

And then in hardening tones, as if not liking to be interferred with, 'You, sir, I guess, have never been in prison?'

'No, certainly not,' was the prompt reply.

'Ah, well, I have, and in a French prison too; and had you suffered as I did, you would better understand my resolve never to see anything in captivity and not release it if I could. And on this day, this joyful holy Christmas day, I am glad to have been able to release and make happy even some captive birds,—and the man moved on.

But hark! I hear a cry from India; 'Come over and help us.' A Hindu lady said the other day. 'Oh, if you only knew the lives we Hindu women lead, and all we have to suffer, you could not help weeping for us.'

'We are prisoners with no hope,' wail another heart-stricken one. 'They tell us you have a Great Deliverer, that you have light, and love, and happiness,—we have none of these things. Come and teach us.'

Here is the story of one of these captive millions, and it is a true story, and could be told with other details of hundreds of these imprisoned sisters. Keroda was a little Bengali girl, born in a princely house, and her father was a Rajah; nevertheless, as she was the third daughter, and only one son had been given, she was not very heartily welcomed into the family circle. However, unwelcome though she certainly was, no thought or fear of cruelty attended her birth; her father, the Rajah, had been too well educated in our Government College, and mixed too much with good English society, for this to be a real danger to the small maiden. But something must be done to mitigate the evil:—what should it be? Marry the child, decides the father; and accordingly without delay arrangements are made with a friendly family, and marriage portions are settled, and Mohun, the son of another Rajah, becomes the bridegroom of our little bride.

Our first peep of her is under these circumstances: Our ghari stopped in a crowded street; the people, all in gayest Oriental colors, singing and making much noise. What is the cause! Looking round, we find it is a wedding procession; there, in the middle of all the confusion, is the bridegroom, gravely walking along, clothed in a sort of yellow sheet, to the end of which is tied our poor little Keroda, a baby in arms, being carried, of course, as a matter of necessity, some few yards behind her bridegroom! Poor little unconscious being, how little any one then could guess the life that was before her!

The young Mohun was a boy at school, and continued his studies, in the course of which he became much interested in Christianity, that is to say his intellect was convinced, but his heart was still untouched. Nevertheless, he contrived to let his father-in-law know that he should not object to his little wife being taught something, and so often suggested this that the Rajah at last gave permission for the child to be taught reading, etc., by the family pundit.

It was not, however, much she could learn, for before she was ten years old it was thought time for the Rajah father to be relieved of her maintenance altogether, and for poor Keroda to be carried from her mother's Zenana to that of her mother-in-law. But this, as it happened, was not an unhappy change for the child, for the young husband began to teach her himself, and told her of what he had heard and learned of Christianity, and for these first years was interested in his young wife's progress, and kind and gentle to her.

After a while, however, Keroda's health entirely failed, and he, finding Government employment at Allahabad, removed there, hoping the hotter, drier climate would suit her better. Of course they had to go as inmates of another big house, that of some relatives, a separate house being a thing unknown amongst Hindus. Still it was an advance, for Keroda was less under the control of the Burra-Bow, and more with her husband.

Here he bought her a Bible and some other Christian books, and these they read and studied much together, and presently thinking to cheer her, Mohun invited an English lady missionary to come and visit his wife. Truly it did cheer her, but it was only a very few visits that the English lady paid, for he again changed his employment, and consequently his residence, and carried her further north still. In her new home, for nine months she never saw a Christian, but daily and deeply studied her Bible. And the Great Teacher, God the Holy Spirit, showed of the things of Christ to her inmost heart, and made her a believer. But, alas! her husband had by this time turned back, and did not, *would not*, share her growing love to her Saviour. He had met with some members of the Brahma-Somaj, and became prejudiced against the Lord Jesus, whom he had taught his wife in the first happy days to love and reverence.

At last, seeing him thus, and hoping to revive his interest in Christianity, Keroda told him how she loved Jesus,—that she had found in Him her Saviour, and wanted to be baptized.

Alas! the effect was very different from her hope: there and then, for the first time since her marriage, he beat her, used harsh and cruel words, tore up her Bible, and threatened fuller and deeper vengeance if she ever again spoke or even thought of baptism. But the time for courage was come, and bravely and firmly the poor young wife reiterated, 'I must tell my Mem-Sahib, and I must be baptized.'

He threatened to leave her. 'How would you live then?' he queried.

'I will sell my jewels,' she replied.

'I will take your jewels,' was his next threat.

'A few moments' hesitation and she thought—'I can cook, and I daresay some one will employ me'—and she spoke out her brave thought to her unrelenting husband.

He tried what more beating would do, but at last finding all threats useless, he said he would *not* refuse to let her be baptized, but that he would leave her at once—and so he did.

Poor Keroda with her youngest son sought protection with her Mem-Sahib, and there asked for immediate baptism. But some little delay for examination and instruction from the missionary clergyman was deemed best,—in itself somewhat of a trial to poor Keroda, for this was the first time she had broken her purbah. However, Advent Sunday was near, and on that day she was received into the outward fold of Christ's Church. She chose baptism by immersion, and joyfully going into the water, she eagerly poured it on her own head. The answers in the Baptismal Service were forgotten in her joy, though carefully learnt before; but in her own words she confessed her faith in a Crucified Saviour.

This was in 1871. Do you ask what has been Keroda's history since? Just this—For a little while after her baptism she accepted the protection and care of her English Zenana teacher, but insisted on the fullest payment for all her expenses; for she had a little sum of money and her jewels, which her husband, notwithstanding