

"The Children of India"

The Present Truth – July 27, 1893

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We introduce to you this week a few of your little brothers and sisters in India. Their faces are a light brown when they are babies, but soon become quite dark from playing in the hot sun. But that should not cause us to love them any the less, should it? Their eyes are as full of fun and mischief and good nature as yours, and they can feel and love and suffer as much as you can. How solemn they look as they carry their precious dollies down the steps to throw them into the river Ganges. They love their dolls as much as you love yours, although they are often but rude things made of clay or wood.



Dear little children! how their hearts would thrill with joy if they could have some of the pleasant things that you have. If they could have a pleasant home where there were no cross words, no frightful idols, and no child-marriages; a home where the little girls could be as free and happy as the little boys, and know that they were as welcome; a home where they could have the privilege of climbing upon father's knee, of running to meet him when he returns from work, and of going for an outing with father and mother, or for a play under the green trees. How happy these little girls would be if they could have pretty picture books, and go to school and learn to read and write, and be taught how to knit and sew. And oh, if they only could gather around their mother's knee in the quiet twilight hour and hear stories of the lovely Jesus Friend, and learn to sing His praises, and clasp their little hands in thankful prayer.

Dear child, if you are ever tempted to feel discontented with what you have, think of these little brothers and sisters who have so much less, and see if you do not find many things to thank God for.

Jesus loves little girls as well as He loves the little boys, and of course those parents who have the love of Jesus in their hearts love them also. But in India most of the fathers and mothers know nothing of Jesus so they do not have this impartial love in their hearts.

Their religion causes them to pay out so much money and to make such grand fees at the marriage of a daughter, that if they have many daughters it takes all their money and more too just to get them married. They therefore think it a great calamity to have many little girls, for they do not know how they ever can get money enough to have them all married. And married they must be before they are ten years old, or it would be thought a very great disgrace.

"You will hear a Hindu talk about 'children and girls,' as though girls were not children at all, but something not nearly so good; and often if you were to ask a father how many children he had, he would tell you only the number of boys, for they say 'girls don't count.' When a little

girl is born, the Hindus say the gods must have been very angry, or else they would have given a boy."

You can imagine something, therefore, of the general rejoicing when a son is born, and of the anger and disappointment when a daughter is born. The mothers finally get over their disappointment and love and pet their girls, for they know that it is only when they are little that they can have any pleasure at all.

The boys and girls live together in much the same way until they are five or six years old, after that their lives are very different. The boys then begin to go to school, but as there are no Hindu schools for the girls they never go to school unless it be to some English or missionary school, but they begin to be taught how to worship the idols.

If they are high-caste they must be shut up in the zenana, or women's room, as soon as they are married, for their husbands might kill them if they went out of doors or let another man see them. Some of them are married when they are but little babies not old enough to walk, and others when they are five, six, or seven years old, and all of them before they are ten. So you see how soon they must be shut away from everything that is pleasant. Some of them who are now grown Never saw a green tree in all their lives.

The only useful thing the little girls do is to help their mothers to cook, and so learn to be good cooks. They are not taught to knit and sew, for the boys and men do all the sewing in many parts of India; and they have no picture books.

What a lonely tiresome life they must lead! About all they can do is to help with the cooking, and amuse themselves with putting up and taking down their mother's long hair, and listening to her stories about the ugly idols. You see their mothers cannot read either, so they know no stories but what their husbands tell them.

We shall have to tell you at another time about the boys' schools, and about the little girls after they are married.

Mohammedan children are not taught to worship idols of stone or brass, but to reverence the prophet Mohammed, and to turn their faces toward his birthplace, Mecca, when they pray. They are taught that Jesus is not the Son of God, so you see their prayers do not reach God any more than the Hindus' prayers, for Jesus says that no man can come to the Father but by Him.

Their sacred book, the Koran, is written in the Arabic language, and the children are made to learn to repeat page after page of it, although they cannot understand a word it says. If they do not say it just right they are beaten. They are taught to say their prayers in Arabic also, and how to stand when they pray, how to clasp their hands, and throw themselves on the ground, and count the beads, saying a different name of God with every bead.

But we are happy to say that a few of the dear children of India are beginning to learn of Jesus, the living Saviour, and of His blessed Bible. And when they do get acquainted with Him they become just as good little Christians as any of our white boys and girls.

Some little girls have prayed so earnestly that their mothers have also begun to pray. They pray that Jesus will help them to learn their lessons, and when they get into trouble they tell Jesus, and He helps them out of it or gives them peace and comfort in bearing it.

Will not you, who have had so many more opportunities of learning of Jesus than these poor children have had, will not you go to Jesus with your difficult lessons and with all your troubles? He is just as willing to help you as He is to help them. If you only would study His word and become better acquainted with Him, we are sure you would thank Him for His goodness, and go to Him for help oftener than you do. Are you allowing His word to be a lamp to your feet, and are you doing all that you can to send this wonderful lamp to shine upon the pathway of others?