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A Pujári or priest at the Golden Temple.—Page 14.
NONE OF SELF AND ALL OF THEE.

A TALE OF INDIAN LIFE.

BY

S. S. HEWLETT,

OF ST. CATHERINE'S HOSPITAL, AMRITSAR, PANJĀB, CHURCH OF ENGLAND ZENANA MISSIONARY SOCIETY.

"The Lord my God shall make my darkness to be light."

"Ye were sometime darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord."

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:
JAMES NISBET & CO., 21 BERNERS STREET.
MDCCCCLXXXIX.
PREFA CE.

The following is a *Tale of Indian life*. It is a *tale*, not a missionary report. It is founded on facts which have been gathered together, partly as illustrating how in these days in India people are thinking and searching out truth for themselves, and partly as showing how much may be done by, and how much should be expected from, the reading of the Scriptures alone without any human teacher, and how useful among their own heathen brethren and sisters the Christian people of the land may be. And it is not to be forgotten that both in the matter of the translation and distribution of the Scriptures, and in the training and teaching of the Christians of the country, the prayers and labours of missionaries are now bearing fruit. Their labour has not been in vain in the Lord.

The future fruitfulness of the Church of God in India depends not so much on large numbers of
missionaries from other lands coming forth to labour; it depends on the outpouring of the Blessed Spirit of all grace. There are many Christians in India, and their number is ever on the increase. We cannot also shut our eyes to the fact that these Christians have among them, in at least a fair proportion, knowledge, intellect, and power; but they need more of the "Spirit from on high." With a Pentecostal outpouring there would come a wave of blessing which would flood India, and make the Church in this land what it never has been yet. It is this which will make lives such as those sketched in this little story not merely to be found here and there, and so rarely that the reader is tempted to doubt whether their history was really "founded on fact," but commonly known in hundreds, and even thousands, all over the land.

Missionaries cannot bring this to pass. It must be the work of the Spirit of the Living God. The Church of God must realise herself to be His chosen instrument for prophesying to the wind, "Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live."

This story was originally written for zenána women, and in that form it is now waiting for publication.
PREFACE.

The intention was to provide zenána pupils with a tale which, while it should please as such, should lead them indirectly to a consideration of those all-important truths which every missionary is longing to bring before them.

The present edition is therefore really a translation of the writer's original thoughts, and, like many another parent of a native child, she very excusably liked it better before it was anglicised; but as the process was necessary before it could be offered to English ladies' working-parties with any hope of their understanding it, they are begged to remember that many of the really English expressions and thoughts herein contained do not appear in the original, while many things which might amuse or interest a zenána lady have had to disappear in translation.

At the end will be found a small collection of prayers, which it is hoped may sometimes prove useful to those who conduct missionary working-parties.

S. S. HEWLETT.

Amritsar, October 1888.
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Chapter IX.

Methinks that God will follow him,
Will compass him around with His All-Great
And Wondrous Spirit; and will hedge with thorns
His every way but one—that narrow way
In which, through scorn and trial and loss, at length
He shall be led to endless joy and rest.
Methinks that this most Wondrous Presence still
Will so environ him, that he shall find
He cannot live without the One Who thus
Doth ever seek to lure him to Himself.
How much soe'er he may resist, and think
To fly this Presence, he at length shall own
Each cistern broken, every spring all dried,
Each hope despair, each light enwrapp'd in gloom,
Each medicine bitter poison, all gain loss,
That is not Christ!
NONE OF SELF.

CHAPTER I.

The sun was setting on a fine bright evening in the month of October, as a railway train slowly approached the famous old city of Amritsar, in the Panjáb.

Those accustomed to travel in England and America, where the trains seem to pass along like flashes of lightning, and almost deafen the traveller by their roar, naturally think, at their first experience of journeys in India, that their progress is slow and their time is wasted; but by degrees they grow used to the leisurely way of proceeding, and expect to spend two or three days in traversing as many hundred miles. The industrious traveller employs himself with books, and can even write with a fair amount of ease; while the large number of those who have no inclination for such pursuits, or who have never learnt to read, can
hold conversations with their fellow-travellers, as the train, in its slow progress, does not make sufficient noise to interrupt or annoy those who wish to talk.

On the evening upon which our story opens, the train, nearing the celebrated city of the Sikhs, was very full of passengers. It is true that some first and second class carriages were nearly empty, but all the rest were densely packed, and it would have made any one feel sorry and pitiful to see the third-class carriages, in which there were upper storeys, so filled both above and below with human beings that it seemed almost impossible for them to breathe.

Though the heat of the hot season was quite over, and towards evening it was even chilly, yet the unfortunate inhabitants of those carriages seemed ready to faint with heat and thirst; and no sooner did the train stop in any station, than there was a loud and almost painful cry uttered by many voices at one and the same moment, “Bhiishtî, bhiishtî, bring water!” There was no variation in this, except when some called, “Water for Hindus!” and some, “Water for Mussalmáns!” Separate bhiishtis, with separate vessels (the leathern mashk or bag of goat’s skin for the Mohamedans, and the brass bucket for the Hindus), responded to these several cries.
In the zenána compartments there were many women, and they seemed never weary of talking about the city towards which they were going, and of what they would do and see there.

Among these, however, there were some who sat silent, apparently preoccupied with some sad thoughts, or feeling ill and unable to join in the general hubbub of conversation. One of these quiet ones was a young woman completely enshrouded in a burqa, whose two or three companions were exceedingly jealous of allowing the smallest particle of her face to be seen, and who, although they did indulge her with some slight relaxation of this vigilance, enough to permit of her breathing more freely and peeping out for a few minutes at the other occupants of the compartment, seemed to be in an agony of fear, as they neared any station, lest this pardah-nishin* should be subjected to the rude gaze of any one outside the carefully guarded ladies' carriage. She was by no means opposed to their solicitude and care, for she herself was nervously anxious to remain "in pardah;" and when she had sometimes ventured, during the moving on of the train between two stations, to cautiously remove part of her burqa from her face and look

* A woman keeping pardah.
at her companions, she speedily drew it back again if any woman in the compartment returned her look; and in the stations, dearly as she would have liked to look out somehow or another on the animated scene, and find out for herself the reason of all the bustle and hurry and noise, she allowed not those black eyes to be seen, or to satisfy themselves with seeing, for one moment. Her conversation with her companions was carried on in quite a low voice, and indeed it would seem to have consisted more in signs and noddings of the head and low exclamations of "Ya, Allah!" than in that flow of animated talk which is our idea of conversation; but perhaps a fellow-passenger sitting on the floor very near to the little group (there are usually no seats in zenana carriages) might have gathered that there was some trouble weighing upon them, and that their journey was tending to no festive termination, whatever that of others might be. Snatches of conversation might have caught the ear of a very quick listener.

"Fátima, ji,* do not let your heart be too full of sorrow. This which is happening is the way of the world; illness and death come to all; the nightingale does not sing for ever in the garden."

* "Ji" is a respectful way of addressing any one, something like our "Sir."
"Yes, ji," replied Fátima; "but my only sister, and so dear! She has been ever to me my heart’s joy, the star of dark nights, the bright flower of sad days! As the first showers of the rainy season after the burning hot winds of summer, so is the love of such a sister."

"But, Fátima, think of your home. You are not a widow and desolate."

"Have I any children?" was the passionate response. "Have I any love, any joy? Oh, that I might die!"

Little else passed between her and her companions, but they murmured gently among themselves, and it might easily have been made out from their conversation that this sad little party, consisting of Fátima, a munshi’s wife, and her husband’s mother, with two or three female attendants, were journeying to Amritsar to visit Fátima’s only sister, of whom they had heard three days before, in their distant home in Agra, that she lay very ill, and probably dying.

Fátima had been married rather younger than is customary among Mohamedans, and long before girlhood should have passed away had had full experience of the bitterness of an unhappy Mohamedan home.

There was one ray of sunshine in her darkness, and that was, that her mother-in-law happened to be really
fond of her and kind to her, and tried to shield her as much as she was able from the taunts and unkindnesses of the sister-wife, who had been brought home when, after some five or six years, Fátima had still no hope of children.

The bright and gay Ján Bibi was the mother of three children, two fine boys and a pretty little girl, and sometimes, in her better moods, she would quite affectionately assure Fátima that these children belonged as much to one wife as to the other, and that she would never feel jealous if Fátima could win their love and make them look upon her as a second mother.

This is not infrequently a real comfort and solace to Mohamedan women, and it is often quite surprising how easily they seem to be reconciled to the very hard lot of being superseded; but probably, in many more cases than we suspect, the comfort and satisfaction are only apparent, and the sad woman, while she plays with and fondles and really loves the children of a second wife, must have a very sore heart hidden underneath outward quietness, and the woman whose bosom has never felt the soft touch of her own child must surely often feel it heave with a passionate sorrow and resentment too deep for words as she caresses, however tenderly, the child of her rival!
NONE OF SELF.

People say these feelings are not known in India; that the families of Mohamedans are so accustomed to such domestic sorrows that they cease to affect the heart and mind. Let such ideas be silenced! Let those who cherish them only sit down by the childless wife as she watches the merry children of her fellow-wife, and try to understand what she really does feel!

Probably there are thousands of homes where this bitter sorrow of heart is known, if not shown to others. Ah! would that all such desolate women knew the only Comforter, Jesus the Son of God most high!

The very name, so charming to those who know His love, was unknown to our poor traveller on that October day, and no wonder her head sank lower and lower, and she became less and less inclined to speak to her companions, as she quietly and mournfully droned to herself (swaying her body backwards and forwards to suit the motion of the train) the words of a plaintive dirge—

"Earth for a wrapper, earth for a bed,
Earth for a pillow to rest the head;
Surely the day will come, and soon,
When body and earth will be but one;
For thou hast none of thy very own, ji,
For thou hast none of thy very own, ji."

The time passed very slowly as the train went on
from station to station, carrying with it some sad-hearted people, to whom minutes seemed hours, and many merry ones, who only longed to reach the famous city, where they were hoping to enter into all the excitement and pleasure of the "Diwali."

At Jullundur one of these merry ones entered the carriage where poor Fátima was wearily wishing the time away. The new-comer's name was Basantkor, and she seemed scarcely able to contain the pleasure she felt as she was at length, after many weeks of expectation, actually in the train which was to take her to Amritsar, to the grand sight of the Diwali, and the many enjoyments she hoped for there. She was a girl in somewhat humble life, but that, of course, did not prevent her wearing very bright clothes and a fair supply of jewels, which latter are in reality the savings-bank of the poor in India.

Her husband was a carpenter, and he had secured some work in connection with the preparations for the Diwali, which would enable him to temporarily close his shop in Jullundur and go to enjoy the grand Amritsar Fair. He was, of course, sitting in another carriage in the train, and was entering with eagerness into all the excited talk of the men and boys there crowded together.
Basantkor did not often have treats, though her life was certainly as happy as that of a queen compared with the life of poor Fátima, the munshiáni; and now, through the kindness of her husband’s brother, who was naturally a carpenter too, this work had been secured, and she was to have the pleasure of a few days’ visit to her sister-in-law in the Lakrimandi.*

Basantkor was only about twenty-one years of age, but in the arms of her mother-in-law, Mahtábkor, there was a fine little boy of some three years old, who wore a kurta—or jacket—of muslin trimmed with gilt braid, but was otherwise unencumbered with clothing, and whose hair was gathered up and secured with a fine black silk tassel. (In the case of the Sikhs the hair of boys and men is never cut.) The little fellow was eagerly devouring sweetmeats, and his face was the very picture of satisfaction. He was so unmistakably like Basantkor, that every one must know at a glance that they were mother and son. There was an exclamation of admiration and pleasure as Mahtábkor deposited the child on the floor and began to arrange her own and her daughter’s bundles and drinking-vessels. Poor Fátima gave one curious glance

* Wood-market. Many carpenters live in the Lakrimandi.
in the direction of the little boy, and then, with a sigh which she could not repress, began the refrain in a low murmuring voice—

"For thou hast none of thy very own, ji."

Let us look into one other carriage as our travellers draw near to the end of their journey; it is very crowded, and in one corner is a young man returning home after a visit to Delhi. His name is Partap Singh, and he looks very grave and thoughtful. In his hand is a book, but he is not reading, only now and then looking at a page, and then returning to his thoughts. It is not the book which makes him think so deeply, for that is only an arithmetic book which he thought to con over as a help to his next examination; for though he has a wife at home, he is not yet out of college. No; deeper thoughts than these, deeper questions than could be suggested by the most learned mathematician, in his own special study, thoughts more truly pregnant with great issues than any which could be found in school-books, are stirring his mind, and he often says to himself, "Is it true?" He has heard something during his visit to Delhi which has taken hold of him; his mind is so
full of it that it seems quite impossible for him to think of anything else, and even the common events incidental to a railway journey appear to mingle a deep meaning with his innermost thoughts. That man staggering along the platform with a heavy burden on his back; that one who has made a mistake about the gate, and is trying to enter the station by climbing over a railing, but who is sent back and made to enter by the right way; that warning voice telling him to enter quickly or he will be too late; and then that incessant cry for water! All these things seem to Partáp Singh to remind him of something greater, more important, more urgent. The water, especially, speaks to him. He has heard, in Delhi, a preacher whose words have sunk into his very heart, and who in preaching has many times reiterated, "They have forsaken Me, the Fountain of living waters, and hewn them out cisterns, broken cisterns, which can hold no water."

"Alas!" thought Partáp Singh, "why do I continue to think about this? The man was no doubt very clever, and had many good things to say, but he is an Englishman, and of course his ideas of religion must be different from ours: it is quite right of him to think as he does, but it is equally right for me, a Sikh, to hold fast to the religion of my forefathers. And why
should I be expected to believe that the hopes we have for this life and the next are all like ‘broken cisterns’? Am I not even now journeying to Amritsar, the ‘Well of Immortality’? And shall I begin now, after carefully performing every rite of the religion of my fathers, and living a strictly moral life so far, to think it all a mistake, that Guru Nanak himself* missed the way, and never drank of living water, and never saw true light? Why should I, a Sikh, let myself be told by an Englishman that I am to empty my heart? Yes, that is what he said, empty it of self and sin, as you would empty a stagnant tank, and then get it cleansed and filled with living waters! My heart is not bad, and I see very little in myself that needs mending; and I shall go to Darbár Sahib† as soon as I can after reaching home, and try to cleanse away all these thoughts, which I fear our Pujári‡ would call very polluting."

"If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink."

Partáp Singh started; he thought he had heard the words spoken in his ear. His companions in

* The great Sikh teacher.  † Golden Temple.  ‡ Doer of Puja, or priest.
NONE OF SELF.

the carriage laughed, and one asked, "Were you asleep and dreaming?" "No, no," said Partáp Singh; "I was only thinking." And he thought on and on as the train began to slacken its speed on approaching Amritsar, and the pleasant rose-gardens (kept for making itr, wrongly called otto of roses), and the plantations of oranges and plantains, and the well-kept roads crossing and re-crossing each other, and crowded at every level-crossing gate with foot-passengers and carriages of every kind waiting for the passing train, reminded him that he was at home again, and he brought all his thoughts to an end by inwardly resolving to show by his renewed diligence in all things concerning the Sikh religion, that he believed Guroh Nanak to have been absolutely right, and that the One whose name the Englishman had proclaimed to be all very well for the English, but nothing to the Sikhs; and that, no matter how much his thoughts might for a few days tease and puzzle him about the preaching, he would quiet them all, and refuse to believe that anything so foolish and unlikely as what he had heard could possibly be true, or that there was either meaning or efficacy in such a promise as that which still baffled all his efforts to forget it. "He that believeth on Me shall nevex
thirst." And so, with all the busy crowds hustling and bustling on the platform at Amritsar station, Partáp Singh elbowed his way along, and was soon speeding towards his home in the city.

"All of Self and none of Thee."
Chapter II.

Look now with pitying heart
Upon this weary, suffering, darkened life.
How sad it is to see the withering blight
Of that child-widowhood, which counts not less
Than tens of thousands for its hapless victims.
How doth it rend and tear the heart to see
The tender child snatch'd from the playful band
Of innocent childhood, and condemned to be
Henceforth the plaything of a cruel law—
A law which writes upon the girl's pure brow
A curse! Which even calls her for her widowhood
A cursed thing! But ah! thank God there is another law—
The "law of liberty!" Send the glad news!
They hear, believe, and are set free for ever.
From deepest darkness into brightest light,
The humblest, saddest, most afflicted pass
And live; no more the slaves of evil men,
But glad and free in Christ!
CHAPTER II.

Partap Singh's father was a wealthy merchant, and a very highly respected citizen. He was a kindly, good-natured man, generally ready to help others, and not given to quarrelling. He had learnt to read when young, and was far ahead of many of his fellow-citizens and merchants in knowledge of various kinds; for he had an inquiring mind, and was industrious enough to take trouble to satisfy himself concerning subjects which he had heard of in school or read about in newspapers.

Among other useful things, he had learnt to keep a clean and airy house for his family in an open and healthy part of the city, and he had introduced into it many improvements and comforts, which made his friends think him in advance of the times. But although in such matters he had allowed himself to learn better customs than those of his forefathers, no one could ever say that Bikarma Singh yielded one iota to any one's teaching in the matter of the religion
in which he had been brought up. He was a very staunch Sikh; not a single duty did he ever willingly omit connected with that religion. Many of his friends smiled at his readiness to adopt new ideas with regard to his house, but no one could say that he listened to anything new in religion. His wife was as zealous as himself, and her diligence in hearing the Granth,* and in bathing in the sacred waters of the Golden Temple Tank, was the admiration of all her neighbours and friends. Yes, Chandkor was quite a pattern Sikh woman, and was immensely respected and implicitly obeyed by all her family. She, indeed, was not at all pleased at the way in which Bikarma Singh allowed himself to be guided by books which she felt sure could be only mischievous and wrong if they led to changes of any sort in household arrangements. It went sorely against her prejudices to have windows made to open and shut in such a way as to ensure light and air at all times in the rooms, and a floor kept perfectly dry and well matted seemed to her a superfluity, and even an inconvenience; and all her lady-friends who came to visit her agreed that it was hard not to be able to throw water and waste things on the floor of the room—hard because it was so very

* Sacred Book of the Sikhs.
unnecessary to be so exceedingly particular about little things which had never troubled their forefathers.

But of course Chandkor never allowed any of her visitors to draw her into disrespectful remarks about the master of the house. Indeed, she would rather have suffered a good deal than have even mentioned his name; the only way in which she could ever speak of him being the respectful “Partáp Singh’s father.” She could not deny that it was very pleasant to live in a large, airy, clean house, and she would not have rebelled against the little regulations which were from time to time introduced by Bikarma Singh, if it had not been for a hidden fear that perhaps some unfaithfulness to their religion might be involved in all this love of things which had not been found needful by generations of Sikhs, and which she felt had better be done without even now than that any risk should be run of turning aside from their good old religion. But poor Chandkor’s fears were groundless; for if you had searched the whole city over, you would not have found a man more resolutely determined that no new-fangled notions as to man’s relations with God should disturb his own mind, or upset the peace and harmony of his family; nor would you have found a more reverent reader of the Granth, a more careful observer
of the Sikhs' three times of daily prayer, or a more devout attendant at the Golden Temple, where his whole demeanour showed that he was not a man with whom religion is a trifling matter, but that he threw himself heart and soul into the grand object of getting near to God, and seeking to find out the secret of holding communion with Him according to the laws and regulations of the one who, in his eyes, was alone fitted to be a teacher and guide for ignorant and weary sinners—Guroh Nanak. Bikarma Singh was a man universally respected. Among many of his fellow-citizens, whose dealings in business would hardly have borne investigation, he was noted for fairness and truth. He was very rich, but was willing to help others to an extent not at all common among men of his class. He had helped more than one young man among his poorer relatives into a good post, and had enabled one who had an ardent passion for learning to pursue his college course, when without such kind assistance he must have left his studies and worked hard for his daily bread.

Acts like these are not common among the wealthy merchants of the Panjab. Money is often made easily, and it is made all the more quickly by the system of underpaying, to a terrible extent, the poor workpeople,
whose deft and often weary fingers have toiled over the few yards of beautiful embroidery which will be sold at a fabulous price to contribute to the rich attire of a native prince or an English lady, and who have died from starvation on the miserable pittance they could gain by their toilsome tasks. Money thus made is hoarded, and not infrequently the homes of such rich men are destitute of the commonest comforts, and wife and children must suffer many privations to satisfy the love of money.

It was otherwise with Bikarma Singh; he was rich, and he was saving up for the future, but he was not a miser, and many had been thankful for his really generous help.

Opinions were very divided among his friends and acquaintances as to the wisdom of being so open-handed; some praised and admired him, but the majority were of opinion that it was a foolish way of going through the world. Nevertheless it was universally admitted that Bikarma Singh was a good man, and worthy of much respect and esteem.

He had living under his protection a sister, who, in addition to the affliction of having been for several years a widow, was also a helpless cripple. She had been married while still an infant, and had never left
her father’s roof to go to her new home, for her boy-
husband died in his seventh year, leaving her, poor
little child, all unconscious of the sorrows before her,
to the wretched life of a widow. It means so much
more than people from other countries can understand,
this sad life of widowhood in the case of a Hindu girl;
it means giving up everything which a girl would
naturally love; fine clothes, jewels, pleasures, &c.,
and it means a life of celibacy and austerity, of hard-
living, of fasting, and of separation from all which
others enjoy; a life which, if self-imposed, would be
well-nigh unbearable, and if deserved, would seem to
point to the enormity of the sin of which it was the
punishment; but when imposed by others upon a
young innocent girl for no sin at all, but only because
a foolish contract, which ought never to have been
made, has been broken by God’s interposition, then
surely there must be such a bitter sense of injustice,
mingled with the sad feelings with which the widowed
girl, seeing others dressed up and enjoying their amuse-
ments, envies them, that it would be no wonder if at
least some hundreds among the thousands of India’s
daughters who are child-widows should rise up in rebel-
lion against customs so hideously contrary to humanity
and common sense.
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At present, except in one or two isolated cases, they actually do not so take their cause into their own hands and assert their own rights, but they will as education raises them, and more and more convinces them of what those rights are and of what they themselves might be. It may be that a day of liberty for such captives will yet dawn upon India, when it will be universally acknowledged that the Hindu girl and boy have as clear a right to an innocent and happy child-life as the children of any other nation; that the very name of "child-widow" is a disgrace to a people, and that the real widow, of more mature years, is entitled to the love and respect, the comforting sympathy and ready help, of old and young; while re-marriage into the protection and enjoyments of a new home is, if desired by the young widow, not only not a wrong thing, but on every account honourable and wise.

Whether or not the dawn of that day is to be forever delayed by the glorious sunrise of the grandest of all days—that day which "is with the Lord as a thousand years," that long looked-for millennium, which seems now to be so imminent that all God's people are being taught in different ways to realise that the Lord is at hand—we may be well assured that
when He comes, He will plead the cause of the oppressed and avenge Him of His adversaries, and repay with exceedingly terrible punishment all who have in any way added to or been the promoters of the sorrows and griefs of the afflicted.

Bikarma Singh's sister was one of the few happy exceptions to the general rule of the miserable life of a Hindu widow. During the life of her father she had indeed suffered some austerities, especially in the matter of fasting, on which point her mother and he were exceedingly strict; but after his death, some years before the time at which we have been introduced to her, she had been more and more tenderly cared for by all her family in consequence of a sad affliction which had quite laid her aside, without hope of recovery, for the rest of her life. That affliction was the almost complete loss of power in her limbs, owing to a spinal injury incurred by falling off the roof one night in the dark. The whole family were sleeping when little Wirán rose from her charpāie to drink water, and, taking a false step in the dark, fell heavily into the paved court below. For some time she lay unconscious, and, after many efforts to restore her, her mother and brother began to think life was extinct; but after a long time the poor child awoke to a new
phase of life, to begin to know days and nights of weariness and pain worse than she could have imagined possible, and to restlessness and wretchedness in which she often wondered whether there was any Supreme Being who heard the prayers of the unhappy and suffering, whether there was any other life beside this so hopeless and miserable existence, and whether release ever came to afflicted beings like herself. Her cure was not given up as hopeless by her family until every remedy had been tried. Leeches, ointments, cupping, blisters had their turns, and bitter draughts and more pleasant sherbets were tried in succession, until at length the child begged with folded hands and a beseeching earnest look to be left alone, to be no more tormented and wearied with remedies which very reasonably seemed to her to be worse than the affliction under which she laboured. Her age at that time was twelve years; she was the youngest child of her parents, while Bikarma Singh was the eldest, and there were several years between them. When Wirān first began to lie all day long on her couch of pain, Bikarma Singh had a wife and three children, the eldest of whom was our friend Partāp Singh. Wirān loved the children; they were among the many things which made her life so much
less sad than that of most widows. They were so merry and happy, it was a never-failing amusement to her to lie and watch them; and then their father, her eldest brother, was really fond of her, and taught his children to do many little acts of kindness for their afflicted aunt.

At the time of the accident Partáp Singh was a fine boy of seven years old, and was going regularly to school. One day, when he was a little more than eight, his aunt said to him as he ran in from school, "Partáp Singh, show me your book; can I learn the letters?" It was a new thought, and it pleased both the afflicted pupil and the young teacher, who from that day might be seen evening after evening eagerly spelling out letters from the Alphabet and "First Book."

Bikarma Singh's mother was in the beginning exceedingly annoyed that her daughter should take up this (to her mind) foolish idea, and she urged upon Bikarma Singh his duty to prevent his sister from doing what could not be right, and what might bring upon them all more trouble and mischief than anything they had known before. But although the old lady was greatly loved and respected in the house, and Bikarma Singh and his good wife Chandkor always
tried to please her in every way, yet she had to give up her will this time, and the invalid was allowed to begin learning to read. From that time her life had at least one unfailing pleasure, and she was so clever and diligent that she often surprised her young teacher and his father. She learnt reading quickly, and eagerly perused one school-book after another, and as many books of other kinds as could be found by her young nephew, who was ever on the watch for something which would do for his aunt to read.

It was always a great sorrow to the weary sufferer when her favourite nephew had to be away from home for even a short time, and she used to sigh and long for his return. When he was first married, and a shy little bride of some twelve years of age came home, she was inclined to be jealous, in the manner in which invalids are so often liable to be jealous of others; but one day she saw the child sitting quietly in a corner with large tears rolling slowly down her face, and her heart was touched. She asked quite gently, “Little Shánti, why are you sad?” At first she could get no answer from the weeping girl, but seeing no one was with them in the room, she gradually coaxed her to come to her and tell her her trouble. Little Shánti
said, "I want to go home." "But," answered Wirāṇ, "This is your home now; you will always live here; and is it not a nice home? Is there not much here to make you happy?" But the child was not comforted. Then Wirāṇ said again, "Is not every one kind to you? Have you not a good father-in-law and mother-in-law?" "Yes," replied little Shánti, "all are very kind to me, and I have a good home; but oh, I do want my mother!"

Then the poor child cried long and passionately. Wirāṇ tried in many ways to comfort her, and found that while she did so she began to love her more than she had thought possible. "Poor little girl!" she said, "what can I do for you?" Then, after a moment's thought, she added, "See, you can be my daughter; I will try to be your mother; will that do?" It was very gently said, and the child looked up trustfully.

"It is not quite the same as a real mother," she said, "but if you will love me, I will be like your daughter," and more tears filled those large dark eyes. Wirāṇ thought for a moment, and then said, "I do love you, little Shánti;" and Shánti replied, "I too love you, and I am going to be happy." After this they were very good friends, for although often the
thought of the "real mother" would cloud the young face over with sadness, there was such a pleasure in always helping and caring for this afflicted aunt, that Shánti generally forgot her own trouble in her new-found enjoyment.

Time passed away, and Partáp Singh was paying that visit to Delhi of which we have already heard, leaving his child-wife happy with the kind family, with whom indeed she had more pleasures and privileges than fall to the lot of most little Sikh and Hindu wives. During his absence Wirán became so thoughtful and strange that Shánti often wondered why she spoke so little and pondered so much; was she going to die? The girl hoped that such a dreadful thing would not happen before Partáp Singh came home, and she often felt very sad and anxious about the one whom she now loved very dearly.

At length the day of his return arrived; it was the evening before the "Diwáli." The whole household was very excited, partly because of the innumerable preparations for that great day, the thousands of chirágs,* the sweets, &c., which must all be in readiness, and partly because Partáp Singh, who

* Small lamps made of clay, and baked in the sun; burnt with a wick floating in oil.
was beloved by all the family, would soon be at home.

At length he came. There were joyous greetings, and many questions as to health, and how he had enjoyed himself in Delhi; and then he must get ready for the evening meal, which on this occasion was quite a sumptuous feast. But, before sitting down to this, he hurried into his aunt's room for the affectionate greeting which it was his wont to give her on every return from a journey.

After many saláms and inquiries, he asked pleasantly, "Have you been reading any new books?" Then, without waiting for an answer, he went on talking. "What a grand day it will be to-morrow! I do like these illuminations; it is so beautiful to see the whole of this dear old city one blaze of light." Wirán said quietly, "Would it not be good to see the whole world lighted up? There is so much darkness everywhere!" Partáp Singh started and looked surprised. What could she mean? Had she heard anything like what he had? Was it possible? No, no; what could women possibly hear about such things? He only laughed and said, "Perhaps you on your bed will be clever enough to devise some scheme for lighting the whole world!" And he went away to the feast in the large
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open court, on one side of which the invalid's room was. He was apparently merry, but his heart was restless. He had heard Wirán sigh as he left her room. He had heard a voice in his heart saying, "I am the Light of the World," and he had answered by saying—

"ALL OF SELF AND NONE OF THEE."
Chapter III.

E'en those who know Him not
God leads. By paths they dream not of, with love
Unerring; wisdom, might, and gentleness
Choose, plan, and then direct their every step.
But as they onward move they know it not;
They think they choose, and some remain all blind
For ever; others look for ever back
With loving gratitude!
CHAPTER III.

It was early in the morning on the grand day of the Diwáli; the first streaks of dawn were just beginning to show that the day had really begun, when already the streets of the city were astir, and people were beginning to go hither and thither in their eager preparation for the Mela* and the illuminations. All the vendors of fruits and sweets, &c., intended to have a good day and make some money, and they were already on their way to their small shops in the bázárs, with the object of making final preparations before starting for the Mela. Oh, those sweets! Who shall describe them? The fruits are in all their natural goodness and beauty, and have attained their proper size and form without the aid of men's fingers and toes; but the sweets! Those masses of an unwholesome mixture of treacle, ghí, and flour, which are reduced to their desired consistence by being slapped against the wall which forms the boundary of a narrow

* Fair.
alley, a wall upon which every man cleans his hands and every buffalo rubs his tough hide as he passes, and during this slapping process the mass slips through and through the hands of the sweetmaker's boy or assistant, whose clothing is generally only grease, in which (literally), as well as in the manner in which he performs his slippery task (metaphorically), he shines. But enough; scores of different kinds of luxuries, prepared in similar appetising ways, are to be seen every day in the streets of our city! Many of the sweet-sellers (called, in Hindustani parlance, mittai wálas) had not gone to their homes at all on the night before the Mela, but had placed a charpaie in front of the tiny room and small piece of board which often constitute a shop, and had there slept, to take care of their precious and tempting wares,* although the nights in October in the Panjáb are cold, and sleepers out of doors at that season generally become the victims of fever.

Then there were the players and jugglers and others, whose object in attending the Mela would be to make

* The writer has seen these mittai wálas in the night, when visits to patients have taken her into the streets at twelve or one o'clock; squatting—the only expressive word—among their little blazing fires and pans of smoking sweets, their nude figures looking ghastly; reminding her of Doré's illustrations of Dante.
The Vestibule of the Golden Temple.—Page 39.
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money by amusing some of the many hundreds of people there assembled, and they might have been seen in the early dawn already making their way to the outside of the city to establish their tents upon the most favourable sites, and get all their things in readiness for the day.

The possessors of merry-go-rounds had been busy over-night, and were again to be seen in the Lakrimandi in the early morning getting repairs done to their generally rickety and broken-down contrivances for giving young and old, who might be willing to trust their bones and their lives to them, a ride, and perhaps a turn-over, high up in the air!

Basantkor and her little boy were awake early, and were expecting to go out presently to buy a supply of chirâgs for the evening’s illumination.

Old Mahtábkor knew a friendly potter who for a very few pice would give her a large number; and she had promised Basantkor to take her on this errand.

As soon as possible they set out on their walk, accompanied by the little boy and his father. They first turned their steps in the direction of the Golden Temple, because there Basantkor’s husband was to assist in putting up on the pavement all round the
clock-tower wooden seats for the visitors expected to see the illuminations of the Temple in the evening.

In one bázár they saw a shop just opened with a large supply of freshly gathered flowers, some lying loose in baskets, and some made into long chains and necklets (all the flowers invariably pulled off their stalk), ready for use in the worship at idol-temples.

Basantkor and her party each spent one pice here, and then, before proceeding to the clock-tower, they all turned aside and passed along two or three narrow streets until they came to a small idol-temple containing a figure of Ganesh. Here they performed their worship, folding together even the small hands of the boy, and teaching him to reverence the uncouth idol.

They next made their way to the Golden Temple, and stood for a little time watching the bright dome, and the glistening marble pavement, and the waters of the tank, all beautifully touched by the rays of the rising sun, and the long stream of Sikh worshippers, who had made a special point of being there in good time for bathing and prayers on that grand day.

Both Basantkor and her little boy were very unwilling to leave the scene; and, indeed, the child screamed so loudly with disappointment when his mother at length turned to go with Mahtábkor, who
The Clock Tower, close to the Golden Temple.

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kept on saying, "Come away now; we shall be late, and find no chirágs left at the potter's," that the father at length told the women to go alone on their errand, and to leave the boy with him until they returned that way with their chirágs. This arrangement pleased every one, and away went Basantkor with her mother-in-law. She chattered very much and very merrily; it was to her a most pleasing thing to see the large fine city, with its multitudes of people and many different kinds of shops. She would have liked to stand and watch the making of ivory combs in the comb bázár, and the winding of beautiful soft-coloured silks in another street, and the embroidering of exquisite patterns on white shawls as they passed a Cashmiri quarter; but her mother-in-law hurried her on, telling her women should not be idling in the streets.

At length they reached the wide open space where the friendly potter carried on his business; here might be seen all kinds of cups and other vessels, from the largest gharra* down to the tiniest chirág. Some were even then being dried in the sun, but none were being made, for the potter intended to have a holiday and go to the Mela. There were plenty of chirágs

* A large wide-mouthed clay vessel for water.
still unsold, and soon a large basketful was poised on
the head of a poor boy, who was glad to earn some
pice on this festive day, and who, thus loaded, followed
the women as they began their return journey.

“Well done!” exclaimed the happy Basantkor.
“Now we shall have a good illumination; and surely
the goddess Lachmi* will vouchsafe to come into
our house and give a blessing this year.”

“Yes,” replied Mahtábkor; “do you not remember
four years ago we had a very good lighting up, and
all the neighbours said our house was the brightest
in the whole street, and you said, ‘Let us hope the
goddess Lachmi will make us rich this year,’ and I
laughed at you and called it an idle wish, and told
you that pice came very slowly in the houses of car-
penters, and you replied, ‘Are there no riches but
pice?’ That was the last Diwáli we were in Amritsar,
and how well I remember that before the next Diwáli
the dear little son had come, who made us all so glad,
that we thought ourselves richer than our richest neigh-
bours, to whom Lachmi may have given many rupees,
but on whose behalf she had not petitioned Ganesh

* It is a belief that the persons who make the best illuminations on the
Diwáli day get riches from Lachmi, the goddess of light, because she is so
pleased.
to give a son, as I verily believe she did in your behalf, my daughter?" *

"Who can tell?" said Basantkor. "Most likely that happiness was all owing to our good lighting up—I should not be surprised if it were; but then these things are not known to us mortals, they are the secrets of the gods; only let us hope that this year will see as good a fortune, and Lachmi be as pleased with our unworthy attempts to do her honour."

And so saying, she quickened her steps, and then added, "But come, mother, let us hurry; for since we have spoken of my darling child, my little Ganesh, my heart is longing to see him; it seems many hours since we left the sweet child with his father, and I want to go home and see his joy in preparing wicks of cotton for all these chirāgs. Come, mother, let us be quick!"

But the poor old Mahtābkor was tired, and said she could not go so quickly, and begged her impatient young daughter-in-law to remember that there was plenty of the day left, and no need to be in such haste.

"But my child!" exclaimed Basantkor; "I want him, and he must be crying for me."

* The god Ganesh is believed to be the benefactor of childless women.
"Never mind," replied Mahtábkor; "if the goddess is pleased with your illumination to-night, and more of such riches as are better than pice come into your house, then little Ganesh will have to be often separated from his mother, and will become accustomed to being with his father!"

Basantkor only laughed, and they went on their way. As they came near the square in front of the clock-tower, they saw a crowd and heard voices as of people excited and alarmed. The two women hastily began to run with the crowd, and as they did so they heard some one say, "How came the child to be alone?" And another replied, "He was with his father when he fell into the water." Poor Basantkor guessed it all; her child, her Ganesh, her beloved treasure, was dead! She felt sure he was. Fear, and anxiety to see in reality the little lifeless form which already she could so well picture in her mind, kept her from fainting away, and she fled on with all the little strength she had left to the spot where she had left her darling with his father. But the crowd had begun to disperse—such things do not trouble the minds of men in a crowd for more than a few minutes—and as they turned away, and again began hurrying off to their different pursuits, or to the Mela, whither the steps of most
were by this time tending, they only waved their hands with an expressive gesture and said, "Alas! alas! he is dead; the father has just carried away his body; what can any one do?"

"No oil is left in the lamp to burn,
No light remains, nor can ever return;
In one sad moment oil and light
Have together ceased, and 'tis dark as night;
For thou hast none of thy very own, ji,
For thou hast none of thy very own, ji."

Basantkor was nearly beside herself with grief, and she sank down on the stones almost unconscious, poor old Mahtábkor standing by wringing her hands and beating on her breast, and crying again and again, "Oh, that we had never left our child!" For a few moments they sat there, stunned with grief and not knowing what to do next. Suddenly a carriage drove up, and out of it hastily sprang our friend Partáp Singh, for whom the people made way respectfully as he hurried to the side of the women.

"Are you the mother of the little Ganesh who has fallen into the water?" he asked.

"Yes, alas!" sobbed out poor Basantkor, "I am that wretched mother. Oh, tell me quickly if you know where the body of my child is taken, my sweet child, my lovely treasure!"
"But he is not dead," replied Partáp Singh; "he lives! Be happy; he is only suffering from the shock of falling into the water, from which he was almost instantly rescued by his father. He was, it is true, insensible for a little time, but my father happened to be here with his carriage, and he took away both your child and his father to his own house, where he could get a doctor quickly, and after a very little time the child was quite well again; and now I am come to take you to him that you may be comforted."

Very quickly the two sad women were seated in the carriage, where with bowed heads and aching hearts they went on weeping quietly for the sorrow which had overclouded this happy day, and Partáp Singh, seated outside, soon had them conveyed to the hospitable house of his kind father.

There were a great many people in the narrow lane leading to the house, and all were busily discussing the sad accident which had taken place, and many were saying how fortunate it was for the little boy as well as for his poor parents that good Bikarma Singh had happened to see him and bring him home. As soon as they saw the child's mother, they began to comfort her, saying, "Be quite happy; he is alive and nearly well." Somehow or another, the people in a
crowd outside an Indian house at the time of any exciting event always seem to know as much about every smallest particular as if they were inside watching everything with their own eyes! Poor Basantkor would believe none of their assurances, but only rushed wildly on, crying and saying, "Oh, my child, my treasure, my flower, my star! why are you snatched from your miserable mother?  Ah woe is me!"

Her grief was, however, soon changed to joy when she saw her little son lying quietly in his father's arms, quite well, only pale and a little frightened after his shock of falling into the water. The first thing Basantkor did on seeing this joyful sight was to throw herself into the arms of her mother-in-law and cry for gladness as much as she had before cried for sorrow. Then all the family together began to thank the kind friends who had helped them in their extremity; and little Ganesh's father and mother both knelt on the ground at the feet of Bikarma Singh and called him the deliverer of the poor, the helper of the helpless, the greatest and best friend that God could have sent them in their need. Bikarma Singh told them to say no more, and he held the child in his own arms and spoke kindly and gently to him, and then gave him to his mother.
Old Mahtábkor said with rather a weary sigh that she thought they should be going now, but just then a voice called out from a small room, "I want to see the little boy before he goes away," and at once every one agreed that Basantkor must take her boy into Wirán's room. Then Chandkor said, "Let all the men go to the Fair, and let Basantkor and the little Ganesh remain here till their return." This kind proposal was thankfully accepted, and soon Basantkor and her mother-in-law and child were resting. Chandkor took care that food was provided for them, and then all the women sitting together had a long talk.

Basantkor told about the lighting up of their humble house in the Lakrimandi four years before, and of how Lachmi had been so pleased, that instead of giving them such riches as gold and silver, she had interceded with Ganesh, and this little boy had come the next year to gladden his parents' hearts; and then she told over and over again of the walk to the potter's that morning to get chirágs, and of how she had left her darling without a thought of fear, and of how when she came back her heart had stood still with fright, and she had almost cast herself into the water in order to take away her own miserable life; and then of how some hope had come after Partáp Singh had assured
her that the child was safe, and she finished her story by taking the sleeping boy in her arms and saying with tears, "Nothing can ever make me leave him again; no, not even for one minute!" All through this recital old Mahtábkor incessantly exclaimed, "Sir-i-Rám, Sir-i-Rám!"

Partáp Singh’s young wife (little Shánti) and his sister and sister-in-law, as well as his grandmother and mother, and some friends who were visiting them during the Diwáli, were all gathered together to listen to the oft-repeated story of how Basantkor had spent her morning; and now and then some of them told similar stories of their own experiences, and so some time passed away. Once, in her childish way, Basantkor began to lament the loss of the chirágs, but Chandkor very gravely told her she should be too thankful for the recovery of her child now to think of such trifles. "And besides," she added, "you can see the illuminations of nearly the whole city from our large roof."

Soon after this all the women of Bikarma Singh’s family, except of course the afflicted Wiráñ, retired to superintend the cooking of the evening meal and to attend to other household duties, and the visitors were left to do as they pleased. Old Mahtábkor made the
best of this opportunity to sleep after the fatigues and excitement of the day, while Basantkor rather timidly drew near to the *charpaie* of the invalid and said, "May I talk with you?" "Oh, yes," replied Wirán, "and I also am wishing very much to talk to you." And so, in whispers in the twilight, they began to make an acquaintance of which neither could then possibly guess what would be the great result.
Chapter IV.

Having no hope!
Life nearly gone, with all its joys and griefs,
Death's angel drawing near with solemn tread,
Those who have been companions in life's way
All gathered round to bid a last farewell.
That little babe, unconscious of his loss,
Unconscious of the pains and toils of earth,
Sleeping and smiling lies, what time the heart
Of that poor mother anxious tries to plan
And think for him; but all her efforts vain.
She has to leave the mother's task undone,
And going, cast him on his destiny.
Duly is read the Katima, but no gleam
Of joy or peace from thickest darkness comes
To weary dying men, who pass away
Under its very sound, all densely dark,
Having no hope!
CHAPTER IV.

It is now necessary to return to the previous evening, and the time of the arrival of the train in which Partáp Singh had travelled from Delhi. Our readers will remember Bibi Fátima, who also journeyed to Amritsar in that train, but with a sad and anxious heart which had no sympathy with the merrymakers. On reaching the station, poor Fátima and her companions alighted from the zenana carriage and began to make their way towards the door. It is difficult for women wearing burqas to manage for themselves in a crowd, and they were being pushed hither and thither by the hurrying passengers leaving the train, and were getting very much agitated, when suddenly a middle-aged woman, who herself wore a burqa, but who was not in very strict pardah, and had therefore thrown back for convenience-sake the part intended to cover the face, and who had been eagerly searching all along the train for Fátima, caught her in her arms, saying, “Thank God, you have come! I have spent such a long time here
NONE OF SELF.

waiting for the train, I thought it would never come.” For a moment they were held firmly in each other’s embrace, regardless of the jostling crowd and of the many impatient exclamations from those intent on making their way out of the station—“Get out of the way—stand aside—do not hinder us—get a little outside the station for your talking,” and so on. At first Fátima could not speak a word, she felt she could not ask her mother whether that dear sister was still alive or not; but it was a comfort to feel her mother’s arms around her, and to realise that she was once more at home.

A busy railway official told them at last to be quick and move out of the way, and as they did so, hurrying along hand in hand, with their companions carrying bedding and drinking vessels, and making the best of their way after them, Fátima’s mother hastily began her story. “Umri Bibi has been so ill, every one said she must die; but she is just a little better; the angel of death has not yet visited our house; the great God in His mercy has averted such a terrible trial from us, and Umri Bibi is still with us. She had a dreadful fever after her little boy was born, and we tried every means without avail to save her precious life. When we sent the sad news to you, my daughter, we did
not think you could ever reach Amritsar in time to see your dearly beloved sister alive, but we found a young doctor-lady whose skill has just saved her life, and now we are all full of hope and gladness." All this time both the women had continued weeping, and the sobs of their companions, who followed them as quickly as their bundles and various vessels would allow, could be distinctly heard as the whole party passed out of the station. But when Fátima heard the name of lady-doctor, she suddenly stopped and uttered an exclamation of surprise and anger. "It would have been better," she indignantly cried, "to have suffered anything rather than call into our family a European lady, whose customs must all be so different from ours, and who must surely introduce notions which would be contrary to all our ideas. I am very sorry indeed, my mother, that you did anything so mistaken as to call an English lady to doctor my sister in her illness!" "Stop," replied her mother; "I did not say that we called an English lady, I said a young-lady doctor; and do you know, Fátima, she is a Panjábi, and she is of course acquainted with all our ways, and does nothing contrary to our customs; but she is very clever and learned, and can treat all kinds of illness, and as soon as she has seen the
patient's tongue and felt her pulse, and found out how high her fever is by means of a little glass she places under her arm, she evidently begins to know all about the illness, and she soon sends the right medicine; and then she is so kind, she is willing to look at other people in the same house. You know your aunt had such severe rheumatism? Well, she examined her knees and feet, and sent her some wonderful kind of wool which came from England, which contains a medicine in itself, and this only had to be tied on for a few days, when great relief was obtained; and then Nur Begam's baby had very sore eyes, and Hashmat Bibi's little girl was so ill with a cough that we thought she would die, but our kind Panjabi lady-doctor gave wonderful medicines and did good to every one!"

By this time all the women were seated in a hired gári, and, with burqas well drawn over their faces, were soon driving away to the city.

There was a great bustle in the house when they arrived; an aunt and two cousins, three sisters-in-law and some nieces, had arrived to meet them. The room where the sick woman was lying was not at all quiet, and the noise was made all the more distracting by the fact that a feast was being cooked for a great many poor people in honour of the fortieth day of the baby's life.
Sometimes, in the midst of all the noise and confusion, one of the many visitors would suddenly remember the injunctions of the doctor and begin to say, "Hush! be quiet; do you not remember that the doctor-lady said we must on no account make a noise?" And then for a few moments there would be a little lull, but soon all the noise would begin again, and the poor weary sufferer would sigh and cry to God in a pitiful tone, "O God, I am weary of my life; I do want to die!"

Fátima Bibi ran hurriedly into her sister's room, and threw herself in great excitement upon the bed to embrace her, little understanding her great weakness. The invalid, gathering strength for a moment from the excitement, fell back after an effort to sit up, and fainted away. In the midst of the confusion which immediately prevailed, some women declaring she was dead, and others crying out for an hakím, a man called from the outer court of the house that the doctor-lady had come. She came in, and at once began to try to quiet the anxious and frightened women. She lifted poor Fátima up from the bed, and persuaded her to sit still and rest while she gave a little reviving medicine to the patient. She used all her efforts to induce the friends and relations, who
were crowding round and making so much noise, to be quiet and go into another part of the house.

Some of them understood that her orders were wisely and kindly given, and they began to go away and speak in whispers instead of in loud excited voices, but some refused to leave the side of the bed, although they rendered no assistance to the patient or to the doctor, but only sat smoking hookahs and talking to each other. The doctor-lady was very kind and patient, and she remained a long time sitting by the sick woman, placing cool leaves on her forehead, and giving her iced sherbet to drink, and speaking gentle soothing words to her.

Fátima quietly observed all that this kind friend did, and at last drew near and began to speak to her. "You are very kind," she said in a low whisper, "but you must know that we are not rich, and I am afraid you will not find us able to pay your fees." "It is no matter," replied the lady-doctor; "when people can give me anything in return for my medicines and my work, then I use it in buying more medicines, and also in getting food for very poor patients, and in providing clothing in the winter for those in the hospital." "Well done!" exclaimed Fátima, "that is a work of merit, which will obtain
great favour for you in the sight of God!" "Oh, no," was the quick reply, "there is no merit in it, and I do not do these things to obtain God's favour." "Really!" answered Fátima; "then why take so much trouble and do so much work without feeling sure of being paid for it all?" "It is love which makes me do it," said the lady-doctor, "and because I know God loves us all so tenderly and so deeply, I want to show love to you." Soon after this she advised Fátima to rest after her long journey, and she added, "God is very good and merciful to us; He does not deal with us after our sins; He has allowed you and your sister to meet once more; and although she is very, very ill, yet she is just a little better, and there is some hope now that she may perhaps recover. She must, however, be taken great care of, and the strengthening medicine given to her regularly, because the fever has left her so weak."

Umr Bibi begged that her sister Fátima might stay by her all night, and so it was arranged; and long afterwards, when the family lady-visitors had either gone under the cover of night to their own houses, or had been persuaded to retire into another room, and when the cooking was done, and the men of the family had satisfied all the poor people who were to
be fed, and had made the house quiet, Fátima, having taken an evening meal after her long journey, came to lie down near her poor sister’s charpaise to take care of her for the night. Umr Bibi was very glad her sister had arrived, and she often said quietly, “I am satisfied now, and shall be quite happy.”

The night passed slowly away, and when every one else was fast asleep, Fátima began to think the time very long and wearisome, and to look again and again at her sister, and wonder as she saw how very wasted she had become. “Surely,” she thought, “she is to die—that must be the fate that is written for her; but oh, how miserable and cruel it seems for the young to die like this! Can nothing more be done in the way of cure? This lady-doctor seems very kind, and I have no doubt she is clever, but after all she may make a mistake. I wonder whether my mother has tried all the other doctors and hakíms; every one ought to be given a fair trial for one or two days at least,* and after that, if the patient dies, it is God’s will; it is a sort of rule among us, and it is a pity not to give my poor sister the advantage of this.” Thus Fátima mused on, and quite forgot that she was to

* The usual thing is to try every available doctor and hakim for a certain number of days each, generally at the expense of the patient’s life.
give her sister nourishment and medicine regularly; she had only given her a little water from time to time. It was between two and three o'clock in the morning when she thought to herself that the sick woman looked more pale and weak than before. Alarmed, she leaned over her. "Umr Bibi, Umr Bibi!" she cried, "speak to me, my sister!" At length Umr Bibi opened her eyes and gasped out, "I have no fever now, but I am dying." It was true that the fever had subsided, and the patient was—as is usual under such circumstances—very weak, but she was not dying; she only needed good nourishing food at once. Alas! that in the Panjáb illness is so little understood that people often do die only because they have not had the strengthening milk and soup which we of other lands know so well have by God's blessing saved innumerable lives.

Fátima Bibi knew nothing at all about nursing sick people, and she could not collect her senses enough to look round for the restorative medicine and the good soup which were waiting to be used. She ran wildly about the room, beating her breast and tearing her hair, and screaming loudly, "My sister is dead! She breathes no more! Her soul is departed! Ah, woe is me!"

Very soon the room was again full of people, and
the mother of Fátima and Umr Bibi was prostrate with
grief beside the charpaie of the sick woman. But no
one did anything. Some one said, “Run and call the
doctor-lady;” and some one else said, “Run first
and bring the hakím who lives in the galli* next to
this; he is so near he can come quickly. Lose no
time; call the hakím!”

So the hakím was called, and when he came he said,
“She is not dead; she is faint from want of nourish-
ment. Give her some soup, and I will send a restoring
draught.” Wise man! Too wise and sensible for his
generation and his country! No sooner had he left
the room than an uncle of Fátima’s said, “That is poor
advice; he did nothing to restore life. Call the hakím
who put so large a blister on our neighbour Chandu Lál
only a few hours before his death; that is more like
cleverness, and he has something to show to prove that
he is an hakím; he does something; call him!” So the
second hakím was called, nothing at all being done for
the poor patient during all this waste of time. When
this clever man came he exclaimed, “Oh, this is a
very serious case; the illness has gone to her brain; she
must have at once fifty leeches on each foot.” “Yes,”

* Galli is pronounced gulley, and means an alley. There is a similar
word in Yorkshire for a narrow lane or street.
said Fátima's uncle; "did I not tell you he would do something? This is really a clever man!"

The leeches came, and were applied. Fátima sat close by her sister on one side, and their mother, weeping bitterly, on the other, both gazing earnestly and lovingly into the face of the poor sufferer, and both saying from time to time, "Umr Bibi, speak to us once more; tell us how you are; tell us what you want." Sometimes Umr Bibi opened her eyes and smiled at them, and once she was trying to say something; what was it? The mother leant over her, and Fátima eagerly tried to hear. What could it be? At length one word fell from her lips—"Child;" so the little baby-boy was brought, looking quite well and happy in his sleep. His mother looked earnestly at him with a thoughtful look; she was very weak; the leeches were doing their cruel work, the life was really ebbing away now; but she seemed to get strength for one great effort; she beckoned to her mother to call the father of her child, and when he came she looked beseechingly at him and at her mother, and then pointed to Fátima and the baby. "Give him to her," she whispered, and then with one look at Fátima she said, with increasing difficulty, "Yes, take him and love him, for thou hast none of thy very own, ji."
Then she became quite exhausted, and fainted away. It was her last effort; Fátima never again heard her sister's voice, and all through the weary hours of the Diwáli day the whole family watched the unconscious form of the one who was slowly but certainly passing away into the great unknown world beyond the grave.

Their friend the doctor-lady came in the early part of the day to see her patient, and was at first very much surprised to find the great change for the worse; but when she heard the story of the confusion and fright consequent on her fainting, and of the treatment which followed, she only said sadly, "I am very, very sorry, but this terrible change need never have taken place if only you had obeyed orders and given strength instead of taking it away."

As she was leaving, Fátima’s young brother, a bright, intelligent-looking lad, followed her and said, "You have sometimes talked to us about the life after death; can you tell me where my sister will go if she should die? and what will she do after her soul has passed out of her body?"

"It is not good to argue," was the answer. "But indeed I do not wish to argue," said the boy; "I really want to know." Then he was told in a gentle, kind voice, which had much sorrow in its tone, "I
only know it is written in the Word of our God, 'He that believeth on the Son hath life, and he that believeth not on the Son of God shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.'"

The day wore away. The Angel of Death came; every knife in the house was hidden (a Mohamedan custom, implying that the family will not aid the Angel in his cruel work). And then in a little time there was a loud wail as of many voices united in one great grief; there was a motherless babe; and there was a childless woman sitting and rocking herself backwards and forwards with that babe in her arms, mournfully wailing—

"For thou hast none of thy very own, ji."
Chapter V.

"Is not my Word like fire? and like
A hammer," saith the Lord, "which breaks
The rock in pieces?" So it ever is.
And some men yield their souls into that fire,
To be refined and purified, to melt
In love's own furnace, till they pour themselves
In love's full torrent out before the Feet
Of their great Purifier. And other some
In stubborn hardness hold themselves away
From that most blessed fire—they will not melt.
Ah, woe is them! the hammer's weight descends,
And they are broken!
CHAPTER V.

When Partáp Singh and his father and brother, with several relations and friends who were visiting them on the occasion of the Diwáli, arrived at the Mela, they found very large crowds of people already assembled, and every one there seemed to be enjoying himself very much; and great was the noise caused by the musical instruments of all sorts, such as the "dugi-dugi" of the monkey-tamer, the "bín" of the snake-charmer, the "barbat," the "sitár," and the "rabáb" of the singers, and the deafening "tambur," "dhol," and "daf," which seemed to be everywhere! The small theatres were all ready, consisting of tents arranged so as to admit of nothing which was going on within to be seen from the outside, and bearing on their canvas walls hideous representations of the scenes which any one willing to pay the entrance-fee might expect to be amused with. Already many persons had crowded in to see these shows, and the owners and players had
made a good deal of money. The persons of all ages, from the oldest to the youngest, who rode in the merry-go-rounds, did not appear to object to the continual noise made by their creaking joints and hinges, but shouted and laughed, and seemed intensely to enjoy their amusement.

Most people seemed to like best to stand still, talking and laughing, and eating sweets and fruit. The *mittai wálas* were very busy indeed, and their business was in a most flourishing and paying condition. Beginning to mingle with the crowd, Partáp Singh and his brother walked on together, and were soon separated from their father, who had met friends and begun to talk with them.

Suchet Singh was younger than his brother, and, like all the rest of his family, was very proud of him. Suchet Singh had never had the taste for learning that Partáp had had, but he admired his brother’s skill and perseverance, and looked forward to the time when he would see him a very famous lawyer. For himself, he intended to follow his father in business; and he had many visions of future riches and the power to do great things with his money. His elder brother, with kind patience, generally listened to all his schemes and thoughts, and used laughingly to ask him how
long it would be before he was the most important man on the Municipal Committee.

Going on, and strolling about in the Mela, Suchet Singh and his brother talked of many things, the visit to Delhi principally of course, then after that the state of the harvest, their own family matters, &c.; and suddenly Suchet Singh impatiently exclaimed, "If I had anything to do with the management of this city, I would put an end to that!" "To what?" asked his brother in some surprise. "Do you not see that tent?" replied Suchet Singh. "Look again; look there, that large tent with a flag with a cross on it." Partáp Singh answered, as if making a great effort to be careless, "Oh! that? Why should you trouble about that? It does not do any harm. Let us turn our steps in another direction." "Most willingly," said his brother, "for I always take care to keep far away from evil things."

"Have you ever been inside that tent?" asked Partáp Singh of his brother. "Inside it!" said Suchet Singh, and he laughed aloud; "why, I would not go within earshot of what is said there for all the riches and honours in the world!" Partáp replied, "If you have never been near, how can you know that there is anything evil in the place?"
"It is no matter, brother, how I know, but I tell you if I were a magistrate or in any other good position, such things, such doings, and such sayings, should not be permitted in our fairs." "Ah, brother," said Partáp with a laugh, "you are not a magistrate yet; and when you are, I shall be among the first to do you honour, but on condition that you are no oppressor." Just at that moment a friend met them and began to talk with Suchet Singh, and Partáp, watching his opportunity, turned back towards the tent with the flag on which there was the sign of the cross. He was half angry with himself, and half ashamed of what he was doing; but oh! he did want to know just a little more about what he had heard in Delhi. Of course he was not going to believe in it, or let any one turn him aside from the religion of his forefathers; but still he would just like to hear more, to understand better; and so on he went towards the Gospel Tent.

The preachers had made an arrangement together that throughout the day there should be no pause in the preaching; that as soon as one preacher was tired, another should instantly rise to tell the story of God's great love, and that Christian bhajans and hymns should fill up any spare moments which might occur.
NONE OF SELF.

Just as Partáp Singh drew quite close to the tent he heard the last words of a bhajan, and they were these—

"The burden of sin lies heavy upon me:
How shall I lift it and ease me?
Listen! the voice of Jesus, Who calls,
As crush'd by that burden He sees me:
He is the Giver of perfect salvation,
Saving and blessing for ever;
Without Him the sinner, so burden'd with guilt,
Has peace and forgiveness—ah! never."

The singing ceased, and a preacher rose to speak. Partáp Singh saw at a glance that he was not an Englishman, but he had not time to think any more about the messenger, for all at once the message, spoken in a clear full voice, sounded through the tent—"He that believeth on Me shall never thirst." The preacher spoke of the desires of man as the thirst of the soul, and said that salvation was not gained unless the soul was satisfied, the thirst quenched.

He said the soul was immortal, and therefore nothing which was of mortals could be its satisfying portion. He said that the soul of man was made for perfection, and asked how anything short of perfection should suffice to meet its needs. He said again that the soul of man was intended for its Creator; that it was His blessed will to make it for ever pure and meet to
dwell with Himself, to be His portion, His delight forever; and how then is it possible that that which is of earth, sin-defiled and spoiled, can satisfy its cravings or fulfil all its possibilities of good? He spoke of sin having debased man, but said that it had not, in spite of all its debasing influences, changed the immortal nature of man's soul, or made it impossible for that soul to be again filled with God, the only inexhaustible fountain of satisfaction and good. But he spoke of the immense distance between God and the soul that had sinned, and he asked, "How can a sinner reach up to God out of the depths of his defilement?" Then, looking steadfastly from one to another of his hearers, he said slowly and solemnly, "Canst thou by searching find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know?" Then he added, "I will tell you of One Who reveals God to man, and Who therefore is the only One Who can satisfy man's soul. It is written of Him, 'Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? that is, to bring Christ down from above; or, Who shall descend into the deep? that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead. But what saith it? The Word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth
and in thy heart; that is, the Word of faith which we preach, that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved; for with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation; for the Scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be ashamed.’ The One of whom this is spoken is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour of men. He is God; He came forth from the Father; He brought the Divine nature into the world; He took human flesh and was made in the likeness of men; He lived a perfect life, He died a sacrificial death; that spotless life, unstained by the least sin, that beautiful wonderful life of Him of whom alone it is written that He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners, that life so blessed and so full of blessing for others, was offered up as a sacrifice to God for man; and God, accepting the sacrifice, pardons all who believe. This is the Gospel, the good news of salvation by Jesus Christ; this shows the way to be brought near to God, the soul’s only satisfying Portion. To believe this Gospel, and to accept as your own the Saviour whom it proclaims, is to know true satisfaction. Are you not thirsting? Do not all the joys and comforts
of earth, of earthly pleasures and fleshly enjoyments, not only fail to satisfy you, but really leave you more empty and craving than you were before? Does not Philosophy come short in its attempt to fill and satisfy your heart? Do not all the various forms of religion all over the world (except that which centres in Jesus Christ) only reveal to us more and more every day the greatness of the soul's thirst, the longing for God which their founders experienced, and the impossibility of any religious scheme, however high in conception, however pure in morals, really leading to God, and satisfying man in God? It is indeed evident that the religion which is to do this must come forth from God, and bring God down to man. Christ alone has done this; and therefore Christ alone, of all the teachers and prophets whom the world has ever known, can truly say, 'If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink;' 'He that believeth on Me shall never thirst.'"

Partáp Singh had forgotten everything now but the one great question which the preacher was discussing. He had forgotten father and brother and home, and was almost unconsciously praying in his inmost soul, "O Christ, if this be true, I want Thee!" He thought not of the anger of those he loved best
when they should come to know what he had listened to. "Now here," he said to himself, "is a Panjábi who was once a very strict Sikh, telling his hearers that he knows that Christ, and Christ only, can satisfy the soul of man; and he looks satisfied; he is happy—I am sure he is—I can see he is. He says other religions fail to bring man to God, and God to man. I cannot tell whether this is true of all other religions, but I know I am not satisfied; my soul is thirsting. I wish I knew why it seems so hard to believe that a Christian is right in what he thinks and says."

The preacher was still speaking, and at that moment it seemed as if he were trying to answer Partáp Singh's thoughts. He asked, "Do you want to know why it is so hard to believe? Satan is a great enemy; he does not want you to believe; he wants you to look at yourself; he wants you to make an idol of yourself; he wants self to be all in all to you; he encourages you to trust in other religions and not to come to Christ, because it is the habit of all other religious teachers and anti-Christian prophets to lead men to themselves, to make their own doings, and fastings, and pilgrimages, and prayers their way of being saved. This exaltation of self must be done away with; self must go, with all its pride and re-
bellion against God's will, with all its habit of hewing out broken cisterns which can hold no water; it must be put down, and Christ, Who is the Fountain of living waters, must no longer be forsaken; He must be taken instead of self!"

Partág Singh had heard something like this before, and then he had made answer, "All of self and none of Thee." But then he had excused himself on the ground that the preacher was an Englishman, for whom no doubt such teaching was good, but who could not possibly understand what was good for a Sikh; but now the same great truth sounded out through that Gospel Tent, and the voice that uttered it was the voice of a Panjábi, brought up a very strict Sikh.

Partág Singh could no longer say, "It is the religion for the English, but not for the Sikhs." His heart was affected by what this young man had said; he knew him; they had been school-fellows, but for a long time he had been carefully forbidden to speak to this young Christian or to number him among his acquaintance. He sat now listening with his head bowed low in his hands, and a battle going on in his heart, which had begun already to cry to God, unwilling as it was to be yet utterly severed from self, "Some of self and some
of Thee." The preaching ceasing, another bhajan was sung, and Partáp Singh raised his head and rose, uncertain whether to leave the tent or to stay on to hear a little more. As he stood up he saw his father! The well-known and widely-respected Bikarma Singh, the strict Sikh, stood looking extremely angry and as if the most fearful misfortune had befallen him, because his son had been into such a place as this!

Partáp Singh hurried towards his father, saying hastily, "Oh, father, do not be angry; I have done no wrong—I was merely listening to what these people have to say. See, there are other good Sikhs sitting there, but they do not all believe what is said just because they happen to come and listen."

Bikarma Singh took his son by the hand and hurried him away from the tent. "You know very well," he exclaimed angrily, "that this is very displeasing to me—you knew it would be; and although I see nothing at all to make me fear that you will ever leave the religion of your forefathers, still I am very annoyed and ashamed to think of my son being found listening to the words of one who has done so!"

By degrees Partáp Singh appeased his father, and they visited other tents in the Mela, saw tamáshas, talked with friends, spent pice for the gratification of
the boys of their relatives who were with them, and apparently forgot the incident of the meeting between father and son in the preachers' tent. Suchet Singh met them again, and after a time they all began to stroll towards home, and he joined his brother in talk in his usual happy and brotherly manner, little thinking where that brother had spent a part of his time in the Mela.

Partáp Singh did not find out whether his father had any fears concerning him, or whether he was satisfied that he had only casually dropped into that tent to listen without any particular interest in the subjects discussed there. Bikarma Singh said nothing at all, and they all walked and talked together, and with friends whom they met, as if nothing had happened. This was a great relief to Partáp Singh's mind.

When they had nearly reached the city, a friend met them and stood some time talking, and detained Partáp so long to inquire all about his visit to Delhi, that the rest of the party became impatient and went on towards home without him, as they wished to be making their preparations for lighting up their own house in due time before going to see the illuminations at the Golden Temple. And thus it happened that
when his talk was ended and his friend had passed on, Partáp Singh found himself alone. He was walking along thinking to himself, when a kind and friendly voice addressed him; it was the voice of the preacher to whom he had listened. After saláms, and asking for each other's welfare, they walked together into the city.

Partáp Singh felt quite sure that this Christian friend had overtaken him with a purpose; and he was not mistaken, for that purpose appeared in almost his first words—"Brother, tell me, is your soul's thirst quenched?" In reply Partáp Singh said a great many things, and tried to hide his real feelings, and at last finished by saying, "I am not opposed to the Christians so bitterly as I once was, but I cannot make up my mind to think that for all these years I have been wrong." His companion replied, "Self is your great enemy; it keeps you from Christ. Let go all thoughts of being able, by what you are or by what you can do, to merit salvation; empty your heart of self, and come to Christ Jesus; He will fill and satisfy your heart with everlasting joy." They parted, but not before the old school-companion had said, "I shall go home to pray for you, and I wish you would take this Bible and read it." Partáp Singh replied to this, "I dare
not take a Bible into my father's house, but I am glad you will pray for me; it will do no harm, and it may do good." Then, in order to seem careless, he added at parting, "But you must not expect to make me a Christian!" In his heart of hearts he much desired to read the Bible, only, as he tried to persuade himself, just to know a little more about it; but he tried to put the wish away from him, for in a house so carefully guarded, and with a father so jealous for his religion, how could he hope to get the opportunity of reading it? Ah! God was preparing a way for him of which he little thought. He could not have believed if he had been told that that very night, when the transient lights of a briefly illuminated earthly city were gone out in deep darkness, the light of Heaven would break upon his soul, as in his own room, in his father's house, he first studied for himself the Blessed Word of God! When he reached home, he found the whole family in a state of great excitement, placing the chirágs all over the house-top and in every possible crevice and corner, as well as all over the front of the house in the innumerable little niches made on purpose for such occasions in the walls. They were just about to light up for the night's illumination.
NONE OF SELF.

Basantkor and her mother-in-law and child were on the roof watching the different houses all over the city beginning to get lighted up one after another; and it was certainly a very amusing sight to see rows and circles and squares of radiance breaking forth out of the fast on-coming darkness.

Basantkor's husband was waiting below to take her away; and after offering again and again many thanks and saláms to those who had been so kind to her, and taking an especially affectionate leave of Wirán, with whom she had been sitting and talking for a long time, Basantkor left the house and set off with her husband and his mother and the little sleeping boy to go to their own home in the Lakrimandi.

Bikarma Singh and all his family completed lighting up their house, and hoped much that Lachmi would be gratified and disposed to send them riches during the year. Wirán had been carried upstairs by some servants on to the spacious, airy, paved roof, on all sides of which, except one, whence they had a fine view of the whole city, there were rooms designed for winter use, the cooler and more sheltered ones downstairs being better for hot weather.

When the lighting was all finished, the young men, with their father and friends, went to the Golden
Temple to see its famous illuminations, and when they returned, they were all very hungry and tired, and sat down to their evening meal thankfully.

As soon as dinner was over, Partáp Singh went upstairs, intending to have a little talk with his aunt, while all the party downstairs were enjoying themselves and recounting the events of the day.

One or two women-servants were sitting near her, having attended to her during her evening meal; and after giving her water for washing her hands, they were resting at a little distance, enjoying the sight of the now brilliantly-lighted city. Partáp Singh noticed that Wirán had fallen asleep, and that, according to her usual custom, she had been reading by the light of a small lamp close to her charpaie. He stooped to look at the book which lay near her hand, and started with surprise and almost fear as he saw that it was the Bible!

Scarcely knowing what he did, he carefully but quickly drew the book away from her hand, and satisfying himself that the servants had not noticed what he had done, he bid them tell his father that he was wearied and gone to his room, and hastily took a lamp and sought a small room which he generally used as a study, where he knew he could pass
the night without fear of being disturbed by other members of the family; and there for the first time in his life he opened the Book from whose sacred pages he had twice heard solemn messages from God to his soul.

Far into the night he sat reading and thinking; and ere he laid himself down to get a little sleep before daylight, the first dawning rays of the Sun of Righteousness began to shine upon his soul; and without a thought of future persecution, only realising his present new and strange joy, he prayed with all his heart—

"LESS OF SELF AND MORE OF THEE."
Chapter VI.

God chooseth wondrously!
He chooseth this world’s foolish things,
And by them doth confound the wise;
He chooseth weak and base and small,
And things which are not; and He works
So wondrously in them, that all
Show forth His glory; thus indeed
He from the mouths of babes and sucklings
Doth perfect praise!
CHAPTER VI.

The reader will remember that when Chandkor had hospitably taken care of Basantkor and her mother-in-law and child, and had left them to rest while she with her daughter and daughters-in-law went to prepare the evening feast, old Mahtábkor had taken such a good opportunity to lie down and sleep after the tiring walk of the morning, and the excitement and sorrow which she had shared with Basantkor when the sad accident had happened to little Ganesh; and then Basantkor and the afflicted Wirán had begun to talk to each other in the quiet twilight.

We shall now go back to that conversation, and thus learn something more of our poor cripple and her joys and sorrows.

Basantkor began by telling over again in her childish fashion the story of that day four years before, when the lighting up of their poor home in
the Lakrimandi had resulted in such a wonderful gift from Ganesh, through the intercession of the pleased and honoured Lachmi, the goddess of wealth.

Virāṇ had already heard her tell this story more than once, but she was a very patient, thoughtful woman herself, and she was too kind to stop the excited and childish little visitor by reminding her that she had told the same thing over and over.

When Basantkor had finished speaking, Virāṇ said, “But I suppose that, even if it did not please Lachmi, it would still please you to light up your house?”

“Why, of course,” answered Basantkor, “it pleases every one. Is it not beautiful to see one little chirāg after another begin to give its tiny light until there is one long line of light all round the roof? It is true our poor house is only small, and we cannot make a very grand show; yours must be very lovely! How many chirāgs does it need to light it up?” Virāṇ replied, “I do not quite know, but I think my brother generally has a supply of ten thousand:* and we employ a great many poor women in the morning to prepare the wicks.” “Ten thousand!” exclaimed the excited Basantkor. “Oh, I do hope I shall see your

* Five thousand chirāgs were used for lighting up St. Catherine’s Hospital, Amritsar, on the occasion of the Queen’s Jubilee.
house lighted up to-night—it will be one of the best sights I have ever seen in my life!"

"Why is light so beautiful?" asked Wiran in a very thoughtful manner. "Why?" answered Basantkor; "really I have never thought much about it, so I do not think I know."

"Perhaps," said Wiran, "it is because darkness is sad; and then is it not true that when any one is very wicked, we say his heart is dark; and when any great trouble comes, we say the light is gone from our eyes? So wicked things and sad things seem like darkness, and light seems like what is happy and good. Shall I read something about this out of one of my books?"

But instead of answering this question, the volatile and excitable little visitor only exclaimed, "What! can you read? I did not know you could do that." Wiran replied, "It is not, of course, the custom in families like ours for women to read; but you see I am a cripple, and my whole family are very kind to me, all the more kind because of my illness, which makes it impossible for me to be employed in ways in which women generally are. At first, when my mother knew that I wanted to learn to read, she was not pleased, and she was going to forbid it; but my brother said
that if I could read it would be like bright light in a
dark life, and he allowed his son, that is, my nephew,
Partáp Singh, you know, to teach me from day to day
on his return from school; and I have truly found that
it is light in a dark life. I have read several books;
and very often when I am in pain, or when I cannot
sleep at night and feel very lonely, then I read and feel
again so happy.” Basantkor said she was very much
surprised; and she gazed very wonderingly at her
hostess, and began to feel a great respect for one who
evidently knew so much more than she did.

After a little pause she asked, “And what is this
wonderful book from which you said you would read
to me?” Wirán replied, “There is a great deal in
this book about light. When I first began to read it,
I saw on the very first page that ‘God said, Let there
be light, and there was light;’ and when I read that, I
began to search for more about light; but I soon found
so much about it in the book, that I resolved to give
up searching for that in particular, and to read the
book straight through till I had seen all that was in it.”

“And have you seen all yet?” inquired Basantkor.
“No,” answered Wirán, “not yet; this is a book
which requires a great deal of thinking about, and it
cannot be read very quickly; and also there are some
people who think we ought not to read this book, and perhaps if I showed it before them, they would take it away from me and never let me read it again.” Basantkor started, and said, “Bibi, is this a bad book?” “No, no,” said Wirán, “I am quite sure it is not bad; everything I have read in it is good, and pure and full of comfort, and if I came to one bad thing while reading, I should never look inside it again.” “Then why do some people think it ought not to be read?” asked Basantkor. “I do not really know,” said Wirán, “but I think perhaps it is because they have not read it themselves.” Then opening the book with care, she added, “And now, shall I read you something that I found about light?” But Basantkor had still another question to ask before she could listen to any reading, “Is your brother one of those people who think we should not read this book?” she asked, “and does your nephew read it?” Wirán did not like to confess that she kept her book hidden away in secret, but she saw that she must give her visitor some answer, so she replied, “Perhaps my brother and nephew would tell me not to read it; but I do not wish to ask their permission, and I have not told them that I even possess it.” “How did you get it, then?” asked Basantkor. “One day,” said Wirán,
"as I was lying here alone, and my brother was out at his business, and my sister-in-law and the rest of the women were attending to the household matters, I was wishing very much that I had something new to read. My younger nephew was at school, and Partáp Singh was at Delhi, and was not to return for several weeks. It seemed to me as if he would never return, and in his absence there was no one to get me any books. The day was passing so slowly for me, that I was very glad when some neighbours came in to talk, as they often do.

"One of these women asked me if I had read many books, and I told her I had read all I possessed. She said that she had seen a woman selling books in the galli outside our house.

"I was very much surprised at this, and asked her to bring that woman into the house; but she answered, 'I dare not bring her into your brother's house; she is a Christian, and your brother would be very angry with me.' I also knew that even for the sake of a new book I must not call a Christian woman into our house, so I asked my neighbour to go and buy me a book. At first she was not at all willing, but at last, because of my very earnest entreaty, she went away and searched for that woman who sold books."
"I had told her to bring the largest she could find, and so when she returned she had this one carefully concealed under her chádar.

"She begged me not to tell my brother that she had brought the book into the house, and I promised, because she had been so kind to me that I did not wish to get her into trouble, and this is one reason why I have never yet told any one about this book."

Then, after a little pause, Wirán began to read, "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun;" and again, "I am the Light of the world; he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." And again, turning over the leaves of the book quickly, as if this were a part which she was very anxious to read to her hearer, she read with much feeling, "Thy sun shall no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw itself; for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."

"Do you not think," she exclaimed, "that these are very beautiful words?" "Yes, they are very sweet," said Basantkor; "but who gives such promises? and what people can hope to enjoy that which is promised?" "I do not understand much yet," replied
Wirán, "but I think this book came from God, and that those who believe the words He has sent to them will have all the darkness of their lives taken away, and will get the true light."

"But how do you know this book came from God?" asked Basantkor. "I think I can hardly explain to you what I mean, but I will try," replied her friend. "I am not really quite sure, because I am not able to give any reason except this: that whatever I want to make me happy, that thing I always find in some wonderful way in this book. When I am sad, somehow or another the stories contained in this make my heart light and happy; and when I am lonely, I read this, and it seems to me that I have a companion; and when I am vexed or angry, or my heart is rebelling and my tongue is murmuring about my illness, then I read in this book about brave people, and what they suffered patiently, or about God’s great works; and then I get ashamed of my impatience, and peace comes into my heart. I know so very little about things which are written by clever men, that some of the books which my nephews like only weary me, they are so full of wisdom, and I am too ignorant to understand; but although this book seems very full of wisdom too, and teaches me many
things which I did not know before, still it is very simple, and its meaning plain.”

“Whose book is it?” asked Basantkor. “It is the Holy Book of the Christians,” was the answer.

“But surely we ought not to read that?” exclaimed her questioner, with an expression of fear on her face; “it is not for us!” Wirán answered, “In this book we are told of One who was great and rich and holy, who left all His glory and came to live on earth to do men good and make them happy; and when He had finished His work on our earth, He died as if He had been a sinner, and His death was instead of the death of sinners. He died for every one in the world, and surely the book which tells people about that must be meant for every one!” “Yes, if the story were true,” said Basantkor; “but how can any one possibly understand whether it is true or not?” “I cannot tell,” answered Wirán. “Oh, I do wish we could ask all the clever and good men what they think!” “Then ask your brother and his sons,” suggested her visitor. “Oh, no, no; I cannot do that yet,” said Wirán, “but perhaps after some days I shall ask them.” “The words you have been telling me are very nice,” said Basantkor, as she rose to take up her boy and go to see the illuminations, to
which sight old Mahtábkor, who had gone before to the roof with the women of the house, was calling her; "but I do not see that it would be any use for any one like me to remember them." "But then," said Wirán gravely, "if you have no one to forgive your sins, what will you do when God calls you before His judgment-throne?" "I do not think I have any sins," said Basantkor; "but once in my life I have been to *Má Ganga,* and whatever wrong I may have done must surely have been washed away then!" "I used to think that *that* washing was sufficient," said Wirán, "but now I think so no longer." Basantkor made a salám and thanked Wirán for all her kindness, and went away to see the illuminations; and then returned, as we have before heard, with her husband and child and old Mahtábkor, to her home in the Lakrimandi.

It may be a matter of surprise to the reader that Wirán should so readily have understood and believed the words of the book which had come by accident into her hands, and which she had perceived to be "the Holy Book of the Christians." No human being had taught her, or argued with her, or tried in any way to turn her away from her old faith; but in her

* The River Ganges.
weakness and utter weariness, with so little from the world even outwardly appearing to satisfy her soul's thirst, and with an intelligent awakened mind, which prompted her to make inquiries in her own heart concerning the punishment of sin, the life after death, and many other great subjects which would probably never have come into the thoughts of a careless and ignorant woman, she had stretched out her hands unto God, and prayed Him to show her the right way to come to Him. Does God hear such prayers? Most assuredly He does; and He knows when the hearts of His creatures turn towards Him whom they know not, with an unutterable longing to find Him. In many a dark zenána there are such seekers, in many a heathen home such cries go up to Him; and He does answer! Wirán did not immediately find answers to all her questions in the Holy Book of the Christians. At first when she began to read it, she was anxious and afraid lest she should be discovered, and lest the precious book should be taken from her in anger by her brother, and very great trouble come upon her as the consequence of possessing such a book. But by degrees she found she had opportunities, when the women were cooking and the men were out, and she diligently used those opportunities and learnt all she could. She
was resolved first to satisfy herself about the truth of this book, and then to tell her brother of her convictions. Out of the fulness of her heart she had told more than she had intended to Basantkor, and she fell asleep at night pondering over what she should do when the time came to tell her family. We have already seen how Partáp Singh, coming in, found her sleeping with the book near her, and how he took it away to his own room for the night. During the night Wirán was awakened by pain—this was often the case in her sad experience; but besides her pain, she was rendered wakeful by her uneasiness of mind. "What if Basantkor should tell everything?" she thought; "it would be so much better for me to tell for myself—they will not be half so angry. It was foolish of me to tell a stranger, but it seemed to me as if I must tell some one; the knowledge of the wonderful things contained in that book was like a fire in my bones, * and I could not help saying something about it to one who seemed willing to listen I ought to have warned her not to tell any one, but alas! I forgot to do so!"

In this uneasy state of mind, poor Wirán could not

* Not necessarily a Bible quotation; it is a most common expression in Hindustani.
sleep; her chiráh was still burning, and she remembered how often in pain and loneliness she had felt better after reading her book, and she thought she would try it now. She reached out her hand to feel for it—it was gone! She felt everywhere, as far as her limited powers of movement made it possible, but nowhere could she find it. After a long and useless search she realised her loss. "Alas!" she said to herself, "Basantkor must have told my family, and they have taken it away, and now what a storm of anger will burst upon me! Alas! what shall I do?" She cried to God to help her, and to avert from such a helpless and suffering being the trouble which she felt quite sure must be the portion of any one found reading the Holy Book of the Christians.

While in this agony of fear and distress, she heard a quiet step, and made out that some one was coming towards her. Trembling and afraid, she was about to call the women servants who were sleeping near, when Partáp Singh’s voice reassured her. He spoke quietly, and said, "Do not be afraid; it is only I." He came near, and put the book down on the charpaie close to her hand, asking, "Is this yours?" "Yes," said the trembling woman, "it is;" and then she hurriedly begged him not to be angry, and not to tell
his father; and she added, "When I bought the book I really did not know it was that; and oh! nephew, I cannot hide from you that I think it very good."

"Hush!" he answered; "say no more. I will keep your secret; but when you want books, do not buy for yourself in future; ask us what is best for you to read." And he hurried away, lest she should ask him if he had looked into it, and lest he should betray by word or act that his own soul was athirst for God, and was crying to Him, amid all the unsatisfying pleasures of the world, "Lead me in the right path; teach me Thy way."
Chapter XIX.

Only one powerful word of His who spake
As never other spoke, and straight within
Her heart is lodged the arrow of conviction;
Never again can rest that waken'd soul,
Never find peace or quiet satisfaction,
Until she lowly at the feet of Christ
Learns first the secret of His victory,
And then the secret of His blessed rest.
CHAPTER VII.

It was when the shadows of evening were gathering, and the streets of the city were looking dark just before the grand illumination, that Fátima Bibi sat watching the last slowly-drawn breath of her dying sister; and before night had come that sister had passed away from the world, leaving her helpless babe, who lay in Fátima’s arms, all unconscious of the misery and suffering and death of the world into which he had so lately been born.

As soon as the sun had risen the next morning, the large party of mourners carrying Umr Bibi to her burial might have been seen leaving the city by the Rám Báng gate to go to the cemetery of the Moham medans. On arriving in the large open space in front of the cemetery, they placed the bier upon the ground while they performed certain ceremonies, bathing, &c.

They then proceeded with the prayers, and afterwards placed the body in the grave, in the usual kind
of shelf dug out within the grave (which allows room for the person to sit up at the supposed visit of the angel to inquire concerning his faith). After this they gave portions to the beggars, who, according to their custom, were assembled at the cemetery waiting for the alms of persons burying their dead. And then, after more prayers, they returned to the house, where Fátima Bibi and all the female relatives and friends of the deceased were sitting and making great lamentation.

The scene was one to fill the heart with pity. Fátima's mother was quite broken-hearted. She had always had a very especial love for this daughter; from Fátima she had been so long separated that, although they loved each other very much indeed, they had become accustomed to living without each other. But it was otherwise in the case of Umr Bibi; her marriage had been delayed by the death of her father when she was fifteen years of age, and for three years after that her mother had not found a good opportunity of making marriage arrangements for her. At length, at the age of eighteen, she had been married; but as her husband's mother was dead, her own mother had always lived with her; and so it had happened that from the time of her birth until the
hand of death had smitten her, Umr Bibi had never known what it was to be parted from her mother.

And now that poor mother sat broken-hearted on the floor near the charpaie where but yesterday she had watched her dying girl, and mourned and wept as she recounted, in a voice constantly interrupted by sobs, the good deeds and loving words of that dear daughter; and often, when she had once more finished the story recounted so many times, she murmured in a low voice the words of the bhajan—

"Does Death choose his hapless victims?
Seeks he out the rich and great?
Nay, for rich and poor he watcheth,
Young and old alike he snatcheth,
Hurrying on their cruel fate."

Many friends and relatives came to mourn with the bereaved family, and Fátima at length began to grow quite weary of the incessant talking and the many expressions of grief, some of which she could not but know were heartless and unmeaning, only spoken for the sake of showing some kindness, or perhaps merely because it was necessary to comply with certain customs and ceremonies. She sat all day upon the floor, singing sadly in a low voice to the tiny babe which was now so precious to her, and wondering much in herself whether he would live, and whether his father
would really allow him to remain entirely with her as her own child, and whether he would grow up, and what he would be like. Would he be fond of her and regard her as his mother? Would she have joy in him, or sorrow? Then she pondered in her mind the strange ways in which God deals with men; how He sends sickness and sorrow and death into families, making no distinction between great and small, rich and poor; and how this cruel Death takes the fair and the beloved, and leaves hearts that were lonely and sad before more desolate and empty than ever; and yet how God pours out riches upon others—the riches of friendship, money, health, children. Fátima's religion, of which she was not at all ignorant, taught her to believe in God, and in His sovereign sway over the universe, as well as in His unerring wisdom and unwavering justice. But it taught her nothing concerning His love! So her soul's deep craving for comfort could never be satisfied, and she remained desolate and sad.

One day in the same week in which her sister died, her kind friend the Panjábi doctor-lady came to see her and to sorrow with her concerning the loss of her sister. Fátima felt very glad indeed to see her, because she had been so kind and spoken such
tender words to her on that terrible last night of her sister's life, and in the midst of all the sorrow and anxiety of the family had shown herself such a true friend, doing all she could to save the life of the sufferer, and to comfort and help those who were with so much grief watching her through her last hours. This good doctor-lady now came in and sat down by the sad women on the floor, and the tears came plentifully as she took their hands and said, "Bibi, ji, I am so sorry; my heart feels very sad for you both; such a good daughter, such a loving and kind sister, it is very hard to lose."

For a little time they all wept together; and then Fátima and her mother began to tell of the goodness of Umr Bibi, and how she never used to get angry, as almost every one else does sometimes, and how she used to give away very much to the poor, and be so religious in her observance of times of prayer and other duties, fasting &c.; and the doctor-lady listened to all most patiently, and often uttered an exclamation of sorrow and sympathy. At last the two tired mourners ceased speaking; they were very weary and sad, yet it had been a sort of pleasure to tell over again, and to a fresh listener, about their dear one who was gone.

The doctor-lady was nursing the baby, and it had
fallen asleep in her arms, and now all was quiet; and with that look of sympathising love on her face which assured her listeners that her heart was sad for them, she softly and solemnly said the following words:—

"Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in Me.

"In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

"And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.

"And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.

"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father but by Me.

"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."

Both the Bibis listened quietly to these few words, and Fatima's face showed that to her they were a revelation; they had brought before her, for the first
time in her life, the idea of the *love of God*. With that marvellous rapidity with which some souls open their doors to God's messages, and receive what He says with the simple faith of little children, she eagerly received the words now spoken to her, and as they ceased, she drew a deep breath and asked, "Is there any more?" Her Christian visitor replied, "Yes, there is much more, but just now I want you to think of this: think of a Teacher Who is able to say, 'Let not your heart be troubled,' and Who can tell the saddest, most afflicted, most weary of the strugglers with this world's difficulties and trials to 'be of good cheer,' and Who can give as the wonderful reason for such a command the grand truth 'I have overcome the world.' No other teacher ever dared to say *that!*" "The words are very beautiful," said Fátima; "but every one must live and die in his own religion." The Christian visitor was about to reply, but Fátima's mother thought that enough had now been said on the subject of religion, so she turned the conversation to other topics, and taking the baby out of the arms of the doctor-lady, began to handle him and turn him over and over in such a manner that he cried loudly. This, of course, brought the interview to an end, and the visitor soon left the house.
Then Fátima’s mother said, “Now remember, I do not wish you to be visited by this Christian doctor; while you stay here you must see only such people as I like, and I do not wish her to come to see us again; she has doubtless very good intentions, but who knows whether our poor Umri’s death may not have been partly owing to our having called in a Christian doctor?” “No, mother,” exclaimed Fátima; “that is very unjust—you cannot say that; we have no reason to think that she is not clever, or that she did not do all in her power for our beloved one who is gone; let us not think such things about any one.” Then after a little pause she added, “Did you not yourself tell me, on the evening of my arrival, that this lady-doctor is so clever and kind, and has done several wonderful cures in our family?” “Oh, yes,” answered her mother, “that is all quite true; but it makes no difference to my wish now, and when she comes again she must be told that we are all gone to Lahore.” “Very well,” replied Fátima obediently. In her heart she hoped very much that at some time she might again meet the kind friend who had sat by her on the floor in the time of her trouble, and had told her comfortable words, the words of the only Teacher Who had ever dared to say, ‘Be of good cheer; I have
overcome the world." The words had taken a wonderful hold of her; she said them over and over to herself; she thought of them morning, noon, and night. She wondered why they were so fascinating, why they charmed her so; and the more she thought of them, the more she felt sure that if only she could hear other things which that doctor-lady could teach her, she would be satisfied and comforted.

The next day brought death again very near to her, but her grief was far less intense than it had been for her sister, when a telegram brought her the news that she had most suddenly and unexpectedly become a widow.

Her husband had had an attack of severe illness; there had been no time to send for his mother and wife from Amritsar when he died. His poor old mother, who, on account of her great affection for Fátima, had taken such a long journey only in order to accompany her, was so grieved and shocked on receiving this sad news that for two or three days she remained quite helpless and almost insensible. At length she began to express a great desire to return home, and asked Fátima how long it would be before she would be ready to go; but Fátima had already decided that she would leave her own mother no more,
and difficult as it was to tell this to her kind mother-in-law, she did at length make her understand that now it was her duty to stay with her mother and care for the child which her sister had bequeathed to her in her dying moments; and so it happened that her mother-in-law (accompanied by the woman who had come with her from Agra, and by two others from Fátima’s home, who were to return to Amritsar after seeing her safely to her journey’s end) found herself again sitting sorrowfully in a zenána carriage commencing a long journey; and although she had another daughter-in-law and three grandchildren who now in a special way needed her care, yet her own and only son was gone, and she was parting with her dear Fátima, perhaps for ever; and it is no wonder that as she started she said to herself with a bitter sigh—

"For thou hast none of thy very own, ji."
Chapter VIII.

It seems at first so weary and so hard
To find the world is all unsatisfying.
And so it is. But when the heart has found
Another and a better portion, then
The world may go with no regretful sigh,
For God is all in all!
CHAPTER VIII.

Time passed on, and Fátima and her mother continued to live together, but not in the house of Umri's husband. They had removed soon after the death of their beloved one, and had taken a small house where there was just enough room for themselves and the nurse who was kept for the baby. They were not rich, and could not afford to have a large house and several servants. Fátima never murmured about their poverty; indeed she felt rather thankful that it obliged her to cook for herself and her mother, and perform other household duties which made the time seem to pass more quickly, and left her less leisure for thinking those thoughts of sadness which so often came into her mind. But after all, in such a tiny family, the household duties could not be many, and often in the evenings Fátima would take the child in her arms and sit down to think. It was strange that it should be so, but she was not so happy with her own mother as she had been with her mother-in-law;
they had been so long separated that there seemed now very little in common between them. And Fátima was very unlike Umr Bibi; she was thoughtful and grave, and saddened by the disappointments of her life, while her sister had been so bright and playful, and had seemed to have no cares; so it was very natural that the mother should often say with a sigh, "Oh, that my Umri had never died!" Fátima's thoughts would sometimes go to the home in Agra, where she had had plenty without anxiety, and where, except for the one great sorrow of being childless, she had rather enjoyed her life. She began to think that the little baby was not well and strong, and that perhaps he would die. She could not bear this thought, and wondered in her own mind whether she could go on living if this child were taken from her. He had begun to know her, to smile at the sound of her voice, and to watch for her coming to take him in her arms when she had finished making the bread every day. One day Fátima was playing with him and feeling very happy, when she suddenly thought to herself, "Alas! if this child dies, there will be only misery for me in this sorrowful world." The very word reminded her of the saying she had heard of the One Who said, "Be of good cheer, I have over-
Fatima Bibi and her mother and child.—Page 119.
come the world." She had long before told a servant woman in her brother-in-law's house that if ever the doctor-lady came there again, she was to bring her to her; but she supposed that her friend, who seemed so kind, was really very forgetful, and did not mean to come again to see her, for she never heard of her coming, and as often as she inquired, was assured she had never called. Fátima did not know that her kind helper in trouble had been many times to the house where she had visited the dying Umr Bibi, and had entreated to be allowed to see Fátima, but had been told sometimes that she was gone to Lahore, and sometimes that she had returned to her home in Agra.

At length Fátima could no longer repress her longing to see her dear friend, and so, perceiving that the baby appeared to be thin and weak, she said to her mother, "I wish to call that doctor-lady who came to visit our poor Umri; perhaps she can give some good medicine for the child." But Fátima's mother was not at all pleased at this suggestion, and would not give any decided answer all day; she would only remind Fátima again and again that she had told her once that it was not her wish to have that Christian woman to visit them any more. In the evening she put on
her *burqa*, and went to the house of her son-in-law to ask his advice about this wish of Fátima's.

Rahím Bakhshe was not a religious man; he knew very little indeed about his own creed, and he cared still less. He was, like many hundreds of men, utterly indifferent concerning the worship of God and the welfare of the soul.

He was not rich in this world's goods; his occupation was that of a cloth-worker, and as he could read and write, he kept accounts for his fellow-workers, and so was known popularly in the *Maḥalla* as "the munshi." He had never had any liking for the regular occupation of a munshi, and preferred the somewhat poorly-paying trade of a cloth-worker. Although he had no personal care for religion, he was an exceedingly bitter opponent of those who chose to profit by the freedom allowed to every man throughout the country to accept any form of religion he chose, and who left that in which they had been brought up in order to embrace one which seemed to them more pure and true. This excited his indignation, and he had often been heard to say that if any member of his family became a Christian, he would persecute

* Maḥalla is equivalent to our word "quarter;" as when we say, "the silk-weavers' quarter," "Jews' quarter," and so on.
NONE OF SELF.

him to the uttermost. When Fátima’s mother arrived at the house of Rahím Bakhsš, she found him at home, and after saláms and mutual inquiries, she began to talk about the baby’s ill-health. The father did not seem so very much concerned about the matter; he had another wife and other children, and he was not much interested in this little delicate boy, which perhaps would never be reared; and his mother-in-law felt inclined to be very angry with him for his indifference, especially as she knew that very soon yet another Bibi was coming to his house, and that there would be merrymakings where so lately there had been mourning. She scarcely knew what to say to make him concerned about his child, but she had no more trouble when once she had spoken about the doctor-lady, for no sooner had the name passed her lips than Rahím Bakhsš grew violently angry and intensely interested in the illness of the child. “There are hundreds of other doctors,” he exclaimed passionately; “why can you not call some of them to give the baby medicine?” “Because Fátima has great faith in this person,” said the old woman, feeling herself very agitated and frightened at the storm of anger she had roused, “and she will never be happy until she has shown the baby to her.” “Who cares whether Fátima
is happy or not?" was the reply. "Do you want her to be happy by turning a Christian?" he sneeringly added. Fátima's mother started. "Fátima a Christian!" she exclaimed; "oh, there is no fear of that; she does not know enough about it." "Fátima is a fool," he answered, "and she has begun listening to this Christian woman, and has told our Phajjo many times to be sure to bring her there; but Phajjo, like other women, could not hold her tongue; she told her secret to Aishan's mā, and she told me, so I speedily forbade that doctor-lady ever being allowed to enter either your house or mine. Do you know, she comes to a house in this gallī and teaches the girls to read, and there are two or three of them wanting to be Christians." Fátima's mother said that she did not know anything about all that, but what answer was she to give to Fátima about the baby? Rahím Bakhsh replied that the child was his, and he alone had a right to say who should doctor it; and he would bring a hakím early in the morning to see it, and if Fátima gave him any trouble about it, he would take it away and bring it up in his own house. Fátima's mother went home again with a conflict in her heart. She loved her daughter, and did not wish to make her unhappy; she felt for her too, in her childlessness and
widowhood, and she would be really grieved if Rahím Bakẖsh carried out his threat and took away the baby; but yet she did not wish Fátima to call that lady-doctor, and she felt secretly rather glad that she could tell her that the baby's father forbade it, and that it was no fault of her own.

It was long before Fátima could sleep that night; she felt as if another great sorrow were about to darken her life, and the world seemed to her to be more empty and worthless than it had ever been before. "Alas!" she thought, as she lay awake hour after hour, "would to God I could believe that for me too the world has been overcome!" Little indeed did Rahím Bakẖsh and Fátima's mother imagine that there was something taking possession of Fátima's heart which no power, no anger, no orders could exclude; that the power of the words of Christ was come, and that nothing which they could do or say could ever hinder that power in its mighty working!

In the morning Rahím Bakẖsh brought the hakīm. He was not the man so famous for his large blisters and generous allowance of leeches, but the wise man whose counsel on the night of the death of Umr Bibi had not been heeded. He gave his opinion that the only cause of the child's illness was want of sufficient
nourishment, and to Fátima’s great joy he added, “Ask the doctor-lady to send you a good daie for this child, and it will soon be better; but lose no time!”

Both Rahím Bakhsh and Fátima’s mother were very unwilling to carry out this order, and they delayed some days and tried other expedients; but at length, finding no improvement, and Fátima’s mother being very anxious at least to save the child’s life, they sent to call the kind friend whom Fátima was longing to see.

She brought a good daie with her, who promised, after many haggling about wages and food and clothes, to stay and nurse the poor motherless babe; and then the doctor-lady sat down for a little talk; but Fátima’s mother was on the alert to prevent this, and Rahím Bakhsh took care to keep so close to Fátima as to make it impossible for her to say anything quietly to her visitor. Fátima was nearly in despair. During the several weeks which had elapsed since she had received the seed of that one word of Divine truth into her heart, it had been alive in her heart, and it was springing up; there was the desire to know more, and now she thought to herself, “Is my longing to remain unfulfilled? Is my question to go on burning in my heart and be unanswered? Till I can ask, I
shall never rest. Shall I wait for another opportunity? Perhaps it may never come, and I shall repent all my life that I was afraid to ask now." Then she said to her visitor, "I want to ask you something about those words, 'Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.'" Her friend replied, "It is difficult to answer you now; can you not come to see me? You can wear your burqa and come in a doolie, and in my house you can be strictly 'in parda.' I am sure your mother will not mind that; perhaps she will come as well. Will you?" she continued, addressing Fátima's mother. "Perhaps some day we might come," replied the old woman, simply to please her visitor, for she had not the least intention of ever going near her or listening to her words; and as for allowing Fátima to go, she would almost as soon have thought of administering a dose of poison to her!

Rahím Bakhsh suppressed his feelings of anger sufficiently to say politely to the visitor that it was not their custom for their women to go so far even in burgas, unless any very urgent family business demanded it, and so he hoped she would excuse Fátima from coming, but always come herself whenever she could and visit Fátima at home. Fátima looked up gratefully, but instantly recollected herself, and knew
in her heart that this polite talk was all false, and that her friend would never again get admission into their house. Probably the doctor-lady knew this as well as Fátima, and she looked at her sadly and wistfully in parting, and said quietly as she stooped over her, “Ask Jesus to help you. I am powerless, but He said, ‘If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it.’”

Fátima was very quick and impetuous, and almost without thinking what she said, she exclaimed, “I will come to see you. I am of age, and can do as I choose; no one will prevent me!”

When the doctor-lady was gone, the wrath of Rahím Bakhš burst forth. “You shall never go,” he said angrily, “and you shall no longer keep this child.” After many angry words and much strife they parted, Rahím Bakhš carrying away in his arms his little son, and ordering the daie to follow him; while the two women sat down very unhappy, and cried and scolded each other in turns, until their vexation passed away a little and they grew more calm.

Towards evening Fátima’s mother, putting on her burqa, went to the house of her son-in-law to try to appease him and bring back the baby.

Nothing was further from her thoughts than that Fátima might leave the house during her absence;
great, therefore, was her surprise and fear, on returning from a fruitless effort, to find that the house was empty! She called her daughter’s name, and searched in every corner, but Fátima could nowhere be found. After thinking a little what to do next, she decided on returning to the house of her son-in-law. On the way she comforted herself by thinking that possibly she might find her daughter there—she might have gone there after her mother, hoping to help in persuading Rahím Bakhš to give up the child; and although she never did go out alone, yet the houses were not very far distant from each other, and it was possible for her to find her way. But this happy thought was not realised; and great was the anger of Rahím Bakhš when he heard that Fátima was missing. There was soon a great excitement in the family when the matter was known, and numbers of neighbours came to add to the confusion and to ask questions. A message was at once sent to the doctor-lady, begging her to tell if Fátima had gone to her; but an assurance, which every one knew was not to be doubted, came back to the effect that certainly Fátima had not been to her, and that should she come, the mother and friends should at once be told of her whereabouts.

The people running backwards and forwards between
the two houses continued to show interest and make a fuss until they grew tired of the subject, and then they gradually dropped off quietly and went to their own homes, making their comments as they went upon the fact of Fátima Bibi leaving her home alone. Some blamed her mother for not taking more care of her; some blamed Rahím Bakhsh for making such a fuss and being so severe about Fátima's visitors; and some laughed at the whole matter, and said Fátima would no doubt be found presently in the house of some neighbour. And where was Fátima?

As soon as she left the house and began to walk in the streets, she began to feel a little frightened, for she was quite unaccustomed to walk or go out alone. In taking long journeys she had always been accompanied by several women, and had been conveyed with great care and caution to and from the railway stations; but now she found herself alone and in the bustling streets, she felt confused and by degrees more and more alarmed.

But one thought gave her courage; she had found sorrow and disappointment and empty vanity in the world, and she had heard of One Who said, "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world;" and she only wished to find out if the words were true; if they
were, she would throw herself at the feet of that great
Conqueror and be His slave; and if they were proved
to be false, she could but go on being as miserable
and lonely as she was before. Anyhow, she intended
to return to her mother's house as soon as she had
obtained an answer to her question. She walked on,
almost forgetting that she did not know the way
to the house she was intending to go to. Suddenly
she recollected her situation; she wanted to go to the
doctor-lady's house, but she did not know the way, and
felt afraid to ask any one; she also feared to stand still
lest she should be rudely accosted. She walked on
slowly, and at length made up her mind to speak to a
woman whom she saw wearing a burqa and coming
towards her. She inquired hastily, "Can you tell me
the way to the house of the doctor-lady?" The
woman said "No," and then asked, "Who are you, and
are you ill?" This alarmed Fátima so much that she
went on more quickly, and for a long time she dared
not speak again to any one. But she began to think it
would grow dark, and so she took courage to ask two
or three women one after the other; but no one could
tell her what she so much wanted to know. At last
she was beginning to despair, and remembered that
now she could not even find her way back to her
mother's house if she tried, when she noticed some kind-looking women who were sitting spinning in the little open space in front of their house, and standing still by them, she said, "I am ill, and want to find a doctor-lady." At once these women began to tell about their own doctor-lady, and offered to take Fátima to see her. Fátima was very grateful, and eagerly begged to be taken at once; but they said "Oh no, you will not find her in the Hospital now; go home and come again in the morning, and we will take you when we go for our own medicines." Poor Fátima replied, "I cannot go home; I have come a long way from a village, and must see the lady-doctor and get medicine before returning." "You do not look like a village-woman," they said, "and your speech is that of the city; but of course we cannot tell; your home may be far away, for all we know."

When they saw that Fátima did not know her way, and seemed very tired, they began to believe she came from some distant place, and so they said, "Eat bread with us, and sleep in our house, and go with us in the morning to the doctor-lady."

To this Fátima thankfully agreed; and so it happened that she, who had never before been away from the shelter of her own home, rested for the night in the
house of strangers. She could eat but little, and she could not sleep. The women of the house thought it was because she was ill, and so they said nothing about it.

Very early in the morning they prepared to go for their own medicines, and taking Fátima, set out in good time for the Hospital; and not long after poor Fátima found herself crouching in a corner of the patients' waiting-room, anxiously listening for the sound of the voice of her kind friend.
Chapter IX.

My soul was weary of my life, but I
Have come to One Who bid me come to Him
For life and rest; and sitting at His feet,
I hear His precious words and know His love,
And all my soul is filled with heavenly joy:
Life is no longer weary since 'tis lived for Him.
CHAPTER IX.

It seemed a very long time to Fátima before the doctor-lady came; and other people who were waiting there seemed also to think it long, and some grew very impatient.

There were some sad sights in that waiting-room. There were poor little fretting, pining babies, wasted away and suffering pain, in many cases only because they had been fed on chupáttis and dál when they ought to have had nothing but milk, and sometimes because their mothers were scarcely more than babies themselves, and could not possibly know anything at all about how to take care of them. There were young women who appeared to have very few weeks to live, whose lives were rapidly ebbing away from consumption, and whose wasted forms and incessant coughs told a sad tale of suffering; and there were older women with sorrowful anxious faces, who had to work hard for daily bread for themselves and their children, and who were becoming afraid lest the dis-
located wrist, or abscess, or inflamed knee-joint should make it impossible for the work to be done upon which they were absolutely dependent; and there were old women who seemed to have nothing left worth living for, one of whom said that her unthankful and evil children were weary of the trouble of her, and had turned her out to die; and another cried, and said, "Alas! alas! I have neither husband, nor son, nor daughter; and since my son died, I have gone blind from crying, and there is nothing for me now but death."

These various sick people sat together waiting and talking to each other, and asking each others' names, and where they lived, and many other questions; and Fátima began to fear lest they should speak to her and ask her history.

Presently a woman sitting near her began to say, "Who are you, and where do you live?" At first Fátima did not answer, and then one of the women who had been kind to her, and kept her in their house all night, and brought her to the Dispensary, said, "Oh, she is a woman from a village, she says, but she looks as if she had lived all her life in a city; and she seems ill and is rather strange in her temper, and we have not been able to find out her name; it may
Patients waiting for the doctor, Miss Sahiba. – Page 136.
be Nur Bibi, or Sardár Begam, or Fátima Bibi; who knows? She does not like being questioned, so leave her alone; what is the good of talking to people who do not wish to talk?"

Presently a kind gentle Christian Bibi came and spoke to the patients, and she had a book in her hand from which she was evidently going to read to them. Some of the women sitting there touched her nice clean dress, and one asked, "Is this English?" "Oh, no," was the reply; "we people of this country do not need to wear English clothes; we only need to keep what we wear neat and clean, and to change them often for washing. It is good for the health of the body to wear clean clothes; if you only knew the comfort and blessing of it, you would try to have things nice and clean." Before this Bibi began to talk to the poor suffering patients of the pitying, loving One who had sent His Holy Word to them, the doctor-lady came and spoke to them all, giving a special salám to one and another whom she knew, and saying something kind to each. She saw Fátima. "Ah!" she exclaimed, "are you here, Fátima?" Poor Fátima, being very tired and exhausted, as well as very sad, no sooner heard the kind words of greeting than she began to weep so violently that it was quite
A female religious teacher amongst the Sikhs.—Page 137.
than she began to weep so violently that it was quite
impossible for her to speak. "Do not cry," said her friend; "tell me what is troubling you, and why you left your house yesterday evening, and gave your mother so much alarm and anxiety. She sent here to inquire for you, but of course I could tell her nothing, as I did not know where you were."

But Fátima could not sufficiently control herself to speak; and so, seeing that all the other women in the room were beginning to get excited and to ask too many questions, the doctor-lady took Fátima gently by the hand and led her away to her own little private room, telling the Christian Bibi to go on reading to the patients till her return.

Sitting down by poor Fátima on the floor, she soon with gentle kindness and persuasion drew from her the story of her sorrows and anxieties, as well as about her longing to know more of the Prophet who had dared to say, "I have overcome the world." Fátima ended all her story by saying, "The world is very, very bad, and full of misery, and it is better to die than live amidst so many disappointments and sorrows."

Many kind and comforting words did her good friend speak to her, and earnestly did she try to make her feel happier; and then she said, "Now you must go back to your home, and I will try again to get your
mother's leave to come sometimes to see you.” But Fátima declared that she could not go home until she had learnt what she so much wished to know; and, in spite of all persuasions to the contrary, she remained firm in this resolve. A little later on, when the patients had been attended to, Fátima's mother was sent for, and she came bringing Rahím Bakhs and many other relatives, as well as many persons not relatives at all.

In the presence of the doctor-lady these people made many promises. Fátima should do as she liked, should learn what she liked, should have any one she liked to visit her, should have back the baby, if only she would come home. But Fátima refused to listen. “No, no,” she said, “I do not intend to come yet; I am going to find out how to overcome the world, and after that I will return.” After trying for a long time by promises, and threats, and persuasions, to make the wilful Fátima change her mind, the friends and relatives gradually went away, and at last all were gone except the mother, who stayed till evening weeping and entreating her daughter to return; at length she also left, and for many days Fátima was left to do as she liked.

When the doctor-lady found that Fátima had resisted all her friends' entreaties, and that she was very anxious to stay with her for a time, she gave her a little house
close to the Hospital, where she could live in *pardah*, and for several weeks she taught her every day from the Book which the poor woman had been so anxious to hear more of, and she also appointed some one to teach her to read for herself. Fátima found it rather difficult at first, because she had not learnt as a child, but she was very persevering, and she found it very pleasant and interesting work. She was exceedingly careful not to break through her habit of keeping *pardah*, and therefore, when she thought of going to see her mother, it seemed to her a great difficulty, and she could not make up her mind again to walk as she had done in her haste on that sad evening when she had left home. But her kind friend overcame this difficulty by providing a doolie for her, in which she could easily pass through the streets without being seen, in accordance with the habit in which she had been brought up.

She was full of joy at the prospect of seeing her mother, and made no doubt of receiving as joyful a welcome; but alas! when she arrived at her old home, what was her consternation to find that her mother would not allow her to come in. "Go back to your friends," she angrily said; "go and stay with those people whom you love so much, and never come again
to my house. You are my disgrace, my trouble, my sorrow, my affliction; would that I had never had such a daughter! would that God had never taken from me my dear and obedient Umri!" There is no doubt that Fátima's mother would have been only too glad to take her back at once, but her son-in-law had warned her that she must at all risks keep Fátima away just now, because her young brother had just returned from a long visit to an uncle in a village, and he was now living and working at his trade as a cloth-worker in his mother's house. Rahím Bakĥsh had told his mother-in-law to be sure to tell the boy that his sister was gone to Agra, and to let him have no suspicion of the real state of affairs; for he said, "Boys are often such fools; they are easily influenced by their sisters who are older than themselves, and there is no knowing to where this trouble may spread if once we allow Fátima to talk to Fath Mohamad, her brother. Keep him till an opportunity occurs of sending him to some Mohamedan friends at a distance, whose influence will be all on the right side, and who will thoroughly teach him about his own religion. Meanwhile you must not allow him to see Fátima; when he can be sent away, then you may call her to live with you once more." The poor mother felt very sad, but she dared not go
against this advice, partly because she was afraid of her son-in-law, and partly because she had herself a fear lest Fátima's influence might be bad for the young brother. But constantly as she had told him that his sister had returned to her home in Agra, he had not believed it, and had ascertained the truth for himself from the servants and neighbours. However, he never told his mother that he knew where Fátima was, and she imagined he was ignorant of all that had occurred.

On the day when Fátima tried to gain admission into her mother's house, she pleaded in vain with her, as she sat in the doolie close to the door, leaning out to try to reach her mother and touch her lovingly, and make her turn her heart towards her once more; peeping out from her burqa only just enough to show the wistful eyes which seemed to beg so hard for love and forgiveness. But the mother was stern, and would not yield; and she told her daughter that not only was she resolved not to admit her again to her house, but she had also determined not to come again herself to visit her, as she had done already once or twice, as she was exceedingly angry with her, and nothing could ever make her willing to forgive her.

Very reluctantly Fátima told the kahárś* to carry

* Doolie-bearers.
her away in the doolie back again to the Hospital. After going a few steps they suddenly stood still, and the *pardah* of the doolie being lifted a little, Fátima saw to her surprise the face of her young brother. He spoke hastily, and seemed afraid lest he should be overheard. "Fátima, sister," he said, "don't you cry and be sorry; it will all be right. Our mother is angry now, but she will some time forgive you and see that you are right." Seeing the surprised look in his sister's eyes, he said, "I know what it is that you are learning: go on reading and learning all you can; what that doctor-lady teaches you is all true. I have been away, and in that village have heard the same thing; it is being taught all over India, and the message is winning its way; it must prevail, for it is the truth." "But do they know?" was her agitated response. "Does our mother know? does Rahím Baklîsh know that you think this, my brother?" "No, no," he answered quickly; "I am not yet of age, but I soon shall be. I am still a minor, and in the eyes of the world cannot choose my own religion, but in my heart I am a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ; and we live in days when no one can prevent even a boy from listening and reading and thinking; and I have only a very little while to
wait, and then I shall without fear declare myself a Christian!"

The shade and sorrow had all gone from Fátima’s face, and after asking her brother for news of the baby, and hearing that he was well and being cared for by their mother, she proceeded on her way, closely covered up in the doolie, towards the Hospital.

Her brother had promised to come and see her and to tell her how he had come to understand the great things which she was now so happily learning, and he had also said that he would try to reconcile their mother to her; and it was a very comforting and glad thought that her brother was thus on the same side with her—not angry with her, as all her other relatives were, but understanding and sympathising and encouraging.

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Many weeks passed away, and Fátima continued to live in her new little home close to the Hospital, and to learn more and more every day concerning the Only Prophet who had ever dared to say “I have overcome the world.” She had made up her mind to trust Him and to give up herself entirely to Him, but she was not yet called by His hallowed name, for she had not been joined by the outward sign to the number of
NONE OF SELF.

Christ's faithful people. It was difficult for her to decide on so important a step, because she felt how irrecoverably it would separate her from her mother. "And yet," she would often ask herself, "can I really be more utterly separated from her than I now am?"

Fath Mohamad had many times visited her, and had conversed long and earnestly with the doctor-lady, from whom he had received much help and encouragement. He had begged Fátima to delay her baptism until the time when, being of age, he could choose his own religion, and be joined to Christ's Church at the same time with his sister. Fátima had made many attempts to see her mother, but all without success; all her journeys to her old home were unavailing; her mother always refused to see her.

At length, when about two years had elapsed since the time when she left home, Fátima heard from her brother that he was of age, and was receiving careful instruction with a view to being soon baptized, and that he hoped she would now see no further reason to delay, but would at the same time with himself confess Christ before men, and be baptized into His death.
Very joyous were those two young believers when, one Sunday, after final examination and instruction from their kind Christian friends, they were publicly baptized. Fath Mohamad had only a few days previously told his mother and other relatives of his intention, and he had received the same treatment from them as had fallen to the share of his sister.

During the service Fátima never once raised her eyes; she had been so long accustomed to a secluded life that any service in public seemed to her at first a great difficulty, and she was so much taken up with her own thoughts that she was quite unconscious of any one's presence; but her brother, as he bravely and in a hearty clear voice answered all the questions asked of him and joined in the prayers, distinctly heard every now and then a low hiss from some one near him, and raising his eyes, he saw his brother-in-law, Rahím Bakhs, who with several other members of his family was intending to give trouble and annoyance to him if he found opportunity.

The service over, Fátimá returned with her kind friend to the protection of the little home by the Hospital, which had now become so dear a place to her; and for the safety of her brother, whose name was changed to Fath Masih, a little band of Christians
might have been seen eagerly talking together and making arrangements. At length they said to him, "Come with us, and we will take you to the house of one who is also giving up all for Christ's sake, and who is soon going to be baptized, and he will give you a very hearty welcome; you can remain in his house for some days."

And not many minutes later, Fath Masih was in a small house, which certainly was not that of a rich man, but where he found a brotherly and cordial reception from one whom we have often met before, and whose name is known to us—our friend Partap Singh!
Chapter X.

God in His pity chose me,
Made me to feel His goodness, taste His love;
Caused me to hear His Word, which fell like seed—
Seed full of life and power—into my heart:
And I, who once was dead in sin, who loved
The service of the devil, now rejoice
To own the once-despised Jesus Lord
And Master of my being.
CHAPTER X.

PARTAP SINGH was looking somewhat worn, as if with care and trouble, and his bright, merry, almost boyish look was nearly gone from his face; for he had suffered much since he had searched God's Word for himself, and decided in his very heart that Jesus Christ was the only Saviour, and that without Him there could be no peace and joy in this world or in the world to come. But still there was a deep and holy calm upon his face, and a look that told of victory and rest and gladness.

He had had many a spiritual battle; he had been for a long time in the state of half loving God; he had known what it was to kneel down and say, "O God, I do want Thee, but I cannot give up everything; life is so sweet, home joys are so precious; it is so hard for flesh and blood to renounce everything; let it be some of self and some of Thee." And then, when no peace and gladness had come into his heart, he had cried to God to reveal more of Himself to him; and at length, like the loveliest rays of the rising sun dispersing the
last dark cloud of night, grace had come into his heart, enabling him to pray with the whole desire of his soul that self might be once and for ever vanquished and God be all in all. And so when the young Fath Masih looked up into the face of the one who was to be to him henceforth an elder brother, he saw what he did not then fully understand—a chastened and somewhat sad expression, with the graveness of which there was mingled a deep and holy joy. They partook together of a simple meal, during which Fath Masih spoke of the service in church in which they had just been engaged, and of how he had felt what a solemn service it was, and how near God had come to him, and how he intended to be a very faithful soldier and servant of Christ. He hoped there were good and kind people among the Christians who would help him to do right.

Partap Singh told him that there were many good Christians, but he also said, "You must not expect to find every one who professes to be a follower of the Holy Son of God really like Him in all things, nor must you be surprised if you see that many who are called Christians do not obey the Word of God; but you must remember that that book is our guide and Christ is our Master, and whether His servants are
faithful to Him and His words or not makes no difference to the truth or to our duty in obeying it.”

Fath Masīh asked, “Brother, if you know so much about Christianity, why are you not already a Christian?” “I am already a Christian in my heart,” answered Partāp Singh, “and I have not yet received baptism only because I have not been able to persuade my wife to follow me. I have sent many messages to her through my father, but of course I do not know whether she has ever received them, or indeed whether my father would even himself read my letters; but now I feel I can no longer hold back from what I know is a solemn duty, and so I am going to be baptized next Sunday, and hope that at some time God will change my wife’s heart and make her willing to come to me. But now let us go and walk in the Rām Bāgh, and tell each other of the way in which God has led us to Himself.”

So together the new friends went out, and they presently reached the beautiful garden, where Partāp Singh had often walked by himself and thought and prayed, and where some of his victories had been gained.

More than two years had passed since Partāp Singh’s visit to Delhi, and it was the lovely spring-time; the
garden was fresh and green, flowers of every variety abounded on all sides, and the delicious scent of orange-blossom pervaded the air. There were very few people walking there, so our two young men found it a quiet and peaceful place for their serious talk. Fath Masih first gave his new brother an account of his life. He began: "When I was quite a boy I went to the Mission School; there was no preference for it in my family, you may be very sure, but I had boy-friends who happened to go there, and so I wished to go too. My mother made no objection, as she knew very little about the different merits of the schools, and I assured her that this was the best. I did not indeed know anything about this myself, but I wished to gain my object and attend the same school with my favourite companions. However, I afterwards found out that my words were true, and that the Mission School was the best in the city. It was in that school that I first heard of the way of escape from the wrath to come, and it was then that I began to understand the need of some way of escape from it. I learnt that God is so holy that He cannot look on sin, and so powerful that He is able to punish every sin of man from the beginning of the world down to the Day of Resurrection, and that He will by no means clear the
Partap Singh and Fath Masih in the garden.—Page 154.
guilty. I did not all at once understand or believe these things; I was only a boy, and I loved play and sight-seeing, and had very little room in my heart for serious thoughts; but still I can say that what I learnt in that school was like a seed, and it went into my heart and remained there; and although for a long time no results were seen, yet afterwards it began to spring up and grow. Time fails me to tell you everything, so I will hasten on to say that while I was still young I was taken from school to work at the trade of my family—cloth-working in gold braid—for I was not intended for a scholar or a munshi, but for a humble cloth-worker.

“One time during the illness of one of my sisters, a Panjábi doctor-lady visited our house, and she was a Christian. I used to linger in the room to hear what she would say to our women. On the morning of the day on which my sister died, I was thinking very much about what becomes of people after death, and I asked this Christian woman if she could tell me. She would not talk much with me; I think she was afraid I should argue and trouble her with questions, as boys often like to do; but she said these words, and I never forgot them, ‘He that believeth on the Son hath life, and he that believeth not on the Son of God
shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.'

"I did not like this saying at all, and I tried to forget it. It offended my pride and interfered with all my notions of the way of salvation; for though I had heard so much at school, I was not really convinced, and the seed of which I spoke had not yet begun to germinate in my heart—it was only lying there as if it were dead.

"But I was not happy; something seemed to say to me that I was a helpless sinner, and that I deserved to die for my sins, and that life could not be had through any form of religion, but only from God Himself. I knew not to whom to look for advice. My brother-in-law is a most bitter enemy of any kind of new teaching, and my mother and sister being only women, I naturally said to myself, what would have been the use of consulting them? I have uncles and other relations, but what kept me from speaking to them was that I was a minor, and I felt sure I should be punished if I began to speak to any of them as if I were dissatisfied with my old religion. My sister's death was supposed by my family to be the cause of my depression, which indeed daily increased, and I was sent to the house of an uncle who lives in a distant village, and there I worked at my trade for some time.
"One morning early, as I was returning from making some purchases in the bázár, I happened to see a little party of people whose appearance was very different from that of the people of the village. They wore clean white clothes, and looked very happy, and walked on quietly and in an orderly fashion, not making the disturbance and noise which is usual when any number of people go about in our towns and villages. I felt quite sure that they were Christians, and I ran after them. Just as I reached them they stopped, and gathering themselves together round one man in the centre, they began to sing, and the meaning of their song was that without Jesus Christ there is no salvation. I went and stood near to listen. At the end of the singing the man in the centre of this little company began to preach, but I was very sorry, for I saw that he was an Englishman, and I had no mind to listen to anything he might say, as I did not think his ideas of right and wrong could be any guide for me. It is true that the Principal of the Mission School was an Englishman, and all the boys loved him, for he was kind and good; but I had been only among the younger scholars, and had never shared in the privileges of the elder boys, who became exceedingly fond of him, and were sufficiently intimate with him
to go and visit him at his bungalow and read and talk with him as a friend or brother. Perhaps if I had remained in the school as long as those boys did, I should not afterwards have felt the aversion I did to hearing an Englishman speak. But passing that by, I may add that others spoke besides the English preacher; and one of them, who was evidently a Panjábi like myself, came near to me and asked, 'Brother, have you found the way of life?' I was very much afraid, for it seemed to me that if I said anything of my unhappy state of mind it would come to my uncle's ears, and he would be almost ready to kill me. I therefore feigned to be quite unconcerned, and even tried to appear angry at being thus spoken to by a Christian; but I think my questioner knew that I was hiding up the real feelings of my heart, and he went on talking as he walked by my side, telling me that I was a sinner, and begging me to cast my sins on Jesus, Whom he called 'the spotless Lamb of God.' I saw he had some books in his hand, and I hastily asked him to give me one of them, which I promised I would faithfully read all through if only he would leave me alone and not continue to walk with me; for my fears were getting greater and greater lest some one should see me and report to my uncle.
that I had been walking and talking with a Christian. I think he felt sorry for my evident distress, and he left me, after once more solemnly urging me to come to Jesus and be saved. He gave me this small book before we parted, and I concealed it in my dress and hurried home. At every possible opportunity I carefully read this book, and by its means alone I was led to the full understanding of the truth that in the Lord Jesus Christ are found life and light and liberty for every one who has faith in Him as the only and all-sufficient Saviour."

Fath Masih drew out of his pocket a small and much-used book; it was a copy of the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans. "This," he said, "is the precious book, which I read and read again until I found out, by the teaching of God's Holy Spirit, that man is full of evil, and that he can only be justified before God by faith in Jesus Christ. I soon became happy, for I believed, and found that with faith came joy and peace. I wanted to tell every one of my joy, but I was under age, and I dared not then make known my faith. I returned to Amritsar, where it was my duty to help to support my mother. I began to live with her in the small house to which she had removed after my sister's death, and to go daily to my
work in the house of my brother-in-law. I found him exceedingly angry on account of the fact that my only surviving sister, who, as you know, has this day received baptism with me, was gone to live with the doctor-lady who had visited our house at the time of the illness and death of his wife. It soon became known to me that my sister was gone there, although Rahim Baksh did not tell me himself, and only appeared angry without giving any good reason, while my mother declared she was gone back to her home in Agra. When I discovered that my sister was seeking salvation, I was very glad indeed; it was an unspeakable joy to me to know that I was not alone in my desires and hopes. I was very grieved for our mother, and I am grieved for her still; for she has lost all her earthly comforters and seems to have no joy left in life; yet she will not allow my sister to live with her, although she is willing and longing to do so, and nothing can persuade her to be at peace with us or to believe that we wish to be dutiful children to her. At that time, before I let out my secret, she said many hard and bitter things to me about my sister, but always assured me she found great comfort in me, because I would never listen to any new ideas or allow myself to be deceived by new teachers.
"From time to time I visited my sister, and was greatly helped by the kind friends with whom she was living. I think my mother's heart would surely have relented towards her, and she would have sent her some affectionate message by me, if it had not been for the influence of my brother-in-law, who always forced her to promise that she would never forgive her daughter. Perhaps she would more easily have disobeyed Rahím Bahsh, and would not have been so readily influenced by him, if it had not been for the fact that his little child always lived under her care, and she had a very great love for it; it seemed to be the only thing on earth from which she could derive any pleasure.

"I waited several months, till I found myself old enough to choose my own religion, and during that time I often went quietly to the houses of Christians and learnt much from them, growing stronger and stronger in my faith. Some urged me not to wait; some even thought I was not in earnest, but was giving way to cowardly feelings and fearing to declare my faith. But does any one know who has not felt it, the almost intolerable anguish of exasperating a loved parent, and closing against oneself for ever the doors of one's home? A man has but one mother, and
voluntarily to cut himself off from her, to make her angry, to change, as it were, her love into hatred, this is bitter and exceedingly difficult!"

As Fath Mas'h said this, his companion leaned his head down on the back of the bench where they were sitting, burying his face in his hands, and sobbed. "Alas!" he exclaimed, "this bitterness I have tasted."

They sat some time in silent sympathy, the poor hard-working lad fresh from the grief of almost breaking his mother's heart in his Mohamedan home, and the eldest son of the wealthy Sikh, still, as it were, stunned by the angry treatment he had experienced many months before in his expulsion from his luxurious home by the rigidly religious Sikh parents whom he had always fondly loved and implicitly obeyed.

These young men had been brought up in very different circumstances, and had been carefully taught in very different forms of religion, but their hearts met in this great sorrow; and as they presently rose to walk home together, Partap Singh took out his pocket Testament and read, "He that loveth father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me;" "Whosoever doth not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple;" and he added, "This is the way God answers those who cry to Him, 'None of self and all of Thee.'"
Chapter XI.

God led me by a wondrous way to know Him;
I did not seek Him first; He sought for me;
He drew me to Him with the cords of love,
And almost ere I was aware I felt
Its great resistless force constraining me,
And own'd myself a captive at the feet
Of Jesus Christ my Lord!
CHAPTER XI.

As the two friends walked home together, Partáp Singh told, in his turn, the manner in which he had been led by God to consider the sinful and lost condition of man by nature, and his need of the one and only Saviour, Jesus Christ.

He began at the beginning, when he first heard the preacher at Delhi declare that the ways in which sinners try to save themselves are like broken cisterns which can hold no water; and then he passed on through all that he had heard, and thought, and felt in his heart, until he had found the Bible by the side of the afflicted Wirán, and had taken it to his own room and spent the night in searching for the truth; and then he went on to say, “This is now more than two years ago, for it was the night of the Diwáli fair I discovered the Bible. But the time seems much longer than it really is—every week seems like a year.” Poor Partáp Singh groaned as he said this. After a few minutes’ silence he continued, “On the
morning after Diwáli, my aunt and I had a long talk together, and I found that, without any human teacher at all, she had understood the truths of the Word of God. She was further advanced in this holy knowledge than I was, and she taught me many things even in that first conversation.

"We had always been very great friends, and the fact of my sitting much with her and reading and talking with her was at first scarcely at all noticed by the various members of our family; but my aunt began to feel that it would be right to declare to others what we believed, and this was a step for which I was by no means prepared. I argued with her that we could believe what we felt sure was the Word of God, and we could pray to Him in the name of Jesus, and try to keep His commandments, and not worship idols or do homage before the Granth in the Golden Temple, and then all must be well with us, and God would surely accept us. But she asked me what I would do on great occasions and at times of special worship; how I could account for my absence, or, if present, how could I outwardly do everything according to the rites of the Sikh religion, and yet have a true purpose in my heart to keep God’s law? She also asked me whether, if we thought we had discovered the only
way to be saved, we ought to hide it from others; ought I not to tell my father and brother? and was I content to let my wife go on being a heathen, and perhaps die without the knowledge of the Saviour?

"Thus she would talk with me and persuade me; but, although I felt very unhappy and uneasy about what she said, I had not the courage for a long time to say anything to any one about what I believed.

"I was daily attending school and working hard for an examination, but this did not prevent my giving some time every day to the most serious thought; indeed, even in school my mind seemed to be never entirely free from the great questions which had of late come into it. I made the acquaintance of two or three Christian families, and now and then went to their houses, always in fear and trembling, for I dreaded nothing more than that my father should hear that I had begun to think seriously of Christianity. I often wondered why he, who was so strict a Sikh, and so strongly opposed to all other religions, had never said anything to me about that day at the fair when he found me listening to the Gospel in the Christians' tent.

"At first I had daily expected him to refer to this, and had always prepared myself with some good
excuse which I could give in answer to any inquiries which he might make.

"But as the days passed by, I supposed that he had forgotten the incident altogether, or regarded it only as betokening a boyish love for seeing sights and hearing new things, which had led me to that tent, just as it might have led me to any other.

"Little did I imagine the time of trial which was in store for me; little did I suppose that soon the storm of wrath would break in wild fury over my head, and leave me without a home, without means of support, bereft of father, mother, brother, wife, all!" He spoke almost bitterly, but immediately recovered himself, and said more calmly, "No, not all. I have gained more than I have lost; all will be well."

The two friends had by this time reached the house, and Partáp Singh continued his story sitting in the small room which he now called home.

"You remember I told you about the carpenter's child which fell into the water on the day of the fair? Well, it happened that the child's father, finding business better in this city than in Jullundur, resolved to come and live here with his relatives; and while he went to bring his things, he left his mother and wife and child here."
Partap Singh and Fath Masih reading and talking together in the house.

—Page 168.
"These poor people were all unboundedly grateful to our family, because on the day of the child's accident we had been able to show them some little kindnesses, and so they frequently came, bringing *dális* to my aunt as tokens of their gratitude. On these occasions Basantkor, the mother of the little boy, always went up to visit my aunt in her room on the roof, where she remains almost entirely during the cold season; and meanwhile old Mahtábkor, the carpenter's mother, would remain downstairs and take care of the child, and talk with any of the women of the house.

"My father is an exceedingly kind man, and is always glad to make people happy; and he takes at all times an especial pleasure in providing any sort of amusement for my aunt, his afflicted sister. He always encouraged women living in the neighbourhood to come and visit Wirán, and he was quite glad that the young carpenter's wife, who seemed so merry and pleasant a companion, should come often. As for her little boy, my father became quite fond of him, and would generally, when he happened to come in from his business and find him there, play with him and give him sweets.

"But all this time my aunt had told the young

* Offerings of fruit, &c.
Basantkor many things about God and His great love to sinners; and although it is true that she is a very light-hearted girl, and does not think very deeply about anything, yet she had a great fondness for my aunt, and was therefore pleased with almost anything she might say. It happened one day that my father was sitting in his small office near to the large door of our house, and Mahtábkor was waiting in the porch with little Ganesh, who was getting impatient and fretful; and when the old woman perceived her daughter-in-law coming down the stairs, she hastily called to her and said, 'Be quick; it is time for us to be going home; Ganesh is getting so tired and hungry. Why have you stayed so long to-day?'

"Then Basantkor answered, 'Is it so long? I am always pleased when Wirán talks to me about God; and when she tells me the words that Christians read and believe, the time goes so quickly.' Mahtábkor replied that such things were not for girls like Basantkor, who was only a poor man's wife, and should be thinking of her house and child and cooking.

"Thus talking together, the two women left the house. My father had heard all! He went upstairs at once and said to his poor afflicted sister, 'What have you spoken about to the woman Basantkor?"
My aunt was at first exceedingly frightened, but she told me afterwards, in the only interview I ever again had with her, that God gave her strength to be brave, and she told no lies, but confessed that she was a believer in the God and in the Book of the Christians.

"My father was furious. He called my mother, whose anger even exceeded his when she heard the news of Wiran, which seemed to her to be so utterly disgraceful. Together they demanded to know who had been teaching Wiran these things; who had been the Christians with whom she had kept company; who had crept into their house and turned away the heart of their sister from the religion of their forefathers?

"Wiran told them that no human teacher had ever spoken to her, that no one had persuaded her, but that she had read the Book of the Christians, and she had been convinced in her heart of its truth.

"At once my father asked, 'Who gave you that book?' But of course Wiran would not tell, lest she should bring her kind neighbour into trouble; and so at once my father thought of me, and exclaimed, 'It may be Partap Singh who is thus leading you astray; I found him on the day of the fair sitting in a tent where Christians were preaching, and I feared then
that something worse would come of it. But I shall not allow such things to go on in my house, and he who forsakes the religion of his fathers cannot dwell under my roof, although he be my own eldest son!' This account of what passed my aunt afterwards gave me, and she told me how terribly excited and angry my poor mother was when she found that I, her eldest son, was in this 'disgrace.' She also told me that my mother angrily exclaimed, 'This is what comes of allowing girls to learn to read; I always knew from the first that it was a very bad thing, and you are greatly to blame for allowing Partáp Singh to teach her; had you listened to my advice, all this trouble and disgrace would have been avoided.'

"My father is naturally a most kind man, and it grieved him, I am certain, to have to say anything unkind to the sister for whom he had so tenderly cared all those years; but he told her that he was very sorry indeed that he had ever allowed her to be freed from the strict laws of widowhood; that had he known of the wickedness and hypocrisy of her heart, he would never have given her the indulgences he had; and now for the future he must be severely strict. She was to understand that she would henceforth get only one meal a day, that all her books
would be taken from her, that visitors would be excluded, and that in many other ways she would have to feel herself in disgrace. My poor aunt! how my heart aches when I think of her!

"My father demanded to know where the Bible was, and, after for a long time refusing to tell, Wirán was obliged to confess that it was with me. Leaving her room in great anger, my father and mother came in search of me, and a terrible scene ensued.

"I was resolved not to be false to my convictions, and so I spoke out boldly and said, 'I am at heart a Christian.' Then they began to coax and persuade me, and to use all possible arguments to convince me that it was my duty to remain a Sikh, and that I should soon tire of these new ideas. For some days they kept me still in their house, during which time no harshness was shown me, but only kindness and affection, except from my brother Sujet Singh, who was wildly angry with me, and declared he would never speak to me again. It was in those days that I had one interview with my aunt, and heard from her what had passed in her room when the discovery of her new faith was made.

"But when again my parents talked with me, and found I was unmoved, and when they had called quite
a large number of relatives to consult over my case, and to try to persuade and argue me out of my convictions, but all without avail, then they denounced me and bade me be gone for ever from my home; and oh! bitter thought, my mother cursed me!

"I left home that day, and have ever since lived alone. I soon obtained work as a teacher, for I had passed successfully in that examination for which I had been working, and I began at once to attend a night-school in connection with the Mission, in order to make progress with my own studies.

"I have lived here in solitude all these months, but I have never repented of the step I took in deciding to leave all for Christ. I have learnt much since those early days of my belief, and have also made some good friends.

"After my father's first great anger had cooled, he came to see me several times, to expostulate with me and to entreat me to reconsider my decision, and not to go on until baptism had put an insuperable barrier between me and all my family for ever. I had many struggles, especially when I heard that my mother was very dangerously ill and not at all likely to recover, though I afterwards found out, thank God, that that was entirely a fiction, merely invented to frighten me
into reunion with my relatives. Sometimes in my struggles I used to think it very hard that so much trial and affliction must be passed through by those who wished to be Christ's, and then I used to long for the possibility of having back all that was so dear to my heart, and yet having God as well; but at length I learnt to say indeed and in truth, 'None of self and all of Thee.'

"Now there are just three things I am continually thinking and praying about with regard to my family. One is that I long to get news of them all, to know how they are, to hear of the good success of my dear brother, Sujet Singh; and to find out, finally and for certain, whether there is any hope of reconciliation, even though I am now about to become a Christian by the outward sign of baptism. Then, again, I long to know about my aunt. I think she must surely be living, or I should have heard of her death; but oh! I cannot bear to think she is being cruelly treated; and I should like to know whether she remains firm in her convictions, and whether she would be willing to come and live with me. And thirdly, I want to make an effort to get my young wife. She is now no longer a minor, but is at liberty to choose for herself; and if she would only
consent to live with me, without at first becoming a Christian, I would receive her. I shall never be satisfied till I have done my very best to bring my wife to the happiness I enjoy myself."

By the time Partap Singh had finished all his long story, it was very late; and after reading together a portion of that Holy Book which had brought them from such different homes and religions to the same Saviour, they prayed together in His name, and then lay down to rest.
Chapter III.

God will surely visit them!
The feet of messengers from Him shall come;
Heaven's light shall shine into their darken'd home;
The world, all heedless of their bitter cry,
In feasting merriment may pass them by.
The Church, on solemn fasts and holy days,
Ever "for all prisoners and captives" prays;
The prayer is needed! Thousands pine and die
In bondage, but God hears the faithful cry,
And He will surely visit them!
CHAPTER XII.

A few days after Fath Masih had found a friend in Partáp Singh, a doolie stopped in the Lakrimandi, and its bearers began asking the way to the house of Buta Singh, a carpenter. Buta Singh was the father of little Ganesh, and was now doing a thriving trade in the busy Lakrimandi. All the road was so blocked up with felled trees and the planks of various lengths and thicknesses which had been sawn, that it was difficult for even a doolie to make its way along, and it was evident that if a carriage of larger dimensions were to come, it would be almost impossible for it to pass at all. All the people seemed very busy, sawing up wood and preparing it for work, hammering nails, boring holes, making door-frames and window-frames, which is the principal business of this street, and piling them up or standing them in rows ready for carrying away, while others were busy packing them on to bullock-carts to take away to houses that were being built, and for which they had been ordered.
The noise of the sawing and hammering and throwing down of large heavy pieces of wood was quite deafening; and poor Fátima, who was the occupant of the doolie, felt very bewildered as she was carried along amidst all this confusion.

She did not like to put her head out of the doolie to ask her way, for she had observed strict *pardah* all her life, and did not wish to go against this old custom unless it were urgently necessary. But at last the *kahárs* found the house of which she was in search, and put down her doolie quite close to the door.

Our old friend Mahtábkor, with Ganesh by her side and a bonnie little girl in her arms, came to ask who was there and what was wanted.

Now Fátima felt very shy and frightened, and almost wished she had not promised her brother to come and see Basantkor; but she thought she must try to be brave, as it was in a good cause that she was making this difficult effort; so she spoke very politely to old Mahtábkor, and said, “Mai, I am not at all accustomed to going to other people’s houses, and I hope you will give me permission to come in and sit in *pardah* for a little while, because I wish to see your daughter-in-law, Basantkor.” “Do you know Basantkor?” asked the old woman, who was always a
little afraid of strangers, and who wondered greatly what this Christian Bibi could want to say to her daughter-in-law. "No," replied Fátima, "I do not know her myself; but I think if you tell her I wish to speak about the lame Sikh woman, Wiráñ, she will be so kind as to see me."

The moment little Ganesh heard the name of Wiráñ, he ran to his mother to call her to come quickly, for he was sure Wiráñ wanted her at last. Ever since Basantkor had been forbidden to enter Bikarma Singh's house to visit Wiráñ, her affectionate thoughts had often gone to the poor afflicted friend whom she had learnt to love so much; and she had told her little son, not once or twice, but perhaps hundreds of times, about the day when he had fallen into the water, and about the kind rich Sikh gentleman into whose grand house he had been carried, and about that kind gentleman's sister, and her wonderful power of reading, and her cleverness, and what beautiful stories she could tell; and so little Ganesh had in his own imagination grown very fond of the lame Wiráñ, and had often wished to see her; but his mother always said "No," and he had begun to think of her as some one to hear about, but of seeing her he now entertained no hope; she almost seemed to
him a mythical person, and answered to the fairies in whose wonderful histories European children take so much delight.

He was as pleased to hear all his mother’s oft-told tale as she was to tell it; neither mother nor child ever became weary of going over and over again the events of that Diwáli day, with the account of the visit to Bikarma Singh’s house, and all the subsequent friendly talks with the lame Wiráñ, &c., &c. The moment Basantkor heard the name of Wiráñ, she ran to the door, and eagerly began to ask who was there, while Ganesh, hastening forward to where the doolie stood, cried out, “Mother, mother, is this Wiráñ?” After a few minutes of inquiries and explanations, and upon their assurance that there was no one in the house except themselves, Fátima went in and sat down with Mahtábkor and her daughter-in-law, and began to tell the errand on which she had come. She soon told something of her own history and that of her brother, and then related how Fath Masíh was living with Partáp Singh, and was very anxious to help him in some way to get news of his aunt and other members of his family, from whom he was now so completely cut off by his association with Christians, and Fath Masíh had thought that it would be a good
plan for Fátima to go and ask Basantkor whether she could help Partáp Singh by telling him anything about all those who were so dear to him, or whether she would be willing to go to the house of Bikarma Singh on purpose to make inquiries.

Basantkor, with her usual childish love for telling long stories, told Fátima with great delight, and with as much vividness as if it were now all fresh before her eyes, the whole account of the Diwáli fair day, when she first saw Wirán; and of course she did not forget the equally interesting story of that other Diwáli time, when the pleased and appreciative goddess had rewarded her fidelity with the gift of Ganesh; and there was a story to be told too about the little baby Kirpa dei, especially about the disappointment consequent upon her not being a boy, and how that disappointment was got over and made up for by her being so very nice and pretty, and having learnt so many charming ways from Ganesh, besides being quite essential to him as a playmate! And thus, playing with her children and talking on, Basantkor quite forgot that Fátima was a stranger, and had, besides, come on important business.

But presently she ended all her long stories by saying, "I have never been allowed by Bikarma Singh
to go to his house since Wirán made him angry by reading the Book of the Christians. He told me he was not at all displeased with me, but that his sister had not been behaving in a manner becoming to a widow, and had given him such just cause of offence that he could no longer allow her to have visitors. Poor Wirán! I think the days must seem very long to her, and she must be very sad and lonely, but I fear I shall never be allowed to go and hear her beautiful stories any more."

Basantkor left off talking and began to cry; and little Ganesh cried too, and said he wanted to go with his mother and see the kind lame lady who told such nice stories, and in whose house he had stayed on the day when he fell into the water.

Fátima said, "Do not cry. I think you might now, after so long a time, go and take your children to visit your old friend. Who can tell but that her brother's heart is now softened? He may have forgiven her; you know a man's anger does not last for ever, and Bikarma Singh has perhaps changed his mind and given his sister permission to receive the visits of her friends and acquaintances as before. Will you not go and try whether he will let you in? And if you are so fortunate as to see Wirán, will you tell her that
Partáp Singh is alive and well, and is a Christian; and he wants to know how she is, and whether she is willing to join him, and also whether his wife is willing?” Basantkor asked, “Why has he become a Christian? One religion is as good as any other. It seems to me not worth while to undergo so much sorrow and loneliness and punishment just in order to change one’s religion.”

Fátima felt that she would not make a very good teacher, and was afraid to trust herself to say much in answer; but she was beginning to say that when God shows us how to get free from sin, and get forgiveness and everlasting life and happiness, we ought to listen to His teaching and obey it, when old Mahtábkor said, “I think it nearly time for the father of Ganesh to come for his dinner, and you will no doubt be wishing to go away before a man comes into the house.” This was quite true, for Fátima had never been accustomed to visit in the houses of strangers, and she was becoming afraid lest she should not get away in her doolie before other people came into the house. So after many saláms and good wishes to each other, the new friends parted, Basantkor promising to come to the Hospital (near to which was Fátima’s little house), and tell whether or not she could get an
interview with Wirán, and what news she could hear of Partáp Singh's family.

As soon as Fátima's doolie was out of sight among the carts and trunks of trees and sawn planks of the Lakrimandi, Basantkor began to plan her visit to Wirán. She thought the children had better not be taken, as the task would be quite difficult enough for her without the additional trouble of looking after them; but Mahtábkor did not at all agree to the proposal that she should stay at home with them while Basantkor went forth alone on such a business; she felt that her sagacity and experience might be much needed, and that it was exceedingly unlikely that Basantkor would succeed without her; besides, she had some little curiosity, and thought she would like to know how Wirán was, and all about the family where the little Ganesh had received so much kindness more than two years before. "And then," she said in her heart, "will not Ganesh himself be something to show, something to be proud of, something for whose sake the doors would open, and the kind people within forget their anger and allow Wirán to see the visitors?"

Old Mahtábkor was not in sympathy with Partáp Singh, and she secretly thought that he deserved his
Basantkor and her mother-in-law with the children starting to visit Wiran.—Page 187.
punishment, and that if he were her son, she would be very angry and severe with him; but still she had no objection to Basantkor’s going on this errand to give him kind help. Her chief thought just now was, that whatever there was to see and whatever there was to hear, she should see and hear for herself, and not have to wait at home for Basantkor’s return with an account of the expedition; so she said she should go and take the children, and the obedient daughter-in-law had to agree. Of course Buta Singh had to be asked to give his consent, and as he did this without any trouble, the very same day that Fátima had visited the Lakrimandi witnessed the setting forth upon their journey to Bikarma Singh’s house of Basantkor and her mother-in-law with the two children, all dressed in the best clothes which people in their rank of life could afford, and accompanied by a woman carrying a dāli of fruit and sweets for Wirān’s acceptance.

As the little party approached the door of Bikarma Singh’s house, they saw that something unusual was going on, and they soon found out that a young niece of Bikarma Singh’s was being married, the ceremonies taking place in his house, as he was the child’s nearest relative, and she had lived in his house since she became an orphan, some four years before. It was
not the actual day of the wedding, but one of the
great feast-days between the betrothal and the wed-
ding, and many people were being feasted and were
making merry. The servants, seeing Hindu women
approaching the gaily decorated doorway, accompanied
by a servant carrying a dáli, made no doubt at all that
they were to be brought into the feast; and so they
speedily conducted them inside the house, and seated
them in the large open court, where many people were
gathered together, eating sweets and talking, and
where there were also musicians playing their various
musical instruments with so much energy that it was
nearly impossible to hear what any one said. At first
Chandkor did not see the new guests—indeed, there
were so many present altogether that it would not have
been surprising if she had quite overlooked them; but
something happened to draw her attention to the place
where they were seated, and she recognised them.

At first she felt angry, and hurried away to find
Bikarma Singh and beg him to send them at once
out of the house; but she saw that he was right when
he answered, “These poor women have never done us
any harm, and even if they had, no Sikh could be
guilty of sending away a guest; not even an unbidden
and unwelcome guest must be insulted.”
But Basantkor grew very tired of having no one to speak to except old Mahtábkor, with whom she conversed in whispers, and she also found it very difficult to keep little Ganesh quiet, as he would keep on asking, "Where is the lame lady? I don't see the lame lady. When is she coming to tell us stories?"

Basantkor was as eager as her little boy was to hear something of Wirán, and her impatience was getting quite unbearable, when she suddenly saw Bikarma Singh's mother sitting on a charpaie a little apart from other people, for she was old, and could not bear much talking and noise. Taking the baby, and telling Ganesh to stay with Mahtábkor, Basantkor hastily moved across to where the old lady sat, and making a low salám, seated herself on the ground at her feet.

Bikarma Singh's mother had forgotten all about the carpenter's wife who came to their house on the Diwáli fair day two years and a half ago; it was not likely that so old a woman would remember such a trifling occurrence. She looked down at the young smiling face and the pretty baby, and said, "Well, my daughter, who are you? I suppose you used to go to the same school as our little Shivde, and you have come to see her married?" "No," said Basantkor; "I have never been to school, and I do not know
your little Shivde; but I shall be very glad to know her, if you will allow me." "Yes, you may see her," said the old mother; "this is a day of joy, and no one is a stranger; there is our pretty little bride, look! seated there near her uncle. Do you see her costly dress? She is a fortunate girl; she is not only the niece of a rich man, but the bridegroom also is rich; and so, although she has no father, there is really no room left to pity her. Do you see her? She is nearly ten years old. But I am very glad you have never been to school, my daughter, and I do hope now that our little Shivde will never be allowed to go; but I fear much, for in these days there are so many new customs, that one gets quite upset and disturbed about everything. Not only is it said that our girls ought not to marry young, but it is even believed by some that the schools for girls and women which are now, alas! to be found in every city, are really good things, and that it is right and fitting for our girls to learn to read! When I was young we had no such customs, and I have a great hatred for all changes."

"But I knew a woman who could read, and she was very nice and good," replied Basantkor, "and it is to see her that I am come to-day. Please will you
let me go now to see Wirán?" A look of unutterable anguish came over the face of the old woman as she answered, in a tone of the deepest sorrow, "Wirán! my Wirán, my daughter! Wirán is dead!" Just at that moment Chandkor came near and heard the last words. "Yes," she said quickly, "Wirán is dead, so you cannot see her any more. Did you come to ask for her?"

But Basantkor was speechless, and the tears began to roll down her face, and she turned away from the women and began to wail, "Hae! She was very kind to me, and now she is dead!"

The guests began to hear the sound of crying, and one after another asked, "What is the matter? Who is dead?" Chandkor saw that there would soon be a great confusion, and she sent for Sujet Singh to tell him to make the musicians play some loud music, and to think of some way in which he could divert the attention of the guests; but just as Sujet Singh came near, Basantkor was saying, "Partáp Singh wanted to know how she was, and now he must hear this sad news! Alas! alas!" "Who dares to mention that name to my mother?" asked Sujet Singh; "that base fellow is dead." Basantkor was very surprised, and began to explain that she was quite sure he was alive; but
Bikarma Singh, noticing the disturbance, and partly
guessing its cause, came and said to Basantkor, "Make
no confusion among our guests, whatever you may have
heard, and perhaps I will let you see Wirán."

Taking away Basantkor with her mother-in-law and
the children, Bikarma Singh charged his wife and the
other women of the house to attend to the feasting,
and try to make all the guests enjoy themselves, and
not think about what perhaps they had heard.

When they had passed out of hearing, he said rather
sternly to Basantkor, "Now, what do you want?" "Oh,
please do not be angry," pleaded the poor frightened
woman; "but I did want to see Wirán once more,
and when I heard that she was dead I became quite
overwhelmed with grief; and then when you said we
might see her, I knew not how to believe my ears.
Please tell me is she really living?"

Bikarma Singh was in a difficulty, and he scarcely
knew what to do; but, to tell the truth, his really
affectionate heart yearned over his afflicted sister: he
was always unwilling to persecute and trouble her,
and only treated her harshly to please his mother and
wife.

It was the custom of the whole family to speak of
Wirán and Partáp Singh as dead, and Bikarma Singh
dared not go against what the women said ought to be done; but he was by no means sorry to get an opportunity of doing one little kindness for the sister whom he had loved so truly from her childhood, and he said to himself that he would explain to Chandkor and the old mother that there was no other way of satisfying Mahtábkor and Basantkor, and so of preventing further confusion and inquiries among their guests, than by letting the poor women have an interview with Wirán. And so it came to pass that Basantkor found herself at last about to realise the joy for which she had almost hopelessly waited so long—the joy of seeing her kind old friend. With her little daughter in her arms, and Ganesh led by one hand, ready to show him proudly the very moment the door should open, she followed Bikarma Singh, not to the old, comfortable, and well-cared-for room where the invalid used to be, but to a remote part of the house, to an ill-kept and dirty room, destitute of all furniture except two bare charpaies, and with no books, and not light enough to read them, had there been any. A poor, suffering, emaciated woman, so weak that she could not lift her head, and so wasted away that it was long before Basantkor could believe that she really saw the skeleton and shadow of Wirán lay on one of the
charpaies; while crouching in a corner, with only one ragged and dirty garment, and with every appearance of long-continued neglect and unkindness, the astonished visitors recognised Partáp Singh's wife, the once pretty and merry Shánti.
I love My sheep;
I know them and they follow Me; and wheresoe'er
In dark and cloudy days they wander far,
Thence will I surely gather them; and they,
By living waters and by pastures green,
In resting-places quiet shall prove My love,
And dwell with Me for ever!
CHAPTER XIII.

Bikarma Singh was intent on returning to his guests, and was very anxious to restore merriment among them and to dispel any sense of gloom, so he did not stay a moment in Wirán's room. He scarcely ever trusted himself now to look at or speak to his poor sister; for he was a just man, and he knew that she lay there in all her suffering, slowly dying, without the comfort of receiving any kindness from those who ought to have loved her best, and with the sadness and sorrow of her life all deepened and darkened by cruel deprivation of many of the commonest necessities; and he knew that all this was wrong. Sometimes he wished with all his heart that he could improve her condition; he even devised plans, in his better moments, for giving her the comforts which his really kind and generous nature, as well as his sense of justice, told him she ought to have; but the thought that his eldest son, for whom he felt no such pity, was also forsaking the religion of his forefathers,
and bringing, as he considered, disgrace on his whole family, embittered him against Wirán, whose influence had, as he felt fully assured, been used to induce Partáp Singh to become a Christian. On this occasion, Bikarma Singh only said harshly, "Sister, here are some visitors for you," and leaving them, he returned to the marriage festivities with a sad heart hidden under a smiling and gay manner. Of course all his friends and acquaintances knew of the cloud that hung over his house. They had all heard of Partáp Singh's "disgraceful conduct," and of Wirán's taking what they unanimously agreed to call a "mean advantage" of kindesses and comforts which ought never to have been allowed to a widow, and which were only granted to her out of consideration for her affliction; and the wise among them shook their heads, and said Bikarma Singh had indeed paid dearly for his folly in relaxing rules in favour of his sister.

Some of his strictest Sikh friends almost gave up coming to his house, and their friendship was really only a semblance—it had no longer any depth or heart in it; for how could they feel quite at ease in a house where the eldest son had had to be expelled for being a Christian? So they pitied Bikarma Singh, and held aloof from his society.
NONE OF SELF.

But on the occasion of this wedding many were gathered together, and the master of the house felt especially anxious to show them how thoroughly all Sikh customs and religious practices were carried out in his family.

We need not follow the story of the wedding feast; it went on just as all others do, and everything that it was considered right and proper to do was done, and Bikarma Singh and Chandkor tried to appear gay and merry, and did not allow their guests to remember the sad story connected with their family; and when all the festivities were over, the little bride, the child-wife, was taken away to her new home, first of all on a short visit, from which she would return, according to custom, to the home of her childhood for a time. Poor little girl! her childish days for ever passed away, she little thinks, as she rides off in her decorated palanquin with music and rejoicing (feeling perhaps very much as an English child does at playing a game), that she is really far more to be pitied than the poor Wirán, of whom she has heard that she has done something very wicked, and that she is receiving for that wickedness a dreadful but just punishment.

Basantkor, on entering Wirán’s room, stood for a minute or two by the side of the invalid’s charpaie,
and then throwing herself down on the floor, burst into a loud and passionate wail of grief. "Alas!" she exclaimed, "to think it should come to this! Oh, Bibi, what have you done? what is your sin? and ah! how thin and ill you are! Oh, I think you are going to die. Alas! alas! my heart is breaking!" and the poor little woman continued to weep very bitterly.

Mahtábkor took both the frightened children in her arms, and sitting down on the floor, began to cry too, but in a quieter manner than Basantkor. To tell the truth, Mahtábkor did not quite see what there was to cry for; she had never had any especial affection for Wirán, and she supposed the time must come when such an afflicted and helpless cripple must of necessity get thin and die; and she thought, indeed, that it was far better for other people that any one so useless, especially a widow, should be taken away; for what could she ever be but a trouble and a burden? Still, old Mahtábkor felt that the occasion demanded a few tears, if only just to show sympathy with Basantkor, although she did consider the girl's grief really excessive and unreasonable.

Presently Basantkor became quieter, and Wirán began to speak to her. Her voice was very weak, and she spoke with difficulty, but she slowly told her
eager listener the history of the many months which had elapsed since they last met. "It has seemed a long weary time," she said, "but God has been very good to us, and I am sure that all which I found out in that Holy Book is true. I was able for the first six months to go on reading that book for myself, for although I had given it to my nephew Partáp Singh to read, yet he contrived to return it to me on the last occasion on which we were allowed an interview. Ah! that was a dreadful time, when he left his father's house never to return, and now I know not what has become of him.

"For six months I went on reading the book at every possible opportunity; but I feared very much that Shánti would tell, and so get it taken away from me, for she was then very angry about the whole matter, as she had been reduced to the most wretched state of widowhood by the fact of her husband becoming a Christian; but her sorrow and trouble drew her nearer to me, and at last she began to listen to the beautiful stories from my book, and now she thinks, as I do, that God's promises, written in this book, are true, and that He saves those who trust in Him."

Basantkor did not quite understand this, and she only thought what a pity it was that any new ideas about
religion should come into people's hearts and bring so much sorrow and trouble; but she was unable to express what she felt, and moreover she was puzzled to see that, in spite of all the sorrow and trouble, there was a very peaceful and happy look upon Wirāṅ's face, and she could even tell of times of gladness and joy which she and Shānti had had together. Basantkor could not tell what to think about it all, but she knew that she had come on a special errand, and that she must try and do what she had promised; but first she must just ask where the book was now, and however Wirāṅ had been able to see in such a dark room. Wirāṅ told her that at first, when Partāp Singh went away, she had been in a room not quite so dark as this, and that it was only when one day Chandkor came suddenly in while she was reading to Shānti, and grew very angry about her still possessing anything to read, that she was removed into this darker room and kept more strictly than before; and the book, which had become so precious, and which had by God's goodness been permitted thus to enlighten the dark days of the first six months of her disgrace, as well as to bring a knowledge of the truth to the heart of Shānti, was finally taken away, and Wirāṅ heard afterwards with inexpressible grief that Sujet Singh had torn it to
pieces and burnt it. "Of course," said Wirán, "I hear all that happens in the house, because Shánti, being a widow, is everybody's slave and does all the menial work; and it is also considered her duty to wait on me and help me, as I am no longer fit to be touched by the hands of other people. When I heard from her that our beloved book was gone, I felt very sad, but I soon remembered with thankfulness that no fires could destroy the words of life which were in my heart. Now I have no fear, except that the people of our house may take away Shánti as they see more and more the love that is between us." The more Basantkor listened, the oftener she thought to herself how much it was to be regretted that Wirán and Partáp Singh had taken up these new ideas; how nice it would have been if all had remained as it was once, and if no time of gloomy sadness and punishment had overtaken her afflicted friend! "Surely," she thought to herself, "one religion is as good as another; why get one's self into all this trouble for nothing?"

But now the time was passing by, and she had not done her errand; she thought she had better begin by telling about Partáp Singh, so she said, "A Christian Bibi came to our house, and told me that your nephew is alive, and that he wishes to find out whether you
and Shánti will come and join him." "Oh, then," said Wirán, "he is not married! We heard he had married a Christian woman." This of course had been a falsehood, told to the women on purpose to make them both feel that he would never wish Shánti to go to him; and poor Shánti had never heard a word of the many messages that Partáp Singh had sent to her, nor did she know that he had even claimed his right to take her. None of the simple-minded women now talking together were in the least aware that Partáp Singh, knowing his young wife to be now legally of age, was hoping to get the law to help him in claiming her, and was very hopeful also that the same law would set Wirán free to leave the home of her childhood to go and live among those who would let her serve God according to what she believed to be right.

The only point upon which he was doubtful was whether, if indeed Wirán were still living, she might not ere this have been persecuted out of her faith and compelled to deny what she had once so firmly believed; and whether Shánti had not been embittered against him and against the Christian religion to such an extent as to be resolute against ever seeing him again, or hearing anything about his new belief. He had sent her many messages, but she had received
none; he had honourably written them in letters to his father, but those letters had all been angrily destroyed. His thought of persuading Basantkor to find out the real state of affairs seemed at first most unlikely to lead to any good results, but he had prayed earnestly to God to cause the plan to prosper, and we have seen how the way was made plain; and in God's providence, events so happened that Basantkor was able to ask all the questions to which Partáp Singh so much desired answers. She was not able to say for certain whether he was married or not; she said the Christian Bibi had not told her that, but as she had said that he was very desirous for Shánti to join him, she supposed he was not married, for she had heard that among the Christians it was the rule to have only one wife.

Wiráñ had become very weary and faint with so much talking, and Basantkor thought she had better not stay any longer; so she rose to go, saying, "Well, Bibi, will you go to your nephew?" Wiráñ answered, "Tell him I have only a little while to live, and that if I could have been baptized here, I would not in my illness and weakness trouble about being removed; but I am longing to be baptized, and so if he can take me from here I am willing to go." "And Shánti?"
asked Basantkor. Shánti answered, "Wherever Wiráñ goes I shall go." Basantkor told her to give Wiráñ some food and water, as she was very faint, and Shánti said she was just going to prepare some food for her. Then old Mahtábkor said kindly, "And eat something yourself, poor child; you also look as if you had no life in you." But poor little Shánti answered, "I cannot eat or drink to-day; it is my fast." "Ah! true," replied the old woman; "customs must be duly observed."

Wiráñ looked at the children, and spoke kindly to the little Ganesh, who was restlessly wanting to go, and who was sadly disappointed by his visit. The lame lady was not at all like what he had expected, and he had heard no pretty stories!

The baby had happily fallen asleep. Mahtábkor took her in her arms, and Basantkor, with parting saláms to her friends Wiráñ and Shánti, took Ganesh by the hand and followed her mother-in-law; and the women, going from the house with noiseless step, did not again intrude on the marriage festivities.
Chapter XIV.

Here darkness tarried not, for heavenly light
Came bright and beautiful from God Himself,
And chased it all away; here even death,
With all its gloom and horror, brought no fear;
For hands that once have touch'd by living faith
The Saviour, beat off death! and feet that run
The way of His commandments trample down
The last great foe, who thus is swallow'd up
In victory!
CHAPTER XIV.

Basantkor lost no time in conveying to Fátima the news of Wirañ and Shánti, and very soon Partáp Singh heard all about it, and was rejoicing in the thought that he might ere long exchange his lonely, and on some accounts saddened, life for one brightened by the Christian companionship of at least some of those whom he loved.

He had been much happier since Fath Masíh had come to live with him, but naturally there was a very earnest longing in his heart to have some from his own family joined with him in the holy bonds of Christianity.

Partáp Singh had just been baptized, and he and Fath Masíh had become brothers indeed.

They both began to prepare for their confirmation, which was to take place early in the autumn and this occupied most of their spare time and their thoughts during the hot season. They were a great help and means of strength to each other, and often
thanked God that each could rejoice in having such a friend.

Partáp Singh found that legal inquiry was necessary in order to his being able to claim his wife, and take his aunt away to live with him as a Christian; and so he had to be patient and wait for some time, for legal questions never seem able to be settled in a hurry. Several times Shántí was declared under age, and all that could be found out about Wirán was that she was dead. Her nephew feared that perhaps she might be indeed, and his Christian friends warned him to be patient, lest, in order to defeat him, both women should be removed where he would never be able to find them, or lest, in the event of Wirán's death, Shántí should be taken away and never recovered.

At length, however, he heard, through the court into which he had taken his case, that an inquiry was going to be made by a magistrate in his father's house, and that it would then be known for certain whether they were both there, and what was their own wish with regard to the future.

The result of this investigation was that Shántí was legally declared of age to choose her own religion, but that, when asked by the magistrate what she would do, she emphatically answered that she chose to remain
where she was; and that when Wirãṇ was asked what course she had decided on, she elected to stay with Shánti. She tried to persuade Shánti to go, and promised to go with her, but nothing could move Shánti from her decision; and so Wirãṇ would not accept the opportunity now before her of joining her nephew.

It was a bitter disappointment to poor Partáp Singh, but he believed his wife had been persuaded or frightened, and that some day yet she would change her mind and be willing to come. He saw clearly from what Wirãṇ had said that she was ready and willing to come, but that her tender affection for his wife would not allow her to leave her behind. He passed week after week in anxiety and prayer. Sometimes he felt that he must take some steps himself to bring about the object for which he longed; but he knew in his heart that it would not be right, and his Christian friends counselled him to "cast his burden on the Lord," and to "tarry the Lord’s leisure." He often prayed earnestly that Wirãṇ might not be lost because, for Shánti’s sake, she did not come out and receive baptism, and at times, after much prayer, his hope was very bright, and he felt sure that he would some day see both those dear ones brought out; but
at other times he was very cast down and sad, and there seemed nothing but darkness in the future.

Fath Masíh had also sorrow mingled with his joy. His mother became very ill, and it was evident her end was drawing near. As she grew weaker and weaker, she could not suppress the mother's love, which had never been wholly extinguished in her heart. She called her children. Would they come? she wondered. Ah! would they not hasten to her with joy! The religion of Jesus often results in separations, but they can never be traced to it—only to those who cast it out and despise and hate it. When it is allowed to come in contact with others, it shows itself lovely and lovable; it reunites, it binds together in holy bonds of brotherhood and peace—it does not sever then. Fath Masíh and Fátima were soon with their mother, and during three weeks of very severe illness they watched her and cared for her in such a tender and loving manner that all the neighbours said what a pity she had ever turned out such dutiful and loving children only because they were Christians. Why, they did not seem at all the worse for their Christianity.

Fath Masíh had never yet left off supporting his mother; ever since he had lived with Partáp Singh he had provided for her out of his wages as a cloth-
worker, having worked diligently at his trade, as he did before his baptism.

Fátima and he were both very thankful that they were able to be with their poor mother in her last hours. Many members of their family were very angry at their being there, but none could deny their right; and although they received much annoyance and incivility, they could not be sent away from their mother's side. She seemed much touched and softened by their dutiful attention and untiring services for her comfort, but she never allowed Fátima to bring her Christian friend the doctor to see her, and she would hear nothing of those holy truths concerning which they were longing to tell her, and insisted on having the Korán read over her as she was passing away, and charged all her family to remember that she died a true and faithful Mussalmáni.

She assured her children of her forgiveness, and said she prayed God to give them grace to repent of their folly! She gave up to Fátima's charge the little boy, now nearly three years old, and told her that his father's other wives did not like the child, and would not have him among their own, and therefore he could not keep him; and indeed his heart was quite turned way from this child, and he never now asked for him
or took any notice of him. She also said that Rahím Bakhshe was ill of an incurable disease, and that he had taken to opium-eating, so that it was not at all likely he would live to trouble her about the child; and as for other people, every one knew well that Fátima's sister had given the baby to her; "So now," said her mother, "see that you keep him." Fath Masîh and his sister stayed to do all that could be done for their mother as long as she lived, and after her funeral they left the house to return to their Christian friends, feeling that the last tie with their old home was broken.

And so the weary and trying weeks of the hot season passed away, and our young Christians grew in knowledge and joy, and began to be lights and helps to others. Fátima had resolved to help in the Medical Mission, and was patiently learning many things in preparation for this service. Fath Masîh continued his cloth-work, and Partáp Singh was still a teacher in the Mission School.

One evening early in October, as Partáp Singh and Fath Masîh were sitting together after their day's work, Buta Singh, the carpenter, entered the open door, and making a salám to Partáp Singh, put a piece of paper in his hand. It was a rough and soiled piece of paper, and the almost illegible writing seemed as
if it might have been done with a bit of charcoal. Partáp Singh read, “I am living still, but very weak. Shánti is willing; send for us both.”

Buta Singh explained that Basantkor was in the habit of going sometimes to wait about a little near Bikarma Singh’s house, in the hope of hearing some news, and that on this particular day, while sitting to rest and ask questions of a woman on a doorstep close by, she had seen this piece of paper come fluttering down from an upper window. She picked it up and brought it home, and Buta Singh had thought it better to bring it at once to Partáp Singh, in order that he might see if it contained any news of those concerning whom he was so anxious.

Great was the joy of the two young Christian men. After some consultation with friends, Partáp Singh again applied to the court for his wife; and after only two or three days’ delay, on its being properly ascertained by a magistrate that Wirán and Shánti wished to go, an order for their being permitted to go where they wished was issued.

The next question was how to remove the afflicted Wirán, for although Bikarma Singh was obliged by law to let her go, he had forbidden every one in his house to render her any assistance. At last it was
decided that some Christian women, among whom were Fátima and her medical missionary friend, should go and manage the removal of the poor sufferer; and thus it came to pass that one day the long imprisonment of the weary Wirán came to an end, and she felt herself lifted gently and carried in strong but tender arms away from her dark room, while in her half unconscious state, looking up to the kind and sympathising faces bending over her, she fancied they were the faces of angels.

Wirán and Shánti were both in Partáp Singh's house. A few quiet days passed away; the confirmation took place, and our young Christians were strengthened to renew the battle of life. They were also all drawn together in thanksgiving and prayer for those two who had so lately come among them. Wirán revived a little under the kind and loving care of Fátima and her medical missionary friend, who had already begun to feel for her the affection of sisters, but it was very evident that all they could do would not lengthen her life for many days. She was too weak to tell for herself the story of the last nearly three years of lonely suffering, but Shánti related everything, telling of privations and sorrows which made her listeners' hearts ache, and
NONE OF SELF.

explaining how it was the dread of separation which had made them hesitate when they had the first opportunity of coming out; because they had each been threatened that, in case either decided to go away, the other would certainly be prevented from following, and her lot made harder than before. Shánti said she had begun to think the Bible was true when she had seen Wirán’s happiness and patience under affliction, and since she had been willing to listen, Wirán had taught her so constantly and well, that she had learnt a great deal, and understood very well what were the great principles of the religion which she was now anxious to embrace. Yes, Shánti gave every proof of being now a believer; and one happy day, not long after they arrived at Partáp Singh’s house, amid the thanksgivings of the little band of loving and sympathising Christian friends, these two, so long bound together in darkness and sorrow and captivity, were together baptized (for it was decided not to separate them merely for the sake of taking Shánti to church); and thus they entered hand in hand into “the glorious liberty of the children of God.”

A few more days passed by, and Wirán lingered on, full of joy and peace. Those who watched her and
ministered to her conversed with her on many subjects, and were full of wonder to find how much she had learnt by herself from the book which had been so precious to her, the Holy Spirit of God being her only teacher. She always loved to hear them read or speak of the Saviour's return, and told them once how that ever since she found out about it in the Bible, it had been to her like a star in the dark night. One morning the few Christians who had learnt to know and love her gathered round her bed for the last time, and in the joyful anticipation of the coming again of Him who was thus knitting their hearts in one, they commemorated together His dying love. Some time after that holy service was ended, she asked if they were not going to their work; but Partáp Singh told her every one had a holiday, because it was the great day of the Diwáli fair. "Oh, then," she whispered, with a smile full of meaning as she looked at Partáp Singh, "this evening the city will be lighted up?" Then after a little pause she said, "But I shall see another city."

They sat and watched her through the day, and more than once there came among them a very loving and a very sorrowful watcher, one who felt that the dearest friend she had was leaving her, and who often whispered to herself the familiar words of the bhajan,
"For thou hast none of thy very own, ji." Poor little Basantkor! it was all such a mystery to her, and all so very painful and sad! Several times, when Wirāṇ noticed her, the dying lips tried to frame words of comfort, and once when she heard the mournful words of that bhajan softly murmured by her disconsolate friend, she said with an effort, "But Jesus Christ will be your very own, ji."

Mahtābkor was not at all pleased that her daughter-in-law went so often to the house of a Christian, but when she found Wirāṇ was dying, she consented to mind the children while Basantkor went to look just once more on the face of her friend. Basantkor had no desire to see the lights of this Diwāli, and she thought the whole world was very miserable and dark.

The day wore away; the evening came on; darkness settled down over the city, and the light from thousands upon thousands of tiny chirāgs burst forth in one beautiful blaze to give a transient earthly pleasure; and in that quiet room, where the watchers were waiting for the last sigh of the one just falling asleep in Jesus, one of the little company read in a gentle but clear voice:—

"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of
the moon to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

"Thy sun shall then no more go down, neither shall thy moon withdraw herself, for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."

And when the answering smile had faded from the dying face, and with one gentle sigh Wirán had passed away, the same voice went quietly on, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight."

"God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things which are,

"THAT NO FLESH SHOULD GLORY IN HIS PRESENCE!"
Prayers.

Thy Kingdom come! Heavenly Father! how many of Thy creatures, those who might be Thy loving, faithful children, Thy loyal subjects, are still in heathen darkness! They know not of the Kingdom which is an everlasting Kingdom; they are very far off from Thee by wicked works. Speed Thy servants who preach the Word of the Kingdom; prosper that Word; make it mighty to the pulling down of Satan's strongholds, and to the ingathering of many precious souls into Thy Holy Church. Blessed Saviour! how many of those for whom Thou didst shed Thy blood are still ignorant of Thy love, still know not that they must be born again and enter the Kingdom of Thy grace, or be for ever lost. Send them teachers after Thine own heart. Send the light of Thy love into every part of the earth. Holy Spirit! it is Thine to touch hard hearts, to rouse slumbering souls, to arrest sinners, to make them see their need of the only Saviour; it is Thine to reveal to men the mysteries of the Kingdom. Oh, that Thou wouldst hasten Thy work! Oh, that Thou wouldst bring the Kingdom with power into men's hearts! Work, yea, work! None can stay Thee. Put forth Thy mighty power. It is time for Thee, Lord, to work. Delay
not, Blessed Spirit; use Thine own unworthy yet sanctified ones from among the children of men to hasten the full accomplishment of all Thy purposes. Triune Jehovah! for the sake of the Gracious Redeemer, by the love of the Eternal Father, through the power of the Holy Spirit, Thy Kingdom come! Amen.

II.

O Lord God, our Heavenly Father, Who willest not the death of any sinner, but dost, in Thine infinite love and pity, will the salvation of all, be pleased to look down very graciously upon all women under teaching in schools and zenánas who seem ready to confess Thy Name before men, but who are held back through fear or shame. Lord, bring them soon to Holy Baptism; convince them by the power of Thy Blessed Spirit of their solemn duty to delay no longer; let them not lose all; having come so near to the Saviour, let them not go away without the healing touch, the touch of faith; let them be numbered among Thy children, and strengthened in the right and good way, and made to become thriving Christians. Help all Thy missionary servants diligently to seek the souls of such, and in all to see Thy glory, for the sake of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.
Most merciful Father, we plead with Thee for the young Christians of heathen lands. Gracious Lord, Thou seest them and knowest them altogether; and in the full assurance of Thy tenderest sympathy in these our desires, we commend these Thy children to Thee. They are beset with temptations; they have innumerable difficulties and trials; they are often very ignorant and weak. We plead with Thee for them. Who is he that can harm them if they be followers of that which is good? Oh, give them grace to follow their Master and their Friend. Give them more and more of the Holy Spirit, and fill their hearts with the love of Jesus. Make them very prayerful; help them in the study of Thy Holy Word, and enable them to use well all their time, that they may, like wise and faithful servants, make themselves ready for the appearing of our Blessed Lord. O God, Thy missionary servants cannot shield these people from evil, they cannot keep away all the dark suggestions of the devil. Be Thou their Sun and their Shield! Make them to remember Thy Presence! Keep them from all evil to-day! Lord, let "the little one become a thousand" in every place where Thy Church has been planted. Let Thy great Name be magnified in these humble believers; let their faithfulness attract others to our holy religion; let them be as lights shining in
dark places; and, O Father, again and again we plead, fill them with Thine own Holy Spirit, for our Beloved Redeemer's sake. Amen.

IV.

O Lord God, our most gracious Father in Heaven, Whose Blessed Son did, on leaving this world, give to every one in His Church his work to do till His return; we are sure that Thou dost look down in great love upon the efforts made to advance His Kingdom and hasten His coming; and now we desire to commend to Thee Thy work at [here any place may be named for which it is desired to pray]. Lord, look upon that place with great pity and love. Make all in it who name the Name of Christ to depart from iniquity, to be earnestly and truly holy in heart and life. Let Thy people there increase in numbers, in power, and in holy influence, and let them all be continually watered with the dew of Thy heavenly blessing. Prosper all plans and efforts there made for carrying on Thy work. Make Thy servants who labour there faithful, true, humble, and diligent; shield them from all evil, from all carelessness of walk, from all mingling with the world, from all neglect of their own souls, from all pursuits and habits which might come as clouds between their souls and the love of Jesus, from all strife and jealousy
and ill-will, from all lessening of their first ardent desires for souls, from all leaving of their first love—Good Lord deliver them, and be pleased to be glorified in all that they are and in all that they do, for Jesus Christ’s sake. Amen.

V.

BLESSED LORD JESUS, our coming Saviour! how little is Thine Advent longed for and prayed for by the Church in India! We thank Thee for all the stirrings of heart in Thy people in England. Lord, increase a thousandfold all their earnest zeal and love in this most blessed cause, the hastening of Thy coming. And let Thy Holy Spirit open the eyes of the understanding of Thy people in India too. O Lord, make them feel the great importance of the subject; rouse sleeping, careless ones; teach those who are strangers to the full sweetness and blessedness of a life lived in the glorious light of Thine Advent; and awaken all Thy missionary servants to effort and zeal in this matter. Remove cowardice, cause all mingling with the world to cease, and make the thought of Thine own near coming to fill missionary hearts; let it quicken prayer and intensify desire to save souls; and may every saved one be taught not only to believe in Thy saving love, but to wait for Thee from Heaven, for Thine own dear Name’s sake. Amen.
VI.

ALMIGHTY and most merciful Father, we are met in Thy Name to work for Thy glory. May it please Thee to accept our unworthy and feeble efforts to serve Thee. Bless all that we do, and make it useful in the work of Thy Kingdom. And while we work to clothe the needy, or to provide means for carrying on missionary effort in different lands, may our hearts be filled with Thy love, and be often lifted up to Thee in prayer that immortal souls may be clothed with the Robe of the Righteousness of Christ, in whose all-prevailing Name, and for whose sake, we offer Thee our thanksgivings and prayers, and service of love, and to Whom, with Thyself and the Holy Spirit, we would ascribe everlasting praises. Amen.

THE END.
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