

## Zenanas—What They are—The Work Being Done for Their Inmates.

### A CHILDREN'S EXERCISE.

What a Zenana is.

The word zenana means, 'belonging to women.' It is the name given to the part of the house in which the women and girls live in a high-caste family of India. The House of a high-caste gentleman is always divided into two parts: the outer portion, which belongs to the men, and the inner, or zenana, which is used only by the women.

Who Live in the Zenanas?

Some of the zenanas contain a hundred or more occupants, including the families of several generations. When a man marries, he brings his wife to his father's house, his brothers all do the same, and then his sons and his brothers' sons do likewise.

The rooms of the women are always in the second or third story of the house. Each has a door, and a small window on to the veranda. The window has no glass in it, but has bars up and down the opening. One lady who has been a missionary for twenty years among women living in such rooms, says these rooms are prison cells. The walls are black with dirt, filth and cobwebs, looking as if they had never been whitewashed, and with never any ornament except sometimes ugly, painted daubs of their gods. To get to these rooms, you go up flights of brick steps from the court-yard.

Society of Zenana Women.

A high-caste woman must never see any man except her father, her husband, her husband's young brothers, and her sons. She may never see her father after she is married. When she goes to her husband's home, she is never to go outside the building save as she is put in a palanquin, the doors closed, and a covering thrown over it before it leaves the open court; and she is returned in the same manner.

How do these Women Look?

The zenana ladies are, when young, gentle and loving. They belong to the same race that we do—the Caucasian.

When girls are little they wear no clothing, but when about six years old they begin to wear a sarree. This is a straight piece of cloth about a yard wide and from five to six yards long, which is just wound round the body and then passed up over the head and shoulders.

How the Women Spend their Time.

Florence: They cook, sleep a great deal, dress their beautiful hair, paint their eyebrows, their finger-tips and their feet, put on their jewels, smoke hookah, chew pan, and perhaps spin a little.

Grace: What is it to chew pan?

Leader: Pan, or paun, is betel-nut cut up very small, mixed with lime, and then rolled up in a leaf. It is made into a small roll just large enough to go into the mouth. It decays the teeth, which after a time turn quite black.

Nellie: Do only women chew it?

Leader: No; every one uses it.

Fanny: I should like to know why the wo-

men always live on the second and the third floors?

Leader: The rooms on the lower floor are used for cook-rooms and cow-sheds.

Fanny: Why, do they keep the cows in the house?

Leader: Yes; in the same building in which the people live.

Mamie: What do the women cook?

Leader: Curry and rice. You remember that Hindus do not eat meat; that is, it is against their rules, and the higher castes do not use it. The curry is a compound of fish or vegetable and hot spices. Then they make many kinds of sweetmeats. Fruit is very much used.

Mary: I cannot help thinking how very sad it is that those poor women can never see the

formed Mrs. Travin that he could not permit his family to receive any further visits from her. This is the first instance of which we have any knowledge of a zenana being entered by a missionary teacher.

A few years later, Miss Bird, an English lady of position and influence, gained admittance for a time, to several zenanas in Calcutta. Blessing attended her work, though no one dared speak of it in those days. But it was not till 1860 that any regular visiting was permitted, and this came about in a strange way. Florence will tell

The Story of a Slipper.

One hot afternoon in India a missionary lady was finishing a beautiful pair of slippers for her husband. As she was working she was



PUNDITA RAMABAI, WHO HAS DONE SO MUCH FOR HER COUNTRYWOMEN.

earth and the sky, the grass and flowers, and everything that makes the world so beautiful.

Leader: Yes, it is very sad; but we shall learn how brightness has been brought into some of these zenanas through the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Singing—'Precious Name.'

The wives of early missionaries in India tried again and again to obtain permission to visit zenanas, but without any success until about 1824, after long effort, Mrs. Travin, the wife of a London missionary, received an invitation from a Babu (a native Indian gentleman) to visit his zenana, and teach his daughter some useful knowledge. She gladly consented, and made several visits. But the Babu received from his companions such a storm of contempt and ridicule that he could not brave it long, and with evident regret he politely in-

thinking of the multitude of women shut up in the zenanas, and how she wished she could go to them and tell them of Jesus. But the men would not consent, though she had asked them many times. Just as she had finished the slippers the door opened, and in walked a Babu, a native gentleman, one who used to be in her school. He picks up the slippers, praises them—cannot admire them enough. He had never seen their like. And to think a woman made them, and did it with a needle, stitch by stitch. The lady said, 'Wouldn't you like your wife to make you a pair of slippers? If you will let me, I will come and teach her.' He quite likes the idea; he borrows the slippers, takes them home, shows them to his wife, and she shows them to the women. Could they learn the wonder? To think of making anything so beautiful, and with a little instru-