

INDIA'S GREAT WALL.

"Why it is China that has the great wall!" says somebody who is well-read in missionary matters. Yes, China has a great wall of wonderful masonry, as most of us know, and the men who built it must have felt that no enemy could ever make his way through or over such a great fort-like barrier.

India's wall is not built of stone; it is built in the hearts and beliefs and customs of the people, and is so strong that our missionaries sometimes feel that it would be easier to break through the famous Wall of China than to break down this other wall which is called *Caste*.

You can hardly take up a book about India without seeing some mention of it, but it is not often that we find it so clearly explained to young people as it is done in Mr. Bruce's *Letters from India*.

First he tells us that the Hindus believe that after Brahma, their great god of the universe, had made the world, he made the people to live in it. Out of his mouth came the Brahmans, who were highest of all. This is the priestly caste.

From Brahma's shoulders came the next caste, who were strong and brave, and became soldiers and chieftains. Next came the merchants and traders, who sprang from the loins of the god; and from his feet sprang the lowest caste of all, the Sudras, who were to be the servants of the higher castes.

After awhile these four classes were divided into a great many more, until now, jewelers, merchants, shepherds, carpenters, tailors, weavers, robbers, basket-makers and many others, all form separate castes. Besides these there are a great many people here who do not belong to any caste and are called out-castes.

"Suppose now that this same system existed in your own city or village. In the first place, after you had become ten or twelve years old, you would not be allowed to eat or drink with any little boys or girls who did not belong to the same caste as yourself. Nor would you be allowed to play with them as freely as you

do now. If your father is a merchant, then you must associate only with the children of merchants. If your father is a carpenter, then you must only eat and drink with the children of carpenters. Do you not see that in this way your circle of friends would be very small? Very likely those who are now your dearest friends, would become by the rules of caste, your enemies.

"In the second place you would be obliged to learn your father's trade, and to continue in it all your life. If your father is a jeweler, then you must be a jeweler. If your father is a sweeper of the streets, then you must never aspire to anything higher than that. So you see that these bonds of caste must destroy all ambition and desire for better things. My Hindu washerman has a little boy whom he loves, and of whom he is very proud. He says he hopes that he will be able some time to wash my children's clothes. This is the highest hope that he can cherish for his darling boy, and a smile of joy lights up his face at the thought of so great a blessing.

"Again, if you were subject to the rules of caste, you would not be permitted to go to school as you do now. The Hindus think that since they can only follow one trade, there is no use of learning anything beyond that trade. If the farmer knows how to plow, to sow his seed, and to reap his harvest, what matters it to him whether the earth be round or flat, or whether the Atlantic Ocean be filled with water or with milk. This is the Hindu reasoning; and so the child is put to his work while he is very young, and made to learn the trade which he must follow all his life. I have myself been much amused at seeing a blacksmith's little boy, not more than four years old, with his anvil and hammer, trying to make a nail.

"I have told you some of the changes that would take place if you were brought at once under the rules of caste; but I cannot tell you all. I think you must pity these wretched people, who are living under such dreadful bonds.