

# In His Name

A RECORD of ASSEMBLY  
MISSIONARY OUTREACH  
from New Zealand

Edition 1

Les A. Marsh

1974

Edition 2

Leslie A. Marsh,  
Henry D. Erlam

1987

## Mr and Mrs W.C. Irvine - 1897 (Edition 1)

Mr William C. Irvine went out to India with the Poona and Indian Village Mission in 1897. Several years later he left the mission and linked up with missionaries who had gone out from assemblies in Great Britain. He was associated with Mr McGavin who worked some five miles outside of Belgaum city and had the care of some 40 boys who had lost their parents during the terrible famines of 1898-1900. Mr Irvine was married in 1903 to Miss Agnes Kay who had gone out from New Zealand with the Poona and Indian Village Mission in 1898. They helped in the orphanage taking over the responsibility later that year and continued with these boys till 1912 by which time all but three of the original number had either died or moved away. 13 were in assembly fellowship and seven were married, some to girls from Mr and Mrs Hunter's orphanage. Over the years the boys had helped with visitation and gospel outreach, some were baptised and helped form the assembly when it was established. Educating the boys had its good results and in later school work some of the boys became the teachers.

Mr Irvine's interest in publishing began in 1908 when he produced a monthly leaflet in Marathi to refute false cults. By the following year a regular Christian magazine was being published in Marathi with a circulation of 1,400 and this continued to increase. He was an industrious visitor in the villages and extended the Mission primary education programme to many villages so that they could be taught the Scriptures. Those years were not without their incidents. Once Mr Irvine fell off his bike on the rough paths and broke his arm. He talked of getting a pony. Another time one of his boys fell down the well and he had to climb down 60 feet to get him out. A gift of \$50 in 1913 enabled him to send a copy of "Scripture of Truth" by Collett to 1,000 native evangelists and teachers.

In 1911 the "Indian Christian" magazine in English was commenced with articles for the building up of believers and combating wrong teaching. Over the years Mr Irvine received hundreds of letters from people of many different fellowships all over India in appreciation for this written ministry. He also published many tracts in quantity such as "Freedom" - 130,000 copies in 1937. His book "Heresies Exposed" has run to quite a number of editions and tens of thousands of copies which have been distributed all over the English speaking world. In 1934 the "Reason Why" was produced in Marathi and distributed widely.

Mr Irvine loved to visit and distribute the Scriptures and of course expound them too. He would also testify to the power of the Word of God in people's lives. One incident that occurred in 1921 was the conversion of Ram Prased. He was 35 years old at the time and devoted to his gods, but he was saved. He spent the first three weeks of his new life reading the Bible. He read the New Testament three times in those three weeks then shortly afterwards he came and asked to be baptised.

No-one could spend almost fifty years in India, particularly in those early years, without feeling the things that affected India, and Mr and Mrs Irvine were no exception. They were hurt by the plagues. In 1923, when disease was rampant in their area, they wrote that 600 died out of the 700 who were attacked by the plague. The worshipping of idols, 330 million of them in the Hindu religion, and not one that could see or hear or

answer, gripped their hearts as they considered the futility of it all. The grinding poverty of millions of people and the bitter oppression of the caste system. The futility of racial and political riots were not lost on them. They interceded for poor Marathi farmers vainly trying to meet increased rents in 1929 and ministered to those in prison.

In everything they rejoiced in the Lord's provision and care, for example, in 1931 when Mr Irvine was riding along on his bicycle and felt his hair move. He removed his topee to knock out a cockroach and discovered a large sized scorpion! Later that year they were able to buy an old Ford car in Ootacamund and [d]rove back to Belgaum.

Of all the interests that were close to the hearts of Mr and Mrs Irvine the work amongst the lepers was perhaps the closest. Very early in their stay in India they became interested in the "asylum" for lepers that was near where they lived. They recounted in 1917 that for the first time in the history of the asylum high caste and low caste sat down together – it was the Lord's table. In 1929 they recorded the death of an old leper, he was one of the first three baptised in 1906.

After being unwell for several years Mr William Irvine died in Belgaum, India on September 5th, 1947 aged 75. Mrs Irvine went to stay with her daughters in Tasmania. She passed home to glory on 17 January, 1963 aged 85.

[Source entry includes photos with captions: 'Mrs and Mrs W.C. Irvine in 1927', 'Messers A.E. Perkins, F. Ferguson and G. Humphries in 1903', and 'Travelling in early days of this country'. Page 171 has photo captioned: 'Missionary group in 1924. Back: Mr Irvine, Miss Mai, Mr Brewerton. Centre: Miss Sundgren, Mrs Noel, Mrs Black, Mr Noel, Miss Mosley, Mr Revell, Miss Treweek, Miss Townley, Miss Starck, Mr Buchanan. Seated: Mr and Mrs Thomson, Mr Black, Mrs Irvine, Mrs Revell, Miss Dyason, Mrs A. Redwood. Note: Mr Brewerton was visiting India from Malaya'. Photo on p. 224 is captioned 'Montauban Group 1935. Back row: A. AIKEN, D. BURT, G. JUNCK, T. BROWN, Second row: Misses TREWEEK, F. Patient, Bates, MRS A. NOBLE, Miss Patient, Dr Vine, Messrs G. FOUNTAIN, W.T. NOBLE. Third row: MISS WALLACE, MR LYNN, Misses Preebles, SUNDGREN, Conway, Whaxton, Mrs Patient, Misses NICOLL, Adams, Mr Hill, Miss DYASON, Mr and Mrs Smele. Seated: Mr and Mrs IRVINE, Misses Morgan, Thompson, Messrs Thomson, Patient, Misses Clarke, Lynn, Mrs WALTER REDWOOD, Mrs Hill, Miss MOSLEY, A[...] and N[...] Redwood. (N.Z. Missionaries names in capitals.)'