

Christ. Your prayers are the bamboos through which we can train them to take root. Pray for my little banyan tree Somayya, that he may grow up to be as useful as the big banyan trees which shade his house.

—Lutheran Boys and Girls.

THE LITTLE CRUSADERS

E. Bessie Lockhart

Time flies apace, even in India, where two o'clock is the same as one, and all things come to pass "tomorrow." Space is merely relative—four miles are but a furlong with a motor car, and seventeen a mere nothing to the young boarding school sprout anxious to leave his books and have a taste of his mother's cooking. Here, all is but nothing as compared with the infinities of God. So let me tell now of a little glimpse of God's plan shown to us while here—even in this movement of the children—for the things of the Spirit are Infinite and Eternal, and the soul of a little child is more to the Heavenly Father than any other of His great creations.

The Children's Crusade, how long ago that was. Yet some of us here have the privilege of watching another and greater one than that, little brown girls and boys in the outcast hamlets of South India. These, my friends, are the true crusaders, and they are carrying the banner of the Prince of Peace and Love into countless homes.

I write from a typical "moss covered" school house, with its mud walls, plastered carefully with cow manure—and its grass roof treacherously letting in "those sunbeams like swords". Before me, or at the side, stands a little girl with the torn leaf of a Bible in her hand. It is too early in the morning for her to have her hair combed, but no matter, her eyes shine and her teeth glitter as she proudly informs me "I know all the stories and verses and hymns." Soon she will be the proud possessor of a New Testament, probably the second one in the hamlet. The teacher's Bibles are worn to shreds by the village children who have to learn from them. The teacher's lantern is used by five or

six village children who come to the one good light in the hamlet to study their lessons. The school is a real "community centre," even though that term has never been defined to the Indian mind. This morning, after my night's stay in another village school house, my eyes were gladdened by the sight of one of the school boys combing his hair by the teacher's looking glass, and if you say that he was using the teacher's comb also, I shall never presume to contradict your statement.

Oh! the hordes of children there are in India. They swarm at one like bees. They follow along the roads and canal banks. They form a procession when the teacher's wife takes us around to see the Christian houses. In they rush before us. Tramp tramp, run, rush, squeal. There, someone has dropped the baby and forty or fifty children are pressing upon the sister and if a great yell does not go up, that baby's education will be finished before his village life has fairly begun. The teacher shouts frantically, "Keep back, keep back. Take the babies home." But nothing matters now. The route is on. The missammagaru has come for her yearly visit, and what care the children for the words of a mere teacher? On comes the steady phalanx. They know not the word retreat. They fill up the houses. They dart under the verandahs. They knock over the water pots. On, on! It is children's night for once, and a night they mean to make of it.

Now! Someone has tramped on the teacher's wife's foot and she limps home to wash it and bind some leaves or maybe some cow manure, upon the wound, and her husband and I are left to finish the time alone—all alone in the dark, except for that squealing dark mass. But at last the house to house visitation is finished, the women come for their night meeting, and the children squat in a black ring around the edge.

These are the children of our village schools. Early in the morning they arrive, "with less than nothing on in front and half of that behind." The teacher