

reaching to the waist, and a strip of cloth seven or eight yards in length—the *sari*—draped about them in such a manner as to keep in place without fastening of any kind.

Girls are despised from their birth, and many of them are left to die by their parents to save the trouble and expense of bringing them up. They are betrothed in marriage very early, from three to ten years of age, and the full marriage is completed when the little girl is ten or twelve. The husband may be a boy a little older than herself, or, as is often the case, an old man, who has already other wives. Should he die, even before the second ceremony, the child-wife is a widow for life, and is treated with great cruelty. Her hair is cut off, her jewels taken away, she is not allowed to take part in any amusement, and even the lowest servant may order her to do the most menial work. She must only eat one meal a day and that by herself. No kind word is ever said to her, and she is constantly reproached and reviled. It is said that there are 21,000,000 of these poor widows in India, and 77,000 of them are under ten years of age.

Sad as is the condition of the widow, that of the wife is not much better. Women are not taught to sew, read or write. The poor among them have much hard, rough work to do; the rich are kept in total ignorance, shut up in miserable rooms, and not permitted to go out, or see anyone but their husbands and near relatives. The houses, of course, vary with the social position and means of the occupants. In this paper I will describe those of the poor, and tell you something of the women and girls who live in them.

The dwellings of the lower castes are either mud houses with the bare earth for a floor, or wretched huts made of dried grass or straw fastened with a sort of lattice work of twigs. There is nothing whatever in the shape of furniture but a poor bedstead, the bottom of woven cords serves for a mattress and pillow, and often there is not even a covering. In one corner there may be a rude wheel for spinning cotton, or a hand-mill for grinding corn. The few cooking utensils are of course earthenware, a dish holding a little oil, with a bit of rag for a wick, is usually the only lamp. The scanty supply of clothing is tied up in a bundle and hung from the roof. The food is of the poorest kind, and very often insufficient in quantity to satisfy the cravings of hunger.