

Woman's Work for India's Women.

SHORT TEMPORARY MARRIAGES.

A lady worker in Travancore writes thus in *India's Women* of the miseries brought about in that district by the Hindu custom regarding marriage:—"A great deal has been said and written—wisely too—about the miseries of Hindu widows; but here, in Travancore, we have, under the sanction of religion, a far worse evil. It will hardly be credited by my English readers that the monstrous system of allying Nayar girls to Brahmans is not only allowed but defended by mothers and other relations for the sake of gain, and also the good fortune likely to happen to a girl by reason of her connection with one who is looked on as being scarcely inferior to a deity. This alliance occasionally lasts for years but in the majority of cases a few months or weeks suffice to make the deceiver weary of his toy which is then thrown aside and forgotten. To the poor victim there then remains no alternative but a life worse than widow-hood. Early marriage lies at the root of this evil. Brahmans of five years being frequently given brides of six or seven and being obliged to wait, perhaps, eight or ten years till they are grown up, in the meantime solace themselves with the society of Sudra women. In this way I lose some of the sweetest and best of my scholars, who, however loth to go, are compelled to shape their lives according to the will of their mothers and uncles, or other male guardians. Injury is done not only to the Nayar girl but also to the poor little lawful Brahman wife, who, too often when she comes of age, finds her husband devoted in heart to a bride of another caste, better educated and more companionable than herself." Well may the writer add: "A great cry of wrong and deserted women goes up from Travancore." Travancore is not by any means the only part of India in which this extraordinary custom prevails. There are certain classes of Brahmans who make a very prosperous living by going round the country, and, for a substantial consideration, marrying for a brief while the girls of parents who are only too ready to pay for the honor of such sacred (!) association. The vileness of the business is appalling.

WORK AMONG YOUNG GIRLS.

Miss Alexander, of Ellore, sends some interesting details of her work in connection with the C. M. S., schools under her care to the organ of that Society. After referring to the examinations held in the school, she says, "But mere examinations can only test head knowledge, and do not show at all what influence these lessons have had on their hearts and lives. That is shown at times of unrestrained intercourse with the children when they visit us at our house, or when they camp together in the playground. We were talking together, the other day, about working for Jesus—that all, however small, could do something for Him.

One bright little girl of twelve years of age looked up and said: "When I was quite a little girl my mother left me all alone in the house, and, being attracted by the fire, I crawled toward it, and my cloth was soon alight. I was too young to remember anything about it, but my mother often tells the story how the neighbors, hearing my screams, rushed in and extinguished the flames. The whole of my arm was dreadfully burnt and they laid me on the bed insensible. I remained in this state for some hours and my friends and relations gathered round my bed, and filled the room with loud weep-

ing and lamentation, and my mother would not be comforted, for she thought her child would never more open her eyes or call her 'mother.' However, I recovered; and this," she said, showing a huge white scar which covers the whole length of her arm, "is the result of the accident. /And" she continued, "I was thinking just now, when you were saying that we could all work for Jesus in our small way by telling of His love, that He must have made me well again so that I might be His little messenger and serve Him." The next day she came up to me and put a *khani* (equal to about a farthing) into my hand, and said she wanted to buy a First Catechism. "Why do you want a First Catechism?" I asked. "Oh," she said "I want to begin and teach my mother. Last night I told her all about Jesus, how He loves us and died for us that we might have our sins washed away in His precious blood, and that when we die, we might go to Heaven, where there is no more sorrow, pain, or death; and I told her that I hoped to go to that bright land and I wanted her to go there too. Then I sang 'There is a happy land,' and, 'Here we suffer grief and pain; and when I had finished, she said, 'Tell me some more, child, tell me some more; and so I thought the best way would be to buy a First Catechism with this *khani* which my uncle gave me the other day, and teach her a little bit day by day."

I have heard from other sources that this child goes morning, midday, and evening to a quiet corner in the house, and kneels down and prays to her Heavenly Father. Another girl has a very good influence in the school; she is a regular little mother to the smaller ones, and is always ready to help and comfort them when they are in trouble. She has openly declared her wish to become a Christian but the law of the land will not allow her to join us till she is eighteen. Meanwhile she is doing all she can to bring her mother and sister to Christ. She has a Bible of her own, and reads to them daily. Her great friend has also openly expressed her wish to become a Christian, and has been taken away from school on this account. Her mother whipped her soundly and told her that if she dared to go near the school again she would be whipped all along the street back to her house. Poor girl! it is a grievous trial to her, for she takes great delight in her lessons. She is wonderfully clever for her age, and though only a short time in school, was far in front of her class-fellows. She earned the first prize for Scripture and when asked what she would like, she said, "Give me a Bible, for I should like that the best of all things in the world!" When she first came to school, she used to mock at the other girls saying that all that *Dhoreesani* told them was false, and the Bible was nothing but a pack of lies. But gradually a great change came over her, and now the book she once despised has become the most precious thing in the world to her, and she is willing to leave her home and all she loves "for His dear sake." Some time ago the festival took place when all Hindus worship the tools used in their respective handicrafts—the carpenter bows down to his saw, the tailor to his needle, the school girl to her books. The three above-mentioned girls and another girl, in the same class, on this occasion left their books at school, and when asked why they were not worshipping them, said they had left them there on purpose, for there is only one God, and He alone is worthy of worship."

Such instances show us that the mission schools are doing a great work in India in training up children, a generation to serve the Lord. The lady worker brings herself into contact with her girls in many ways out of