

PUNDITA RAMABAI.



IN this magazine for September, 1887, the facts concerning Pundita Ramabai ended with her coming to America. Her wonderful success here in behalf of her countrywomen justifies, it seems to me, an additional word at this time.

With her five-year-old daughter Manorama, she came to this country, it will be remembered, in February, 1886, to witness the graduation of her kinswoman, Anandabai Joshee, by the Woman's Medical College in Philadelphia. The two Hindu women there met for the first time, having previously known each other only by correspondence. (For further particulars of the Hindu doctor, see the "Life of Anandabai Joshee," by Mrs. Caroline Healey Dall, published by Roberts Brothers, Boston, 1888.)

Ramabai entered heartily into the graduation exercises, rejoicing particularly in the fact that a Hindu woman was, for the first time, to receive the degree of doctor of medicine. She soon became so deeply interested in American institutions, so much impressed with a public-school system which included girls as well as boys, that, instead of returning to her work in England as professor of Sanscrit in Cheltenham College, she decided to remain here for personal investigation in behalf of her down-trodden sisters. Seeing much promise for them in the free kindergartens of Philadelphia, she not only bought the "gifts" and began to translate the games and tokens into their language, but she enrolled herself as a student in a kindergarten training-school. She also began to prepare a regular series of Marathi school-books. She could not forget that of the 99,700,000 women and girls under British rule, some 99,500,000 were unable to read and write. These exceptional few hundred thousand could in no way claim to be educated, since the school-period of a girl is usually between seven and nine years of age, the marriage period for girls among Brahmans all over India being generally from five to eleven years of age. Ramabai's heart went out especially to the child-widows, who, with comparatively few exceptions, are rendered miserable in every possible way. Those who have read the Pundita's book, "The High-caste Hindu Woman," are not ignorant of these wretched little creatures. The more Ramabai thought of them—strangers to any means of support, destitute of the least promise of education, devoid of all hope of second marriage, a curse to themselves and

the world—the more the idea grew upon her of founding an institution which would insure, first, self-reliance; secondly, education; and thirdly, women teachers. Strong in the determination to work in this direction, fully aware of the difficulties in the way, in America as well as in India, she went forth to lecture among the people. Her good knowledge of the English language made this a possibility. Her sincerity, sound judgment, and Christian faith soon won for her the attention of serious and philanthropic minds. At last, in the summer of 1887, after she had spoken in nearly one hundred and fifty meetings, a Ramabai association was discussed in Boston. By December, when the coöperation of the three Hindu gentlemen desired by Ramabai to act as the advisory board in India had been assured, the association was a settled fact, with Rev. Edward Everett Hale, D. D., as President, and Rev. Phillips Brooks, D. D., Rev. George A. Gordon, D. D., Miss Frances E. Willard, Mrs. Mary Hemenway, Dean Rachel L. Bodley, M. D., and Rev. Lyman Abbott, D. D., as Vice-presidents. The board of trustees and executive committee included names well known in charitable work. By the time the Association had been in existence a year there were sixty circles auxiliary to the central one in Boston, with nearly three thousand members. These with life memberships, scholarships, etc. pledged for the annual support of the school between five and six thousand dollars. Besides this the general fund, as reported by the treasurer of the Association, Mr. T. Jefferson Coolidge, Jr., of Boston, had grown to about twenty thousand dollars.

Not only the Atlantic but the Pacific coast claimed Ramabai's attention; for though delicate in health, still following the Hindu custom of eating neither flesh, fish, nor fowl, she traveled alone to the western coast, speaking in every important city in behalf of her Hindu sisters. She spoke in San Francisco at the educational convention of July, 1888, and at fifty other meetings in that vicinity. As a result a branch Ramabai Association of the Pacific Coast was formed with twenty auxiliary circles pledging annual support.

The outlook was now so encouraging that the executive committee assented to Ramabai's going to India to begin her school. So, instead of returning East, she sailed from San Francisco, November 28, 1888. On arriving in Japan she paused to speak, through an in-

terpreter, to large audiences on the education of women. Her arrival at Hong Kong was publicly announced. By the 1st of February she was in India. Her daughter, who had been in the care of the Protestant sisterhood in Wantage,—their first home in England,—had already arrived with a member of the sisterhood. Ramabai, on being asked why she had not left her child to be educated in England, replied: "I want her to grow up among her people, to know them as they are, and to prepare herself for the work there is before her. If I left her in England, she would grow up to be an English girl, not one of us."

Ramabai also found, on arriving in India, Miss Demmon, the young woman from Philadelphia whom the executive committee had engaged to be her assistant in the school. She had started from the East before Ramabai sailed from the West, and was already studying the language with a Brahman pundit.

With the proceeds of "The High-caste Hindu Woman," Ramabai, before leaving America, was able to purchase about six hundred electrotype plates for the illustration of her completed series of books: namely, a primer, five reading-books, geography, and natural history. This series of school-books will be the first for girls ever published in that country.

All the arrangements for school-work were made on a sound business basis. The Pundita, as principal of the school, was to receive a salary and be in regular correspondence with the trustees. She was to give one year's notice of intention to resign, also to prepare a high-caste Hindu woman to take her place in the event of her death. Industrial education was to have special attention. Bombay was finally

settled upon as the place for the school, and a building engaged. Four pupils of the orthodox Brahman caste having been promised, the school opened March 11, 1889, and Ramabai's dream of years was a reality.

The opening of this Sharada Sadan, or Home of Wisdom, as the school is named, was a great success, an occasion to be remembered in the history of India. Ramabai, feeling that here was the opportune time to depart from the old custom of having only some high official or great dignitary preside over assemblies, gave the honor to a Hindu lady, Mrs. Kashi-bar Kamitkar.

While the Bombay newspapers and intelligent, liberal Brahmans spoke well of the school, the people from all parts of India, as would be natural, criticized it, and even prophesied failure. But the Pundita was courageous and hopeful, strong in the faith that her work was ordained of God. After the school had been in existence a month there were eight pupils, six of the Brahman caste and two of the Vars-hya, or third high caste. The number soon increased to fifteen, and at the close of the first quarter the school contained twenty-two girls, nine of whom were living with Ramabai. In spite of this success, however, public opinion in India was still cold, even bitter, against the work. But the brave little woman, whom her friend Max Müller has called "one of the most remarkable women of this century," determined to go on "working quietly, and see if faith in God and man will not bring about the desired change."

Those interested in the continued progress of the school will find reports from time to time in Dr. Hale's magazine, "Lend a Hand."

Elizabeth Porter Gould.

NAKED BOUGHS.

THERE were troths in the hedges
 And bird-mates were true;
 There were trysts, there were pledges,
 And old loves, and new;
 There was sun at the tree's heart,
 And song in the boughs,
 And Spring in the bee's heart,
 And whispers and vows:
 There were leaves, when we mated,
 And now — naked boughs.

Ah, vows that were fated!
 Ah, loves that would house!
 Your time was belated,
 Your fate — naked boughs!

Harrison S. Morris.