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Our Little Hindu Cousin

THE
Little Cousin Series

(TRADE MARK)

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plates in
tint. Cloth, 12mo, with decorative cover,
per volume, 60 cents

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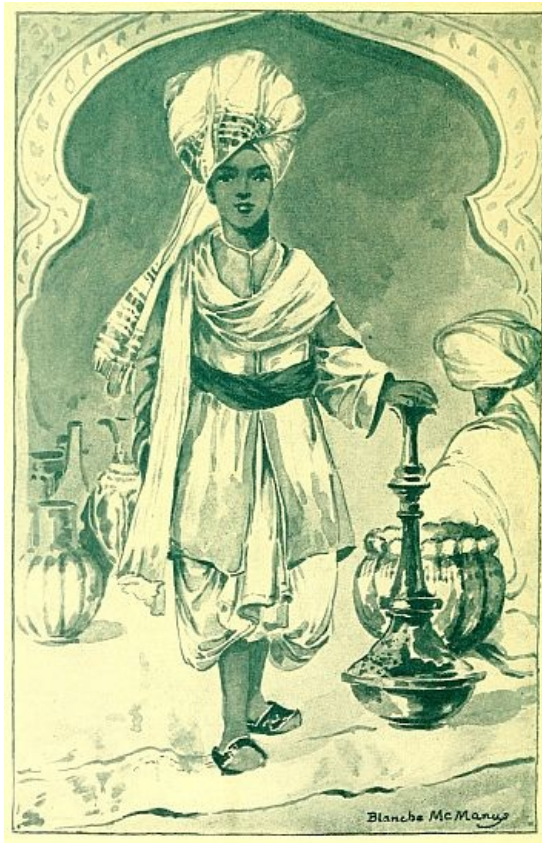
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Our Little Turkish Cousin



CHOLA IN HIS FATHER'S SHOP.
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Our Little Hindu Cousin

By
Blanche McManus

*Author of "Our Little English Cousin," "Our
Little French Cousin," "Our Little Dutch
Cousin," "Our Little Scotch
Cousin," etc.*

*Illustrated by
The Author*



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Preface

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OUR little cousins of Hindustan are charming little people, even though their manners and customs and their religion are so very different from our own.

India is a big country, and there are many different races of people living within its borders, the two principal ones being the Mohammedans and the Hindus. The Mohammedans number about sixty millions and there are about a hundred and eighty millions of Hindus, who are by far the superior race.

The intelligence of the Hindus is of a very high order, but, like all Eastern races, they have many superstitions. Their attention to their food and drink and personal cleanliness is remarkable, and, though their customs in this respect are peculiar, they follow a healthful and sanitary manner of living which might well be practised by Western folk.

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The arts and crafts of the Hindus and their trades and professions are very strange and interesting, and the young people themselves invariably grow up in the same occupations as their elders. There is no mixing of the races or *castes*, and members of one caste always associate with those of the same class.

But the English influence is making itself so strongly felt, that frequently the children learn English as early in life as they do their own language; so our little American cousins would almost always be able to make of them good playfellows and would perhaps be able to learn many valuable lessons from Our Little Hindu Cousins.

B. McM.

SUEZ, *January, 1907.*

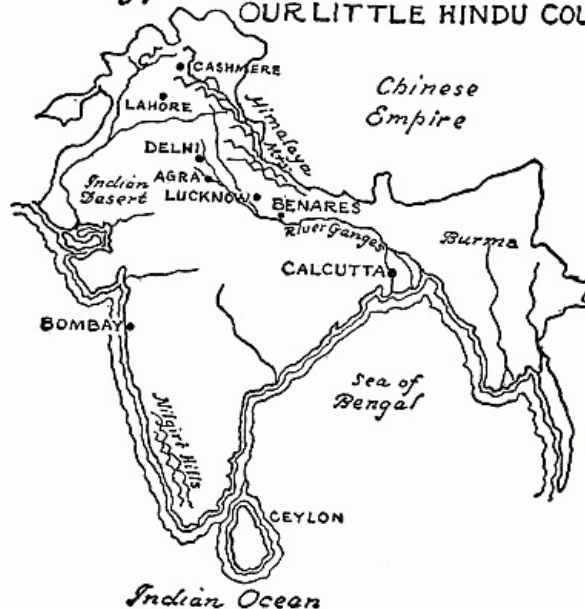
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Map of INDIA
showing places mentioned in
OUR LITTLE HINDU COUSIN



Our Little Hindu Cousin

[1]

CHAPTER I

CHOLA AT HOME

It was barely light when little Chola rolled out of his blanket and gave his cousin Mahala a shake as he lay stretched out beside him.

"Lazy one, listen! I hear little kids bleating below in the courtyard; the new goats with the long hair must have come. Hasten! We will be the first to see them!"

"Oh!" said Mahala, sitting up and rubbing his eyes, "thou art the plague of my life. I was in the midst of a beautiful dream. I dreamed that I was sitting beside a clear stream, with many dishes of sweetmeats beside me, and I was just beginning to eat them when thou didst wake me."

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"Oh, thou greedy one! 'Tis always of sweets that thou art thinking," laughed Chola, as he and Mahala ran down the little winding stairway which led from their room into the courtyard.

"Here they are, aren't they dear little creatures?" cried Chola, as two little kids came frisking toward them, while the big white mother goat followed them bleating piteously.

"What fine long white hair they have," exclaimed Mahala, trying to catch one of the kids as it bounded past him.

"A lot of fuss over some goats," grumbled the old porter. "This fellow with his goats came hammering before cock-crow at the gate," continued the old man, who did not like having to come down from his little room over the big gateway of the court at such an early hour to open the gate.

"We are early risers in the hills," said the man who had brought the goats. "It is you town folks who are lazy; but I promised your master when he bought the goats in the market yesterday that he should have them this morning."

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"Oh, thou art from the hills," exclaimed the boys, looking curiously at the little man in his strange dress.

"Yes, from the far northwest; and both I and my goats are homesick for the tall mountains with the snow on their tops and the great pine-trees. We like not these hot plains; but I must be off to the market," and, twirling his stick, the little man left, clanging the heavy gate behind him.

"Come, we will bathe before our fathers come down," said Mahala, after they had played about with the kids awhile; "they always say we are in their way." So saying the two little boys ran into the big garden where, under a group of mango-trees, there was a big stone tank, or pond, of water, with steps going down into it. Here Chola and Mahala bathed every morning, for it was part of their religion and must be done in a certain way. Indeed, some of our little Hindu cousins bathe before each meal; and this is why, all over India, you will see the people bathing in the

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rivers, in the public bathing-places, and in their own gardens at all times of the day. Moreover, it is a very pleasant custom for a hot country like India. As the boys were splashing merrily about in the big tank, down dropped a big mango right on top of Chola's head.

"Where did that come from?" he cried, looking around; but there was no one to be seen, so he went on splashing, when down came another mango, and a sound was heard as if some one was chuckling to himself.

"Oh, it's thou, son of mischief!" cried Chola, as a little monkey leaped down and capered around on the edge of the tank. [5]

It was Jam, Chola's pet monkey. A cousin of the gardener had caught it in his field one night when he was guarding his crops from the monkeys. These mischievous animals would often dash out in droves from the near-by forest at night and eat up the farmers' crop. He did not wish to kill the little monkey; for, like many Hindus, he thought it a sacred animal. So he had brought it to Chola for a pet.

The boys had great fun with Jam, though often he would play mischievous pranks on them. Today Jam thought this was just his chance to have fun. Spying Chola's turban lying beside his clothes on the steps of the tank, he pounced upon it and carried it up into the mango-tree.

"Oh, son of mischief, just wait until I catch thee! Bring back my turban!" cried Chola, as he scrambled out of the water and climbed up after Jam in a jiffy. It would never do for him to lose his turban, for it would be very bad manners for him to be seen without this curious head-covering. But as Chola went up the tree, Jam climbed down by an out-stretching limb and swung himself to the ground, then away he went tearing around the garden with Chola after him. Suddenly Jam tossed the turban over the garden wall and flew to the top of the house, wild with joy at having given Chola such a chase. [6]

"Oh, Mahala, find it for me," said Chola, as he dropped breathless on the grass.

Mahala ran out into the road and was back directly.

"Here is thy turban all unrolled," he laughed, throwing what seemed to be many yards of white cloth at Chola.

"Just wait until I take a good bamboo stick to thee, wicked one," said Chola, shaking his fist at Jam, now safe out of reach, and beginning to wind the cloth around his head. [7]

After their bath it did not take the boys long to dress, for they just wound a long white garment around and around them, and slipped over this a little jacket.

"Let us go to the cook-room now and see what the women are cooking; to dream of sweets does not take away one's hunger," said Mahala, after the boys had given their teeth a vigorous washing and rubbing with little sticks, which was another one of their religious duties.

As the boys ran across the courtyard, scattering the goats, doves, and fowls which were picking up seeds and grain, a voice called out: "Give me food, oh, little princelings!"

"That must be a beggar, but I do not see him," said Mahala, looking around.

"It is old green-coat," said Chola, laughing, and pointing to the other side of the court where hung a hoop in which sat a beautiful parrot, all brilliant green and blue and red. He could talk so well that a stranger who came to the house would look everywhere to find the human being who he thought had spoken to him. Once there came a thief who thought he could steal the fine cock that stood under the veranda with his head under his wing. Just as the thief caught the cock by the neck, such a torrent of abuse came from above that he dropped the cock and rolled in the dust, crying out: "Mercy! mercy! Oh, great one, thy slave will never do this thing again!" Then as he heard a laugh, and no one seized him, he fearfully lifted his head, and there sat the parrot swinging on his hoop-perch. The thief slunk away very much ashamed that he had been fooled by a bird. [8]

"Ah, it smells good!" said Mahala, as they looked in at the door of the cook-house which was near the great gateway.

There were no stoves or even fireplaces in the cook-room, but a series of little holes or cupboards in the wall, in each of which was a pot or pan resting on a few bricks or stones over a tiny fire. These little ovens were near the floor, so that the cook could watch the pots and pans while squatting. No Hindu stands up to any kind of work if he has a chance to sit down. [9]

Three or four women were squatting around watching the cooking, while the boys' old grandmother bustled about scolding everybody within sight.

"Do not linger here," said the grandmother to the boys, "this is no place for children."

"But, grandmother, Shriya is here," objected Mahala; "why can't we stay, too?"

"I am helping grandmother," said Mahala's little sister Shriya, who, with a very important air, was sitting on the floor stirring something in a big bowl. Shriya felt that she was a person of importance these days, for was she not going to be married soon! [10]

"Shriya is a useful little girl; besides, why are you not in the great room where thy fathers

make sacrifice to the Gods of the Household?" answered the old lady, rather tartly. Like all good cooks she did not like to be bothered while she was preparing her dishes.

"Come away, the grandmother is always cross when she is in the cook-room," whispered Chola; so he and Mahala crossed the court again and went into the house.

If you should come to visit Chola, you would think no one lived there when you first entered the house. You would see no furniture of any kind, no tables or chairs, for every one sits cross-legged on mats or rugs spread on the floor, or squats on their heels. The walls are whitewashed and bare, and there are no pictures or knick-knacks such as you have at home.

The great-room was the sitting-room and dining-room for all the family except the women, who lived in their own part of the house, called the *zenana*. [11]

At one end of the great-room was a shrine, in which was a curious old idol of baked red clay. This was supposed to be the image of the family god, and each morning offerings were made to it. This morning when the boys came in, they found that the offerings of dishes of rice and wreaths of flowers had already been placed around the old idol.

"Thou art late," called out Chola's father, who was sitting on the wide veranda in front of the great-room, smoking his big pipe called a *hookah*. It was very comfortable on the veranda, for all around it hung mats of woven grass to keep off the burning sun and yet let in a cooling breeze. You must know that India is a very hot country and that the people make use of all sorts of things to make them comfortable. That is why the houses all have broad verandas, where the folk can sit and keep much cooler than within doors. [12]

"It was all Jam's fault," said Chola, and he sat beside his father and told of the trick the little monkey had played him, which amused his father very much.

"You have spoilt Jam," he said. "Some day he will have to be sent back to the forest if he does not behave himself better."

Meanwhile the steaming dishes of food were being brought from the cook-house and placed on the big mat in the centre of the great-room; this kept the grandmother and the boys' mothers busy, for they had to serve three separate repasts, one for the men, one for the children, and then, last of all, one for themselves. All this took a long time, for there was Harajar Chumjeree, Chola's father, and his wife Lalla, and Murree Rao, Chola's uncle, and his wife, and his son Mahala, and Mahala's little sister Shriya, and the grandmother, and several cousins and cousins' widows. They all lived in the big stone house, built around a square courtyard, which stood in the middle of a large garden on the outskirts of the beautiful city of Lucknow. [13]

"Oh, grandmother, give us the fine white rice this morning with the beautiful curry which thou hast made! None other tastes so good as thine," said Chola, coaxingly, as he and his little cousins seated themselves on the cleanly swept earthen floor of the great-room.

"Aha! art thou young rajahs that you should eat the beautiful rice of the feast-days?" said the old lady, as she bustled back to the cook-room; for the very fine rice is costly, and not usually given to children every time they ask for it. Nevertheless, the old lady was always pleased when they praised her curries, and, like other grandmothers the world over, she quite spoiled her little grandsons. So, presently, she came back with a big bowl of the fine white rice and put a pile of it on each child's plate, taking care not to actually touch the plates themselves, and then she made a hole, or basin, in the centre of each pile and filled it with a steaming hot curry. This is one of the dishes that the children were fondest of and there are many ways of preparing it. [14]

This curry of the grandmother's was made of several kinds of vegetables, and was very hot and spicy indeed, but the children enjoyed it. After this they had flat cakes of fried meal, and then a preserve of fruit.

"Here is milk from the new goats," said the grandmother, placing a big bowl of goat's milk before each child; "but hasten, little ones, for I and the mother and Shriya go with my son to the Bazaar to-day. There are many things to buy for the wedding of my granddaughter," continued the old lady, who was devoted to her grandchildren and really ruled the house. [15]

"Oh, take me, too," cried Chola. "There are no lessons at the school; for thou knowest it is a holiday, and Mahala goes with his father to visit a cousin. I will be all alone."

CHAPTER II

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A DAY IN THE BAZAAR

So it was settled that Chola should go, too. A little later the "*ekka ghurrie*" was ready in the courtyard, and they all stowed themselves away in it somehow. The "*ekka ghurrie*" is a funny kind of carriage made of bamboo poles hung between two high wheels, with a red canopy to keep off the sun. It was drawn by a little pony, and the shafts were fastened to a stout bamboo stick across his high pointed collar.

They found themselves rather a tight fit, for the "*ekka*" was small; and the *coolie*, or servant, who was driving had to balance himself as best he could on one of the shafts. Nobody minded this, however, and away went the little pony along the dusty road, past gardens and many low, rambling two-storied houses very much like their own.

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Everything looked wonderfully bright and gay. Many of the houses were painted a brilliant pink or yellow with bright green verandas; and the people, too, were dressed so gaily in all kinds of colours, though some of them wore pure white, which looked nice and cool in the blazing sun.

Soon they passed the great gate of the city and came into the busy streets of the Bazaar.

In all Eastern cities there is a part called the Bazaar, where are all the shops; and in a large city like Lucknow the Bazaar is made up of many streets of nothing but shops.

All the fruit and vegetable shops are in a street to themselves; all the workers in brass and other metals in another. You will find the silk merchants in one street; and, in still another, all the shops that sell cotton goods,—the pretty flowered kinds stamped with tinsel as well as plain white, for every one in India wears light cotton or silk clothes.

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When they came to the street where the silk merchants were, the grandmother and Shriya and her mother got out; for it was here they were going to buy Shriya's pretty silk dresses and long veils, and other pretty things.

"I would rather go with thee, father," said Chola, so he and his father turned into another street. Here were the shops where wonderful gold and silver work was made and sold; and where precious stones were set into all kinds of rich and curious jewelry. The shop of Chola's father was one of the largest in the street, though we would think it very small. It was more like a big cupboard in the side of the street than anything else; and he could reach nearly everything in it without getting up from his seat. The shop had no name or sign over it, nor were there any windows, while no doors were needed because the entire front was open to the street, so that customers could look in to see if there was anything they wished to buy without coming inside.

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Chola sat on his heels watching his father as he sat cross-legged on a carpet spread on the floor, putting a beautiful blue turquoise into the setting of a silver necklace. Near to his elbow was a low table on which were piles of precious stones. He liked to come with his father to the Bazaar and watch him make the gold and silver into beautiful things. When Chola was older he would come every day to the Bazaar, and his father would teach him to be a silversmith like himself. Every little Hindu boy follows the same trade as his father.

The Hindus love jewelry of all kinds, and both men and women wear quantities of it. In fact much of their wealth is often put into the form of necklaces, rings, and bracelets, which the women wear all the time. The Hindus think this is the safest way to keep their wealth. So you see why the jewellers do such a big trade in India.

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"Father, there's a customer," whispered Chola, but Harajar paid not the slightest attention to a tall man in a long silk robe, with a big turban on his head, who stopped to look in the shop. A Hindu merchant usually thinks it beneath his dignity to ask any one to buy his wares.

Presently the tall man said: "Are you happy?"

"I am happy," answered Harajar.

This is the Hindu way of saying "How do you do?"

Harajar then offered the tall man a seat on the rug, and his own *hookah* to smoke, which is the polite thing to do. The would-be customer puffed away at the great pipe for some minutes, meanwhile saying never a word. Soon he began to pay compliments; and then he looked at, and priced, nearly everything in the shop before he asked the price of the gold-mounted dagger on which he had had his eye all the time. Then came the bargaining.

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Chola knew that this would take all the morning, so he slipped away to a shop a little way down the street, where a big yellow and red awning hung across the roadway.

Here were beautiful brass ornaments of all kinds, lamps, vases, pitchers, and what not, and Chola peered among these for a sight of his little friend Nao. Only Nao's father was in sight, and he sat dozing over his *hookah*. Farther down the street, however, Chola spied Nao's embroidered cap bobbing about between two big camels laden with great bales of cloth.

Nao as quickly caught sight of his friend Chola, and came running up at once. "Oh, Chola," he cried, as he greeted his little friend by touching his forehead and the palm of his right hand, "let us go to where the caravans gather about the city gate; the man with the camels has just told me that all the camels stopped there to rest on entering the city."

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"Nay," said Chola, "there are wild, rough doings among the strange men who come down from the hills with the camels. I have heard my father say so."

"Oh, go play with thy sister, then, I will go alone," said Nao, who made out as if he would turn away.

"I am not afraid, I, too, will go and talk with the camel men," Chola answered with spirit. No little Hindu boy likes to be told to stay at home with the girls, because in his country it is a sad fact that little girls are not thought as much of as boys, nor do they have so good a time.

The two boys slipped away through the crowded street, dodging between lumbering wagons drawn by oxen, called buffaloes, and pushing their way through a crowd of folk dressed in a great variety of costumes, all in gay colours and with queer gaudy turbans on their heads. The turban forms a very important part of the dress of the Hindu, and Chola could tell by the colour and shape of each man's turban to just what *caste* each man belonged and what business he was in. There are many of these *castes*, or classes, of Hindu people, and each *caste* keeps strictly to itself. A person of one *caste* must not marry outside his *caste*; or touch persons of another *caste*, even; or eat with them, or have any friendly dealings with them. Not only that, but you would think it very tiresome, would you not, to have to remember not to sit next to that person or touch this one? And that you must find out who cooked your food before you might eat it? But this is what our little Hindu cousins have to think of all the time.

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Many of the men carried umbrellas of bright colours. Once only very high and mighty people in Hindustan carried umbrellas, or rather had them carried over them by a servant, but now nearly every one carries one;—and they are needed in a country where the sun shines hotly all the year round. For this same reason the streets are nearly covered in by great spreading awnings drawn from one side to the other and forming a sort of roof.

Just for fun the two boys got in the way of the "*bhisti*" or water-carrier, so that the stream of water from the goatskin bag, with which he was watering the dusty street, might play on their bare feet; but when he turned it toward their heads, they ran away laughing.

"See! there must be a juggler over there," said Chola, pointing to a circle of people around an old man with a gray beard.

The two boys pushed into the circle until they were near enough to see what wonderful things the man was doing. He had just put a few seeds into the dust under a small mat. "Behold," he cried, "there will grow up a beautiful flower," and, sure enough, as he lifted up the mat, there appeared a pot, and from the pot there began to grow up a stem and green leaves, until finally it became a tall plant from which unfolded a great red flower. All at once, as the juggler held the plant up for every one to see, the flower changed into a cage containing two white doves, and, when the door of the cage was opened, the doves came out and began to circle about the juggler's head. At this there was a murmur of wonder and surprise from the crowd. The doves entered the cage again; but, as the people looked, the cage and doves and the red flower and the plant with the green leaves all vanished; and the juggler stood on his little grass mat with absolutely empty hands. Nothing could have been hidden about him, for he had on no clothes except a cloth wrapped around his waist.

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"Is it not wonderful?" whispered Nao. "There be people who say it is magic; and that there are no such things in sight as the flower and the doves, and that it is all the power of the eye of the old man that makes other people see things as he wants them to see them."

"Nay, it is real magic, and the flower did grow up before us," said Chola. It would be hard for any one to believe otherwise; for it is true that the jugglers of India do the most wonderful tricks, far more wonderful than those we see in our own country, and no stranger can really tell how they are done.

"How will you find your camel-man?" asked Chola, when finally the boys came to the great square where the caravans camped. Everywhere were camels and horses and men in strange costumes.

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"He said he would be near the great gate," said Nao, as he and Chola crept in and around the big camels and under them, constantly being scolded by the men for getting in their way. Finally Nao spied his friend sitting lazily smoking in the shade of the gateway, while he watched his camels being unloaded.

"Welcome, oh, little friends," said the big, bluff fellow. "I suppose it is no use to ask thee to share my dinner?" he continued, pointing to the big dish of boiled rice, cabbage, and goat's meat which one of his stable boys had just brought him.

The food smelt very good, but Chola and Nao shook their heads. They knew by the blue turban and dress of their new friend that he was a Mohammedan, and they would rather have starved than eaten food with him; but they were quite willing to squat beside him in the dust in true Hindu boy fashion, and listen to his strange tales of the far-away countries which he had visited, as he ate his meal out of the big bowl. They heard how he had come from the great plains of China, across the snow-covered mountains of the north—the great Himalayas, the highest mountains in the world;—and how his camels had waded through snow-drifts up to their necks. He told them marvellous tales of the great cities of Delhi and Lahore, with their marble palaces and beautiful gardens; and of the great rice-fields of Burma. Sometimes he had crossed the great desert going toward the west, and had seen the splendid city of Bombay, and from there had gone on down the coast where the tall palm-trees grow. He and his caravan had crossed India many times, carrying merchandise from one part of the country to another. The camel-man talked on until he had finished eating and was ready for a nap.

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"It must be fine fun to ride a camel," said Nao, as he and Chola made their way back to the Bazaar.

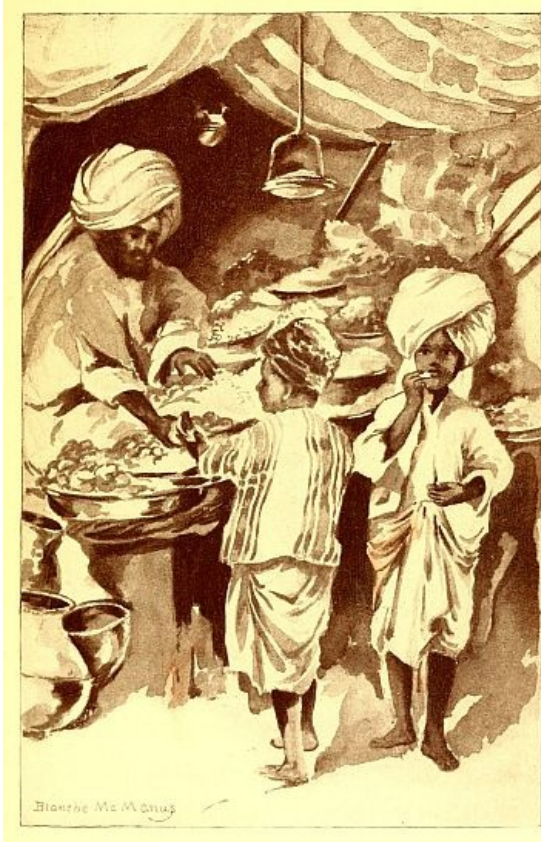
[29]

"I think it is much nicer to ride a big elephant, as my Uncle Achmed does when he goes about his lumber yards," answered Chola. "But, Nao, the smell of thy friend's dinner has made me

hungry. Let us buy some sweetmeats," he continued, darting across the street to a little booth where there were bowls and baskets filled with all kinds of sweet, sticky things to eat that not only Hindu children like, but all the grown-ups as well. When a Hindu wants a real treat, he eats as many sweetmeats as he can.

Just as the boys got to the booth, a big bull buffalo came snorting along. He evidently wanted sweets, too, for he stuck his head under the awning of the little shop and took a big mouthful of preserved fruit from one of the baskets, at the same time upsetting the contents of another basket over the owner of the little shop, who was dozing among his wares.

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BUYING SWEETS IN THE BAZAAR.

"Oh, the thief!" cried the man, jumping up angrily, though he dared not do anything to the animal; for it was one of the sacred bulls from a near-by temple. They were allowed to wander through the streets, though they often robbed the shops in this mean fashion.

"'Tis no laughing matter," said the man, turning to the boys, who could not help laughing at his discomfiture.

"Do not be cross," replied Chola, as he and Nao helped to pick up the scattered sweets. "We are a different kind of customer from the buffalo. How many '*cowries*' do you want for this almond paste? Not too many, mind you," he continued, with an eye for a bargain, "for we helped you save the others."

"And eaten some, too, I warrant," grumbled the man, still in a bad humour, as he wrapped up the sweets in a large green leaf and gave it to Chola, who paid him with some tiny shells, threaded on a string, which he took from the wallet he carried in his dress. These *cowrie* shells are used for small pieces of money and are carried on strings. As you may imagine, each shell is not of a great value.

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"Let us eat our sweets here," said Chola, squatting in the shadow of a wall; and, with his finger, drawing a circle round them in the dust. This was intended as a sort of a boundary-line to keep any *low-caste* person from coming too near them while they were eating. The boys greatly

enjoyed their candies, which they thought all the better for being made with *ghu*, a sort of rancid butter.

Just as they were finishing the last bit, some one came up and touched Nao on the shoulder.

"Who comes here to make my food unclean," he cried, jumping up angrily.

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"Hush! It is a little Sahib. Doubtless he knows no better," said Chola, as he looked around and saw an English boy standing by.

"I think those things look better than they taste," the boy said, smiling, as he pointed to the sweets; "but I meant no harm. I only wanted to ask if you could tell me where Colonel Scott lives. I think I have lost my way."

"Ah, every one knows the Colonel Sahib; but the house is far from here; in the street with the great trees near the Chutter Munzil," said Chola.

"Where the roofs look like big gold umbrellas, I know," said the English boy. "My name is Harry, and Colonel Scott is my father. My mother and I have just come from England; but my papa has been here a long time. While he was buying something in one of the shops, I followed a man who had a lot of performing birds; and the first thing I knew I had lost my way." Harry rattled away, glad to find some one to talk to.

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Chola could understand him fairly well, for he had been taught a little English at his school.

"Yonder stands a '*rickshaw*.' It will take you quickly to your home," said Chola, proud to be able to talk to a little Sahib.

The little Hindu boys hailed the "*rickshaw*," and, nearly bursting with importance, bargained with the man who pulled it to take the little Sahib home.

"Perhaps I shall see you again, for I am going to live here now," said Harry, as he thanked the boys and climbed into the "*rickshaw*," which looked like a big perambulator. Away the man went with it at a lively trot, with Harry waving his cap in the air as a good-bye to his new-found friends.

Chola could talk of nothing but the "little Sahib" as they jogged home in the "*ekka*" in the dusk of the evening.

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There are many English people in India, because it is now a part of the British Empire. So it is not surprising that Chola and Harry should meet in this way and be able to talk to each other. Mahala was very much disappointed because he had not been there, too, when he heard Chola tell of his adventures as they ate their supper.

CHAPTER III

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THE CHILDREN'S HOLIDAY

"CHOLA, art thou there?" said little Nao the next morning, peeping in between the mats of the veranda. Nao lived in a pretty pink house next to Chola's, and their gardens joined; so he and the two cousins were great playmates.

"Yes, but I'm busy," said Chola, without looking around. The barber had come to shave his father, and Chola had begged to be allowed to hold for his father the little looking-glass which the barber had brought with him, as he reclined on a rug while the barber shaved him. The barber made his rounds from house to house each day, carrying the tools of his trade with him; and he not only shaved his patrons' faces, but their heads as well.

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"I only wanted to tell thee that there is a man just outside the gate with a basket," replied Nao, in a tantalizing way; "but if thou *must* help the barber—"

"There are plenty of men in the street with baskets," returned Chola; but he was beginning to be interested.

"But this man carries a flute," answered his little friend, smiling.

"Oh, it is the snake-charmer!" cried Chola, jumping up.

"I see thou art tired of playing barber. Give me the mirror, and thou mayst run away," said his father.

Out in the street the boys found the man dressed all in bright pink, with a basket on his arm. He had seated himself down in the shade of a tree, and a crowd of children had gathered around him.

Presently he began to whistle on a little pipe or flute. "Look," whispered Nao, as a snake's head pushed up the lid of the basket and crept slowly out. Then another and another followed, until several snakes were crawling and wriggling around in the dust, all keeping time to the music of the flute. Soon the snakes began to climb and crawl all over the man, winding themselves around his neck and arms to the great delight of the children. Finally one of the snakes wound itself around the man's neck; and one around each arm; after which the man piped them back into their basket.

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Then he spread the handkerchief on the ground, which was a sign for the children to pay for the show. This was enough to send most of the children flying away; for, though they had enjoyed the performance, many of them were not willing to pay for it. Both Chola and Nao, however, threw some *cowrie* shells on the handkerchief before they left.

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"May good luck attend thee, my little masters," said the snake-charmer with a deep *salaam*. Then he picked up his basket again and went piping down the street to find another audience.

"Thou hast on thy yellow dress. Hast thou been to the temple?" asked Nao, as he and Chola came back into the garden.

"No, I wait for Mahala. Where can he be?" said Chola, running back into the courtyard.

Mahala was there, busily washing out the inkstand which he always carried to school, while Shriya hung out of one of the *zenana* windows talking to him.

"I cleaned my inkstand yesterday, oh, tardy one!" exclaimed Chola.

"Mine, too, is ready," said Mahala, giving it a final polish as he spoke. "Now we will be off."

[39]

To-day was the great holiday for the children. It was the festival of Sarasvati, the Hindu Goddess of Learning, who is supposed to be the especial guardian of children.

The boys were going to the temple to lay their inkstands before the queer image of the Goddess of Learning, as was the custom on this holiday festival.

"Thou art not keeping the holiday," called out Nao, looking up at Shriya.

"No, indeed," answered the little girl, shaking her head. "I do not want to be a widow some day; and the grandmother says this is what would happen if I should read books and learn to write while I'm little."

The boys laughed; and then ran out to join the crowd of little boys, who were making their way toward the temples, all dressed in bright yellow in honour of the day, some carrying their

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inkstands stuck in their belts, others swinging them in their hands.

"What shall we do to amuse ourselves?" asked Mahala, after they had dutifully laid their inkstands before the queer image of Sarasvati.

"I know," answered Chola. "We will find the potter and beg a bit of clay from him. It will be fun to make some toys for ourselves."

The boys turned down a street; and there, under a big tree on the river-bank, the potter was at work with piles of damp clay around him. As usual, a lot of children were gathered about him. They loved to watch him take the clay and put it on a revolving wooden wheel before him and mould dishes and jugs and bowls of all sorts and shapes. Each neighbourhood has a potter whose business it is to make the ware for that village; and he does a good trade, for it is the custom among many of the people to throw away their dishes after each meal. This of course means that they must have new ones all the time. [41]

"Eh! well, thou wouldst have clay for thy toys?" said the gray-bearded old potter, when the boys explained what they wanted. "Here it is then," he said, good-naturedly, and gave them each a lump of the wet clay. Carrying their treasure carefully the boys hurried back to Chola's garden.

Shriya was there in a shady nook, swinging Chola's baby brother gently as he lay in his cradle. His cradle was a kind of little hammock, swung between two bamboo supports, and, as Shriya swayed it gently backward and forward, she was singing:

"Here is a handful of white rice,
Here is a bit of sweet,
Here is a tamarind ripe and nice,
A curry for thee and me."

"The little one is fretful. He is not well; and it may be that he has a fever, the mother fears," said Shriya, stopping her song as the boys came up. [42]

"I will make him a horse to play with," and Chola seated himself and began to mould the clay as he had seen the old potter do.

"I shall make a buffalo like the sacred one that stole the sweets yesterday," said Nao, falling to work.

"Tush! this only sticks to my fingers!" exclaimed Mahala, impatiently, after a few minutes' work.

"Give it to me and let me try," said Shriya, eagerly.

"Thou canst take it; and a good riddance, too," and Mahala held out a pair of dirty hands.

"There!" cried Chola, "here is thy horse, little one; but wait, I must put a saddle on him," he said, as the baby crowed and put out his hands.

"A horse, indeed," laughed Mahala; "it looks as much like a horse as Nao's buffalo." [43]

"I couldn't make the horns stick on mine," grumbled Nao.

"And thou hast forgotten thy buffalo's tail, too!" Chola laughed, heartily.

"But, look," he continued, "Shriya's are the best of all."

Shriya's nimble little fingers had indeed made the two little dolls which she had moulded look very lifelike.

"I shall put a bit of real cloth on their heads for veils," she said.

"We will put them here in the sun to dry," said Chola, admiring his horse as he held it up.

"Ah, and if we leave them here, perhaps 'Sir Banas' will come to the garden to-night and make them all alive," whispered little Shriya, mysteriously.

The children believed that there was a strange being who came during the night and made their dolls walk and talk as if they were alive. [44]

Later on all the family went to the big square near by, where games were going on; and everybody took a ride on the big "merry-go-round," which was very much like the ones we have. Shriya's father put her up into one of the swinging seats, all red and gold, and took his seat in another, for the grown people were as fond of riding in a merry-go-round as the children. The boys were already holding on tight, each in one of the funny little swings; and away they went, the long ends of their turbans flying behind them, until they were too dizzy to see. But this is the fun of a merry-go-round the world over. Then they went home merrily in the warm, dusky twilight, very happy, with their hands and mouths sticky with sweetmeats.

One evening, not long after this, as Chola and Mahala came home from school, Shriya met them at the garden gate with a very solemn face. [45]

"See," she whispered to Chola, "the priest from the temple sits there talking with thy father. He says the only way to make thy little brother well is to take him to Benares, that he may be bathed in the holy river."

All the family were gathered under the big tamarisk-tree that stood in the centre of the garden. It was their custom to spread mats on the brick pavement under the tree and sit there after the evening meal, the men smoking their big *hookahs*, while the women, with their faces tightly wrapped in long veils, sat a little back of them gossiping together. As the children slipped into their places, everybody was earnestly watching the old Brahmin priest who sat there, too, looking very fine in his pink turban and red brocaded silk gown; and also looking very wise as he drew various sorts of curious lines in the dust about him. When he had finished he looked up and said:

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"It is indeed the will of the gods that the little one be taken to the sacred city."

The Ganges is the most important river in India, and the Hindus know it as the "Sacred River." They think that their sins will be washed away and that they will be cured of all illness if they will but bathe in its waters and drink of them.

"It is well said," answered Harajar Chumjeree, after a long pause. "We will make the pilgrimage and bathe in the waters of the holy river; thus will the child be made well and we shall achieve merit."

Chola's baby brother had not been well for some weeks. His mother and grandmother had given him many bitter drinks made from various healing herbs until he cried and would take no more of the nasty things, just as children in our country cry over their medicine. His mother even dressed him in girl's clothes, and then charms were brought from the temple written on pieces of paper, and Lalla, the baby's mother, soaked the ink off the bits of paper in water which she gave the baby to drink. Even this did not make him fat and rosy. So it was this evening that they came to decide to make the pilgrimage.

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"But first," went on the wise old priest, "there must be made an offering of money and a white calf to the gods of the temple." This would ensure their making the pilgrimage safely. The Brahmins are very cunning, however, for they live within the temple and get the benefits of the offerings which are sent there.

"Ah, truly, the white calf is not forgotten," muttered the old grandmother behind her veil, but loud enough to be heard. She liked to doctor her grandchildren herself; and was rather jealous of the supposed effects of the Brahmin's paper charms. She and the priest had many hot words as to which of their remedies was the best.

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"Peace!" said her son; "it is right to obey the gods."

"Shall we go in the 'fire-wagons,' father?" whispered Chola. He thought the "fire-wagons," as they called the railway trains, were the most wonderful and terrible things in the world.

"I like not this flying over the ground with a great noise," answered his father. "But it will take us quickly and at less cost than if we travelled by road."

"Indeed I shall not ride in those 'devil-wagons!'" cried the grandmother, "nor shall the son of my son" (meaning her grandson). "Do you wish him to die before he can bathe in the holy river?"

"In my young days there were none of these fire-spitting things rushing all over our country," she continued, throwing back her veil in her excitement; "people were content to ride in their wagons and palanquins."

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Harajar Chumjeree was easy-going, and the mother cared only to start as soon as might be; so the old lady had her own way, and it was settled that they should travel in the big, slow-moving ox-wagon, while she should be carried in her own special palanquin.

CHAPTER IV

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THE CHILDREN TRAVEL IN THE BIG OX-WAGON

THE next day everybody in the house began to make preparations for the journey. Not that they hurried about it as we do. No, indeed! Everything was done very leisurely, though there was a lot of talking and disputing and the giving of contrary orders. At last, however, the great "*ruth wagon*" drawn by oxen, was ready in the courtyard. It was a heavy and ungainly vehicle with *solid* wooden wheels and a canopy closed in with lattice-work and curtains.

The old porter was there, directing and scolding the servants as they piled the rugs and blankets and bags of food and pots and pans and dishes into the wagon. Chola's father and mother had to take all these things with them on the journey because there are no hotels at which they might stay, only camping-places, or "*paraos*" beside the roads, where the traveller could buy his food if need be and camp for the night.

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It was a wonder there was any room left for the people, but they were all finally stowed away; except Mahala's father, who was to take Harajar's place at the shop in the Bazaar while he was away, and the many cousins who were left behind to look after the house.

There was quite a procession when at last the big wagon rumbled out through the gateway.

Behind it came the grandmother, in her "*dhoolie-dak*," a sort of a litter, or easy-chair, swung between two long poles. This was carried by two men, one in front and one behind, who rested the end of the poles on their shoulders.

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Besides the family there were many servants, and several others walked beside the slow-moving wagon. The cook, too, went with them.

"Good-bye!" shouted little Nao from his garden wall as they went by.

"Good-bye!" called out Chola and Mahala to him, from their seats in front beside the driver. The boys were perfectly happy to think of all the new, strange sights they were going to see along the road. They shouted greetings to their friend the potter as they passed him, and also to the old "*fakir*," smeared all over with ashes, who sat in a little brick hut by the bridge and pretended to make wonderful cures.

"This is more fun than going to school," said Chola, as the oxen plodded along through clouds of dust. The young folks did not mind this, however, for the road was very lively with people going into the city, some in bullock-carts, some in big wagons like their own, and there were many on foot carrying big baskets on their heads, while beside them trudged little solemn-faced, dark-skinned children.

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At noontime they halted for a rest near an orchard full of flowering fruit-trees, where some beautiful peacocks were sunning themselves on the garden walls, spreading out their great tails and strutting about. These lovely birds are found nearly everywhere in India, and in some parts run quite wild.

"There is a 'Holy Man,'" said Mahala, pointing to a man who was sitting cross-legged by the roadside, with only a cloth wrapped around his waist. His long matted hair hung on his shoulders, and he was saying his prayers with the help of a rosary of beads which he continually passed through his hands.

As the wagon came up, a young man who accompanied the "Holy Man" ran up and held out a begging-bowl, saying: "Give, oh, charitable people, to this Holy One." Chola's mother threw some cakes into the bowl as the wagon stopped.

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"We will become beggars ourselves before we reach the 'Sacred City' if we are going to give to every beggar on the road," grumbled Harajar. "They are as thick as flies in our country."

"It is good to give to a 'Holy Man,'" said the gentle mother. "Maybe he will pray that our babe be made well;" and she sighed as she looked down at the white face of the baby in her arms.

No country in the world has so many beggars as India. Many of them are called "Holy Men" because they do nothing but make pilgrimages from one sacred place to another, living solely on the alms that are given to them.

When they had eaten their lunch, the young people went to explore the garden near them. "Perhaps there are dogs," said Mahala, a little fearfully, but they forgot about dogs when they saw a thicket of sugar-cane down by a stream. "Perhaps we can buy some from the man; there he is now ploughing by the stream," said Chola.

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"I will give you some of the sweet cane, my little princelings," said the man, "if you will give a wreath of flowers to the Sacred River for me," when he learned that the boys were on their way to Benares.

The farmer stopped his oxen in the shade,—for oxen also do all the ploughing,—and began to cut some of the long purple stalks of cane. All at once Mahala cried out, and pulled Chola back, and there, just at their feet, was a pure white snake crawling out from the roots of the cane. It flattened out its head in a most astonishing fashion when it saw them.

"Behold! a pure white cobra," cried the farmer. "It must mean good luck to you, my young masters. It is a rare sight now-a-days to see one of these white cobras."

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The children *salaamed* to it very politely, though they were careful to keep at a good distance. "It is looking for water," said the farmer, as he took a long stalk of cane and gently guided it down to the stream. The snake is another sacred animal of the Hindus, and they would not kill or injure one for anything.

"It may be a sign that the babe will be healed," said the mother, hopefully, when the children came back with their sugar-cane and told about the wonderful cobra. As they were about to move on again, they saw a great cloud of dust down the road. "It is an elephant and many men," said one of the servants. "A great ruler, doubtless," said another, as there came into sight a man on horseback carrying a silk banner or flag. It turned out that it *was* a great and powerful Rajah going in state on a journey to visit another Rajah, or ruler, of one of the small kingdoms or states of which modern India was formerly made up. And did he not look imposing!

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First there came a big elephant, all decorated with silk and gold and silver. On the elephant's back was a "*howdah*," which is like a big chair with a canopy over it, and in this, sitting cross-legged, was the Rajah,—a big, fat fellow dressed in coloured silks and jewels, with a great diamond-set plume in his turban. The fittings of this "*howdah*" were most luxurious. It was lined and carpeted with expensive silken rugs, for the making of which certain *castes* are famous. There are many kinds of rugs in India; but those of

woven silk, like the praying-rugs of the temples, and those upon which the great Rajahs sit in state, are the most beautiful and expensive. These rug-makers are mostly Mohammedans, a religious sect entirely different from the Hindus.

Behind the "*howdah*" stood a servant holding a big umbrella of fine feathers over the Rajah's head. The driver sat on the neck of the elephant and guided the big beast by prodding him on one side or the other with an iron-shod stick or goad.

After the Rajah, followed many men on horseback, all in fine dress and carrying lances and banners of silk; then a whole troop of servants who guarded the wagons filled with the Rajah's baggage and the presents he was carrying to the other Rajah.

"Isn't it fine to ride like that on a big elephant!" whispered Mahala to Chola, as the children picked flowers by the roadside and threw them before the Rajah's elephant, which is a pretty way the Hindus have of welcoming a person of importance.

"How happy the Rajah must be," said little Shriya, "to be able to ride like that and wear such beautiful jewels!" And all the rest of the day the little folk talked of nothing but the great Rajah and his escort.

At sunset they came to a *parao*, where they were to camp for the night. It was only a bare piece of ground under some trees, and a few stalls or little shops where one could buy food and fuel to make a fire.

Our party came to a halt among many other bullock-carts, the owners of which were already sitting around on the ground cooking their suppers or bargaining for food at the little booths. Soon, when their own pots and pans were got out, and the dishes and the bags of rice and meal, the cook made ready the supper.

"This is much more fun than eating at home," said Shriya, as the children were gathering big leaves from the trees. These they used for plates, heaping them up with their boiled rice, and curry, and fish, and all sorts of puddings and sweets.

Meanwhile the oxen tethered close by were eating their suppers of chopped straw. As supper was being eaten, another party stopped at the *parao* and camped not far away. There were many servants in the new party, and a fine litter with gold and silk coverings. When the litter was put down, a young boy stepped out, looking very proud and haughty. His servants at once spread a handsome rug on the ground for him to sit on and rushed about waiting on him, taking good care to keep every one at a distance.

"It is a noble Brahmin boy, and he must be a little prince at the very least," whispered Mahala to Chola in an awestruck voice. "See his rich dresses and the airs he puts on."

"Yes, and how he orders every one about him. Nothing seems good enough for him," replied Chola; "but he has a right to be proud, for he wears the 'Sacred Thread' about him," he continued, looking at the little boy with interest. Around the little Brahmin's neck was a thin cord or thread, which was the sign of his high *caste*.

Just then a little boy from one of the wagons crept up near and *salaamed* before him until his head touched the ground.

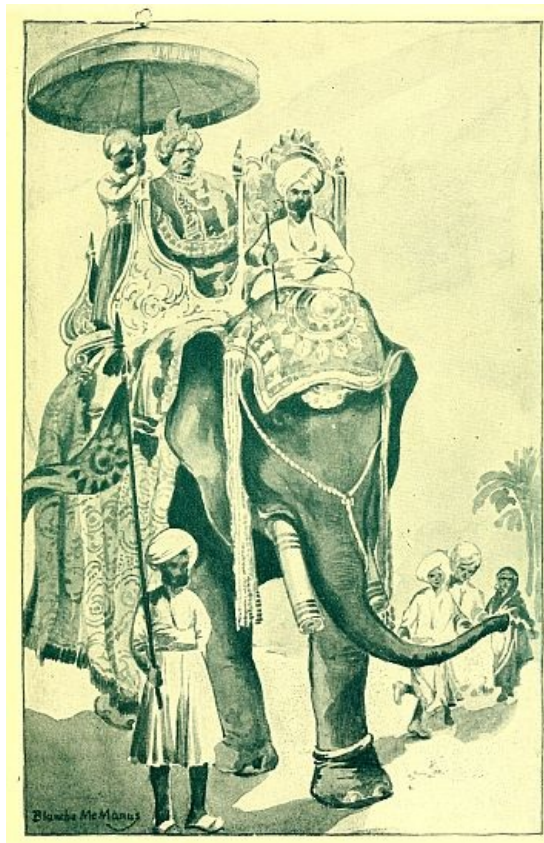
"Away! do not come so near my master," cried one of the servants, and ordered him off.

"Ha! the servant is right," said the children's grandmother, who was sitting in her palanquin-litter enjoying the lively scene. "When I was young like Shriya, a beggar boy like that would not have dared come so near a noble child." The old woman frowned at the little boy, who crept meekly back to his cart.

Meanwhile the haughty little Brahmin ate his supper, with his head turned away so no one could see him eat, and then, growing tired of respectful glances of the crowd around him, he got into his litter again and the servants fastened the curtains tightly around him.

Chola and Mahala were sleepy by this time, so they just rolled themselves up in quilts on the ground, while Shriya crept into the wagon with her mother. Everybody slept soundly, in spite of the fact that one of the servants was beating a drum most of the night, which they really believed was the way to keep off evil spirits.

The first thing Chola heard when he woke up the next morning was the cook scolding the



"FIRST THERE CAME A BIG ELEPHANT."

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doves, who were picking out of his meal bags while he was getting breakfast ready.

"Oh, the thieves!" he cried. "They are as bad as the beggars."

"They are hungry," said Chola. "It would not please thee to be scolded if thou wert hungry." Then he and Mahala amused themselves by throwing pieces of cake to the doves who were picking up their food around the carts, and the green paroquets which came flying out of the trees, where they had been roosting all the night. [63]

They did not see the little Brahmin again. The curtains of his litter were still tightly closed when, after much shouting and running about, the bullocks were at last yoked into the wagon and the little procession rolled away down the dusty road long before the sun came up over the distant groves of mango-trees.

"What art thou guarding so carefully, Shriya?" asked her brother. He and Chola were walking beside the wagon for a change. The lattices were raised so Shriya and her mother and aunt could enjoy the fresh air.

"They are my dolls," said the little girl, sadly, as she patted the bundle beside her. "I take them as an offering to the holy river."

"Poor little woman! Must thou sacrifice thy toys, too?" smiled her uncle as he patted her head. [64]

"It is right that she should," answered her mother; for she, too, had thrown her dolls into the sacred river when she was a child, at the yearly festival, when the children must sacrifice their playthings to the great river.

The boys suddenly looked gloomy, for they remembered that the day would come only too soon when they, too, would have to destroy all their toys. Chola wondered to himself as he walked along if he might not at least save the little tiger, painted a bright yellow with red spots, which was his favourite toy.

But the children could not be sad long, with so much going on about them, and they were soon shouting and laughing to a group of children by the roadside who were amusing themselves playing at making "graves." They were heaping up little mounds of dust and sticking flowers in them, which is the nearest thing little Hindu children have to "mud pies." [65]

For several days our little party plodded along the flat, dusty road, camping out at night at the *paraos*, until at last they drew near the "Holy City of Benares."

CHAPTER V [66]

THE CHILDREN SEE BENARES AND GO HOME FOR A WEDDING

ON the road to Benares they found many other people going the same way as they themselves. There were old people, young people, children, beggars of all kinds, priests of all faiths, sick people and well people,—all going to the "Holy City" carrying offerings of flowers and fruits, and all intending to bathe in the Sacred River.

Finally our party made camp just outside the city gates. Here they left the wagon and servants and made their way through the crowded, dirty streets until they finally came down to the banks of the river Ganges.

Such a sight as met their eyes!

"Oh!" said Chola, "all the temples in the world must be here." [67]

"And all the people, too," said Mahala.

"And all the beggars as well," answered Harajar, as they shouldered their way through a crowd of "*fakirs*" holding out their begging-bowls.

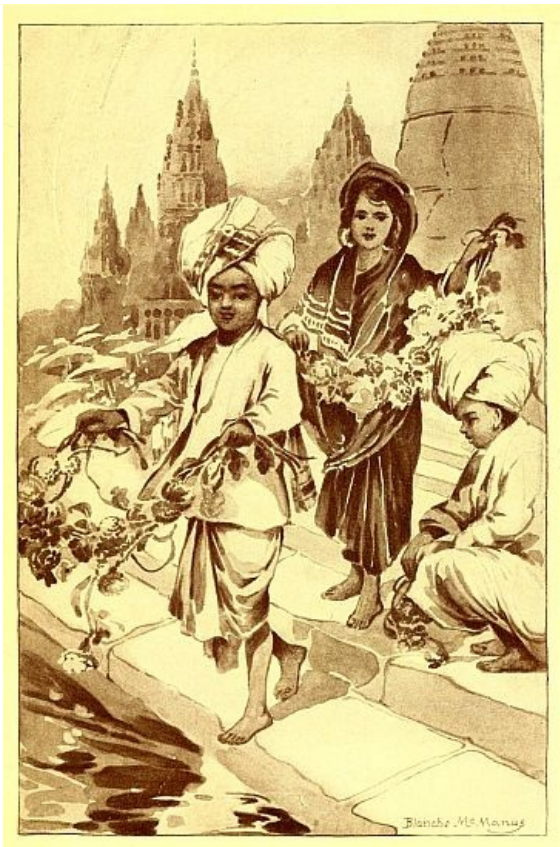
"Nay, speak kindly of all in the 'Holy City.' It may be that our child will be cured," said the gentle mother, as she wrapped her veil around the baby to keep off the hot sun.

The children stopped to stare at the hundreds of big temples of strange shapes which stretched up and down the river back as far as they could see. In front of these temples were terraces and long flights of steps, called "*ghats*" leading down to the river's edge.

"We will go first to the temple to make an offering," said Chola's father, as they walked past temple after temple full of queer, ugly images.

At last, after many inquiries, they found the temple that they were looking for, and put dishes of coloured rice and flowers before a great bronze image with four arms and two big diamonds for eyes, sitting cross-legged just as they did themselves. [68]

After this they went down the long steps in front of the temple to the river's bank, and the baby was bathed in the water with much ceremony.



"THESE THE CHILDREN TWISTED INTO WREATHS AND THREW INTO THE RIVER."

The children all splashed around and thought it rather good fun. The water was cool and agreeable, and they amused themselves trying to catch the long lines of flower wreaths which went floating by. These wreaths of flowers are thrown into the waters of the Ganges by the pilgrims as an offering to the waters of the "Sacred River."

Little Shriya had brought her dolls. One by one she sadly dropped them, the brightly painted little dolls, made of clay and dressed just like herself, into the river. At last she held in her arms only the two she had made herself in the garden at home. They had lost most of their arms and legs on the journey, and were sorry-looking little dolls; but Shriya was very fond of them, and she wondered if the "Sacred River" would really miss them if she kept them. With a sigh she decided this would be very wrong, and so she put them, too, tenderly in the water among the floating flowers. She then sat down on the steps and drew her veil over her face and sighed softly, for it would be three whole months before she could have any more dolls.

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"Here are our flowers," said Chola, running down the steps with his arms full of yellow marigolds and sweet jasmine, which he had bought from the flower-seller who sat under one of the big umbrellas. These the children twisted into wreaths and threw into the river. "And here is one for the man who gave us the sugar-cane," he said, tossing a large wreath on the water.

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"Here thou wilt see every *caste* in India," said Harajar, as they sat on the steps drying themselves under a big umbrella after their bath. There were indeed thousands of people; some just getting ready to enter the water; others slipping into their dry clothes after their bath. There were water-carriers, carrying great jugs of the "holy water" to sell to pilgrims to carry with them.

"Look how the smoke rolls up yonder," said Mahala. "The smoke comes from the burning 'ghats.' May the little one not have to be carried there," said his uncle, looking gloomily at the smoke curling up from the edge of the river lower down.

"Nay, speak not of them. 'Tis an evil omen and the gods may hear thee," said the mother, as she held the baby closer to her.

It is the Hindu custom to burn their dead; and, in spite of bathing and drinking the sacred water, many of the poor pilgrims do die at Benares. Indeed, it may be that they die because they do drink it; for you can imagine how dirty the river is with so many, many thousands of people bathing in it all the time. For this reason certain of the "ghats" along the river are set apart as places where bodies may be burned. The bodies are laid on great piles of wood which are set on fire, the families of the dead sitting around lamenting and wailing.

[71]

Our party camped some days outside the great gate and took many baths and drank much water. When they finally got home again, everybody was very happy, for the baby was really much better.

"We did well to go," said Chola's father, as he looked at the baby growing fat and well again.

"I think the white cobra helped to bring us good luck, too," Chola said, confidentially to Mahala.

[72]

Then word came from the boys' Uncle Achmed that he was coming to the city to take a new elephant back home with him, and that they might go back with him for a visit.

Little Shriya soon forgot to grieve for her lost dolls, for now the grand preparations for her wedding began. It is the custom for our little Hindu cousins to marry very young. But this is only a ceremony. As little Shriya was only nine years old, she would still stay at home and play with her toys until she was grown up, when she would go and live in her husband's family.

If, meanwhile, her boy husband should die and leave her a widow, she would have to go into mourning for him all her life and never marry again. She would have to shave her head and never wear any more pretty, bright dresses or jewels, and only eat one meal a day. Then, too, everybody would have as little to do with her as possible; for even to *see* a widow is thought to be bad luck. You see that some of the Hindu customs are very unjust to the little Hindu girls. So it was no wonder that Shriya did not want to keep the festival of the Goddess of Learning, for fear it might cause her to be a widow some day.

[73]

On the day of the wedding, Shriya stood in the middle of the big room of the *zenana*, being

dressed for the grand ceremony. How happy and excited she was! To-day, for the first time in her life, she was the most important person in the family. She had been bathed with sweet perfumes, and her mother had put all kinds of powders on her face and painted her eyebrows.

"Oh, mother, is it not lovely?" cried the little girl gleefully, as the mother draped a scarf of pale blue silk all shining with gold over her beautiful dress of pink silk.

"Now thou wilt indeed look like a little princess," said the grandmother, as she put a wonderful jewelled head-dress which she had worn at her own wedding on Shriya's head. It was of gold set with many jewels, and little Shriya gave a sigh of pleasure and joyfully clapped her hands when her mother held up a small mirror that she might see herself. [74]

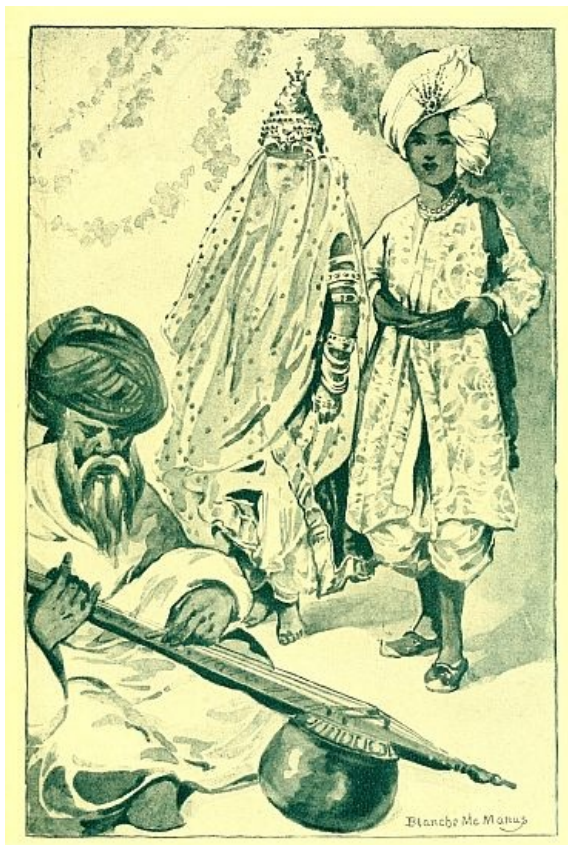
The grandmother decked her out with many other kinds of jewelled ornaments, long earrings that hung down to her shoulders, beautiful pearls, and a gold collar around her neck. Then she put on bracelet after bracelet of gold and silver until her arms were almost covered from shoulder to wrist, and she had to hold them stiff like a doll. And her fingers were so covered with rings that she could hardly move them at all. Last of all the grandmother threw over her a long veil of silk tissue, spangled with gold.

What would you think of a little girl dressed in all these beautiful things and being barefooted? Shriya would much rather have rings on her toes than shoes and stockings. She *did* have rings on her toes, too, and silver bands on her ankles as well. [75]

The last thing the grandmother did was to hang wreaths of jasmine flowers all over her. It was no wonder that she had to be pushed along by some one! She could not possibly have walked by herself.

How pleased little Shriya was! Everybody was admiring her and giving her good wishes. The boys were quite jealous, for they felt that every one was paying more attention to a girl than to either of them.

"Next year I shall be married, too," said Chola, trying to console himself.



THE MARRIAGE OF SHRIYA.

But just then some one called out that the bridegroom was coming, and all the children ran out to meet him. The little bridegroom rode a spirited pony, and looked as fine as a little Rajah in his white silk dress with golden flowers embroidered all over it, and in front of his turban a handsome jewelled ornament. He had shoes on, and around his neck were chains of jewels and precious stones. Behind him came a long procession of relatives and friends. When he got to the door, all the little girls, Shriya's little friends, surrounded him and led him into the courtyard. Chola and Mahala were very busy running around giving each guest a wreath of jasmine to hang around their necks, and a wand of sandalwood, which was lighted like a candle and gave off a sweet perfume as it burned. [76]

A beautiful arbour of flowers had been put up in the inner courtyard, under which the bride and groom sat side by side.

The old Brahmin priest was there, of course, to perform the marriage ceremony. He made a *salaam* to the north and south and the east and the west, a sign of politeness to the "good spirits" who were supposed to be present; and, after many long prayers, the grandmother put a silver cord around the bride's neck, after which the guests threw handfuls of rice which they took from a great copper bowl before the bridal couple. [77]

Just as all the little girls were marching around the courtyard after the ceremony, followed by the bride and groom, what should naughty Jam, the pet monkey, do but snatch some of the rice out of the bowl, and rush with it to the roof, where he sat chattering and throwing it down on the heads of the guests. This greatly amused the children; but the old Brahmin was very angry. So Chola had to pretend to scold the little monkey:

"Thou shalt come down and taste the bamboo rod, naughty one!" he cried, looking up at his pet. But Jam only chattered the harder and threw more rice and made up his mind to stay where he was. [78]

"'Tis a good saying of ours—'Never trust a boy or a monkey.' Eh, Chola?" said his Uncle Achmed, who had just got there in time for the wedding, laughing.

But Jam was quite forgotten when a great beating of drums was heard outside and in came the

dancing-girls and the musicians.

All the company then sat around the court and watched the *nautch-girls*, as they are called, dance. They never thought of dancing themselves, deeming it too much work. All the time the musicians were beating their drums and playing on the funniest sorts of instruments imaginable, like queer-shaped mandolins and zithers; and it was more like a screechy noise than like music—just a monotonous singsong chant.

But this was not the end of the gaieties. There were many dinners to be given. So the cook-room was in a perfect hubbub, and you may believe that the grandmother was making everybody fly around. But she found time to scold the crowd of beggars who were hanging around the doors however, though at the same time she saw to it that they got the scraps that were left. [79]

"It is well to be good to the poor at all times," she said.

"Ah, but this is the best thing of all!" exclaimed Chola to Mahala, as he and his cousin and Nao sat side by side on a mat in the pretty garden that evening and saw the wonderful fireworks. There were queer animals and birds, all made up with coloured lamps and fires; and all through the trees were hung lanterns, made of big yellow gourds with coloured lights inside them. All the while the musicians thumped on their drums, and everybody was very gay and merry.

CHAPTER VI

 [80]

THE LITTLE SAHIB SEES THE BIG ELEPHANTS

"TO-DAY I must take the young elephants home," said Uncle Achmed, when the wedding festivities were over. "Are the two little princelings ready to go with me?" he continued, smiling at his two little nephews.

"Indeed we are," exclaimed the two boys, wild with delight, though they did not whoop or jump about as boys probably would do elsewhere. Little Hindu children don't make much noise at any time. It would be thought strange because it would be bad manners to do so; indeed a Hindu very seldom even laughs loudly.

But there was nothing that Chola and Mahala really liked better than to go to their uncle's house and see the big elephants at work. Uncle Achmed had a big lumber-yard on the banks of the Ganges, and used many elephants to move about and pile up the great logs of teak-wood. Wouldn't little boys in America think it a lot of fun if they could go out into the country and see, instead of horses, a lot of elephants at work? Well, that is just what a little Hindu boy can do, for elephants are almost as plentiful as horses in India; and they use them for many kinds of work where we use horses or machinery. [81]

"I have brought the old elephant with me; he is wise and will be able to show the others the way home; and, also, he will tell them how to behave," said Achmed, as he and the two boys made their way to the *serai*, the camping-place of the elephants outside the city gate.

Here were lots and lots of great gray elephants, swinging their long trunks from side to side as they swayed and stamped around, while their owners and drivers shouted and disputed together. [82]

The two young elephants were hobbled in one corner, swaying to and fro and swinging their trunks in rather a wicked way. Near by was Uncle Achmed's old elephant, swinging his trunk at the two young ones as much as to say: "There are a great many things for you youngsters to learn yet, and I'm going to teach you."

The driver touched the old elephant with his stick and the great beast slowly knelt down. Achmed and the boys then climbed into the *howdah*, and the great big elephant marched off with much dignity.

"Look, the little elephants do not like the road," said Chola, pointing to the new elephants, who would not budge. A little prodding from the driver's sharp stick, however, made them change their minds quickly; and they meekly followed the old elephant. [83]

"Thou art like two little Rajahs now," said Uncle Achmed, with a smile as he squatted in the *howdah* beside them and took out his "*betel*" box. It was a beautiful little silver box, all inlaid with enamel and precious stones. Inside were three compartments which held *betel* nuts, lime, and spices. He took a pinch of all three of these and began to chew the *pan*, as the mixture is called.

The boys had a very good time. They would call down to the children walking along the dusty road and twit them for not being able to ride in state as they were doing, just as children do the world over. Everybody gave them the road, or, rather, the big elephants took it as a matter of course. The old elephant took all kinds of liberties with the passers-by, evidently just for the fun of the thing. He would give a fellow trudging along a nudge on the back with the end of his trunk, which would nearly scare the fellow to death; or he would sneeze, as it were, into a lazy beggar's face, which would make the "Holy Man" very angry indeed. Once he deliberately took a nice ripe melon out of a cart and ate it, while its owner, who was fast asleep, never missed it. [84]

"He is a wise one," said Uncle Achmed, "but what is the matter there?" he cried, looking back. The matter was that a wedding procession had just come out of a side road. The bride was in a litter covered with gay curtains and gold embroideries, and the bridegroom was riding a white horse which was all decked with flowers, and had his mane and tail dyed pink.

With all this splendour there was much beating of drums and music from other noisy instruments. One of the new elephants had taken a great fright and backed up against the bride's litter. This had made the bridegroom's horse rear up and nearly upset him on the dusty road. The poor little bride screamed, and the crowd of relations and friends abused the elephant and all his family and kindred back through many generations, several hundreds of years, which is the true Hindu fashion of showing one's anger. [85]

The drivers prodded and punched, but the young elephant would not move. Then old Ranji, the wise old elephant, wheeled around and went up to the naughty and obstinate youngster and gave his trunk such a twist that he squealed out in pain. Then Ranji gave him a push out into the middle of the road again, and after this kept the young one right in front of him. He was so scared that he scarcely dared to swing his trunk from side to side again; and all went smoothly until they lumbered into the great courtyard of Achmed's house, which sat in the midst of a wide expanse of rice-fields. [86]

As they climbed down out of the "*howdah*," the head servant made a "*salaam*," or bow, before the master until his forehead touched the ground, which is a way of being very polite. He then told Achmed that the Colonel *Sahib* and the little *Sahib* had done him the honour of coming to see him, and were even now sitting in the garden awaiting his coming. All Englishmen in India are called *Sahib* and English women are called *Mem-sahib*.

Achmed found the Colonel sitting on a bed under a big tree in the garden. This bed the head servant had brought from the house for him to sit on, for this is one of the forms of politeness shown to English visitors at a Hindu home.

Just then the "little *Sahib*" ran up to see the elephants; and, who should he be, but the little boy who had lost his way in the Bazaar. [87]

"Look, it is the little *Sahib* I talked with," exclaimed Chola to Mahala.

"Hello!" said Harry, holding out his hand. "Oh, I forgot you folk never shake hands," he continued. "Isn't it funny to think I should see you again? But this isn't the same boy who was with you before," he continued, turning to Mahala.

The boys were delighted to see each other again, and soon were talking away as if they had always known one another, though sometimes it was hard for them to understand, and they made many funny mistakes.

Harry thought the big elephants were wonderful beasts, and wanted to see them at work; so the boys took him down to the river where the elephants were piling up the teak. An elephant picks up one end of a log with his trunk and lays that on the pile; then he takes hold of the other end and so brings it around in place. All the while his driver sits on the neck of the great beast, and tells him what to do by prodding him gently with his iron-shod stick. After awhile the elephants become so well trained that they will do their work without any guidance whatever. [88]

Harry was amazed. He had never seen elephants at work before; but it was an old story to the Hindu boys, and they told him how the elephants were made to help build roads and railroads, and even carry cannon on their backs in battle. Elephants are very intelligent, and can be trained to do the most wonderful things.

"We will go now and see the wonderful elephant of old Yusuf," said Chola, leading the way to the back of the house, where old Yusuf, the head driver, lived. Here they saw the funniest sight. Yusuf's baby grandson lay asleep on a mat in front of the door, and the old elephant was standing by waving his trunk backwards and forwards over the baby to keep away the flies. [89]

How the children laughed! "That is the funniest '*ayah*' I have ever seen," said Harry. An "*ayah*" is the name for the Indian nursemaids.

Old Yusuf now came up and showed them how the elephant would wake up the *coolies*, or labourers, when they were sleeping in the shade, by filling his trunk with water and squirting it over the sleeping fellows. When he wanted his master he would go to the door of his house and knock against it with his foot, just as a person would knock with his fist, only a good deal harder.

"Yusuf knows, too, the language that the elephants talk together in the jungle," whispered Chola to Harry. It really seemed as if the old man did understand the language of the elephants, for he would speak to the elephant with strange sounds, and the beast would follow him about like a dog. "He has taught me to speak some of the elephant talk, also," continued Chola, looking very knowing. [90]

Harry told the boys that his father had come to talk with Achmed about a tiger hunt that he and several other Englishmen, who were friends of his, were planning. Achmed was well known as a good man to plan a hunt, for he knew the jungle well, as the wild forests of India are called.

"Papa is going to take me on the tiger hunt, too. Won't that be fine!" said Harry, eagerly. "Mamma was afraid at first, but I begged as hard as I knew, and told her that if I was going to be

in the Indian Survey some day, I'd have to go through the jungle grass and wild forests, and take measurements with all sorts of instruments and things, and that I might as well get acquainted with the country now. Then papa laughed and said that I ought to begin as soon as possible, and so it is all fixed.

[91]

"Why couldn't you both come, too?" Harry asked the boys. "Your uncle could bring you. Wouldn't it be fun! Perhaps we could shoot a tiger ourselves!"

"Oh, I shouldn't dare to even think of attacking a tiger," gasped the gentle little Chola. Hindus are as a rule mild, gentle folk. Perhaps this comes from their laws, so commonly observed, which forbid them to kill animals or eat meat.

"Perhaps you are afraid to go," said Harry.

"I have not fear, though I would not be brave enough to attempt to kill a great tiger; but I should like to go all the same. We are brave people, and many of our warrior *caste* serve in the great Sahib's army, as you know," said Chola, proudly.

"I did not mean to say that. I know you people are brave. Father often says he never had a finer lot of soldiers than those in his Indian regiment," replied Harry, hurriedly. He was afraid that he had hurt the little Hindu boy's feelings.

[92]

"But perhaps you can go, Chola, if Mahala can't. Let us go now and ask your uncle if he will take you," continued Harry.

"By all means let the boy come, Achmed. He will be a companion for you, Harry," said the Colonel *Sahib*. "And he will help you learn Hindustanee, too. You need help, do you not?" laughed his father.

"What will your father say if the gods of the jungle carry you off?" asked Achmed, half-banteringly. But he could not long refuse his favourite nephew anything that he could give him, and so it was arranged that Achmed, with two of his best drivers, and Chola, should meet the Colonel Sahib and his party at the big railway station in Lucknow in a week's time. From there they would take the "fire-wagons" to a certain small village, from which they would make their real start for the jungle.

[93]

CHAPTER VII

[94]

CHOLA GOES ON A TIGER HUNT

POOR Mahala felt very badly as he stood in the big railway station and watched Chola and the little Sahib go off in the fire-carriage. "I will go and buy some sweetmeats," he said finally. This made him feel a little better, for Mahala had a very "sweet tooth."

Meantime Chola and his little friend were speeding quickly through waving rice-fields and grain-fields. This is even more fun than travelling in the ox-wagon, thought Chola, as they rushed through town after town and watched the trees fly past. Finally they stopped at the village where Achmed had arranged for the elephants and the beaters to meet them, for the real way to hunt tigers is to go after them on elephants.

[95]

The servants had packed away their belongings and camp things on top of the two big elephants, as they expected to have to live in the jungle for several days.

"Isn't this splendid?" exclaimed Harry, as the elephants went rocking along through the tangled grass. He was so excited that he could not keep still, and even Chola's mild black eyes were sparkling.

The beaters, whose business it is to beat through the long grass and underbrush where a tiger might be hidden, were full of tales of a great man-eating tiger that was the terror of the region, and who was in the habit of coming boldly up to the fields and gardens, carrying off goats and even attacking the oxen.

When they came to one of the little villages, they found the inhabitants in a state of terror. Only the day before, the tiger had sprung on a farmer who was ploughing his fields and carried him off in sight of the whole village. The tracks which were seen in the mud along the banks of a stream showed that he was a very big and powerful tiger.

[96]

Our party followed these tracks for some time, but nothing more was discovered; and, as it was growing late, they made camp for the night.

The servants quickly put up the tents for the Sahibs and built a big fire. They did not want a tiger to pay them a surprise visit at night; and hungry tigers often do bold things.

"Ough! this is creepy. Just suppose a tiger should steal up behind us now," confided Harry to Chola, as they sat around the big fire after supper.

"It is well to have a charm; hast thou one?" asked little Chola, as he felt for the charm which

hung about his neck. He always wore a charm, but this was one which his uncle had given him to keep off the evil spirits of the jungle.

[97]

"No, indeed," laughed Harry. "We don't wear such things. Still, if one does believe in charms, now is the time to have one," he added, looking behind him rather fearfully.

It was strange and wild there in the dense forest full of unknown dangers; and there were queer noises, and the firelight twisted up the shadows of the men and elephants into grewsome and unsightly things.

Once in awhile a cry would come from some wild animal or bird in the trees, and the boys would look over their shoulders and draw up closer to the fire. But it was fun, although they felt more creepy still when the beaters began to tell stories of wonderful hunts in which they had taken part in the past; and the old head beater, who had come from the south, himself, told tales of his wonderful adventures.

He told how one night he awoke and found a leopard sniffing at his head as he lay sleeping on his veranda; and how he only saved his life by holding his breath and pretending to be dead. A leopard will not touch a dead person or animal. Another time he had seen the queer little "*Todas*," a race of people who live in the Nilgiri Hills in the far south and worship buffaloes, and say prayers while they are milking these sacred beasts, whose temples are their dairies.

[98]

He knew, too, the wild, shy people of the jungle, who build their houses like nests in the trees, so as to be safe from prowling wild beasts. Once while hunting in the deep forest he had been caught in the huge coils of a terrible boa-constrictor, one of those great snakes that can crush an ox by winding themselves about it in great coils, or can swallow an antelope at one mouthful. The beater was only saved from the anger of the great snake by one of the other hunters coming up just at the right moment and killing it.

[99]

He was a wonderful man, this old fellow with the long gray beard, as he sat by the fire chewing his "*betel*" nut and telling his neverending stories.

The next morning all were up at daybreak, for they wanted to get an early start. One of the elephants had been rather ugly during the time when the men were packing the things on his back, and he was still in a bad temper when Harry came up with a piece of sugar for him. Instead of putting the sugar into the elephant's mouth, Harry accidentally dropped it on the ground. This made the elephant still more angry; and, as Harry stooped to pick up the sugar, he lifted his great foot and would have crushed the boy, who did not dream of the danger he was in. Suddenly Chola saw the danger, and rushing right up under the angry elephant's foot made those strange cries that the old head driver at his uncle's had taught him. It was the talk of the elephants among themselves as they roamed the jungle.

[100]

It was like magic. The big foot came down gently without touching either of the boys, and the elephant, giving a peculiar cry, rubbed his trunk against Chola, just as the Colonel Sahib and every one came running up in terror, for they had seen it all and thought that the boys would surely be crushed to death.

Chola was a great hero! You can imagine how the Colonel Sahib thanked him; and the natives looked at him with wonder and awe.

"He is indeed one who is wise though young; for the wild animals talk with him as with a friend," said the old head beater, as he *salaamed* down to Chola's feet.

Harry did not say much until he and Chola were alone, and then he said: "Chola, I *did* think you were a bit of a coward when we were talking in your uncle's garden; but I know now you are much braver than I, for I would never have dared to go up like that and order about an angry elephant."

[101]

After everybody had got over their fright and were actually ready to start, some of the beaters who had been looking around for signs of tigers came back and said they had seen the tracks. So everything was got ready as quickly as possible, or as quickly as Hindus can be got to move, and the big elephants went trudging along through the underwood until finally it was seen that the grass had been crushed down in places, a sign that the tiger himself could not be far away. The elephants began to show signs of fear, as they always do when a tiger is about, and the beaters divided their forces, some of them going around one way and the rest another, searching carefully through the tangled grass and underbrush. All the men got their guns ready, and it was not a minute too soon; for, suddenly, up out of the jungle, there sprang a great yellow tiger, straight for the "*howdah*" in which the Colonel Sahib and Harry and Chola were sitting.

[102]

With a howl of pain the tiger rolled under the elephant's feet, as a bullet from the Colonel's gun went crashing into his brain.

"My! but he's a fine fellow! Won't his skin make a fine rug, father?" cried Harry, in great excitement. When he was measured, the old beater said that it was one of the biggest tigers he had ever seen. The Colonel felt very proud of his prize.

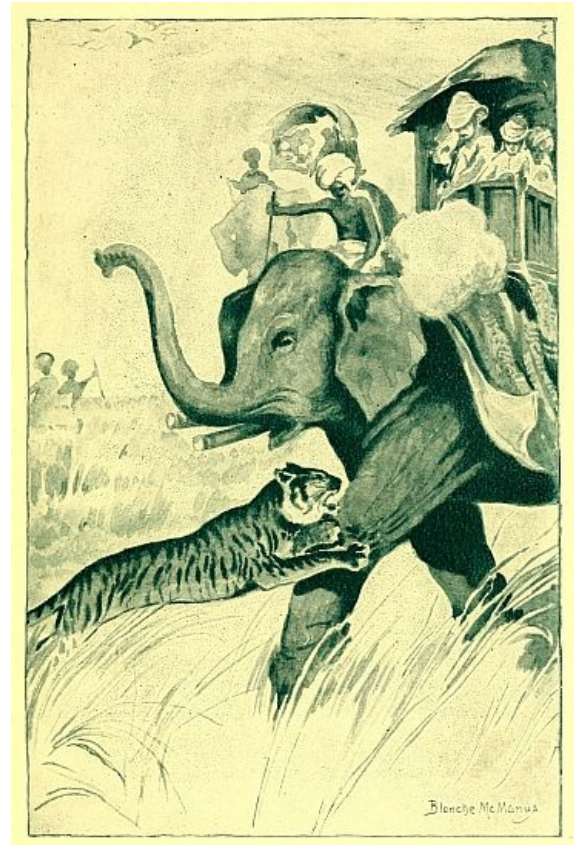
They beat around through the bush for several days, but they came upon no more tigers; so the party turned back again on their own tracks bound for home.

Our two little friends were sorry to part, but Harry said that Chola must come and see him at

Simla, up in the hills, where the English folk go when it gets too hot for them to stay in the plains and in the big cities. There the boys would have some more "good times" at the Colonel Sahib's *bungalow*, among the cedars, as the Englishman's country house in India is called.

And didn't Chola have wonderful tales to tell to Mahala and Nao, as they all sat together in the evenings under the big tree in the garden, while Shriya played with her new dolls beside them and listened with wide-open eyes.

THE END.



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Transcriber's Notes

Obvious punctuation errors repaired.

Ad pages in back, the author for A Child's Garden of Verses by Robert Louis Stephenson is listed on the original ad page as: L. R. Stephenson. This was corrected to R. L. Stephenson.

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