

Young People's Department.

SOME LEPERS OF INDIA AND THEIR GENTLE MISSIONARY.

Dear Boys and Girls,—I want to tell you a story—a story as wonderful as it is true. They are the best kind after all; are they not? the *true* ones. You and I can remember when we asked mother for a “really truly story,” can't we—Well, our story from beginning to end shall all be true, and we will begin it in the good old way: Once upon a time there lived in the United States a young girl whose name was Mary Reid. Mary was a bright, attractive girl, and every one loved her. One day when she was 16 years old she heard Jesus knocking at her heart, and she arose and let Him in; then she was more loveable. Mary found Jesus so precious to her she wanted all her friends to know Him and serve Him, and not only her friends, but all those around her, and later there was borne in her heart a great hunger to cross the seas to tell her brothers and sisters in heathen India of the dear Saviour she had found. Day and night Miss Reid prayed, “O Lord if I am worthy, suffer me to go and tell the heathen of thy love; and God heard her prayer. Soon after she was appointed to work in India by the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

But now I fancy I hear some one say, “but what about the lepers, this letter is headed, ‘Some lepers of India,’ and not a word have we heard about them. We are coming to them, boys and girls, right off, and are going to hear many things about them too; some very sad and some very glad. When Miss Reid had been teaching in India for a while her health broke down, and she was sent to a place in the mountains to rest and get strong. Three miles from where she lived was an asylum for lepers, and Miss Reid became much interested in these poor sufferers.

Are you surprised, boys and girls to hear there are lepers in the world to-day? Did you think they lived only in Bible times? There are thousands of them all over the world, dear young people; and, oh, they need sorely all the love and sympathy and help you and I can give them. Let me tell you what a hard life those in India lived before some missionaries undertook to make them a little bit more comfortable. A gentleman on first seeing a settlement of them, wrote:—“I distinctly remember my first visit to the lepers. On the outskirts of the city in a little mound by the roadside, were eight or ten wretched human beings in such a pitiable condition that it had the two-fold effect of first making me sick, and when this had worn off, of causing such a deep pity for them that it has never left me, and never will. I see them now with matted hair and unwashed bodies crusted with dirt, clothes that had not been washed since they

were first put on (perhaps a year previous). Here a toeless foot; there a fingerless hand, literally, a festering sore; there a bloated face and swollen ears; there two holes that once had eyes in them; there a nose eaten away. The stench was too much for me and nature; I shrank saying, ‘Room for the leper, room;’ yet with a cry to God I controlled my feelings and preached to them Jesus; then hastily supplying their bodily wants I sped away, and for days after could not forget the sights and smells.”

Is not this a pitiful picture, you have all read from God's Word what a terrible disease this leprosy is, how the body slowly decays causing great suffering and disfigurement, how all lepers were compelled to live by themselves and cry out “unclean! unclean!” if they saw anyone coming, would you not deem that man a hero who would go to these poor people, make comfortable homes for them, bathe, clothe their bodies, and dress their gaping wounds knowing full well he was liable at any time to take the dread leprosy from them? Well, men have done it and are doing it to-day. Chivalry and brave deeds do not all belong to the past, boys. And girls, not only have men done such brave work but of noble women not a few have taken their lives in their hands, and gone to minister to these afflicted ones, and among them this dear Miss Reid whom we have been talking about. In some way, nobody knows how, when she was up there in the mountain resting, she contracted leprosy. She did not know it then, not till years after; but she became so ill she had to give up her beloved work and came home. Here she consulted doctor after doctor but all to no purpose she got steadily worse.

“One night when in prayer the idea came to her like a flash that it was leprosy from which she was suffering. The agony of that thought seemed too great to bear. She wrestled all night in prayer, and towards morning felt peace and submission. The Heavenly Father Himself had revealed to her the nature of her disease, and also His purpose concerning her.” He brought to her remembrance that beautiful spot in the mountains where she had seen the lepers and whispered to her “go there and feed my lambs.” In the morning she told her physician what she thought her disease was. Her doctor said “I cannot tell you, you must see a specialist in New York.” Between the time the thought first came to her and the time when she saw the specialist she suffered much. The fear that her disease was leprosy, and the hope that it was not combined to keep her in great mental agony, so that when at last the specialist pronounced on her case and declared it leprosy, she actually felt relief. Then this brave woman said Good-bye to father and mother, brothers and sisters and knowing she would never see them again in this world started for India. To no one but a sister, did she reveal her terrible