

castes or to the despised outcaste community before they became Christians. And, in India to-day there is annually an increasingly large number of men and women who, in this fellowship with their brethren and their Lord, in partaking of the Lord's Supper, forever break away from the old caste life.

The writer numbers among her personal friends women who, after the first commemoration of their Lord's death, were never allowed to enter either the home of their husband or parents,—they had broken caste and were numbered with the outcastes.

In the case of one young man who thus dared to set aside caste rules and partake of the Supper, he was burned in effigy on the village burning ground. His mother and sisters wailed for him as they wail for the dead. His girl wife was stripped of her jewels and bright-colored clothes and was dressed in the garb of a widow and treated as a widow.

The prohibition of the marriage of widows, including child widows, is the most tenaciously and unrighteously enforced caste custom in India, and there are to-day in India 26,000,000 widows, 115,000 of whom are under ten years of age. One in every six of India's women and girls is a widow.

Not only does Christianity alleviate the sufferings and make more bearable the proverbially hard lot of the Indian widow, it advocates and encourages the re-marriage of widows; and many a Christian widow, in the liberty of her Christian faith, has done violence to the old caste law, which would have forever doomed her to the hated, despised, neglected lot of the Hindu widow, and has married again and thereby became one of the strongest living arguments in favor of Christian religious liberty.

So closely interwoven are the customs of enforced widowhood and infant marriage that, indeed, they are insepar-

able. A married woman or girl is supposed to belong to her lord for time and for eternity. A widow is therefore ineligible for re-marriage, even though her husband may have died when she was an infant.

The man, on the other hand, may contract any number of marriages, and it matters not how many wives he may have had, nor how old he has become, none but the very young may be his bride. The consequence is that men of mature years, and even of old age, are wedded to mere girls. So long as India's fathers and mothers persist in marrying their little daughters of one, two or ten years to young men, and to men who have passed their prime, there will of necessity be hundreds and thousands of child widows.

Here, again Christianity runs athwart these centuries-old customs of caste, and the Christian Marriage Act of the British Government provides that the daughters of Christian parentage in India may not be married before they reach the age of fourteen. The Christian girl enters upon the duties of wifehood and motherhood with more in her favor than the Hindu girl, and has the added advantage in many cases of having from two to four more years at school, for seldom is a Hindu caste girl allowed to attend school after the age of ten or twelve years.

Caste has degraded manual labor. It has taught the people of India that humble toil, however honest it may be, is more than mean, it is sinful. Indeed, a Brahman who follows the plough loses his caste.

There are millions of the higher castes of India who count it honorable to beg, and dignified to spend their days and years in abject laziness, but who would look upon the earning of an honest living by the sweat of their brow as degrading in the extreme. All through the whole of society in India, from the