

OUR CONTRIBUTORS.

HOME LIFE IN INDIA.—IV.

BY H. PAIR-BROTHER.

The Hindoo has little dread or fear of death, but he does stand in mortal terror of the ghosts of the departed, and more especially of those with whom he has not been on friendly terms during this life. The women make a clever use of this superstition in order to gain their own ends, especially in Bengal, and practise what is called *setting in dhurna*. For instance, a woman has a grievance—it may be she is jealous, or wishes for new clothes or jewellery, etc. She first makes her wishes known in the right direction, and awaits results. If no attention is paid her, and she sees it to be a desperate case with her, she deliberately goes into the presence of her adversary, and, seating herself at his door, announces her determination to starve herself to death, or else drink a poison she has with her prepared and ready. If she is allowed to carry out her threat, and death is the result, then all her sins, whatever they may have been, are heaped upon the head of her enemy, to remain with him forever as a terrible incubus. In the ghostly state she is supposed to have unlimited opportunities whereby she may take him at a disadvantage and be revenged to her satisfaction. The ghosts of females are said to be most trying and relentless, hence women are seldom intentionally driven to extremities. When greatly angered, they sometimes prefer suicide to compromise, because of the fuller opportunities for vengeance. Here is one abundant reason why self-murder is so common in India. Ungovernable temper and passion have, I am convinced, as much to do with it as persecution or abuse. This mode of obtaining redress is by no means confined to the women, but is practised by business men in their transactions with one another. Simulated epilepsy and hysteria are every day modes which the women employ for obtaining their own way, often fairly frightening their male relatives into obedience. Rather than allow a woman to die in a rage, and so obtain power to torment them as a spectre for years to come, a Hindoo man will yield very much.

The common Hindoo women of the middle and lower classes are industrious, frugal and cheerful. They are early risers, being up long before the sun to spin the daily allotment of cotton yarn for the making of garments for the household. That done, there follows the grinding of the grain by means of the little hand-mill, just enough for the meal. In the morning this is a light repast, eaten before going out to work or to the office; then the children are fed, and last the mother; then the female servants, if she can afford to keep any. In most well-to-do families these are poor relations or slaves. The first substantial meal of the day is eaten at noon. The viands differ much in different parts of the country. Everywhere they profess to eschew European diet, except among the scavengers. Brahmins are the most noted for their exclusiveness regarding food, but the caste is large roughly estimated, they form about one-twentieth of the population. They are divided into many sections, each variety having its rules, restrictions and licenses, which are peculiarly its own in this matter. Some are flesh-eating, such as the Siva Brahmins, who sacrifice while waiting upon their temples, fowls, sheep, hogs and buffaloes. There are those who confine themselves to fish only. Abbé Dubois tells us the "Vishnu Brahmins eat publicly all sorts of meat, except beef, without shame or restraint. Some Brahmins there are who abstain altogether, going so far as to deny themselves anything having within itself the principles of life, as eggs, bulbous roots, especially the onion, which is commonly said to be an animal, as it has a bone in its heart. Bishop Heber says, "I had always heard and fully believed till I came to India that it was a grievous crime in the opinion of the Brahmins to eat the flesh or shed the blood of any living creature whatever." But says his biographer, "He had not sailed up the Ganges to Calcutta before he found himself compelled to abandon this belief. Among the boats which crowded the Hoogly he saw the little barks of numerous fishermen who were employed in catching fish for their wealthy countrymen, Brahmins, as well as others. Fish our traveller now found is considered one of the purest and most lawful kinds of food." Rice is cooked in a variety of ways, with meat, chicken, or clarified butter and spices. A

favourite dish is that of split peas boiled with turmeric, salt, and clarified buffalo butter. It is very palatable. Wafer biscuits, seasoned with asafoetida and baked after the manner of Scotch oat cakes, are common. On occasions, dishes of rice are spiced with turmeric, black pepper, ginger, garlic, warm seeds and Chili peppers. Hot pickles are much liked, also wild honey and fruits in abundance and variety. They drink a spiced lemonade and fruit syrup mixed with water, which makes a delicious sherbet. Nuts of all sorts are eaten, also pop-corn and salt, melons, etc.; while the very poor have to be content with the seeds which are dropped from wild fruit trees, or the "crumbs which fall from the rich man's table."

The cooking is the work of the women. Early breakfast being over, and the men having gone, the dishes are scoured with sand and ashes, the water being procured from the nearest well, where the women go to draw, not with buckets, but brass vessels which they carry upon the head. In shape, these are like a hollow globe of brass or copper, from one side of which has been cut a slice equaling about one-sixth the entire size. The margin is then cut and bent back into a rim, underneath which a rope may be tied and so let down to the water. Such is the *dukka*, or cooking vessel, and which in its varieties of size serve as pot, kettle, pail, milk-pan and drinking-cup. The hot food is lifted from them into brass plates by long-handled metal ladles. The food, when cool enough, is eaten with the fingers, each person choosing for himself the coolest and most convenient seat he can find.

In cleansing these vessels, the smaller are scoured "by hand," but when it comes to a large and stubborn one it is carried out under the nearest tree and sand and water are thrown in it; then the housewife tucks up her drapery, raises her shapely arms, and takes firm hold of the overhanging branches, then dips her bare feet into the pot and begins swinging herself round and round from side to side. The vessel is soon shining brightly, and she steps out, rinses it with water, dries it with a small towel or in the sun, and then sets it away for future use.

After breakfast comes the sweeping of the house and court-yard. The broom is simply a bundle of slender twigs from the jungle, bound firmly together at one end by stout hempen cord. It has no handle, and the sweeper sits upon her heels while using it. After the sweeping, the floors are sprinkled and brushed over with a solution of cows' manure in water, and the house is considered tidy for the day.

THE MONTREAL "WITNESS" AND THE PRESBYTERIANS.

MR. EDITOR,—In this article I fulfil my promises in my former one with the same heading in THE PRESBYTERIAN of August 26th.

The Montreal "Witness" will not give any proof in support of its statement that "one doctrine among others contained in the standards of the Presbyterian Churches is the everlasting damnation of non-elect infants." We have, therefore, to rummage in our Confession of Faith to see if we can find therein anything like proof. The only passage which seems to favour the "Witness" view is the following (Section III., Chap. X.), which I give in full. "Elect infants, dying in infancy, are regenerated and saved by Christ through the Spirit, who worketh when, and where, and how He pleaseth. So also are all other elect persons, who are incapable of being outwardly called by the ministry of the Word." To some, these words appear to prove beyond all doubt that the damnation of non-elect infants—without stating their length—is a part of the creed of Presbyterians. They say, "If there be elect infants, there must also be non-elect ones. If the former be saved, the latter, of course, must be damned. There could be nothing clearer than that." Well, let us examine the passage. There are many most earnest Christians who cannot see that the Bible teaches the doctrine of universal salvation as regards those who die in infancy. They do not believe that there are infants in hell. Their belief on this point simply is that the Holy Spirit has not seen fit to reveal to us whether the whole, or only a part of the class referred to, are saved. They may be "weak in the faith." Their piety cannot, however, be questioned. The strong should, therefore, bear with their weakness. Now, suppose that the Confession of Faith had simply said, "Infants dying in infancy," etc., this

would have taught the doctrine of the universal salvation of those dying in infancy, which those of whom I speak reject, only, however, because, as I have already said, they consider it to be "not proven" by Scripture. I have no doubt that, in that case, those who find fault with the Westminster Confession would have cried out about "chains and slavery." It was, therefore, absolutely necessary to use language which would suit the views both of those who believe that the doctrine of the salvation of all dying in infancy is agreeable to the Word of God, and of those who can see no authority there for it. Well, then, I challenge any one to frame more suitable language than what we find in the passage aforesaid. The language there is simply non-committal. Those who believe that possibly some infants dying in infancy have not been chosen to eternal life, can, of course, unhesitatingly assent to it. But those who believe that all have been, can do the same, and that in perfect liberty, though the "Witness" thinks that they must use mental reservation, and thereby so far Jesuitize themselves. Of course, Presbyterians cannot give up the doctrine of election. There is not a pious Arminian who does not verbally accept it. I do not hesitate to say that one can be a true Christian who does not at least in effect hold it. Of course, I do not mean the doctrine of election which our Arminian brethren bombard with one million ton guns, and which Calvinists oppose just as much as they do. Therefore, as I remark in my former article on this subject, "what the Confession of Faith says about infants dying in infancy is characterized by great wisdom."

I come now to explain the views of those who cannot see that the universal salvation of those dying in infancy is clearly taught in the Bible. Of course, no intelligent person among them believes that an infant may be sent to hell for a sin which it never committed, yet, could not commit. But they believe that every human being is born with a sinful nature. Many Protestants believe that every infant is as spotless as Gabriel himself. The Romish Church says that one woman was conceived without sin. These Protestants say this of the whole human race. But those with whom I am now contrasting them know the Bible too well to hold such views. They further believe that even an unconscious babe cannot enter into heaven unless its heart be changed. "Except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God," and "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord," are statements as true of the babe of four hours as of the man of fourscore years. The Holy Spirit can work as easily on the heart of the first as He can on that of the second. The salvation even of a babe is an act of grace. God is no more bound to change the heart of every infant, than He is to change that of every person who has come to years of understanding, or than He was to keep all the angels from sinning. He may, therefore, if it so seem good to Him, pass by some infants. We must not think that those who leave the world in infancy shall be infants forever. Their powers shall in the other world be increased to a degree far beyond what we can now suppose. If, then, an infant were to die with its heart unchanged, it would forever sin against God, and, therefore, for ever be punished. Though it would not be punished for sins which it had not committed here, it would justly be for those which it had committed hereafter.

Such are the views of those who, though they do not believe that there are infants in hell, yet cannot go so far as to say that they believe that the Bible teaches the doctrine of the salvation of all dying in infancy. They may not be correct, but they are a great deal more worthy of notice than many think.

Whether all dying in infancy be saved, or merely a part, is made only a secondary matter in the section of the Confession of Faith already quoted. What is chiefly taught there is, how those of that class who are saved, be they all, be they only some, are saved. We are told that they are elected and saved, as regards means, in a different manner from that in which persons possessing intelligence are saved. The latter are "outwardly called by the ministry of the Word." Of course the former cannot be. The Spirit of God, therefore, works directly on their hearts. How those in their state who are saved are saved is a most important question. Those who drew up the Confession of Faith were, therefore, bound to give a deliverance on it.

I have hitherto spoken only of infants dying in infancy, because the "Witness" has referred only to