

Through Native Eyes.

OUR FRIENDS IN INDIA.

Very much interest is being taken by 'Messenger' readers in the missionary work being done in India. Many of them help to support Bible readers and orphans in that country and others forward papers in connection with the Post Office Crusade. We are hoping henceforth to supply our readers from time to time with news direct from India. To-day we print a letter from a Mohammedan lady in India to the superintendent of our 'Post Office Crusade,' in Westmount, Que.

Dear Madam,—Allow me to express to you my sincere apologies for the long delay that has happened in my sending a reply to your letter of the 15th August, 1901, received by me on the 15th September.

But I hope you will excuse me when I tell you that it is my prolonged illness which is responsible for this. I am now better, but still too weak to lightly undertake the task of penning a lengthy note. However, I expect to follow up the present communication by others despatched at regular intervals and describing to you Indian life in greater detail.

I shall begin by trying to give you an idea of Indian women; and to make you realize their status in society, it is necessary to draw attention to the fundamental difference between the position of woman in society in the East and the West. In Europe and America, woman has always been treated as the equal, the helpmate in household affairs, and the companion of man in the struggle for existence. In Asia, she has, from time immemorial been regarded as immeasurably inferior to man, no more than his dependent and his servant. Man has been the lord of creation, the philosophic guide, the religious leader, the warrior ruler of the world. Woman merely an article of luxury, who is to manage her husband's house, and to minister to his pleasure; but she has had no concern with the important business of his life. Under such circumstances it is no wonder she would be kept in ignorance, that female education would not be the creed of serious men, and that all Asiatic religions, while inculcating for women lessons of complete submission to the desires of her husband, should have never in right earnest preached the doctrine of the equality of men and women.

The weaker sex in India has not, till comparatively modern times (and excluding the primitive stages of human society, when perhaps there is not much difference between uncultured man and uncivilized woman) occupied a respectable position in society, though isolated instances have not been unknown in our history in which a woman has played no contemptible part either on the stage of politics or in the domain of literature. Even now, as far as the masses are concerned, women are no better than helpless chattel, they receive no education, have no idea of self-respect, possess no rights or privileges; so long as unmarried are the servants of their parents, and after marriage the slaves of their husbands. And, then, the custom of marriage as in vogue in India, is probably the most tyrannical of its kind now extant in the world.

In the first place, marriages take place at incredibly early ages, among some castes girls being married before they are a year

old! In the second place, widow marriage is prohibited, and however young a widow she has to deny herself the comforts of a second marriage if she cares for the honor of her name and the reputation of her family. But, if possible, a still more wonderful fact is the way in which men and women are selected for each other's life-long company. The couple have no option in the matter of marriage. In fact, in most cases they have never seen each other before the marriage day. The parents of the boy and the girl, on considerations by no means always very noble, decide among themselves as to the parties to be married together, who ought to be of the same caste, this being the primary and most important point, and of more value in itself than all other considerations put together. Now, when the preliminaries have been thus settled without the consultation or the knowledge of either of the two persons about to be united together, the pair is forever bound together by the sacred and almost irrevocable ties of marriage, after which they are allowed to see each other and have to pull on with one another as best they can.

Perhaps you may not be able to conceive all this; but such is the system which has the sanction of long usage and defies change. The higher a family, the stricter the necessity of the observance of the rules by its members; and I may state for your information and amusement that in certain circles and among some families it is not allowable for husband and wife to see each other freely and in the presence of other relations of theirs. There are fixed hours and places, beyond which decency and propriety forbid a married pair to be in each other's company.

No description of the condition of Indian women can be complete without a reference to the custom of female seclusion, which is technically called the 'purdah.' All high class ladies—particularly among Mohammedans, which is also the religion of our family—have to pass their lives in complete seclusion. Immediately that a girl attains the age of 10 or 11 years, she is put under 'purdah.' She cannot come out of her house, unless properly veiled, or in a closed conveyance, and the house is so constructed as to bar all foreign intrusion, even of view. No adult male, except her husband, father, brother, and son, can see her, or she see him; nor is any conversation between men and 'purdah' ladies allowed, excepting the nearest relatives enumerated above. Her servants must be only women, of course, of the lower classes, who do not observe the 'purdah'; and the friends of men and women here should be of the same sex. There are no out-door amusements for an Indian lady; societies, clubs, associations and public meetings are shut against her; the world is a sealed book to her, and she is practically a prisoner within the high walls of her home.

Here I close for the present. I am too weak to write more, but hope to be able to resume the subject in my next.

Expiring Subscriptions.

Would each subscriber kindly look at the address tag on this paper? If the date thereon is March, 1902, it is time that the renewals were sent in so as to avoid losing a single copy. As renewals always date from the expiry of the old subscriptions, subscribers lose nothing by remitting a little in advance.

About the Children

(J. B. Fenton, in 'Ledger Monthly'.)

Children, if left to themselves, naturally take a great deal of exercise, more or less violent. It is of great importance that every child from the time it is a month old should spend most of its life out of doors. The weather, unless extreme, need be no drawback. Out-of-door life and out-of-door exercise is essential, and a child properly dressed need have no fear of sun, or rain, or winter weather.

Nervous, excitable children will play and run to the point of exhaustion before they will stop. Some really are unconscious of fatigue till exhausted, while others are not willing to stop for fear they will be thought unable to keep up with their companions, and their pride carries them beyond their strength. For this reason they must be watched at their play, and while some are held back, others must be encouraged to make greater effort.

Little children need plenty of sleep. They should retire early, not later than eight o'clock, but should not be disturbed in the morning, but left to waken naturally. The noon nap should be continued until the child is at least five years of age. Even if the child does not sleep, the quiet rest is beneficial, and for a nervous, restless child is necessary.

The proper dress for children is that which allows the most freedom of action. Clothing that binds, or draws in any direction, or that is not suited to the weather, is sure to make trouble. Children grow very rapidly and the dress that fits well when new is soon too tight to be worn with comfort and should be let out promptly, or discarded. Tight waistbands, and tight sleeves are injurious. Little trousers that are tight in the body and legs ought not to be worn. Small shoes and stockings are responsible for many badly shaped feet. In many families it is economy that permits a child to wear its clothes as long as they will last regardless of the size. But it is poor economy that risks a child's health with outgrown clothes. Better let youngsters go barefoot than to permit them to wear small shoes.

Children may be taught to care for their clothes from the beginning, boys as well as girls; they can put their garments away and straighten the clothes as they take them off as well as one can do it for them. A personal responsibility is good for children, they quickly appreciate and take pride in looking after their own things.

A child's bed should have a good firm mattress and one small pillow of hair, or feathers, never down. Cotton sheets are best, for linen is cold, and one or two blankets, according to the weather. An extra cover for severe cold can be a light cheese-cloth comfortable. Again do not use down; it is too heating. Never put a child in a feather bed, and do not use a heavy Marseilles spread on any bed, unless it be removed at night. Warmth without weight is the object. Heavy covers of any kind are impervious to air and are not good to sleep under.

Children should sleep alone. A large room with three or more little white iron beds is a pretty sight and no more trouble than two large beds and is very much better for the children. Two washstands should be in such a room so there need be no confusion, and each child should have at least a part of a bureau and closet for which he is responsible. For the toilet arrangements, care must be taken to see that each child