

A MISSIONARY STORY.

Robbie, Grace and Mrs. Arnot seated themselves in a circle around Mrs. Espeville, and the children cried as if in one voice: "Grandmother, we are all ready for the story."

"Let me tell you," said grandma, "about Krishna, a very popular god in India, and the cruel custom of child-marriage in that far-off country."

"India is the home of teeming millions who have never heard the story of the cross or felt the influence of the blessed gospel. The population of India is said to be ten times that of England, and one-fifth that of the entire globe."

"In the rich agricultural districts more than nine hundred people live to the square mile, and the general average for the whole country is said to be over five hundred inhabitants to the square mile. The land is very productive and the people raise almost all kinds of vegetables and fruits, wheat, rice, cotton, coffee and tea."

"Now, these people have a god for almost everything, and it is thought that they have more gods than any other heathen nation in the world. The people worship this or that god according to their various wants."

"Krishna is the favored god of the women and his divine favor is continually sought. He is also the god of the children, and the mothers tell their children many little incidents about his early childhood."

"Krishna, when a boy, was a very mischievous little fellow, and his mother is said to have lived on a farm and kept a large number of cows for butter-making. He was in the habit of going into the dairy and would meddle with the milk and butter. At last he became so annoying that his mother was compelled to lock the door of the dairy to keep him out."

"But one day she was very busy at work in the dairy and forgot to lock the door, and Krishna, her dear little son, crawled in unobserved and went into one of the compartments. After sticking his hand into the butter, he came out with a large quantity of it in his little hand, and, crawling on his hand and knees to his mother's side, he held up his hand and cried, 'See, mother, what I have got.' A little brass statue, representing this act of Krishna, has been cast."

"The children and women lead a wretched life, and the one hundred and forty mil-

lions of women in India have few rights and privileges. As soon as a girl is born she is betrothed by her parents to some man, and only remains at her own home until her espoused comes and claims her as his wife."

"If I were a native girl would I be compelled to marry and leave home?" interrupted Grace.

"Yes, my dear, and probably our little smiling Helen," replied their thoughtful Christian mother; "since they are often compelled to marry at the age of ten, and even younger."

Little Helen shuddered at the dreadful thought and tightened her hold upon grandmother as if for protection.

"But," continued grandmother, "the wise teachings and the noble example of Jesus of Nazareth have broken down the barriers of oppression and prejudice against women, and has placed her on her present level in the Christian world. Yes, children, we owe a great debt to Jesus."

After a few moments of silence in which all were busily engaged with their own thoughts, Robbie said, "Grandmother, please, don't stop!"

"When once married she becomes the property of her husband, and is under the direct control of her mother-in-law. If her husband should happen to die and she be left a childless widow, then she is looked upon as being cursed by the gods, and is forever disgraced in the sight of the people. Henceforth her life is fit only for abuses and persecutions."

"Sometimes the cruel parents shut these helpless child-widows in monasteries, or hire them out as servants for a paltry trifle, or sell them to wicked men. After they are broken down in health and will bring in no more revenue, they are often turned out in the streets to beg for their living, or starve to death. Such are the fruits of their religion."

"But, grandmother," said Robbie, "is there no help for these poor, unfortunate women?" "And is there nothing to change their condition in life?" anxiously asked Grace.

"I am glad to say there are hopes and a change is gradually coming over India," replied their grandmother. "Christianity is spreading and is doing a great work among the people in establishing schools and educating them. Our missionaries are pointing the people to the cross and the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world."—Pres. Banner.