



Miss A. Roper – Mrs H. Rees – 1906 (Edition 1)

Miss Amy Roper was commended by assemblies in Auckland and went out to India in September 1906. She was at first at Ceylon with Mr and Mrs Witty and then moved north to Bengal being with Mr and Mrs Watson at Mihijan, Bihar to engage in language study in 1907. She was married to Mr Henry Rees on December 5th, 1908 and they moved to Jamtara, about 150 miles north of Calcutta. They engaged in preaching in the market places and visiting in the villages often finding the high caste people very opposed to the message. Mrs Rees helped in the dispensary and visited womenfolk in the area around their home while Mr Rees itinerated near and far to make the gospel known. There was very little response at first to the preaching. That seemed to be characteristic of the Bihar Province and those who did believe were often ostracised by their family and friends.

In the 1920's they were still continuing with the care of Indian children in the orphanage work that had been commenced when Handley Bird had sent children there from North India during the famine of 1900. In those years they commenced a Bible School to help train local believers to reach and teach their own people. There were a few assemblies in the district but none were large compared with those in South India. The work in schools was not without its results and some young people of both high and low castes were won for the Lord. The orphanage work also provided encouragement in those years as well as the dispensary and the ministry to the lepers. At one time two seven-foot long snakes were shot and the year book for that year stated 2,000 people in Bihar were killed by wild animals and 19,000 by snakes. Visiting along the tributaries of the sacred river Ganges and reaching out to the jungle people were other activities at that time. The ignorance of those people meant that the message had to be told many times before they grasped even a semblance of the truth.

A motor cycle helped in the outreach in 1928. But in that year Mr Rees was laid low with enteric fever followed by complications and an emergency operation was performed to save his life.

Throughout the 1930's the work was steadily continued, needing to be regulated to the conditions. In the hot season it was so terribly hot that people crowded under any patch of shade but they did listen because it was too hot to work. On January 15th 1934 they had a devastating earthquake that resulted in a death toll of 7,000 people (govt. figures). There was very little opposition to the message in those times and quite a number were added to the assemblies including some from amongst the Santal people who were animists. A number of lepers were also saved.

Despite the unrest during the 1940's with the war in Burma, the times of serious famines and the transition period of the Indian government into independence, there was nevertheless a ready ear for the gospel. A great deal was done in the way of preaching at festivals, camping out at villages and distributing literature throughout the whole area around Jamtara. In 1948 it became necessary for them to visit the U.K. Both Mr and Mrs Rees had operations for eye troubles but nevertheless found opportunities for service in Wales where they lived until 1960 at which time they travelled out to Perth, Australia to be with their son who had a medical practice there. They celebrated their golden wedding [anniversary] in 1958.

Mr Rees died at Perth in February 1962 at the age of 88 and Mrs Rees, though blind, lived with her son till her death in December 1967, aged 91.

[Source entry includes uncaptioned photo of Mr and Mrs Rees]