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BURI'S BAIRNS

By

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LONDON

CHURCH OF ENGLAND ZENANA MISSIONARY
SOCIETY

19-21, CONWAY STREET, FITZROY SQUARE, LONDON, W.1.

1923

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FOREWORD

TO THOSE WHO CARE TO READ IT.



THIS book was first written many years ago—nearly twenty years ago. Buri, and some of the others, the cook for one, have finished their “daily round.”

Why then reprint the book? For the very simplest of reasons.

India is full of other Buris—other cooks—other Twins.

Ketros are still facing the fire of the front line, in their witness to the Truth of the Son of God.

Crowds of little Mary Charushillas are being brought in the arms of love, to be signed with the sign of the Cross.

The Twins are nearly twenty years older, and have become teachers amongst their own people. Perhaps you would like to see a copy of their latest letter, written to the Missionary

who stretched out the hand of help so many years ago. It is written in English and shows that they must have worked very hard to be *able* to write in English.

Christmas, 1922.

Our dearest Mother,—

We received your letter, and were glad to know that you are well.

We are glad to know that you are sending clothes for us ; and as for Saris, I would like to have them and pay for them, but, dear Mother, at present I can't. . . . I am rather hard up. When we will come back (from holiday) we will send our clothes.

Miss — has given a bag each for our Christmas present.

Our united love to you.

Your loving daughters,

SHUSHILLA and SOROGU.

I wonder where they would have been today, if the Old Mission House and its inmates had not been there ?

When all the puzzling things of life are made clear, and the Kingdom has come, perhaps we shall then know how much has been done by the people who have never looked into the big brown eyes, or played games with the sweet brown children, but who, having read the stories of their lives, have prayed the Master of the Harvest to send forth more labourers, and thus done their share.

Perhaps we shall *not* know—but we shall see the King, reigning amongst His redeemed, and I think we shall then be so glad to have had a share, and shall be quite content not to know whether it were big or little.

If it is possible, in that Home of love and peace, to have a troubled thought—then I think we shall often feel—“ Oh! I wish I could go back and live more lovingly, and love more faithfully.”

It won't be possible, so shall we do our best to-day, and make it easier to do the same with to-morrow and the next day ?

This is how the Kingdom comes.

Listen! Can you hear the brown children calling? What do they want ?

I'll tell you a story about an American bishop, and then you will know.

He was visiting a Hindu temple in India. He asked the priest: How long has the worship of idols been going on here ?

“ For thousands of years,” answered the old priest.

“ How long will it last ? ” inquired the Bishop.

“ Not long,” said the old priest.

“ Why not ? ” said the Bishop. The old

priest hesitated—then, raising his hand, he swept the horizon—and simply said :

“ JESUS.”

This glad day when Jesus Christ alone shall be worshipped is not coming as soon as it might.

How can they believe in Him of Whom they have not heard ?

How can they preach unless they be sent ?

There is not enough money with which to send the preachers—there are not enough preachers to go.

That is one other reason for sending out this little book again ; and does someone say : What can I do to help ? I can only answer : I don't know. But I *do* know that if you love the King yourself you *will* help—for love will find a way.

So “ Buri's Bairns ” goes out once more to be a messenger. I wonder what it will say to you ?

J. V. KELWAY.

Bridgnorth.

1923.

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BURI'S BUSINESS



I

BURI'S BUSINESS

“  BURI! Get up! ”

Buri gives a sort of grumbling shuffle of her old body, and composes herself for more sleep.

“ Buri! The sun is high; it is six o'clock, you will be late.”

At these words Buri groans and raises herself from her bed on the floor.

Buri is amongst the great army of bread-winners, and though old, toothless, and somewhat feeble, she must obey the call to duty. It does not take her long to put on her clothes, for she only wears a kind of long sheet, wound round her body very cleverly and quickly. It is a plain white cloth, for our Buri has belonged for many years to that company of sufferers, the widows of India, who have never heard, or are only just beginning to hear, that Somebody loves them.

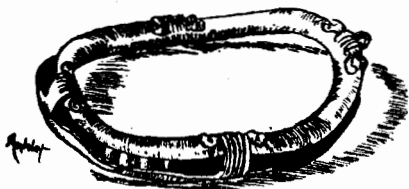
“ Ogo! Horimoti! Krishtodashi! Porimolhashini! ”

Buri's “ daily round ” has begun ! In and out of the damp and often dirty streets and lanes of Calcutta she wanders, calling out these curious names.

In answer to her call comes a pretty sound of jingling, and presently small brown girls, dressed in the same shaped garment as our Buri, but made in lovely colours, come out, and walk beside, or behind, or in front of her, keeping very close to their protectress.

Very tiny are most of these followers, who chatter amongst themselves as they thread their way through the crowded city. On their feet are anklets which jingle as they go ; on their arms are pretty coloured glass bracelets ; in their noses, rings ; in their ears, earrings ; in their hands, slates and books that let us into the secret of where they are going, which is to school.

Backwards and forwards, to houses, to school, goes our Buri, but at length her last journey is accomplished and she lies down on



the stone floor, makes a pillow of her arm, and is soon fast asleep.

It seems as though she hears the clock strike in her dreams; for, true to time she again wakes, but before starting out she goes from class to class collecting *pice* (small coins). These she carries off to a sweet shop near, where she exchanges them for the sweets the children love. The shopman wraps them up in a basket made of dried leaves and twigs, and back she comes.

But Buri still has to work hard as she doles out the sweets, for seated on the trees near by, on the beams of the verandah, and even on the desks, are two-legged black things called crows. They caw and caw, and croak and croak, asking very plainly for a share of the *pice* feast. Receiving no response, they try



to help themselves and steal dainty bits just going into the children's mouths. But Buri's arms are long, and she waves them in the air as she stands over the children, and they feel happy and safe in the care of their protectress. The crows are afraid of Buri's long arms as she waves them, and fly away disappointed at getting no sweets.

When lessons are quite over, Buri guides back through the busy streets a very noisy crowd of little children glad to be going home now work is finished.

Some live in one direction, and some in another, and she has three or four journeys to make, before she can go back to her lonely home and cook her meal and sleep.

This is Buri's "daily round and common task," and sometimes she carries with her a very heavy heart. Years are adding up, as we said before. Arms and legs are growing weary, sight is becoming dim, and her eyes fill with big tears as she pictures the sorrows of fast approaching, feeble old age.

Buri ! there is a Burden Bearer. There is One Who loves you, One Who will make light for you at eventide. Look to Him ! love Him ! rest upon Him ! and your heart's sorrow will be changed to joy.

But Buri turns away. Long years of oppression, ignorance, poverty and suffering make it difficult for her to take in and receive the beautiful Gospel story. But we will pray for you, dear Buri, that ere those weary legs cease to carry you, or those dim eyes to guide you, you may stretch out the hand of faith, and lay hold on Eternal Life.



“ CHUTIE ”



“The Cook felt ill.”

II

“ CHUTIE ”



IT was 9.15 a.m. on a very hot sunny day, the period that we in an English school would call “ Recreation time ” ; the period that we in India called by the short name *Chutie* (holiday).

Chutie was used for short holidays and for long. If the cook felt ill, he asked for *Chutie*. If the Ayah wanted to buy a new dress in a bazaar a long way off, she asked for *Chutie*.

If the *durzi*, the man-dressmaker, could not bring your dress back for two or three months he would tell you that in the middle of making it, he had to take *Chutie*.

The long five weeks' holiday in the summer was called *Chutie*, and when the children had a quarter of an hour in the middle of the morn-

ing to play and eat their sweets, they and everybody else called it *Chutie*.

Now do you understand what *Chutie* means?

On this particular day *Chutie* was being enjoyed—the quarter of an hour *Chutie*.

The *pice* feasts brought by dear old Buri had disappeared, or were fast disappearing, when from the verandah came a figure, which was being eagerly waited for by a knot of little children. Then there were cries of—

“ Amaree ! Amaree ! Be a monster ! Do be a monster ! ”

A branch was broken off one of the bamboo trees, a nice long branch with a shaggy end of leaves, and the monster sat down under the shade of a tree, whilst the crowd gathered round, and watched her go to sleep.

She took some time to go off, now and then starting up, and frightening the watching crowd. At length patience was rewarded ; the monster snored !

Oh ! the fearful joy of drawing nigh ; the excitement that rose to fever heat when the more bold amongst the crowd drew nearer and nearer. Would they be eaten ? Would they be taken prisoners ? What would happen ?

Piercing shrieks rent the air, when the monster, awakened by the soft footfall of bare

feet upon the grassy bed, suddenly awoke and dashed here and there to catch the thieves and robbers !

Oh ! those were good times ! Times when the monster and the robbers learnt to know each other better than they could ever have done in school. Times when the child-widow of six or seven years old forgot her sorrows. Times when the child-wife (allowed to come to school for a little while longer because she was so small) lived in another world ; forgot there were grown-up people who did not understand, forgot there were two and three-year-old uncles and aunts to be nursed !

Yes ! they were good times !

But now and again the monster plan was discarded, and “ here we go round the mulberry bush ” took its place, translated by a clumsy tongue into clumsy Bengali, but it didn't matter ! It served the purpose. The clumsy tongue would have done better, if it could have, but it couldn't ; so there it was !



The tune? Tenors, basses, first sopranos, second sopranos, third sopranos, fifth, sixth, seventh altos, and ever so many more joined to make the noise, for tune it could not be called; but what did that matter either!

To-day the monster feels anything but monster-like, and wonders very much whether she *can* meet the crowd of eager expectant faces. But a sight of them pushing to be first, and to get the chance of a hand, or a wrist, or a bit of a blouse, to hold on to, when the monster does appear, makes her "screw her courage to the sticking point."

"Oh! little thieves and robbers! the monster is tired. We will sit under the trees and tell stories to-day."

Poor monster! In the scramble to be seated, her feet are sat upon, and stood upon, tumbled over, and generally knocked about. Her dress bids fair to be somewhat torn, and in desperation, she says: "No story to-day unless you are quickly quiet."

All stop making a noise themselves and concentrate upon making their neighbours good. They are wanting to be really good, but are still more anxious that the others should be good, and the hub-bub is great.

True to her word, the monster stands, extricating herself and her dress as best she can. Her face is turned towards the house.

It has the desired effect ! Forgetting each other, thinking only of the fleeing monster and the lost story, a dead silence falls. The monster sits down again, for they have in very deed become quickly quiet, and then, Golden-hair and the Three Bears loses nothing for being told in a clumsy tongue, especially when the Father growls, the Mother squeaks, and the Baby Bear whines out everything she has to say, finishing with big sobs and real tears ! And when all the Baby Bear's porridge is eaten, and the Baby Bear's chair comes to pieces and Golden-hair is found in Baby Bear's little bed and quickly jumps out of the window and runs safely home, eyes glisten, mouths open, and “Tell us another ! Tell us another !” shouts the crowd.

“ Well ! Once upon a time——”

Ring-a-ting ! Ring-a-ting-ting.

Chutie is over !

With a big “ Oh ! ” the children rise, and fall into line to return to lessons.





A CONTRAST



III

A CONTRAST



YES, *Chutie* is over; but as the monster rises, a hand is slipped into hers and a troubled little voice says—

“ Amaree, my granny died last night ”; big tears run down her face and she cannot finish her story.

Amaree very tenderly puts an arm round the child.

“ Tell me all about it, little one; what sickness was hers ? ”

“ Amaree, she was not sick; she was putting something into the beams and a snake bit her—a poisonous snake—and she was gone, and now there is all sorrow at home; they cry and cry, and I am very unhappy, Amaree. Come to my home. I will show you where it is. Come and see them. They are sad.”

Standing near is another little "robber," with a head as bald as a ping-pong ball, telling its own tale of a recent attack of high fever.

"Amaree!" says the possessor of this bald head, "my sister has died of plague, and they are all sad too at my home, and I have to come to school all alone."

The sweet little face of the sister and her loving ways had won for herself a corner of Amaree's heart, and she too is sad when she hears this news.

"Boshumoti! Listen! Your little sister is quite safe now. She is with Jesus Christ, in His beautiful Home. When the plague was giving her pain and trouble, He sent an angel to carry her to Himself, and now she has no more pain or sorrow, and she will never cry again."

The child turns, and with an expression difficult to fathom, says almost sternly—

"My sister is in the Gongga" (Ganges).



“ But listen, little one. She is not in the Gonga, her body is, but her spirit, your real sister, is in Heaven with Jesus Christ, very happy.”

“ They carried her away to the Gonga the day she died. I know she is there. I saw her put in ” ; and with these words the child walks solemnly into school.

Amaree feels puzzled and nonplussed, and drawing the other bereaved little one closer, they follow her, for lessons must be done.

“ Where is my granny, Amaree ? What is she doing ? I ask them at home and they cannot tell me. They say perhaps she is a snake, perhaps she is a dog. Amaree, I loved my granny ; I wish I knew where she is. Mother cries all day and says—‘ Gone ! Gone ! What shall I do ? What shall I do ? I never shall lift up my head again. Where ? Where ? Gone, gone.’ O, Amaree, it is so sad at home. I do not want to go there. They all wail and cry, and it frightens me. Come and see them ; do come.”

“ *Without God, and without hope in the world.*” This text is one of the saddest texts in the whole Bible, and the sight it describes one of the saddest sights on earth.

BURI'S BAIRNS

There are who never yet have heard
The tidings of Thy blessed Word,
But still in heathen darkness dwell
With troubled thoughts of heaven and hell.

* * * * *

“Mira is no better !” Such was the answer to the question, “How is she ?”

“Her strength, getting less and less, is going.”

Mira was a young schoolgirl, *not* without God, and *not* without hope. Not that she often talked about either, but Mira had a strength beyond her own that made her what she was. It was Mira to whom the little ones turned when they wanted anything.

It was Mira who quietly slipped a book into a desk—a book that had been carelessly left about—saving its owner the losing of a mark.

It was Mira to whom her teachers turned when there was something to be done that



called for faithfulness and care. It was Mira who bravely bore the pain of having a bad abscess dressed.

And now Mira lies near "the Valley of the Shadow." "No better, daily losing strength."

One or two who loved her most planned a visit to the sick girl, who lived in a village some few miles out of the big city.

"She had better go home and have plenty of milk and strengthening food," the doctor had said. "When she is stronger, after a month or two, she may come back to school."

But Mira had been for the last time to school, and those who tended her, the sorrow-stricken mother and the younger sister, saw that Mira was fast slipping away from school and home. Her father was the pastor of the little Christian church being built up in the village in which they lived.

After a drive of about an hour the two visitors reached the home, and were shown the room where the sick girl lay on her bed of suffering.



The wasted face lit up with a smile of welcome, she inquired about many of her school-friends ; but her strength was soon exhausted. The visit had to be short, and the two came away, having said a long good-bye. A day or two afterwards came a postcard, bearing the few words—

“ Mira, rising up in Jesu’s arms, has gone to the Heavenly Father’s Home.”

The funeral was fixed for the day after. Again those two drove out to the village.

“ God’s acre ” in that village was a strange one—just the corner of a field, reached by narrow lanes, too narrow to allow of a cart being turned in them.

The gate was made of bamboos ; the hinges and lock of string !

The coachman, wading through the wide and somewhat deep ditch that lay between the lane and the “ acre,” cut with a sharp knife the hinges and lock, and taking the gate laid it across the ditch, to serve as a bridge for those to go over whose feet were clad in shoes and stockings !

The funeral procession coming from the opposite side of the field, could be seen in the distance winding through the trees, the white

coffin, "carried of four," the father and catechist in one, heading the line of mourners.

Dark clouds gathered, the thunder now and then gave ominous roars—roars such as only tropical thunder can give.

The sad little company drew nearer and nearer. The bearers lowered their burden by the shallow open grave. The father opened his prayer-book, and in the strange language the service began. . . .

"I am the Resurrection and the Life. He that believeth in ME, though he be dead" (here the strong voice broke, and the grey head was bowed), "yet shall he live." (The head was raised, and the voice grew strong once more.)

"Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." . . .

The service was over, carried on to the accompaniment of thunder.

The whole world seemed hushed and still, as though in sympathy, with that strange hush that comes over bird and flower just before the breaking of a bad storm. With words of

comfort and consolation to the parents, the visitors prepared to leave, with more than one backward glance at the sorrowing family gathered round the last resting-place of their eldest daughter—their, and our, loved Mira. The coachman had unharnessed the horse, and managed, somehow, to turn the carriage. They crossed the rickety bridge once more and entered the waiting vehicle, which dashed away to escape, if possible, the coming storm. They were not in time, and before long it broke, the rain came down in torrents, suggesting, as these tropical downpours so often do—“There shall be showers of blessing.” “That which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die.”

Some unknown sower had gone forth one day and sown the seed of Eternal Life in Mira's heart.

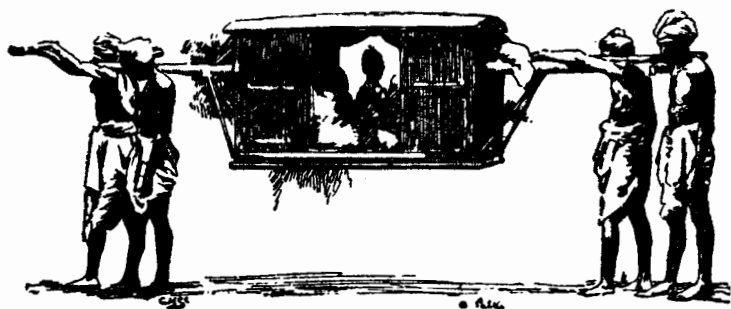
And Mira, too, sowed seeds of Eternal Life in other hearts while she was alive. They were not called by that name, and perhaps she hardly realized she was sowing them. Their names were unselfishness, love, joy, peace, patience under great suffering.

Mira's father walked over the next day to thank those who had gone to show their sympathy.

“She was good, very good,” was the father’s testimony to the life so soon called home. “O! we miss her. Our hearts are empty, our minds are full of trouble; but what God does is well. We shall see her again, and our hearts shall rejoice.”

“O! Death, *where* is thy sting? O! grave, *where* is thy victory?” Not in, or over the hearts that have learned to say, “I know that my Redeemer liveth.”

Jesus, Lord of Glory, as we breast the tide
Whisper Thou the story of the other side,
Where the saints are casting crowns before Thy feet,
Safe for everlasting, in Thyself complete.



THE TWINS

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IV

THE TWINS



ONE on the back of 1 = 11

2 on the back of 1 = 12

3 on the back of 1 = 13

4 on the back of 1 = 14

So chant the children as
they sway backwards and

forwards.

It is a strange schoolroom in which they are gathered together. It once was an idol house ; but the idol is now put away ; and there, in the place where it used to stand, is a servant of the true King of kings teaching the children—

“Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth.”

Some of those who thus learn in the school have begun to recognize a deeper Love shining through their loved teacher, and they are drawn, without realizing it, to that deeper

Love. Their hearts are turning from idols to serve the living God, Whom the teacher, one of their own countrywomen, is daily revealing to them, by patience, and love, and likeness to her Master.

We cannot give a picture of how she did it, any more than we can give a picture of how the wind blows, but it was done, and there came a day when one of those little Hindu children stood up in the room where the idol had been worshipped and confessed her love for Jesus Christ.

One or two years before this happened they were all sitting in the long, rather dark school-room upon mats on the floor, for of desks or stools or chairs there were none. They had to sit very close together, for the children were many and the idol house was small. Sometimes they stood, swaying to and fro, as they counted— 2 on the back of 2 = 22

3 on the back of 2 = 23.

Now and again a mischievous child in the middle of one of the rows would sway a little too far, and if it had not been for the friendly wall at the end to hold them up they would all have been lying on the floor; and then there were pinches, and everybody blamed everybody else, and there were cries of—

“ Guruma ! Nolini hits ! ”

“ Guruma ! Porimolhashina pinches ! ”

By the time “ Guruma ” had restored order, another sprite in another row had tried the same plan, and—well, the discipline was not always perfect in the old idol house !

But to-day they are sitting, so that the temptation to knock down a row of fellow-chanters is not so great ; in fact, it is not there at all. Besides this, even were they standing, it is doubtful whether any of them would be wide awake enough to do it, for it is hot, very hot. Half of them are counting in a sleepy, drowsy voice, some of the youngest are shutting their brown eyes, and, on the surface, they all look very good.

If you had stopped them, and asked : “ 1 on the back of 2, what does that make ? ” they would most surely have answered, “ Two ! ”



Had you objected and said that two standing alone was two, but when it was on the back of one it was something different, they would have answered, "One." They were just in that sleepy condition when thinking was a thing impossible. No! I do not think even you would have liked to have been learning in the old idol house on that hot day. I do not believe you would even have liked to have been teaching—

1 on the back of 3 = 31

2 on the back of 3 = 32

3 on the back of 3 = 33

4 on the back of ———

Here the chant is interrupted; the half-sleepy ones look interested, for our Buri has come from one of her many journeys, bringing with her two little girls.

Both have brown bodies, both have brown arms and legs, both have black eyes and short hair, and from each of their noses hangs a nose ring. Both have on a *sari* with a red border. They are both one height, and both were born on the same day. They are twins, and together have come for the first time to school.

"Guruma," says Buri's old voice, "their *Didi* (eldest sister) has sent them to school;

she wants them to learn. Take great care that they get on ” ; and with this message faithfully delivered, Buri goes off to her next duty.

The pair sit down amongst the other children, holding each other by the hand. It is all so strange. They cannot count, and they do not understand what it all means ; but they comfort each other with sidelong glances.

Day after day they come ; Buri brings them, and one day confides to the teacher that their *Didi* would like the missionaries to have them altogether.

Their *Didi* is not good, and she knows it herself. She is serving the king of the idols.

She hears much about those who serve the King of kings, and she longs that her little twin sisters may grow up like His servants. She cannot teach them how herself, for she does not know the Way nor the King.

The Missionary went to see her one day.

“ Are you willing really to give them up ? ”

“ Yes ! I will sign a paper saying so.”

The letter is written in red ink in Bengali. A lawyer sees it, assures the Missionary that it is quite right, and the compact is sealed. The brown twins are to become the care of the

missionaries. I wonder how you would like to be signed away in a letter written in red ink. I should not like it at all !

The day is fixed for the *Didi* to bring the twins to the Mission House, and all look forward to seeing them arrive.

The work of the day is over. The teachers have cooked their curry and rice, have sat on the floor and eaten it with their fingers. The crows have been, and, with the cats, have "licked the platters clean." (Of course you understand that the crows didn't really lick !) The horses are being rubbed down with big wisps of straw, and are looking forward to poking their noses into their mangers. The bats are waking up, and the air is getting cool, when in at the gate comes silently a little company. Four bare-footed men carry on their shoulders a *palki* with its living freight. They deposit their burden on the ground ; the doors are opened, and out step three people—*Didi* and her twin sisters.

They are shown upstairs into the drawing-room. Their hands are full of treasures—china cats, little boxes, sweets—for *Didi* has



been lavishing gifts upon the little ones she is going to give away for others to look after.

Didi's heart feels achey and sore to-night, and it is costing her a great deal to give up her little sisters.

Her eyes follow them here and there as they run round the room like bits of quicksilver, admiring all the wonderful things, especially the *bājnā* (piano).

Suddenly she calls them to her, and taking a hand of each she places them in the missionary's hands.

"Mem Sahib ! I give them to you ; they are yours ; take them, and love them. I do not want them to know the life that I know " ; *Didi* can say no more.

There is an awkward pause, and then the missionary says, " Shall we pray ? "

Pray ? *Didi* does not understand ; but she kneels when all the others kneel.

The children realize that *Didi* does not know how to pray as the Guruma has taught them to pray, and so one of them whispers in her ear, while the other one watches that all is right ; " *Didi !* shut your eyes, and put your hands together like this."

It is the first prayer to the True God that *Didi* has ever heard, and tears tumble down her cheeks while the missionary prays—

"Heavenly Father! we bring these little ones to Thee. Do Thou bless them. Give us patience and wisdom and love, that we may be able to bring them up for Thee and train them in the ways of righteousness. Bless their *Didi*. Comfort her heart, draw her to Thyself, teach her of Thy love, and bring her into the paths of peace, for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."

Didi cannot speak when she rises from her knees, but her firm grasp of the missionary's hand as she takes it into both of hers shows what her heart is feeling.

All move towards the door. She has imprinted a kiss on the foreheads of the two children—her good-bye kiss—and the missionary whispers to one who is walking beside her—

"Take the children away, and amuse them in the garden." But she is too late!

Suddenly, one of them, realizing what it all means, flies to the side of the *palki*, and holds on to it with a firm grip.

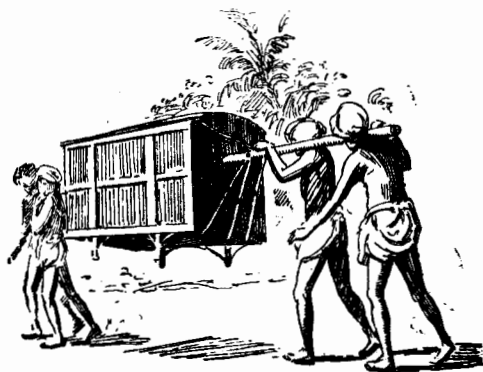
She is with difficulty got away, struggling and kicking and crying out: "I will go! I will go! Let me go with my *Didi*!" Poor little twin! Her struggling figure, as it is borne away, is the last her *Didi* sees of her.

The *palki* doors are shut. The men lift their burden, grown lighter by two children, on to their shoulders, and *Didi* is borne away into the fast-coming darkness !

Thus St. Andrew's Day, 19—, went beyond recall ! Were the little twins an answer to many prayers that had ascended to God that day, that He would send labourers into His Harvest Field ?

Little Radha is another one who came to us about the same time ; just when we were specially pleading with God to send helpers for the great work that was waiting to be done.

The children were assembled in school, the babies repeating, " Kaw, Khaw ; Gaw, Ghaw," the Bengali alphabet, when their chant was brought suddenly to a standstill by a very unusual sight. Into the schoolroom came three figures : one a tall kind-faced



English gentleman; the other an Indian policeman, with his red turban, white clothes, leather belt, blue spats, and heavy clog shoes. Between them stood the third person, a very small brown girl in a dirty *sari*. Her hair was matted, and her face wanted washing, and she looked as though no one had cared for her since her babyhood.

She stood perfectly still between her two protectors, holding a hand of the policeman, and a hand of the big Englishman.

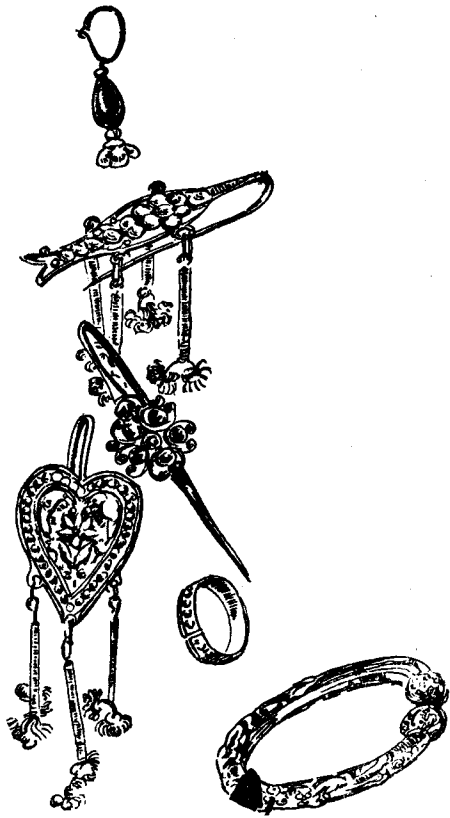
“ Will you take her ? ” said the Englishman to the missionary who came forward. “ Will you love her and care for her ? We have brought her away from a house where they were treating her cruelly and unkindly.”

Poor little Radha ! Alone in the world ; no mother, no granny, no uncles, no aunts, no brothers nor sisters, nor cousins.

“ Yes ! We will take her,” said the missionary, as she approached the group and took hold of little Radha’s hand. Radha was willing for the change, and went away amongst the other girls, making herself very happy, and chatting as though she had been there all her life.

And so Radha came to school, like the twins. All three grew bigger day by day, and learned more and more. We often wondered,

as we watched them grow, what kind of workers they would be, and we often prayed that they might be good workers, workers that need not to be ashamed. And to-day there are others like them growing up in mission schools. Will you help them? Pray for them? Will you save some of your pennies to buy their clothes? They do not need so many clothes as you do—no hats, nor boots, nor shoes, nor stockings—but they do need some. Sometimes the money-boxes are *so* empty in that far-off land, and we wonder how we are going to dress all the little people, like the twins and Radha, who come to us. Then they eat a great deal of rice, and they like sweets sometimes, just as you do. What will you do for the Radhas and the twins that we are caring for all over India?




KETRO'S WEDDING



Band Stand
erected for weddings

V

KETRO'S WEDDING

UT out Ketro's name; she will never come to school any more," vouchsafed a small voice from the big class of thirty restless, mischievous infants.

"How do you know she will never come to school any more?"

"Her marriage will be soon!" And this infant, a perfect genius for finding occasion to make her own voice heard, sat down, with an air of having done the whole world a good turn. The Ketro in question belonged to the highest class in the school. Nevertheless, Shubashini knew all about her, and, what is more, her statement was correct. Our sad-faced little Ketro had been to school for the last time!

We missed her sorely, for it was Ketro who so often caught at the deeper meaning of the

Bible stories, delighting our hearts by her grasp of things that to many an older and wiser head were as dead letters.

A very little while after this dialogue had taken place, an invitation arrived for her wedding.

“ Will Ketro’s teachers come and witness the ceremony ? ” The invitation was written in Bengali, and contained some very hard long words, but the above is what it meant.

The wedding was to be at 8 p.m.

At a quarter to eight the heavy mission omnibus came round from the stables. Seven or eight people entered it, arrayed in wedding attire !

The sun had long since gone to bed, but the stars were twinkling, as only stars can, and nestling in amongst them was a silver crescent. The sky looked very beautiful ; as though for little Ketro’s sake, it, too, had put on a wedding garment.

The old omnibus made a great noise as it trundled along over the cobbles in the road, and bumped its occupants about so much that they sometimes knocked together.

Out of the highroad into the dark narrow lanes it went, bumping and jolting over big holes in the road, until at last it came in sight

of what appeared in the distance to be a gigantic light, but on closer acquaintance proved to be a large house, lighted with tiny little saucer lamps, placed in rows wherever there was a ledge that would hold them. In the saucers was oil, and into the oil was dipped a little wick, and its end, hanging over the side of the saucer, was lighted. Each little lamp by itself gave but a feeble light, but massed and shining together, they lit up the old moss-grown brick and mortar house, and made it look like a fairy palace.

What a noise there was ! The guests were arriving from both ends of the narrow lane, and horses and carriages, men and women, drivers and whips, all seemed to be well mixed up. The women came in covered *palkis*, and the *palkis* got in the way of those on the path.

The coachmen and grooms were shouting so loudly that nobody heard what anybody else said. Some of the horses reared at the lights, others backed at the noise, and all got entangled. It was just like a ball of wool after the kitten has had it. But they all got unmixed at last,



and if you had said anything to the coachmen and pitied them for having such a lot of trouble, they would have answered, "It is all written on our foreheads that it should be. What can we do?" After a while the horses ceased backing and rearing, the carriages got into order, the men became quiet (most of them went to sleep on the top of their carriages) and everything and everybody settled down to wait! which is so easy to the Eastern, so difficult to the Western! Perhaps it is because the Eastern can go to sleep at any time and in any place; morning, noon, or night, it matters not to him. A stone floor, or a mud wall, a post, or two poles lying side by side, provided they be not too far apart; a ledge; a stone step—any of these make a bed; whilst the top of the carriage, waiting for its master, makes a resting place second to none, save a bed of string with four legs.

"Ketro will be married at eight o'clock." So ran the invitation. It is nine o'clock now and the bridegroom has not even come!



The omnibus load, although they had been working hard all day, have not yet had time to feel weary, for there is much to see and there are many to talk to.

The guest room was bare of furniture, and on the floor was laid a white drugget. Shoes were removed by those who wore them before they entered, so the drugget kept clean, and looked cool; the night was hot, and the crowds in the room did not help to make things less hot.

A great number of women were there, dressed in such lovely dresses, all colours of the rainbow, green, pink, blue, purple, scarlet, magenta; some covered with shimmering silver.

Hosts of little children squeezed themselves between the elders, and went here and there, and everybody talked. Now and again a baby cried, and the mother jumped its little head up and down in her hand to send it off to sleep; and, strange to say, to sleep it went.

A little after nine the women grew very excited, the children crowded to the windows, and there was general bustle and excitement; for the word was passed from lip to lip, "*Bor Aschen!*" "*Bor Aschen!*" The bridegroom is coming! and indeed it was not

difficult to believe it, for, looking out of the windows, they could see that the lanes, so dark and narrow an hour ago, were now a blaze of light. Winding through them came the procession. Hundreds of men, lining each side of the road, carried bright lights. Excitement seemed to make the very house vibrate. Down below, in the men's guest room, shouts could be heard, sometimes in English, "The bridegroom is coming!" "The bridegroom is coming!"

Little boys jumped up and down, shouting the same thing, "*Bor Aschen!*"

Those responsible for the doings of the evening walked feverishly up and down like caged tigers, shouting out direction after direction which nobody seemed to hear, for was not the bridegroom coming? How could they expect any eyes to be anywhere else, but in the direction of the slowly approaching pageant? Everybody made a noise, and as the procession advanced the volume of sound increased. Nearer and nearer it came, headed by a band of men, dressed in the cast-off uniforms of English soldiers—red coats and white helmets. They carried instruments, more or less cracked, and played one tune, more or less flat, "We won't go home till morning."

Then came a huge black paper elephant, its trunk swaying as its bearers swayed ; following this, some wax dancing girls, with pink cheeks and a stolid stare, which swung round, keeping time to no tune, one arm up, and the other arm down. Then came another band, men playing a Bengali air, and clashing cymbals together, while they sang the long drawn-out notes or the trills and runs, all in the minor key, peculiar to Bengali music. " We won't go home till morning " merged itself into the Bengali dirge, and the result was a novel sensation to a musical Western ear. After a few more paper boats and houses, and things to make a show, came a band of Highlanders (?), who, with their bagpipes, joined the fray, and when the end of the procession brought within sight and hearing a fourth band and they all played together, words fail to give an adequate description of the effect !

The bridegroom was indeed coming, coming with " pomp and blare."

At length he appeared and the shouting increased. The drivers awoke from their slumbers, which was as well, for the horses had begun to rejoice in the general scimmage! Some fifty or so men were carrying the bridegroom on a sort of platform. In the middle of

it he sat, dressed in crimson velvet with silver trimmings, very magnificent. Behind his chair stood girls, fanning him. He gazed steadily before him, not a muscle of his face moved as he passed along, all eyes straining to catch a sight of his face.

His platform drew up, at last, outside the door of the house, and he was helped to descend.

Gradually the lights of the procession went out; the men dispersed, carrying with them the elephants, boats, etc.; the horses quietened down; the drivers went to sleep again, and all was still as before.

The little bride appeared once during the evening, looking very unhappy, which was the right thing to do, but the visitors did not see much of her. It was now ten o'clock, and the wedding had not taken place.

Thinking of the heavy day's work before them on the morrow, those who had come in the mission omnibus asked if the ceremony would be soon. "The star has not risen," was the answer; "but the reverend *pundit* says it soon will rise."

When half-past ten came, and the star was still in bed, the party rose to go, and after saying good-bye they descended the stairs and

got into the rumbling omnibus, which had with difficulty disentangled itself from the maze of other horses and carriages. They passed the room where the wedding feast was spread; grass mats to sit upon, and pieces of the huge banana leaf for plates, and terra-cotta drinking-vessels. The scene was picturesque.

At length they got off, loaded with good things to eat, amongst which was a jar full of curd or *kheer*, a sugary milky mixture, a true wedding delicacy. The jar was full, and the *kheer* swished and swashed as the omnibus trundled home, and rising up above the limits of the jar, fell where it found it most convenient. Some of the wedding garments needed washing next day, and the floor of the omnibus was nothing if not sticky! But the *kheer* that stayed in the pot was very good, and much enjoyed by those who liked it.

We never saw Ketro married, but we know that she was married, for the next day, hearing a band, we looked out and saw a grand carriage drawn by four horses. Sitting in it, surrounded by relations and friends, was the bridegroom of the night before. Behind the



beautiful carriage in a small *doolie* carried by four men, and covered up so that no one could see inside, was our little Ketro, no longer a happy schoolgirl but a little child-wife, going to begin from that day forward her zenana life.

One morning, when all was quiet in the mission house, a sound of the jingle of ornaments was heard in the drawing-room, and at one of the doors leading out of the room a voice said, "*Ashtaya pari?*" (May I come in?) "*Ashaw!*" (Come!)

In walked a figure; but it took some time to discover who it was, for at first sight it looked more like a moving mass of jewellery. Jewels on the forehead, jewels in the hair, jewels in the nose, jewels in the ears, jewels on the hands, jewels on the feet, jewels on the toes, jewels on the arms, and on the wrist an iron band—Ketro's wedding ring.

Yes, it was Ketro! With difficulty she walked across the room (for the jewellery was cumbersome and heavy), and sat on the floor beside her friend, the "monster" of the other story, whose heart gave a throb of pleasure at seeing the little "robber" once more.

They talked of many things, those two, things of Heaven and things of earth.

“Charu and I will not do *puja* (worship), Amaree. We hold each other's hands and stand upright before the idol. We will not bow down to it.”

“And what do they say to you, Ketro?”

“Amaree! they beat us sometimes, and they laugh at us, but we try not to mind. We remember that Jesus has said we must not worship the idols, and so we will not. We pray to Him, and He helps us.”

The time was up, for Ketro had only been allowed to come for a little while, just to show us her wedding dress and ornaments.

“Ketro!” said Amaree, looking down, “when I pray for you, as I often shall do, is there anything you would like me to specially ask God for?”

The pathetic eyes looked up, the small soft brown hand stole into the larger white one, and the pleading voice said: “Amaree!



when you pray for me, will you pray that I may not forget Jesus Christ ? ”

“ Ketro ! ” said the “ monster,” as she turned her head away, more touched than she cared to show, “ will you always remember that Jesus never forgets you ? He is living to intercede for you, and I will continually be asking God for what you want, and He will hear.”

Ketro was only ten years old, and her sister younger, but already they were amongst those of whom Jesus said—

“ Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My Name’s sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in Heaven.”

AN AFTERNOON VISIT



VI

AN AFTERNOON VISIT



EVERYTHING and everybody was sleepy. Men were sleepy, women were sleepy, children were sleepy.

The tank, which was sometimes rippling, and making very tiny waves, must have been sleepy too, for to-day it did not move ; instead, it lay perfectly still, reflecting the blue, blue sky overhead.

Drivers were too sleepy to care whether their horses walked or galloped, and so, naturally, the horses mostly walked, for they were, like all the rest, sleepy.

The owner of the little bookshop was not only sleepy, he was fast asleep ; but that was his own fault, for he had fitted up on one side of his shop a nice sofa, covered in white. Above him was an electric fan, which went whirring round and round, keeping him cool,

whilst he lay underneath. He was without coat, without shoes, without stockings, without waistcoat, and he slept beautifully.

The little boy who called him when a customer came, and fetched the books to him as he lay on his sofa to serve them, was, like everybody else, sleepy too. Sometimes his head went forward with a bump, which made him sit up, and pull himself together and try to make himself believe that he was wide awake, which he was not.

The man who kept the cloth shop was fast asleep, right across his door on the hard wooden floor, with his arm for a pillow, and it was difficult to wake him. He kept no little boy to run his errands while he lay still.

“Dako ! Dako ! Dako ! Will he ever awake ? I want a piece of muslin, please.”

Slowly he turned and with a groan got up, and half walked, half rolled over to where his stuffs were tidily arranged on shelves, for he was still only half awake.

He opened his parcels, and while we were choosing our cloth, stretched across for his hubble-bubble, or hookah, or pipe, and smoked away. The hubble-bubble gurgled and bubbled as he smoked, for it was not a bit sleepy.

“ No, I have no other kind,” he said, when we told him that the kind he had shown us was not quite what we liked ; and he let us depart out of his shop without troubling to look amongst his wares any more, for he was very, *very* sleepy.

All the pariah dogs were sleepy, so sleepy that they allowed us to pass without barking at us. If they had not been sleepy, they would have barked, and barked, but, like the cowards they are, would have run, if they saw us stoop down to pick up a stone or anything else to throw at them, and so get rid of them.

Yes ! he is a coward, is the pariah dog, and he is mean, too ; but perhaps you and I would be cowards and mean if we were treated as pariah dogs are treated—kicked, shunned, never properly fed, picking up the scraps that somebody else has left in the rubbish heaps in the streets ; teased by the boys, often cruelly treated, loved by nobody.

On this sleepy afternoon a carriage was going along the road. Inside it was a missionary, bound for a little Hindu home, where she knew a dear old Granny, a Mother, three little children and some children friends would be waiting for her.

Heat seemed to rise up from the roads, just as though they were on fire. Even the crows felt hot, for they were very quiet, and sat in the branches, with their mouths open, waiting for the cool of evening to begin their mischievous games once more. The drive was not a long one, and the carriage, after passing through a narrow stuffy lane, stood before a door; three faces peeped out of the door, and voices shouted a welcome "*Asachen! Asachen!*" (She has come. She has come).

Mother is in readiness inside, in a tiny little room, with a big bed in it. There are plenty of cobwebs too, and dust is lying in the corners. A three-legged stool is brought for their teacher to sit upon. Granny sits cross-legged on the stone floor, Mother sits cross-legged on the big



bed, and the needle-work lesson begins. Poor mother ! She does want to learn how to sew, she would like so much to make her children's clothes ; but her fingers are big, and the needle is small, and the thimble seems to fit so much more comfortably on the thumb or little finger than it does on the middle finger. Then it is so hot ; and her cloth gets wet, and her cotton gets knotted and it is very hard work. She has made a piece of pink print into a jacket for her eldest girl. She cut it all out, with a great deal of help from the teacher, and longed to see it finished. So great was her longing to see it a whole jacket on the back of her loved child that she made big, big stitches, bigger than cat's teeth, quite as big as lion's. When the jacket was finished, the sleeves soon began to come out, and the seams undone, then she wished, oh, so much ! that she had made the stitches smaller, and when she made the next jacket, she did make them smaller, and had the satisfaction of seeing the jacket worn day by day, and the sleeves staying where they ought to !

It was a grand day when both her girls put on their pink jackets and came to school. "Mother made my jacket," "Mother made my jacket," they confided to their little school-

fellows, and Mother was as proud of making those jackets as a baby is the first time he walks across the room.

“ Amaree ! we are so much happier when you teach us how to do these things,” she said one day, and Amaree was happy too.

The sewing lesson is now over, the cloth is folded up, the needle and cotton packed away into a little tin box, and all prepare for the story which the teacher has come to tell, for the agreement was worded like this : “ If you will let me come and tell you about Jesus Christ, I will help you to learn how to sew.”

Mother still sits cross-legged, and Granny comes back from the cook room, where she has been preparing the evening meal. I wish you could all see Granny; I am sure you would love her. She has a sweet, sad face, and she listens to the stories about Jesus Christ so beautifully and keeps saying, “ He was good ! He was good ! ” Sometimes she sits on the hard stone floor, sometimes she sits on a little mat, but she does not seem to mind what she sits upon so long as she can be still and hear the stories. The picture is hung on the knob of a cupboard door. To-day it is the picture of the lepers being healed. A hymn is always sung first (“ as we do in school,” say the

children), and a hymn book is passed round. Granny nearly always holds it upside down, as of course she cannot read a word of it. She is a poor Indian widow, who has never learned how to read; but she likes to listen to the children singing. Mother can read a very, very little, and she is often able to follow the hymn. She does not know how to sing, only one of the little party does, besides the teacher; but they get along very well. Sometimes they ask for a hymn the tune of which the teacher does not know, but it does not really matter, for she makes it up as she goes along, and it sounds almost as nice as the known tune!

“One more hymn! One more hymn!” shout the children, “and then the picture and the story.”

The children get their way, and choose a hymn they all love, “I am Jesus’ little lamb.”

Now for the picture! Jesus, the great Physician, healing the poor lepers. The children understand so well what it means to be a leper, for lepers walk about the streets of Calcutta, begging for money and food. It is a terrible thing to be a leper, such suffering, such pain, such sorrow. Oh! how the lepers of Calcutta would love it if Jesus would come down and heal them now, as He healed others in the days so long gone by.

Mother does not listen to the story very well. She likes the needlework better, but dear old Granny never takes her eyes off the picture, and when it comes to the part where the lepers are healed, she smiles a sweet smile and says, "How happy they must have been!"

And now something happens which seems to spoil all the story, and makes everybody very unhappy. The little boy all at once cries out, "Mother, give me a *pice*" (farthing).

"*Choop! Choop!*" (Be quiet, be quiet) says the mother.

"Give me a *pice*," says the boy.

"*Choop!* boy, listen to the story."

"I won't listen. Give me a *pice*—give—give—give——"

No answer.

"Give," he cries again, thumping his poor mother all the time.

"My jewel! *choop.*"

"Give"; and the "jewel" kicks and thumps harder than ever.

Here Amaree interferes, and tries to still the naughty boy, but he hits her off, and she is glad to get away from him.

"Not to-day, not to-day, my jewel; you shall have a *pice* another day."

This is followed by a fresh burst of anger, and screaming and kicking and biting.

“Very well, very well, I will give; I will give.” The *pice* is given, and the “jewel” goes off triumphant with it, leaving sore hearts behind him.

With difficulty the lesson is begun again, only to be interrupted in a few moments by a loud knocking at the outer door, and a loud call from the outside.

“Granny! the cow has come home.”

It has not been to school, but it has been out with other cows to feed in the fields a little way out of the town. The cow is let in, and walks into its house leading out of the room in which the lesson is being given.

How difficult it is to get back to the lepers and the great Physician!

Mother’s heart is still with her naughty boy, as her flushed and troubled face shows, and



indeed it is difficult to forget him, for her arms are still feeling the effect of his pinches and punches.

Granny's mind is with the cow. She is wondering whether the man has really taken her where she could eat grass, or whether she has picked away at mud all day long.

But despite the difficulties, the story is finished, and the teller of it says—

“ There are many, many sick people in Calcutta to-day. They have not plague sickness ; they have not fever ; they have not——”

“ Amaree ! ” breaks in the younger girl, “ I know what sickness they have.”

“ Well ! Tell me.”

“ They have the sickness of sin.”

“ Yes ! and they go to all sorts of places to try and get well. Some go to bathe in the Ganges. Some go on long——”

“ Amaree ! I know where they must go.”

“ Where ? ”

“ To Jesus Christ.”

“ Yes ! and some try this medicine, some that, some try——”

“ Amaree ! I know the only medicine that will cure sin.”

“ Well ? ”

“ The blood of Jesus Christ.”

And then Amaree knew that all the Bible lessons given in the school, so faithfully and lovingly day by day, had not been in vain, for this little child of eight years old had grasped the truth about sin and its cure.

Moti has not begun to think seriously yet, though she soon will, for it will not be long before she marries, and her zenana life begins. It is then, when she sits hour after hour in her prison home and begins to wonder, as so many before her have wondered, about the future life, that her head knowledge will come back to her, and she will know that there is a "Home eternal far beyond the skies," reached through Him Who paid the price of sin.

Moti has one or two lovely dolls; she got them at school. Her Mother keeps them in a cupboard with very dirty glass doors. Sometimes Moti asks mother to unlock the cupboard door, and let her touch her dolls. One is a beautiful big one, dressed in pink silk with tucks and lace on the skirt and a lovely large hat. Moti sits on the floor, and looks down on the face of her dolly and touches the silk frock, saying, "*Norom, norom,*" which means "soft, soft."

Mother stands by with the keys, and when she thinks Moti has looked at it long enough,

she takes it away, puts it up again behind the dirty glass doors, and locks the cupboard up. Dolly stands there, propped up by one wall of the cupboard, and looks at her little brown mother ; I wish you could see her. I wonder whether you dressed her ? If you did, please dress another dolly for another Moti.

RAJU



A Child Widow.

VII

RAJU



DAY after day went by, day after day Raju's name was called out in the register, but day after day no answer was given.

"Where is Raju?" but nobody answered the question. Raju was a little Hindu girl, one who worshipped idols. She was about ten years old, and up till now had been very regular at school, despite the bright red mark, which was made day by day in the parting of her hair, telling its own tale; and what do you think the tale was? It was this, Raju was a little girl-wife. She was not a very rich, nor a very high caste little girl, and so she was allowed to come to school for a time after she was married.

Raju loved school, she liked to sit in the class, and learn to read and write and sew. She liked making islands, and mountains, and

rivers, and capes on her slate with clay and sand and water. It pleased her when she was told that Himalaya really meant, "The house of the snow." Raju liked the Bible stories too. One day she was hearing about Job; how all the things he liked best were one after the other taken away from him, and when she heard that his animals were taken she said, "Baa-baa," which means the same as it would mean if you said, "How dreadful." Raju was not a pretty little girl, and her hair was done back in a tight knot, so that not a single hair could curl or get loose. How her Mother pulled and scraped and combed when she did poor Raju's hair! But Raju did not seem to mind.

Yes! Raju loved school, and yet for many days we had not seen her, and her place had been empty. Perhaps they have shut her up, and she is beginning her zenana life; perhaps she is ill; perhaps—we perhapsed ever so many things.

What we would have liked to do would have been to go to her house, and find out where she



was, and what she was doing ; but we were busy, so busy, there did not seem time. We asked Buri if she had seen her, and if she knew where she was ; but no, Buri did not know.

One afternoon, a face peeped round the corner and suddenly disappeared ; again it came, and again, but it always disappeared so quickly it seemed impossible to catch it.

“ Someone wanting something, and afraid to draw near,” thought Moni. “ I will wait quite near the corner, until it comes again.”

It came, and whose face do you think it was ? Raju’s. Yes ! Raju’s. But it was a changed little face and had a sad hunted look upon it, and she was only a girl of ten years of age.

Her pretty bracelets had all gone, her earrings had gone, and the *sari* she wore was all white. Can you guess what had happened ? Listen to what she says : “ Moni ! Oh ! Moni ! My husband has died.” Poor little ten-year-old Raju is a widow !

“ Dear Raju ! my heart is sad for you. So this is why you have not been to school ? ”

“ Yes ! Moni ! but listen, I mean to come to school. I mean to steal away quietly when no one is looking, and come each day. Nobody loves me now. They say it is my sin that has

killed my husband. Oh! I am very unhappy; but if I can get to school each day, I shall not mind so much.

“When they find I have gone, they will come for me, and when they come and say, ‘Is Raju here?’ will you please say ‘No! she is not here.’ Please, Moni, say it. I am happy, so happy, at school. Let me come. Please protect me, and do not tell them where I am.”

“But, Raju, that would not be true. You have learnt in school what Jesus says about saying things that are not true. I cannot, I really cannot say you are not here, for it would grieve Him.”

“Well, Moni, if you cannot say it, will you tell your teachers to say it—to say I am not here.”

“But, Raju, they are followers of Jesus Christ too; they must not grieve Him by saying what is not true.”

“Well! the old man at the gate is a Hindu. He can say it. Tell him to say it.”

“Raju! Can you not understand? I must not tell even a Hindu to say it. I am very, very sorry, but I really cannot.”

Poor little Raju, her face was very sad. Taught by her Hindu Scriptures that she might

always tell a lie if it would help her out of a difficulty, she cannot understand why the Christian must not do the same.

But presently a light breaks over her face and looking up, she says, " Well, Moni, when they say, ' Is Raju here ? ' will you please keep quite still, and say nothing."

The promise was given, and she went away happy to await the next morning, when the school for the Hindu children would open at seven o'clock.

Seven o'clock found her in her accustomed place, and nobody came to seek her, but the difficulty of " sitting still, and saying nothing " when being asked a question never had to be met, for from that day Raju disappeared and we were never able to find her again. We can only be glad that there was that opportunity of telling her something of the Good Shepherd Who laid down His life for the sheep. Perhaps that Name of Jesus has sounded sweetly in her ear in many a dark moment, and the little troubled heart has found shelter in His loving arms.



MARY CHARUSHILLA



VIII

MARY CHARUSHILLA



MARY CHARUSHILLA had a a brown nose, black eyes, red lips, short, very short, curly black hair, two little ears, and no teeth, for she was a very tiny baby. Sometimes she lay, as many another baby lies, crowing, and kicking her brown legs in the air with delight. What she was thinking about nobody knows. Perhaps some of you will be able to say ! Anyhow, it was something that made her very happy.

Sometimes she cried, long, wailing, pitiful cries—cries that Mother or Granny nearly always understood, and were able to stop. Sometimes it was the feeling of Mother's arms around her that comforted her. Sometimes it was a bit of sugar put on her tongue, or something else, nice and sweet, and then Mary Charushilla would forget to cry and would suck the sweet thing, and smile instead.

There is surely something unusual going on in Mary Charushilla's home to-day, for Granny and the two aunts, aged four and six, are putting on very pretty clothes. When they are ready, Mary Charushilla is taken up from the bed and is dressed in a little white muslin frock, trimmed with narrow lace. She looks just like a little brown doll, a very pretty brown doll.

And now Grandfather, Granny, Father, Mother, two aunts, and two uncles all start out together. Mary Charushilla is in Granny's arms.

It is Sunday afternoon, but the sons and the daughters, the man-servants and the maid-servants, the cattle and the stranger, are all hard at work just as though it were Saturday or Monday.

The blacksmith in his little cavern of a shop is making the sparks fly.

The cobbler bends over the shoes, and his fingers fly fast.

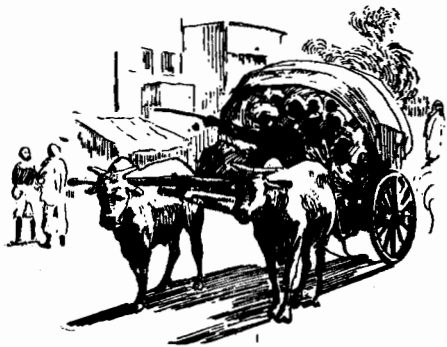
The cloth man sits near his shop door, and smokes, or talks, or sleeps.

The bullocks carry heavy burdens in the creaking bullock-carts, just as they do on week-days.

But Grandfather, Granny, Father, Mother, the two aunts, and the two small uncles, pass along the streets and through the busy thoroughfare with a peace in their hearts, for they are servants of the King of kings. On they go with faces set towards the little Church, built in the midst of the heathen city. They are very happy, for to-day little Mary Charushilla is to have the sign of the Cross made on her forehead, to have her name written in Heaven, to be gathered into the fold of Jesus Christ.

It is very, very hot, and the sun beats down upon their heads as they go, until at length they reach the cool, quiet Church, and pass inside.

Godmother, a "stranger" come from a far-off land, is already there. This is her first little godchild, and she feels very happy as she



takes the brown thing into her arms, glad also that it has the white muslin frock on, for babies in that land are sometimes very slippery, and the stranger is afraid of dropping them.

Will our heroine cry? Will she disturb the service? All are a little anxious, but they need not have been; for she lies quite still in Godmother's arms, and, in the strange language that the little children had used in school, the service begins.

Boys and girls, men and women, have gathered together to witness the baptism of little Mary Charushilla. The time has come to give her into the clergyman's arms.

He is in some ways like our Buri, for his hair is going white, and age is bending his shoulders; but, unlike her, he has a long white beard.

Mary Charushilla allows herself to be given from Godmother's arms to his, without a murmur, and the beautiful service continues—

“Mary Charushilla, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”

Then, looking down into her chubby little face, he continues—

“We receive this child into the congregation of Christ's flock, and do sign her with the

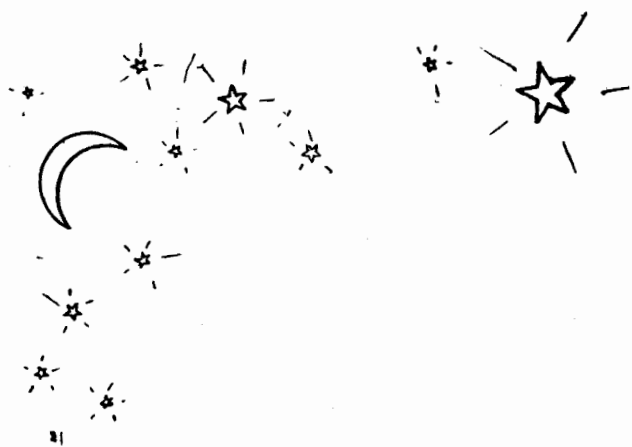
sign of the Cross, in token that hereafter she shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ Crucified, and manfully to fight under His banner, against sin, the world, and the devil; and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto her life's end."

Then Mary Charushilla is handed back; her head sinks lower and lower on Godmother's shoulder, and Christ's new little soldier and servant is fast asleep.

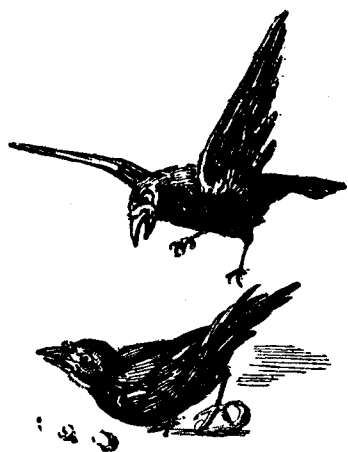
Strong, loving arms are around her, and although she sleeps, no harm can reach her.

The service is finished——

Grandmother takes the sleeping little servant in her arms, to carry her home, and the love-light is in her eyes, as she looks down into the little face of her first grandchild to be received into the congregation of Christ's flock.



FIRST RICE



IX

FIRST RICE

“ GREETINGS.”



“ On Wednesday Mary Charushilla will eat her first rice. Will you graciously make us happy by your presence on that day ?”

This was the invitation which came to Godmother and two other “ strangers ” some time after the christening day.

* * * * *

Wednesday has come, and is nearly over. The sun is getting into bed very quickly and quietly ; the crows are saying “ Good-night ” very noisily, telling each other what they have seen in the big, hot city that day ; and some people wish that there might be a notice put up in the crow dormitory, “ No talking ! ”

The moths and little insects who choose the evening for their games and work are fast waking up.

The cockroaches are becoming excited at the near approach of dark, when they will be able to swarm out and cover the kitchen and dining-room floor, and get into the cupboards that have holes, and thoroughly enjoy themselves, unless, as sometimes happens, somebody brings a light, and then they will have to scurry here and there to get out of the way of great big feet. In their hurry they make a mistake and get on to the bottom of a dress, or find themselves travelling up a leg, and then —— ? Perhaps they will be flicked off with a shiver of disgust, or a piercing scream will frighten them all, and make them do still more stupid things, and instead of running downwards they will run upwards and play a sort of hide-and-seek round a thing called a neck. Poor cockroaches !

Some of the flowers, gorgeous and beautiful in the morning, are putting on a sombre night-dress, and folding up their lovely petals for ever, having finished their little bit of work.

Just at this time—when all these things are happening—the two little uncles come round the corner to take the “strangers” to the feast provided in honour of the day when Mary Charushilla eats her first rice.

The streets are very narrow and very stuffy,

made stuffy and unpleasant by the rubbish thrown out from the houses. It does not take long to reach the baby's home—a happy home, where love and peace reign; but such a different house to the houses we in England are used to.

It is made of mud, which has hardened in the sun, and it has a thatched roof.

Mary Charushilla is lying in a big wooden bed, looking very happy, but quite unconscious that all these wonderful things are happening just because she is a little baby who, for the first time in her life, is going to taste rice. Godmother now has something to do which she has never done before, and that is, to dress a Bengali baby.

Mary Charushilla is, as we said before, an oily little mortal, for she has been well oiled all over. Now she must be dressed in a red and gold *sari*, a piece of cloth about one yard long and half a yard wide.

Were it a petticoat with a hundred strings, or a little frock with two hundred buttons, Godmother would feel happier; but, as it is, there are no buttons, no strings, no hooks, no eyes, no pins, no knots to tie—nothing!

Godmother makes a muddle, Mary Charushilla kicks and cries, and Granny has to come to the rescue.

Then is brought a little brass plate, and a funnily shaped brass spoon without a handle. In the plate is some rice, a wonderful mixture and *very* sweet. By this time the *sari* is properly put on, our baby looks very sweet, and the question is asked, "What next?"

"*Kali Prarthana*" (Only prayer); and there, on the little verandah, with the sky as a canopy overhead, studded with wondrous bright stars—"gimlet holes, to let down God's glory" the eldest "stranger" prays, whilst all kneel together on the mud floor.

With loving words she commits the darling of the day to the Father's tender keeping.

How our baby splutters and splashes over her first attempt at eating from a spoon, but the rice is *very* sweet, and despite the difficulties of eating in this novel way, she seems to enjoy herself.



And now she has had her turn, so she is put back on to the big wooden bed, whilst the larger and more substantial feast is served to the "stranger" guests.

A dinner-party, a feast! No knives, no forks, no spoons, no salt-cellars, no table-cloth, no cruet, no carvers, no dishes, and yet the feast is spread! No chairs, no tables, and yet the dinner is ready! One stranger is very tall, another is very short and the other one comes in between, rather like the Three Bears!—but the long legs and the short, as well as the medium, double up, tailor fashion, on a little grass mat on the floor. Their shoes have been removed, and before each of them (the owners of the legs, not the shoes) is placed a large *thala*, a brass plate about the size of the face of a grandfather clock, or rather bigger.

On each of these is arranged a pile of *loochies*—things rather like very thin muffins, only much bigger and greasier. All round the *thala* are six or seven different kinds of curry, and after the curry, chutney; and after the chutney, salt; and after the salt, sweets; and after the sweets, curd.

Oh! the difficulty of picking up damp curry and washy curd with five fingers of the right hand, or, to be quite correct, with the four

fingers and one thumb. But it has to be done. The *loochies* help ! Breaking off pieces of the *loochies*, the three use them as wrappers (the correct thing to do), and gathering up curry in the piece of *loochie*, tuck it all in carefully, and carry it to the mouth. But the curry *will* ooze out of the side and drop about, and oh ! it is very difficult. Sometimes there are no *loochies*, only rice, and then it is still more difficult to make a compact little ball, and get it in safely. The left hand lies idle, and must not be used, though sometimes these "strangers" *cannot* get on, and try to use the left hand. It does not help very much, and the people smile and say : "Little by little you will learn better." They are very kind to the ignorant "strangers."

Only a part of each dainty is eaten, as it is impolite to eat up everything ; and to "strangers," a thing impossible ; for Granny goes up and down replenishing each kind of curry, serving it all with her hand. Love-feasts are generous feasts, and there are plenty of mouths waiting to be filled with all that is left—the sweeper, one of the lowest caste amongst the people, who is despised and shunned by all and may eat crumbs that others leave without getting harm in a future world !—and

after the sweeper, the pariah dog; and after the pariah dog, the cat; and after the cat, the cockroach; and after the cockroach, the ant; and before *any* of these—the stranger, the sweeper, the pariah dog, the cat, the cockroach, the ant—if he can get a chance, is the shining, black, impudent crow.

All this time the little uncles and aunts have been watching; they are getting very hungry and the hour is growing late.

Granny brings round a bowl of water and some soap to wash the four fingers and the thumb.

The long legs, the medium, and the short ones undouble with stifled groans, and the three begin to say good-bye with many an expression of pleasure and gratitude for the



happy time spent in the little home. Our baby has long since gone to sleep. Mother and Father precede the strangers into the low little room with its big bed, on which lies the baby to whom they have come to give a good-bye kiss. They are lighted on their way by a native lamp with its uncertain flicker, for the stars have grown brighter and brighter, and the blue of the sky deeper and deeper, as the feast proceeded. And now the good-byes are over, and they leave that little home, threading their way once more through the dark and dirty streets.

On their right, as they pass along, is the light of the idol temple. From within proceeds the sound of a bell, clanging, clanging, to awaken the god from its evening slumber, that it may arise and listen to the petitions and heart cries of its devotees, lying full length before it.

“Peace. O! give us peace.”

“Oh, stay the monster, that it slay not my firstborn!”

Then comes a little child, not so *very* much bigger than Mary Charushilla. In her hand she carries an offering of flowers. Stiff and upright and staring sits the god. It doesn't look pleased to see the little child. It does not

stretch out a hand and bless her, because it cannot. She does not realize this, and kneeling before it says—

“ Give me a rich husband. May he have greatness and honour. May he have a big house and plenty of servants.” Her prayer is finished !

We cannot write the many prayers that go up before that hideous idol made of mud with painted eyes and nose and eyebrows.

Grown-up men bring their sorrows, little children bring their wants, old, old people come and ask for peace. They long to know what lies the other side of the grave ; where they will be, when the visitor, whose name is Death, visits their homes, and carries them away. They get no answer, but come away uncomforted, unaided, unblest.

They feed it, this idol, but it eats not ; they dress it, but it cares not for the silk and tinsel ; they wash it, but it feels not ; they put it into Hospital, and bring it out repainted, but still it remains unmoved. They deck it with garlands, but it realizes not ; they offer their wealth before it, but it receives it not ; they ring the bell at morn and eve to awake it from its slumbers, but it neither sleeps nor wakes.

As the sound of the bell falls on their ears,

the "strangers'" thoughts go back to that home they have just left, and they hurry by the temple with all its associations of evil and unanswered prayer, for the sight within of the god on its pedestal is hideous to look upon.

Arrived at home they lift up their hearts in gratitude to the Heavenly Father, that His love is strong enough to draw men's hearts, and to establish on the earth such homes of peace and joy as the one they have just left; and they praise Him that He has "counted them worthy" to come as "strangers to the far-off land," and to tell out among the heathen that "God is love."

We leave our baby sleeping; but let us remember that she is a real baby, and is even now growing bigger and bigger each day, and understanding more and more.

Has her story pleased you? Would you like to sit on a grass mat, take off your shoes, and eat with your fingers?

Would you like to be rubbed all over with oil every day?



Would you like to have a big black crow flapping his wings over you, and trying to steal your toffee or jam tart? I am quite sure you would not like to see that idol. I think it would frighten you.

And now the stories have come to an end, and, as the last picture says, there is "Nothing More" except to say that many, many Rajus and Mary Charushillas and Buris are waiting for you. What are you going to do for them?



CHURCH OF ENGLAND ZENANA MISSIONARY SOCIETY

OBJECT.

To make known the Gospel of Christ to the women and girls of India, China, Ceylon and Singapore.

METHODS.

Evangelistic. Preaching and teaching in hundreds of heathen homes and villages.

Educational.—Women and girls of the secluded classes are taught in their homes, while girls are educated in Day and Boarding Schools and Colleges.

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**GARDEN CITY PRESS
LETCWORTH
ENGLAND**

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN