



LITTLE GIRLS IN INDIA.

sacred to the use of the Brahmins. "I, as a Christian," said Miss Sorabji, "could not touch that well." Here she draws the water, and carries it home in three large water-pots which she bears on her head. This practice gives a fine, erect carriage.

After bringing the water she takes a bath and puts on a delicate pink garment, worn only in the kitchen, which, by the Brahmins, is considered a sacred place. Indeed, their religion is mixed with their ordinary life in everything, and Miss Sorabji remarked that, should we, copying them, make every act an act of devotion, consider every gift as a blessing from God, and thus mingle our religion more with our everyday life, we would be happier and do better.

To return to the little wife. She now enters her kitchen and prepares the breakfast for her household, the mother-in-law looking on and criticizing.

First, she must make a great number of unleavened cakes, eight or ten for each member of the family; and after that she must prepare several kinds of vegetables and other dishes.

When the cooking is done, she enters the dining-hall, which is a large oblong apartment opening from the kitchen. Around each side of this hall are placed stools, as many as there are men in the household.

First she takes a sieve, made in the form of the lotus blossom, fills it with fine wheaten flour, and makes the impression of the lotus flower before each stool, down the centre of the dining-room. The lotus is the sacred flower of the Hindoos, hence they consider its image as a charm protecting the household.

After this she takes the polished brazen plates and sets one at each place. Then around the

large plates she places twelve little ones, also of brass, and beside each place two bright brazen tumblers, one for water and a smaller one for milk. When all these preparations are completed she stands in her kitchen door and waits. Soon the men come in to their breakfast. Before coming they must bathe, and the garment which they wear to this meal is of spotless white from the loins down, with nothing above the waist but the sacred Brahminical cord around the neck, and this they put over the ears while eating.

The little wife keeps her eyes on her lord and master. He does not meet her with a smile and a morning greeting,

but when all are seated he nods. This is the signal for her to serve breakfast. So she brings in the dish with a large spoon, and serves (just as a servant would in our country) each dish in turn, and lastly fills the tumblers. She then retires to the doorway of her kitchen and awaits further orders. "If the master wishes a dish replenished," said Miss Sorabji, "he does not say, with a smile, 'Will you please help me to some more of this?' but points to the dish, and the obedient little wife fills it again."

When the men have finished their meal the poor little wife cannot eat her own breakfast and rest, for the many dishes and all the stools must be washed and polished, and, after the completion of that task, she must again bathe ere she can break her fast.

The midday meal consists of fruit and milk, which require no cooking, but the evening repast is the most extensive of the day, and rice is added to the "bill of fare."

At the age of twelve, perhaps, she is a mother. She shows you her tiny baby, and smiles and says, "I am a little mother now." But her life is no easier now than before; the labors and hardships are the same, with the additional care of the infant.

Should she ever make a mistake in one of her many tasks she is beaten by "that dear mother-in-law."

"And what," said Miss Sorabji, "happens to one of these young wives of from ten years upward if her husband dies?"

Should she die, her husband might marry the next day if he wished, but she may not marry again, and is treated as an outcast. Her handsome clothes and her jewels are taken away from her; she is given a garment of the coarsest material, such as is worn by the very poor. Her beautiful, long, heavy hair is shorn close,