

MISSIONARY
PRESENTED
ABOUT THE CHILDREN IN
INDIA

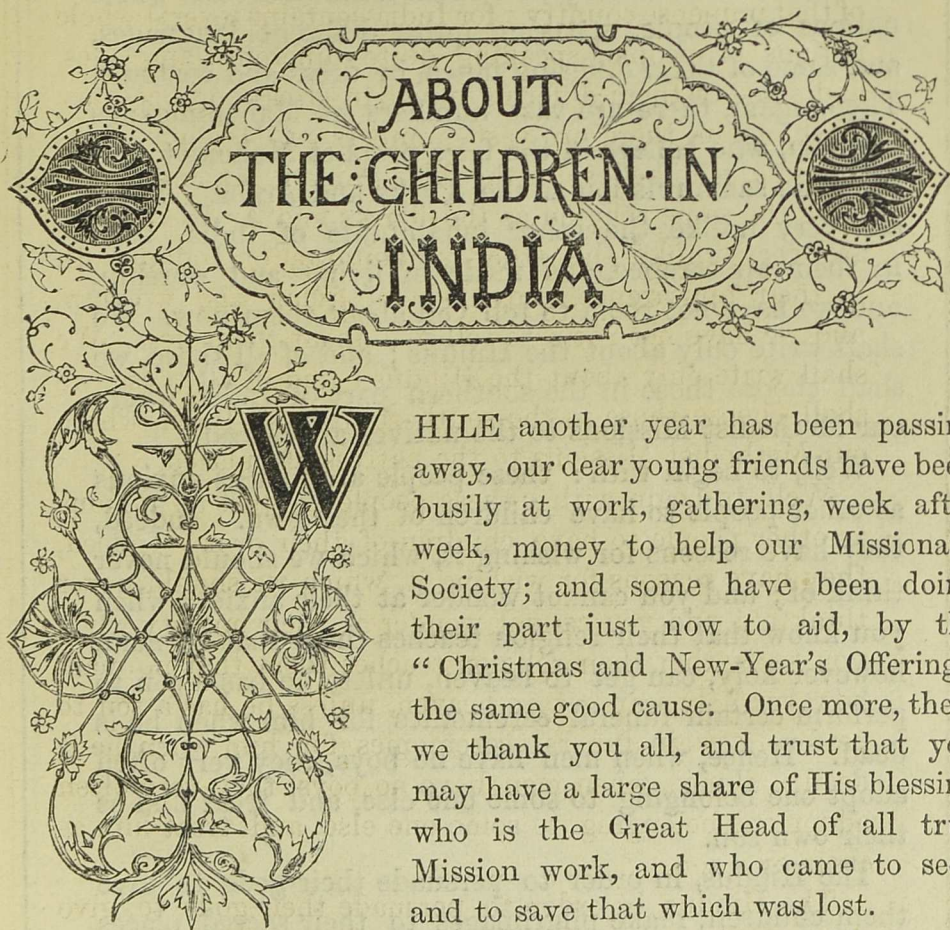


BRAHMA





WORSHIPPING GANESHA.



WHILE another year has been passing away, our dear young friends have been busily at work, gathering, week after week, money to help our Missionary Society; and some have been doing their part just now to aid, by the "Christmas and New-Year's Offering," the same good cause. Once more, then, we thank you all, and trust that you may have a large share of His blessing who is the Great Head of all true Mission work, and who came to seek and to save that which was lost.

For many years we have prepared for you a "Missionary Present," that each collector might have a token of our thankfulness; and as our young friends seemed so much pleased last year with the little book about the Children in China, we are now going to tell them something about children in India. Of course we shall not try to describe children's life in all parts

of that immense country ; for India contains several whole nations of people, speaking quite different languages, and some of them differing much in dress and customs. Then, again, there are vast numbers of Mahommedans in India, who believe in the false prophet Mahomet, and have the same religion as the Turks and Arabs. These are very unlike the other inhabitants of India, both in their appearance, and mode of living and worship, and we have not room to tell you about them now. We shall write only about the Hindus ; and of all these, we shall choose those in the southern part of India, where our Methodist Missions to the natives are placed.

Well, to begin with : these people are just as anxious as other people to have children of their own. Indeed, they have reasons for wishing it, which we should never think of ; and you cannot wonder at their anxiety when you know that their religion teaches them that no man, however holy, can get to heaven, unless he has a son to perform certain funeral ceremonies for him when he is dead. Hence, when men have no boys, they very often adopt one belonging to some one else, and treat him as their own son.

The Hindus, in order to persuade their gods to give them children, make pilgrimages to their sacred places and shrines. There they offer vows, promising that they will present money and other things to the idols. To the cruel and dreadful goddess Kali, of whom we have told you in the "Juvenile Offering" lately, they sometimes vow, that when their child is born it shall be presented before the goddess with its tender body cut

with knives or other sharp instruments, or with pieces of thick iron or silver wire, like knitting needles, thrust through the flesh of its sides. A Missionary says: "I examined at one feast a number of babies and little children who had been so tortured and presented. I also saw a man, who had every year, for thirty-five years, in accordance with the vow of his mother, presented himself before the goddess Kali with *three* rods of iron piercing his sides. He had made the rods larger every year." When I saw them they were the size of ramrods."

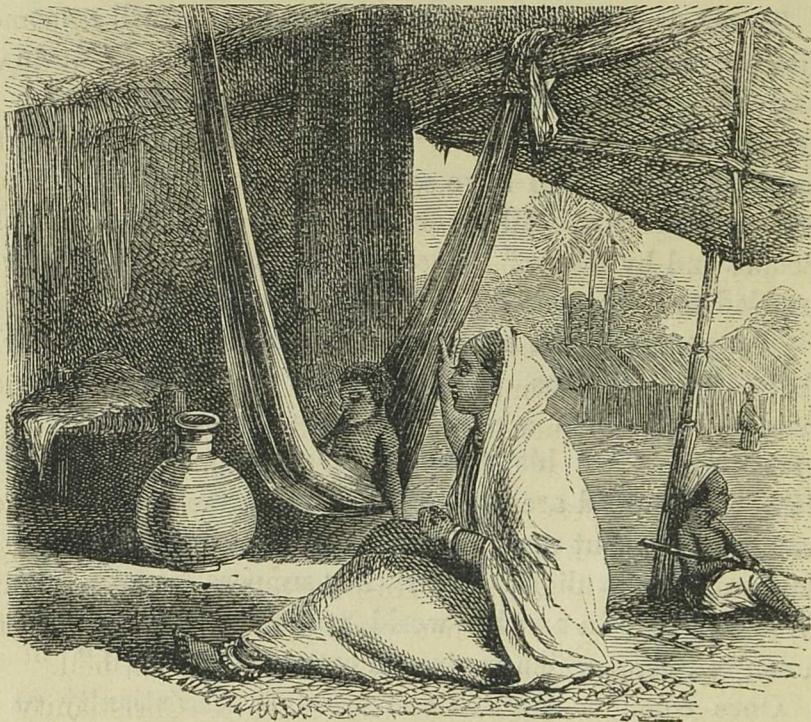
To obtain the same or similar favours, men will sometimes "pass through the fire." A large tree is cut down and burnt, and the red-hot ashes are gathered in a trench cut in the ground. "Over these ashes," says the same Missionary, "I have seen about ten or twelve men walk one after the other, cheered by the shouts of the people and by music." Such doings as these, you will be glad to hear, are now getting less common.

The people would much rather have boys than girls, for several reasons, but especially for that already named, that, when a man dies, he may leave a son to carry the fire at his funeral; for among most of the Hindus, the dead are not buried in the ground, but their bodies are burnt upon a great heap of wood; and the son must set it alight. This, they suppose, keeps a man from suffering in another world, and hence one word for a son is Putra, which means "Preserver from hell."

Once when a boy was converted to Christianity at Manaargoody, the greatest grief of his relatives was,

that there would be no one left to light the funeral piles of the rest of the family.

An old man, on being asked why he always looked so sad, replied, "In our family (his own and sister's) we have had thirteen girls, and *never a child*," the girls not being worth the name! Indeed, a girl is often spoken of as a "hen child," or a "slut," not angrily, but to show that she is thought inferior to a boy. Even the native nurses employed by English people have sometimes been known not to pay half so much attention to the little girls as to their baby brothers.



A SWING-CRADLE.

When a son is born, sweetmeats are given away amongst friends, who seem to enjoy them very much, though they are only made of sugar and butter, and sometimes flavoured with spice or cocoa-nut. They are formed in very fanciful shapes, like horses, elephants, and other creatures, but sometimes only in little flat cakes, like butter-scotch; and many of you know what that is like.

When the baby is ten days old, it is first laid in a cradle with much ceremony, and more sweetmeats and feasting.



CARRYING BABY.

The cradle is generally very narrow: but in some parts the child is laid in a long piece of calico, the ends of which are hung to

two beams, and there it swings backwards and forwards very comfortably, as you see in the picture. One great advantage of this swing-cradle is, that the baby is safe from creeping insects and scorpions while the mother is away.

Hindu mothers do not carry their babies in their arms in our fashion, but *under* their arms, the little one stretching its tiny legs across its mother's hip.

You would be much amused to see an Indian nurse

with a baby to take care of. She sits on the ground, and, stretching out her legs, lays the wee creature upon them, on a sort of thick cotton pad, which she calls a *guddari*; she then raises her knees, or swings them from side to side, and soon lulls baby to sleep, with a song. And this is the song she sings. You must get some one to play or sing it to you.



Two or three times a week the little one is well oiled—not its head only, but all over its body—and then washed

with pretty hot water. And not only the children, but the grown-up people too, very much enjoy this oiling, and wonder that the English do not follow their example.

On the eleventh day the child receives its name. Several female friends of the mother are invited. An elderly lady, taking the child in her arms, gives it the name chosen by the mother or any near relative. If the child is a boy, the father fixes on the name. The eldest son is generally called after his father's father, and the eldest girl after her father's mother.

The names most common are those of the many Hindu gods and goddesses. Perhaps the most common of all for a boy is Ramaswami: *Rama* is a name of the god Vishnu, and *swami* means *god*. Thus there are people called Krishnaswami, Kundaswami, Kuppuswami, Guruswami, and all sorts of *swami's* besides. Girls are named after Saraswati, the wife of Bramha; Lakshmi, the wife of Vishnu; and Parvati, the wife of Shiva. Children are also called after rivers, mountains, and precious stones, and after the virtues and affections. Ruby is common as a man's name, and so is Pearl. Faith, Courage, Comfort, and many such names are often given. There are no surnames in the south of India; but you will find children with such names as these, Little-father, Little-mother, Mother's-eye, Good-little-brother.

Now we must go back and see what becomes of the baby that has just been named. Whatever happens, you may be sure that it will be well cared for by the

mother, for Hindu mothers are very loving and kind to their children.

How dreadful must be the power of that cruel religion, which requires these poor women to put their darlings to great suffering to please some horrible idol !

The people so admire the innocence of little children, that they have a proverb, "The Deity and babes are one." When children die under three years of age, they are not burned like other people, but are buried, "because," say the people, "they have done no sin." But they are too often buried without any care : a few handfuls of earth are thrown over the little body by the mother, or she buries it a few inches deep in the ground. But very often they are thrown into a ditch outside the town walls, or on some waste piece of land, and are devoured by dogs.

Well, on the day of the naming, or the day after, comes a very important event. The baby has holes bored in it—in its ears—a barbarous custom still kept up by vain persons in other lands besides India. Boys and girls alike have to endure this, for everybody who can wears ear-rings and other jewellery. Men and boys generally wear two small rings in each ear, two bracelets on each wrist, and one ring round each ankle. But this would not be enough for the women and girls ; so, if they can afford it, they put three rings in each ear—in the upper as well as the lower part—and then one, or sometimes three, in their noses as well.

They have from one to five ornaments on the back of the head. These are round pieces of gold, or other metal,

stamped like large buttons or brooches : often one is as large as a small saucer ; and then come three or four more, getting smaller and smaller, fixed on the hair, which is braided into a tail, and hangs, thus adorned, straight down the back. Sometimes the largest of these will cost more than ten pounds. Several of the Indian or-

naments worn by women remind one of those described by the prophet Isaiah, and those just mentioned are "round tires, like the moon."

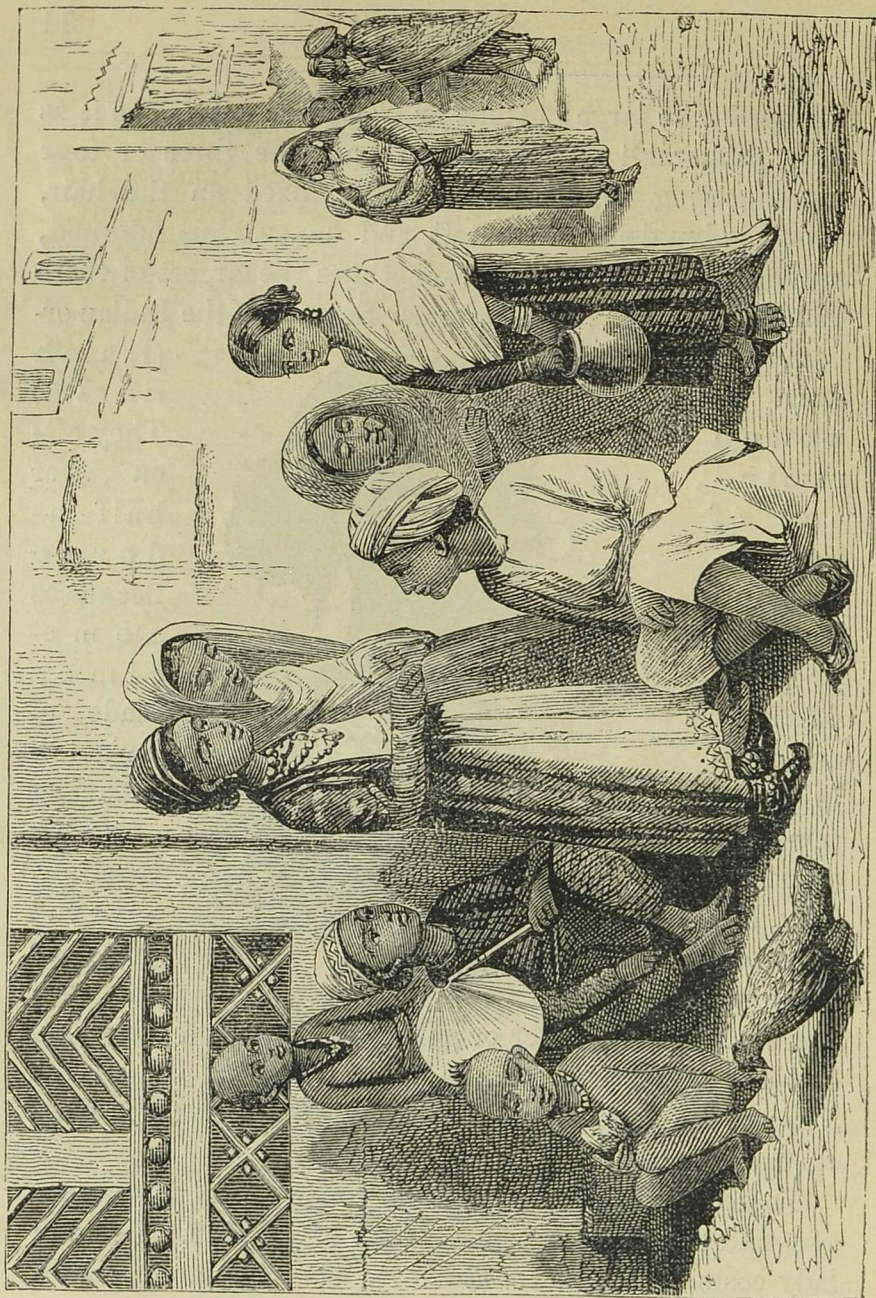


A BRIDE.

(Isaiah iii. 18.) They often wear half-a-dozen necklaces sometimes made of English sovereigns strung together, several bracelets on each

arm and wrist, a silver or golden band round the waist, and heavy *bangles*, or chains of silver on the ankles. Then to finish up—or down—they often put three rings on the toes.

There now, little girls, what do you say to all this set-out of grand things? A complete set of jewels for a Hindu lady costs from one thousand to six thousand pounds,



GROUP OF CHILDREN.

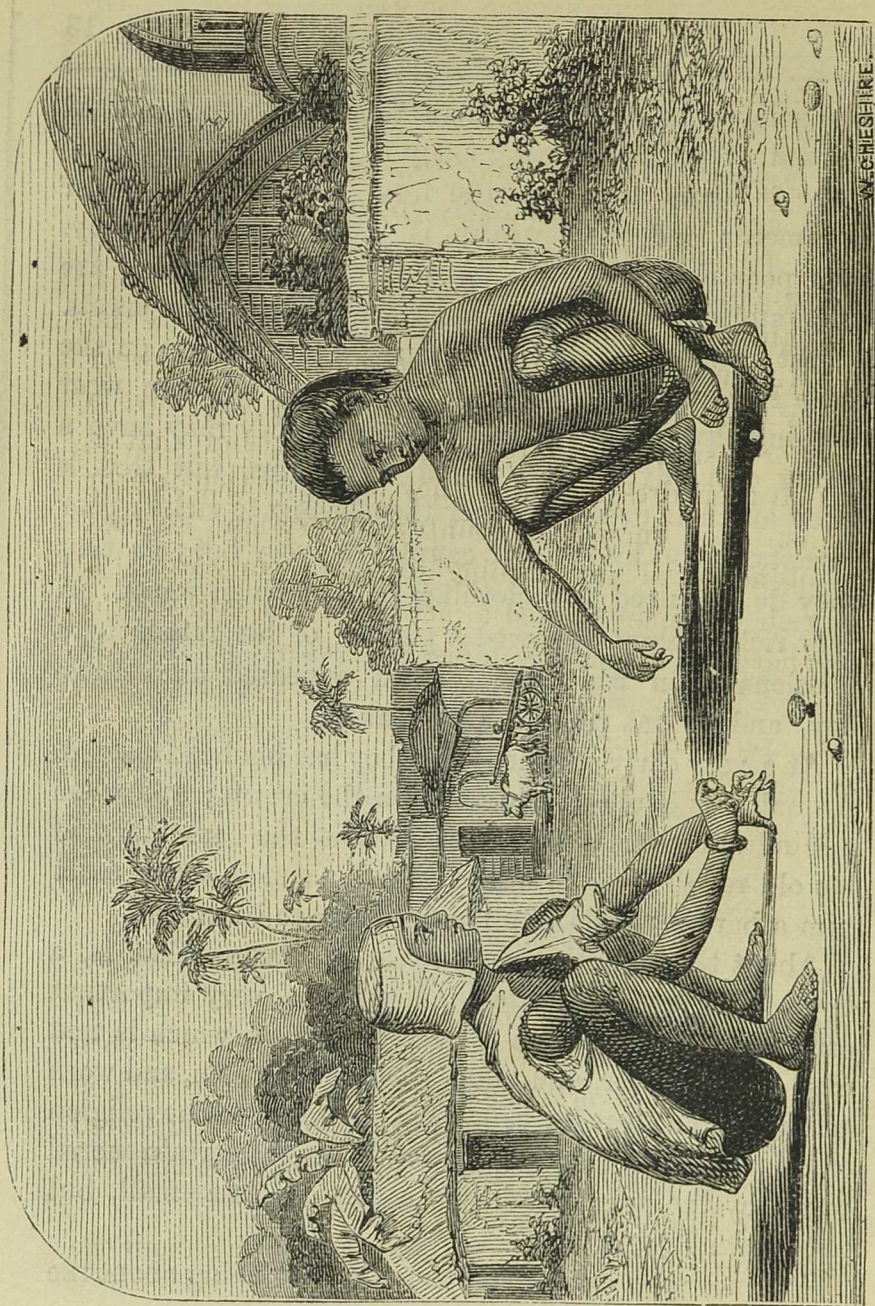
and sometimes even more than that. The fact is, that instead of putting their money in a bank, the people carry it about them in the form of gold and silver ornaments, and their wealth is judged of accordingly. The poor children suffer for this custom; for they are often stolen, and even killed, for the sake of their jewels.

But although so many precious things are put on the little Hindus, you must know that many of them wear nothing else. For the first few years they may have a string or a silver chain round their loins, but that is often all their dress, whether they belong to rich or poor parents. You know their country is very hot; so that they do not need any clothing to keep them warm. A very rich Brahman showed a picture of his father to a Missionary, in which he himself appeared as a little boy, and he was painted quite naked.

At a very early age the Hindu boy has his head shaved. A small tuft is allowed to grow on the crown; and when a Hindu becomes a Christian, this is the last mark of his old religion which he parts with; and it often costs him a hard struggle to allow his *juttu* to be cut off.

About the seventh year a little Brahman—that is, a boy of the highest caste—undergoes a very important ceremony. He receives the sacred thread, which is tied over one shoulder, and under the opposite arm, and worn as long as he lives, or as long as he keeps to the religion of his people. He is next carefully taught certain sacred words by the priest, and then comes out as a small, but full-blown Brahman.

And now you would like to know something about the



PLAYING AT MARBLES.

W. CHESHIRE.

games and playthings of these children. But really it is not very easy to tell you ; for will you believe that there are any children in the world who are not very fond of play ? Whether you can understand it or not, the Hindu children do not seem to care for such sport as you enjoy so happily. Their toys, when they are very young, are chiefly plain, common dolls ; and they have some games in which they go round and round with clapping of hands. Sometimes the boys play at marbles, though very differently from the way you have seen. They shoot the marble by holding it in front of their finger, which is held back like a spring and then suddenly let go. They can thus send the marble with great force, and learn to take a very good aim.

Kite-flying is a favourite amusement during the windy season, and the kites are often made in curious shapes.



KITE-FLYING.

Here you see a youth flying a kite, holding in his hand, the bamboo reel on which the string is wound.

But when little Hindus come to the age of eight, or ten, or twelve years, they almost leave off playing. In fact, among the higher classes, it would be thought undignified for the children to take part in any games. They all get a quiet and thoughtful look, as if they had all at once taken on themselves the cares of older life, even while they are yet children. There is something sad and unchildlike in their appearance, and it seems to Europeans, as it no doubt seems to you, very unnatural that they should be so solemn and staid. You could understand a little boy or girl not being very fond of learning lessons, or not liking to sit quite still ; but you cannot easily understand a real boy or girl not liking to play. Yet a Missionary has told us that he and a brother Missionary used to give an hour a day to play with the boys attending the Mission school. "The boys," he says, "would only play when we played with them. They said they were ashamed to play unless we joined. Hindu boys are like thoughtful, staid old men. I have sometimes offered my boys in Manaargoody a day's holiday ; and they have begged to be allowed to take their lessons to my wife during my absence ; and they have done so, rather than have holiday !"

No doubt much of this seriousness of character is natural to a people living in such a climate, and whose habits are quiet, and not very active. But we cannot help thinking, that if Hindu homes were made bright by the love of Jesus, the dear children would share in



THE GOD GANESHA.

the brightness, and begin a happier life. All their religion helps to make them gloomy, and must fill young hearts with fear. Their idols are often terrible and ugly figures, and they are taught very early to bow down to images of wood, and stone, and metal.

We give you a picture of one of the gods best known in India, copied from an Indian drawing. His name is Ganesha, and he is the god of wisdom, who is supposed to help people over difficulties. All Hindus therefore call upon this god before beginning to write a letter, or start on a journey, or any other undertaking. He certainly is not handsome, with his elephant's head, and fat body, and four hands. He is generally made sitting on a rat, and with a snake tied round him. It is because he is so ugly, they say, that he was made so wise, to make up for his want of beauty. It is a strange tale to be found in the religion of any people ; but it is not so strange or so shocking as many other tales which the Hindus believe of the gods they worship. They say that Ganesha was the son of the god Shiva, born while his father was away from home. His mother, Parvati, set the young god to take care of the door while she took her bath. While he was on guard, his father came home, and of course did not know who this young door-keeper was, and was very angry because he tried to keep him out of the house. So the great Shiva nipped off his son's head with his finger and thumb, and threw it away. He then went in, and told his wife that he had found a very impudent boy at the door, and what he had done to him. Then Parvati was in great grief, and told him

it was his own son. Shiva ran out quickly, but could not find the head anywhere; so, to save his son from bleeding to death, he nipped off the head of the first animal that came, which happened to be an elephant, and stuck it on the body of Ganesha.

The mother was not much pleased at this; but, to quiet her, Bramha promised that her son should be more worshipped than any other god. He is so ugly, say the Hindu sacred books, that he could never get any one to marry him.

All this makes you smile; and no wonder. But is it not very sad that the little children in India are taught to worship this ugly thing, which is made of all sizes, from a little image you could put in your pocket, to a statue hewn out of a vast rock?

From the very beginning, the Indian child is surrounded by superstition and idolatry. For the first three months of its life, it is kept out of sight of strangers, lest it should be hurt by the "evil eye." This fear is found in many parts of the world. It is supposed that a look from an envious eye brings bad luck. A mother therefore dreads to hear any one praise her child; and if the little one be very pretty, she will hide it for as long as six months, or even a year. The people are astonished to see the babies of Europeans brought out for an airing; and a nurse from the Mission-house at Manaargoody, when carrying a very young baby one day, was nearly suffocated by the native women crowding about her, and crying out, "Are you not afraid of the evil eye?" A woman will snatch up her child, and carry it out of sight

in a moment, if you should chance to look upon it, and say, "What a pretty child!" For the same reason, if a man get a handsome turban, he will not put it on, for fear of the evil eye. If he has a pair of fine bullocks, he is always afraid they will fall lame from the same cause. He builds a new wall, or a house, and puts up a very ugly bust, or an old pot spotted with whitewash, to act as a charm, most likely by drawing people's look to it rather than to the building.

It seems a strange thing, when writing about children, to say anything about their marrying. But among other strange things in India is this, that the children are married very young indeed. The bridegroom must be older than the bride; but he need not be very old—about seven or eight years of age; sometimes very much younger. Of course he has nothing to do with choosing his little wife: that is all done for him by his parents; and the business is generally a very expensive affair, on account of the marriage-portions that have to be provided. First of all the almanac must be searched to find a lucky day. This is done before beginning anything. The sacred books say about marriage: "The girl looks to the personal appearance of her future husband; her mother to the amount of his wealth; the father to his character; the relatives to his rank; and the people to plenty of feasting."

A lady, the wife of a Missionary, who has written a beautiful little book about Christian Missions in India,*

* "Scenes among which we labour." By the Wife of a Missionary in Bengal.



BRIDAL CEREMONY.

gives a most amusing story of what happened at a wedding, where the husband was nine and the wife seven years old. "Whilst the priest was going on with his *muntras* (prayers), the bridegroom was looking round the room as if in search of somebody. 'What are you about?' asked the priest sharply. 'I'm looking for my mother,' answered the boy, 'and don't see her anywhere;' and with this he burst out crying. The bady-bride, finding her little husband in distress, began to cry too. No words would comfort them. At last the priest, going into an adjoining room, returned with a switch in his hand, and, lifting it to the face of the boy, said angrily, 'You stop that crying, or I'll beat you.' The threat was effectual, and the ceremony went on."

Of course the little people thus married do not begin to keep house, but go home again to their mothers, until they are old enough to start life on their own account. When this time comes there are yet further ceremonies, one of which is represented in our picture, which is copied exactly from a native drawing. The father is pouring water on the hands of the bride, while the bridegroom and the mother stand looking on.

Although the early ceremony between young children is a sort of betrothal, yet it is held as binding as true marriage; for if the little married boy were to die, his little wife would be a widow, and, according to Hindu custom, would never be allowed to marry again during all her life: her fine dress and jewels would be taken from her, an old cloth thrown over her shoulders, and she would be fed and treated badly to the end. We



A YOUNG DEVOTEE.

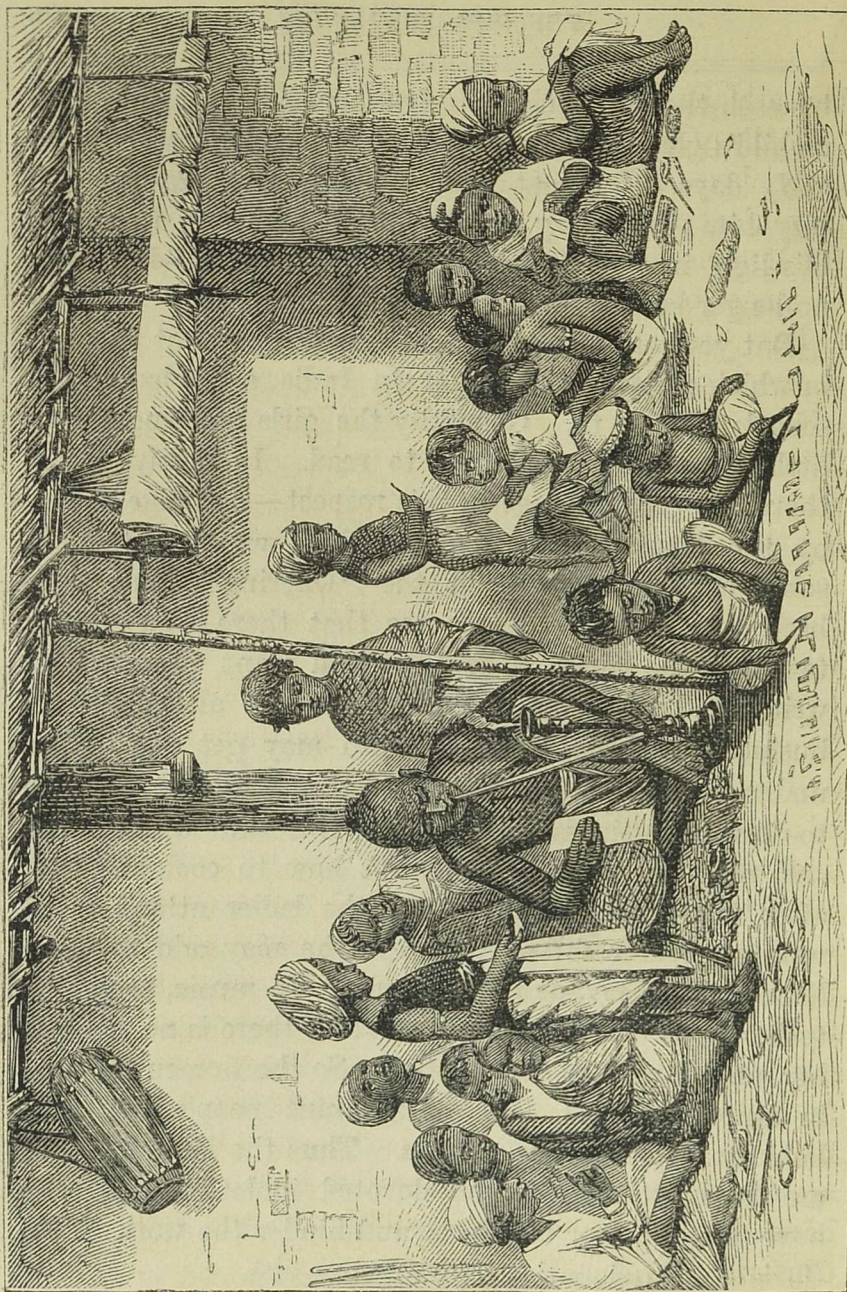
know of one case in which the husband was only twenty-one months, and the wife eighteen months old. Three months after the marriage the boy died, and the little girl, before she could well walk, was a widow, and must remain so to the end of her days.

It seems very hard thus to bind children before they are able to choose for themselves. But some are doomed to a still harder fate. Look at the picture on the opposite page. It is a Hindu mother and her little boy. When you know more about it, you will agree that it is the most mournful picture in our little book. It is decided, because of some vow, that this dear little fellow shall become a devotee ; that means, he is to live a life separate from all mankind. It is called a holy life ; but it is really a useless and wasted existence. He is already being trained for this dismal fate. He is never to work, but only to suffer. He is to be a beggar as long as he lives. He will learn to sit or stand in some dreadfully awkward position, until he becomes a miserable cripple, and his flesh wastes from his bones. He will grow up among men without one good quality of a man about him ; he will grow up in laziness and filth, a worthless and disgusting creature. Yet his parents' religion teaches them that in all this there will be something well-pleasing to their gods ; and people look upon these idle, crippled, filthy men as very holy, and think it a religious thing to give them alms, and show them reverence.

Now look again at the picture. It was taken from the life. The Hindu mother and her poor devotee child stood to be photographed. Look at that dear little face

beneath the large turban. It is never to be bright with a child's glee ; it is never to know the gladness of your early days. Look at your little Indian brother, and pity him ; and pray to God more earnestly to spread His light in dark India, that its beautiful children may no longer be doomed to misery and pain.

But you will want to know something about the way in which children are taught in India, and what sort of schools they go to. Generally the girls are taught very little, sometimes not even to read. In many places there is a great change in this respect—a change caused by the Mission schools, about which we often tell you some interesting news in the “Offering.” But it is hard to make the people see that there is any use in teaching the girls. The boys will want to read and write, and do sums, because these are all needed in business ; and by these a youth may get some office under the British Government. But a girl has nothing to do with business : she has to live shut up at home, and need learn nothing except how to cook and look after the house, which duties the ladies attend to as well as poorer folks. Perhaps she may add to this a little embroidery, or tambour work, or music, according to her taste. If she learn to read, there is no book in her own language fit for her. So the women grow up in ignorance, and, like all ignorant people, are very liable to superstitious notions. Thus the Hindu women are the most zealous and devoted idolaters, and they have more power to oppose and hinder the work of the Christian Missionaries than any one else.



NATIVE SCHOOL.

The native schools for the boys are very different from any that you have seen. We are glad to be able to give you some pictures of them: one drawn by an artist who has lived long in India; and another—a picture of words—by the lady, the writer of the very nice book we have spoken of before.*

This is her picture. "On the roadside, down in the centre of the village, there stands a low, straw-thatched, mud-walled house. The front is quite open, showing the whole of the inside: A mat is spread in the middle of the room, and an elderly man, whom they call the Gooroo Mahashoy, which means "Mr. Teacher," is seated on it. He has a sheet wrapped about his waist, but his shoulders and back are bare, and his head can boast of very little of its natural covering. A single lock of hair has been suffered to grow from the crown, and hangs in a knot on his neck. The boys, who put themselves anywhere, are seated cross-legged about him, some with long dried strips of palm-leaf, others with bright green plantain leaves and earthen inkpots before them. They are, for the most part, too poor to afford any better material; and, even when they are not, they like the old things better than the more expensive new ones, such as paper and slates. The principal part of their education is learning to form the letters of the alphabet, and the many ways in which the letters are joined together. They may be taught to spell their

* "Scenes among which we labour." We have ventured to change some of the words into simpler language, for the benefit of our little readers; but it has not been often needed.

way through one or two ugly little books, miserably got up, containing foul stories about their gods ; and twice a day they are made to follow the lead of their teacher, or some elder scholar, in shouting out certain arithmetical tables. This is all that is to be learnt here.

“There is no order or quietness in the school. The master raises a cane or stick, and now and then strikes the ground with force to stop the din, which almost deafens him. For a moment or two there is silence—for the voice of the rod has a power which a schoolboy well understands—and then the whispering begins afresh. These whisperings gradually get louder, and, being answered from all parts of the room, soon the noise grows and grows, until the old man, no longer able to bear it, starts up, and, laying the cane about the backs of those nearest to him, exclaims, in a great rage, ‘You wicked children! what shall I do with you? must I kill you at once, and rid myself of you?’ At this the offenders are awed for a few minutes, and are as still as mice. But by-and-by there is a whisper, and here and there a sly laugh at the old man; and by degrees the old noise swells as loud as ever, and has to be put down by the stick again.

“In looking round the room, you see numbers of the boys in filthy clothes; others hardly covered, and showing bare backs and arms and legs; some with rags hanging about them, and the smaller ones naked. But the old man sees nothing to speak about, and fails to teach them better. . . .

“Towards sunset, the work of the day is done, and



the boys disperse, each with his book of palm-leaves under his arm, and his earthen inkpot in his hand."

The most common way of learning to read and write is very simple. The children, sitting cross-legged on the floor, have sand spread before them, in which they form the letters with their finger. The master, or chief boy—a sort of monitor—calls out the letter or word to be written, and each child, as he tries to make it, repeats it aloud in reply. A few pats of the hand make the sand all smooth again, and they can begin a fresh lesson.

When a holiday begins, before closing the school, both master and boys perform a religious ceremony. Flowers are offered, and sacred sentences spoken in honour of Saraswati, the goddess of learning. Her picture here is copied from a native drawing. That queer-looking bird beside her is meant for the peacock, on which she is said to ride. All the things used in the school, not leaving out the master's cane, are piled together, and surrounded by the worshippers. Each boy in turn goes through the following form. He holds his left ear between the thumb and finger of his right hand, and the right ear, in the same way, with his left hand. He then, kneeling down, taps the floor with his elbows. You can try to do it if you like. It is very easy. But it is also something to sorrow about, that these children are taught no better religion than one that sets them knocking their elbows on the ground, and doing many other things as foolish.

Boys go to school when they are about seven or eight years old, and leave again in about three or four years

afterwards. They certainly do not learn much ; but, through constantly saying them over and over again, they generally learn well the few things taught in their schools.

One course of lessons is never finished, and that is, the learning of religious duties and ceremonies. These are mixed up with every thing, and are so many that a Hindu said, "A man practising them all would not have a second's leisure for any thing else."

There is one thing about the Hindu children which we ought to tell you, and from which many children of Christian parents might learn a good lesson. They are always very respectful to their parents and to old people. They are taught to regard God, their mother and their teacher as equal ; and they therefore treat them with reverence and obedience. Another thing much in their favour is, that they are nearly always polite and well-behaved, which is more than can be said of all children in Christian schools. When they are better taught, and, above all, when they are taught about the true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent, they make beautiful characters. Already, in the Mission schools, many have learned the way to be saved, and some, dying when young, have left this world in great peace, certain of a better place prepared for them by their Saviour. Some have had to suffer many things from their heathen parents and friends, because of their taking Christ for their Lord, and giving up idols ; but they have kept faithful when persecuted ; and some, by their earnestness and prayers, have been the means of leading others also to Jesus.

A very great many children, no doubt, come to our Christian schools in India, and go away after a time, without showing much good effect. But we know that, even with these, they have learned so much of the truth that they cannot become as thorough idolaters as they would be if they had been left without it. And so the light is spreading slowly, but surely, in India; and amongst the most important of the means of shedding that light are the Christian schools. These, as you will suppose, are very different from the native school of which you have just read. In them the children are taught to be clean and orderly; they read good books, and learn many useful things; and, whatever else they learn, they are sure to be taught the truths of God's Holy word.

It is a happy thing to think about, that you have been helping to keep up these schools, and to add to their number. Still go on in this good work. In the name of many children in that far-off eastern land, we thank you for what you have done.

One thing more we must say, and one thing more you must attend to, whatever else you do. "One thing is needful"—needful for you as much as for Indian children. Have you given *yourselves* to the merciful God? Do you know Jesus as your own Saviour?

May you live happy in His favour, dear young friends, and be able, by His grace, to do much good, among the poor and dark children in your own land, as well as those far away.

ca. 1870



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