

tomary, and of course the proper, mode of disposing of the dead. The ashes are then gathered up and thrown into the Ganges. One of the low-caste coolies, whose business it was to burn the dead, was engaged in shoveling up the ashes into a basket for the purpose of throwing them into the river. Our guide told us that he himself expected to be burned in the same way. In fact, this is the universal mode among the Hindoos, all the graves visible in India being those of Europeans and Mohammedans.

Happily, no longer is the suttee witnessed, when the widow, with a wretched existence before her if she lived, and the promise of great honor on condition of her following the custom of her country, would throw herself upon the funeral-pile of her husband, and, clasping his dead body, be herself consumed in the flames. This custom, which originated in the desire to make the woman wish her husband to survive her, and thus not be tempted to poison him or otherwise shorten his life, was forbidden many years ago by the strong arm of British authority. All over the country, however, may be seen little monuments, now objects of worship, which signify that there a suttee took place, when the shrieks of the burning widow were drowned by the yet louder cries of the mob, led on by the priests, who usually shared any property which might have been left by the unhappy couple.

Caste is strong even in death, and the people rebelled against the indiscriminate burning of the dead in a place specially prepared for the purpose by the English authorities. Accordingly the tall chimney which was to carry off the smoke and gases of the cremation-house remains without an occupation. It should be stated that the bodies are usually brought to be burned within a few hours after death—in fact, sometimes so soon that they are found not to be dead at all. Recoveries to health

as well as to life have occurred when the funeral-fires were being lighted, and such events are always attributed to the power and favor of the gods. Persons who thus recover are not allowed to live among their friends again, but in villages to themselves. Friends of the family, or even relatives, are not necessarily present at the burning. Only professional burners, who know how to lay the wood and build in the corpse, together with idle lookers-on, appeared to be present at the early hour of the day when we were there. Near by were hundreds of men and women bathing in the river where the water would come freshly freighted with the ashes of the dead. Their voices were quite audible amid the crackling of the fires.

Returning to the hotel we visited the principal native business quarter, the Burra Bazaar. We turned first into the street devoted to the manufacture and sale of idols, of which there were large numbers on sale in the dingy niches of the wall called shops. There are no Hindoo temples in Calcutta—Kali Ghat, or the temple of Kali, being located some distance out of the city. Worship is paid to the Ganges, and also to little idols in shrines in the city, but the worship of the goddess Kali, which calls thousands to Calcutta, takes place at her temple outside. She is represented as a fierce divinity, her tongue stretched out half way down her breast, and red with blood, while in one hand she holds the sword with which she has just cut off the head of some victim, whose gory locks she holds exposed in the other. Her husband is one of the principal deities in Benares, nearly five hundred miles away. There seems to be a poetical fitness in his absence. A woman with such a tongue!

We have not seen elsewhere any thing to compare with the narrow, dirty nooks, called native shops. They are dark, they are dingy, they are

dirty. Still they are filled with goods, and often goods of large value. Each package of goods, in many shops, is wrapped up separately in a dirty cloth, to protect it from the dust, and the result is that the whole place looks foul, when these cloths conceal the finest Cashmere shawls and other costly articles. The shop-keeper sits on the floor, and very often on the counter, his feet drawn up under him, but becomes quite active at the prospect of a sale. He is very unwise who makes a purchase at the first price named. We saw plenty of Chinese, of whom there are some five hundred in the city, mostly engaged as carpenters and shoe-makers. The native Indian blacksmiths, as all other kinds of artisans that we saw, sit while they work. The shop-keepers frequently bring large stocks of goods to the hotels for the guests to see. They will unwrap their packages and display goods of all kinds, with a varying scale of prices, according to the enthusiasm or indifference of the purchaser. They have many English goods among them. All classes of the natives are extremely polite, alike to foreigners and each other, when they address one another at all. They usually speak only to their own friends. The mode of salute is a bow, often touching the hand to the forehead.

We were much interested in the work of the Zenana Mission, of the Women's Union Missionary Society of America. This society was organized in 1860 for the purpose of work among heathen women, and, being the first of the kind, represented different denominations. They began their work in India some fifteen years ago. There are some twelve female missionaries connected with the society in Calcutta. They have an orphanage of over one hundred girls, and also about eight hundred and eighty zenana pupils. A zenana (pronounced ze-nan'a) is the part of a Hindoo house where the

women live. Any family of means has one, and sometimes a whole family-connection unite in one, which will embrace as many as twenty inmates. It is a virtual prison, as it is perfectly secluded, no woman being allowed to look out or to go out. There have been cases of women in these zenanas who have never seen the moon nor a horse. Should they ever have occasion to be taken from one to another they are carried in a close palankeen, and with a cloth thrown over it as an additional precaution. So soon as a woman is married she becomes an inmate of a zenana for life. If her husband dies, she must remain as a drudge, despised and maltreated by all. It is not strange that in other days the widow preferred to die with her husband! Even within twelve months a case of suttee occurred in the province of Oude. If she remains barren, or without male children, she is despised by her husband, who is then at liberty to bring home another wife, who will only make her lot yet more bitter. In this prison-life she sees no one but her husband and the other inmates of the zenana, together with a low-caste woman who comes every fortnight or less to pare their finger and toe nails and to stain them with sennua. Her presence is always welcomed, as she brings news of the outside world, which is eagerly devoured, and none the less because it is the vilest gossip and scandal. Observing their wretched condition, she tells, especially the widows, of the easy life of pleasure and attractive abodes of *the daughters of sin*. The consequence is that this lowest class of society is mostly composed of widows escaped from the zenanas.

A widow need never have lived with her husband. When a mere child she is betrothed to a boy, whom she has never seen, the priest and the barber acting as the go-betweens. Once betrothed, a red spot is placed between her eyes, which she wears as a sign of her marriage. We saw several little girls, from

five to ten years, with this sign of their betrothal. They appeared very bright and happy as they sat at their desks in the school-room. All each knows about it is that one day a little boy was borne in a palankeen along the street, and that there was much music attending him as he rode by, and that on the same day she began to wear this red spot to signify that she was his wife. She does not know who he is. But if he should die without her ever seeing him she will never be permitted to marry another, but must live in seclusion all her life. In the course of a few years after her betrothal she is taken to her husband's home, and without any other ceremony she lives with him as his wife. There are frequent instances of girls eleven and twelve years of age who are mothers. There are rarer instances of the same sort at ten years. In these zenanas, filled by unhappy women and girls, the missionary ladies go as teachers. They are taught to read and write, but with the understanding that the gospel shall not be excluded. The women are eager to learn, that they may be able to read the New Testament, for they say it is the only thing which has any comfort for them. The desire to have the women read is now so great among the men that tuition fees are paid. They are small now, but promise to increase. Native women have been employed to some extent for this purpose, and even the little children in the schools teach their unhappy mothers, so that they may read the words of Jesus, the woman's Friend.

How many real converts there are in the zenanas there is no means of fully knowing, because it has been deemed best, owing to the peculiar state of domestic society, to let the leaven work in silence. At present, owing to woman's despised position, a public profession of her faith would cause her to be driven from her home and children, and thus

be separated from the very ones whom it is desired that she shall influence. Despised and ill-treated as woman is, the son, on returning from a distance, will pass his father on the street in silence to go home to speak first to his mother. Her commands are to be obeyed rather than the father's, although the father will beat her for giving them. A mother's curse is the greatest earthly calamity. Her position being one of such importance, it is recognized as essential to the salvation of India to reach the woman. At present her influence, of course, is only evil. Europeans seldom employ women as servants, they are so quarrelsome and vile. A life of shame is regarded as nothing improper, since the very gods whom they worship are notorious for their impurity and intrigues. Thank God for the good work being done in the zenanas of India! Of thirty female laborers in Calcutta twelve of them are connected with the society before mentioned. Miss Brittain, of New York, is the energetic superintendent here, and to her I am indebted for the information about the work which I have just given. The ladies receive such a hearty welcome in the zenanas, and their message of life is so often received with zest and joy, that they are quite happy in their work. Would that many an American lady, slowly dying of *ennui*, could see these happy faces and catch their enthusiasm! Woman's work for Christ in India is at present among the most hopeful being done.

Another interesting interview was with the Rev. Dr. Wenger, of the English Baptist Mission. We were anxious to meet one of the successors to the noble Carey, and Dr. Wenger fully shares his spirit. He is quite a scholarly man, and after more than forty years in India he is spending his last days in the important work of translating. We are satisfied, from what we learned from him and others, that a new day is about to dawn on missionary work here.

Much stress has hitherto been laid on school-work, and nearly all the missions have large schools. Dr. Duff's, of the Free Church of Scotland, has some one thousand two hundred pupils, and many others hardly a less number. Formerly there were more or less conversions from these every year, but latterly there are few or none. This is giving all the missionaries great concern, as hitherto this was the principal source of their native membership. The causes of this dearth are not determined. Some attribute it to the influence of the Brahma-Somaj, a theistic society, whose teachings better please the native mind ready to cast off idols, and whose great leader, Keshub Chunder Sen, resides in Calcutta, and commands general respect alike by his ability and his character. The adherents of this faith believe in one god, and have a simple worship, but retain various remains of Hindoo belief, especially about caste. They also insist on the contemplative side of religion so welcome to the Bengalese mental habit. Moreover, being natives, awakened natives are more readily drawn to them. The system is regarded by many as really preparing the way for Christ, but still it appears at present like a John the Baptist making far more disciples. The concern of the missionaries is leading to much earnest prayer and crying unto God. This is perhaps preparatory to a change of methods of work. They will not teach less, but preach more, and probably more in the English language, which the schools have so widely taught.

The work of the Rev. Wm. Taylor, of the M. E. Church, is quite suggestive. He preached at Calcutta in English, and hundreds of the natives and others were converted in the course of a few weeks, and are now organized into a large congregation, with one of the best churches in the city. We attended service there one night when there were five

hundred people present, more than half natives, or of native descent. The singing and preaching were in English, and were entered into with spirit, having reference to immediate results. The work inaugurated thus is breaking down caste, and is making a wide impression for good. Other Churches confess its power, and will, on recovering from their astonishment, break the bonds of old methods, and follow a mode which has been so signally useful. While reaching different classes, these services have been largely successful because adapted to the hours of the poor.

We leave to-night for Benares, the "Holy City of the Hindoos."

Calcutta, India, Feb. 21, 1877.