

Densely ignorant, extremely superstitious, they are easily led astray and most *gullible*. They believe all the silly tales and legends they hear. Their priests, ignorant and superstitious as themselves and far wickeder, are their religious leaders—and they follow blindly.

"Densely ignorant, extremely superstitious, pitifully credulous—what next?" you say. The next thing is that they seem to us to have learned everything bad from their babyhood up. Lying is nothing, and comes as easily as their breath. Petty thieving, not quite so common, still is not at all a rarity. Quarrelling, using abusive language and family jars are as common as curry and rice—and commoner; for whereas in hard times a family may be for two or three days without rice, they will not be without hard words. They are the common coin of the village. They have some idea of personal cleanliness. The young married woman usually takes pains to look neat, but an elderly woman has gotten past such vanity and especially if she is a widow, for if such an one attempts in any way to look comely, her neighbors with one accord make terrible sport of her and accuse her of being a coquette! Aside from themselves their surroundings are indescribably filthy and odoriferous.

Of home-life—I was going to say there is *none*. Certainly none as we understand and love it. There is no privacy in this hot country where people live out-of-doors in the sunshine and only use their houses to cook in and keep their scanty furniture in and sleep in—when it is cool. They do their housework outside, sit and gossip outside, and fight and quarrel outside. Family unpleasantnesses are much discussed village property—there are no "cupboard skeletons" in India, they are all paraded before the public.

I am trying to think, as I write, if there is *anything* in the hamlet life that I am describing which is of itself elevating and I can only think of one thing, and that is the love of the parents for their little children. And even this is blemished by outbursts of violent temper when they abuse and knock them about. Neither do they care for the highest good of their children, their only anxiety being to feed them and keep them healthy until they are able to feud for themselves. However, it is love, *genuine love*.

They might perhaps learn something beautiful or true from Nature, but they have not eyes to see. Nature is, to them, fields of rice and corn to eat, and rain and sun to make the crop grow. Life is one long fight for food. They are "like dumb, driven cattle."

Well, the women hear the Gospel. In the course of time they with their husbands believe and after instruction are baptized and become members of the church. In their hearts is the seed of the New Life, just coming up in a weak, tender little shoot. They have found the true God—but their Christian character is yet to be formed. They begin to realize

that there is some connection between the new mind within them and their outward conduct. The salvation wrought within them must be worked out in their lives—and here the real struggle with the Tempter begins, and here does our real work begin. They have left off idol worship with all its charms and ceremonies, heathen modes of marriage and burial, and heathen feasts. But it is not so easy to quit lying, stealing, quarrelling and using bad language. The old habits of mind are hard to change and it is not to be done in a day. The evil deeds which have become second nature to them must be "put off," and oh! how hard that is when their evil surroundings are still the same, their companions go on in the same old way and there is no help to be expected from them for they usually combine to make it all the harder for the new converts by jeering at any attempts they may make to mend their ways. They cannot fly to their Bibles for help and guidance for they cannot read. There may be a teacher or preacher in their village who teaches them a good deal, but very likely he lives in another village and only visits them once a week on his round.

Now in this country women must teach women, the social conditions are such that men cannot. That is why we were sent to India and why we have women workers. There is only one of *me*, unfortunately, so I cannot do all I would for the Christian women on my field. Besides, it is much better to get others interested and set them to work and that is what I am trying to do. The Bible-women are paid and so we expect them to work hard, and as a rule they do. The preachers' wives are not paid and we hope that they may become voluntary workers. Some are responding to my call nobly—some do not have a mind to work, alas! (but their numbers are very few) and some cannot, for not even all the preachers' wives are educated.

My own personal work for the Christian women is this—when I tour I always camp in a village where there are Christians, and hold meetings with the women, on week-days when possible and always on Sunday afternoon. I try to find out what they need most, whether instruction in biblical knowledge or exhortation. If they seem very ignorant we teach them something about Jesus and His life here on earth—or perhaps a lesson on His sacrifice for us. If they seem well up in such knowledge and deficient in spiritual life we give them James 3, or some practical lesson. We examine them on the Ten Commandments and drill them once more on that. If the preacher's wife of that village—if it is a village where there is a preacher—is educated and interested, I organize a little Women's Helpmeet Society and we appoint her its President and give it to her to keep going. Then we visit the women in their homes, pick up the babies, name the new baby-girl, talk to the mothers, listen to their "tales of woe," sympathy, rebuke them if a bad word slips and read