

## LETTER FROM UJJAIN, INDIA

CANADIAN MISSION, UJJAIN,

January 16th, 1896.

**D**EAR CHILDREN:—Before this week's mail closes, I want to tell you about a picnic that some of the little boys and girls out here in Ujjain enjoyed on the day after Christmas. I think you all know what fun a picnic brings in Canada, and when you hear about our picnic, you will see that we had a good time.

We had asked the Christians what they would like to do for Christmas, and left it for them to decide, whether they would come to our bungalow for dinner, or have a picnic, and they all decided that they would rather have a picnic.

All the boys and girls were very happy when they knew about it, and were all washed and dressed bright and early in the morning, and at about nine o'clock went out about a mile out of the city to a pretty grove that one of the merchants has fitted up. There was a house where the dinner was cooked, and everything was very convenient.

At eleven o'clock, we missionaries, five in all, as Mr. and Mrs. Ledingham, who, you remember, came out to India this last year, were spending the holidays with us, started for the picnic ground.

We ladies went in an ox-cart. I think I hear you laugh, but these oxen can trot quite fast, and make a very good team. The gentlemen were in a two-wheeled cart drawn by a very bad-tempered little Indian pony.

When we reached the grove, the Christians were all there and welcomed us with repeated salaams. The dinner was well under way, but while the finishing touches were being put on, we hung a swing for the boys and girls, and tried to teach them to play "drop the handkerchief." They thought this was great fun and led us a good chase, for these boys and girls can run very fast, as they are not bothered with shoes or stockings nor very much clothing.

After this they stood in a row, graded according to their height, the wee-est one of all, holding tight to Mr. Jamieson's hand, reach-

ing only to his knee. Then they all sang together some of the pretty Hindi hymns so nicely, and the older ones repeated the ten commandments, many of them the Lord's Prayer, and even the smallest said: "Suffer little children to come unto me."

It was very touching to hear them, dear little folks that they are, and it showed that their fathers and mothers were teaching them at home. There were about sixteen boys and girls in all, and no one of them was over twelve years of age, and several only two or three years old.

Soon the white cloth was spread out on the grass, and we were all seated around the tablecloth. Nothing was to be seen to eat, but we knew, by the faces of the boys and girls, that something was coming.

When all was quiet, we sang a blessing in Hindi, and then Mr. Ledingham asked a blessing in English, which a number of the Christians could understand.

Then came great soup-plates full of "curry and rice." You all know how rice tastes, but not many of you know how very hot "curry" is, nor how it makes one's mouth burn, who is not used to eating it.

Of course they served us first, but we just awaited a bit to see if we could find out how to eat quite properly with our fingers.

But did the boys and girls wait a bit? No, indeed! They made away with great quantities of curry and rice, and seemed to enjoy every mouthful that they carried to their mouths so dexterously with their little brown fingers. It was just astonishing how much one small boy's stomach could hold.

They were too busy to see how very awkward we were. It looked easy enough when we saw them eating, and we thought to eat in a most proper style, but somehow the kernels of rice would go anywhere but into our mouths, and we couldn't help laughing at each other.

This first dish tasted very good, at least the rice and a *very little* curry. But the next course was rice made up with raisins and spice, ghee (a clarified butter), and some sort of sugar. It was very, very sweet, and some of us could not eat much of it.