

## THE HINDU WIDOW.

The formal period of mourning for a widow in Bengal lasts for one month with the Kayasths, the most numerous and influential class in that part of India—the Brahmins keeping only ten days. During this time she has to prepare her own food, confining herself to a single meal a day, which consists of boiled coarse rice, simplest vegetables, ghee or clarified butter, and milk; she can on no account touch meat, fish, eggs or any delicacy at all. She is forbidden to do up her hair and to put any scent or oil on her body. She must put on the same cotton sari day and night, even when it is wet, and must eschew the pleasure of a bed and lie down on bare ground, or perhaps on a coarse blanket spread on it; in some cases she cannot even have her hair dried in the sun after her daily morning ablution, which she must go through before she can put a particle of food in her mouth.

The old women say that the soul of a man after his death ascends to heaven quickly and pleasantly in proportion to the bodily afflictions which his wife can undergo in the month after the death of her husband. Consequently the new-made widow, if for no other reason, at least for the benefit of the soul of her departed husband, must submit to continuous abstinence and excruciating self-afflictions.

A whole month passes in this state of semi-starvation, the funeral ceremonies, which drag on till the end of that period, are all performed, and the rigid observances of the widow are a little relaxed, if it may be so termed, since the only relaxation allowed to her is that she need not prepare the food with her own hands, and that she can change her clothes, but always using only plain cotton saris.

The real misery of the widow, however, begins after the first month. It is not enough that she is quite heartbroken for her deceased husband, and that she undergoes all the above mentioned bodily privations; she must also continually bear the most galling indignities and the most humiliating self-sacrifices. She cannot take an active part in any religious or social ceremony. If there be a wedding in the house the widow must not touch or in any way interfere with the articles that are used to keep the curious marriage customs.

During the *poojahs*, or religious festivals, she is but grudgingly allowed to approach near the object of veneration, and in some bigoted families the contact of a widow is supposed to pollute the materials requisite for the performance of marriage ceremonies. The widow is, in fact, looked upon as the "evil one" of the house. If she has no son or daughter to comfort her, or if she has to pass her whole life, as is often the case, with her husband's family, her condition truly becomes a helpless one. During any ceremony or grand occasion she has silently to look on, others around her enjoying and disporting themselves, and in some kind relation does not come to relieve her tedium, she has hardly anything to do but to ruminate on her present sad, wretched condition. Every female member of a family, whether married or unmarried, can go to parties, but a widow cannot, and if she expresses any wish to join the family on such occasions, it is instantly repressed by the curt rebuke of her mother-in-law, or some other relation, that "she is a widow, and she must not have such wishes."—*Sel.*

## KINDNESS.

The world is full of kindness that never was spoken, and that was not much better than no kindness at all. The fuel in the stove makes the room warm, but there are great piles of fallen trees on the rocks and on tops of hills, where nobody can get them; these do not make anybody warm. You might freeze to death for want of fuel in plain sight of these fallen trees if you had no means of getting the wood home and making a fire of it. Just so in a family; love is what makes the parents and children, the brothers and sisters, happy. But if they take care never to say a word about it; if they keep it a profound secret, as if it were a crime, they will not be much happier than if there was not any love among them. The house will seem cold even in summer, and if you will live there, you will envy the dog when anybody calls him "poor fellow."

A rare event in the Piedmont valleys took place at the meeting of the Synod of the Vaudois Church, when M. Louis Jalla was set apart for missionary work. After passing some months in the Mission House, Paris, and the same in Scotland, he has been called to the Zambesi to join Messrs. Cuillard and Jeunmairet.