

As Silver Is Refined

Part I. THE BIRTH OF A SOUL.

One sultry afternoon in June, 19—, an elderly woman, seated in the shade of her front gateway, the coolest spot she could find, was fanning vigorously in vain attempt to keep cool, discontented mutterings keeping time to her fan. It was time the long summer siesta ended and for folks to get to work, so thought Mrs. Dwan, but "folks" evidently thought otherwise, for the whole village seemed as still as a graveyard.

Just as the woman was about to rouse the sleeping household her attention was attracted to a man wheeling a barrow on which lay a sick child. Putting his barrow down opposite the Dwan's gateway the man wiped his steaming brows as he stepped forward saying, "Honorable Lady, my child is very thirsty, we have come a long way, will you give us water?"

"Gladly," said the woman, hastening into the inner court as fast as her excessive *avouir* would permit. In a moment or two she reappeared, not with ice cold water as in our country, but with a kettle of boiling water and two bowls.

"Wheel the child into the shade and rest yourself," said the woman as she filled the bowls; then setting one down beside the sick child, she motioned to the man to take a seat on the stone steps. "Where are you going," she asked by way of opening the conversation.

"I'm taking my child to the foreign doctor at W—."

"What!" she exclaimed, with a look of horror, "you are surely never going to venture inside that place! We have heard some terrible things about those people."

"Well," replied the man, "all I can say is this, a neighbor woman of ours went to that hospital perfectly blind and came back seeing almost as well as you or I. A man in my village had a terrible leg, he would certainly have died, but he went there too and came back healed. He told us the doctor treated him as well as the patients who could pay, though they knew he was too poor to pay."

"But, why then do people talk so?" persisted Mrs. Dwan.