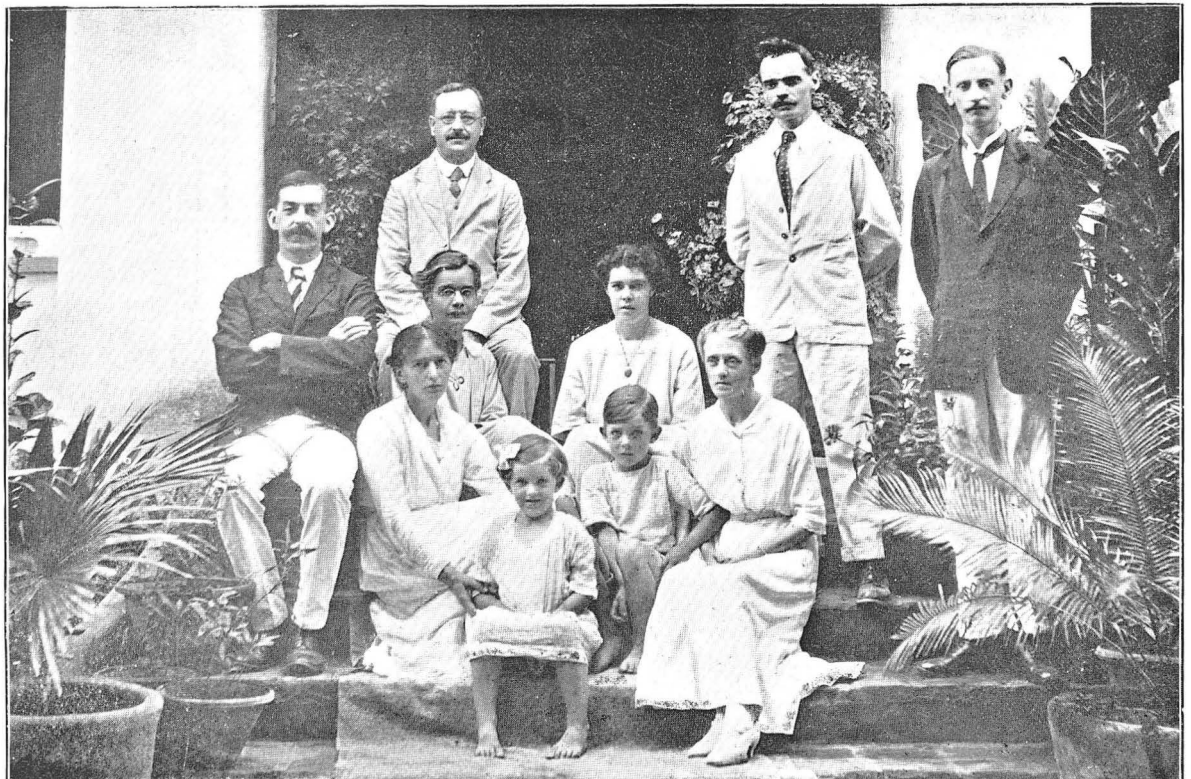
PICTURES FROM A MISSIONARY'S ALBUM.



A Group of Indian Missionaries.

Pictures from a Missionary's Album.

BY

WINIFRED BOOTH.

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TO

MY HUSBAND.

INTRODUCTION.

THESE pictures were gathered and stored in a missionary's heart in a land of sunlight and shadows. While visiting the Tamil people with the message of God's Grace, in and around the city of Madras, one walked unexpectedly into scenes of tragedy, or stepped unawares on holy ground. Glimpses of twilight, and flashes of starshine, were unwittingly disclosed; and this little book is an endeavour to reproduce faithfully things as we have seen them.

The pictures make no claim to beauty, for the writer is fully aware of their artistic lack; but they are every one of them true. They are reproduced to depict a few of the joys and disappointments of missionary service in India, also as an appeal for more labourers into His harvest field.

If, through God's blessing, they accomplish this twofold purpose, they have not been published in vain.

WINIFRED BOOTH.

Kilpauk, Madras, 1922.

CONTENTS.

CONTENTS

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

GLOSSARY.

ARECA	a nut chewed with betel leaf and lime paste.
BETEL	leaf of the betel pepper vine.
CHERI	the non-caste quarter of a village.
CONCH-SHELL ...	specially sacred to Vishnu.
DHORAI	gentleman.
GANESA	one of the two sons of the god Siva.
GOVINTHA	a god invoked especially during funeral ceremonies.
GOPURAM	a temple tower.
KRISHNA	the full incarnation or descent of the god Vishnu.
LYRIC	an Indian Christian hymn.
MUNSIFF	the officially appointed Headman of a village.
MANTRAM	a poetical prayer.
PUJA	Hindu worship.
SARI	a woman's "cloth" or garment, 10 or 15 yards long.
SHOLA-AMMAN ...	a village deity or goddess.
SWAMI	a god.
TOM-TOM	a kind of drum.
	Vishnu and worshipped as a deity.
TULSI	a plant pervaded by the essence of
VEENA	a musical instrument.

" Come! fill up the gaps in our files,
Strengthen the wavering line,
'Stablish, continue our march,
On, to the bound of the waste,
On, to the City of God! "

Pictures From a Missionary's Album.

CHAPTER I.

Ganesa With the Fiery Eyes.

A GOVERNMENT official, with his wife and little girl, toured over a vast Tamil district in India. His work was such that it necessitated camping for three weeks in every month, two or three days being spent in each village. The remaining week of the month was spent at headquarters (which was the great heathen town of Trichinopoly), to attend to official correspondence and payments, and to obtain fresh provisions for another tour. Such a life, for several years, meant daily and hourly contact with heathenism; and the little girl's heart received an impression which nothing could eradicate in after years.

Only those who have lived under similar conditions will understand how the air was full of the sound of heathenism. Day after day the beat of the *tom-tom* and the wail of the conch-shell rose and fell; heathen worshippers passed and repassed; offerings were brought to the stone god

under a green tree, or taken to the large *swami* in the temple.

Sometimes frenzied cries rent the air, and a tumultuous crowd gathered around a woman who was being swayed by some mysterious power. The heavy blows showered on the devil-possessed one by the bystanders, her long, black hair swinging in a circle around her swaying head, her wildly-waving arms, her agonised cries, and the shouts of the crowd, struck terror into the heart of the child watching at the tent-door.

Night after night the funeral fires were lit, sometimes only a few yards away from the little tent, and the air was wild with the cries of " Govintha, Govintha ! " as the mourners consigned the corpse to the flames.

" Govintha ! Govintha ! Govintha ! " The cry was repeated, and the little girl shivered in the hot Indian night. A thousand eyes seemed watching the lurid scene, and he whom they called " Govintha "—a great, black presence—seemed to stretch his evil wings ready to whirl away those calling worshippers to outer darkness.

But whether by day, or in the fearful night, the child's fears were hushed, and her heart comforted, by her tender mother. She heard from her lips of the holy Almighty God, before whom quailed all spirits of darkness, and who ruled the universe and the hearts of men. She learnt from the tear-filled eyes of that mother of the greatness of Christ's sacrifice; saw, in her mother's heart, the tenderness of His love; watched, in her life, the

sweetness of souls who know and love Him who is pure. On one never-to-be-forgotten night came a crisis in the life of that seven-year-old child. Her father's camp was to move from one village to another, a distance of several miles. The tent had been packed, with other camp accessories, into bullock carts, and dispatched ahead. He, with his wife and child, took a detour of some miles, and reached the camp as evening shadows fell, expecting to find the familiar tent pitched, and the camp dinner ready. But, for once, this was not the case. An accident had happened to the carts on their journey, and no servants and no tents were to be seen. There was nothing to be done but wait, with the resigned patience one learns in India. As night drew on a solitary bullock-bundy crawled into the village, bringing the camp cots and the cheerful news that nothing else could arrive before morning.

The village *Munsif* and other Indian officials were full of concern for the *dhorai's* comfort. Some milk was procured in a brass vessel, a loaf of hard bread and a bunch of plantains were purchased from an adjacent bazaar, and these formed a sumptuous dinner. But now the question of sleeping accommodation arose. Night was fast darkening, and a drizzling rain began to fall. There was no house available in the village, and after long consideration and consultation the *Munsif* decided that there was shelter under the thatched shed of the village temple, if the *dhorai* did not go too near the *swami*. The temple was a building walled in

on three sides, and open on the fourth, before which stood the thatched shelter for pilgrims—merely a roof on four stout posts. Against the back wall of the temple was the idol, a stone image of Ganesa, about four feet high, black and loathsome at any time, but doubly so now in the eyes of the child, as the friendly Hindu held up a little oil lamp, which glimmered faintly into the darkness of the shrine.

The camp cots were pitched in the shed and the three tired travellers lay down for the night, glad of any shelter from the rain. Silence soon reigned. The village had gone to rest. One by one the glimmering oil lamps went out, and the only sounds that broke the stillness were the drip, drip of the rain, the croak of an army of frogs concealed in a tank near by, and the whirr of crickets in the trees. An occasional yelp from a dog, or the cry of a night-bird, rang out with startling clearness.

The little girl in the shed heard the regular breathing of her sleeping parents, and yet no sleep would come to her tired eyes by reason of her nervousness. Strange shapes seemed to gather in the darkness; all around there seemed to be the rustle of dark wings, and the sound of stealthy feet.

She had turned her face away from the big idol in the temple when the lamp had been extinguished, but now she felt compelled to look at it, and as she looked the black shape seemed to stand out clearly in the darkness. She could see it so plainly—its bloated body and huge, elephantine

head and trunk, the yellow garland around its thick neck. She could smell the reeking oil with which it was anointed; but most horrible of all were its protruding eyes, which suddenly seemed to move and glow. The idol remained stationary, and yet those awful eyes seemed to elongate and approach nearer and nearer to her, darting with fire as they came. She shut her eyes and cowered in the darkness. She heard her mother's gentle breathing beside her, and knew that her voice and touch could banish all fear, but limbs and tongue were paralysed with fear—she could neither call nor move to obtain that comfort.

The long minutes went by slower than any hours. The child was cold and exhausted with terror, when, through the stillness, she heard the words, "Eyes have they, but they see not." They were so familiar to her; so often had her mother read or told her of what God said concerning such idols.

"Eyes have they, but they see not,
Eyes have they, but they see not."

The words beat on her brain, filled the temple shed, cried around the loathsome image in the darkness, and slowly, slowly brought back courage to the trembling little heart. Who said the words? Trustfully her heart made answer: "God."

And there, in the darkness, within sight and reach of that image with the fiery eyes, was born the missionary desire which shook the little girl's frame like a mighty power. Oh, to tell the heathen

of the sin of worshipping such idols, and to point them to the one true Saviour! She was no longer afraid, and those fire-eyes were quenched.

Long years passed, during which took place separation from parents, and schooling, and the home-call of her beloved mother; but the fire God lit in the child's heart on that dark night in a Hindu temple will live and burn while her life shall last.

CHAPTER II.

"WHERE THE LIGHT IS AS DARKNESS."

"An infant crying in the night,
An infant crying for the light;
And with no language but a cry."

THEY, too, are sweet and winning, these little Eastern babies, with big, dark, wondering eyes looking out into the new, untried world. It seems so bright and splendid, this big Eastern world, so full of sunshine, and colour, and music, and fragrance. The baby-eyes are dazzled, the baby-fingers eager, the baby-feet heedless, and they look, and grasp, and toddle right into the colour and light with glee.

And we, who stand by and watch, know that the seemingly gorgeous road leads surely, step by step, into complete and utter darkness, and our hearts are wrung for the babies.

But babies have mothers; and mothers are quick to stay and save their darlings when they see them in danger. Yes, *when they see them;* but these babies have mothers who do *not* see, for they, too, are walking with the toddlers, the baby fingers clinging to their out-stretched hands, along that alluring path which leads to darkness and death.

They are *not* "crying in the night"—oh no! For the Eastern night is full of sound and lights.

The minor music of the *veena,* the beat of *tom-toms,* the flare of torches, the scent of jasmine and oleander blossoms, the tinkle of silver anklets, are all there in the night—not a dream, but a reality. Where, then, is the darkness and the cry? Listen . .

* * * * *

The sun is pouring its fierce light upon a temple, bringing into startling prominence the obscene images carved upon its pinnacle, and the broad red and white stripes upon its walls, lighting with wondrous beauty the green water in its sacred tank. Hark! There is the roll of drums and the shriek of wind instruments sounding from the temple precincts, as a long procession winds its way around the wall of the tank.

A landau, drawn by a pair of prancing white horses, appears round the corner, preceded by the musicians and followed by a crowd of people in gay clothing. The landau appears to us empty till we pass quite close, and look within, and then we see them—the baby bride and bridegroom. He is about five years old, and wears a magenta and gold turban, and is smothered in a huge garland of yellow chrysanthemums. She is almost too tiny to be observed by a passing glance, her little flower-like face framed in jewels, and her head weighted with jasmine flowers. Husband and wife starting out on the long life-road with music and with flowers—and only we, who stand and look, seem to see ahead the darkness, and to hear in the distance the cry.

* * * * *

The grey twilight has crept over the fields, but in the West is a glow, as of red fire. A village temple, with a background of tall palms, is silhouetted against the red. We are there, near by, in the midst of a heathen crowd, and the Message of Life is being proclaimed in the twilight.

All around us are gathered the little children who attend our school in the village; we ask them to sing a lyric, and the young voices heartily respond with "Jesus, the King, who lovingly rules me."

A woman goes by in the dusk to the temple, calling, as she passes, to her wee boy, who has been singing there with us. We hear the breaking of cocoanuts, and see the gleam of burning camphor before the shrine, as she makes her offerings to the idol. We see, too, the little child worshipping, and oh, is there any sadder sight in India than that of baby limbs prostrate before a stone image, and baby lips calling on its name! It is the cry in the night—that long-drawn "*Oh Shola-amman!*" from the mother, and the echoing "*Oh Shola-amman!*" from the child.

* * * * *

And how can we just look, and listen, see, and hear, and pass by, maybe with a pain in the heart, but with no hand stretched out to bear even a candle into the darkness?

They gather, day after day, in our schools, some hundreds of these little ones, and are there taught of The Light of the world. Many of them are

quick and eager to learn, with a big soul and great possibilities shining through their dark eyes These are the coming men and women of the age, and *ours* the great opportunity and sacred obligation of planting in those young hearts something that will blossom and bear fruit in coming manhood and womanhood.

We dare not undertake the task lightly, but with a burning passion, a mighty faith, and untiring prayer. May God grant us these.

CHAPTER III.

"A Serpent by the Way."

THE morning sun glinted between the dark trunks of the palmyra palms, casting broad bands of light and shade upon the dusty road. Across the almost dry tank-bed were fields fast being reaped. A few jungle trees, with black trunks and thorny branches, growing in the tank, were covered with a hundred white, fluttering wings. The paddy-birds, eager to glean what the reapers had left, made a scene of startling beauty and whiteness. On the roadside, where lay the bands of sun and shadow, a woman in a crimson cloth bent over an ant-hill. The golden ornaments in her ears and on her neck gleamed with each of her rapid movements, and her brow was knit with anxious thought. As we approached her we saw that she held in one hand a cocoanut shell containing a quantity of white powder, while, with the other hand, she dropped the powder deftly, in accurate lines, around and over the ant-hill, forming an intricate, web-like design as she did so. On the summit of the ant-hill lay a little garland of yellow flowers; all around it were dots of red plentifully sprinkled over the brown hillock.

We stopped and spoke to her, and she paused in her occupation, standing upright and shading her eyes with her hand as she answered us. It was NAGAMMA (the snake god), in this case a live cobra, that she was worshipping. "Nagamma used to live under that tree," she said (pointing to a shady tree a furlong away), "then it went to that temple (pointing again to a small temple visible to us in a village on our right); "that did not suit it, so it has come to live here, and I am doing puja to it."

It was simply and earnestly told, and then she sighed a deep "Ay-o, it is getting late," and stooped again to her task.

We passed on with that picture deeply impressed upon our minds—a woman, with the furrows on her brow, and silver threads shining thickly in her hair, with no god and no hope but *this*—a cobra hiding in an ant-hill!

How deeply were the fangs of the old serpent, the devil, buried in that poor heart!

CHAPTER IV.

WIDOWHOOD.

THE Gunga-thees-varan temple, in Pursawalkam, reared its proud head in the blue sky, the carving on its stone *kopuram* standing out with defiant clearness. Beside the temple the waters of the sacred tank gleamed with a thousand ripples. The red and white stripes on the wall surrounding the tank shone with a cruel glare. On the four flights of steps leading down to the water's edge, the holy Brahmins stood at their morning ablutions, some washing their garments on the stone steps, others immersing themselves in the green water, with their faces turned sunwards.

A slow procession wended its way on the bank of the tank. A group of men walked ahead, bearing gleaming brass pots and clanging cymbals; a few women followed with lagging footsteps. There was one among them, clothed in festive attire, her hair adorned with flowers, and her form with golden ornaments. The tinkle of her silver anklets gave forth a musical sound, and the scent of sandal-paste clung about her. And yet the small, flower-crowned head was bent, and the young shoulders were shaken with sobs. The women who walked beside her uttered a cry of woe

as they went; "*Ay-ay-o! Ay-ay-o!*" they wept. The young girl, decked in gold and flowers, was bidding farewell to all the joys of life.

Ten days ago her husband had died. She had loved him timidly; he was her master, the one who gave her jewels, and a certain status in life as a married woman. For a few brief years she had been an obedient, virtuous wife, thereby laying up for her lord great happiness in a future state.

And then the blow had come, and, in some way, *she* was responsible for her husband's death, for the gods had poured the vials of their wrath upon *her*. She still wore around her neck the symbol of wifehood, the little golden ornament on a saffron cord, which seemed so precious now that she was about to lose it.

Oh, how slowly they walked! and yet how surely was she approaching the scene of her degradation and woe!

At last the bathing ghaut was reached, and the women's voices rose in a united wail as the terrible rites of widowhood were commenced. One by one the costly jewels were removed—the sweet jasmine flowers that she must never wear again, the silken *sari* and the silver anklets that she thought so pretty and prized so highly. A razor was passed rapidly about her head, and she was shorn of the glory of womanhood—her glossy hair lay in a heap at her feet—a shaven head must henceforth proclaim her degradation. A coarse cloth was wound around the trembling form, and then came her "sorrows' crown of sorrow," as the wedding token

was severed from her neck by another woman's hand. A widow indeed, henceforth to be a drudge and a thing accursed till the hand of death releases her from her misery. Never more, for her, the joys of life—no love, or music, or flowers, or the kisses of little children. Back from the gleaming tank the slow procession came, the little widow trembling like a leaf, her coarse wet garment clinging about her, and the sun shining on her bent, shaven head. Back to a darkened home from which a dear presence had departed, leaving her to face the hopelessness and curse of widowhood. "*Ay-ay-o! Ay-ay-o-o! Ay-o-o-o!*" wailed the women; and our eyes were dim as our hearts echoed their cry.

CHAPTER V.

POSSESSED.

IT is a small Indian village, one of the smallest on the outskirts of this large city of Madras. No one thinks of little Lock Cheri, with its dozen or so of mud and thatch huts, hidden away beside the silent water-channel. And yet, among those few non-caste huts throbs all the human experience of life. Babes are born, and weddings solemnised, and souls go out from the little thatched homes into the "Great Unknown."

There is a small temple there, and a grinning image sitting cross-legged within it, and there are religious ceremonies observed, with the beat of many *tom-toms*, and the flare of many torches.

There are mighty quarrels between the residents of Loch Cheri, quarrels which grow louder and warmer, till the whole neighbourhood resounds with shrieks and curses. Satan lives at Lock Cheri, and sometimes we see him. On the small, bare space among the thatched houses a crowd gathered one day. The men lounged against the mud walls of the houses, or sat on their heels on the ground; the shrill voices of the children were full of nervous excitement, but it was the women who appeared to be the principal actors in the scene. Hither and

A Tamil Girl.

thither they ran, fetching baskets full of offerings, which they laid on the ground. Now a few cocoa-nuts, next a bunch of plantains, then a garland of flowers, a small heap of uncooked rice, betel leaves, and nuts, and incense. They worked with feverish haste, looking furtively over their shoulders, as though expecting something fearful.

An earthen pot of water, the mouth of which was covered with a bunch of sacred leaves, was at last placed among the other offerings. Following the water-pot, and uttering strange, unearthly yells, which dispersed the children and startled the women, there came a woman in a blue *sari*. Her face was not visible, as she walked with a stoop, and her long, black hair was unbound, and hung over her face and shoulders.

Taking her stand before the water-pot and offerings, the woman began to sway with a weird, circular motion, still uttering terrible cries. Faster and faster she swayed, her long, black hair sweeping the dust at her feet—faster and faster till her hair whirled like a long, black rope around her, and struck the ground with repeated thuds. The slender figure swayed like a willow bent by a storm, and still those piteous cries came from her parted lips, growing fainter as her strength gave way. She, at last, came to an end of her endurance, and collapsed on the ground—the willow had been ruthlessly snapped and flung away. The crowd, which had been standing around watching this uncanny sight, now closed around her, and, breaking the water-pot, poured its contents over

her. The dripping, unconscious woman was then carried away and concealed in one of the huts, while a swarm of beggars appeared from various quarters, eager to receive and bear away the offerings. The mystery and horror of such a visitation can never be explained. The people lightly spoke of a *god* who had visited them, while a poor, crushed soul moaned within a dark hut. Who is sufficient for these things save Jesus, before whom the devils trembled?

CHAPTER VI.

"EARS, BUT THEY HEAR NOT."

A SEPTEMBER afternoon. The air is heavy with the scent of cork blossoms; the cocoanut palms stand motionless, casting still shadows on the warm earth. A herd of buffaloes crops the dry herbage on the sun-baked plain: their persistent crunch is the only sound audible in the stillness. The sun smites the white walls of the little temple in the grove of cocoanut palms, and a group of merry lizards chase each other round to the shady side, chirruping as they go.

Across the plain a slim young figure comes, carrying tenderly in her arms a little babe wrapped in a red cloth. Her eyes are wild and full of fear, while dry sobs burst from her parted lips. A moan from her baby causes her to hasten her steps as she clasps it more closely to her heart.

At the little temple she stops, and gently lays her light burden on the ground. Tenderly she uncovers the wee, smallpox-stricken face, and gazes anxiously at the baby's half-closed eyes. "Oh, my jewel, my pearl, my beautiful one, thou wilt not leave me," she cries; "stay, stay with thy mother, the light of whose eyes thou art!"

Within the shadow of the temple the stone image of Shola-amman sits and stares, a garland of

flowers around its neck. Outside, in the sunlight, is the sacrificial stone where the offerings of many generations have been made. With feverish haste the young mother lays her offerings there, weeping as she arranges them—a garland of jasmine flowers, a bunch of betel leaves, a few areca nuts, a broken cocoanut, and a little lump of camphor. She dashes the tears from her eyes as she lights the camphor, and places it there before the god, and, lying prostrate on the ground, she speaks: "Oh, Shola-amman, you gave me this child; now tell me why you are taking it away. Take these offerings, oh Shola-amman, and give me back my child. If thou art angry, let these offerings stay thine anger, oh Swami. Why dost thou want my child? Are there not other children? Oh, cruel one, why dost thou take my child?" She looks again at the little one lying in the sunshine, and now quite unconscious; and a terrible fear seizes her. Is her journey in vain, has the god not heard, will he not hear? "Oh Shola-amman!" she shrieks aloud, her voice ringing through the still afternoon, so that even the mild buffaloes look up in surprise, "Oh, Shola-amman! speak, speak! my child, my child!" In a frenzy of fear and sorrow she strikes her head on the hard earth, and beats her hands on her breast, still calling upon the name of the god. Now exhausted, she pauses for a while, and listens intently, as though for some voice from the temple. Perhaps a lizard will chirrup from the wall, or a crow call from the palm trees to tell her that the god has heard. But not a sound breaks the silence, and, taking her

baby to her heart she calls again, and yet again, her voice rising in shrill despair, "Oh, Shola-amman! speak, speak, speak!"

* * * * *

Stepping quickly across the plain another woman comes, with the sunlight shining on her silver hair, and a book held against her side—a Biblewoman on her way home from visiting. Hearing the despairing cries she hastens to the temple, and there, before the staring god, she takes her broken-hearted sister in her arms and tries to comfort her. Was there ever a kinder messenger, or sweeter voice? Spent and stricken, the sad heart listens to the Word of Life—hears of Jesus, who hears and answers prayer, heals the sick, and calls little children to His arms.

The baby in her arms no longer breathes. Rising, she goes homeward, with the little, cold body held closely, as though none should ever take it from her. The kind old arms are about her, and the kind voice speaks soothingly as they go home in the quiet evening. She is calm now, for, looking up into the evening sky, she forgets Shola-amman with the stolid stare, and thinks of Jesus Christ, with whom her baby is safe.

CHAPTER VII.

THE WISDOM OF THIS WORLD.

IN the potter's village work was at a standstill. Two weddings during the week had disturbed its usual routine. Little heaps of unmoulded clay lay beneath the trees, motionless wheels were propped against the silent houses, and for once the huge kiln was cold and smokeless. The streets looked deserted, for the usual rows of grotesque clay images and pots were not drying in the sun.

A few women stood in the sun and called out at our approach, "There is no one to listen to you to-day; everybody has gone to a wedding."

As there were quite half-a-dozen of them who apparently considered themselves "nobody," we thought they might answer as an audience, so we pitched our camp-stool beneath a tree and sat down. This appeared to be an interesting proceeding, for they drew nearer to us.

We studied them as they stood there. An old woman, with very white hair and an intelligent face—"*Periya-amma*" (big mother) they called her—and she had to be installed on a plank, with much ceremony. Then there was a pretty young bride, just come from a village, to whom her sisters-in-law were giving various instructions as

to manners and customs in Madras; a wistful-eyed girl whom we have known for several years, a stout country women, who plied us with questions as to our customs, but did not care to hear about our religion; three tall young men, and an elderly man who sat looking at us with a scowl on his face; and two other women, who passed uncomplimentary remarks on white people. A rather unpromising audience; but we had come there with a purpose, and we did not wish to waste our afternoon. At any rate, *Periya Amma* and the wistful girl were attentive, and so we told them all over again that wonderful story of Jesus. We had told it on that exact spot many a time—(but such are the opportunities of missionary effort)—at least half of our hearers to-day were new to us.

The minutes had grown to an hour: we had finished our story, shown them our pictures, given them tracts, offered our books for sale, and induced them to talk, when a disturbing element came. A young Brahmin stepped out of a garden, hastily closing the gate, and came up to us, his face full of angry excitement. He had been listening behind the hedge, he said, and he did not like what we had been saying. "Everybody had been irritated," he affirmed; but we could find no trace of irritation on any but his wily face. The nervous women disappeared at sight of the "twice-born one," and the three young men, who had been attentive listeners, now took sides with the Brahmin, and chimed in with "Oh, yes, certainly." The old man also found his opportunity, and shouted across the street, "We do not want to hear

about your Jesus Christ!" How quickly the situation had changed! Five minutes ago a few quiet women sat around us—now a group of angry men confronted us.

It was interesting to note how the Brahmin took precedence as a matter of course. A stool was fetched, and he sat down to argue with me.

He was an arts student in Pachaiyappa's College, he said, and intended studying law when he had finished his college career. He " knew all about Christianity, for his library included a Bible." He thought it was a good religion, but so was Hinduism and Mohammedanism, for they all taught good truths, and Jesus Christ was no better than—perhaps not as good as—Krishna.

" You must not form your ideas of Krishna from the conception these common people have," he said, with a superior wave of his hand, " for they cannot understand the inner truths."

There were many ways of salvation, he affirmed; and what had irritated him was that we had said Jesus was the only way. He quoted Sir Oliver Lodge and Milton, wandered to theosophy and Mrs. Annie Besant, lost himself in the mazes of science and philosophy, but avoided the Bible with strange persistence. We brought him back again and again to that, telling him that our one authority for what we preached was the Word of God. His excitement had cooled; he looked superciliously at me, and flung out a challenge—" Madam, if you sat and talked to me for a whole year you could not convert me to Christianity,"

he said, and his hearers laughed, expecting me to undertake that stupendous task forthwith.

"You never spoke a truer word," I said, "but the Holy Spirit of God can." A sudden nervousness appeared on his face, and he rose quickly. "My business is urgent, and I must leave; good evening!" and then he muttered, "It is strange you Christians tell us so persistently of your religion! Why is it?" Why is it? We turned to those who still stood around us, and told them; and as we rose to go we saw, to our surprise, that he whose business had been so urgent was standing behind a tree, listening. He had waited to hear why it was.

CHAPTER VIII.

PILGRIMAGE.

THE bell of the electric tramcar clanged with noisy persistence through the crowded bazaar street of Pursawalkam. Bullock carts rumbled by in leisurely fashion, their drivers dozing on the yoke-pole, with the tails of their bulls held loosely, in conjunction with whip and nose-ropes. Little unclad urchins darted across the road, trundling lids of coffee tins, or flying paper kites, utterly oblivious of traffic. Now and then a motor flew past, hooting loudly, but making little impression on the meditative crowd. Old men and women toiled along in the middle of the dusty road, dogs frolicked and tumbled over each other, and chickens flew between the legs of the pedestrians. Street hawkers, mendicants, umbrellas, rickshaws and varied vehicles were among the obstacles to steady progress, and pervading all was the unforgettable odour of Indian cakes fried in oil.

Rolling along in the middle of the road was something—or someone—so strange that one had to look several times before realising that it was really a human being; and yet the crowd passed on, hardly turning to look or wonder.

It was a man rolling there. He was devoid of clothing except for a small rag around his waist; his black hair and beard were very long and matted, and thick with dust. On his forehead and chest and arms were ashes smeared in horizontal lines, and in his mouth was a bit of stout wire, passed through horrible holes in his cheeks. He crooned a monotonous "*munthram*" as he made his painful journey—one moment with his face buried in the dust, the next with his eyes staring up into the fierce sunlight. In his hands he held a slightly hollowed wooden tray, in which lay an infant uttering little piteous cries. As he rolled on his back he held the tray and infant up at arms length; when he lay on his face the baby was at arm's length in the dust. For many, many miles the man and the child had travelled thus. Where he had come from, or whither he was bound, no one cared to ask, for was not this wearisome pilgrimage in fulfilment of a vow? By this act he was storing up great merit, and peace of mind—perhaps forgiveness of all his sins, and eternal happiness. The people passed on unheeding, except when one or two dropped a copper into the tray beside the baby, thereby making propitiation for their own sins. Some day, when the pilgrimage is over, and the dust of the highway is washed away in some sacred tank or river, the heart of the pilgrim will bitterly realise that torturing the body never yet saved the soul.

CHAPTER IX.

"MARRIED TO THE GODS."

A ROLL of drums, and a flash of crimson and yellow through the trees. We look up from the lesson we have been teaching, and cease speaking, because our hearers have risen to their feet and are watching eagerly for the procession to come into view.

And this is what we see. Leading the way are the drummers, their lower limbs clad in crimson and white, the upper part of their bodies bare, drumming with all their might in that strange rhythm known only to heathen musicians. Next comes a man swinging a brass censer of smoking incense. Following him are other men bearing trays of offerings—flowers, fruit, cocoanuts, rice, cakes, betel leaves and nuts. Then come a crowd of people gaily dressed, and talking loudly, the central figure among them being a tall man carrying a baby girl. We look and wonder for a moment, and then a chance word enlightens us. The horror of it bursts upon us, and the pathos of that little human offering. The tall man is taking his one sweet baby girl to the temple to be "tied to the god." It is in fulfilment of a vow, the women around tell us.

The soft, dimpled arms of the baby cling confidingly around her father's neck, and her little curly head rests trustfully on his shaven one. The baby heart fears no evil within those arms, and yet he is about to give her away, body and soul, to Satan! Married to the gods, condemned to a life of sin, taught from her earliest years to serve the devil!

Christian father or mother, take your own little girl within your arms, and try to picture that scene; and if you have never prayed for the heathen before, do it now, with that soft cheek against yours, and those clinging arms about you.

Within the shadow of every temple of any size is a street where live the *deva dasis*—servants of the gods—women who have been thus married to the gods in early childhood, and devoted to the devil's service; or women who have been born into their mothers' awful profession.

We had often wished to take the Gospel to these sinful abodes, but every effort in this direction had been opposed; and so we longed and waited.

One day we made another attempt. We sat in a Hindu house in the village of Sembarambakkam and looked across an open plain to a temple enclosed within high, fortress-like walls. The sun glinted upon the red and white perpendicular bands on the walls, and poured its glory on a gigantic idol-car near by. The car was a small tower in itself, its wheels reaching nearly to a man's height. By the side of the car were some blossoming trees, and a double row of houses (the

homes of the *deva dasis*), forming a small street. It seemed as if the soft, green branches and the yellow blossoms bent and bowed for shame in the wind, and tried to hide that little street.

A sudden resolve seized us. Rising and bidding our Hindu friends good-bye, we turned to walk across the plain. " Where are you going? " asked an anxious woman's voice.

" To see the *dasis*," I said.

" Oh, do not go, Amma," she implored; " the *guru* (priest) is in the temple, and other men are about; there is sure to be trouble. Why go to them? They do not want you. Stay here and talk to us as long as you like."

But we had talked to them for many years; and that other need seemed calling, and so we went.

A furlong or more across the plain, and by the car where the yellow blossoms bowed we stopped, for from the first house in the street a Brahmin man came to meet us. Two other men sat in the doorway of the house, and watched their leader. He was polite, and his voice had a soft, chanting tone, which we did not wonder at when he told us he was the reader of the *Shastras* (Hindu scriptures) in the temple. He enquired our business quietly, and we told him we visited women, and, hearing of some in this street, had come to see them.

A gleam shot into his cunning eyes, and he set his white teeth, but his voice was smooth and soft as he gave us permission to visit the houses. He

reminded one irresistibly of some huge creature of the feline tribe, with cruel teeth and claws concealed beneath a soft purr and a velvet paw. Our eyes went past him to some gaily-dressed women in the other doorways, and we moved a step towards them. He moved in front of us—and now we saw the claws. Raising his voice and making a gesture of command, he said, "You may go, but they have no wish to see you; they will not hear you." His eyes were fixed smilingly on me, and behold, the women had vanished, and every door was closed!

He let us go, then, but never an answer could we get from those houses, and so back we came to the car. Quickly from the temple porch stepped the *guru* (priest), his almost bare body smeared with holy ashes, a heavy rosary of brown nut beads around his neck, and a look of surprise on his wily face. Under the shadow of the idol car we stood and offered them our books for sale. The *Shastra* reader examined them carefully, and returned them with a shake of his head; the *guru* refused to touch them.

The precious moments were passing, and with a silent, agonised cry for help we spoke to them of Jesus Christ, moving as near as we could to the closed doors. A bolt was shot back in one of the houses, a woman crept out, nearer and nearer, till she stood at our side. Through the yellow blossoms two more women's faces peeped at us; behind a softly-opening door we saw another. A few more minutes passed, and we were being helped and strengthened to speak on—and they listened in

silence. Another woman stepped out, bold and black-eyed, with a subtle scent of sandalwood about her, and tinkling silver bells about her ankles. She looked into my face, her eyes a few inches from mine, and laughed mockingly; but there was no answering laugh from the others.

And so we told them the old, sweet story, with a terrifying sense of our own weakness, and a wonderful consciousness of God's great power. And now we heard the purr again, and saw a little—a very little—of the claw put out to scratch. "You have come a long way in the sun, and said what you had to say; but what good has it done?" he asked. We knew not, but we left it as a seed sown in a stormy wind, and an arrow shot into the air—left it in God's keeping.

A Caste Woman Adorning Her Doorstep.

CHAPTER X.

Sorrow upon Sorrow.

IN India a woman is not supposed to have a heart or feelings. Her lot in life is chosen by her parents, and all that a dutiful daughter has to do is to quietly acquiesce in what they arrange for her. Least of all has she a voice in the matter of her marriage. Marry she must, and that within a certain time, and within a certain family or caste. Whether her husband is good or bad is of no account, and whether she cares for him or not is of less importance still.

"No one cares for me, and I cannot even die," were the wild words that fell from the lips of a fifteen-year-old girl-wife. This is the story of that little non-caste bride.

Less than two years ago she was a healthy, happy girl. We knew her as such. A marriage was arranged for her with her mother's younger brother—he being the proper husband for her. The wedding ceremonies were performd at great expense, and the little girl was pleased with the music, and jewels, and flowers, and scent, and delicacies. But, in the midst of the festivities, the bride's gay clothing caught fire. It was quickly extinguished; but the wise men and women shook their heads and prophesied evil.

A year later the little girl-wife experienced her first great sorrow in the death of her month-old baby girl. They shook their heads again, and said dark things of a devil-possessed mother.

Soon after she became very ill herself, and they would have left her to die, had we not interfered and persuaded them to send her to hospital.

There she underwent a serious operation, and came back to life a mere shadow of her former self. But her people firmly believed that the doctor and the devil between them had appointed her to death, and that some power in the iron bedstead on which she lay in hospital had sapped away her strength. "In thirty days she will surely die," they said, and quietly waited; but wondered to see her strength slowly return, by reason of the nourishing food we gave her.

The spirit of her husband's former wife was supposed to be responsible for all the trouble, and that evil spirit had to be propitiated—not with the idea of saving the little wife, but for fear it should work further mischief.

A Brahmin priest was consulted, and he ordered and conducted the ceremonies, and fared sumptuously himself at the expense of the deluded husband.

One day the propitiation procession passed the Mission House, and we stood and watched. A little girl of eight was made to carry a pot of water on her head, covered with sacred leaves. With music and dancing they proceeded to a tank. There a sugar cane and cocoanut-leaf shed was

erected, and offerings were made to the dead wife's spirit, which was supposed to immediately enter into the water pot. The pot was then carried home again by the child, and there the priest performed other ceremonies, when the spirit entered the little girl and spoke through her, saying, "Oh, my lord, my great king, I have come back to remain in your house. I shall now do no harm; go in peace and marry again." The pot of water was then placed in a corner of the husband's home, and is to stand there always, being worshipped and decorated and anointed daily.

Through all these ceremonies the poor little sick wife was dragged. Her tottering limbs were hardly able to support her; but she was made to walk to the tank and back again, to witness all that took place, and hereafter it was her appointed task to attend on the spirit of the water pot.

But yet another trouble awaited her. She being doomed to death, her husband had resolved to marry again. She sat in her home, wild-eyed and hardened, while he set forth to marry another wife.

The bridal party came home with laughter and with flowers. The little sick wife smiled a wan welcome to the new bride, who was a child herself. They were not unkind to her; but she was to die, so why trouble about her? And so she lay on her grass mat beside the water-pot, and slowly, slowly, pined away. Death was the kindest friend of all, as he closed her tired eyes and stopped her sorrowful heart.

CHAPTER XI.

THREE COCOANUTS.

THEY lay in the sunlight before a temple shrine, and were the expression of all the superstition and anguish of a human heart.

She was a simple village woman. Her world was contained in the little leaf-thatched hut in the village of Ayanapuram. The only god she knew was the stone image in the temple under the the palmyras; her one joy in life was her little son. This one treasure was, somehow, the gift of that stone god, sitting mute in the temple. Had she not gone there years ago and laid her offerings before him, and begged that she might be given a baby-son?

The god had been pleased to favour her, and her child was a boy. How joyfully she had looked upon his small face! With what pride she had shown him to her friends and neighbours! Her cup of life was full; she was the mother of a son! The days sped by, and he grew—how wonderfully he grew! Never yet had a baby shown such intelligence; he walked sooner than any baby in the village; he spoke more clearly than them all. When he called "Amma," her heart leaped up to answer him, and her fond arms opened to clasp him to her breast. What wonderful black eyes he

had, and his curly hair was more beautiful than the sheen of a raven's wing. His first little tooth was a very pearl for whiteness; his kisses were as dew-drops on her face. His laughter seemed to make the grass to dance, and the birds to sing; and when he cried, her heart grew cold with foreboding. For seven years she loved him; he was her brave little man now. He talked of the day when he would go to work, like his father, in the big railway workshops. One day he would build a great "smoke carriage" himself, and, when it rushed puffing and screaming across the country, everybody would talk about the engine that Nagan built. He would then be a very rich man, and his father and mother and he would go in the big, big train to all the famous towns and temples, for had he not built the engine to take them?

And thus and thus he spoke, standing sturdy and bright in the sunshine, and her mother's heart was full of pride.

A kindly old man came down the thorn-hedged lane one day, and saw little Nagan playing there.

"Little brother, do you go to school?" he asked.

"What is school?" asked Nagan; "I am going to be a man one day, and then I shall go to the workshops," he said.

"True, little brother," said the kind old man, "but school comes first. It is a place where we learn many things. Little boys go to school before they go to workshops. Do you know about God?"

"Who is God?" asked Nagan. "I know the *swami* over yonder; but he does not know or say anything, he is made of stone."

"Cha! cha! little son! You must come to school and learn about the true God. Where is your mother?"

His mother came smiling at his call; and there in the lane she learnt that Nagan would become a clever boy, and know how to read books, and write letters, and keep accounts, if he went to school; and forthwith she promised to send him to the Mission School which had just been opened at Ayanapuram.

Nagan soon loved the Mission School, and the teachers and boys he met there. He learned many things there about God; not the god in the temple under the palmyras, but the true God, and His Son Jesus Christ. While his mother ground the curry stuff and prepared the evening meal, he told her all about it. She listened and wondered at Nagan's cleverness; he was such a wonderful boy!

A neighbour came in one day to borrow a cooking pot, and heard little Nagan's story of the Jesus Swami. "*Ay-ay-o!*" she cried in horror. "You have sent your son to a Christian school! Some trouble is sure to come! Will the *swami* allow you to do this unpunished? Something will happen to your boy. *Ay-ay-o!* He is sure to die."

The mother rose in quick alarm, almost expecting to see her loved boy snatched away before her eyes. "You shall go no more to the Christian

school, my treasure," she said. "You and I together will stay the god's anger, so that no harm shall come to you."

Very early in the morning, when the dew was on the grass, and the night-birds had scarcely ceased to scream, she woke little Nagan, and, holding his hand tightly, took him to the temple in the palmyra grove. In her cloth, slung in front of her, she carried three brown cocoanuts. They were the best she could procure in the village, and this was an urgent errand.

By the temple shrine she knelt, calling upon the idol, telling him that she had done wrong in sending her boy to a Christian school. "But these cocoanuts will stay your anger, oh swami! Accept these cocoanuts, and leave my beautiful boy unharmed," she prayed.

On the stone before the shrine she broke the first cocoanut. It fell in pieces around her. "Oh, Nagan, why is it?" she cried, perplexed, "the cocoanut is black and withered within! Is the god still angry?"

There were still two more. This was some mistake which the god would overlook. The other two are good cocoanuts.

Crack! crack! She broke the second hastily. The pieces fell around her on the dewy ground—black, black and decayed again.

"Oh, swami!" she cried, beating her breast, "oh, cruel swami! what is this? Wilt thou not hear my prayers and accept my offerings?"

The third one would be, *must* be all right. In haste she broke it, looking in terror as the pieces fell around her—black, black and decayed again!

And then she knew that Nagan must die. Wailing and shrieking she caught his hand and led him home—she, wild with despair and horror, he wistful and wondering.

The days went by. She watched him every day—how she watched him! He went no more to school, for he was to die, and she could not trust him from her sight.

And then at last it came, the sickness she was looking for. He was tired, his bright eyes were dimmed, the fever burned within him. She told no one, she gave him no medicine, she asked no aid. It was to be, for the swami was angry. Those three decayed cocoanuts were, to her poor, dark heart, as the voice of God. She tended him in mute despair, her little lad with the black eyes; and when he had passed beyond her ken, her heart died too. Three broken cocoanuts, and a mother's broken heart, and the stone god sitting mute in the palmyra grove neither knew nor cared.

Very soon after we were sent of God to find and comfort little Nagan's mother. The outpouring of the above sad story was the first sign of healing in that sore and silent heart.

Sitting there, within sight of the temple under the palms, she listened quietly to the message of the God of Love. "My Nagan told me that He was the True God," she said, pointing up into the blue sky.

CHAPTER XII.

An Unfinished Picture.

A HINDU mother and daughter sat in their courtyard after the heat of the Indian day was over. They were wealthy, and could enjoy much leisure while servants did the household tasks. A pungent odour of chillies told us that the evening meal was in course of preparation in the little dark kitchen. A glittering array of brass pots and pans stood by the water-tap in the courtyard, and several *tulsi* plants flourished in pots.

On the cleanly-swept floor of the courtyard was an elaborate design sketched in coloured chalks. In a niche in the verandah wall stood the family god, a silver image of Krishna, and on either side of it were hung several gorgeous paintings of Hindu deities.

The mother was tall, and wore her violet-coloured *sari* with dignity. She sat on an armchair and gave loud directions to the servant concealed in the dark kitchen. The daughter sat on a mat, with a large wooden frame held on her lap, on which was stretched a yard of canvas. With great skill and patience she was working on the canvas the figure of Krishna in one of his ugliest attitudes. Day

after day the picture grew. It was to be framed, and hung, and worshipped by the family. Her deft fingers threaded the needle, and rapidly put in the pink stitches which formed Krishna's nude limbs. She made a pretty enough picture herself, in her blue silk *sari*, with the glitter of gold and rubies in ears and hair, and many tiny silver bells on her ankles. She smiled with satisfaction now and then, and patted the stitches with approving hands, and held the frame at arm's length to view their effect.

And, day by day, as the picture grew, we visited her with the Gospel message, and, amid the *tulsi* plants and the brass pots, led her thoughts from the unclean history of that Hindu deity to the life of the pure and holy Jesus. Was it fancy, or did the worker's hands grow slack, and her gaze less approving? Were the silks sometimes neglected, and the needle still? The picture was nearly finished; a few more days would see the last stitches put in, and Krishna would then be adorned with real gems and framed. We spoke to her of the sin of such worship; how could we be silent with that figure growing before our eyes?

The girl listened, and for the first time expressed distaste for her task, and turned her face from the canvas to the Gospel portion we offered her.

And then the mother took quick alarm. Very cuttingly she told us that their caste forbade them to listen to Christian teaching, and that hereafter their door would be closed to us. We were compelled to leave the house then, but tried on several

occasions to gain admittance again. Once we entered the courtyard, but the mother coldly refused to listen, and said her husband had forbidden her to do so. We do not know whether the picture was ever completed, and whether it is now worshipped in that home; but we know God can bless the seed sown, and turn that Hindu maiden's heart, even as she bows before the picture, from Krishna to Christ.

CHAPTER XIII.

"A Little Child Shall Lead Them."

A BABY with bonnie brown limbs and a tangle of black curls lies on a mat in the courtyard. The mid-day sun pours down its fierce heat on the soft hands and velvety face, and she blinks her black eyes, and writhes and wriggles, and puts up little clenched fists in protest. It is all she can do at a month old; and when no one heeds, she tries a further protest in a series of whimpers and wails. But Father Sol smiles on, his big, warm, bland smile on baby's face, and Baby Brownie, with aching head and watering eyes, adapts herself to circumstances, as all good Indian babies should, and goes to sleep.

In a dark room off the courtyard, baby's mother lies still and cold, sleeping her last sleep, with saffron-dyed face, and a blaze of yellow blossoms about her, with her gorgeous crimson cloth wrapped around her still body, and a look of fear upon her dead face, waiting to be borne to the burning ground—and even now the wail of the funeral horn sounds in the street, and the noiseless tread of the unshod bearers is at the door.

In the doorway of the room, between the sunlight and the gloom, is baby's grandmother, sitting huddled with her knees touching her chin, sway-

ing and rocking, her white wisps of hair falling over her wrinkled, tear-stained face. Her voice hoarse with weeping the long night through, she has spent the last six hours rocking herself, and crooning her death-song.

"*Ay-ay-o! Ay-ay-o!*" the old, trembling voice cries, as she stretches her withered hands towards the dark room and the silent sleeper. "*Ay-ay-o!* my child, my gold, my eyes, where hast thou gone? Why hast thou gone? *Ay-ay-o! Ay-ay-o!*"

The baby in the sunlight wakes, and blinks, and whimpers again, and the old woman rises hastily, and ties a charm, threaded on a yellow string, around one dimpled wrist. There is anger and fear on the old face as she bends to her task, and she goes quickly back to her corner and her crooning.

"*She* has brought the misfortune," the poor, dark heart says; "*she*, who should have been a boy, and brought joy and good fortune; she, who should have been eldest son of the house, to inherit his father's gold, and light his father's funeral pyre. But *she* came, a girl, to show us our gods are angry, to cause her mother's death, to cheat her father of the son he much desired, to bring misfortune on misfortune—*Ay-ay-o!*"

And such is Baby Brownie's start in life.

* * * * *

The clock is pointing to the hour of four, and in the little Mission School-house the children prepare for their Scripture lesson.

The teacher, an earnest-faced young man, stands up before them, kindness in every look, encouragement in every gesture. There is a tremor and a hush in his voice as he tells them the story he has told them many times before—the story of Jesus and His sacrifice on Calvary, which is so precious and sacred a thing to his own heart. And the children look and wonder as they stand there. They love and respect their teacher, and something tells them that this is no light thing that he is speaking of. In each little mind is a vision of an image in their heathen homes, to which they have bowed the knee, and offered the broken cocoanuts, and lit the sparkling camphor.

But this story of Jesus brings new visions, touches new chords in the child-hearts, calls forth fairer and sweeter thoughts than they have ever heard expressed.

Into one little maid's heart, as she nervously twists and untwists a corner of her cloth, there comes a rosy dawn, before which the long, long hours of loveless childhood fade away and are forgotten. "Jesus is loving, therefore He may, He *will* love me. Jesus answers prayer, and I will pray to Him."

School is over, the lessons are done, the young heads are bowed in prayer for a few moments. A chorus of young, lusty voices cry "Amen" with some measure of relief at the close, and there is a patter of bare feet as they run gleefully home.

She with the tangle of curls and the black eyes runs home with a new, sweet secret in her little heart—she is going to pray to Jesus.

It is night in the Hindu home. The oil lamps glimmer, and the old grandmother is performing her last ceremonies for the day before the god. Her little granddaughter creeps to her side and tells her of the one God who died on Calvary, and who hears, yes, *hears* prayer.

"*Chee Po!*" the grandmother says, "what do little girls know of such things? These our gods have been good enough for us for many generations; what do you know better, child?" And then she shakes her head, and mutters, "She was sent to bring us misfortune. What new thing is this? It is the devil come on her. *Ay-ay-o!* Someone is sure to die," and she vigorously sets herself to perform purification ceremonies to ward off the influence of the devil in that strange little grandchild.

But night after night she sees that little child kneeling in a quiet place, talking, not to an image, but to a Living Presence; sees the child's face lit with joy, and a wonder and a wistfulness comes into the old, wrinkled face.

* * * * *

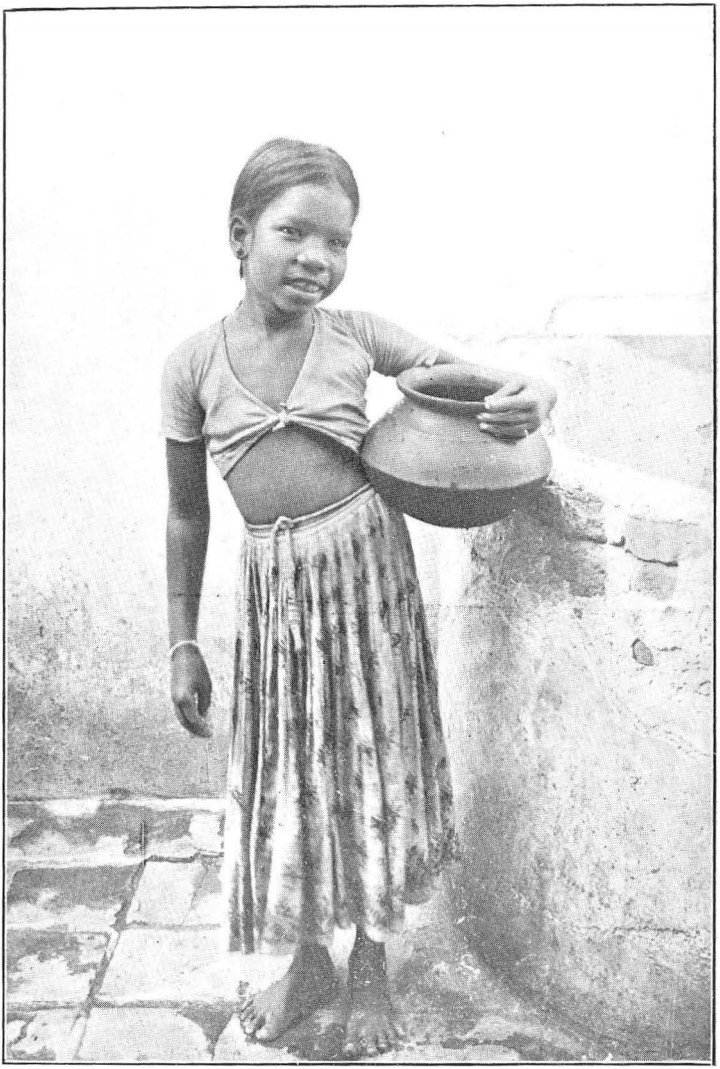
A missionary and a Biblewoman sit at the door of a heathen house. The goddess Mariyatha had come a few days before and smitten a child, and if a Christian's defiling feet cross the threshold, the goddess will take the child's life, so "only up

to the doorway and no further " was the permission given. The Christian workers know not that it is smallpox the goddess has brought, but even did they know, they would still sit on, for just inside that doorway is another about to enter the dark valley. She, the old grandmother, lies on a grass mat, with a bundle of rags for a pillow. There are none to minister to her, for all in the house are too busy. The old woman has had her day, and she must die, so why trouble? It was time she died.

As the dews of death settle on her brow she sees the other two women in the doorway. " Oh, you have come! " she cries; " how I have looked for you! Pray, pray that Jesus may speedily take me. He only is my Saviour: I have put my trust in Him."

And as we tell her once again, for the last time, of that Love that passeth knowledge, she clasps her hands and cries, " I know it, for He died for me." Heathen faces are around her as she breathes her last. She says to them: " I am dying a Christian, so let no heathen rites be performed over my poor body, only dig a grave and put it away to rest." And, smiling, she enters into His Presence.

And only the little girl, whom Jesus found and took to His heart in the Mission School-house, knows the secret of her grandmother's fearless entering into " The Valley of the Shadow."



A Tamil Pariah Girl Carrying Water.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Entrance of His Word.

IT is early afternoon. The midday meal is over, the floor has been swept, the brass pots have been scoured, and stand, in shining array, beside the water-tap. Clean mats are spread in the courtyard, and the women of the household sit down to chew their betel and nut, and gossip.

On the wall of the courtyard, which is sheltered by a roof, is a wooden family shrine, in which an image of Krishna stands—Krishna, with pink, nude limbs and grotesque face, studied with jewels and garlanded with flowers. A tall brass lamp, with lips for five wicks in the oil saucer, stands burnished and ready for the evening devotions. Various brass trays and vessels, and a brass bell, shine on a shelf; pictures of other Hindu deities are scattered indiscriminately on the wall; and a print of Queen Victoria in coronation robes proclaims the loyalty of a bygone day.

A hen, with her brood of chicks, clucks and scratches in a corner of the courtyard, and a dog lies and blinks in the doorway.

From without come the calls of various street vendors. Now the sweetmeat man, with a tray of sweetmeats poised on his head, waving a branch

above the tray to keep away crows. Now the bangle man, with his load of many-coloured glass and tinsel bangles, threaded on string and slung over his shoulder. A woman with milk pauses at the doorway and calls: "Milk, will you buy milk?" Another, with baskets and brooms, walks into the courtyard and displays her wares.

Little Lutchmee runs in and out of the courtyard, now standing at the doorway, now looking down the street. "What a child it is!" says her good-natured mother; "can't you sit quiet, daughter? Who is it you are looking for?"

"For the Amma who tells us stories," says the little girl; "is it not time she came?"

"Who knows whether she is coming to-day, child?" say the women, and continue their talk and bargaining.

The baskets and brooms have been purchased, the seller departs, and now enters a quieter visitor carrying a few books. She greets the women with a smile, and they welcome her kindly. A mat is spread, and she is asked to sit down, and a few moments are spent in friendly enquiries and conversation.

Nine-year-old Lutchmee's face lights with pleasure at the entrance of the Biblewoman. She takes her seat cross-legged by her mother's side, tucking her feet, with their silver anklets, into her ample skirt, and crossing her arms across her chest.

She is pretty, with wistful eyes, and quaint, womanish ways. Her hair is well oiled, and braided with flowers. A big, gold jewel shines above her forehead, and red stones, set in gold, twinkle in her ears and nose. In a green silk jacket and crimson, voluminous skirt, she makes a pleasing picture as she settles down for an hour's enjoyment. Her proud mother smiles and tells the Biblewoman how Lutchmee has looked for her, and all the women laugh good-naturedly, and listen to the Biblewoman's story as though it was an entertainment organised solely for Lutchmee's enjoyment.

The story is quietly read, and earnestly explained. The speaker's heart is full of pity, and her eyes are brimming with unshed tears as she tells of the poor leper calling upon the Lord Jesus to heal him.

There is a hush in the courtyard as she tells of that wonderful Divine Love that stretched a hand to touch, yes, *touch* the diseased and unclean flesh, and of the Saviour's tender voice that said, "I will, be thou clean."

Lutchmee listens, large-eyed and breathless; and her mother exclaims "*Ah Ba!*" in astonishment.

"He was made clean," continues the story-teller, "and so it is with sin-stricken souls who cannot cleanse themselves." Pointing to the idol

Krishna, she earnestly says, "Not there, but in the fountain of Jesus' blood is the cure. There, alone, is Salvation, and Peace, and Rest."

The visit is over. She says her "salaams" and departs, and the women rise and busy themselves with preparations for the evening meal. There is marketing to be done, and rice to be pounded, and fish to clean, and curry-stuff to grind. Life is so full of tasks for hands to do that there is no time to think of other matters, and so they forget forthwith the message of the afternoon. In one little heart alone there remains a vision of a gracious and loving God standing on an Eastern road, and touching a leper to heal him.

* * * * *

In a dark room Lutchmee lies, tossed with fever and dying. Her anxious mother bends over her, holding the little restless hands, wiping the hot brow, calling to her to take a little food, to drink a little milk, to speak to her. For many days the fever has burned in that young body. The Indian doctor has tried his potions and his liniments, and put plasters of leaves on the little shaven head; and now he has come to the wise conclusion that he can do no more. This is a sickness brought by a devil, and so the priest had better come and do his part to banish it. The priest has been with his charms, and incense, and "*munthrums*" (incantations); long, long hours have been spent

in ceremonies, at a cost of many hundreds of rupees, and father and mother are sorrowful and weary with watching for the devil to leave their stricken child. But still the fever burns, and Lutchmee is fast slipping away.

Panting in the hot night, she speaks at last, and leaning over her, the distracted mother tries to catch the words she has longed and waited for. But what strange words she hears! Alas! her darling must be light-headed, and knows not what she is saying, for she is speaking to a stranger!

Clasping her thin, weak hands together, Lutchmee says: "Lord Jesus, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me well; Lord Jesus, if Thou wilt, Thou canst——." Softly through the darkness she hears a loving Voice which says "I will," and feels a gentle Hand touch her fevered brow.

"Child, child, little daughter, my precious one, what art thou saying? Speak to thine own mother who is watching here by thee. Speak to me, dear one," cries her mother. But the tired eyes are closed, and the restless hands are still.

Wide-eyed and anxious, she stoops over her, and holds the little hands, so quiet now; feels her head —cool and moist now; listens to the gentle, regular breathing. She is not dead, but what is this? Why is this? On through the night Lutchmee sleeps, turning over and opening her eyes with a tired sigh as morning breaks. A smile steals over the wistful,

childish face as she sees her mother still keeping her tireless vigil by her bedside. "Mother," she says, "I am well now; the fever has gone. It was Jesus who touched me and made me well. Do you not remember Jesus, who healed the leper, mother? He is the true God."

A great and wonderful light has flashed into that Hindu home, and for all time Jesus reigns as King and Lord in the hearts of a mother and a little girl.

CHAPTER XV.

Hidden Fires.

FOUR women sat in the courtyard of an Indian house. Two of them were Hindus, one being the mistress of the home, and the other a relative from a distant town. The other two were a Biblewoman and a missionary. The day was oppressive, and the air was foul, sanitation being a sadly neglected virtue in that part of the city. As we read to them of Mary's box of ointment, and the gracious words of Jesus Christ to the erring one, a glad light shone on the face of one of our hearers. Turning to her friend, who was but the guest of a few days, she cried, "Did I not tell you so? Did I not tell you so?"

We enquired the reason of her remark, and she told us simply, as a little child.

For many months she had believed that Jesus was the only Saviour, and she had put her trust in Him to save her. Her friend did not know of this Saviour, and so she had told her, each day that they had been together, of the Sacrifice on Calvary, and the Open Way of salvation.

" If you believe this, why do you not confess your faith and follow Him? What hinders you?" we asked. Making bare her breast, she showed us the little golden wedding token, threaded on a saffron cord, which hung around her neck, and quietly said, " This." She then told us a story, not uncommon in India, of a harsh husband to whom she had been married in early childhood, of many relatives, all of whom she feared, and she sadly asked, " How long would they let me live if I became a Christian? "

We could not answer her, for we knew too well the cost of such a profession.

" He gave *His* life," we reminded her, and the quick tears filled her eyes. Knowing the strength of her fetters, we could only pity and pray. She was following afar off, held back by a slender yellow cord, stronger than bands of steel.

* * * * *

One day, sitting on the verandah of a Hindu house, a group of women gathered around us. It was the hour when men-folk were at work, and so feminine curiosity was quite free to go and enquire what was happening in other people's houses.

She who was called the " house mother " was well known to us, and this was not our first visit to her. She sat cross-legged on the *pial* of the verandah. Smearing a brown nut with lime,

she carefully folded it into a betel leaf, and stored the little packet inside her cheek for a prolonged chew. She then counted the coppers in the chintz bag tucked into her waist, and, undoing her knot of hair, tied it up more tightly. "Read, read," she said, in answer to our enquiry as to whether she was ready to listen, and forthwith bawled some instructions through the open doorway to someone inside the house. They gathered one by one, a mother and her little girl, who sat in the sunshine on the verandah steps, a young girl with a grass bundle on her head, and an old lady from the next house, who, though haughty and supercilious, was still curious. Down the road came another old lady leading two goats. "Amma," bawled old lady No. I. to old lady No. II., "Come and listen"; then, turning to us, "She can listen better than we can."

"Amma" came, full of curiosity, to ask what it was.

"They are telling us about their *swami*," explained old lady No. I.

"*Chee! Po!* who wants to listen to that?" exclaimed old lady No. II., and took herself and her goats off in great indignation.

A woman came down the sunny street carrying a basket on her head. She stopped by the verandah, and lowered her basket to the ground. A few

moments sufficed to enlighten and disgust her regarding our errand. "Why do you come and tell us of your Swami? We do not tell you of ours!" she screamed.

We explained why, but she was not satisfied. "We do not tell you of ours," she persisted.

"Then tell us," we invited. She then told us a Hindu legend, explaining her meaning by signs and gestures when her tongue refused to utter the unclean words.

And now the "house mother" rose, indignation and anger flashing in her eyes and voice. "Stop! stop!" she cried, "how dare you tell such a story! Are you not afraid to say the words after hearing of Jesus, the sinless and holy Son of God? Does it not make you ashamed of our gods? Go! Go!"

Startled and surprised, we looked up, and saw a light upon her face which was unmistakable. A flame burnt bright beneath a bushel which we wist not of till now.

CHAPTER XVI.

Light at Eventide.

SHE was small, and old, and blind. She spent her day and night, and all her days and nights, in a little leaf-thatched hut at Arambakkam. The big, dusty high-road to Madras lay yonder; close around were other leaf-thatched huts, and the village temple stood in a grove of trees. This was her world. All day she heard the rumble and clatter of bullock-carts along the big road. Now and then a motor rushed past. The wind moaned in the giant banyan trees, parrots would screech by day, jackals howl at night.

The voices of merry children at play came from the field beside the school, and morning and evening they sang. It was sweet singing to her old ears, unlike the harsh noises from the temple. Her thoughts groped back through the years to the time when she was a little child. She, too, was merry, and played as other children, but she was never taught to sing. She remembered the village temple, and the old tree where the devils lived. Thre was a stone image in the temple, and stones set up beneath the tree garlanded with flowers. She remembered the stories of evil spirits who were

always waiting to harm, and the many ceremonies performed to propitiate them. In the bright sunlight she had laughed, and forgotten the terror of it; but when night came she had crouched in the little hut, with the flicker of an oil lamp casting shadows on the earth walls, and seen a demon pointing at her from every shadow. That was long, long ago—only the shadows and demons had remained through all the years till now. A stealthy step was near her, a garment brushed her face. "*Ai-ai-yo!* another devil," she cried. But it was only a daylight thief stealing the few coppers left in a box by her daughter, the breadwinner of the small household.

Sometimes the slow tears ran down the old, furrowed cheeks. She almost wished to die; shadows and devils were round about her—but death was so full of terror. Who could say what was on the other side? They had all gone—her husband and sons. She had seen them taken away to the burning ground, taken away from her for ever, and her heart had broken and died.

Ai-ai-yo! There was no light, no God, no hope; only darkness and demons. Darkness and demons all her life.

* * * * *

She sat alone one day, when a kind voice addressed her, and a gentle hand was laid on her arm.

"Salaam, Amma!" said the voice.

"Who is it?" she asked.

"My name is Susannah, and I have just come to talk to you. You must be lonely, Amma. Shall I tell you a story? It is about Jesus the Saviour. Shall I sing to you first?"

"Yes, yes! sing the songs the children sing in the school. What songs are they?"

"They are songs about Jesus, too."

"Who is Jesus?"

"He is the Son of God, who came to the world to save men and women from their sins. Listen! I will tell you all about Him."

She listened. The kind voice read the story, and told it lovingly and simply. It was so wonderful and strange, she had never heard the like before. She had never known that God was love, or that a Saviour had come. It was beautiful—that story the Biblewoman told her. "Come again," she pleaded, as the messenger rose to depart.

Sitting there, she thought it all out. *She* was a sinner; she had never realised that till now. Jesus had come to save sinners like her. She loved to think of Him. The thought of Him drove the demons and the terror from her heart. She loved Him. "Oh, Jesus Swami, look on me, I am so old and so afraid," she prayed. Up through the

Indian night that prayer ascended, and found the heart of God.

She came again, and yet again, the bearer of that wondrous message; and now—it was light! all light! I can see her again, sitting there with the tears running down her wrinkled cheeks—tears of joy now—and shaking hands held out in pleading. I can hear the quavering voice say, "Oh, Amma, I sit here, and ask God all day to come and take me—*you* ask Him to come for me. I am so old and weary."

Life had been so long and dark, and God and heaven were so dear and beautiful.

God took her one day soon after; took her with a smile upon her face and joy in her heart. The blind eyes were opened to gaze upon His face, and her dying lips cried "Jesus, Saviour!"

There are other blind eyes and sad hearts. What can compare with the joy of taking the good news to such? Sisters, do you hear them calling you? Do you hear *Him* calling you?