

PICTURES FROM INDIA.

I wish I could make you see a village in India. It is difficult to imagine the place, so unlike anything you are used to.

They are often enclosed in a high brick wall, and when you see them at a distance, what you do see looks like a huge brick kiln. As you get nearer, you see that there is a great doorway, and when you go in through the doorway there are streets of small whitewashed houses.

The roofs all project a long way beyond the walls, and there is a covered space before each house where the people can sit in the shade, and where they mostly sleep in the very hot nights.

Almost all the work is done in the open air. The weaver sets up his loom and weaves his cloth in the street. the carpenter does all his sawing and planing, the blacksmith all his hammering, in the village street.

Outside the village, the potters sit making basins and pots of clay on their swiftly turning-wheel.

Near them stands a small square building, with a queerly-shaped stone or a rude image of wood, which is the village temple and the god whom these ignorant villagers worship.

I once saw in one of these villages what I have been told is a rare sight. I saw the village carpenter making a god. The whole scene is exactly described in the 44th chapter of Isaiah : so exactly, that the prophet must have seen in Palestine hundreds of years ago what I saw in India eight years ago.

The people had gone to the forest jungle, and selected a suitable tree, and sawn the stump the proper length, and hauled it to the village square. It had been roughly squared with an adze. The carpenter sat on the ground, a board of moist red clay beside him, and a pair of rude compasses in his hand.

He drew circles to represent the head, the upper and lower parts of the body, and the feet, using his finger dipped in the red clay for his pencil. The figure was like what I have seen small boys draw on their slates. Then he took his axe and began chipping at the wood.

The women came and gathered up the chips, and when the evening came they lit their fires and cooked their bread, using these wood chips as their fuel.

I saw some boys creep up and run off with some of the chips and splinters of

wood. They went to where the tall tamarind trees stood, and kindled little fires in the angles of the great roots. Then I saw all the village boys run across the square to the fires, and heard them shouting in Marathi, "Aha, I see a fire; I'll get warm" (it was during the rains, when the evenings are chilly).

Now, will you read the 44th chapter of Isaiah, and you will find all that described there. With part of the wood they baked bread, and with part they made a fire to warm themselves, and with the rest they made a god.



A god of India.

There are schools in most of these villages, but native schools are queer things and the education is always mixed with gross idolatry. When a small Hindu boy is first sent to school, the priest is asked to make a spell to find out the luckiest day. On that day he is taken with great pomp by his father.

When he gets to school he is made to sit on the floor, and a wooden board covered with fine red dust is placed before him. On the board is painted an image of the Hindu goddess of learning, and the small scholar is taught to worship the image.