

INDIA AND ZENANA MISSIONS.

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(Continued.)

UP TO the year 1833 the widow was burned with her husband's corpse. The treatment which she now receives is considered to be even worse than the "Suttee," as wife-burning was called.

The first moments of her widowhood are occasions of the disfavor of her husband's mother, who curses her and treats her with cruel taunts, as do all her husband's relatives. Sometimes she is a child of six or seven years. At the funeral procession she is dragged along by six women who will not allow her to approach within two hundred feet of any woman, for woe to the woman upon whom her shadow should fall, she too would soon be a widow! Passers by are warned to keep out of the way of the accursed thing! and when at length the procession has reached the river bank on which is prepared the funeral pyre of her husband, she is pushed into the water, where she is obliged to remain irrespective of the heat or cold, till the body of her late husband is cremated! When this is accomplished she is still obliged to remain in the water till the whole party have bathed in the river and dried their garments. Then she is dragged out, and made to walk to her late husband's dwelling (I will not call it home), where she is obliged to sit in a corner apart with her damp garments on. She must fast for twenty-four hours, have her hair shorn off and listen to still worse taunts from her mother-in-law, who accuses her with such remarks as "Unhappy creature, I wish she had never been born." "The viper, she has bitten my son." For thirteen days the poor widow is obliged to remain in that position without changing her garments, she may not speak, she may not weep to relieve her burdened heart, so full of sorrow, so void of consolation!

We may now wonder what has been done, and what is being done to reform such a state of social degradation in this Nineteenth century? What is the Church doing to break those "cruel bonds in sunder," and to set "the poor captive women of India free?" Much has been done in the past, and much is being done at present. The first efforts made by women for this purpose dates back 77 years. When Miss Cooke began her labors in Calcutta amongst women and girls, she then laid the foundation of what is now called "Zenana Missions." There are at work there, no less than seven "Zenana Missionary Societies," with 186 schools; these societies have entrance into 2,330 homes; besides this Zenana work, Zenana teaching and schools, there are other agencies at work in connection with Zenana Missionary Societies. Bible women among the low caste or poor people, and hospital work which relieves the physical sufferings of so many, and

while it does so, attends also to their spiritual wants. In connection with hospital work in India, I may mention the St. Catharine's Hospital, Amritzur in the Punjab, because Christ's Church Sunday School in Montreal has for several years contributed largely to that Mission.

It is to the Punjab that Miss Tucker, the gifted authoress, known as A. L. O. E., went at her own expense in connection with the "Church of England Zenana Mission," where she still is at work with her hand, and head, and heart, making use of her "ready pen" for the benefit of the society. This is the society in which we are naturally the most interested, because the Church in Canada has contributed through her different branches of the Woman's Auxiliary between five and six thousand dollars to this Society during the past three years. It was from this society that Miss Ling came to us in September last, with so much earnestness and information.

The Society began its work as a separate body in 1880, when it parted from the Indian Female Normal School and Instruction Society, of which it is now far in advance. It employs 255 women in the Institution of 6,100 pupils. It has an annual income of \$100,000. It is, I am told, proposed to have a Board of Examiners in Canada for the Church of England Zenana Society, who will recommend suitable young ladies for the "foreign field." A medical education is much to be desired for those young ladies chosen by the Board for this work.

I have pointed out the agencies at work, and some of the results of that work; let us consider some of the difficulties and hindrances to be met with in the prosecution of it. Prejudice against Christianity is one great difficulty, and another is the dislike of the men of India to have the privacy of the Zenana interfered with, but the greatest of all difficulties is the indifference of the women themselves. Many of these difficulties have been overcome by the tact and cleverness of the Christian ladies who have undertaken to work amongst the women. They have captured many a heart and opened many a door to the Gospel by the indirect means of needlework. There never was a time of greater opportunity than the present, only the money and the women are needed.

What lessons of thankfulness we may learn from the sorrowing women of India, when we compare our position with theirs. Living, as we do, in a Christian country, members of a Christian Church, free women and not in bondage, ennobled and exalted by the religion of Jesus Christ; as daughters possessing the warm affections of our fathers; as sisters sharing the same education and privileges as our brothers, while they bestow upon us their love and watchful care; as wives reigning supreme in the homes which we make as the companions of our husbands, as members of the Church of Christ, possessing equal rights with men, as regards our independent and immortal existence.

What lessons of duty may we not also gather

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