

## A PICNIC IN INDIA.

INDORE, India, Nov. 2, 1893.

## DEAR YOUNG PEOPLE:

**D** When you read the heading of this you naturally think of a well-dressed, happy looking company of boys and girls, with dainty baskets filled with choice luxuries, hastening to some cool, pleasant woods.

Come with me to the station at Indore, early in the morning, where are 150 people assembled in groups, not in dainty white frocks and laces, but in garbs of many shades and colors, some, perhaps, rather scanty, and many shivering, for it is the rainy season with its fever and cold, caused too often from want of substantial food. Instead of dainty baskets are bags of flour, vegetables, and country baskets containing native sweets.

Special carriages having been secured they are soon safely packed in them, and slowly we make our way to a place called Patal-Pani (Water of Hell), where there is a pretty water fall, plenty of level ground, a beautiful grove of trees and a house belonging to the railway, but kindly placed at our disposal for the day.

To boys and girls at home the fun is most thought of in such outings, and to some extent this was the case here; but to most, the bags and baskets were all important, and eager busy hands at once began the preparations for the dinner. The sweetmeats were distributed, as the preparation of the food would take some time.

Games were started, such as baseball, running races, swings, etc., but outside of the "Home" boys few showed the enthusiasm seen at home. Our games are new to the people and under-fed bodies do not readily rise above natural and climatic listlessness. The "Home" boys—sturdy, well-fed fellows, and trained athletes—took the lead, and the Europeans did what they could, though you know some of us are not as young as we once were, some of us playing baseball for the first time since girlhood.

But let us go over and see the food being prepared. The flour is emptied into large flat brass dishes, mixed with water and salt,

kneaded and shaped into small buns. A number of flat cakes of dried cow's manure are in the mean time, by other hands, set on fire, and when burning well, the so-called buns are thrown upon it to bake. This hot fire browns and somewhat cooks the outside, and so hot ashes are drawn to one side and into this they are put, to cook them through and through. When properly done they are shaken in a towel or sheet and then thrown into boiling or hot ghee (clarified butter), to give them the final relish.

Whilst some are doing this others are preparing the curries or rather the vegetable preparations that are to accompany the bread. In one pot there is put a mixture of dal, like split peas, red pepper, and many other seasonings, whilst in the other is a mixture of potatoes, onions, garlic, red pepper, etc. These are boiled for nearly two hours and then are ready to be served to the many hungry ones who had been hanging about with wistful eyes, and to whom the whole was to be a great treat.

For plates they have leaves kept together with a thorn; for knives they have their fingers, and for a spoon they have a piece of bread. The brass lota that all carry with them here, served for their drinking cup, and afterwards their wash basin, etc.

This large company of very hungry people, 150 in all, were fully satisfied with food for the whole day for Rs 22 10 3, or in other words about \$7.50. Can you do better than that? A more thoroughly satisfied crowd I have seldom seen, as they made their way back to the train, and then about half past seven reached Indore.

You cannot, however, hear the music and singing that all day long filled the air, sometimes by small groups and again by the whole company accompanied by the concertina, violin, cymbals, native drums, and even clapping of hands when they were particularly pleased. To be appreciated, this requires a cultivated, or rather naturalized ear.

The picnic was thought of to counteract and to show to these new Christians the contrast between the gatherings of Christians and others in this land, and this we believe we accomplished.