

a sprinkling of rings and necklaces, interspersed with the choice furniture of the rich dressing-case. Over all was placed a large white shawl, with its many soft folds, and then Daph viewed the success of her packing with much satisfaction.

Quietly and stealthily she approached the bed, where the little girl was sleeping so soundly that she did not wake, even when Daph lifted her in her strong arms, and laid her gently in the great basket—the choicest treasure of all. In another moment the plump rosy boy was lying with his fairy-like sister, in that strange resting place. Daph looked at them as they lay side by side, and a tear rolled over her dark cheeks, and as it fell, sparkled in the moonlight.

The negro had taken up a white cloth, and was in the act of throwing it over the basket, when a small book with golden clasps suddenly caught her eye; rolling it quickly in a soft, rich veil, she placed it between the children, and her task was done. It was but the work of a moment to fasten on the cloth covering with a very stout string; then with one strong effort, Daph stooped, took the basket on her head, and went forth from the door with as stately a step as if she wore a crown.

(To be continued.)

Piyara.

(Margaret Cameron Davis, in the 'Presbyterian Banner.')

A little Hindu girl sat one morning in the shade of a tall plantain tree, grinding corn. Her chuddar was pulled well over her face, hiding all of it except a rosy mouth and a round, olive-tinted chin. As she worked, however, the head covering slipped up and showed a straight little nose and long lashes, startling black even against the dark cheek. But, as a quick movement sent the chuddar down on her shoulders, the child's prettiness turned almost to grotesqueness, for the head, instead of having the wealth of glossy black hair needed as a frame for the face, was closely shaven, and the little brown ears were torn and disfigured.

Near the girl in the doorway of the little thatched house of sun-dried brick her father sat watching her.

'Piyara,' he said, gently.

She rose quickly and stood before him.

Why didn't he let her grind, she thought, for, perhaps, when she had finished, she might play with the little white kitten. It did not care if her hair had all been cut off. It has been two months, two such long months, since the old women of the village had come one day while she played with the other children, and had told her that her boy husband was dead. Then they had beaten her and torn off her ornaments; her playmates had drawn away from her and joined in the curses the old women pronounced—awful curses to hear from any lips—but from children's! She had cried bitterly when the earrings had been torn out. It had hurt so! And now, as she thought again of that awful day, she shivered and drew her chuddar closely around her.

'Piyara, my child, I have thought long of thee. Thou art my only child and the gods have denied me a son. For two whole months I have done unto thee as our priests command concerning widows. I will do so no longer. To-morrow thou

shalt put on thy bright tinsel-trimmed chuddar. They shall not shave thy head again. Thou shalt not fast save on our holy days. Thy jewels have gone to thy husband's family; but I have a bracelet of gold—it was thy mother's and I have ever kept it with me. Thou shalt wear it.'

As he spoke of bright clothes and jewels the child shrank back in terror.

Before he could stop her she was gone. Poor child, she felt that kindness would mean only one thing. Her lot was hard, but there was a harder—to be sold. Down by the river, whither she ran blindly, she cried herself into an exhausted sleep, and when she opened her eyes again her father sat beside her, watching her patiently. He smiled down at her and said, 'Poor little one, didst thou think I could part with thee—my only child?'

'Nay, thou art to live in my house as my daughter and not as Sher Sinjh's widow,' he said, almost doggedly, as though he were already facing his kinsmen, who, he knew, would wear him out over the matter.

Next morning, when Piyara went to the village well, wearing a bright chuddar instead of the coarse white one—the widow's badge—there was a great outcry. The women questioned her, and when she answered that she was to live as a married daughter in her father's house, they screamed shrilly. One woman struck her fiercely and sent her home crying in terror. 'Let me put on my old clothes. The women say I am wicked and will defile the well,' she sobbed, when she found her father.

'The gods forgive me! I did not mean that thou shouldst go to the well alone this morning. Give me the water pot; I will fill it myself.'

But at the well he found the priest and men of the village whom the women's cries had attracted. 'Golok Nath, what is this thy daughter speaks, saying she is not to live as a widow?' demanded the priest.

'She hath spoken the truth. I will not starve her and keep her sad and shaven.'

The villagers turned to the priest in horror. What should be done to a man who dared defy the customs of the land? The priest, however, remembered that Golok Nath was rich, and said wisely: 'Take back thy words and offer a great gift to Vishnu, lest I curse thee.'

'Listen, Golok Nath. Thou art not the first to lift thy voice against custom. The desire to change the things that hurt comes to many of us in youth. Thou wouldst save the little one? Knowest not that this is her destiny? Give her ease here and thou but delayest her punishment and addest to the wrath of the gods. She is one accursed, for whom there is no happiness except through suffering here. Thou wilt lay up trouble for thyself also. She is but a woman. Wilt thou put thy confidence in weakness and lose thy friends and break thy caste for a woman? Will she repay thee? Nay, one day when she hath grown strong and beautiful, she will tire of the lonely life which thou must lead and she will leave thee for gayer companions. Wilt thou sink her lower than the lowest and lose all thyself?'

'What I have said I will do,' answered Golok Nath. Then he added slowly: 'Our ancient books say also in one place that "where the women of a family live in grief

that family shall wholly perish." Who is right, those who wrote our holy books, or our priests who—'

The priest interrupted with a yell of fury. 'Thou! a man of unclean lips, darest thou speak of the law? Dost thou teach us? Away! cursed art thou! No water mayst thou draw from the well. No one may give thee food or drink lest the gods smite him. Thou art cut off from thy people and thy father's land, and in death none shall pray for thee.'

At the first words of the curse Golok Nath turned slowly and walked toward his house. The crowd pressed closely after him, and someone, as the priest ended, threw a stone. Piyara, who had been watching at the door for his return, saw the stone strike him and ran toward her father. High above the clamor of the crowd the priest's voice rose in hate:—'Touch him not. He is unclean. He is an outcast, cursed of the gods.'

True to all the training of her ten short years she ran back in alarm and the crowd laughed and shouted, 'See, she hateth thee already.' The child's action, however, was one of instinctive obedience to the priest's command; obedience was the one clear idea her mind caught from the tangle of the thoughts in her poor brain, and her flight was almost a reflex one for self-preservation. But when a second stone was sent with surer aim and she saw her father fall to the ground, she ran back to him. The stone had made an ugly wound, and the frightened child, crying bitterly, knelt and staunched the blood flowing from it with her gay red chuddar, until her father opened his eyes again and smiled at her. The two were alone now, for the people, alarmed at their own violence, had gone quietly away to talk the matter over.

That night Golok Nath and Piyara, hand in hand, started to find a new home; and after many days reached a nook in the Sewalic Hills; there, beside a little spring, they began their lonely life, with only one another and the small furry and feathered children of the woods for company. Golok Nath taught the girl to read, and together they studied the sacred books of Hinduism: the girl to please her father and the man to find truth and peace. For four years they lived beside the spring.

One morning he sat by the spring, book in hand, but with thoughts far away, when a tall Englishman came up the path, and not seeing Golok Nath, stooped to drink from the bubbling spring.

'Will the sahib have a cup?' asked the Brahman gently.

The old Englishman took the little brass drinking cup, but instead of using it, looked curiously at Golok Nath and said: 'You are a Brahman and yet offer me your cup!'

'I hold to the older laws and they enjoin hospitality. Besides,' he added, with a smile, 'our holy law saith in one place that if a man retain the whole of the Rig Veda in his memory he may be forgiven any sin.'

Then they sat beside the spring and talked of many curious things; and, somehow, Golok Nath found himself opening his heart and telling the story of Piyara and his fear for the future.

When he spoke, Piyara came running lightly down the hill. 'See, father, dear one, see what I have found—a little bird tangled in the grass. We will set it free together, and in the days to come it will