

## A PURDAH CARRIAGE.

By Rev. Norman H. Russell.

(For the Children's Record.)

You all know how so many of the poor women of India are shut up for the most of their lives within the walls of their own home, where many of them often have a very unhappy time.

When married, generally as young girls, they are brought to live in the home of their husband's father.

As girls they enjoyed much freedom going in and out of their father's home as they pleased, playing with other girls, or perhaps attending school.



The Purdah Cart in India.

But from the day they enter their father-in-law's home they lose their freedom. They must now remain in the women's apartments or in the open zenana court in the midst of the house. They must keep their face veiled when their brothers-in-law are present, and are not supposed to speak even to their husbands in the day time. In fact it would be looked on as wrong even to utter his name.

They have for company the wives of their

husband's brothers and their mother-in-law, to whose rule they must give implicit obedience unless, indeed, the old grandmother be alive when she will be ruler of the women's apartments.

If it be a Brahmin household of means the young wife will not have much to do, and time passes very heavily in the narrow confines of the Zenana.

She has not the privilege of her husband's company and conversation. She never eats with him except once in a lifetime and that is on the day of her marriage. Even were he present he would not talk with her as she is supposed to belong to a much lower order of beings than her husband.

You will understand, therefore, how eagerly the poor young wife looks forward to the chance of a journey, or a drive to her father's home.

For this purpose she must go in a closed carriage, and as only the very wealthy people, such as princes can afford carriages like our closed cabs at home, they have to make up a simpler kind of purdah cart, such as is shown in our picture. This is just a bullock cart, with a sort of cage over it, covered with a white cloth. The bullocks are not yet harnessed to it.

The woman who is travelling in this carriage was on the train with us. When on the train of course she could not observe purdah entirely, as she could not afford to pay for a whole compartment, and was seen by the other passengers.

But when she reached her destination her husband's servants brought a great curtain to the car door and held it all round her while she walked to the carriage and got in. So careful are they to keep their women from being seen.

I am glad to say, however, that the majority of the women of India are not shut up in Zenanas, but move about almost as freely as the men.

Even the Zenana women are getting more freedom, so that to-day they often ride in open carriages.

Travelling on the railways has so broken in on the old custom that it is being relaxed in other ways.

But above all the teachings of Christianity are giving the people of India a much higher opinion of women and as they come to learn more of the Bible and more of the high estimate Christianity puts on women these old customs will pass away and be replaced by better and wiser ones.