

leading spirit, for her husband is away touring and all hear her words with attention. She speaks the vernacular distinctly, fluently, so that the heathen women of the village say to one another, "listen, here is a white woman who speaks to us in our own tongue."

Then her husband comes home, he has been off in the far villages, and has mayhap grown a little careless in dress and manners, harking back to barbarism. She at once takes him in hand so that he is ashamed to appear at her well spread board in anything but his neatest and cleanest array.

This lady does not figure in reports and statistics like her husband but she is not a silent partner in the mission, but the heart and mainspring of the station.

With the continued isolation, the many daily cares and worries, the anxiety for the welfare of others, the distressing heat, the mosquitos and other insect pests, and it may be the care of her children, no wonder that health is sometimes shaky and a breakdown imminent, for it is the natural sequence of such multitudinous and varied duties.

It may be that her dresses get out of fashion and that letters from home do not come as often as she expects them. The home papers come with reports of meetings, conventions, picnics and marriages and the thought comes irresistibly, "oh, what must it be to be there," but though moons do wax and wane and monsoon rains come and go, the brave little lady of the station holds the fort, believing that a joyous reunion with friends at home will come, to meet which she will gladly, yet sadly, lay down her work for a season and brave the perils of the sea.

India.

VERITAS.

### CASTE.

This peculiar, and I may say unique, institution is one which has been so often described that it may seem a threadbare subject to my readers. Nevertheless its prominence, or rather its predominance, in the Hindoo system gives it an importance which justifies my venturing to present it again. The truth is foreigners are apt to fall into erroneous views of the nature of caste, imagining it to be a kind of social classification, similar in kind though differing in degree from what is found in Europe and America. It is, however, far more radical and deep seated than any mere social distinction and is claimed to have its origin in the creation itself. It shall be my aim not to enter into a full account of caste, but to point out from facts of experience its enormous power, showing what a factor it is in opposition of Hindooism to Christianity, and also to show that even this stronghold of Satan is beginning to crumble away under the influences of modern Christian effort and civilization.

It is a familiar fact that caste prevents a Hindoo from eating what outcasts (like ourselves) touch, but it is not so well known, perhaps, that it also prevents his touching what we eat, yet this is so to a certain extent. For example, a European living in India must necessarily employ a Mohammedan cook, unless he can get a Christian or one of the sweeper class, for no Hindoo

of caste would contaminate himself by serving in this capacity. The European may and does have servants of the highest caste for other kinds of work about his house, but no consideration would induce one of these servants to go to work in the kitchen on an emergency, or even to wait on the table.

It is a picture for the pencil of an artist to see the ineffable scorn with which a beggar who professes to be starving rejects a piece of bread offered by a European lady or gentleman. I have now and then tried it on a fat, healthy-looking mendicant, just for the scenic effect.

There could be no greater breach of decorum than for us to touch the cooking, eating, or drinking vessels of a Hindoo, or even to approach the fireplace where he cooks his food.

In camp the Hindoo makes a ring of mud a yard and a half in diameter, builds a *choola*, or fireplace, in it, and cooks there. I once saw the child of a missionary, a little fellow two or three years old, touch such a ring on the outside. The owner who had just finished cooking his dinner, immediately threw it away. It was hopelessly polluted by the innocent approach of that child.

If you touch a vessel of earthenware, it is at once thrown away, but a brass or copper dish or utensil may be cleansed by a thorough scouring with sand or clay. Last winter I was itinerating in the Rupar district, forty miles west of Ambala, and came to a well where an old Brahman sat doling out drinks of water to thirsty travellers, a common practice pursued for the purpose of storing up merit or laying up treasure in heaven.—He offered me a drink in a brass cup. In the poetical style we use out there I said, "*Wah ji Maharaj*," dear me, great king, "are you not afraid of my spoiling that nice cup? How will you ever get the unholiness out of it again?"

"O," said the old saint, coolly, "there's sand here; I'll scour it well."

The arrangement for supplying railway passengers with drinking water would strike an American visitor as curious. The trains have no supply on board as they do here, though in that climate water is greatly in demand. Every station, therefore, has men whose business it is to run along the platform and give water to those who want it, through the windows of the cars. One of the most familiar sounds one hears, the moment the train stops, is the cry for water from all parts of the long and generally crowded train. Mohammedans call for the "*bhishti*," who responds in a distracted way with a *mashak*, or goat-skin bag, which hangs across his back, while the Hindoos would rather die of thirst than take a drink either from the *mashak* or from the hands of the Mohammedan who carries it, yell frantically, "*Hindoo pani mala! Hindoo pani mala!*" and this functionary, who is a Brahman, comes