

utterly wretched and devoid of hope that, to many of them, suicide offers a welcome alternative, which their religious teaching urges, rather than forbids them to accept.

As, according to the Hindoo notion, it is impossible for a woman to enter Heaven excepting under the protecting wing of her husband, and as Dante may well have based the description of his Inferno on the horrors of a Hindoo hell, parents usually arrange for the marriage of their daughters before they are well out of their cradles, and if eligible suitors are not forthcoming, it is not difficult to find a man who is willing to add one more to his already numerous family of his wives. Some Brahmins are said to have thus thrown the mantle of their sanctity over a hundred and fifty of the less favoured sex, though poverty usually prevents the lower orders from attempting the salvation of more than one woman apiece.

If the condition of these rival claimants for their lord's favour is unenviable during his life, it is changed to one of misery indeed after his death. As we mentioned before, the curse of widowhood is supposed to be the punishment of sins committed in a former state of existence, which can only be expiated by a life of the most rigid asceticism and self-mortification. There are twenty-one million widows in India, of whom seventy-nine thousand are children under nine years of age. None of these are allowed to partake of more than one meal a day, and that of the coarsest quality; every ten days a fast prescribes that for twenty-four hours no crumb of food or drop of water may enter their lips; the most menial work falls to their share; not even a cheerful thought may lawfully find a resting-place in their minds. If the carrying-out of such an ideal of life were left to their own determination and self-control we can hardly doubt that, as in other lands and ages, the desire for present gratification would often triumph over the hope of future happiness. But though the widow's own courage may fail, the iron form of custom, and the authority of her parents or parents-in-law prevent any relaxation of the severity of the rules which bind her, and her own inability to think or act for herself, renders fruitless any dim longings for freedom which may cross her mind.

Some hope for the future of these unfortunates, however, lies in the fact that already a slight re-action against the force of public opinion which has prevailed for centuries, seems to be setting in. Some of the more enlightened among the men are beginning to recognize that their own progress must be checked and hindered, while their women are kept in a state of bondage and degradation. Ramabai owes her own enlightenment to the instructions of her father, now dead, and with the help of some few influential friends, upon whom she can count, she hopes on her return to her native land to open a school for the high-caste widows, where their minds, which are still intelligent, in spite of generations of neglect, may be developed, where some independence and helpfulness of character may be

cultivated, and their lives rendered less hopeless than they have been heretofore. This school must be on a native basis, and under the auspices of no missionary society, if it would not defeat the objects which it proposes to itself, for the Hindoos are devotees of their own religion, and would shrink from allowing their women to be placed under *direct* Christian instruction. But though professedly a secular school, its founder thinks that many *indirect* Christian influences can be brought to bear upon its inmates, amongst others, the English language will be taught, and the Bible will be put into their hands; and we can surely look forward with confidence to the response of many hearts to the Gospel of Love and Peace, which offers so heavenly a contrast to the gloomy terrors, the religion of fear and torment in which they have been brought up.

The success of such a school would be an era in Hindoo history; and much depends upon the faith, energy, and courage of the one who has dared a good deal in undertaking to be its founder. But the institution must at least, at first be supported from without; and Pundita Ramabai appeals to us all, especially to those interested in the work of education and the welfare of our fellow-creatures, to assist her in her enterprise. Of the \$75,000 necessary to provide the requisite building and endowment fund, \$35,000 have been already collected in the United States, and surely we too will be ready to use some self-denial, to make some effort to lend a helping hand to what promises to be so beneficent an undertaking.

IMPERIAL FEDERATION.

(Continued.)

There is one point upon which I wish to dwell now for a few moments, viz., the conception which Englishmen in the main have of the Colonies, in which, I presume the Colonies themselves share. Are they not regarded as dependencies, possessions, to remain such so long as profitable to both parties. We possess indeed a large amount of liberty, as much or more than any other country, still it is a liberty which consists in the possession of a very long chain. So long as we keep within the limits of that chain well and good, but there is a point at which we should be liable to be pulled sharp and short. Now Imperial Federation would radically alter all this. The relation of the Colonies to the mother country would be changed; we should be no longer Colonies, but parts of the Empire, no longer dependencies, but Federated States. If Canada on any Imperial Question disagreed with the rest of the Empire, she would not be prohibited from or compelled to action by the mere mandate of England, but by the decision of the whole Imperial Council, of which Canada would form a part. To suppose that the possibility of the occurrence of such a state of affairs as this renders the whole scheme chimerical, is as absurd as the supposition to that the Government of Canada would be