* never saw it approach that point. Indeed, the work there has often been discouraging, but Officer after Officer has toiled at the Nats, the women have been taught to do beautiful needlework and the men have been fitted for suitable jobs. Once a danger to the community, the Karwal Nats now guard the Saidpur section of the railway when the Governor of Bengal passes through to Siliguri for Darjeeling.

Not only so, but at Nilphamari, some miles up the line, an Industrial School has been established for the education of Nat children. One Nat boy from this School has graduated B.A.; but more than the educational value of the School is its effect upon the moral and spiritual well-being of the children.

One girl who, on account of sickness, had temporarily returned to her parents in the Saidpur Settlement, was distressed to find in the house objects of evil worship. Under her influence these were removed. One night, as the Settlement Officer strolled round in the darkness, he saw at this house a small light. Drawing near, he found the sick girl with parents, brothers and sisters sitting around her and, obviously at the desire of the girl, the elder brother reading aloud from the Bible while the others were interestedly listening. Well might it be said, 'What hath God wrought!'

Not all the Crims who came to us were tractable or 'easy

to be entreated.' Five brothers with their families were sent to us by the police. Four of the five had served long sentences as convicts on the Andaman Islands. These four were a bitter, sullen set, often defying rule and order and girding at any discipline. They were a problem. One Saturday afternoon one of them, along with his wife and a nephew of about fourteen years, went out on pass-leave to the bazaar to make some small purchases. From what the boy told us afterwards the man and woman quarrelled on the way. He charged her with being unfaithful to him, and she poured abuse upon him.

Turning upon her savagely he shouted, 'How many men did you have while I was in jail?' and she in her Domin pride retorted, 'What is that to you? Mind your own business.'

'All right,' he said, 'wait until we get back and I'll show you what my business is.'

Having made their purchases, the party returned to the Settlement and the woman at once began to prepare the evening meal. As she crouched on the ground just outside the door of her house to make the vegetable curry for the meal, the man stepped out behind her and plunged a long dirk-like knife into her back; it passed right through her heart and came out on the other side. The woman dropped dead and the man, flinging away the knife, ran to get away from the Settlement; but some settlers who had witnessed the whole affair and one of our European Officers ran after him and captured him.

The police were called and the man was taken away; afterwards, brought before Judge Moir charged with murder, he was sentenced to death. My wife and I visited him in the condemned cell and tried to direct his thoughts to repentance and to the seeking of the mercy of God, but all we could get from him was concern as to who would have the few pence owing to him for the work he had done on the Saturday morning of the murder. So he went to his death. This execution Bandhwa Dom, the

official hangman, should have carried out, but was prevented because he was himself in jail. His son, Kalicharan, deputized for him.

The three truculent brothers said the whole thing had been arranged so that Kalicharan might get the hangman's fee of five rupees and threatened that the day the murderer was hanged there would be five people killed in that Settlement and they would not be Doms either. As it happened, however, these men so badly misconducted themselves that we had to report them to the police for insubordination and before the day of execution arrived they were themselves in jail. These men were samples of what Commissioner Booth-Tucker used to call 'the won't-be-goods.' Indeed, we might say that these men had decided, 'We will be bad.'

One such man in the Chawa Settlement in the Punjab once complained to Commissioner Booth-Tucker that the Manager had threatened to expel him. 'This,' he said, 'is wrong. A father might have a bad son, but he must not turn him out of house and home.' The Commissioner told him to look at the Sansiahs in the Settlement.

'These,' he said, 'may be called our flock, but suppose a tiger came into the Settlement, should we let it devour the flock? No, we should get it out. Just so, if one of our settlers is like a tiger among the flock, are we to let him devour the flock? No, we must turn him out.' The man sat down in silence; he learned his lesson and gave no more trouble.

In the Gorakhpore Settlement we had some queer characters. One was Bandhwa, the official hangman and beater, in the police department. He regularly attended Army Meetings, always with his hangman's rope over his shoulder and a bundle of canes under his arm.

On one occasion Bandhwa got into trouble. A man (not a criminal) had been sentenced by the magistrate to receive

fifteen strokes with the cane. It was Bandhwa's duty to carry out the sentence. As he was walking along with the man and an Indian policeman to the small compound where the beatings were given, a relative of the man slipped a rupee into Bandhwa's hand and said, 'Touch him lightly.'

Bandhwa nodded assent, but the action had been seen by the policeman who promptly claimed for himself half of the bribe. Bandhwa refused to let him have it. The prisoner got fifteen very light touches with the cane and Bandhwa thought he had done well for himself. However, the policeman reported him for receiving a bribe; he was put up before the magistrate and sentenced to fourteen days' imprisonment for failing to efficiently carry out his duty. Bandhwa not only got a fortnight in jail, but as the murderer from the Settlement was to be executed during that fortnight, lost the five rupees he would have received for doing it.

Another of our 'characters' was a man named Salina. To English eyes this name looks like that of a woman, but our Gorakhpore Salina was a man, and a big, heavily-built man at that. Salina had such a loud voice that he was commonly spoken of as 'the man with the voice.' He was a confirmed criminal and a thoroughgoing old jail-bird. He worked as a scavenger and if he were engaged by a householder to clean up some dirt or to clear out a drain he had a way of bullying his patron in an effort to extract from him more pay than that for which he had bargained. He would shout with his terrible voice until from very terror the householder would give him what he demanded. I have had to go to the rescue to deliver Salina's victim from his torrent of abuse, pointing out to him that he was bringing a bad name on The Army as well as on himself by the way he was acting. He did not know anything about the Scripture, 'A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches,' but he saw the point of what I was saying and yielded to my persuasion.

But there was another side to Salina's character. On one occasion, when Brigadier Hunter had to be away from the Settlement for a night, Mrs. Hunter appealed to Salina to keep guard over herself and her little boy during the hours of darkness. Salina was touched by this confidence and honoured by the request, and duly mounted guard over the memsahib and the boy as they lay sleeping on the veranda of the Quarters. It would have been an ill night for any marauder who had ventured near to harm them.

This was the sort of thing which helped to give the Crims a sense of true manliness, letting them feel that they were being trusted and were on their merits. To treat a man as though he were a dog, and a wretched cur at that, is one way of robbing him of the quality of manliness, but to inspire him with the feeling that he is believed in and hoped for is to lead him to respond to the trust imposed in him and to desire to rise to the hope entertained concerning him.

Brigadier and Mrs. John Hunter, a Scottish couple, were the first Salvation Army Officers to work amongst the Crims. They were utterly devoted to their work for the Salvation of the Doms. We worked under their supervision for about a year, succeeding them in their charge when they left for their homeland furlough. Alas! from this they never returned, for they, with their two children, died in the disaster to the *Empress of Ireland*. Their work at Gorakhpore remains their monument.

Soon after the Gorakhpore Settlement was opened, a Night-school was started for men desiring to learn to read. One of the first pupils was Roshan. He made rapid progress and before long was able to read the Bible in Hindí.

One night, walking round the Settlement in the dark, I saw a tiny light burning on the veranda of Roshan's quarters. Quietly drawing up, I saw Roshan sitting on the floor with his big Hindí Bible open in front of him; his wife Súdarí was lying on the

veranda close by him. After listening for a while without being observed, I spoke:

'Oh, Roshan, what are you reading?' Getting over the surprise of my question coming out of the darkness, he answered, 'I was reading to Súdarí about Jesus being crucified to save us from our sins.' And this was the man of whom the police said, when I sent in an application for his name to be removed from the Criminal Register, 'No, not Roshan! His record is too bad.' But perhaps they did not know how much greater than bonds and imprisonment was the power of Divine grace to change a man.

One of the clear signs that Roshan's religion was not a thing of the lips merely, without any change of heart behind it, was an incident that occurred when we were leaving Gorakhpore for Eastern Bengal. Roshan went with us to the station to help us with our baggage. Arriving at the station, we found that we had left behind us at the Quarters a small trunk. Roshan hurried back to fetch it and reached the station with the trunk before the train left. I offered him some bakhsheesh for his trouble, but he declined to take it, saying, 'Nay, Sir, I don't want bakhsheesh; what I have done for you I have done from love.' A Dom has progressed a long way in grace when he declines to take backsheesh.

God has wonderfully blessed the toil, devotion and love of the Officers who have been engaged in Criminal Tribes work. The success of the first Settlement soon led to the establishing of others in the United Provinces, the Punjab, the Madras Presidency, Bihar and Orissa, and Bengal.

The variety of Settlement sites is in itself an interesting point. At Moradabad in the United Provinces and at Saidpur in Eastern Bengal the Settlements were built on open tracts of land. At Aligarh and at Bareilly, both in the United Provinces, an old fort and an abandoned brewery respectively provided buildings. In

the Madras Presidency a deserted railway settlement was used, while at Kot Mokhal in the Punjab the Settlement was a group of villages, the settlers being staunch Mohammedans, with their own *maulvis* and *namaz* (prayers) strictly observed five times a day.

One of the most remarkable of the Criminal Tribes schemes was that carried out at Port Blair in the Andamans. A large party of the most desperate Crims from the United Provinces was moved to this place. The first Salvation Army Officers to be stationed there were Adjutant (now Lieut.-Colonel) and Mrs. Sheard, both still working in India.* The Manager had to plan the Settlement, map out the building-plots and start the settlers on an entirely new way of life. Both agriculture and weaving were lines of labour. The Manager's domestic staff consisted of convicts supplied from the local jail. The house-boy was a murderer, his wife was a murderess and the compounder of the Dispensary was a murderer. In this environment the Officers lived, their term of service there extending to five and a half years. Yet in such surroundings Sunday afternoons would find a Bible Class in session, with about a hundred young people voluntarily present, and of these most were young men, all reverently studying the Bible.

While making his round of the Settlement one night the Officer noticed that in the semi-darkness of one house occasionally a light would flare up. There he found two brothers, aged twelve and thirteen years respectively, sitting in front of a cow-dung fire, which smoulders, but does not give much flame. One lad was holding a Bible, whilst the other thrust a piece of wood into the fire poker-wise; when the end was well alight he took it out and by its light the other lad read the Bible. So eager had these one-time Crim boys become to read the word of God.

About two years after the establishment of this Settlement

* *I Had No Revolver*, by F. L. Coutts.

the chief commissioner of the Andaman Islands testified to the fact that the Criminal Tribes people under Salvation Army control gave far less trouble than was experienced with the ordinary population of the Islands.

The various Settlements which were established up and down the country were occupied by many different tribes of Crims and almost every tribe had its own method of carrying on its dishonest work. The Doms were skilful housebreakers and burglars. Others made a point of stealing horses and cattle. A member of a notorious gang of Crims turned king's evidence against his gang. An able police officer succeeded in bringing about the arrest of the whole group. After the trial and sentence of the men the informer was asked what he would do to save himself from an informer's fate. He said, ' Give me five hundred rupees and let me go my way. I can take care of myself.' As the sequel to this the story was told that he revenged himself of the police officer who had brought about the arrest of his gang by stealing two of his valuable horses. The official received a note worded after this fashion:

> Sahib,—You are a very clever Police Officer. You have suppressed crime with a strong hand. Now tell me, what has become of your two horses, and who has stolen them?—(Signed) THE THIEF.

It was said that when the horses were stolen pads were put on their feet so that there would not be any hoof marks in the sand by which to trace them. The horses were never recovered.

One tribe of Crims is known as the Chapparbands (hut builders). A favourite method with them of making money easily is that of passing base metal as gold. A Chapparband made an alloy of tin and copper and shaped it into what looked like an ingot of gold. This he dropped on the road and then hid himself to see what happened. A countryman came by, saw the ingot, picked it up and began to tuck it away in his pouch. The Chapparband sprang out of his hiding-place and demanded a

share of the treasure. The countryman refused to give anything. So the Chapparband threatened to report him to the police for not handing in an article of value found on the road. Finally, with a show of generosity, he agreed to let the countryman keep the ingot and he would be content with the small sum of ten rupees. The money was handed over and the Chapparband hurried away from the neighbourhood. The countryman also hurried away thinking what a lucky fellow he was; but his joy turned to grief when he offered the ingot to a goldsmith and was told it was worthless.

Another type of Crim was that called Bundle Snatchers. These men usually worked in a group of two or three. They frequented railway stations, kept their eyes open for any passengers' bundles not carefully guarded, and in a moment they would dexterously remove the bundles, pass them on to a confederate, and possibly he would pass them on to another. Then they would separately leave the station and retire to some previously arranged spot and share out the spoil.

Often a couple of these men would travel in the train by night, choosing an already full compartment which they would enter separately as though they had not any connection with each other. One would say he could sleep on the floor, the other would push himself into a seat near the door. When the passengers had settled down for the night and were asleep, the one on the floor would slit open the bags or bundles which had been stowed under the seats, take out anything he considered to be of value and stealthily pass it on to his partner. The receiver would then get out of the train at the next stopping-place, while the one on the floor would travel on to the station beyond, where he would alight. The two would walk along the railway track, meet, and depart to some place where they could dispose of their stolen goods. To detect and capture them was almost impossible.

A tribute from an observer may not be out of place here. Colonel Robert J. Blackman (R.A.M.C.), C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., wrote in *Incomparable India** :

> The Salvation Army alone is now responsible for thirty-five Settlements in various Provinces. . . . These Settlements are not charitable institutions where the inmates are maintained in idleness. They are places where erstwhile criminals maintain themselves by honest industry. Considering that the tribesmen and women were originally filthy outcasts, living on vermin, clothed with the minimum quantity of loathsome rags and practising demonolatry with abominable rites, it is wonderful to read in one of the leading Indian newspapers that the Settlements are not merely weaning the tribespeople from crime, but are making them models of well-conducted life, skilled artisans, educated, and accustomed to observe social and hygienic rules which make them happy and healthy patterns to many of those who in the past suffered from their malpractices.

At one time upwards of 10,000 of these Crims were under The Army's care. The figure is now about 6,000, over 25 per cent of whom are declared Salvationists. Hundreds of our settlers, by dint of being crime-free for a given period, have been released from the provisions of the Criminal Tribes Act and are permitted to reside where they please. They are now earning an honest living in various spheres of labour. Many who have been reformed and could be released prefer to remain in the Settlements under The Army's care.

A special word should be written about the young people's section of this work. In connection with the Gorakhpore Settlement there was a Boarding School for Criminal Tribes children. In this school there was an intelligent and studious girl named Guljinnia. In the first annual examination that was held she passed with the highest marks in the School in reading, writing and arithmetic. For this she gained the prize for the best scholar in the School—a Hindí New Testament. Think of it—the first member of her family to be able to read and to own a book, and that book the New Testament!

* 1933, Sampson Low, Marston & Co., London.

Guljinnia grew up into a fine young woman and became the wife of a Salvation Army weaving master at Ludhiana. She died of influenza during an epidemic, and in dying gave a glowing testimony to our Lord's saving grace.

One morning a Dom girl was brought to the Settlement by two Indian policemen. The girl was crying loudly and looked the picture of dirt and wretchedness. She had scarcely any clothes; her hair was a matted verminous mass; her hands and feet were covered with itch—a sorry figure indeed!

One of the policemen handed to me a letter. It was from the magistrate and said, in effect, that a gang of absconding Doms had been arrested the night before, had been put up before him that morning and sentenced to terms of imprisonment. This girl had been with them, but he did not think it was right to send her to prison. Would The Army take her under its care?

I tried to calm the young Domin's fears and asked for her name. Through her crying she told me that it was Mania (Jewel). She was a dark jewel, to be sure. Could any light ever flash from her? I sent for an *ekka*—a small country cart, on which travellers sit cross-legged—put her on, jumped on myself, and set off for the Shahpur School.

Almost all the way Mania screamed. The shopkeepers ran out from their shops to see the strange sight—a sahib running off with a Dom girl on an *ekka*! Arriving at the School I handed over Mania to the care of the women-Officers there. They took her to the bathroom, took off her bit of greasy rag, cut off her matted and filthy hair, and scrubbed and washed her until she was fit to be clothed in a clean white sari. Then they brought her back to the room where I had waited. What a transformation!

Mania soon settled down to school life and made good progress with both lessons and work. When we left Gorakhpore she was giving good promise. Some years went by. We had been in Bengal and the Punjab and were now on Training Work

in Bombay. Among the names of the last group of Cadets to be trained in the old Byculla Bridge building was that of Elizabeth Domin. I wondered who this could be. The moment I saw her I recognized her as my friend Mania of years before.

'Aren't you Mania, of Gorakhpore?' I asked.

'Yes, Sahib.'

'Do you know me?'

'Yes, Sahib.'

'When did you first see me?'

'The day you took me to school on an *ekka*.'

She cried again at the remembrance of it all and I cried along with her. The girl's name had been changed to Elizabeth in order to hide her identity and so save her from ever being snatched back again into criminal life. What a contrast from what she was the first day I saw her in Gorakhpore! Then filthy, dirty, almost naked, totally ignorant: a dark jewel; now a fine upstanding young woman, well built, glossy black hair, brightly flashing eyes, and come to take her training—in English!

Elizabeth passed through her Training Course creditably and as a commissioned Lieutenant returned to the part of India from which she had come, to work for God and the Salvation of others.

Postscript.

Early in 1945, *The War Cry* published a letter received from a Salvationist corporal serving in the South East Asia Command, which contains this passage:

'For ten days I lived in the midst of a hive of Salvation Army activity, as the guest on a Criminal Tribes Settlement. I watched the work being done for these men and women 'born to crime.' It was my privilege to conduct several Meetings with these people as well as two Open-Air Meetings, a moonlight service with the Young Men's League, a Bible Class attended by seventy young people and a united Meeting in the Corps itself, formed of converted settlers.'

Printed in Great Britain by The Campfield Press, St. Albans