

Youths' Department.

THE LITTLE WIDOWS.

There's a little girl over in India,
No bigger nor older than I,
Who never laughs or smiles at all;
I'm sure you wonder why.

I just can't understand it myself,
How such a thing could be;
For little girls, all over the world
Should be happy, it seems to me.

But this little girl, no bigger than I,
So sad, across the sea,
Is a widow already,—'tis true, they say,—
How strange it seems to me!

I can't understand it myself at all.
A widow's an outcast, they say;
No home, no friends, and no one to love,
Just hated and in the way.

She didn't choose to be widow, or wife,
Or betrothed, our dear teacher said,
But a widow's a widow indeed, over there,
If husband or lover is dead.

This little girl, no bigger than I,
Is not alone in her grief;
For twenty millions like her wait to die,
As their only hope of relief.

Unloved, unloving, they pine in their pain,
No hope when they go to their grave;
So strange, don't you think? that this can be,
Since Jesus has died to save!

But the beautiful story of Jesus' love,
They're just beginning to tell
In India's darkened, sin-blighted land,
Where the little widows dwell.

I sometimes wonder, tho' I'm very small,
If, perhaps, in a long, long while,
God will want me to go and try to help
The little widows to smile.

—The King's Messenger.

A VISIT TO AFRICA.

WHEN the weather is as cold and wet as in Ottawa tonight, we would all enjoy taking a trip to some warmer clime! Let me tell you something about Central Africa—which was told us at Smith's Falls this week! Our Eastern convention of Circles and Bands met there on Tuesday and Wednesday. Five foreign missionaries visited our sessions, and we were so glad to hear and see them. One lady had been a missionary in Africa, and you would have enjoyed her address, about the

women and children of that country. Their mission was 300 miles from the coast where no white women had ever been seen, and they supposed she could do everything! Broken umbrellas, carriages and various other articles were brought for her to mend, and had to be taken off home again. She was quite a curiosity to the black women, while their dress and ways seemed equally strange to her. Their hair is braided in such fine braids that they have to be done with a needle. Then it is plastered with oil to make it beautiful—except on a hot day, when the oil runs down their cheeks.) They work very hard in the fields and at home chopping wood or pounding corn, while their husbands "take life easy." Their wedding rings are made of brass and copper wire very thick and often weigh twenty pounds. They are worn around the neck and never taken off while the husband is alive. A widow may break hers off as soon as she wishes. The African woman is so loaded down with jewels that should she fall in the river she would go straight to the bottom with these heavy ornaments. The people are very superstitious and think that all sickness comes from evil spirits. They never speak of death, but say their friends are "lost" when they die. Many charms are worn to keep evil spirits away. Babies often wear a charm tied around their wrist made out of combings from their mother's hair. They are fond of music and quickly learn our Sunday School songs. The missionary sang, "Shall we gather at the river," in the African language, and we all joined in the English chorus. When these women work in the fields their little black babies are tied onto their backs and covered with part of the cloth tied around them instead of the dresses we wear. A son is much prized by these African people, but their daughters are not considered of much account. One old woman could not believe the good news about God giving His only Son to die for sinners. She thought that would be too wonderful, but at last the Lord opened her heart to His great love. One boy was tied up to a fence and beaten severely because he would not stop praying to Jesus. Wonder how many of our Canadian boys and girls would have been as brave as he was? Let us remember to pray for the hundreds of Africans who have never heard the name of the Saviour who died for them.

SISTER BELLE.

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