

having given us reason to hope they could follow Christ themselves. Thus we were in a position to see and know much of the hidden life of this class of people.

I want particularly to turn your attention to the caste-women of India. Doubtless you are accustomed to think of them as the down-trodden, imprisoned and despised women of India. Perhaps you will be startled if I tell you the truth, that they hold the destiny of their country in their hands more completely than the women of America do; that they are the ruling power in India, although it is exercised so quietly and out of sight. Repressed power is always the most dangerous. Women, here, can participate in almost every amusement and every privilege open to their sex—can have their women's aid societies in every philanthropic measure of the day; and perhaps this very widening of her influence sometimes tends to divert time and thought from father and brother, husband and child. Certainly it gives us community of thought and action. The literature, the lectures, the advanced thought that exercises the minds of our husbands, is more or less familiar to us also. Women are as much elevated by the mental and moral culture of the day as men are.

In India it is not so; all the influx of civilization and religious light from the New World has fallen on the men alone. It has had no means of reaching the hidden retreats where the women dwell. The only rays of light that have penetrated there have been carried by the missionary women, sadly few in number, who have been able to reach them in their seclusion, and tell from house to house the story of the Cross. I believe this, above every other reason, is the cause of the slight hold Christianity has taken of the Christian people of India. A caste-woman has not even her father or brother to care for; for she was separated from them in early childhood. Her husband and children are all her world, and she is bound to keep them in the good old paths after the strictest sect of Hinduism. She cares more for religion generally than her husband; she is, if you please, more superstitious. Woe to the man who is recreant to her faith! his home becomes too hot for him at once.

Many of these men love their wives and children; *more* perhaps, love the tasty breakfasts and savory dinners than no else will take the trouble to cook for them. For one reason or another, all find it inconvenient, at least to have no home. But to have one he must please the women who dwell there. If a man wishes to be a Christian, he has not merely his wife or wives to contend with; his mother and grandmother, his brother's wives, and all the women of the establishment, usually not a few, club together to bring him to his senses; they will coax him first, but they have no end of devices for bringing him back to their faith if coaxing fails. The only thing a man can do, and what every caste-man who has become a Christian has been obliged to do, is simply to leave them—literally to run away, and leave with them his property, his house, his children and everything he owns in the world. Bunyan's description of the pilgrim starting on his pilgrimage has been literally fulfilled in many a Hindu.

I remember a case in point—a wealthy and influential high-caste man, who, I have no doubt, is a converted man, and who was baptized by Mr. Armstrong in 1878. This man is remarkable for breadth and strength of character, a man of sterling worth and great independence. He was practically king in the district where he lived,

and he thought he was able to be a Christian, and make his household either submit or leave. He was wealthy, had two wives and a "large following." When he came to the house of the native preacher, to ask for baptism, and to offer himself to the church, a crowd of retainers came with him, among whom were his two wives, weeping and tearing their hair. One of these—one to whom he was strongly attached—beat her head against the wall of the house until they had to hold her to keep her from killing herself rather than see her husband a Christian. But none of these things moved him. He deferred his baptism for a while in consequence, but avowed constantly that he believed in Christ, and meant to confess his name publicly. And he did so. He came and was baptized, but he held to his property and one wife. He had no children.

His friends found that they could do nothing with him; for he was too far above them to fear them. However, they were determined not to lose him. Finding that he had actually left them, they all rallied round him again. They said, "If he in his wisdom thought it best to be a Christian, they could not gainsay it: he was greater than they; they would be what he was." So they cooked his rice, and ate with him as before, and treated him as well as they knew how. It was not in human nature not to feel flattered with all this deference to his opinion.

For about a year his conduct was exemplary, but soon the heathen influence by which he was surrounded began to tell upon him. His wife and relatives made much trouble when other Christians came to eat with him; and, as it was only a matter of eating and drinking any way, he thought it hard not to conform a little to their wishes when they had borne so much for him. He was strongly attached to the wife who had remained with him, and her influence induced him to withdraw more and more from intercourse with other Christians. He said he knew that it was wrong, but he was really worried to death. After a while his other wife came back to the house unbidden. Again and again he promised to break away from them all. He believed in Christ; he worshipped him only, and wanted to follow Him: but he said he saw there was nothing for him to do, but to build a small house for himself, and him alone,—that he could not be a Christian, and live in his heathen home. This man's case is a remarkable one, because he had sufficient authority, for a time at least, to compel his household to submit to him; but you see what the result has been.

These women of India are standing right across the path of Christianity in Hindustan. The work of converting them is restricted to the labors of Christian women among them. Here is a work peculiarly yours, that no one else can do. How will you do it? With all your hearts, unflinchingly, till it is accomplished, or with lukewarm zeal, spasmodic efforts, and indifferent success? I believe you will do it, and do it well. May God give you speedy tokens of his approval and his interest in your work! You cannot expect not to meet with hindrances. Our adversary is living and he is strong. We are no match for wicked spirits in high places, but our Master is. Trusting in Him, we have every necessary equipment for the work before us. His very word, that He has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the mighty, should give us strength. The less confidence we have in ourselves the better, if only we have faith in our Leader, and are willing to follow Him anywhere, through everything. Then at last we shall rejoice in His success, singing "Alleluia, salvation, and glory, and honor, and power unto the Lord our God.—Alleluia. Amen."