

must be avoided and if there is extreme dryness of the skin, a lanolin ointment should be applied. Cleanliness of the external genital organs is most important, for neglect in this respect may lead to the onset of severe irritation—a most distressing complication after washing the genitals, either powder or ointment should be applied, the former, in cases in which the skin of the parts tends to be damp, from excessive secretion, and the latter in which the skin is dry and tends to crack.

Whilst regulating the physical side of the climacteric woman, the psychological must not be overlooked. A woman's mind is very powerfully affected, by the process of the change. Her fears are stimulated, by the thought that she is entering upon the "critical age" and she is mentally depressed by the knowledge, that she is about to lose, her feminine attractions and that her reproductive capacity is at an end. It is good, therefore, for women during the "change" to have some kind of employment which fills their time, occupies their thoughts, and above all, keeps them from brooding upon their ailments, real and imaginary. At the same time, the work should not be too strenuous, and most important of all, should not cause severe mental strain or worry.

The use of sedatives, alcohol, etc., is to be discouraged, for drug habits are readily acquired, under these conditions.

Lastly, I must impress upon you, once again, that bleeding at or after the climacteric, must, in all cases, be regarded, as an indication, of the possible occurrence of cancer, and expert medical advice must be sought without delay.

SIMLA, 16th October 1923.

THE CAVE OF AMAR NATH (LORD OF LIFE, IMMORTALITY).

By M. B.

One needs to be out in India to realize how much the thought of a holiday to the hills sustains through the trials of hot days succeeded by hot, oppressive nights. The Cave of Amar Nath, the home of the god Shiv, was the goal to which I looked for many months, through trying moments at work would flash across my mind phrases from the guide book "ascend steeply over a precipitous spur, then drop to the snow-bedded Amarwati stream"; or there'd come a vision of the map with its snow peaks and red dotted paths. But what of the realization of all these hopes? what lessons learnt?—what refreshment received?

Amar Nath is sacred to the Hindu; for thousands of years Sadhus and Hindus have walked the length and breadth of India on a pilgrimage to the cave in the month of August. I was told by the headman of our camp that two months before the appointed time the Maharaja of Kashmir sends 2,000 (?) coolies to make a path; juniper shrub is carried to the greater heights for fuel, light wooden bridges thrown across the swollen streams. The pilgrims (the official in charge of transport informed us that there were about 9,600 pilgrims this year) meet at Pahlgam, and the procession, led by the priests, winds its way in and out of the mountain sides up the East Lidder Valley,

shouting "Amar Nath ki jai" ("victory to Amar Nath"). A precipitous path up 'Pisu' (slippery) brings them above the level of pines or trees of any description; the road, stony and rock hewn passes beside the river through Zoipal, barren mountain slopes with the Dodal snows towering above. The end of the day finds the pilgrims at Sheishram Nag, 12,000 feet high, a turn in the road suddenly reveals one of Nature's most magnificent pictures;—an amphitheatre of the Sonar Sar Glaciers a green lake with a series of tiny pools and waterfalls from which emerges the East Lidder itself. The grassy slopes of the mountain sides are carpeted with gentian, Canterbury bells, forget-me-nots, yellow and red poppies:—The higher peaks are of barren rock with their moraines and glaciers pouring down from the eternal snows. Treading the same path just three weeks after the pilgrims, I often wondered what *Te Deum* did they find to express their feelings. Across a path 14,000 feet the way leads through barren rock mountains, glaciers, grassy slopes covered with edelweiss into the Sindh Valley to Panjitani, the last camp, almost at the foot of Amar Nath Peak (16,000 feet). The pilgrims encamp in the wide bed of the Sindh river surrounded by the great snow-capped mountains. Our camp headman, who had been with a sahib as a spectator on a former pilgrimage told us of how the sadhus and Hindus begin their walk of 5 miles to the Cave at 4 a.m. The path was up a precipitous spur slippery and shaly, over the snow-bedded Amarwatti, fissures revealed a depth of 12-14 feet of ice through which comes the roar of the torrent beneath, off the ice across moraines with hardly a foothold, up a steep stony way to the Cave, "a lofty recess in the gypsum rock, 150 feet high and about as wide and long." Inside the Cave are a block of ice and some frozen springs, the Essence of Shiv and Parbatti, his wife, the object of their worship. Their offerings of marigold flowers, cocoanuts and earthen lamps, burning with their prayers and hopes of a good harvest, of children, of financial success etc., are left inside the Cave, and then a speedy return. It is all over in an hour or two, there is no resident priest; and silence reigns. The pilgrims descend by various routes, the most common is that of a pass 14,000 feet with a descent of about 3,000 feet in $1\frac{3}{4}$ mile into Astanmarg and back to Pahlgam.

Before leaving for Kashmir, I mentioned to a wealthy Hindu patient my plan for a walk to Amar Nath. Her face brightened, "I myself have been there, but the time is passed." "Yes, the time of the pilgrimage is just finished, I know, but I only desire to see and to walk." Anxious, she pleaded, "Missahib, don't go *now*, when I went there was a great crowd and noise and it was very nice, but now, there will be fear, you will be alone, there will be complete stillness." I recalled her words many a time, but with none of her fear of the impressive stillness which spoke of the Presence of God all around one.

We had planned our return route by Har Nag, but the snow bridges had collapsed and the shepherds informed us that the way was impossible for pony traffic (we had eight baggage ponies). Several consultations were held with the headman and we told him of various routes marked on the maps. One day when not approving of a proposal he remarked, "the padre sahibs

(obviously the Drs. Neve of the C.M.S. known to all) when on holiday go up this mountain and that mountain and then write red lines on the maps, but they are not proper roads, there is much difficulty that way." It is true indeed; the whole way is characteristic of the spiritual life, the precipitous, stony mountain sides, the easy paths through sheltered forests; rivers, some bridged, others to be waded through; the march up the frozen river; the scramble across the moraines with barely a foothold; and yet, beauty all around, the majesty of the great towering snow-capped peaks, the glaciers, "lake water lapping"; and ever along the road the delightful companionship of friends, flowers and birds. I thought too of the many missionaries who have marked the red lines of the difficult path for some poor soul who is struggling out of heathen darkness. We who have had the privilege of being born Christians can never understand that struggle.

The Hindu endures inconceivable physical discomforts and hardships, the sadhu with perhaps only one blanket, or ash-besprinkled, lies by the dying embers of a camp fire all night. Wealthy Hindus, hoping to attain their most longed-for earthly wish, engaged baggage coolies (carriers), journey on foot or ponies, or in dandies (carrying chair), their wives too are carried up by relays of coolies the whole way. Some unable to climb the last steep bit, stop short a mile or two of the Cave, but feel their goal is reached by the mere sight of it. Yet, very few, if any, can tell what spiritual benefit is derived, answers are vague:—"we go to worship," "we obtain merit."

As we stood inside the Cave and sang "All the earth doth worship Thee—the heavens and all the Powers therein" came the thought of the 9,000 odd souls who had blindly sought Something at Amar Nath this year. The Sanscrit lines ever recur to me on the Himalayas:—

"If I tried for a thousand ages of the gods, I could not tell thee the glories of Himachal,

"As the dew is dried up by the sun in the morning, so are the sins of mankind by the sight of thee, O Himachal."

The great Heights and Silences cannot but draw the being nearer his Creator and Saviour, the Hindu seeks It blindly; would that there were an outpouring of the Holy Spirit to grant him a revelation of the True Lord of Life.

DELHI.

A CHILD WELFARE CENTRE.

By MRS. ORR.

One hears much just now of Child Welfare Schemes and Welfare Centres and reports seem to indicate that they are all in an equally flourishing and well-established condition—a fact liable to depress those who know their own Centre has dignity only in name.

Ours is one of the Centres that sometimes is and sometimes isn't and leads one to wonder at intervals, if it justifies all the efforts put into it. The lay of a well-kept *and* well-filled register and of regularly weighed babies is