

HINDU WOMEN.



IN no part of the world, says Dr. William Knighton, are nobler specimens of female humanity to be found than in India. The history of the country abounds with instances of the noblest devotion, unswerving fidelity, high principle, and sublime self-renunciation on the part of its women. Nor can anyone have been long resident in India without witnessing such. I have lived in Ceylon, in Bengal and in Oudh, and I have seen something of

many districts and provinces lying between these distant regions, and everywhere I have witnessed the noblest instances of devotion and self-denial on the part of the women.

And yet the lot of the Hindu woman is unspeakably sad. She is married at so early an age that choice on her part is impossible. She accepts her destiny. She looks up to her husband as a sort of deity—she has been so taught from her earliest years—and a very debased, earthly, selfish, and altogether contemptible sort of deity he too often proves himself to be. But for her there is no hope, however vile and contemptible he may prove. In life and death she is his. And if death takes him and she is left to widowhood, sad indeed is her lot. She may not immolate herself on the funeral pyre of her husband, a stern English Government forbids that, and she is doomed in consequence to gloom and sadness, and if childless, to one meal a day, one garment, a total deprivation of all ornament, and all that in her eyes makes life worth living. Her existence is bound up in his, and her affections are called forth powerfully, first for her husband and secondly for her children. And for the childless widow a far more miserable life remains.

The principal duties of the Hindu woman of the middle class at home are grinding the corn with a little hand-mill, similar to that so often referred to in the Bible, washing the floor where they cook and eat, drawing water, scouring the metal vessels, the cooking utensils, the jugs and plates; of course many of the more wealthy are exempt from these duties, but the vast majority perform them. The kitchen must be washed every day; when I say the kitchen, I mean that part of the house in which cooking and eating are carried on, for a large part of the religion of the Hindus consists in cooking and eating in a proper and in a religious manner. The shadow of a low-caste man falling on the food of a high-caste Brahmin, whilst that food is in preparation, will be sufficient to defile it, and the whole will be thrown out in consequence.

The well at which water is drawn is a frequent resort for gossip. It is usually early in the morning and in the afternoon, from four to six, that water is drawn. Friends meet there, and interesting little details of household management and village life are exchanged. Some of the women will carry as many as

three water-pots on their heads, one over the other, and sometimes one or two on the head and one under the arm. Women of different castes must not touch each other's vessels. This is a matter of great importance. Deadly feuds may be the result of thoughtless imprudence in this respect. Families of the higher classes who are wealthy often engage men or women of the fisherman's caste to carry water for them. But the young women usually like the duty, if the well be not too distant, and, in towns, the wells are usually in the gardens or yards of their own houses, rendering any journeys to a distance for the purpose unnecessary.

Few people in the world are more religious than the women of India, but theirs is a zeal for religion without knowledge. They perform their service to the gods and goddesses of their faith unremittingly, particularly to the goddesses, and fail not to bathe in the sacred Ganges, or any other accessible river, on days of festivals, at the changes of the moon, and such like. From this service they expect good in this life rather than happiness in another. They are full of superstitious terrors; in fact they are amongst the most timid and fearful people on the face of the earth. The evils against which they contend by their religious services are their own, or their husband's or their children's illness. Being full of affection and concern for their children, they will go to any inconvenience or expense possible for their welfare. If sickness visits them it is attributed to some angry god or goddess, who must be propitiated by religious offerings, by prayers, by devotion, or human mortification. They will use medicines, but too often, alas! the physicians whom they are able to consult are little able to help them, and not unfrequently but experimentalise in their endeavours to do good. If the sickness be long continued or dangerous, they will pro-

mise a young kid as an offering to some goddess in expiation, hoping thereby that the sick loved one may be restored to health. Should the child recover they believe their prayers have been heard, and the vow is performed. Priests often work upon their credulity, and the credulous women will believe any story they may tell them. In this matter they will often act in opposition to their husband's wishes, although in other respects attentive and dutiful.

A Hindu wife never mentions the name of her husband. It would be esteemed an indelicacy or an insult if she were to do so. If he have a son then he is spoken of as that son's father. *Gopal's father*, the wife will say, ordered it, not *my husband* ordered it—*our man*, or some equivalent expression, if he have no son, is the nearest approach to indicating him distinctively. Nor does the husband mention his wife's name—he will call to her, *O mother of Gopal*, or if there be no child, *O housewife*, but never by her name.

Although distinctly regarded as an inferior by

the husband, with whom she does not even take her meals, always waiting till he has finished, yet the treatment she experiences is not usually bad. There are of course tyrants and cruel husbands in all countries, but so far as my experience went in India, I do not believe that the average treatment of women by their husbands in that country is worse than that in England, rather better I think amongst the lower orders; but in the upper ranks of life the husband has a power and an authority which are quite unknown in Europe, and which of course will often be abused by unfeeling and tyrannical men, particularly amongst the uneducated, and it is unfortunately too often the ease that, in remote districts especially, even the wealthy are uneducated. I have heard it remarked that those who have had the advantages of European culture amongst the upper classes make better husbands and better sons than others.

The chief education of a girl in India has for centuries consisted in learning how to dress the dishes most prized, to do rough needlework, to behave seemly in company, and sometimes a little singing and instrumental music. Mental nurture and training is the great want. Reading and writing have been for centuries denied to her, and considered unnecessary. Young men have been laughed at over and over again, both in Calcutta and in the Upper Provinces, for having had the boldness to teach their wives to read and write. And this they have been obliged to do stealthily—not openly in the light of day, but in a clandestine manner, after dinner, at night. Nor is it uncommon still to hear such exclamations as these: "What nonsense! for a woman to read and write! What's the use of it? A foolish proceeding! something new and senseless!" and such like. But a better day is dawning for women in India.



FULFILLING A VOW AND SACRIFICING HER CHILD.

restrained him. I kept it back from him lest there should be disappointment, and I thought the surprise would be so delightful if there was not."

"And the happiness was dashed just as it ought to have been realised! But I am thankful, thankful on your account, Katie, that you can feel about it as you do. Your heart cherishes no bitterness though the grief has been so bitter."

"Oh, Mr. Walmer, don't speak to me like that, don't! If you knew all, you would chide rather than comfort. You would bind me down in the valley of humiliation, out of which I have vainly endeavoured to find a way, and you would help me to take part against myself. I must tell you that I never thought it possible that I could feel towards my bitterest enemy as I have felt towards Frank; and when the dear fellow came and asked me to forgive him, I said, 'Don't come near me. You've disappointed me—oh, bitterly;' as if myself, you know, and my disappointment were all that mattered."

The very recollection, and it was an ineffaceable one, so overcame her that she burst into a flood of tears; but he spoke to her firmly, reminding her of the necessity she was under to keep quiet.

"Tell me anything that will be a relief to you," he said, "but do not get excited. You felt sorry, I am sure, that you had spoken harshly, when he was penitent."

"Yes, more especially when I heard him crying in his room, as I think only Frank ever does cry. I went to him and made it up; but all night through the words seemed to be turned against me

and spoken to myself. 'You have disappointed me, oh, bitterly!'"

"You felt then that more than Frank had ever disappointed you, your conscience telling you so, was that it?"

"Yes, and I thought, what if He were to forbid me to come near?"

"Ah, what indeed? What for any of us! But then Frank's tears would never make you, tender-hearted as you are, relent to him as sweetly as God relents to you. Did you think of that also?"

She shook her head slowly, while her eyes were full of a new-born confidence.

"I think, Katie, where the Spirit has been so certainly chiding and upbraiding, all that is left to my humble instrumentality is to apply the consolation. This is very evident, you have been chastened as a child and not beaten like an enemy; in all the trial God has been with you. Now you made one little remark with respect to Frank which I should like you, as you have been reasoning from him to yourself, to apply in another way. You said you believed if he had known your plans for him he would have been good, though he ought to have been independent of incentives. I should like to see him here."

Thanking the kind clergyman for the words he had spoken to her, Katie went in quest of her brother, glad to know that the spiritual skill and insight that could adapt itself to her case would meet the recreant schoolboy's also.

Nor was she mistaken, for Frank's face, after he had been in conversation with his minister, was happier than it had been since his return home; he said to her also, in a very shy whisper,

"Katie, Mr. Walmer says that since you have forgiven me, I may feel sure that God will forgive, and do you know I almost believe that He does."

It was only two evenings after this that Mr. Walmer called again. His kind face was rippling into so many smiles that Katie, a little intolerant of such manifest exultation where so dark a shadow had fallen, wondered what was the cause of it. Something more than the well-spring in himself, she felt sure. "I have just come from the train," he said to Mrs. Oxley, "and I think I have some good news for you. I have been to see Dr. March about Frank, and he has consented to take him back again, fully persuaded that it is the right thing to do. I told him that I would be surety for his good behaviour. He owned to me that he was very sorry for the lad; he said his abilities were of a high order, and he had never been guilty

of anything criminal, but he was too much carried away by his great flow of animal spirits, and— However, we won't talk about his faults. We'll give him time to mend them. Now Katie, will you be the bearer of the good news to Frank, or shall I?"

But Katie couldn't speak. She thought the joy was going to make her as ill as the grief had done, and only by a strong effort did she regain composure.

Mr. Walmer hastened home to escape the thanks which followed him next morning in a beautiful little note, still preserved among his most fragrant epistolary treasures. So there was "clear shining after rain," and at the expiration of the holidays Frank, with a chastened gladness, took up his cross and returned manfully to the field where he had been worsted.

Before leaving he did not say anything about a possible Senior Wranglership *in futuro*, nor even about Scholarship, and B.A.'s, but he went, promising by God's grace to be a more diligent, steadfast, and obedient scholar than he had been, and by God's grace he kept his word. Nor were a sister's fond hopes concerning the immediate result of this extra year at school doomed to disappointment.

[THE END.]

ANSWERS TO RIDDLES, PUZZLES, ETC.

ANSWER TO PUZZLE No. 7.—The boy had fivepence farthing; the first baker doubled it—tenpence halfpenny, out of which he spent sixpence; left fourpence halfpenny, which second baker doubled, making ninepence. Here he spent sixpence—left threepence, which last baker doubled, so that he should have had sixpence, but no more.—Answer: fivepence farthing.

ANSWER TO RIDDLE No. 8.—1. The chest; 2, eyelids; 3, kneecaps; 4, drums of the ears; 5, hands and feet; 6, nails; 7, soles; 8, muscles; 9, palms; 10, two lips (tulips); 11, apple of the eye; 12, calves; 13, hairs; 14, temples; 15, arms; 16, insteps; 17, eyes and nose (ayes and noes); 18, pupils; 19, tendons.

ANSWER TO ANAGRAM No. 9.—Unite—Untie.

ANSWERS TO SQUARE WORDS, p. 108.—
1. CART 2. WANT 3. WINE
AFAR AREA IDEA
RATE NEAR NEAR
TREE TARE EARN

ANSWERS TO DOUBLE ACROSTICS, p. 108.

| | | |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. | 2. | 3. |
| NARCISSUS | MORIAH | WONDER |
| AUNT | OTTAWA | ONLY |
| PATH | ZUTPHEN | RECORD |
| ONCE | ALLAHABAD | DIANA |
| LIBEL | RUNNYMEDE | SOIL |
| EYEN | TYROL | WORM |
| OCEAN | | OHIO |
| NAPHTHA | | RICHELIEU |
| | | TOWN |
| | | HAMLET |

ANSWERS FOR p. 108.

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| BURIED | BURIED | BURIED |
| COUNTRIES. | FLOWERS. | FRUIT. |
| 1. Spain. | 1. Lupin. | 1. Apple. |
| 2. Italy. | 2. Harebell. | 2. Date. |
| 3. Holland. | 3. Pink. | 3. Orange. |
| 4. Germany. | 4. Cactus. | 4. Plum. |
| 5. Hanover. | 5. Stock. | 5. Peach. |



HINDU LADIES.