

NOTHING TO DO.

A FAIRY STORY OF TO-DAY.

"There's nothing to do, and there's nothing to say,
And the rain, it raineth all the day,
There is nothing amusing, and nothing is new;
In fact, as I said, there's nothing to do."
So spoke little Gretchen, and turned again
To watch the rain on the window pane;
"Now," she cried, "there's the clock, but it only struck two.
What is to be done when there's nothing to do?"
"Nothing to do," said a voice by her side
"Would you like to come with me for a ride?"
Then Gretchen turned round delighted to see
Her good fairy godmother smiling with glee,
And the very first tap of her high-heeled shoes
Quite startled the child from her fit of the blues
A neat little figure, so quaint and so trim,
Her little high hat had a little broad brim
And her dainty red petticoat, quilted and neat,
Showed the high buckled shoes on her brisk little feet.
"O yes," cried poor Gretchen, "pray take me with you;
I really am dying from nothing to do."
"Very well," said her godmother, "prithce be quick!
And jump by my side on this fairy broomstick:
It does not rain now, and we will not go far.
So don't stay to dress, but come just as you are."
Quoth Gretchen, "I'll get hat and cloak ere we go;
I'm not quite a fairy, as you are, you know."
The broomstick was swift, and the broomstick was fleet,
So it soon set them down in the old village street.
"And now," said the fairy, "you just follow me;
I have touched you with fern-seed, so no one will see."
Then straightway she opened a rickety door,
And there saw a poor baby alone on the floor,
Such a pitiful baby, so pale and so thin,
With hardly a garment to wrap itself in.
It gave little Gretchen a sorrowful shock,
And she said, "I must make that poor baby a frock."
Her godmother nodded, and merrily smiled,
But soon led Gretchen away from the child,
And showed her its mother, who lay on the bed,
With scarcely a pillow to hold up her head.
Said Gretchen, "She looks very ill. Don't you think
I may bring her some food, or a nice cooling drink?"
Her godmother gave her broomstick a twirl,
And they stood by the side of a little lame girl;
She had no one to comfort her hour by hour,
Cried Gretchen, "I should like to bring her a flower."
"Very good," said the fairy, "pray do if you can;
But now we shall call on a poor old blind man."
"O dear," cried her godchild, "how lonely he looks!
Might I read to him sometimes some comforting books?
And O, godmother, look at that poor little lad,
He is shaking with cold, and so wretchedly clad,
While I am all wrapped in velvet and fur!
Don't you think I can make him a warm comforter?"
"Our ride," said the fairy, "has not been in vain;
And now, if you please, we will fly home again;
I shall call on you, dear, just a week from to-day,
And then I shall hear what you may have to say.
The week slipped away, and the godmother came,
In her little red petticoat, gray as a flame;
She tapped at the door, and she laughed outright
To see her fair godchild so happy and bright.
Then Gretchen looked up with a sunshiny smile,
And she folded her work in a neat little pile;
She laid it a-top of her plentiful store,
Saying, "Now that is done I can make something more.
The days are so busy: I rise with the sun,
But I never can do all there is to be done,
When wants are so many, and workers so few,
How can any one say they have nothing to do?"
—Christian at Work.

ALLAHABAD.

Allahabad, with its wide, straight roads, pleasant bungalows, and shady trees, lies very near the "junction of the waters"—a spot most sacred to the Hindus. Just within sight of the massive fort the Jumna curves round and meets the muddy Ganges; while, according to Hindu mythology, a third river, having its source in Heaven, flows unseen to form a trio of peculiar sanctity.
Here in summer time, while the great cracked bed of the river is mainly dry, quite a busy thriving village springs up on the neck of land nearest the meeting. Booths of every description, guarded by forests of bamboo, with wonderful flags at-

tached, arrest the eye. Idol shops are scattered everywhere, and stalls displaying small bottles of sacred water, or strings of seeds, answering the purpose of Hindu rosaries.

Here, too, may be seen public readers of the Shastres—Brahmins seated comfortably on bed-like divans, mumbling to small congregations around, while further on, at the meeting of the waters, meritorious bathing is continually indulged in. But for me the chief interest centred in the numberless Fakeers frequenting the place, and especially so in Baba Surada, whose portrait, stolen unawares, accompanies this paper.

A raised platform of cement, about two and a half feet high, has been made on a high bank above the river, very near a spreading nimb tree (pronounced neem); this forms his throne. Wrapt in a garment of dirty red sackcloth his bent figure may be seen at any time, seated cross-legged on this divan, the object of worship and of alms.

On the opposite side of the tree a rough

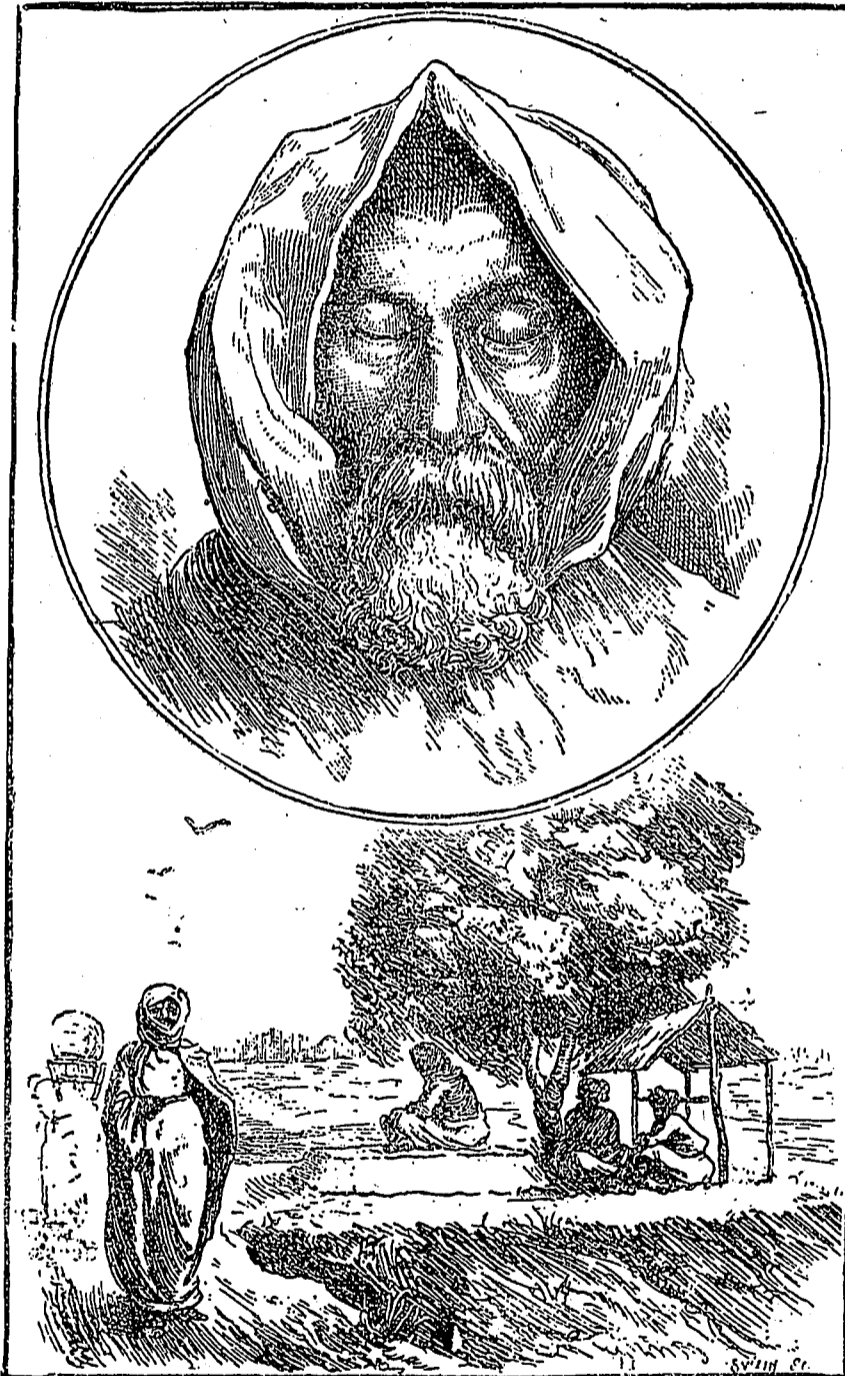
majority of these religious mendicants desire; and thus they impoverish the people without adding an atom to the general good. Absolutely they are good for nothing, though often rich.

It struck me as pitiable, however, in this instance to see the dry old face peeping out with sightless eyes from the dirty covering, Seeing nothing, yet worshipped by passers by—"Blind leaders of the blind"—and I longed, as one often longs in India, for the coming of that Saviour to Fakeer and people whose touch has a healing power for blindness. Will not our readers pray for the speedy coming of this blessed time?—Joseph J. Duke in Missionary Herald.

CHINESE CUSTOMS.

The Chinese, topographically our antipodes, are as opposite to us in manners and customs.

Our night is their day. Our mourning color is black, theirs is white. Their boats are drawn by men; their carriages are moved by means of sails.



BABA SURADA, THE ALLAHABAD FAKEER.

shed has been erected, while behind him recline his attendants, as shown in the sketch.

Some doggerel verses written in English set forth his claim to generosity, and state that he is perfectly blind, and has been sitting there for more than half a century, only leaving his throne in severe storms, or to bathe in the river mud at dawn. From this ablution he emerges dirty and refreshed, ready for any grist that may come to his mill; and doubtless a vast deal of grist does come to that institution during the day in shape of pice or annas.

As a rule the Fakeers of India are by no means worthy of the praise often so lavishly bestowed upon them for seeking holiness by self-sacrifice. A lazy living is what the

Old men fly kites, while little boys look on; with them the seat of honor is at the left hand, and to keep one's hat on is a sign of respect. We drink tea hot and wine cold; they drink wine hot and tea cold.

The family name comes first instead of last; thus, John Smith would be Smith John. The needle of their compass points to the south, ours to the north. They say "west-north" instead of "north-west," "east-south" instead of "south-east." Their soldiers wear quilted petticoats, satin boots and bead necklaces, carry umbrellas and fans, and go to a night attack with lanterns, being more afraid of the dark than the enemy.

They mount their horses on the right side. The children in school sit with their

backs to the teacher and study their lessons aloud.

A married woman when young and pretty is a slave; when she is old and withered she is the most respected and beloved member of the family.

Their most valued piece of furniture is a handsome camphor-wood coffin, which they keep in the best room. They are very fond of fireworks, but always display them in the daytime. If you offend a Chinaman, instead of killing you he will kill himself on your doorstep.—Selected.

ONLY HIS MOTHER.

Charlie Holland, at your service. A well-dressed, well-mannered, pleasant-faced boy. You feel sure you would like him. Everybody who sees him feels just so.

"His mother must be glad of him," is a sentence often on people's lips. Look at him now, as he lifts his hat politely, in answers to a call from an open window.

"Charlie," says the voice, "I wonder if I could get you to mail this letter for me? Are you going near the post-office?"

"Near enough to be able to serve you, Mrs. Hampstead," says the polite voice. "I will do it with pleasure."

"I shall be very much obliged, Charlie, but I wouldn't want to make you late at school on that account."

"Oh! no danger at all, Mrs. Hampstead. It will not take two minutes to dash around the corner to the office." And, as he receives the letter, his hat is again lifted politely.

"What a perfect little gentleman Charlie Holland is," says Mrs. Hampstead to her sister, as the window closes. "Always so obliging, he acts as though it were a pleasure to him to do a kindness."

Bend lower, and let me whisper a secret in your ear. It is not five minutes since that boy's mother said to him, "Charlie, can't you run up-stairs and get that letter on my bureau and mail it for me?" And Charlie, with three wrinkles on his forehead, and a pucker on each side of his mouth, said, "O mamma! I don't see how I can. I'm late now; and the office is half a block out of my way."

And the mother said, well, then, he needn't mind, for she didn't want him to be late at school. So he didn't mind, but left the letter on the bureau, and went briskly on his way until stopped by Mrs. Hampstead.

What was the matter with Charlie Holland? Was he an untruthful boy? He did not mean to be. He claimed himself to be strictly honest.

It was growing late, and he felt in a hurry, and he hated to go upstairs. Of course, it would not do to refuse Mrs. Hampstead, and, by making an extra rush he could get to school in time; but the other lady was only his mother. Her letter could wait.

"Only his mother!" Didn't Charlie Holland love his mother, then?

You ask him, with a hint of doubt about it in your voice, and see how his eyes will flash, and how he will toss back his handsome head, and say:

"I guess I do love my mother! She's the grandest mother a boy ever had."

Oh! I didn't promise to explain Charlie's conduct to you; I am introducing him; you are to study for yourselves. Do you know any boy like him?—Pansy.

A MINUTE'S ANGER.

Not long ago, in a city not far from New York, two boys, neighbors, who were good friends, were playing. In the course of the game a dispute arose between the boys, and both became angry. One struck the other, and finally one kicked the other, who fell unconscious in the street, was taken home, and now for four weeks has suffered most cruelly. The doctors say that if he lives he will never be well, and will always suffer and need the constant care of a physician. If the boys had been the greatest enemies they would not, could not, have desired a worse fate for each other than this. But instead of enemies they were friends and loving companions. Now everything is changed. One will never be able to walk or to take part in active games; the other will never forget the sufferings he has caused. A minute's anger caused this.—S. S. Messenger.