

## BOYS IN BOMBAY.

**L**IFE is much pleasanter for the boys in Bombay, or indeed in any part of India, than for the girls. When the boy first comes into the world, he is welcomed with great joy. His father is delighted, and his mother is proud and happy. I don't suppose the little baby knows much about this himself, but when he grows older he soon learns what an important member of the family he is.

For the first five or six years of his life this little boy runs about as he pleases, playing out-of-doors most of the time, and wearing little or no clothing. Sometimes he wears a little cambric jacket of some gay color, and sometimes he wears a chain, tied around his waist with a string, and nothing else. His little brown face grows still browner in the hot sun, but he does not care. Because he spends so much of his time out-of-doors he is usually well and strong, and though our little boys would not think he had very much to make him happy, yet he always seems bright and smiling.

When the boy is about six years old he begins to go to school, and then he has some new clothes, perhaps the first he has ever worn, and he is very proud and happy. He does not need any books or slate at first. His fingers are all the tools he wants, as he sits down on the floor with a little sand before him and makes the letters, marking with his finger in the sand. He has a harder alphabet to learn than the little boys in America, for, whatever language he speaks, there are sure to be about thirteen or fourteen vowels, and twenty or more consonants.

If he is a little Telugu boy he begins by writing two characters which mean a, a, only he pronounces the short a like u in tub, and the long one like a in father. If he is a Tamil boy, he will have to learn fourteen vowels and eighteen consonants. But if he lives in Bombay, he will be more likely to learn the Marathi alphabet, and he will have to learn the printed characters, and also the written ones.

I don't know whether the little boys in Bombay would think the English letters were hard to learn or not, but when I tried to learn the Marathi alphabet I found it very hard. I wish I could show you the queer-looking letter; but, if I should write them here, I am afraid the printers in Boston could not set them up. However, these little boys seem to make easy work of it, and they soon learn not only to write, but to read.

A good many of the boys like to learn English, as they are more likely to get good situations, when they are older, if they can speak English well. It is funny to hear them try to pronounce the letters, for they often put a "y" before their vowels. I remember hearing one

class reciting like this: Ya, b, c, d, yef, g, yaitch, yi, j, k, yell, yem, yen, etc.

I became pretty well acquainted with some boys in Bombay. They were in a mission school there. Some of them could talk English very well, and some of them could only smile to me in Marathi, but I think we understood each other finely. I shall not soon forget the little boy about seven or eight years old who put a garland of flowers around my neck, the last time I saw the whole school together, and I am sure I shall remember the faces of those older boys who came to the steamer to see us off.

But I must tell you about one more boy that I saw in Bombay who was not in the mission school. It was Sunday evening, and we were on our way to church, when suddenly we heard the sound of drums and horns, and saw a very grand procession come, which we were informed was a wedding procession. First came six horses mounted by six little children, very richly dressed, and decorated with garlands of flowers. Then came the musicians, and then a great company of people walking, then some more horses, and then came the boy who was the hero of the occasion, for he was the bridegroom.

He was riding on a beautiful horse, and was adorned with garlands which almost covered his head and face. Over his head was a large umbrella, and some one walked beside him fanning him. He looked about fifteen years old, though perhaps he might have been a little older. Behind him was seated his little bride, who looked about five years old, and was decked out in jewels of all sorts, earrings and nose jewels and bracelets and anklets and necklaces.

Afterwards I saw a good many more wedding processions, but no other quite so fine as this one. I have often thought since I came away of that boy who had such a grand wedding, and have wondered what kind of a life he will live and whether he will be kind to the dear little girl who is to be his wife.

If you could only see the boys in Bombay, the Mohammedan boys, and the Parsee boys, and the Marathi boys, if you could realize that they are all your brothers, I am sure you would want to do all you could to help them. One thing you can all do, you can pray for them, and perhaps you can give some of your money to help them.—*Mrs. F. E. Clark, in The Golden Rule.*

I FEEL a profounder reverence for a boy than for a man. I never meet a ragged boy on the street, without feeling that I may owe him a salute, for I know not what possibilities may be buttoned up under his shabby coat. Among the boys are the great men of the future, the heroes of the next generation, the reformers and moulders of the next age.—*Garfield.*