

### SUKIA.—A STORY OF THE BETHEL SANTHAL MISSION.

Sukia (which means in English peaceful) is a little girl about eight years of age. Her father and mother died when she was quite small; her grandmother took the little orphan to her home and heart, and very peaceful were a few years that flitted by. The orphan child became the joy and sunshine of the widow's cottage, and well repaid any kindness shown to her. Alas! it did not last long: her grandmother was called away by death, and the little girl stood all alone in the wide, wide world. She had many a cry, and did not know what to do; however God, the Father of the orphan, knew all about her, and impressed her aunt to receive Sukia into her family; but there was no love lost in this house, and poor Sukia felt sometimes very bad. But what could she do? She had to stay and be thankful, and have her cry on the quiet.

During 1884 famine visited the Santhal Hills, and many were the pinched faces; a few died of starvation, and many others lived for months on what they could find in the jungle. Food was scarce in the house, and poor Sukia often got no dinner; her aunt, having hardly enough for her own children, grudged the little that was given (with a scowl) to Sukia. She got many a scolding, and sometimes a thrashing, and finally was driven out of the house, and told never to return, as her aunt had plenty of children of her own, and little or no food for them.

Crying, crying, poor Sukia left the house that had sheltered her for a few years; thick and fast fell the tears. She did not know where to go; very thin were the few rags that covered her. Was there not one house to open to the weeping little maid? Father and mother were dead; the neighbours all struggling along, hardly knowing how to provide food for their own children.

Poverty and starvation were everywhere; all doors were shut to the orphan, none wanted her.

Poor Sukia was ashamed to cry on the

road any longer, and hid in a field where she could not be seen by any one. But did not our heavenly Father notice her tears? Were they not more eloquent than a long petition? Her very helplessness, did it not cry aloud heavenward for help?

Night came on, and the child was afraid to stay any longer in the field, as the leopards and tigers prowl about the villages seeking their supper; so quietly she went up to the village, and seeing that all had retired, she lay down on the hard floor of a verandah to sleep. During the night something touched her,—whether it was a snake or a jackal I do not know; but the child was simply horrified, and loudly and wildly screamed for help. The men of the village were aroused by her screams, and soon surrounded her with clubs; they thought she had been dreaming, and drove her out of the village, and forbade her to return to it. She hid under a shed till the day dawned, and then turned her back for good upon Badhia village.

The next day she walked here and there in the jungle, and hid in some one's verandah during the night. The second day she heard a noise. Hark! what is it? It was only her poor little stomach calling for food. She had to beg the women for a little rice, and the whole collection was cooked by a kind-hearted woman who pitied the little stranger. This is the first meal she had since she left her aunt's, and it was eagerly devoured.

The third day she came to Domkata. The blacksmith's wife was in our school, and urged the child to go to us; so in the afternoon (three years ago) she arrived at our house, asking if Jesus lived there. Probably she heard of Jesus from the blacksmith's wife.

Seeing that the child was hungry, Mrs. Haegert gave her some daka and dal to eat, and spoke kindly to her. Our school girls took her to the tank, and gave her a bath; her dirty rags were thrown away, and she had a clean cloth given to her, and some oil for her hair.

She is not at all a bad looking girl, for she is well fed, and has become fatter; besides, she is sharp, and makes progress