

Visit to a Zenana.

I would like to give you a full account of my visit to some zenanas at our different stopping-places. I will only refer to one in Calcutta.

One of the teachers in Miss Doremus's zenana took three of us into her work. The first place we went to was a high-caste zenana, and was a grand one. Going up a long flight of stone steps, we came into an inside piazza, extending around the four sides of the house inside. There were luxuriant plants growing in the court, or yard. A sweet-looking Hindoo woman came forward to meet us. She sent for some chairs, and we sat down to be looked at. You would like to know all about her. First, her dress was a long, long strip of soft pink cloth, called a "sarree" (pronounced *sorry*). This was wound all about her, one end being brought up over her head, yet not covering her face. She does not wear this colored dress when she goes out. At such times she must wear white. Colors are allowed only in the house—that is, with the high-caste. She wears no shoes, only heavy bangles upon her ankles; beautiful bracelets both above and below her elbows; rings in her ears and nose. Her face was very sweet. Her first question was as to whether we were married, for with them it is a disgrace not to be. Our gloves excited remark. She felt of our hands and the gloves, and lifted our sleeves to see how far they went up. Pretty soon the children appeared. They also were in pink. One little girl, nine years old, had a red dot upon her forehead, just where the hair begins to part. This is a sign that she is married. There were others in this house besides this one family, for when a man has sons their wives live at home with them. In this family there were several sons, so we saw their wives and the girls.

There were two other little brides. A man came in, and immediately one of the little brides covered her face and ran out. One of the ladies took us in to see her baby. It was entirely without clothing, having its morning nap. Two little boys came in, very dark-skinned; you might have guessed they were negroes, only their hair was straight. One of them clung to me. His dress was a big silk handkerchief; only, instead of wearing it, he carried it under his arm.

We visited two other zenanas, each one poorer than the last. In one of them the teacher asked one of the little brides to put on her jewels. From the appearance of the room (it being only a cellar) you wouldn't have expected to see much wealth. Yet the little girl brought in on a tray jewels worth at least \$2,500, which she put on. They were elegant, but they can never wear them on the street, for fear of being robbed. The missionary told us it would please them very much if

on going from any place we would say the word "Nomskar." It means, "I bow the head," and corresponds to our "Good-by." In all these houses I saw the many idols they worship. It is sad indeed to see them bowing down to these hideous images, which can neither hear nor help; but if they give up their idols and begin to serve Christ, or call themselves Christians, they lose their home. Once I thought I knew all about it from reading; but until I came here, and saw for myself how they live, I did not understand the half. —*Helping Hand.*

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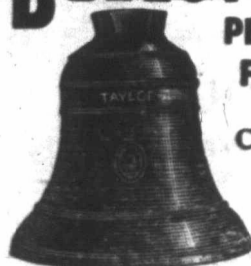
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