

PICTURES OF LIFE IN INDIA.

IN THE MIDNAPORE BAZAAR.

BY REV. E. B. STILES.

When you hear the word bazaar don't picture to yourself a church turned into a den of thieves, where fair ladies weary themselves in inducing a man to pay a dollar for a ten-cent pen-wiper that his own wife made from materials that she took from his store, for sweet charity's sake. The dwellers in the city here speak of going down town, when in India we speak of going to the bazaar. The bazaar, then, is the market place, and the business section of the town.

The bazaars of Midnapore are mostly at the south of the mission premises. Mount your wheel and come with me. It is evening, and we are going to School Bazaar to preach. You are surprised at the excellent roads, and wish that you had as good ones at home. We pass the club where the English residents meet every night to play tennis, badminton, or billiards; or where they may read the papers, play the piano, or converse over a glass of ginger ale or a tumbler of whisky. Across the road are the lockup, the police court, and the offices connected with the district collectorate. A half-mile farther on are the post and telegraph offices, and the Midnapore college, a government institution. Turn to the left please, and we will go to School Bazaar via Big Bazaar. Now we are passing the temple of Honnman, the monkey god; see his hideous image painted a bright red. The priests are busy preparing his evening meal, and soon you will hear a horrid din of gongs, bells, drums, and horns as the priests announce to him that his meal is ready.

Just beyond, on the right, is the house of a rich landlord. It is an imposing structure. Over the gateway that admits to the inner court, where is an elaborate temple, are two ridiculous lions, in relief made of stucco work. Never is the place neat and tidy. The year round there are piles of lime and lumber on the verandas, suggestive of perpetual repairs. The twelve temples across the street on two sides of a square are erected to the god Siva. Now we are beginning to find the stores. Here is a shoe store, where you can get a piece of sole-leather with a toe-strap to hold it on, or a pair of patent leather shoes with bright red or yellow laces. There is a Mohammedan tailor with many sorts of clothing, from the green silk coat for a small boy to the white *chapan* for the three hundred pound babu, who waddles to his office each day, where he serves the government for a salary sufficient to enable him to "accumulate grease" while he smokes his pipe in peace. Just ahead is a confectioner's store, where you can get almost anything native in candies, all fearfully and wonderfully made of curds, of flour, of

sugar and cocoanut, of parched rice and molasses, many kinds fried in butter. See that old man buying a cent's worth. It is weighed out, put in a box (?) made of leaves, but before it is paid for the purchaser insists on his *phau*, a bit thrown in after the weighing. If the dealer demurs, there is a rumpus that would make the members of the Wall Street Stock Exchange green with envy.

Would you like to see some India silks? Step into that store on the right. There sit the dealers, cross-legged, doing business or waiting for a customer. They are generally busy, for they furnish many small dealers, who travel about the country selling cloth at the markets that sit somewhere every day. A strange little hole in the wall is this store, with two smaller holes running farther into the wall, but here you can get almost any kind of cloth, from a dish cloth to the finest silk, from coarse red flannel to broadcloth. The looms of Maine, of Cashmere, of England, and the rude hand-looms of the Bengal weaver have contributed to the supply. White and brown, clean and filthy, prince and pauper, are the customers. This store is an excellent place to study Hindu characteristics, but space forbids.

See that tall man across the street in his drug store. Now he lolls on his cushion, now takes a pull at his pipe, and now arouses himself to wait on a customer. His store too is an exposition of *multum in parvo*. He has all the drugs necessary to fill any ordinary prescription; he has patent medicines, from Ayer's Pills to Jayne's Sea-weed Tonic; he has tea and biscuit, Chicago canned meats and California fruits; dishes and lanterns, and "if you don't see what you want, ask for it."

Let us go on. Here is a book store; there is a store where brass dishes, bells, and idols are sold, all by the pound; just beyond is a dealer in English hardware, cutlery, locks, lanterns, glass, etc.; near him is a dealer in native grains and oils, including kerosene. As we go on the scenes described are duplicated and reduplicated. Now we turn sharp to the right, through a narrow lane that brings us into School Bazaar, where we get most of our fish, fruit, and vegetables. Fish big and little, smooth and scaly, good and bad; the parable of the drag net re-enacted, except the sorting process, which seems to have been overlooked. Oranges, lemons, bananas, jak fruit, guavas, mangoes—all in their season. Potatoes common and sweet, garlic and cabbage, leeks and onions, egg plant, greens galore, and noise more than galore.

At the southern end of this bazaar, under a *peepul* tree, is our preaching stand, where for more than thirty years our missionaries have preached with tolerable regularity. This is a sort of training school for our Bible school students. They are expected to go every night—all to distribute tracts and help in the singing, the older ones to try their hand at preaching.