

A VISIT TO RAMABAI'S ORPHANAGE.

IT is good to get away from one's own work and one's own mission sometimes, and see what others are doing. Being a member of a committee that was called to meet at Ahmednagar, I decided to go, and thus get a chance to see a little of the work at that place, and also to visit Khedgaon, where Pandita Ramabai has her large orphan work, and Dhond, where Mr. and Mrs. Norton have two hundred orphan boys. Some years ago when many of the orphans were received at the above homes, I sent two or three hundred rupees from our Mission Famine Fund to Pandita Ramabai, and also to Mr. Norton. Hence the donors in Canada will take a special interest in the work carried on by them.

I travelled by the East Coast line to Bez-wada, and from there by the Nizam's State Ry through Secunderabad to Wadi, and from there by the Great Indian Peninsula Ry to Dhond and Ahmednagar, in all 722 miles. After two days in the latter place, where we were kindly entertained and also taken about to see the mission institutions, I returned to Dhond, fifty-one miles distant, and spent the night at the station, and took a train at 4.30 a.m. for Khedgaon, which is thirteen miles on the way to Poona and Bombay.

As soon as it was daylight I walked over to Mukti, as Ramabai has called her place. The word means salvation and is pronounced Mookty. It is only about a quarter of a mile from the station, and on the same side of the railway. The buildings stand on both sides of a main road that crosses the railway, though most of them are on the side nearer to the station. In going to the place, one comes first to a long line of one-story rooms on the right side of the road. They are built solidly of stone. Trees and foliage-plants in pots occupy much of the space between the road and the long lines of rooms. These rooms are occupied by Ramabai and her helpers, and there are some spare rooms for guests. Visitors are welcome to stay over night and find in their rooms an iron cot with bedding for their comfort. I was taken to one of the lady helpers, who showed me a room and sent me some cocoa and bread and butter.

Then we went over to the large new church, where the girls had assembled at 5.30; but the door was shut, and we had to wait till the service closed. However, I got in while the girls were still seated on the floor. I was told that there were 1,200 there. It was quite a

sight. Ramabai has very sensibly had a board floor put in. It may cost a good deal, but as the girls sit on the floor, both at religious services and at school, it is much more conducive to health than a stone or cement floor. Only part of the large church building is finished. When the whole plan is carried out, there will be accommodation for an immense congregation. At Ahmednagar, which is only sixty-four miles distant by rail, a church building to accommodate 1,300 is nearing completion under the direction of Dr. Home, of the American Board. I just mention this here, because it is remarkable that two such immense church buildings are being erected in places so comparatively near to each other.

Some other visitors were there, and we were taken to see the great wells that supply the institution with water. It being Saturday, the girls were bathing and house-cleaning. On the way to one of the wells, we passed a long line of girls who were going to have a bath. The bathing place is screened from view by a fence of sheets of corrugated iron. The first well we visited is in a field on the other side of the railway. The lower part has been dug out of the rock. The upper part is circular and built of cut stones. I think it is about seven yards in diameter. The water is used largely for irrigation. It is drawn up by bullocks pulling a rope with a leather bag at the end. This is a common plan in India. Good wells are a great necessity in such a dry and thirsty land. I understood that the one I have been telling about cost over five hundred dollars.

Various industries are taught at Mukti. I saw a room with forty-eight hand looms where the girls weave "saris" or cloths that form not only a skirt, but also a covering for the upper part of the body. These cloths are for the use of the girls themselves. I saw the printing department, the compositors' stands with the type in one room and the hand presses in another room. The quarterly report sent out by Ramabai, which is called the Mukti Prayer-Bell, is printed there, and of course much other literature besides. Then I saw the carpentry and blacksmith departments also. I believe that there are about one hundred and fifty boys in the orphanage, besides the vast host of girls. As I have said, I did not see them either at their studies or at their industries, because it was Saturday. I must add that all the buildings appeared to be very substantial structures.

About noon we were called to dinner. In a