

Pandita Ramabai

The STORY *of* HER LIFE



BY · HELEN · S · DYER



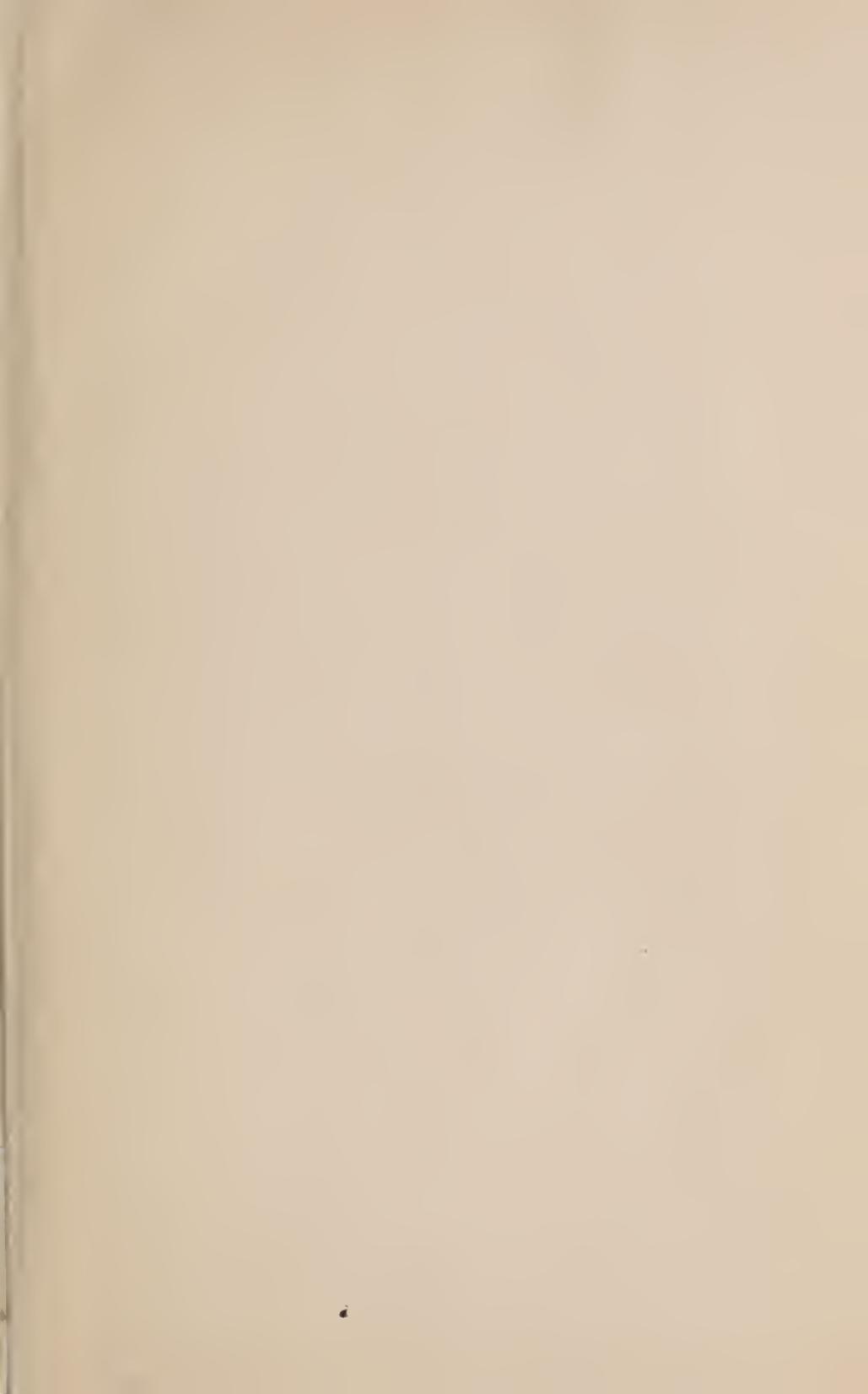
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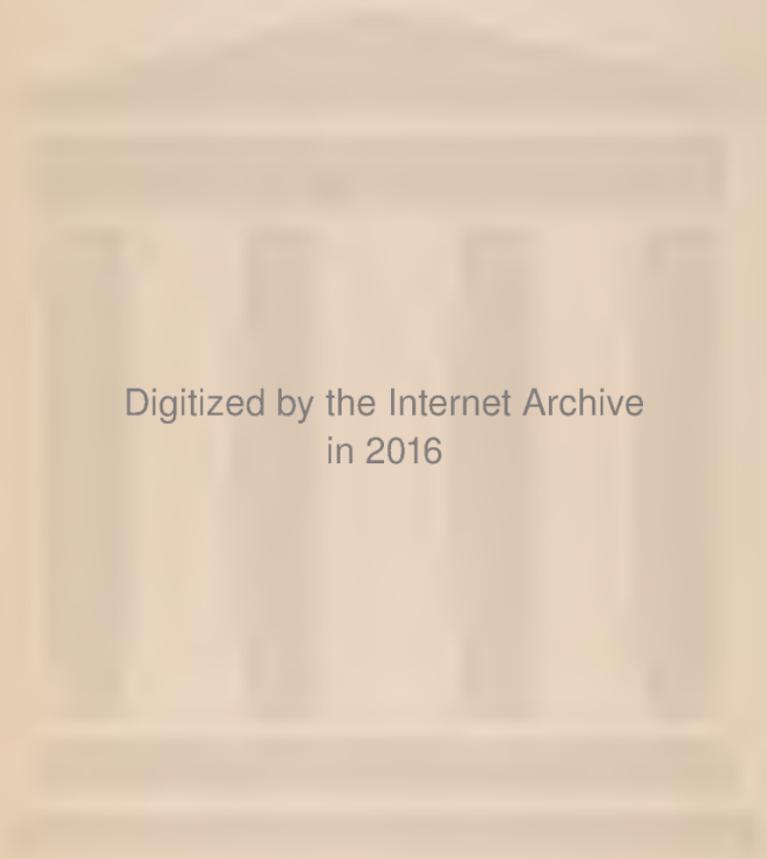
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Dyer, Helen S.

Pandita Ramabai: the story
of her life





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BY ✓

HELEN S. DYER



NEW YORK

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INTRODUCTION

TOWARDS the close of the eighteenth century, when books were few, a remarkable volume entitled "Monumental Pillars," was published for English Christians. It was compiled from authentic records of the Lord's dealings in providence and grace with individual Christians; of summary justice meted out to those who had blasphemed His name; of wonderful dreams and their fulfilment; of preservation of life through following the inner guidance of the Spirit of God; and similar testimonies tending to show the direct individual methods of God with the children of men, and of the absolute certainty of a particular providential care over their lives.

The story told in the following pages will show how the Lord, having a purpose of grace towards the down-trodden widows of India, has raised up one of that despised class to erect a "Monumental Pillar" to His name. The whole may be designated as a Record of Answered Prayers and Fulfilled Promises. Ramabai could adopt the language of Eliezer of old, and say,

“I being in the way, the Lord led me.” The human part of the work has been persevering faith and obedience; and as God delights to honour faith, the blessing has come, and the work has grown.

When, in the providence of God, my husband was obliged to relinquish the work in India in which we had been engaged for more than ten years, it was impressed upon my mind that the Lord would have us do something in England for Ramabai. This book has been written in response to that impression.

We know also that Ramabai covets the prayers of God's people. It has therefore been on our hearts to do something to bring this work more definitely before the Lord's remembrancers. Ramabai is intensely desirous that all the glory should be given to God. In a recent letter she writes: “I do not want to be in this place, or have anything to do in connection with it, unless the Lord wants me to be here. It is all His work, and He will take care of it. He is giving me joy, and grace, and strength, for the work day by day. I want you to pray very much for me, that I may be kept very humble and close to Christ.” She says that she has had it on her mind to ask Christian people to form prayer circles specially to pray for the salvation of India's twenty-three millions of widows. She believes that if two or three believing ones would meet together and agree upon this subject, and pray specially for it,

the Lord would answer their prayer, and qualify those whom she is training to go out in increasing numbers with the Gospel message. In a letter I received from her, in reference to this, she says: "I shall be glad indeed if a Prayer Circle be organized in England, and the Lord permitting, for you to take a leading part in organizing it. I tried to get some friends to do it when I was in England in 1898; but it was not the Lord's will then to let the plan be carried out. I am awaiting His time and orders, and leave everything to Him."

After much prayerful consideration we have therefore launched the

SISTERS OF INDIA PRAYER UNION,

to include first of all the work for India's daughters in the hands of Pandita Ramabai, and any other work of faith and labour of love carried on by the women of India for the salvation of their own people.

I shall be glad to send further particulars to any who may write to me.

HELEN S. DYER.



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PANDITA RAMABAI:

The Story of Her Life

CHAPTER I.

THE CHILD OF THE FOREST; AN ORPHAN; A PILGRIM;
A WIFE; AND A WIDOW.

“God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in His presence.”—I COR. i. 27-29.

AN eloquent commentary on these inspired words may be found in the life and work of PANDITA RAMABAI. For in her “God hath chosen” a weak Indian widow to do mighty works in His great name. An emancipated member of a class of women held in the bondage of idolatry and superstition for ages, Ramabai, having found light, liberty, and salvation for herself, seeks the same for her fellow-widows, her race, and her country. Measurably in sight of a comfortable Government appointment—the Eldorado of thousands

in India—she gave it up, in the prospect of devoting herself to the uplifting and enlightening of Hindu widows.

It is characteristic of Ramabai that she works with all her heart and soul for the highest ideal she knows; and as soon as more light dawns upon her, she leaves the things that are behind, and reaches out to that which opens up in the vista of the future. This thought explains the developments of her work and plans during the past years, and prepares those who know her well for further surprising developments in the future.

If Ramabai's work has not patterned itself after the exact ideal set out in her mind when she returned to India in 1887—to begin a school that should open the paths of knowledge to young widows in such a way that they should not have to dread the loss of their ancestral religion—it has been prosecuted according to the pattern revealed to her “in the Mount.”¹ While still holding open a door to a liberal education to the high caste Hindu widow, without causing her to break her caste, Ramabai has herself become the moving spirit in an aggressive, Evangelistic, and Industrial Mission.

To sketch the developments of this work as personally observed by the writer, is the object of these chapters; but an outline of the life-story of this re-

¹ Heb. viii. 5.



ANANTA SHASTRI AND HIS FAMILY

markable woman is necessary for those unacquainted with her history.

There are factors in making Ramabai the woman she is which date back to forty years before her birth, when her father, Ananta Shastri, a student at Poona, was witness of the (to him) astonishing fact that a woman could be taught to read and recite Sanskrit. His tutor was also tutor to one of the princesses in the household of the Royal Peishwa; and Ananta Shastri made up his mind that knowledge was an excellent thing for a woman as well as for a man, and that his wife should be taught to read also. In due time he returned to his ancestral home in the Mangalore district; but his bride and his mother both opposed his efforts to teach the former, and he was obliged to relinquish the plan.

Years passed; his family grew up, his wife died, and he set out on pilgrimage. From a fellow-pilgrim with daughters he obtained a fine little girl of nine years for his second wife, took her home and delivered her to his mother, as usual, for domestic training, but asserted his right to teach the child to read. Continual opposition caused him to realize that this experiment was likely to fail also; so he took his wife and started off into the forest, where a rude home was made. The child-wife was tenderly cared for, but sedulously taught; so that in the process of years, when woman-

hood and the cares of family life came on, it was her voice that taught the sacred learning of the Brahmins to the children of the family. The father was revered as a holy as well as a learned man, and pilgrims and students flocked into his forest home. Ramabai venerates the memory of her father, believing that, like Cornelius, the old Brahmin scholar was one of the class whom Peter confessed to be "accepted" with God.¹

It was in this forest home that Ramabai's childhood was spent; and among her earliest recollections are those of being awakened in the early mornings by a loving mother to hear and repeat her lessons. Her love of reading was from a child remarkable. Sanskrit, in which all the classics of Hinduism are written, was to her as her mother tongue. The ponderous volumes which form the scriptures of Hinduism were all accessible to her, and she became familiar with their contents and doctrines. At twelve years of age she had committed to memory eighteen thousand verses from the Puranas. This religious learning forms the highest education of the Brahmin or priestly caste, to which Ramabai's family belonged. She says that though she was not formally taught Marathi, yet hearing her parents speak it, and being in the habit of reading newspapers and books in that language, she

¹ Acts x, 35.

acquired a correct knowledge of it. In the same manner when travelling about she acquired also a knowledge of Kanarese, Hindustani, and Bengali. In fact, she may be said to have a knowledge of all those dialects of India which are based on the Sanskrit, the sacred language of the East. With her parents and brother all enthusiasts in Brahminic learning, and pioneers in the education of women, it was no wonder that Ramabai's remarkable talents were cultivated, till she became, under their instruction, a "prodigy of erudition."

I have before me a photograph taken in Bombay between thirty and forty years ago. It is a copy of an old daguerreotype, a family group. The father, an aged man; the mother, a comely woman under thirty; a boy and a girl in their teens; and Ramabai, a little maiden of seven, nestling at her mother's side. Their Spartan adherence to all Hindu customs was well illustrated by this journey to Bombay. They came from the Malabar coast by sea in a country vessel, and not a morsel of food or a drop of water passed the lips of one of them while on the journey, which lasted three days—Ramabai remembers them keenly now, as days of misery.

The poverty that overtook the family in Ramabai's early teens was partly caused by the open house kept for so many years for pilgrims and students; and then

came the beginnings of the terrible famine which culminated in South India in 1876-77, but which, Ramabai says, was keenly felt by many three years before. The share of the ancestral land, to which her brother was heir, was sold, with his consent, to pay the family debts, and the family went on pilgrimage. How they parted with all their money, jewels, and valuables in the vain hope of propitiating the gods and securing a return of fortune's favours, Ramabai has pathetically told in her "Famine Experiences," as follows:—

"My recollections carry me back to the hard times some twenty-two years ago. The last great famine of Madras presidency reached its climax in the years 1876-77, but it began at least three years before that time. I was in my teens then, and so thoroughly ignorant of the outside world that I cannot remember observing the condition of other people, yet saw enough of distress in our own and a few other families to realize the hard-heartedness of unchanged human nature.

"High caste and respectable poor families, who are not accustomed to hard labour and pauperism, suffered then, as they do now, more than the poorer classes. My own people, among many others, fell victims to the terrible famine. We had known better days. My father was a land-holder and an honoured Pandit,¹ and had acquired wealth by his learning. But by-and-by,

¹ A learned man or teacher.

when he became old and infirm and blind in the last days of his earthly life, he lost all the property in one way or another. My brother, sister, and myself, had no secular education to enable us to earn our livelihood by better work than manual labour. We had all the sacred learning necessary to lead an honest religious life, but the pride of caste and superior learning and vanity of life prevented our stooping down to acquire some industry whereby we might have saved the precious lives of our parents.

“In short, we had no common sense, and foolishly spent all the money we had in hand in giving alms to Brahmins to please the gods, who, we thought, would send a shower of gold mohurs upon us and make us rich and happy. We went to several sacred places and temples, to worship different gods and to bathe in sacred rivers and tanks to free ourselves from sin and curse, which brought poverty on us. We prostrated ourselves before the stone and metal images of the gods, and prayed to them day and night; the burden of our prayer being that the gods would be pleased to give us wealth, learning, and renown. My dear brother, a stalwart young fellow of twenty-one, spoilt his health and wasted his finely built body by fasting months and months. But nothing came of all this futile effort to please the gods—the stone images remained as hard as ever, and never answered our prayers. Oh that we had

found out then that, 'Every man is brutish in his knowledge, every founder is confounded by the graven image; for his molten image is falsehood'; 'The idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain.'

"We knew the *Vedanta*, and knew also that we worshipped not the images, but some gods whom they represented—still all our learning and superior knowledge was of no avail. We bowed to the idols as thousands of learned Brahmins do. We expected them to speak to us in wonderful oracles. We went to the astrologers with money and other presents, to know from them the minds of the gods concerning us. In this way we spent our precious time, strength, and wealth, in vain. When no money was left in hand we began to sell the valuable things belonging to us—jewelry, costly garments, silver-ware; and even the cooking vessels of brass and copper were sold to the last, and the money spent in giving alms to Brahmins till nothing but a few silver and copper coins were left in our possession. We bought coarse rice with them and ate very sparingly; but it did not last long. At last the day came when we had finished eating the last grain of rice—and nothing but death by starvation remained for our portion. Oh the sorrow, the helplessness, and the disgrace of the situation!

"We assembled together to consider what we should

do next; and after a long discussion came to the conclusion that it was better to go into the forest and die there than bear the disgrace of poverty among our own people. And that very night we left the house in which we were staying at Tirpathy—a sacred town situated on the top of Venkatghiri—and entered into the great forest, determined to die there. Eleven days and nights—in which we subsisted on water and leaves and a handful of wild dates—were spent in great bodily and mental pain. At last our dear old father could hold out no longer—the tortures of hunger were too much for his poor, old, weak body. He determined to drown himself in a sacred tank near by, thus to end all his earthly suffering. It was suggested that the rest of us should either drown ourselves, or break the family and go our several ways. But drowning ourselves seemed most practicable. To drown oneself in some sacred river or tank is *not* considered suicide by the Hindus; so we felt free to put an end to our lives in that way. Father wanted to drown himself first; so he took leave of all the members of the family one by one. I was his youngest child, and my turn came last. I shall never forget his last injunctions to me. His blind eyes could not see my face; but he held me tight in his arms, and stroking my head and cheeks, he told me, in a few words broken with emotion, to remember how he loved me, and how he taught me to do right, and never depart

from the way of righteousness. His last loving command to me was to lead an honourable life if I lived at all, and to serve God all my life. He did not know the only true God, but served the—to him—unknown God with all his heart and strength; and he was very desirous that his children should serve Him to the last. ‘Remember, my child,’ he said, ‘you are my youngest, my most beloved child. I have given you into the hand of our God; you are His, and to Him alone you must belong, and serve Him all your life.’

“He could speak no more. My father’s prayers for me were, no doubt, heard by the Almighty, the all-merciful Heavenly Father, whom the old Hindu did not know. The God of all flesh did not find it impossible to bring me, a great sinner and unworthy child of His, out of heathen darkness into the saving light of His love and salvation. I can now say to the departed spirit of the loving parent—‘Yes, dear father, I will serve the only true God to the last.’ But I could not say so when my father spoke to me for the last time. I listened to him, but was too ignorant, too bewildered to understand him, or make an intelligent answer. We were after this dismissed from father’s presence; he wanted an hour for meditation and preparation before death.

“While we were placed in such a bewildering situation, the merciful God, who so often prevents His

sinful children from rushing headlong into the deep pit of sin, came to our rescue. He kept us from the dreadful act of being witnesses to the suicide of our own loved father. God put a noble thought into the heart of my brother, who said he could not bear to see the sad sight. He would give up all caste pride and go to work to support our old parents; and as father was unable to walk, he said he would carry him down the mountain into the nearest village, and then go to work. He made his intentions known to father, and begged him not to drown himself in the sacred tank. So the question was settled for that time. Our hearts were gladdened, and we prepared to start from the forest. And yet we wished very much that a tiger, a great snake, or some other wild animal would put an end to our lives. We were too weak to move, and too proud to beg or work to earn a livelihood. But the resolution was made, and we dragged ourselves to the jungle as best we could.

“It took us nearly two days to come out of the forest into the village at the foot of the mountain. Father suffered intensely throughout this time. Weakness caused by starvation and the hardships of the life in the wilderness hastened his death. We reached the village with great difficulty, and took shelter in a temple; but the Brahmin priests of the temple would not let us stay there. They had no pity for the weak and helpless. So we were obliged again to move from the temple and

go out of the village into the ruins of an old temple where no one but the wild animals dwelt in the night. There we stayed for four days. A young Brahmin seeing the helplessness of our situation gave us some food.

“The same day on which we reached that village, my father was attacked by fever from which he did not recover. On the first day, at the beginning of his last illness, he asked for a little sugar and water. We gave him water, but could not give sugar. He could not eat the coarse food, and shortly after he became unconscious, and died on the morning of the third day.

“The same kind young Brahmin who had given us some food came to our help at that time. He could not do much. He was not sure whether we were Brahmins or not; and as none of his co-villagers would come to carry the dead, he could not, for fear of being put out of caste, come to help my brother to carry the remains of my father. But he had the kindness to let some men dig a grave at his own expense, and follow the funeral party as far as the river. Father had entered the Order of a Sannyasin before his death. So his body was to be buried in the ground according to the commands of the Shastras. As there was no one else to carry the dead, my brother tied the body in his dhoti like a bundle, and carried it alone over two miles to its last resting-place. We sadly followed to the river bank, and helped him a little. So we buried our father

outside that village, away from all human habitation, and returned with heavy hearts to the ruins of the old temple where we had taken up our abode. That same evening our mother was attacked by fever, and said she would not live much longer. But we had to leave the place; there was no work to be found, and no food to be had. We walked with our sick mother for awhile, and then some kind-hearted people gave us a little food and money to pay our fare as far as Raichur. There we stayed for some weeks, being quite unable to move from that town, owing to the illness of our mother. Our life at Raichur was a continuous story of hopelessness and starvation. Brother was too weak to work, and we could not make up our minds to go to beg. Now and then kind people gave us some food. Mother suffered intensely from fever and hunger. We, too, suffered from hunger and weakness; but the sufferings of our mother were more than we could bear to see. Yet we had to keep still through sheer helplessness. Now and then, when delirious, mother would ask for different kinds of food. She could eat but little; yet we were unable to give her the little she wanted.

“Once she suffered so much from hunger that she could bear it no longer, and sent me into a neighbour’s house to beg a little piece of coarse bajree cake. I went there very reluctantly. The lady spoke kindly to me; but I could on no account open my mouth to beg that

piece of bajree bread. With superhuman effort and a firm resolution to keep my feelings from that lady, I kept the tears back; but they poured out of my nose instead of my eyes, in spite of me, and the expression of my face told its own story. The kind Brahmin lady, guessing what was in my mind, asked me if I would like to have some food; so I said, 'Yes, I want only a piece of bajree bread.' She gave me what I wanted, and I felt very grateful; but could not say a word to express my gratitude. I ran to my mother in great haste, and gave it to her. But she could not eat; she was too weak. The fever was on her; she became unconscious, and died in a few days after that. Her funeral was as sad as that of my father, with the exception that two Brahmins came to help my brother and me to carry her body to the burning ground, about three miles from the town.

"I need not lengthen this account with our subsequent experiences. My elder sister also died of starvation, after suffering from illness and hunger. During those few months before our sister died, we three travelled on foot from place to place in search of food and work; but we could not get much of either. My brother and myself continued our sad pilgrimage to the northern boundary of India, and back to the east as far as Calcutta. Brother got work here and there; but most of the time we lived wanderers' lives. Very often we

had to go without food for days. Even when my brother had work to do, he got so little wages—only four rupees a month, and sometimes much less than that—that we were obliged to live on a handful of grain soaked in water, and a little salt. We had no blankets or thick garments to cover ourselves; and, when travelling, we had to walk barefoot, without umbrellas, and to rest in the night, either under the trees on the roadside or the arches of bridges, or lie down on the ground in the open air. Once on the banks of the Jhelum, a river in the Punjab, we were obliged to rest at night in the open air, and tried to keep off the intense cold by digging two grave-like pits, and putting ourselves into them and covering our bodies—except our heads—with dry sand of the river bank. Sometimes the demands of hunger were so great that we would satisfy our empty stomachs by eating a handful of wild berries, and swallowing the hard stones together with their coarse skins.”

It was during these wanderings with her brother that Ramabai's faith in the Hindu religion was shaken, though until twenty years of age she worshipped the gods of brass and stone. The freedom of their lives had given to the brother and sister keen powers of observation, and they resolved to test the teachings of the sacred books whenever possible. The following is but one of many tests that exposed the hollowness of their

religion, and the deception of the priests. They had been taught that in the Himalayas there was a beautiful lake, in which were seven floating mountains—the forms in which seven sages, or Mahatmas, appeared. When sinless pilgrims came to the shore, the Mahatmas floated toward them, and received their worship; but before the wicked they were immovable. During their journeyings, Ramabai and her brother, to their surprise and joy, found themselves near this lake, and beheld the mountains. They prostrated themselves, but received no sign. The priests warned them against going into the water, lest they be devoured by crocodiles; but the brother, early in the morning, when the priests were not on the watch, dared the crocodiles, and swam out to the mountains. He found them to be masses of stone and mud planted with trees, standing on rafts. The whole mystery was soon cleared. Behind the mountains a little boat was concealed. When a poor pilgrim, desirous of being considered sinless, crossed the palm of a priest's hand with sufficient coin, and called on the Mahatmas to float toward him, a priest in the boat gave the raft a push toward him, and he went away happy in his delusion.

While wandering from place to place, Ramabai had free access to the homes of the high-caste Hindus; saw the home-life in all its cruel details, and resolved to de-

vote her life to the redemption of her unfortunate sisters, especially the child-widows.

Ramabai and her brother gradually developed into public lecturers in the cause of the education of women. In Calcutta, Ramabai attracted much attention; and a solemn conclave of Pandits bestowed on her the title of Sarasvati, on account of her learning. She is the only woman who has been permitted to call herself Pandita. The Pandits were astonished at her learning. Beside her thorough knowledge of their sacred books, she had acquired fluency in seven of the languages of India; and her ideas on reform were remarkable for so young a person.

Echoes of Ramabai's lectures reached England even at this early date (December, 1880). A gentleman in India, writing to a friend there, told of an accomplished Brahmin lady travelling through Bengal with her brother, holding meetings on the education and emancipation of women. "They were received everywhere," said this Indian correspondent, "with great enthusiasm by the Hindus, who were delighted to hear their holy Sanskrit from a woman's lips. It seemed to them as if Sarasvati (the goddess of eloquence) had come down to visit them. Instead of a hot, confined room, we had a long and broad terrace open to the sky, and with the Ganges flowing at our feet. The meeting was at

half-past four in the afternoon, by which time the terrace was shaded from the sun by trees and houses to the westward. At the eastern end of the terrace a small marble table, with a glass of flowers on it, and some chairs were set, and there Ramabai stood up facing the west and addressed her audience. On her right was the Ganges, covered with large, broad-sailed boats, of a type which perhaps has lasted for two thousand years. There was little or nothing around to remind her or her audience of European civilization. The clear, blue sky and the broad river coming sweeping down from the walls of Benares dominated everything else." This writer adds that "the young lady is twenty-two years of age, the daughter of a learned Pandit, slight and girlish looking, with a fair complexion and light grey eyes. She is now engaged to be married to a Bengali pleader, an M.A. of Calcutta University."

Ramabai's parents had, contrary to custom, refrained from marrying her at an early age. They had betrothed the elder daughter in infancy to a youth whose parents solemnly promised should be educated to equal his bride. But these people broke their promise, and great trouble resulted when the time for consummating the marriage arrived. Thus it came to pass that to prevent such a calamity occurring in the case of their

second daughter, her marriage was put off; and then, at the age of sixteen, the parents passed away within six weeks of each other.

Before Ramabai and her brother had been long in Calcutta, the latter, weakened by years of privation, was taken ill and died. His chief concern during his brief illness was for his unprotected sister. "God will take care of me," said she, to comfort him. "Then," he replied, "all will be well."

Shortly after, Ramabai was married to the educated Bengali gentleman mentioned above, who took her to his home in Assam. The marriage was a civil rite, for they had rejected Hinduism, and knew nothing of Christ. The marriage was a happy one, but of painfully short duration. In nineteen months, cholera snatched away the husband, leaving Ramabai, with her little daughter, Manorama (heart's joy), to begin her career as an Indian widow.

CHAPTER II.

THE HINDU WIDOW BEGINS HER LIFE-WORK: LESSONS LEARNED IN ENGLAND AND AMERICA.

“Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by Thy name, O Lord God of Hosts.”—
JER. xv. 16.

RAMABAI'S position in her widowed state differed from that of the millions of her fellow-countrywomen when bereaved of their natural protectors, in that she was not ignorant of the world and its ways, and by the fact that she had an education fitting her to open out a path of usefulness for herself.

Accordingly, we find her, within a few months of the death of her husband, at Poona, the ancient capital of the Marathas, having resumed her former occupation as lecturer on the Education of Women.

The evil custom of confining high-caste women within the four walls of the Zenana, which prevails in the North-West Provinces and other parts of India, is unknown among the Brahmins of the Maratha country. In Poona and Bombay all Maratha women are free to



"SUTTE PILES"

walk and ride abroad, to see and to be seen. This, and the fact that Ramabai had relatives and family connections in Poona, drew her to recommence her career as a lecturer at this great centre of Brahminism.

In prosecuting her object, Ramabai took her stand upon her knowledge of the Shastras, and maintained that their ancient teaching enjoined the instruction of women; and that the neglected and ignorant condition of women was a modern descent into degradation. She advocated that high-caste girls should be instructed before marriage in Sanskrit and the vernacular. She also strongly condemned the practice of child-marriage.

Ramabai's lectures made a wide impression upon the best families in Poona, and, through her instrumentality, a Society of high-caste women was formed, having for its object the education of girls and the postponement of marriage to maturity. Encouraged by the success of this project in Poona, Ramabai went from city to city throughout the Maratha country, forming branches of the *Arya Mahila Somaj*, as this woman's Society was called. Ramabai also busied herself with writing and translating, in the endeavour to create a literature helpful to her cause. In her leisure hours she gave lessons on morality and religion to the women of Poona.

It was on Ramabai's heart during this time to start an institution for the education and succour of helpless

widows. In this class she saw, in faith, the future teachers of the high-caste girls. But she failed in getting the necessary financial support from the Hindu community to put this cherished plan into execution. It was here and now, however, that she rescued her first widow. The girl was a waif of the Poona streets, a Brahmin child of twelve years, cast out by her husband's relatives after his death. For several years she had lived the life of a street arab. Her appeal to Ramabai was not on the ground of starvation and homelessness, but on the ever-increasing difficulty of keeping her budding womanly honour intact. To her homely face and strange defective eyes she probably owed her escape from the harpies of vice thus far.

Ramabai was poor herself, but she took the girl in, to share whatever food she had, and to protect her from wrong and outrage. She is now a useful Bible-woman, labouring in connection with Ramabai's settlement at Mukti.

In 1882 the British Government appointed a Commission to inquire into the question of Education in India. The terms of reference included the definite and separate question of female education; and when the Commission visited Poona, it was invited to a reception by over three hundred Brahmin women connected with Ramabai's *Arya Mahila Somaj*, who with their children

assembled in the Town Hall at Poona. Ramabai was the speaker, and her subject the Education of Women.

Subsequently Ramabai was examined before the Commission, and the President was so struck with her evidence that he had it translated from the Marathi and printed in English. In her replies to the questions put by the Commission, Ramabai told of her father's strenuous efforts for the education of women, of her brother's views, and those of her late husband, who was a *Vakil*,¹ and fellow of Calcutta University. She told the Commission that she felt herself bound to the end of her life to labour on behalf of her countrywomen. She advocated that Girls' Schools should have specially trained women teachers; that women inspectors should also be employed; and concluded with a forcible appeal that Government should make provision for the study of medicine by women, doctors of their own sex being, in her opinion, one of the greatest needs of the women of India.

The publicity given to the proceedings of the Education Commission brought Ramabai into notice in circles other than the Marathi Brahmins. She now began to feel that she herself needed more training and experience in regard to the education of others. At this time she was unacquainted with the English language, although so well versed in those of India; and the idea

¹ A lawyer.

that she should go to England for study and training forced itself again and again upon her mind.

Ever since the death of her brother, and more particularly again after her husband died, Ramabai had felt in an undefined manner that God was guiding her. Disillusioned by painful experiences during her girlhood from the superstitions of Hinduism, she was still working from the Hindu standpoint. She knew but little of Christianity, and had no thought of becoming a Christian, but believed in an all-powerful deity whom she felt to be guiding her. Her mind became possessed of a divine unrest; and given the opportunity, she one day found herself bound for England—going forth, as she says, like Abraham, not knowing whither she went. Arriving in England with her baby daughter, Ramabai was kindly received by a Church of England Sisterhood at Wantage, a community having a mission at Poona. Here she remained for a year, studying the English language, and adding to her stock of information in many ways.

Four years before, when in Calcutta, Ramabai had made her first acquaintance with the Christian Scriptures. Keshub Chunder Sen, the founder of the Brahmo sect of Reformed Hindus, had given her a little book of precepts from all religions, most of which were from the New Testament. This greatly attracted

her ; and later she possessed herself of a complete Bible, and commenced to read it.

At Wantage, time and opportunity to study the subject were afforded ; and here Ramabai confessed herself a Christian, and was baptized, with her little daughter, according to the custom of the Church of England, on September 29th, 1883.

The difference that Ramabai at that time discerned between the good precepts of the Hindu Scriptures and the Gospel of Jesus Christ she thus expressed : “ While the old Hindu Scriptures have given us some beautiful precepts of loving, the New Dispensation of Christ has given us the grace to carry these principles into practice ; and that makes all the difference in the world. The precepts are like a steam engine on the track, beautiful and with great possibilities ; Christ and His Gospel are the steam, the motive power that can make the engine move.”

After the year spent at Wantage, Ramabai received the appointment of Professor of Sanskrit in the Cheltenham Ladies' College, where she found opportunity to study mathematics, natural science, and English literature. The immediate goal of her mental horizon was at this time bounded by a possible Government appointment in connection with the education of women in India.

A year and a half was spent at Cheltenham, when an invitation to visit America opened out a new vista before Ramabai's eyes, and led to important results. A high-caste Hindu lady from Poona, a friend and relative of Ramabai, had followed her in her determination to be of use to the millions of their fellow-countrywomen. Anandibai Joshi had reached America, and studied medicine in the Women's Medical College of Philadelphia. She was now about to graduate as M.D., and the invitation to Ramabai was to witness this ceremony. Ramabai's mind was agitated, she did not desire any interruption to her studies; but finally came to the conclusion that it would be a help to her life-work to visit America. She went with the intention of staying a few weeks. She stayed almost three years.

The public school system of America—including girls as well as boys, and the Kindergarten, training hand as well as head—greatly attracted Ramabai. She felt she must remain and study these; and in the course of a few months she enrolled herself for a course of Kindergarten study in a Philadelphia training school.

In Rachel Bodley, A.M., M.D., the Dean of the Women's Medical College in Philadelphia, Ramabai found a true friend, and with her also a home. Dr. Bodley had sheltered Anandibai Joshi, and helped her in her studies; and the sad news of the untimely death of that devoted little Indian woman, a few months after her re-

turn to her husband and home in India, bound Dr. Bodley more closely to Ramabai, and evoked in her a keener interest in her plans for the future. For now all Ramabai's old desire to benefit her countrywomen by founding schools which combined the training of the hand with that of the head, revived; and forsaking plans which regarded only the higher education of the few women in Government High Schools or Colleges in India, she concentrated her thoughts upon native schools founded by and for native women.

While living with Dr. Bodley and studying Kindergarten methods, Ramabai wrote her famous book, entitled, "The High-Caste Hindu Woman." Here she portrayed the true history of countless thousands of lives doomed by a perverted and decaying religious system of lifelong ignorance; to child-marriage with all its evils; to the absorption of young wives into the joint family system; to the terrible abuse and degradation of widowhood; and to the re-action of this treatment of women upon social and family life in India.

Dr. Bodley prefaced the book with an admirable treatise, sketching the devoted life and early death of Anandibai Joshi, relating Ramabai's history, and supporting and enforcing her appeal for help to go back to India and found an educational home for young widows, who in their turn should go forth as teachers to enlighten the darkness of their countrywomen.

CHAPTER III.

DREAMS BECOME REALITY; THE SCHOOL FOR HIGH-CASTE WIDOWS ESTABLISHED IN INDIA.

“He brought them forth also with silver and gold.”—PSA.
cv. 37.

“THE silence of a thousand years has been broken!” aptly declared Dr. Bodley in her preface to Ramabai’s volume, entitled, “The High-Caste Hindu Woman.”

Missionaries and travellers had had many a story to tell of the inaccessibility of Hindu women immured within the four walls of the Zenana. Those who had gained access behind the purdah, or mingled with the castes not entirely secluded, had felt the wall of separation raised by Oriental customs; so that, as yet, but a corner of the vail had been lifted. But now a voice had arisen from among themselves to tell with intimate knowledge how the ironbound customs of centuries had ground woman into a position of servitude and ignorance; making her at one and the same time the slave of man, and his greatest hindrance in rising to the higher plane of life held out by the religion of Jesus Christ.

The book opened the way for Ramabai to the hearts of a class of cultured, earnest American women, who became deeply interested in the story of the imprisoned, contracted lives of India's daughters. Many of these were the abolitionists of America's great anti-slavery struggle of the previous decade. In the ranks of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union Ramabai found much help and encouragement. The late Frances E. Willard became her warm friend, and through her influence much interest was evoked.

Ramabai's lifelong desire to educate Hindu widows—that through them a door might be opened into the dense darkness of Hinduism—now took tangible shape. Ramabai travelled up and down the United States, speaking to large audiences here, and drawing-room meetings there, gaining interest and forming circles of help; at the same time exercising an alert eye with regard to every kind of educational enterprise with which she came in contact, noting many points for adaptation to the work in India later on.

At an overflowing meeting held in Boston in May, 1887, when the audience was moved to tears and laughter by her pathos and keen wit, a provisional committee of women was formed to consider Ramabai's plans—to act with her, and report later. On December 13th of the same year, at another public meeting, the Provisional Committee presented a report that was accepted, a

list of officers who were elected, a constitution that was adopted; and the temporary Association became an organized body—it seemed to *spring* into existence—and Ramabai saw her long-cherished plans take definite form. That night her joy was too great for sleep; when found sobbing in her room, she exclaimed, “I am crying for joy that my dream of years has become a reality.” The President and Vice-President of the Association comprised members of five denominations; the Board of Trustees, composed of some of the best business and professional men of Boston, was equally unsectarian, as was the Executive Committee, formed entirely of women.

Among converts to Christianity in India, especially those of the older Missions, there is a frequent trend towards a European style of living, fostered in some cases, without any intention on the part of the missionary, by the life in Christian boarding-schools, conducted after European plans. This, by setting Western ideals of life before the Indian Christian, leads to discontent with the simple native customs of food and dress. Their incomes will not support them in Western luxuries; and, in consequence, the converts find themselves frequently in debt and difficulty.

This aspect of conversion to Christianity is looked upon with great disfavour by the Hindu community; and by its more ignorant members is regarded as part

of the Christian religion. Ramabai keenly felt this anomaly; and realizing that Christianity was an Asiatic religion, and as such ought to be adaptable to India without Western additions, she wisely determined to maintain her Indian habits in all customs of food and dress. She would show her country people, on her return to India, that to become Christians, it was not necessary to denationalise themselves.

In fact, Ramabai's strict vegetarian diet must have caused some difficulty to her American hostesses, even as their grand dinners, of which she could eat so little, were a source of embarrassment to her. Brought up as she had been, with an intense repugnance to any kind of flesh-eating, it was an ordeal to be seated at table in the place of honour next to the host, with a smoking roast of meat in front of him (the smell of which overpowered her), and to have to decline everything except a little bread and plain vegetable. But Ramabai, persevered in her determination, and returned to India as much of a Brahmin in food and habits, save as to their religious aspects, as she left it.

Ramabai having become a Christian, placed her, however, in a more serious difficulty than that of food, viz., the place in regard to religion which her educational home for widows should occupy. She had left her country in full sympathy with the more advanced Hindu reformers; she was returning, having cut herself off

from their sympathies by becoming a Christian. But she yearned more than ever to reach her own people; and the only method that approved itself to her judgment was to offer an education neutral as to religious teaching. Her plans in this respect were fully criticised as she went about expounding them to American audiences.

Many spiritually-minded people committed to missionary enterprise could not see why Ramabai should not cast in her lot with some Mission, and open an avowed Mission School. But Ramabai was strongly of opinion that no Mission School would reach the class for which her heart was aching. The people were too prejudiced against Christianity. Their widows were taught that it was better to commit suicide and be sure of heaven, rather than enter any institution established for the purpose of turning them from their ancestral faith.

In the midst of this controversy, Ramabai cast no slur on Missions or Mission work; but she rallied many to her standard outside of the ordinary supporters of Missions. In an interview with the representative of a Chicago daily paper, in December, 1887, on being asked to give her opinion on the good done by missionaries in India, Ramabai said: "Missionaries are showing by their precepts and example that Christianity does not mean going into other countries and taking possession

of them, putting taxes upon the people, introducing the liquor traffic, and gaining a great deal of revenue from the infamous traffics in rum and opium. As their numbers multiply they are gaining a foothold in the country, and also commanding the love and respect of the people by their earnestness in missionary work. . . . And finally, the blessed Gospel will be everywhere preached by the missionaries; and I hope some day we shall owe to their labours and their prayers a great army of Christian apostles among our people who will eventually regenerate the whole Hindu nation through their lives and their teachings."

In the same interview, with a variety of illustrations, Ramabai enforced her belief that the work she desired to do would prepare the way of missionaries by enabling widows to rise to an independent position in which they would be free to accept Christianity as she herself had done. "Christ," argued Ramabai, "came to give different gifts to different people—some He made prophets; some He made preachers; some He made teachers. Since I have become a Christian I have thought He has given me the gift of being a sweeper. I want to sweep away some of the old difficulties that lie before the missionaries in their efforts to reach our Hindu widows."

Ramabai further declared her belief that having the widows brought under the influence of her school, with the Bible placed in the hands of every pupil, Christian

women as teachers, and Christian literature in its library, many would be won to see the beauty of Christianity, and embrace it for themselves.

Thus it came to pass that the platform of her work was declared to be neutral as to its religious teaching. Her Hindu pupils were to have full liberty to retain their caste, and perform their religious observances.

In due time the "Ramabai Association" was complete. Its headquarters were in Boston; its base, "Ramabai Circles," in towns and cities all over the country. Members of circles pledged themselves to give or collect a certain sum annually for ten years, to equip and sustain a home and school in India for the education and support of high-caste Hindu widows.

In May, 1888, Ramabai bade good-bye to her Boston friends and went on to Canada, and thence to the Pacific Coast, gaining friends and forming circles all the way. In November of the same year she left America for India *via* San Francisco and Hong Kong, and thus got a glimpse of China on the way. She arrived in Bombay on February 1st, 1889, and chose that city in which to commence her work. Six weeks later the Widow's Home was quietly inaugurated in a house just back of the Chowpatty Sea-face. The modest announcement of "Sharada Sadan" (Abode of Wisdom) was placed on a board on its frontage. School commenced with two pupils, and the alphabet in three languages,



SOONDERBAI POWAR

Marathi, English, and Sanskrit. One of the pupils had thrice attempted suicide, restrained only by the fear of being again born a woman. She is now the educated wife of a professor in Poona College, and a happy mother.

The Hindu reform circles in Bombay and Poona gave Ramabai a welcome; her assurances of neutrality as to religion were generally, though cautiously, accepted; and, in a short time, more pupils of the desired class were obtained. Ramabai went in and out among the Hindus, and had frequent opportunities of lecturing as of yore, when she always commanded a large audience.

Miss Soonderbai H. Powar, at that time engaged in work among women in connection with one of the Bombay Missions, first brought me news of Ramabai and her work. She had visited Ramabai and been introduced to the pupils in residence. Her calling as a teacher of the Bible had been explained to them, and an opportunity to give a talk on the Bible and Christianity was afforded her. Ramabai's little daughter, Manorama, then about nine years old, had won Soonderbai's heart, by insisting that *she* was a Christian, and that the Bible was her Shastra.

In the course of a year or so, Ramabai moved the Sharada Sadan to Poona, as being a more healthy place, cheaper, and more suitable in every way for the work than Bombay. In 1892, through the continued gener-

osity of her American friends, she was enabled to purchase a commodious bungalow in a fine position in Poona, standing in about two acres of ground, which made an admirable home for the Sharada Sadan.

CHAPTER IV.

A VISIT TO THE "SHARADA SADAN," AND A GLIMPSE AT SOME OF ITS PUPILS.

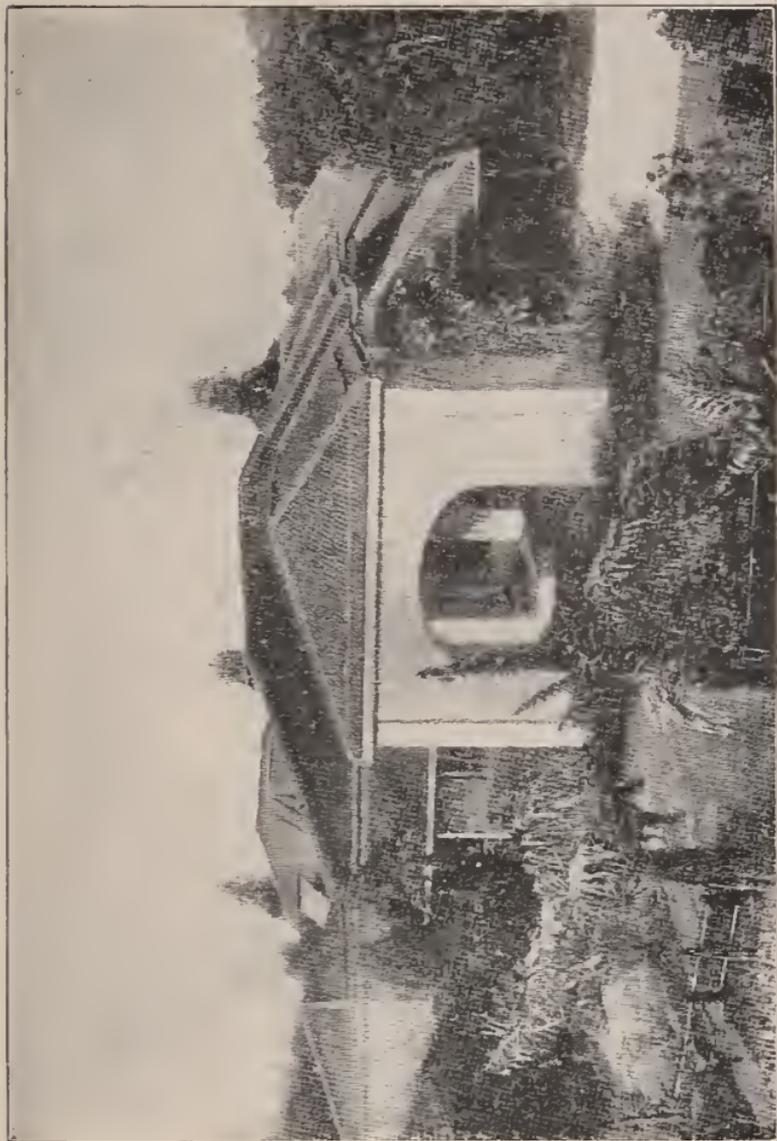
"Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars."—PROV. ix. 1.

THE house that Ramabai secured for the permanent location of the Sharada Sadan in Poona stands well back from the road; but to make the position still more secluded, Ramabai lined the walls that divided it from the road with a screen of trellis-work. This, covered with creeping vines and backed by flowering shrubs, added to the bowery appearance of the garden. The garden, occupying nearly half the compound, was dotted here and there with fine shade trees, the gold mohur, the plumeria, and others, which are covered with gorgeous flowers in their season. Roses and lilies, jasmine and elemanta, variegated crotons, caladiums, bouganvillia, and the hundred and one tropical shrubs that are cherished greenhouse plants in our colder atmosphere, luxuriate in the beautiful climate of the deccan of India. Nowhere are they seen to more

perfection than at Poona; and Ramabai's garden has always abounded with them. A shaded fernery, planted around a fountain close to the house, affords a cool retreat for the heat of the day. Ramabai, as a child of the forest, was ever an enthusiastic lover of flowers, and longed for her pupils to take delight in them also.

The house had its outer and inner apartments, like all houses built for Hindu family use. To these Ramabai added two long dormitories, built one above the other. The upper was reached by a stone staircase outside, a further flight of stairs leading to an enclosure on the roof, from which to study the stars.

“This is not an institution in which all the best rooms are reserved for the teaching staff,” remarked Ramabai, to a party of visitors she was showing over the building on the occasion of its opening ceremonies in July, 1892. “My pupils,” she continued, “are as free to come and go in the drawing-room as in any other part of the house. The Sadan with all its privileges has been instituted for their benefit. They come from homes where they have been treated as outcasts, where no love has been bestowed upon them, and no comforts provided for them. I wish them to see the contrast in all things where love rules. I wish them to become acquainted with as many good people as possible; to learn what the outside world is like from pictures and books; and to enjoy the wonderful works of God, as



VIEW OF SHARADA SADAN, POONA

they ramble in the garden, study with the microscope, or view the heavens from the little verandah on the roof."

The Pandita's aims, as thus set forth by herself, represented truly the atmosphere of the Sharada Sadan as I found it on my first visit at that time. The pupils came and went everywhere, learned their lessons in groups in the drawing-room, or walked in the garden by twos and threes, gathered roses and lilies for each other and the visitors, made wreaths of jasmine and decked each other's hair.

"Bai," the usual Hindu title for the mistress of the house, was Ramabai's home appellation; while that of Miss Soonderbai Powar was "Ukka" (elder sister). A few months previously Miss Powar had taken up her abode with Ramabai as companion and friend; and as loving elder sister to the pupils her influence has been blessed in a marked degree. Out of school hours the girls followed Ramabai about and clustered around her like bees; while Soonderbai's little room was usually crowded with pupils coming and going, sure of a hearing and help in any difficult phase of work or lessons.

The "good-night" scene, repeated with variations on all my visits to the Sadan during the subsequent seven years, was one to be enjoyed and remembered. When the retiring bell rang, wherever "Bai" and "Ukka" were to be found, there the girls and women

flocked in. Every one must have a good-night kiss—from the Brahmin woman of forty, who did the cooking, to the youngest child-widow. Some of them were not satisfied with one embrace, but would slyly come up a second time out of their turn, till the fun would get a little too riotous, and a summary dismissal was necessary.

There were then about forty widows in residence, ranging in age from little girls of seven to the afore-said Brahmin cook of forty. But the majority were from fifteen to twenty-five. Most of the older women had their heads shaved, and wore their sarees drawn close around their faces to hide this disfigurement imposed upon them by cruel custom.

At this time of the opening ceremony in 1892, the schoolrooms were in the inner apartments, the verandahs being used as class-rooms. This was but a temporary arrangement, for the foundations were already in for a fine school-room in the compound opposite the entrance to the original building. This was completed and used a twelvemonth later. The other rooms were then utilized as dormitories for an increased number of pupils.

The opening ceremonies were in two sections. In the morning a company of missionaries and Christian friends of various denominations assembled in the drawing-room for a dedication service. Ramabai said she

desired a public thanksgiving to God for all the way He had led her, and for the provision of this beautiful building which had been given them by Christians in America. The speaking and prayers, in which many present took vocal part, were in line with this thought. One of the speakers closed his remarks with a Scriptural quotation which may now be looked back upon in the light of a prophecy. Turning to Ramabai he said: "My sister, 'The Lord shall increase you more and more, you and your children.'¹"

In the evening the schoolroom was gaily decorated and filled with a sympathising company of Ramabai's Hindu friends, relatives of the pupils, and a few Europeans. Addresses in Marathi were given by Ramabai and others. The pupils sang a number of Marathi songs, one of which, describing the woes of the widow, was very touching. An American White Ribbon song was nicely rendered by a few of the girls; and four of them gave, with marvellous correctness, an English dialogue, representing a scene in the life of Peter the Great. Thus it will be seen that their education had made considerable advance since the alphabet commencement before-mentioned.

It was my privilege at this time to spend several days at the Sadan. The loving spirit that prevailed, and the all-prevading energy of the bright little woman at the

¹ Psalm cxv. 14.

head of the house, were two features of the work that remained with me. There was never any trace of Oriental languor about Ramabai; whatever she did she did with her might. Whether hearing the pupils recite their Marathi lessons, directing the *malis* in the garden, overseeing the workmen on the new building, or explaining the operations of the institution to a party of visitors—she was all life and energy, the centre and circumference of all that was going on.

I was particularly attracted by a happy group of child-widows, some half-dozen or more, about ten or twelve years of age. Such bright little girls! It was difficult to believe that they rested under the cruel ban of widowhood! But even their games echoed the circumstances of their lives. One of these, in which there was an amount of screaming and running away, was explained to me. It was the new child-wife being tutored by her mother-in-law in domestic affairs, and, persistently misunderstanding her commands and bringing her the wrong articles, was being, in consequence, chased and punished!

Somewhere about this time one who heard it took down a conversation between some of these little girls, in which occurred the following passages, illustrating the condition of girl-children who, not knowing what marriage means, are yet widows:—

VITTO: “I was a mere baby when I was married.

We do not look like wives, do we? Yet people call me a 'widow,' 'unlucky,' and say I have killed my husband."

CHANDA: "I also am a widow, because my parents say so; but what is the meaning of it I do not understand. They say I shall have to suffer much as I grow older. No one will love me because I killed and swallowed my husband; but I never saw him. I do not know who he was. Since I am come to this school all the teachers love me; they try to make me happy, and they never say unkind words to me or think I am unlucky."

SUNDRI: "Prya, let us hear your history, and I will tell mine."

PRYA: "My father knew I would be a widow, but he purposely gave me in marriage."

ALL THE GIRLS: "Prya, Prya, do not say so! How could he know what would be in the future?"

VITTO: "Well, sometimes parents do it for money. Do you know of one girl who was here in the school, and was obliged by her ignorant people to leave? The poor thing was married when she was five years old. She was given to a man of fifty for a hundred rupees. Within a year the miserable man died, leaving behind him a widow six years old! Don't you think her parents must have had sense enough to know that such a small child given to an old man would become a widow?"

But they want money, or do it when they are tired of their daughter.”

The other girls chimed in with reminiscences of the cruel treatment meted out to this hapless widow of six years by her husband's relatives.

Then Prya said: “ You will get thousands of cases like that. My mother died when I was nine months old. When I was two years and six months my father wanted me to be married. He gave me in marriage to a little boy, who died six months afterwards, when I was three. My mother's friend took care of me till I was six; then my father brought me to Bombay. I lived with him four years, cooked for myself, and was very unhappy. My father was a strict Hindu, and did not love me because I was a widow. My mother's uncle put me in this school. My father did not like it, and came to Poona to fetch me out, but was taken ill. I went to see him. He said he wanted to see my head shaved and disfigured. But he died soon, and I was free.”

The poor little mites concluded their conversation by unanimously refusing to consider themselves widows; and rejoicing in the freedom and happiness found at the Sharada Sadan, they ran away to play.

Soon after Ramabai settled her Sharada Sadan at Poona, she paid a visit to the ancestral home of her family in the Mangalore district, where she was well re-



TWO PUPILS AND THEIR HINDU MOTHER

ceived by her relatives. On her return to Poona several young widows from the extensive Brahmin community of the former place accompanied her, and became her pupils. The case of one poor ill-used girl-widow at this place had especially attracted Ramabai's attention, and she much desired to rescue her. This girl was used most cruelly by her relatives. She was beaten for the slightest fault. She was also punished by being suspended from the rafters of the roof by her wrists, while a heap of prickly pear-bush was placed underneath to receive her if she should succeed in freeing herself. Another punishment was to shut her in a cook-house with burning chillies (red peppers) on the fire; this produces a most irritating smoke, and, often repeated, injures the eyesight.

This poor girl was a most unhappy creature, fearful and suspicious of everybody. Ramabai tried in vain to gain her confidence, and her relatives treated with contempt the idea of giving her an education. Ramabai's diplomacy then led her to try another plan. She invited the mother-in-law and one other female member of the family to pay her a visit with this girl. They came, and were courteously established on the compound, and a cookhouse appropriated to their use, their caste principles making separate cooking needful. Ramabai entertains like a princess, and the visitors felt themselves highly honoured. Some weeks passed away, during

which time Ramabai did all she could to gain the confidence of the unhappy girl, who, however, did not appear to be much more cheerful in spite of her change of surroundings, and the apparent change in the way she was treated. When she did at last open her heart to Ramabai, it was found that the course of ill-treatment had really never ceased; that these women had contrived to beat the girl daily since their arrival at the Sharada Sadan, and to frequently lock her in the cook-house and leave her there for hours. As soon as Ramabai felt convinced that the victim trusted her, and would stand by her intention to remain, she told the other women that they might leave—a perfectly polite intimation according to Hindu custom. There was some trouble when they found the young widow determined to remain; but as she was over the age at which they could legally have forced her to return, they had to submit with the best grace they could, especially when they found Ramabai took her part. This young woman has long been a professing Christian, and a useful helper in the Sharada Sadan; but I always think her face bears traces of those years of systematic ill-usage. Probably the reader will be able to identify the heroine of this story in the picture of “Six Pupils of the Sharada Sadan who have become Christians.”

CHAPTER V.

SOME OF RAMABAI'S PUPILS BECOME CHRISTIANS; OPPOSITION AND PERSECUTION.

“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.”—MATT. v. 6.

“IT is altogether too bad that I should have all the blame on earth, and Ramabai all the reward in heaven,” piquantly remarked Soonderbai Powar, when relating some stirring events that occurred at the Sharada Sadan in the early months of 1893.

“The people are saying it is all because I am living with Ramabai that the girls are becoming Christians, and that I am the cause of all the trouble; but I have been away in England for several months, and on my return find all the girls attending Ramabai's prayer-meetings. How could it be my fault?”

Nevertheless, it was apparent that Soonderbai was rejoiced at these developments, and not so very much inwardly disturbed at the blame meted out to her by the offended Brahmin community.

Since leaving America to begin her life-work in India, spiritual enlargement had come to Ramabai. From time to time, in the early part of the past decade, India

was visited by earnest Christian evangelists from Britain and America. Such men as Dr. Pentecost, Henry Varley, John McNeill, and a host of others not so well known, have gone on what are called "cold-weather tours," visiting the large cities, and addressing European audiences, and also natives through an interpreter. Each of these seemed to have some special message, and most were greatly helpful in re-emphasizing the foundation truths of the Christian faith, leading many out into a truer and deeper Christian experience.

Ramabai always eagerly embraced these opportunities, and, as she learned new lessons, incorporated them into her life and practice. In all these various ministries that helped her, it is but fair to say that Ramabai studied her Bible and made sure there was a "Thus saith the Lord" for all that she accepted. It was her practice then, and still is, to devote the early morning hour, from five to six a. m., to the study of God's Word and prayer. In those days she was usually joined by Soonderbai, her own little daughter, Manorama, and that section of her pupils whom she called her own family.

In the prosecution of her work, Ramabai was continually meeting with high-caste girls who were *not* widows, but who were in circumstances of destitution and moral danger. Ramabai's American supporters gave her a generous personal allowance, very little of which

sufficed for her own simple needs. She employed the surplus in caring for a number of these poor girls, who, not being widows, but either deserted wives or destitute orphans, were not eligible for support from the funds of the Sadan. Some of these were maintained in Mission Schools at Ramabai's expense, and she received some as members of her own family. A few she adopted entirely, they having no natural guardians to whom they owed any sort of allegiance.

Ramabai felt it was her duty to instruct these girls in the principles of the Christian religion. They were therefore aroused an hour before the other inmates of the Shadan to join in the early morning Scripture study and prayer. Neither was the door closed against any others who might be drawn to come and listen from motives of curiosity, or from a genuine desire to learn what it was in Ramabai's religion which made her so different from any one they had ever known before. And they did so, till, at the time of Soonderbai's return to India in the spring of 1893, fully half of the widows were attending these early morning meetings, and the Spirit of God was evidently applying the teaching powerfully to many hearts.

At this time there were two other resident teachers in the school, who, though professing Christians, neither showed any sympathy with the movement nor attended the prayer-meetings.

As in a thrifty English household fruits are preserved and pickles made for winter use, so a good Brahmin housewife has her season for drying and preparing a store of various fruits and herbs for use during the rainy season. Their season comes in the month of May, while ours is an autumn function. At this time, the middle of the hot weather, school holidays were given in Poona; Ramabai's store room was likewise replenished—and a vacation from school work meant the employment of the girls in all the mysteries of preserving, pickling, and preparing tamarinds, limes, mangoes, chillies, and the various spices used in the complicated culinary art as understood in well-managed Brahmin households. But it was not all work; now and then some delightful excursion was arranged, looked forward to, and much enjoyed.

It was the time of an Indian festival in the middle of these holidays, and on the eve of the principal day of the feast Ramabai told her pupils that she had ordered conveyances for the morrow to take them to a beautiful spot, a few miles away, for a picnic. They would go in charge of the aforementioned teachers, and she trusted they would have a very happy time. To the eager inquiries as to why Bai and Ukka were not going, she replied that they had need of a day alone with God; adding that if any of the girls wished to stay and join them, they were at liberty to do so. Out of a total of

sixty or sixty-five, about thirty elected to forego the picnic and remain for a day of prayer. The whole day was spent in devotion, the study of the Scriptures, prayer, and exhortation. Before it was ended, more than twenty declared themselves to be inquirers after the truth, and some seemed to have really received it into their hearts with joy and gladness.

Ramabai and Soonderbai were filled with joy. A small Christian Endeavour Society was formed, officers appointed, and a little upstairs room set apart for a prayer room.

But "a city set on a hill cannot be hid," and it was soon noised abroad that Ramabai was making all the girls Christians. Then arose a storm.

From time to time Ramabai had encountered difficulties from her Brahmin friends. In Bombay a "Managing Committee" had been appointed, who aimed to make the Sadan a strictly Hindu home, and imposed full observance of caste restrictions, the effect of which was to shut Ramabai and other Christian teachers out from certain parts of the dwelling. No pupil was free to attend any sort of Christian service, but any might worship at Hindu temples. This being decidedly against the *strict neutrality* enjoined by the American Committee, an appeal was made, and Ramabai was instructed to resume the management herself.

In an interview published in a Madras paper concern-

ing the conversions just named, Ramabai said: "When we came to Poona, an Advisory Board was appointed to advise me with regard to outside matters—purchase of land, building, etc. They had nothing practically to do with the internal management of the Sadan. This Board consisted of three well-known Hindu gentlemen. We went on satisfactorily for some time, but when the number of girls attending my private prayers rose to about twenty, the matter was reported to them. We did nothing in secret. My room was always open. They asked me whether some of the girls attended my private prayers. I replied that they did. Then they asked me to prevent them from doing so. I told them I could not conscientiously do that—I could not restrict my intercourse with the pupils. As a Christian was at the head of the institution, the girls must be more or less under Christian influences. The members of the Advisory Board therefore tendered their resignation, and issued a circular-letter to the parents and guardians of the scholars, asking them not to send their girls to the Sadan."

About twenty-five of the girls were thus withdrawn. Many affecting scenes occurred. Some parents yielded to the entreaties of their daughters, and allowed them to remain, with the strict promise not to attend the prayer meetings in future. Some poor girls were carried off to certain persecution and ill-usage. In one



THE GUJERATHI LASSIE

or two cases where Ramabai knew they would be taken away to inevitable moral ruin, she resorted to various justifiable expedients to save them.

The escape of one girl, in which my household had some share, was in some of its features as sensational as that of many an old-time negro slave. The escape was from as real a slavery. Only part can be told here. This lassie was one whom Ramabai had adopted as her own. Her mother, a Gujerathi widow, was living the life of a temple woman in Bombay (a "holy" Hindu harlot). A prominent Hindu reformer in Bombay, editor of a newspaper, sent the girl to Ramabai to save her from her mother's fate. But when he heard that the girls were becoming Christians, he joined in the popular outcry, and incited the mother, vile as she was, to claim her daughter. He was only one of many who plainly showed that they would rather see Hindu girls become harlots than Christians.

A chronic complaint, at that time troublesome, was a reason for sending the girl to a hospital in Bombay. This would gain time. A message was sent also to me asking me to visit her, and if possible devise some way of saving her from her threatened fate. Owing to the riots then raging in Bombay between Hindus and Mohammedans, it was some days before I could get to see her. Mrs. Man Sukh Lal, then living in our house, accompanied me, and visited her frequently afterwards.

To her the girl opened her heart. She wanted to be sent away where her mother could not get at her to ruin her. She dreaded the day of her discharge. Frequently the mother and some priests were found there at the visiting hour. They brought her the Hindu Shastras and wanted to take her Bible away from her. Day by day the hospital was watched at the hour of discharging patients. But, by the kindness of the matron, we were permitted to remove her at a different hour, and at once sent her out of the city to the care of a missionary friend; Ramabai being purposely kept in ignorance of her whereabouts. But the mother continued to trouble Ramabai, claiming now that her daughter was two years younger than she herself had stated when first given to Ramabai, while the latter believed her to be of legal age to decide for herself.

Renewed torrents of abuse were poured out upon Ramabai by the entire native press. She was then consecrated up to the point of not caring for her own reputation—but her school must not be ruined. She came to me and said the school would be ruined if the girl were not given up. I declined to have any hand in producing the girl, but at Ramabai's entreaty gave her the name of the missionary friends who had taken charge of her. They finally arranged to bring her to the head police office in Bombay and let the matter be decided there. The girl was brought, but the mother did not

keep the appointment. The Christian Police Superintendent declined to give her to the Hindus who came to represent the mother, and she was again removed by my friends. A subsequent attempt to gain possession of her was at once abandoned when it became known that the missionary in whose house she had been staying had baptised her! The deed was done, she was now a Christian, and was at once relinquished to her fate by her mother and the priests. Ramabai's perfidy was again published to the world, although the baptism, administered at the girl's own ardent desire, took place entirely without Ramabai's knowledge or consent.

CHAPTER VI.

THE MARBLE HALLS OF HINDUISM.

“Her princes within her are roaring lions; her judges are evening wolves.”—ZEPH. iii. 3

THE storm raised over the baptism of the young woman mentioned in the last chapter was fiercer even than that of the previous three months. It threatened to annihilate the institution; more pupils were removed, and the leading Hindus of the Bombay presidency seemed to be determined that they would never rest until they saw the Sharada Sadan die an ignoble death. But God gave Ramabai three promises at that time of great trouble. They were as follows:

“No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn.”¹

“These things have I spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.”²

¹ Isaiah liv. 17.

² John xvi. 33.

“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse . . . and prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”¹

These promises were a great source of comfort and strength to Ramabai, and have been marvellously fulfilled, as will be seen later on.

In a report made subsequently to her American friends, Ramabai thus succinctly explained her policy. Reminding them that she had all along insisted that the institution should be unsectarian, she said: “We give them (the pupils) all liberty to keep their caste and customs, and we have made all arrangements for it. They are not prevented from praying to their own gods, nor from wearing those gods around their necks, if they want to; and some girls in my school do so, as I used to do years ago. Do you think I have gone against the religion of the girls? No, not in any way. I have not taught the girls any religious system. If they wanted any religious training, they might go out of the school to the missionary, or to the Hindu teacher. But I am glad to say that some light came to them—not from ourselves, but from God.

“I was a Christian woman, and I had a home of my own, and a daughter for whom I thought I must make

¹ Malachi iii. 10.

a home. I had made the resolution of Joshua, 'As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.' That shall be my resolution to the end. I let my girls do what they like; but I have the freedom with which Christ has made me free: and why should I keep my light under a bushel? I do not mean to do it. When I had my family worship in my own room, not in the school-hall, some of the girls began to come in; and we gave them freedom to come, if they wanted to.

"My Hindu brethren thought it was going too far, and that I was Christianizing those girls. They wanted me to shut my room when I was reading the Bible and praying. I said, 'No; I have the same freedom to practice Christianity which these girls have to practice their religion. Why should I shut the door of my room, which I do not shut at any other time during the twenty-four hours of the day?' The Hindu friends were much offended at it, and wanted to pull our school down, and raise another school on its ruins; but I am glad to say that the foundations of this school have not been set on the sand, but on the eternal Rock, and it stands there to this day, and it will stand for ever and ever."

In the cold season following the events narrated, Mrs. Judith Andrews, President of the Executive Committee of the American Ramabai Association, visited India. She spent several weeks at the Sharada Sadan, and fa-

miliarized herself with the work and workers. The pupils, taught by Ramabai to be courteously attentive to all guests, were charmed with the gentle white-haired old lady, and bestowed upon her the endearing appellation of Ahjibai (grandmother).

During the visit of Mrs. Andrews, the school-house alluded to in Chapter IV. was publicly dedicated, though it had been in use for some time. The meetings on that festive day, March 12th, 1894, partook of the same character as those of the dedication of the previous buildings. Much sympathy was expressed by the speakers for Ramabai in the severe trials through which she had passed, and the hope was voiced that she would not be again burdened with another "Advisory Committee." And she never has. Some Hindu gentlemen present also expressed their repentant sympathy, and an account of the meeting, written at the time, says, "God has greatly helped Ramabai and sustained her work. Her prospects are brighter now than they have ever been before."

No trip to India is considered complete without a sight of some of her ancient palaces, temples, and tombs. As the most noted of these are in North India, Mrs. Andrews desired to take the usual trip to Agra, Delhi, etc., and prevailed upon Ramabai to accompany her. She could not have had a better guide. Ramabai had been there before; and under her auspices Mrs.

Andrews saw sights that other travellers miss—sights calculated to give a more just idea of the lives really led by those who once peopled these ruined marble halls. In the grounds of what is now called the Agra Fort are some ruined palaces of the Moghul emperors. Ramabai must tell the story herself and draw the moral as she alone knows how: “The guide showed us the Rani’s private rooms, the gardens and grand marble buildings, once occupied by the kings and queens. He also showed us the beautiful pleasure tower called Saman Burj. Visitors are shown all that is beautiful here, and they go away carrying very pleasant impressions of Agra with them.

“I was not satisfied with seeing the outside beauty of those ‘poems in marble,’ but wished to see the dungeons, and the place where the unfortunate women used to be confined and hanged at the pleasure of the king. The guide at first denied the existence of such places in the palace; but, finally—on obtaining a promise to get a little more money for his trouble—he consented to show the dungeons. He opened a trap-door on one side of the palace, let us in, and guided us about, showing us the many small and large underground rooms where the queens who had incurred the king’s displeasure used to be shut up, tortured, and starved, until it pleased the monarch to set them free. The guide then lighted a big torch, and took us to the

furthest end of the prison, into a room underneath the Saman Burj, or Jasmine Tower. The room was very dark and octagonal, with a deep, dark pit in the centre, and a big beam placed on the walls right over that pit. This beam, beautifully carved, served for hanging the unfortunate women who once occupied the throne of the king as his queens, but had by some unknown cause fallen under his displeasure, and had to suffer such a cruel and ignoble death. Their lifeless bodies were let down into that dark pit, whence a stream carried them to the waters of the Jumna, to be eaten by crocodiles. Thus the poor, miserable wives of the Moghul emperors suffered torture and death in that dark hell-pit under the pleasure-gallery, while their cruel masters and rivals sang songs, enjoyed life, and made merry over their grave in the beautifully decorated, grand, Saman Burj. I think but little of those lovely places, but always remember seeing that dark room, and compare it with similar places of torture which exist in many sacred towers of India. If the walls of that horrible room had the power of speech, oh, what stories of human cruelty and misery would they tell to-day!

“ I beg of my Western sisters not to be satisfied with looking on the outside beauty of the grand philosophies, and not to be charmed with hearing the long and interesting discourses of our educated men; but to open the trap-doors of the great monuments of ancient Hin-

du intellect, and enter into the dark cellars, where they will see the real workings of the philosophies which they admire so much. Let our Western friends come to India, and live right among us. Let them frequently go to the hundreds of sacred places where countless pilgrims throng yearly. Let them go round Jagannath Puri, Benares, Gaya, Allahabad, Muttra, Brindraban, Dwarka, Pandharpur, Udipi, Tirpatty, and such other sacred cities, the strongholds of Hinduism and seats of sacred learning, where the Mahatmas and *Sadhus* dwell, and where the 'sublime' philosophies are daily taught and devoutly followed. There are thousands of priests and men learned in sacred lore, who are the spiritual rulers and guides of our people. They neglect and oppress the widows, and devour widows' houses. I have gone to many of the so-called sacred places, lived among the people, and seen enough of those learned philosophers and possessors of superior Hindu spirituality who oppress the widows, and trample the poor, ignorant, low-caste people under their heels. They have deprived the widows of their birthright to enjoy pure life and lawful happiness. They send out hundreds of emissaries to look for young widows, and bring them by hundreds and thousands to the sacred cities to rob them of their money and their virtue. They entice the poor, ignorant women to leave their own homes to live in the Kshetras, *i. e.*, holy places, and then, after

robbing them of their belongings, tempt them to yield to their unholy desires. They shut the young helpless widows into their large Mathas (monasteries), sell and hire them out to wicked men so long as they can get money; and, when the poor, miserable slaves are no longer pleasing to their cruel masters, they turn them out in the street to beg their livelihood, to suffer the horrible consequences of sin, to carry the burden of shame, and finally to die the death worse than that of a starved street dog! The so-called sacred places—those veritable hells on earth—have become the graveyards of countless widows and orphans.

“Thousands upon thousands of young widows and innocent children are suffering untold misery and dying helpless every year throughout this land; but not a philosopher or Mahatma has come out boldly to champion their cause and to help them. The teachers of false philosophies and lifeless spiritualities will do no good to our people. Nothing has been done by them to protect the fatherless and judge the widow. If anything has been done by anybody at all, it has been by those people who have come under the direct influence of Christianity. Education and philosophies are powerless before the caste rules, ancient customs, and priestcraft. That is why our educated men and our learned *Sadhus* are so indifferent toward their own brothers and sisters. The educated men and learned

priests do not like to move about. They don't want to take the trouble to go about to see how dreadfully the widows have to suffer, and how many thousands of lives are destroyed by their priestly brethren. They mourn over a few women who have the boldness to declare themselves as free women, and to follow their conscience; but they say nothing of the thousands who die every year or lead shameful lives. I earnestly beg the women of America and England to come to India and live in our sacred cities, not living in European and American fashion, but living like the poor beggar-women, going in and out of their dirty huts, hearing the stories of their miserable lives, and seeing the fruits of the sublime philosophies. Let not my Western sisters be charmed by the books and poems they read. There are many hard and bitter facts which we have to accept and feel. All is not poetry with us. The prose we have to read in our own lives is very hard. It cannot be understood by our learned brothers and comfortable sisters of the West."

The iniquitous traffic in widows alluded to here by Ramabai opens the door to a subject in connection with Hinduism, the knowledge of which has been a sore burden on Ramabai's heart, and has forced from her many tears and groans on behalf of its victims. Some twelve months or more after this visit with Mrs. Andrews, Ramabai set off on a visit to Brindaban, a sacred



RAMABAI DISGUISED AS A MAHAR

city about forty miles from Agra, to see what she could do to rescue some of the miserable victims of priest-craft. She disguised herself as a poor pilgrim and took a mean lodging in the city, going in and out among the women, heard their stories of cruel wrong, and tried to plan some way of escape for them. She found an organized method of entrapping them. The agents of the rich priests who own this city of sacred temples, go about the country and by inquiry find where the rich young widows live. They enter into conversation with them, and persuade them of the merits of pilgrimage to expiate the sins which have caused their widowhood. They tell them they will go direct to heaven if they will live at these sacred places and serve the priests and *Sadhus* and worship Krishna. They are courteously received on arrival, then subtle temptations are laid to deprive them of their money and jewels, and when these are gone their virtue follows. Brindaban is largely devoted to the deity Krishna, whose vile and immoral character is rejoiced in by his followers. If these poor women are unwilling to live immoral lives, they are told that it is no sin to do so in these sacred precincts, which are specially favoured by Krishna. Ramabai found hundreds of widows here, mostly from Bengal. She planned for the escape of six or seven of these women; but her plans were frustrated, and she returned sick with the mental depression, the moral debasement, and

the actually foetid conditions of life which she underwent in her efforts to save some of these perishing ones.

The dark features of Hinduism thus portrayed, not only infest the " sacred " cities, but spread like a miasma into every region of Hindu life. Ramabai computes that ten per cent. of the women and girls who have come into her hands during the twelve years of her experience have been sinned against by heartless men.

In her efforts to help widows, Ramabai has been frequently asked to shelter deserted wives. Childless women are constantly being driven from their husbands' homes by a more favoured rival. Many of these have come into Ramabai's hands, and in some cases she has been successful in obtaining for them a divorce. Persecuted wives, too, have fled to her for help and shelter. Some of these have needed protection from husbands who were " going about to kill them " ; and I have known Ramabai have two or three such in hiding at one time from the rage of those who should be their natural protectors.

CHAPTER VII.

PLANS FOR THE FUTURE; RAMABAI'S SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCES.

“She considereth a field and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard.”—PROVERBS xxxi. 16.

WHEN Pandita Ramabai arranged with her friends in America to support the Sharada Sadan for ten years, she confidently expected that at the end of that time the Hindus would have become so convinced of the benefits of education for women that they would willingly pay for it. But, as the years went on, it was evident that this prospect became no nearer realization. Ramabai's mind became exercised about the future support of the school—how could it be brought about? After considerable thought and prayer, she conceived the plan of purchasing a piece of land in the country, and planting it with fruit trees, the produce of which should yield a fair income in the course of a few years.

Acting upon the principle that “If two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask,

it shall be done for them of My Father which is in heaven," Ramabai and Soonderbai joined in prayer that if the thought was of the Lord, He would send the money to purchase such a fruit-farm. They then began to look out for answers. Ramabai mentioned the plan to several of her friends both in India and in America. Money given to be used at her discretion was placed to this fund; it gradually grew. In 1894, two years after they had begun to pray, the money was in hand, and the purchase of the farm an accomplished fact.

A suitable piece of ground was found to be for sale at Khedgaon, close to a railway-station on the recently-opened Southern Marathi Railway, about forty miles south of Poona. Ramabai planted a portion of the land with hundreds of young orange, lime, and mango trees. A fine well was dug, and a vegetable garden made, which in a few months supplied most of the vegetables used by the school. The remainder of the hundred acres were, by degrees, cleared of the jungle-wood, by which they were covered, and planted with various useful crops; leaving only one very rocky portion, of which the Government took a part in making a new road.

There was a charm about life at the Sharada Sadan that always captivated me. I learned more about the ways and thoughts of genuine Indian life by a few days



RAMABAI AND A MISSIONARY FRIEND

with Ramabai than in months and years of ordinary European experience in Bombay.

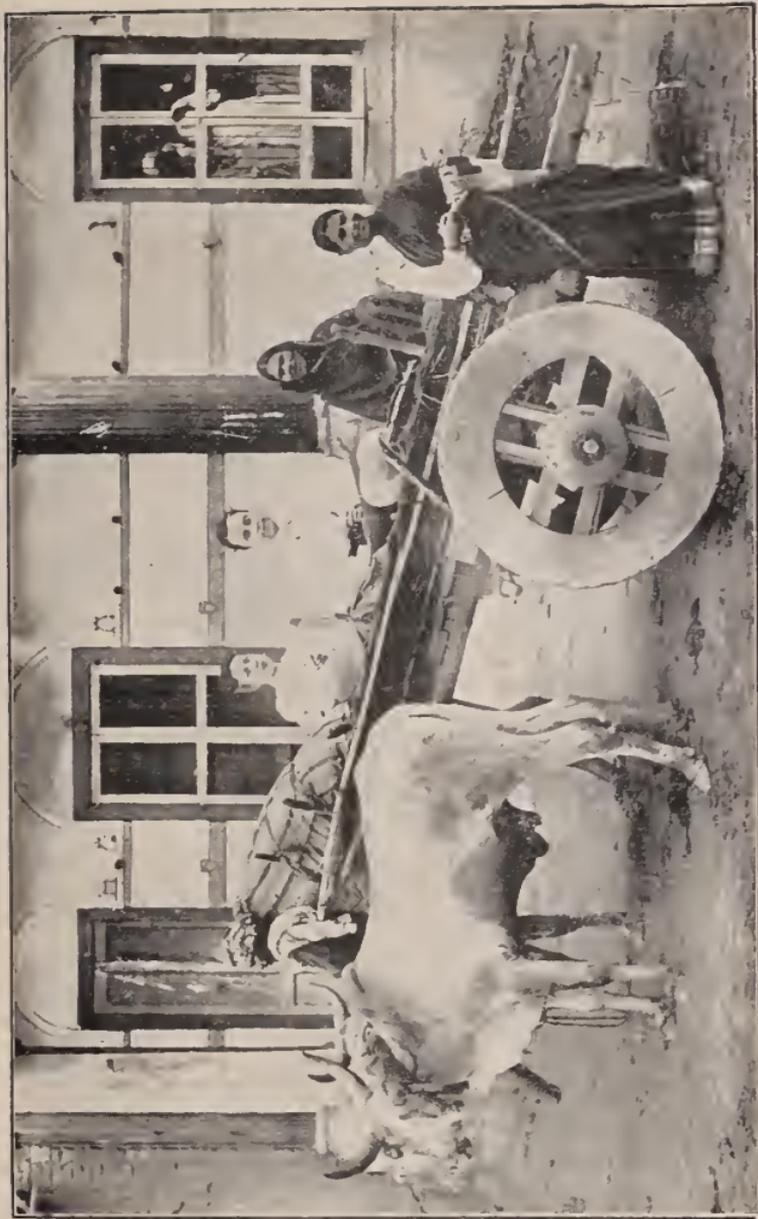
When therefore Ramabai asked me to spend the New Year holidays of 1895 with her, I was very glad to be free to accept the invitation. The Sharada Sadan was "Liberty Hall" for guests. They could either have their meals sent to their rooms, or join the family. I usually preferred the latter. When breakfast or dinner was ready, Ramabai herself would come to escort me to the refectory. This was a long, shed-like building, with a verandah in front, on which we left our shoes. There was no furniture, save a row of stools along each wall. I call them stools for want of a better name; they were simply boards about one foot by two feet, raised about two inches from the ground. These were the seats. I was placed next to the hostess, who commenced by pouring water over her hands and mine. She then inspected the brass vessels which were placed in front of us, and usually rinsed out the shining brass plates.

Then the girls who had been cooking came in and deposited quickly a small mound of rice on each plate; another followed with a pot of ghee (clarified butter) and poured a little on the rice; another served us with two kinds of curry, made of lentils or peas, in small brass basins. Others followed with hot chappatties (unleavened bread), then vegetables of several kinds,

all cut small and fried with herbs and pepper. In addition to this, the ordinary fare, Ramabai always served her guests with fruit, cake, and milk. I enjoyed the food, and succeeded fairly well in my endeavour to eat it in the same fashion as my Indian sisters, without the aid of fork, knife, or spoon.

On the visit of which I am writing, I spent several pleasant days, the last being New Year's Day. All the Christian girls who understood English attended the Watch-night Service with Soonderbai and Manorama, while Ramabai conducted a service of her own at home in Marathi for the other Christian girls. All were up bright and early on New Year's morning in anticipation of a happy day. Ramabai informed me that we were invited to breakfast with one of the Christian teachers of the Sadan who lived with her family in the city, but that she was going on a round of New Year visits first and I could accompany her.

The dummies, a heavy covered wagon, drawn by two fine white bulls, came round about 8 a. m., and we started off. Manorama and some others of the children were included in the party of six. In the front of the wagon and beneath the seats were piled huge baskets of sweetmeats, from which I partly guessed the nature of the visits we were about to pay. We first alighted at the Anglo-Indian Children's Home, a work of faith, founded by the late Miss Dawhly, which cares for desti-



MISSIONARY AND BIBLE WOMEN

tute children of European and Eurasian parentage. As we waited the appearance of Mrs. Hutchings, the devoted successor of Miss Dawlly, I related to Ramabai the peculiar history of one of the children in that institution. "I wish to support a child here," said Ramabai; "I will support that very girl." And from that day that dear child has found a kind friend in Ramabai. Her holidays are spent with Ramabai; and when I last met her she was looking forward to taking up some post of usefulness in connection with the work in years to come.

One basket of sweetmeats was left here, and I fancied also a more substantial gift, by the happy and grateful-looking faces we left behind us. The Government poor-house was our next destination. This covered a considerable extent of ground, and here we saw maimed, halt, blind, and lepers. Ramabai went through all the compounds, and herself gave a large ball of sweetmeat to each inmate, while the respectful salutation of "Sa-laam Bai," sounded gratefully on all hands. Indian sweetmeats are a food as well as a luxury—this was a peculiarly nourishing kind, made of lentils, butter, and sugar.

"Poor things, they have no pleasures," said Ramabai.

Our next visit was to the lunatic asylum. The distribution here was assisted by two of the keepers. We saw sad sights here indeed, and some that were com-

ical. One man, a Mahommedan, looked very fiercely at me, and ordered me (in Hindustani) to go back to my country, saying that I had only come there because I could not get enough to eat in my own land.

Gratitude there was none. The poor creatures snatched the sweetmeat and cried out for more. Ramabai persevered in overseeing the distribution. She dared not leave it to the officers of the place, lest any should lose their share. On leaving, she remarked to me that it was evident that a large proportion were there through opium and ganga (hemp-drug)—their appearance showed this.

The breakfast prepared for us at the teacher's house was very elaborate. Plaintain leaves were spread for plates. A merry party of about twenty sat down to eat the repast, which was strictly vegetarian. One very delicious dish so closely resembled custard that one could scarcely believe it was made without eggs; but I was assured it was a combination of rice and coconut.

The great event of the day was to be a Brahmin dinner given by an aunt of Ramabai's, a Hindu, who was visiting her. The old lady took great pleasure and pride in cooking this dinner and serving it up, though she would by no means have defiled her caste by sitting down with us—Christian outcasts—to eat it. Two missionary families and several Indian Chris-

tians joined the dinner party. The festivities ended with a surprise party of Soonderbai's planning, held in the large schoolroom. A monster bran tub furnished presents for pupils, teachers, and visitors. The little ones had toys and picture books; the pupils had each the material for a choli (a short bodice that they all wear) with knitting-needles, crochet-hooks, wool, etc., etc. The party dispersed after a happy day, and Ramabai and myself took the night train to Bombay.

The battle had been decided as to whether Hinduism or Christianity should have the ascendancy in the Sharada Sadan. As Ramabai's Christian life strengthened and deepened, she became more independent of even the opinions of her quondam Brahmin friends. At the same time, she kept strictly to her covenant of giving an entirely unsectarian education, with freedom to her pupils to observe all their Hindu customs. The Brahmin community gradually came to the conclusion to let Ramabai alone. They accepted the fact among themselves that she had gone irrevocably from them; and that all the benefits of her work which they had looked upon to shed lustre on their ancient religion were quite lost to them. A rival institution, or what was intended to be a rival institution, to the Sharada Sadan, was started as a boarding establishment in connection with the Poona Girl's High School; but though it existed for a few years, it never flourished greatly. Some of

the girls who had been removed from the Sadan were placed in this institution, but more than one finally returned to Ramabai.

As time went on, the light of Christianity shone more and more brightly in the Sharada Sadan. The Christian Endeavour Meetings prospered. Morning and evening prayers were held in a larger room, and attended by the majority of the pupils. Ramabai's little daughter, Manorama, whose heart had been early opened to divine influences, took a leading share in carrying on the work among the girls. Those who were interested in Christianity, and not forbidden by their guardians, attended Church and Sunday-school outside, as well as the ministrations of a Poona missionary, who held meetings in the prayer-room once a week.

The natural outcome of all this teaching was the creation among those girls who had received Christ of a desire for baptism. They wanted to become Christians in fact and deed, as well as in heart. Ramabai, however, was in favour of their remaining unbaptized—at least, while pupils in the Sharada Sadan. The school, she affirmed, was not for Christian girls, but for Hindus; and, consequently, she could not encourage the proposed baptisms. Several of the girls, however, made their own arrangements with the missionary whose classes they attended, and were baptized in the Methodist Church at Poona. Ramabai let things take

their course; but, after the baptisms, she told these girls that she could no longer accept them as pupils of the Sharada Sadan. As they all declared their readiness to work for their living, work was found for them. One or two became teachers in other schools; some were employed as teachers in the primary department of the Sadan; and others, unfit for teaching, accepted posts as servants of the establishment, cheerfully undertaking menial work as unto the Lord. Thus the difficulty was bridged over, and time was allowed for continuing their studies in part to those who wished it.

Among the pupils thus baptized was one particularly nice and good girl, whose early history illustrates the condition and hardship of the little widow more than many.

This poor little child, married at the age of five to a man forty years her senior, became a widow at six. She was left in charge of her husband's brother, a Brahmin innkeeper in a country district, a day's journey by rail from Poona. As the child grew up, she became a regular little slave, beaten and half-starved. She was employed constantly in going backwards and forwards to a well a quarter of a mile away to fetch water, which she carried on her hips and her head in great copper vessels. She was very miserable and her treatment was no secret to the people around.

One day Ramabai received a letter informing her of

this poor child's forlorn condition, and of the location of the well where she might so often be found. One of Ramabai's helpers visited the place in disguise, gained the confidence of the child, and arranged to take her away by the night train. The girl was then about eleven years old, and with her shaven head was easily disguised as a Mahomedan boy. Before the train started she was missed, and her people were in pursuit of her. They were at the station, but failed to recognise her; and she escaped. She bloomed out into a most lovable and estimable girl, and was married in 1897 to a fine Christian young man.

In a little tract published in Bombay, in 1895, Ramabai told the story of her own spiritual experiences. She said: "When I turned my attention to searching for the truth in the Hindu and Christian religions, and comparing them with each other, I found Christianity to be the better of the two, and accepted it. I was duly baptized in the Church of England. I believed the Apostles' Creed, and all the essential doctrines of Christianity. My mind was at rest; and I trusted in God, believed on Christ, and prayed in His name. I did not adhere to any special sect, nor do I now. It was enough for me to be called a Christian, on the ground of my belief in Christ as the Saviour of mankind. I used to pray in a general way, and had never known that my special need was—'Believe on the Lord Jesus

Christ, *and thou shalt be saved.*' Salvation, I thought, was something to be good in the future. That is how the future tense in the above text is abused by the converts, especially the intellectual converts of the present day in this country. I had many doubts and many difficulties in the matter of belief. So many sects, so many opinions, so much want of spirituality and much shallow talk in the name of religion. All these troubled me very much, and I began to see much the same in the picture of Christianity as I have been accustomed to see in that of the Hindu religion. But all this time I was conscious that God was leading me; and I determined not to take the opinion of men as my ground of belief, and went on reading the Bible only and trusted in God's mercy.

"Some years ago I was brought to the conviction that mine was *only an intellectual belief—a belief in which there was no life.* It looked for salvation in the future after death; and consequently my soul had not 'passed from death unto life.' God showed me how very dangerous my position was, and what a wretched and lost sinner I was; and how necessary it was for me to obtain salvation in the present, and not in some future time. I repented long; I became very restless and almost ill, and passed many sleepless nights. The Holy Spirit so got hold of me that I could not rest until I found salvation then and there. So I prayed earnest-

ly to God to pardon my sins for the sake of Jesus Christ, and let me realize that I had really got salvation through Him. I believed God's promise, and took Him at His word; and when I had done this, my burden rolled away, and I realized that I was forgiven and was freed from the power of sin. 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.'¹ I became very happy after that. There was not a shadow of doubt as to my having obtained salvation through Jesus Christ. 'But as many as received Him [a person, not a thing; not a religion, but a living person], *to them gave He power to become the sons of God.*'² 'And this is life eternal, that they might *know* Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent.'³ In the Old Testament God is not revealed as Father, but as the Creator, the Mighty God, the Judge, the Jehovah. It was left to Jesus in the New Testament to reveal the Father. Men talk about God, but they cannot know Him except the Son reveal Him.⁴ These things are hid from the wise and prudent, but God has revealed them unto babes.⁵ That is why He says, 'Except ye be converted, *and become as little children*, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.'⁶ 'He that believeth on the Son *hath* everlasting life.'⁷ I knew I had everlasting life, *i. e.*, knew God; and

¹ Rom. viii. 16. ² John i. 12. ³ John xvii. 3. ⁴ Matt. xi. 27. ⁵ Matt. xi. 25. ⁶ Matt. xviii. 3. ⁷ John iii. 36.



TARA AND HER CHRISTIAN HUSBAND



TARA AS FOUND BY THE WELL



the Spirit was sent into my heart, crying 'Abba, Father.'¹

"Last year I happened to read the Life of Amanda Smith. She had been a slave in America, and had been freed. When she was converted, she shouted and said she had been delivered out of bondage twice—once out of slavery, and once from the slavery of sin. And I have a right to praise God too; for I have been first delivered from the slavery of man's opinions, from the fear of man which holds so many of my dear people, and a second time from the bondage of sin. As I read further in this book, where she gives an account of her spiritual experience, I felt my need of the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in me.

"I prayed earnestly to God to show me the way, and to remove all the hindrances that came in the way of my receiving this great blessing. I read in the papers that Mr. Gelson Gregson was to hold some special mission services in Bombay. I longed to go, but could not easily leave my school and be away from Poona. I did not know anything about Mr. Gregson, but the desire to hear him preach became very strong. I left the matter in God's hands, and rested quietly. One morning I received an urgent letter from a girl whose mother was supposed to be in a dying condition, and who wanted very much to see me. The girl urged up-

¹Rom. viii. 15.

on me very much to start at once and come to Bombay. I did so, recognising in this call the special providence of God which was taking me to Bombay in answer to my prayer.

“ I heard Mr. Gregson preach his first sermon from the text, ‘ I am crucified with Christ ’¹ ; which impressed me very much. I stayed three days, and attended the services. The subject was exactly what I wanted and needed to know. In April at the Lanouli camp meeting I heard Mr. Gregson preach again. He preached as one who had received and was filled with the Holy Spirit and knew the deep things of God. I then opened my heart to a friend, and told her of my intense desire for the gift of the Holy Spirit ; and we together sought a conversation with Mr. Gregson. I asked him many questions, which he satisfactorily answered in the words of Scripture. We prayed then that I might receive the Holy Spirit ; but it was not until the evening of that day that I felt conscious of His presence in me. Since then I have received much blessing, and am ever grateful to God for showing me the way of this blessed life.”

¹ Gal. ii. 20.

CHAPTER VIII.

ASKING GREAT THINGS OF GOD.

“Open thy mouth wide and I will fill it.”—PSALM lxxxix. 10.

THE camp-meeting is a feature of American Christian life, which transplants to India remarkably well. Near the summit of the Western Ghats, eighty miles from Bombay, nestling in the bosom of the mountains, are the Lanouli woods, an ideal spot for such a gathering. The situation, amid the grandest natural scenery, irresistibly recalls the thought that, “as the mountains are round about Jerusalem [Lanouli], so the Lord is round about His people.” The grove of closely planted trees, which forms a perfect shelter from the noonday sun, is situated on the breezy hill-side, sufficiently near to the village and station of Lanouli to be convenient, yet far enough away to be secluded; and forms an equally welcome change in the hot season from the moist and enervating heat of Bombay, or the sultry, hot winds of the Deccan.

To organize here a camp-meeting as an annual Easter gathering, was the inception of an earnest Methodist preacher, known as "Camp-meeting Osborn" in his own land. This servant of God, Rev. W. B. Osborn, was located for a time in charge of English work in Bombay, some fifteen to twenty years ago. Its organization was an inspiration, and it has formed a brightly anticipated rallying point for earnest warm-hearted Christians of many denominations. Rev. W. B. Osborn returned to America soon after; but the meeting continued, conducted by various qualified brethren, none of whom have been more appreciated as a leader than the present presiding Elder of the Poona Methodist Church, Rev. Dennis Osborne, akin in name and spirit, though not otherwise related to its founder.

To attend this camp-meeting, whole families migrated from Poona and Bombay, and in fewer numbers from other parts of Western India, till the grove was peopled with fifty to sixty tents. Missionaries and people in business or Government employ, pastors, teachers, and Bible-women, Brahmin and Parsee converts to Christianity, and those of other castes—till it seemed like a foretaste of the time when all kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, shall join in the glad heavenly chorus of praise to the Great Redeemer. Many Christian schools sent contingents of boys and girls old enough to enjoy and profit by such an occasion; and frequently,

not the least blessed and enduring work was done among the young people.

Few who have spent an Easter Sunday with this assembly would be likely to forget it. Awakened at dawn by the sweet voices of a band of young Christians, singing Easter hymns and anthems, seven o'clock found an assembly gathered in the large tent for a short and bright Sunday-school session in which young and old joined. At nine a prayer meeting; at ten breakfast, served with simplicity in another large tent. At eleven a love feast (including a communion service), when hearty, bright, and cheering testimonies were given in English, Marathi, Gujarathi, Hindustani, and occasionally others of India's many tongues; and so on throughout the day. In the large tent something was always going on. When the English attenders were resting, the Indian Christians were having a turn in their own tongues. The large tent was wonderfully expansive, and after sundown became a roof only; for no walls would have held the Sunday evening congregation, augmented as it was by large contingents of hearers from the railway settlement, which forms the European quarter of the Lanouli village.

The camp-meeting of 1896 was the last. By Easter of 1897 India was in the grip of the terrible plague and famine; and it was not felt wise or right to hold it. Three years have passed, and the hand of God is still

heavy in judgment: when it shall be lifted we may confidently expect that the voice of the assembled multitude will again make the woods of Lanouli vocal with songs of praise to their risen and reigning Lord.

In 1896 one of the chief speakers was a native evangelist, who was so full of zeal and holy joy that it was difficult for him to leave off preaching and expounding long enough to eat! If he was not in the rostrum addressing a congregation, he would be surrounded by a private group of Indian Christians, and either in English or through an interpreter was continually making known the way to be a joyful Christian to an eager group of listeners.

Ramabai was present at this camp-meeting, with a fine group of Christian girls and young women. Several with note-book and pencil showed that they understood and appreciated the opportunity here afforded them. An experience befel Ramabai here, indicating in a remarkable degree how the Lord was preparing her for a greater work: this must be told, however, in her own words. She says:

“This camp-meeting proved to be an occasion of special joy to me, as I was accompanied by fifteen of my own girls who were believers in the Lord Jesus, and had confessed Him before the public as their Saviour. Amid the troubles and trials that faced me at that time, I rejoiced much to think that the Lord had given

me fifteen immortal souls whom I could call my spiritual children. One day, early in the morning, I went out to a quiet place in the woods, where I saw the sun rising in all its glory. Then I thought of the Sun of Righteousness, and wished much that my people who were sitting in darkness should be willing to open their eyes and hearts and see Him rise in all His heavenly glory. At that time my heart was full of joy and peace, and I offered thanks to the Heavenly Father for having given me fifteen children; and I was by the Spirit led to pray that the Lord would be so gracious as to square the number of my spiritual children, increasing the number to two hundred and twenty-five, before the next camp-meeting takes place. Every circumstance was against the very thought. For, in the first place, no more than sixty or sixty-five girls at the most could be admitted in my school. Then the number of my school-girls was but forty-nine, and some of them were to leave during the summer holidays. Things were going very much against my school, and I did not know where to get even fifty girls for my institution. My mind began to be doubtful, and I asked the Lord if it were advisable for me to venture to pray such a prayer, and if it were even possible for me to have so many girls in my school. I then prayed to God to give me a clear word about it, and He graciously gave me the following words: 'Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh;

is there anything too hard for me?'¹ This proved to be a rebuke to my unbelieving soul, as well as an assurance of the great things which God meant to do for me. I noted those words in my note-book; put down the date on which I claimed two hundred and twenty-five souls from God on the strength of this assurance; and waited for Him to fulfil His promise in His own good time."

It will thus be seen that Ramabai's spiritual experience was continually deepening and widening. She had asked great things of God; and having received great answers, was hungering and thirsting for more. Her increase of faith and enjoyment of the Holy Spirit's leadings, following on a path of obedience, enabled her to testify from a full cup to others. She longed that her own people who had professed the name of Christ, the members of the Indian Christian Churches, should be led out into a fuller life of service for their Lord. To a few who were privileged with her confidence, and especially to one sweet missionary woman² who had been used of God in leading her into some of these deeper experiences, Ramabai poured forth her longings. This friend expressed her belief that God would have Ramabai give her school over into the hands of others, and herself do the work of an evangelist, proclaiming to Indian Christians all over the land from the fulness

¹Jer. xxxii. 27. ² The late Mrs. Jennie Fuller.



RESCUED WIDOWS MARCHING TO DINNER

of her own experience what God was willing to do for those who would trust Him fully; and pressing upon them their responsibility in carrying the Gospel to the millions of heathen all around. This friend seemed to apprehend that God had some purpose for Ramabai beyond the training of the fifty girls at the Sharada Sadan. He had; but it was not to be in the relinquishment of her former work, but in its fuller and more complete development.

Ramabai became quite willing to follow in any path of service of this kind, if the Lord should lead. She began to prepare herself for a life of itinerant hardship. She felt she should relinquish her salary, and trust God for her own needs. Towards the autumn of that year, 1896, she says, alluding to her camp-meeting experience:

“Six months passed away from that time, and our work went on as usual. There was no increase in the number of my pupils; on the contrary, the number went down to forty-one, and those Christian girls whom I had told in April that God was going to square their number before the next camp-meeting, were perhaps beginning to doubt in their mind as to whether I had not been carried away by my imaginations, and not inspired by the Spirit, to have prayed such a prayer whose fulfilment seemed to be next to impossible. I knew nothing of the famine in Central India, nor that I could

get any girls from that part of the country. In October I heard of the terrible famine in the Central Provinces, and received my call from God to go there and rescue some of the young widows who were starving to death. It was not until the last week of December that I had the courage to obey the call. There were many obstacles. I was doubtful whether I could get any of the kind of girl-widows whom I could admit into my school. The next chief difficulty was the want of place to shelter the girls, and of money to maintain them, even if they were to be had. So I did not venture at first to step out of Poona; but my conscience began to trouble me for not having obeyed the call at once, and I was obliged to leave my comfortable nest and go."

Human reason might well have thought there was cause for this delay and hesitation on Ramabai's part. Many would have said, "I will go if God sends me the money." But God's way with Ramabai was to make the obedience the test of blessing. There had been at that time some difficulty with regard to the remittances from America which supported the school, some mis-carriage of money, delay or decrease in amount, which had necessitated diminished expenditure; and when the Lord thus called Ramabai to go to the Central Provinces and rescue three hundred girls, she tells that she had but a few rupees in hand. She asked where she should get the money; but felt that God would have her

go on, and the money would come. God had provided the money, but He was testing her faith. As soon as it was known that Ramabai had started in search of widows left destitute by the famine, one of His servants in Bombay undertook the expense of their transit to Poona. Another called and left a hundred rupees at the Sharada Sadan for current expenditure; and from one source and another money flowed in as needed for the work to which Ramabai was thus committed.

CHAPTER IX.

THE FAMINE OF 1897, AND THE RESCUE OF STARVING WIDOWS.

“By terrible things in righteousness wilt Thou answer us, O
Lord of our salvation.”—PSALM lxxv. 5.

RAMABAI'S doubts as to whether any widows of the kind suitable for her school (*i. e.*, high-caste widows) could be obtained in the famine districts, were soon set at rest when she reached the spot. She was accompanied by a sensible, motherly, Indian Christian Bible-woman; and as Ramabai went from place to place, gathering up the girls, she sent them in parties of from ten to twenty at a time by this Bible-woman to Poona.

Perhaps the most difficult part of the work was the reception and feeding of these poor creatures after their arrival. It was heroically faced by Ramabai's helpers in Poona, led by Soonderbai Powar, and ably seconded by the Christian girls of the Sharada Sadan, who devoted themselves to the cleansing and civilizing of these poor victims of starvation. All were miserably dirty; many diseased—most were suffering from sore heads,



A VICTIM OF STARVATION



A RUINED HOME

sore mouths, and other complaints caused by starvation; many were mere skeletons, and all clamouring for food, which to have given them in sufficient quantity to appease their hunger would have caused their death. The older women and girls were the most trying, and a few ran away. Added to this, two or three rebellious spirits among the former pupils became troublesome, and several attempts were made to burn down the premises, without any clue being found to the perpetrators of the mischief; thus the position of affairs may be better imagined than described. Satan found an opportunity for harassing; but the Lord, who is over all, over-ruled wonderfully, and preserved from the threatened danger.

Among those suspected of incendiarism was a Rajput woman, who had been acting as servant to Ramabai. From this woman Ramabai had discovered, to her horror, that the practice of infanticide was still prevalent in Rajputana to an alarming extent. She recounted to Ramabai as many as eight or ten cases in her own family, in which girl-children had been exposed or strangled to their death to avoid the expense of their maintenance and marriage. A few weeks before starting for the famine field Ramabai had mentioned this to the Convention of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, gathered at Poona, and had spoken of the terrible hardness of heart the cruel custom of infanticide engendered in those who practised it. She was in des-

pair, she said, of influencing this Rajput woman, nothing good seemed to touch her. It was natural, therefore, that she should be suspected of these attempts to burn the home that had sheltered her. There was, however, no proof; but after she and one or two others had been removed the trouble ceased.

After some sixty girls and women had been gathered, Ramabai returned to Poona for a few days. While there she wrote a rapid sketch of the way she had been led to enter this work of saving widows, prefacing it with the story of her own early experiences of starvation in 1877 (as related in Chapter I.). She sent the story to the *Bombay Guardian*, a Christian weekly newspaper published in Bombay, then under the editorial care of my husband and myself. In this narrative, Ramabai told expressly of the fearful moral danger to which young girls were exposed in relief camps and poor-houses, and of the agents of evil who were abroad seeking to lure them to destruction.

It was a pathetic story, but would make my pages too long to quote it in full. The concluding portion, however, will help to elucidate this part of my narrative, and must be given here. Ramabai said: "My sympathies are excited by the needs of young girl-widows especially at this time. To let them go to the relief camps and poor-houses, or allow them to wander in the streets and on the highways means their eternal destruction.

“ Ever since I have seen these girls in the famine districts—some fallen into the hands of wicked people; some ruined for life and turned out by their cruel masters owing to bad diseases, to die a miserable death in a hopeless, helpless manner; some being treated in the hospitals, only to be taken back into the pits of sin, there to await a cruel death; some bearing the burdens of sin, utterly lost to the sense of shame and humanity—hell has become a horrible reality to me, and my heart is bleeding for those daughters of fond parents who have died leaving them orphans. Who with a mother’s heart and a sister’s love can rest without doing everything in her power to save at least a few of the girls who can yet be saved from the hands of the evil ones?

“ The Father, who is a very present help in trouble, has enabled me to get sixty widows, forty-seven of whom will go to school to study, and others will work. To go to work to get these widows, to fetch them here from Central India, and to feed and to clothe them, is an expensive business. Harder still is the work of civilizing them and teaching them the habits of cleanliness. Some are little better than brute beasts. The filthy habits they have acquired during this period of famine have become second nature with them. It will take a long time to civilize and teach them. We can do all things in the power of the Lord. The Lord has put it into my mind to save three hundred girls out of

the famine districts, and I shall go to work in His name. The funds sent to me by my friends in America are barely enough to feed and educate fifty girls; and several people are asking me how I am going to support all these girls, who may come from Central India. Besides their food and clothing, new dormitories and dining rooms must be built. Our present school-house is not large enough to hold more than one hundred girls at the most. And how are these emergencies to be met?

“ I do not know ; but the Lord knows what I need. I can say with the psalmist—‘ I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh upon me ’ ; and He has promised that ‘ Ye shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God that hath dealt wondrously with you ; and My people shall never be ashamed.’ My girls and I are quite ready to forego all our comforts, give up luxuries, and live as plainly as we can. We shall be quite contented to have only one meal of common coarse food daily, if necessary ; and so long as we have a little room or a seed of grain left in this house, we shall try and help our sisters who are starving. It seems a sin to live in this good house, and eat plenty of good food, and be warmly clothed, while thousands of our fellow-creatures are dying of hunger, and are without shelter. If all of us do our part faithfully, God is faithful to fulfil His promises, and will send us the help we need at this time.”

This narrative touched many hearts. It was reprinted from the *Bombay Guardian*, and edition after edition disposed of. Missionaries and others bought it in quantities to send home to their friends in England and America. They declared it to be the most keen description of famine suffering which had yet been depicted, and it proved to be no small factor in rousing sympathy for India's sufferings in the hearts of Western Christians.

After Ramabai had launched the story and had attended to necessary business in Poona, she started again to the Central Provinces for more girls, determined not to rest till her three hundred were saved. Within a fortnight, however, she was called back to Poona by telegraph. Fresh trouble had arisen. The bubonic plague, which had been raging in Bombay for several months, had spread to Poona. The authorities, at their wits' end to cope with it, were introducing stringent measures here and there. A strict system of inspection of dwellings was instituted. The magistrate sent eighteen of the famine victims who were suffering from some ailment or other to the hospital for observation, and ordered that the number of the permanent inmates of the Sharada Sadan should not be increased. This caused the stoppage of the buildings which had been commenced on the Sharada Sadan compound with a view to housing the fresh pupils.

Here was a dilemma! But Ramabai found a way out. She hired a dozen tents, and sent the whole establishment out into the open country twenty miles away. Soonderbai went in charge of the girls, and Ramabai remained herself in Poona for awhile. This could only be a temporary arrangement. What was to follow?

In this difficulty Ramabai's thoughts reverted to her farm at Khedgaon and the piece of rocky waste land there. She cabled to America for permission to utilize this as a temporary home for the famine-stricken—for the farm lands had been duly placed in trust under the same board of trustees which held the Sharada Sadan property. Permission was received in three days, and the famine girls were transferred from the tents to grass huts erected on this waste land at the farm. A large barn was speedily in course of erection, with a view to forming some sort of shelter in the coming rainy season.

When the rains began in June, all the intelligent girls of school age who had sufficiently recovered from the effects of starvation were transferred to a house at Poona, near enough to the Sadan for school purposes, and their education commenced. The remainder, including older women up to forty years of age, were continued at Khedgaon under the best shelter possible.

A few very small children, some almost babies, had come in from the famine districts with the older girls

and women. Ramabai appealed to the Sharada Sadan pupils for volunteer mothers. The appeal was eagerly responded to, and very tenderly these poor little starved waifs were cared for by those to whom the responsibility was entrusted. One very bright Christian girl of fourteen picked out the most forlorn-looking baby of all. When rallied by her companions for choosing such a monkey-faced child, Subhodra replied, "Not to take a pretty and attractive child, but to take a wretched and unattractive one is love." This dear girl, it was truly remarked at the time, had learnt well one of the divinest of lessons.

Subhodra herself, when a baby, had been thrown out into the road to perish by a heartless Hindu father. She was taken in and cared for by a neighbour, and at his death came with his young widow to the Sharada Sadan. She was then a bright little girl of seven or eight, brimming over with fun and mischief. She proved a clever child, made good progress with her studies, and, best of all, became a true Christian. Her relatives, however, kept track of her, and began to agitate for her to be returned to them, in order that they might get her married. One of her brothers actually came to Poona to fetch her; but time had flown faster than he had reckoned on, and when he saw his sister he found she had passed the age prior to which the Brahmins of his caste consider it a duty to give their girls

in marriage. To Ramabai's great joy he was therefore obliged to return without the fulfilment of his object, and Subhodra is still an affectionate and useful little daughter to Ramabai.

The work of rescue went on all through those months of 1897 till the autumn harvest ended the famine. Gungabai, Ramabai's faithful Bible-woman, visited poor-houses, relief camps, and mission stations, in the affected districts, and altogether gathered from five to six hundred starving women and children. After all the girls and women really suitable for the Sharada Sadan had been selected, Ramabai passed on the remainder to various mission orphanages. She found herself with just the three hundred God had told her to take.

Ramabai greatly rejoiced in all these as her own God-given children, whom, free from the interference of bigoted parents or guardians, she could instruct in the way of life. All the available spiritual help she could obtain was pressed into the service of teaching the Word of God to these as they returned to health and strength. Ramabai believed that God was going to answer her prayer and give her that measure of spiritual blessing, which she had, as it were, seen in vision, at the Lanouli camp-meeting. The Spirit of God worked with the means used. Ten months after she started out in faith to the famine districts she was able



BIBLE WOMEN WITH BULLOCK-TONGA READY TO START FOR THE VILLAGES TO PREACH THE GOSPEL

to report that ninety of these girls had given their hearts to God, and were showing signs of a real change of heart by serving and helping other girls, by their self-forgetfulness and love one toward another. As these girls professed salvation, they were taken to the river by Ramabai, and baptized by a missionary in the name of the Triune God.

Miss Parsons, of the Poona and India Village Mission, who spent a month the same autumn with Ramabai, helping to care for and instruct these rescued famine victims, thus records her experiences among them:

“The stories connected with some of these dear women and children are sad in the extreme. A young Brahmin woman about eighteen years of age has found a home here with her little boy ten months old. I asked her why she came. ‘Oh,’ said she, ‘I got up one morning and found my husband had deserted me. I saw nothing more of him after that.’ Praise the Lord! since she has come she has accepted Christ. Another knew very little of what love or home-life meant. Married young, and not being strong, she suffered a great deal. One day her husband said, ‘I’ve had enough of this; you’re never able to cook my rice. You can go.’ The poor girl was too ill to move, however; so *he moved*—deserted her, and has been unheard of since. After some weeks she was able to walk a little, so went to her mother’s home; but was there told that they had noth-

ing for her to eat, and so she must go; and while wandering about seeking food was picked up by Ramabai. Another was one of two wives; and being the younger of the two, she fared badly. The husband used to get the other wife to beat her; so much so, that she ran away and was eventually brought here, where she is very happy and contented, and will, when won for Christ, be a very useful woman. She is very quick, bright, and capable; and it is a great pleasure to have anything to do with her.

“ Another is a little widow about nine or ten years of age. Her husband died when she was five, and she has had anything but a happy life since. Indeed, such a thing as *love* or *happiness* is not in the province of a great many of these dear little people; and one just longs to be a comfort and joy to them. This little widow is very quick—learns the hymns very quickly; remembers the Bible stories wonderfully; and best of all, has accepted Christ as her Saviour. It is very touching to hear this dear child pray. She rises early, and she always prays aloud: you can hear her pouring out her little heart to the Lord, and thanking Him for giving her such friends as the Christians. One day, after I had been praying with some of the sick girls, a voice from near-by was heard—‘ O bai (sister), do come and pray for me. Last night my hand was so bad I could get no sleep. I sat up, and three times



RESCUED FAMINE CHILDREN AT DINNER

asked Jesus to give me sleep; but I can't understand it a bit. He didn't let me sleep at all. Do ask Him to give me sleep to-night; I am so tired.' I prayed for sleep for her, and next morning her beaming face told the tale. 'Well, Anandi!' said I, 'did Jesus hear prayer last night?' 'Yes!' she said, 'and I slept all night.'

"I think the most beautiful work of grace I have ever seen in any child's heart was the following. One evening we were late in going to have prayers with the girls. When we got to the door, we found dear little Anandi had gathered all the women and children together, and was praying aloud with them, and they repeating the prayer after her. How the heart of our Father God must have rejoiced as He heard such requests and thanksgiving as ascended from that room! 'Our kind heavenly Father, we do thank You for bringing us here, giving us such dear friends—and especially for Ramabai. Oh, our kind Father, those of us who love You, we want You to keep our hearts very clean; and those who don't love You, quickly clean their hearts, and keep them clean by Your Holy Spirit dwelling in them. Oh, our kind Father, take care of all of us in this Home and the Poona Home to-night; bless all who look after us, and abundantly bless Ramabai and Soonderbai, who take such care of us. Now Father, we thank You for Jesus, and for what Jesus

promises to do for us. Take care of us to-night, and forgive us wherein we have given You pain to-day, for Jesus' sake. Amen.'

"I praise the Lord for the privilege of hearing such a real, simple prayer; and I am sure our home people will join me in offering a big praise note for 'what God hath wrought' in less than a year in some hearts out here.

"Truly He is 'able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.'¹ To Him be the glory."

¹ Eph. iii. 20.

CHAPTER X.

“ MUKTI ”—THE NEW SETTLEMENT AT KHEDGAON

“ The Lord thy God: He it is that doth go with thee.”—
DEUT. xxxi. 6.

THE hand of the Lord has been remarkably seen in raising up helpers for Ramabai in the great work He has put into her hands. The hearty way in which the older girls, even some of the Hindus, threw themselves into the work of caring for the famine girls, was delightful and inspiring. The conversion and baptism of groups of the new girls from time to time had a reflex influence for good upon the older ones. Many who had been halting between two opinions came out boldly for Christ, and a holy enthusiasm seemed to pervade the whole establishment.

After the girls had been gathered at Khedgaon, and all their material wants provided for, a vision opened out to Ramabai of what such a settlement might mean to the country around, from an evangelistic point of view. Here, she thought, is a great missionary opportunity for some fully qualified and consecrated Christian woman to come and live among these girls, lead them to the Saviour, and train them in the Word of God, so that

they shall be fitted to carry the Gospel to all the region round about, where no missionary work has ever been carried on. Ramabai spoke of the need and the opportunity to several whom she thought suitable, but none responded. She and her immediate helpers made it a matter of constant prayer; and God Himself called the one He had chosen for the post.

Miss Minnie F. Abrams came to India in 1887 as a missionary of the Methodist Episcopal Church. In Bombay she had varied experience, both of visiting the women and caring for children. In 1895 she relinquished the care of the girls' boarding school in Bombay to devote herself to the work of village evangelization. She became a deaconess of that Church, and was duly set apart for this work. Miss Abrams aimed to reach the women in those villages, where the Gospel had already been preached to the men. With a tent, and two or three Bible-women, she itinerated from place to place in the villages around Poona, coming into the city each year for the rainy season. She came into Poona as usual at this period in 1897, and employed herself in caring for a number of older famine widows, some of whom were sent her by Ramabai. When the end of the rains came in October, she was planning to leave this work in other hands, and was making arrangements for another camping season.

One morning at this time she awakened earlier than



A HUNGRY CROWD

usual, and as she lay with the duties of the day in her mind, a voice seemed to say to her, "Go to Khedgaon." The impression deepened on her mind, and she went. Ramabai was absent, but Miss Abrams surveyed the place, and saw the girls and women gathered there. She returned to Poona in the evening wondering why she had been sent there. She said as much to the Bible-woman who had accompanied her. The woman replied: "Who knows? Perhaps one of those tracts you gave at the station had a message for some one!"

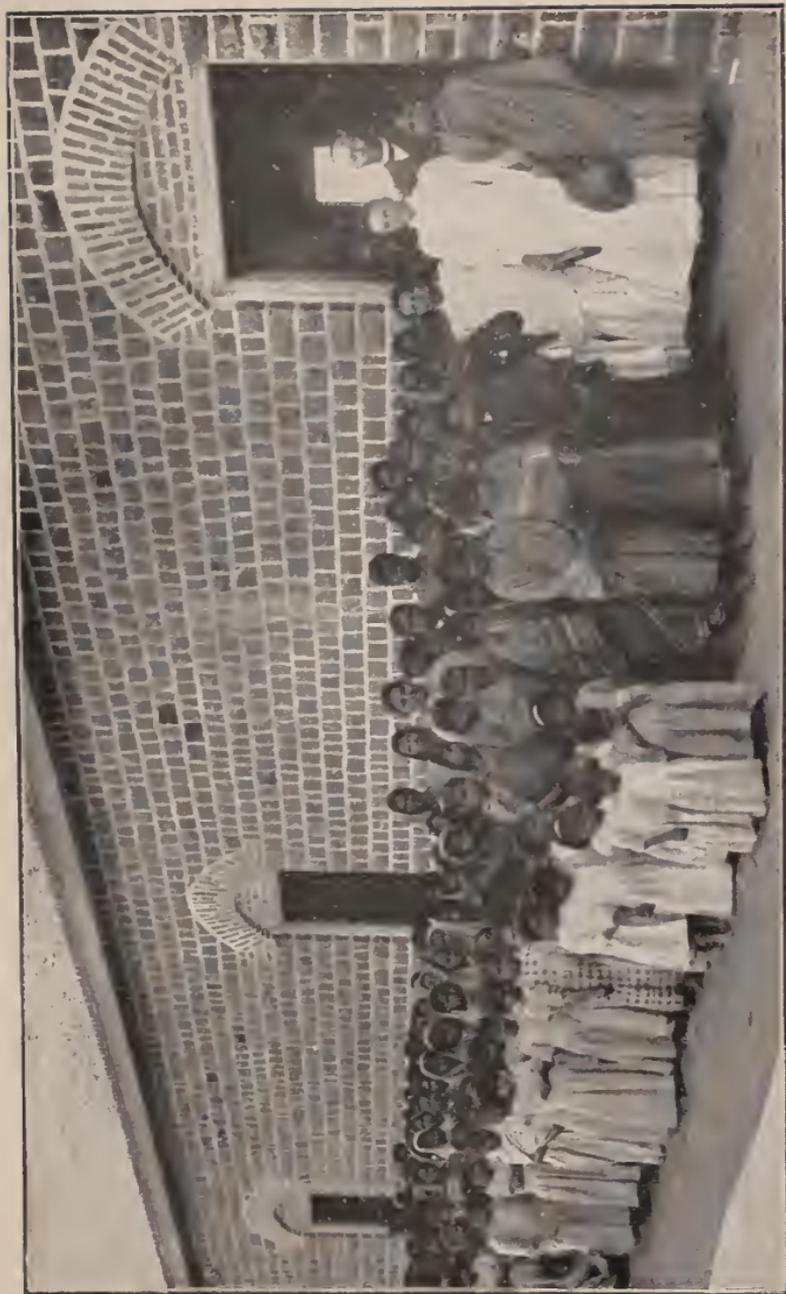
The following morning, Sunday, Miss Abrams was again awakened early. In telling the experience of this hour, she said reverently that it was as if the Lord Himself came and commissioned her to go to Khedgaon and take up the office of spiritual teacher to that flock of girls and women. The holy influence of that hour followed her all day. The sermon at the morning meeting was singularly appropriate, and confirmed to her the commission she had received.

The next day she went to the Sharada Sadan, and found that Ramabai had gone on her final visit to the Central Provinces on rescue business. Miss Abrams opened her heart to Soonderbai Powar, and as she told of what she believed the Lord had called her to, the tears ran down Soonderbai's cheeks and she said: "This is what Ramabai and I have for months been praying for." When Ramabai returned, her practical

question was, "When can you come?" In a fortnight all difficulties had been overcome—Miss Abrams was established at Mukti, and commencing the work which has grown so remarkably under her care.

I must mention here the case of Ramabai's clerk, or chief steward. He was a Brahmin of good education, a member of the sect of reformed Hindus known as Brahmos. He had been in Ramabai's employ for several years. At one time, when the tide of Brahmin disfavour was setting strongly against Ramabai, this man acted against her interests in a way for which most employers would have dismissed him. Ramabai, however, retained his services, though obliged to withdraw her most confidential work from his hands. But, as the years went on, Ramabai's faithful life and teaching led him to see that there must be something in the religion she professed. Then the Lord dealt with him. His wife became an early victim of the plague at Poona. And when a large group of famine girls were baptized in 1897, more than making up the number promised to Ramabai at the Lanouli camp-meeting, Mr. Gadre came out also as a believer in Christ, and was baptized with his younger children.

Miss Abrams contributed a graphic account, to an Indian paper, of some of the scenes that occurred in connection with the early conversion of the girls in the first weeks of her residence at Mukti. She spoke of a



THE BARN ; THE FIRST BUILDING ERECTED AT MUKTI

great and general awakening that had taken place in both the Poona and Mukti Homes. This revival prevailed not only among those who had been rescued from famine, but reached to a goodly number of the widows who were previously in the Sharada Sadan. It was an outcome of special services held by Rev. W. W. Bruere—first, for ten days in the Poona Home, when one hundred and sixteen women and child-widows were baptized. He then went on to Khedgaon; and what happened there we must give in Miss Abrams' own words:

“The women had been prepared for these services by constant daily religious teaching, ever since they entered the Home. The older widows, and consequently those most hardened in sin, are living at the farm in Khedgaon. But the Spirit of God is able to transform even hardened sinners. He was present in great power from the beginning of the service. At the close of three days' services when Mr. Bruere was called away, sixty-seven had been converted. The meetings were continued; Mr. Bruere returned; and as the crowning event, November 15th, the baptismal service took place.

“It was a rare sight when seventeen bullock carts, crowded with seven and eight women in each, started out for the Bheema River, five and a half miles distant from the farm. Songs of joy arose one after another, as they slowly went along, methinks mingling with the joy around the throne when sinners are converted.

“A tent was pitched on the bank of the river, which served as a dressing room. A short service was held by Rev. W. W. Bruere, after which the baptisms took place. Pandita Ramabai’s secretary, Krishnabai,¹ and the writer, stood in the water and helped the candidates to enter and return to the shore. One of the school-mistresses on the shore called out the names of those to be baptized. It was very interesting to hear each one repeat with the minister, ‘In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.’ The happy faces and frequent expressions of praise showed that the Spirit teaches His children alike the world over, for these women had never come in contact with many Christians, revivals, or baptismal services. One hundred and eight women and girls, and one boy of twelve years of age, were baptized.

“When Pandita was taking the names of those who were asking for baptism, a little girl of six years tugged away at my dress and said, ‘Bai, bai, mere nam likna (Bai, bai, write my name).’ This dear little child, who prays much and gives evidence that she really loves Jesus, was carried out into the water. Mr. Bruere took her into his arms and put her under the water. Jesus took such in His arms and blessed them.

“I should like to tell of how the Spirit led many to

¹One of the former converted widows who had been acting as Bible-woman with Miss Abrams for some time previously.



FRONTAGE OF MAIN BUILDING AT MUKTI, SHOWING ENTRANCE GATES

confess their sins of stealing, lying, quarrelling, and fighting; and many with tears confessed their idolatry. One woman arose to speak. She covered her eyes, and began to pray in the Marathi language, but soon broke forth in her own language (Hindustani) with the confession of her sins, enumerating them one after another. Her whole frame was convulsed with weeping as she pleaded the merits of Christ's sufferings on her behalf. Then she broke forth into loud praises to Jesus, for salvation, the forgiveness of sin. It was a solemn yet a joyous time.

“When Pandita was bringing widows from the Central Provinces, a deaf and dumb woman insisted on coming. Pandita refused to bring her. She came and sat in the train. They made her understand that she could not learn in school, hence could not be taken. She told them by signs that she would grind, cook, wash clothes, scrub, etc. She literally refused to leave the train; and at the last minute Pandita laughed and bought her a ticket. She has been true to her word and works cheerfully.

“She always preserves a reverent attitude during worship. When the women were asking Pandita for baptism, she persisted in having her name written. Pandita tried to put her aside, but again she was persistent. One day she arose to testify. We all felt God's presence as she stood in silent eloquence before

God. The girls said aloud, 'Mookkie knows God as well as we.' On two occasions she tried to speak and made a low sound. She received baptism with the others. While the services were going on, one day she brought two children to the altar, closed their eyes, and then closed her own in prayer. All who have contributed toward this famine work will rejoice at this bountiful harvest of souls."

Ramabai rejoiced so at these spiritual developments that she said she could not wait for another camp-meeting at Lanouli, she must have one of her own at Khedgaon. Accordingly she issued invitations; and, in response, a goodly number of missionaries and Indian Christians gathered in December, 1897, to praise the Lord with her for all His goodness. Those who attended it spoke of it as a most favoured time. It included a dedication service of the new settlement to God, by the name of *Mukti*,¹ i. e., salvation. The large barn served for the meetings, and the visitors camped out in grass huts. By this time arrangements had been made for a permanent settlement, and ground was laid out for a large building. Ramabai gratefully dedicated the whole to the Lord, and called the place "Mukti" in reference to Isaiah lx. 18: "Thou shalt call thy walls salvation and thy gates praise."

The ten years for which the Ramabai circles in

¹ Pronounced *Mooktie*.

America had pledged their help was to expire in March, 1898, and Ramabai's American friends had been urging her to come over and help to devise some way for conserving the interest in the work and reconstructing the Association, in view of its great recent developments.

Ramabai had hitherto seen no possibility of leaving her post, but had gone on in faith, feeling that if the Lord wanted her in America He would Himself open the way. Now, Miss Abrams' capable help being provided; Mr. Gadre's conversion more than doubling his usefulness to the institutions; with Soonderbai Powar in full charge of the Sharada Sadan—Ramabai felt clear to go.

My husband and I spent a day at Khedgaon early in January, 1898. We happened on the very day Ramabai was leaving for her visit to America, a day of farewells. It was affecting to see how genuine was the grief of large numbers of these newly-rescued girls and women, when at the close of the afternoon meeting in the barn they came up one at a time to receive a farewell embrace from the only real friend many of them had ever known. It was a long day; the train did not leave till near midnight. About a hundred of the older girls were permitted to remain when the others retired for the night; and with the teachers and a few visitors from Poona, all sat out in the bright moonlight and pleasant cool air of that January evening while Ramabai gave

her farewell counsels. Her progress to the station, about a quarter of a mile distant, reminded me of nothing so much as a swarm of ants carrying a cherished trophy up the wall, a frequent scene in India. There were girls in front of Ramabai, behind her and at each side, all pressing to get as near as they could, till Ramabai seemed to be literally carried along in the midst of the crowd. How gladly they would all have accompanied her to America!

It had long been a cherished plan in Ramabai's mind to send some of her specially bright pupils of suitable character to America for further education and training, with a view to their helping her more effectively in the future of the Sharada Sadan, or of carrying on similar work among the vast and needy masses in other parts of India. From her own experiences she believed that such training would be of immense benefit to them in cultivating independence and individuality of character. Acting on this belief, she sent three girls to America in 1897, and took two others with her on this journey; her own daughter, who had been in England for eighteen months, joined her mother on the way, and went on to America with her.

Manorama's education had already been generously provided for. In one of her recent Reports, Ramabai tells how this came about. She says: "When I was about to start from the United States to undertake the

work for Hindu widows, a Christian lady, quite unknown to me, came to see me in Philadelphia. She was led by God to help me in some way. I did not know when I first met her what a faithful friend God had raised up for me in her. After hearing a little of my story and what I needed, the lady before finishing her call placed one hundred dollars in my hand and promised to pay all expenses of my daughter's education. This incident occurred nearly twelve years ago. I am very glad to mention gratefully that this good lady has kept her promise, and has been paying my daughter's expenses for the last eleven years. God be praised for such help, and for the helper! But for this help I would not have been able to throw myself heart and soul into this work. God has freed my mind from one other care. I was seeking for a Christian home for my daughter while she stays in America for her education. God has given me another great friend in Mrs. Emma S. Roberts, Principal of the A. M. Chesbrough Seminary, North Chili, N. Y. She not only cares for my daughter, but has undertaken to support and educate five young widows, former pupils of the Sharada Sadan, who were sent to America for education."

These girls are making good progress. Tungabai, who had studied Sanskrit, Marathi, and English at home, is reading Greek and Latin, and will take up the

sciences. Her thought is to establish a school similar to the Sadan in the southern part of India, and thus will the influence of the Sharada Sadan continue to spread. These girls, having tasted the bitterness of child-widowhood, could tell many a sad story. Chumpabai, for example, had been made to fast so long that one day hunger overcame fear and prudence; she attempted to help herself to a little of the porridge cooking over the fire: her sister-in-law, discovering it, tried to pour the scalding hot porridge down her throat. Yessoobai exclaims again and again, "How can you be so kind to a poor widow?" Nermaddabai was a widow at five; and, when first an inmate of the Sadan, she would shrink and crouch with fear before any one approaching her. Now she is friendly with all, and is making fine progress in her studies. Jewoobai, who scarcely understood a word of English when she left India, now speaks it quite well, writes a clear, bold hand, is quick to see and to learn, desires to know how to do everything, and promises to be an invaluable helper to Ramabai.

Ramabai received a warm welcome on her arrival in America. At the Annual Meeting of the Ramabai Association the Executive Committee disbanded; but a Committee was formed, including a number of the old workers, with a desirable infusion of new friends. Mrs.



CHUMPABAI AND NERMADDABAI

Judith Andrews, the President of the Executive Committee, continued in office with all her former zeal and energy. Before disbanding, the former Committee put it upon record that those who withdrew from the work did so from no lack of confidence or interest in Ramabai, nor from any lack of faith in the future. They testified to the harmonious way in which the work had been carried on, and wished Ramabai a hearty God-speed. The new Committee stood pledged to work on the same lines, to support the Sharada Sadan as before, with no time limit, and to encourage Ramabai in the God-given developments of the work at Mukti.

Ramabai's address to the Annual Meeting was throughout a happy inspiration. Here are a few extracts:

“ You have heard the reports of the school which you started in India nine years ago. . . . You see the first scholar of that school standing before you; she has learned a lesson there—it is to thank and praise God. For this work has not been done by human strength alone. The Eternal God is behind it, and at the foundation of it; and as there is no end to Him, there will be no end to His work. . . .

“ In these nine years we have erected a monument—
 a monument to the saints. Let us call this All Saints'

Day! It is that to me; and I thank God for the saints He has given me for my friends. There are these dear departed friends who are no more in this world; but I do not mourn for them as those who have no hope. This Sharada Sadan which stands in Poona is a monument to honour their memory, and also to the honour of those saints who live here in the Church militant—you, all of you, who are working for us everywhere in this country, and many who are working for us all over the world.

“Now, what shall be the future of the school? There is nothing to regret; and you have a property of sixty thousand dollars, and two schools with three hundred and eighty girls in them. What shall we do with these schools and this property? The first thing I have to tell you in this connection is that Ramabai is dead. The person who went in your stead is dead and gone. What will you do with the property? The first scholar of the school suggests that a new Association be formed. God gave me this morning a name for it, if you will adopt it. That is, the Faith, Hope, and Love Association for the Emancipation of the High-caste Child-widows of India; for nothing but faith and hope and love will redeem India. Do not concentrate your interest in one person, for that person will die and be gone, as many have gone before; but this Association

must not die. It must be perpetually alive; and how will it live but through faith, hope, and love? Let this new Association be organized right here, to go on working in the same old way.

“ We want twenty thousand dollars a year. When I came here first, I only asked for five thousand; and you gave me six thousand a year. Now my hopes and expectations are enlarged, and my ambition for my girls and for the elevation of the women of India prompts me to ask for great things. I believe, if we had not a single cent in hand, God would shower from heaven the funds we want. Last year God sent thirty thousand dollars. He is as rich to-day; and He will send us twenty thousand dollars—not for one year, or two, or ten, but so long as India and its needs exist.

“ We are not to take thought for to-morrow. We are only to do His work faithfully. ‘ Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.’

“ Yet tell me that you are very busy, and your interests are divided; and some of you say that you are very old and cannot work any longer. You have many poor people to help, and many widows and deserted wives, I suppose; but our needs are greater. Are you too busy to pray for us? No, because you are members of that royal priesthood whose privilege and right

it is to pray for us. Why can you not work for us? Yes, you can work for us, and you will. And what about old age?

“Just about the time I started from India I was getting very tired, and wishing to rush out from the school and give up the work. I thought I too was getting too old, and could not stand it. But the Father told me to go and read the Bible; and in Luke’s Gospel I found the story of a prophetess who is called Anna—Mrs. Anna, the prophetess, let us call her—and the Bible says she worked for eighty-four years, and did not give up her good work in the temple service all that time. And God said to me, ‘If you live to be that age, you must work till then.’ And I bring that same message to you, my dear friends; and it is a glorious thing for you to look for.”

In disbanding, the former officers of the Ramabai Association transferred the property and all its interests to Ramabai personally. She remained in America a sufficient time to see the New Board legally constituted and the property duly vested in the hands of responsible trustees.

CHAPTER XI.

MATERIAL PROGRESS AND SPIRITUAL ADVANCEMENT

“As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.”—2 COR. vi. 10.

TESTS and trials came both to Ramabai and her helpers during the time of her absence in America. When she started from Mukti, the foundations were rising for a large new building, erected in the form of a square, providing dormitories for these three hundred girls and women, with rooms at each corner for officers and matrons. There was some money in hand, but not sufficient to maintain the establishment and complete the building during the expected months of Ramabai's absence. The stone was quarried on the premises, and the whole work was under the care of a qualified Bengali Christian overseer. Miss Abrams undertook to be treasurer; and Ramabai left the work in faith that God would provide means as needed. Miss Abrams was instructed to pay all bills as money came in, but to stop the work if funds ran low, and on no account to go into debt. For a considerable time funds did run low, and on two occasions building was

stopped for a week or two; but there was always food. Still, it was a time of trial to Miss Abrams and to Soonderbai; and the latter experienced added difficulties on account of the recrudescence of the plague in Poona.

This condition of affairs was reported to Ramabai; and reaching her at a time when she was quite worn out with the fatigue of travel, and the strain of re-arrangement of the American Association, it tried her far more than if she had been at home to face the difficulty herself. For two years without respite her mind and body had borne the continuous effort of caring for these needy ones, sustained only by her brave spirit and firm faith in God. There was no rest for her when she got to America. It was her earnest desire to meet the wishes of her friends for her to speak here, there, and everywhere; the distances being often so great as to require travelling by night, followed, at times, by two addresses during the day. To this was added her intense anxiety about her poor children at home. She bore it bravely between herself and God.

“But at last there came a day,” says a friend in America, “when all this was too much for the overtaxed body and mind; and she lay upon her bed, crying to God in her anguish, and feeling that she must go home to suffer and to die, if need be, with her dear ones there. During that day of pain and terrible fear she poured out her heart to one who loved her. The story

was told to two of her best and most generous friends; and on her return to Boston, a few evenings afterward, the entire sum necessary to relieve, for a time, the needs of her children and her own anxiety, was placed in her hands. When she realized the meaning of it all, her weary, anxious face became illumined with joy and with grateful love, as she exclaimed: 'Thank God and those dear friends! Oh, I shall sleep to-night as I have not slept for weeks thinking of my poor hungry children!'

Ramabai's longing for home deepened. The times for successful work in America grew more unfavorable. The receipt of a telegram from London, requesting her immediate presence, decided her. She sailed from New York early in July, with the hope that an English Association might be formed to work in harmony with the American Association. In this she was disappointed. No plans had been formed, and none could be formed during the summer. She hastened her departure from England, after visiting the Keswick Convention. In August she was with her own again, and none too soon. For able, and faithful, and devoted as were those having charge of the schools, they were not Ramabai. On the farm hundreds of fruit-trees had died through the neglect of the gardener, and Ramabai found herself obliged to discharge him, and take up the management of the farm herself

In spite of delays the buildings were sufficiently near to completion for a dedication service to be held in September; and again a large number of missionaries and Christian friends from Poona, Bombay, and elsewhere, gathered at Mukti, to unite with Ramabai in praising God for progress in material blessings, and for spiritual advancement in the pupils. Soonderbai and the whole of the Poona establishment were present.

The picture of the building which we reproduce here was taken at this time. The inscription over the large gateway is "Praise the Lord," in Marathi, in pursuance of Ramabai's determination to call her walls "Salvation," and her gates "Praise."

After Ramabai came out into the fulness of spiritual blessing, as related in Chapter VII., her views as to the power of God expanded. She translated the Scriptures literally. She believed that as the Lord made the human body, it was His province to heal it; that the Spirit would so "quicken" her "moral body" as to remove ailments and keep it in health. Taking Him at His word she commenced praying for the healing of an internal disorder for which she had for years been consulting physicians at home and abroad to no purpose. Soonderbai joined with her in prayer for half-an-hour daily, and in the course of two months she was able to tell of her own complete healing, and that of two of her pupils from serious maladies. She thus tested God

and proved that the prayer of faith did heal the sick. Continuous miracles of this sort have been wrought since in connection with this work of faith and love.

There is so much scepticism on this subject, even among Christians, that I do not feel called upon to relate details here; but if Ramabai would write her own experiences on the line of Divine healing, I believe it would be a more remarkable story than any I have told in these pages. I must, however, relate one circumstance here of the continuous overruling of God's power with regard to the pupils at the Sharada Sadan at the time of the plague in Poona. I referred in Chapter IX. to the arbitrary action of the magistrate in carrying off to the Plague Observation Camp eighteen girls suffering from various complaints left by the famine. These were all returned to the Sharada Sadan in the course of a few days, except one who was reported to have plague. When Ramabai inquired for her, she was told she had died. A few weeks later a party of girls was being brought into Poona by rail, when a little one who was suffering with slight fever was taken at the railway inspection office and sent off to this Observation Camp. Ramabai insisted on accompanying the child, a mere baby, and spent some days there with her, until she was released.

While there Ramabai began to make particular enquiries about the girl who was reported dead. She never

had been able to believe that the girl had the plague; and now discovered that she had not, and that she was not dead, but had been detained by one of the native officials of this camp, and was living with him in sin. The poor girl's joy on seeing Ramabai proved that she had not been a willing partner in the transaction. She was again rescued, and sent to a kind missionary friend, but died after a few months.

This experience proved to Ramabai what unsafe places these plague observation camps were for young girls, and yet to these places families suspected of having cases of plague were constantly being sent by the authorities. Should a case of plague occur at the Sharada Sadan, there would be no appeal against the removal of all; and fever cases would also be taken there singly if any were found. Ramabai and Soonderbai made it a matter of earnest prayer that they might be protected from plague, and from any mistakes on the part of the plague inspection parties who visited the house several times a week. It was a generally unhealthy season, and cases of slight fever were common. Soonderbai has told me of the way in which they would all gather and pray when a case of fever occurred; and of how, even when five or six had appeared unwell at once at night, the temperature of each would be normal when the inspection party came round the next day. Thus God protected them, and no further cases of re-

moval occurred. But it will explain the strain upon those in charge of the work at Poona during Ramabai's absence. Writing of Mukti after her return from America, Ramabai said:

“There are neither doctors nor medicines found in this village; those girls who wish to resort to medical help in sickness are in no way hindered from it. They are taken to Poona, and proper medical treatment is given them. Yet it must be said to the glory of God that the large majority of girls seek God's help in their sickness. The Lord has wonderfully protected us from the dreadful plague and other sickness. The sun, so terribly hot, has not hurt us, nor the cold and rains. The girls realize that divine help is better than human means. So when any one among them is sick, they get around her and begin to pray, and God answers their prayer beyond their hope and expectation.”

From the time of the 1897 famine there had been scarcity in the country district around Khedgaon, though not actual famine. Ramabai's building operations, therefore, were a great boon to the workpeople who came from the neighbouring villages. It has also been a golden opportunity for giving them the Gospel. When the building work had to be stopped for want of funds—and this happened after Ramabai's return, as well as while she was absent in America—the workmen were told that work would be started again when God

sent the means. Not an opportunity was missed to thank and glorify God for His bounteous help, and to show how absolutely dependent we are upon Him. Thus the heathen workmen employed on the buildings came to know that there is a living God who hears and answers prayer, who does not desert His people, and who is so different from the lifeless gods and devils whom they serve. The number of workmen employed on the buildings has averaged from eighty to one hundred and twenty. Their usual time of labour is nine hours every day; but they were allowed to work only for eight hours, and in the last hour are called together to hear the Gospel preached by Miss Abrams and other missionaries. A number attended Sunday School in connection with the Mukti Church, and the Gospel is finding its way into some of their hearts.

Ramabai's desire that the rescued girls should be trained to work in these villages was granted almost sooner than she expected. At Christmas, 1898, Miss Abrams gave several addresses on the spiritual needs of India, in the endeavour to incite a missionary spirit in the minds of these young disciples, themselves so recently won from heathendom. She then told them of the Student Volunteer Movement in the American and English colleges, and of the numbers of students who had pledged their lives to mission work, as God should open the way. When Miss Abrams suggested

the formation of such a mission band at Mukti, thirty-five volunteered to be ready for training for evangelistic work. They agreed to meet daily at noon for an hour's extra Bible teaching. In a few months from that time several were regularly employed with the other Bible-women in visiting the villages.

When the Collector of the district (the British magistrate) visited Khedgaon, he was astonished to find how strong was Ramabai's influence for good among the villagers. Beside the amount of work provided for them in needy times, Ramabai proved their benefactor in another sense. The ground on the opposite side of the road to the Mukti buildings was owned by a liquor-dealer. This ground came close to the buildings. There were rumors that some one intended to open a liquor-shop close by her property. Ramabai went to the Collector of the district and secured a promise from him that no license to sell liquor in Khedgaon should be granted to any one. But to make herself secure from any possible annoyance of the kind she purchased the liquor-dealer's farm containing seventeen acres. She then invited the people in the surrounding country to establish a weekly bazaar on this roadside. They were thankful for the opportunity to do so, as the nearest bazaar was eight miles away. This new bazaar is a boon to the people; Ramabai and her employees buy a good deal of the produce brought for sale, and it tends

to cheapen some kinds of goods. It also brings the people within sound of the Gospel, which is proclaimed, both by voice and the printed page, every bazaar day.

In January, 1899, my husband and I paid a farewell visit to Khedgaon before leaving India. We found the work going on most satisfactorily, and a number of industries in full swing.

These industries were chiefly of an agricultural nature, preparing food-stuffs for consumption at Mukti and the Sharada Sadan, and thus reducing materially the expenditure of both establishments.

The dairy department provided all the milk, butter, ghee, and dhye, for both institutions. A gift of fifty pounds sent to Ramabai by a lady in England, instead of a legacy, had then recently enabled her to enlarge this department of the work by the purchase of more cows; and while in America the previous year a wealthy American friend had given her some American churns and other improved dairy appliances, including some very nicely contrived cans in which milk was daily sent by rail to Poona. We went to see the cows, a number of which had young calves. Ramabai was then anticipating the increase of this department into a regular business of supplying dairy produce to customers in Poona; but the subsequent famine made it very difficult to maintain the cattle, and all the milk and ghee obtainable



DAIRY WORK AT MUKTI

were needed to sustain and succour the famine victims.

The deaf and dumb woman was in charge of the churning department, and eagerly displayed to us the superiority of the new churns over the previously employed native methods. This old method consisted of a pole about the size of a broom-handle, with short cross-way bars fixed on the lower end, not unlike a "dolly" used in some parts of England for washing clothes. The pole is swiftly whirled in the pot of milk till the cream comes. Both kinds of churn are shown in our illustration.

"Ghee" is clarified butter; and "dhye" is a kind of curd-cheese much used. Both are important elements in the daily food of non-meat-eaters in India. When sufficient butter and ghee cannot be obtained, a good substitute is found in a sort of vegetable oil. This is made from a grain called Kardi (or "Tilly" in the Central Provinces). The grain for making this oil was grown on the farm at Mukti. Among the widows rescued from the 1897 famine was one who understood the process of oil-making. Ramabai, prompt to seize opportunities, purchased a second-hand oil mill, and placed her in charge. The mill interested us very much; it was a clumsy looking erection, a heavy upright beam, some cords and pulleys, with another

beam placed crosswise; this was attached to the yoke of a small bullock who patiently plodded round and round in a circle with his eyes blinded. A large hundie (cooking pot) stood at the mouth of the mill, and received the oil as it flowed. This had to undergo some process of boiling or purifying before it was ready for use. Several girls were employed, beside the woman in charge, sifting and sorting the grain and preparing it for the mill. Ramabai said this manufacture effected a great saving in expense.

While we were there, the woman lifted up a full pot of oil and put it aside. We had been admiringly watching the patient little bullock, and just then I ventured to pat its back. Then was a transformation scene. The unaccustomed caress so scared the apparently gentle little creature, that he began kicking and plunging in every direction. We had to beat a hasty retreat, and send a workman to assist the woman in disentangling the animal from the cords of the machinery into which it had pranced. Happily the pot of oil had just been placed outside of his range, and no damage of consequence was done.

A field of red peppers ready for harvest at this time was employing a troop of women and girls in gathering, sorting, and drying the pods. Another detachment was at work harvesting the jowari crop—a grain used instead of wheat in making bread.



HAND LOOMS, ON WHICH DRESSES FOR WOMEN ARE WOVEN

A weaving department with about twelve looms was under the care of a Christian man, who was employed to teach, to a selected number of young women, the art and mystery of weaving sarees (the length of material which gracefully twisted about the person forms the dress of the Marathi women.) The preparation and spinning of cotton yarn from the raw material is an adjunct of this industry, and employs as many in proportion as the looms.

The manufacture of these hand-loom dress-stuffs is an industry which has not been affected to any great extent by the modern Manchester competition. True, the mills do put out a printed cotton saree, but in wear and durability it is not to be compared to the hand-loom production, and for women's garments the hand-loom still holds its own. It is well that it is so; and I for one trust the day is far distant when this wholesome simple family industry will be substituted in India by the herding together of crowds of persons in the unhealthy moral atmosphere of mill life. Bombay has already its forest of mill chimneys. The workers are chiefly men from country districts, and the women are the wives of working men, who are in all sorts of employment in the city. Frequently a man will have two wives, one of whom works at the mill from seven in the morning till six at night; the other remaining at home to provide for the family. Tragedies often

come up in the police-court which reveal the sort of life led by these unfortunate women. Contrast this with a model settlement of Christian weavers which we saw at Itarsi, in the Central Provinces, in connection with the Friends' Mission. These were hereditary weavers who had become Christian. Their comfortable home-life, wives and daughters plying the spinning wheel, dyeing and winding the yarn, the boys learning to take their father's seat at the loom when school days should be over, and the babies rolling in the sunshine, gave an almost ideal picture of what industrial life should be.

Those who would successfully solve the problem of the industrial employment of Indian Christians will be wise to take into consideration the system of family industries indigenous to the country.

Rev. Albert Norton, a missionary of many years' experience, had arrived with his wife from America, and was helping in the outside mission work. Fifteen villages in the neighbourhood were then accessible to Gospel work. Mr. and Mrs. Norton had organized Sunday Schools in some of these. Two Bible-women were going out daily from Mukti to these villages, Miss Abrams accompanying them as often as her other duties permitted.

I had the privilege of going with them on one afternoon to a village two miles away. I was impressed

with the miserably poverty-stricken aspect of the place. It had the appearance of having been at some time wrecked, and then patched up with any and every kind of material that could be got: mud and straw by choice. Some of the stone walls were high and massive, and the doorways pretentious. Some of the "cosiest homes," if such words could be used in such a connection, were mud walls with thatched roofs. These at least were in keeping. I was told that this village was in fair average condition.

Seven times during the afternoon we sat on door-steps or outside of houses, at the invitation of the inmates, while a little crowd gathered around to hear the Gospel hymns and messages from Miss Abrams and the Bible-women. All castes were visited, high and low.

As we drove home through the moonlight, Miss Abrams told me of some of the responses made by the people, which I had been unable to understand, and also of some of her experiences in the work. When she first visited some of the villages in this district, she found they had never seen a white woman before; some were afraid, and afterwards told her they took her for a soldier in disguise. At one house where the neighbour-women had gathered to hear, one excused herself from remaining by saying she had grain to sift at home; the hostess spoke up and said: "Don't go, you can clean

grain any day ; but it is not every day you can see such an image as this."

We left Mukti more than ever impressed with the wide possibilities and healthy developments of the work in the hands of Ramabai and her helpers.

Two Christian women from America were then on a visit to Mukti. These friends helped Ramabai to give shape to a thought that had long been with her, for the erection of a building specially for the care of girls who had been sinned against by wicked men ; many of these were sick, and it was undesirable that such should be mixed with the others. The younger lady took charge of a few of this class already with Ramabai. She remained for nearly twelve months. She nursed several of these poor girls back to good health, and then left to establish a rescue home of her own in another part of India. The other stayed and saw the foundations in for a new building on the piece of ground purchased from the liquor-dealer. She then returned to America, and worked for some months both there and in England, and raised half the amount needed for this new building.

Rev. Albert Norton and his wife remained with Ramabai till February, 1900, when they removed to Dhond, ten miles distant, being led to undertake famine relief work especially on the line of caring for destitute boys.

CHAPTER XII.

RESCUE WORK DURING THE FAMINE OF 1900

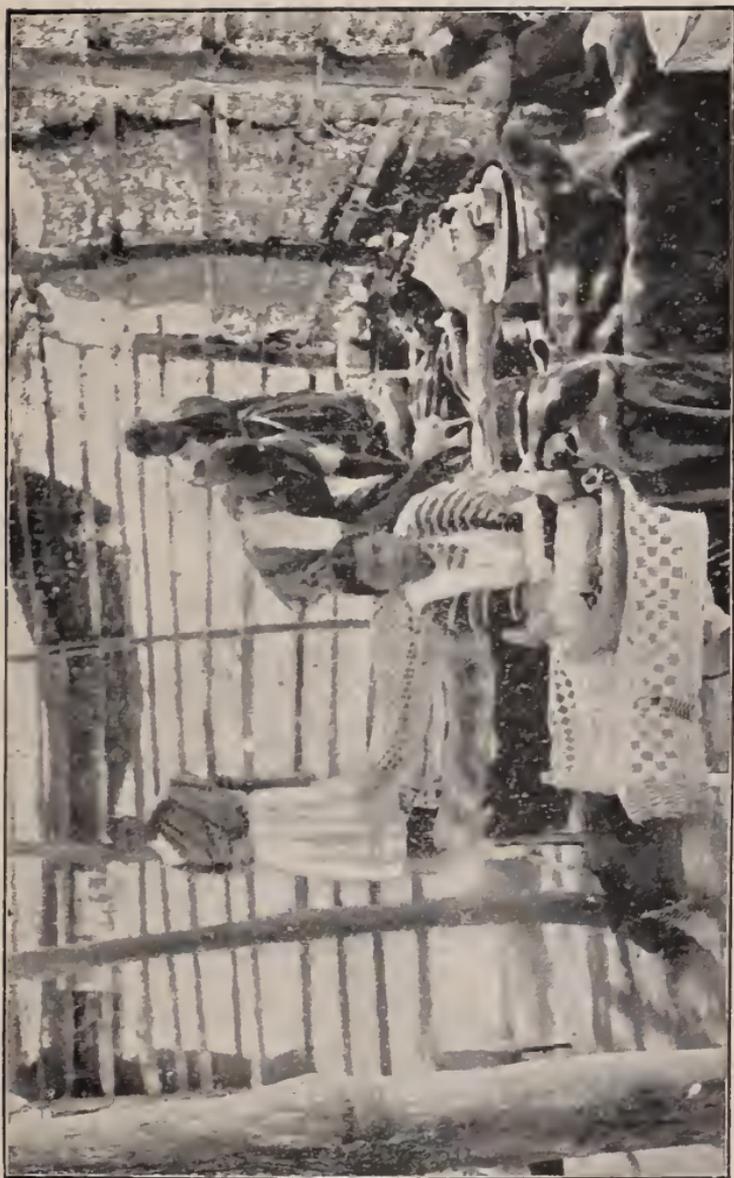
“The servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart.”—EPH. vi. 7.

WHEN Ramabai was making her garden at the Sharada Sadan in years gone by, she planned to have a fernery around a fountain. Ferns were brought from the Ghauts at Lanouli, or Khandalla, where in the rainy season they adorn in profusion the sides of the rocky hills, clothing their native barrenness with a garment of tender and lovely green. Baskets of these ferns can always be purchased for a few annas at the railway stations on the Ghauts, and many people take them home and transplant them, but they rarely survive the operation—they are rock-grown, and will not root in ordinary garden soil. This was also Ramabai's experience. But she meant to have a fernery, and nothing daunted by failure, she hired two bullock carts, and went off one day to a river-side some twenty miles distant, where she knew she would find what she wanted. She brought back quantities of

beautiful maiden-hair, roots, soil, and all, and planted her fernery, which flourishes to this day.

It is this characteristic of determination and perseverance that has been a large factor in the human side of her work. Ramabai ascribes all the glory to God, and looks upon herself as solely an instrument in His hands. But she is a polished instrument, and will have the reward of those who have placed all their talents out at highest interest in God' service. Her versatility is a constant source of wonder to her friends. In a recent Report of the Ramabai Association, Mrs. Andrews wrote :

“ Do you ask if she is equal to doing so many things, and doing them well—of buying and building, of planning and executing, of farming and teaching? Dr. Hale's words, uttered years ago, are as true now as then, and will answer the question: ‘ This little woman, who has had this remarkable success with audiences; who has had the wit to think out this combination of circles which work together so well, goes back to India. The chances were ninety-nine out of a hundred that she would have wasted the whole of her money. There are very excellent people, who can do something of what she has done, who have not the slightest executive capacity; and it ought to be said that most people who talk well, as she does, are singularly destitute of the power of working well. . . . But here this wonderful



THE SICK FROM FAMINE DISEASES, AT MUKTI HOSPITAL

little woman who has roused the whole country, and has raised this sum of money, and has organized all this thing, goes out there and proves to be a first-rate educator. And she proves to be a first-rate buyer, and a first-rate person to get on with contractors.' ”

We may add to this that she is a capable farmer, and a poet of no mean order. In the Kindergarten, which is a part of her educational work, training the older girls to teach the little ones, many of the action songs used in English schools have been aptly translated into Marathi by Ramabai. She has also enriched the song of the Marathi Christian Church with a number of beautiful hymns to English as well as Indian tunes.

And the spring of all her inspiration is love to God and man, kindled by that love of Christ which constrains to spend and be spent, and to suffer for others. Ramabai tells how in one part of her father's house, when she was but nine years old, there lived a poor family. The family consisted of a man of thirty years of age, his girl-wife of sixteen, and his old mother. The mother-in-law was all the worst that is implied by that name in India—a heartless old hag, always beating, abusing, and cruelly treating her daughter-in-law. One day when the girl was spinning, a monkey stole her cotton. For this carelessness the girl was abused by the mother-in-law, who nagged the husband on to beat her. Ramabai adds: “I was an eye-witness to all

this. Her piercing cries went right to my heart; and I seem to hear them now after nearly thirty years. My childish heart was filled with indignation. I was powerless to help. But I have never forgotten that poor girl's cries for help; and I suppose it was the first call I received to enter upon the sacred duty of helping my sisters according to the little strength I had. But I never realized the extent of grief and suffering and the need of my sisters just as long as I remained in darkness, and had no love of God in me."

The funds raised in England in the autumn of 1899 for the new rescue building were doubly welcome. Another famine had broken out in India, and this time the country around Khedgaon was more deeply affected. This money came in time of need to employ many starving people in the erection of the rescue home. And Ramabai found herself obliged to make the needs of her starving neighbours known, and to help many with work and the more helpless with alms. This new famine increased in severity, and added trouble was caused by the scarcity of water. Still Ramabai's heart went out to the poor wandering and starving high-caste widows.

In Bombay Presidency and the Central Provinces organized relief work met to some extent the needs of the people; but in Gujerat, in which there had been no famine for one hundred years, and in Rajputana, a ter-



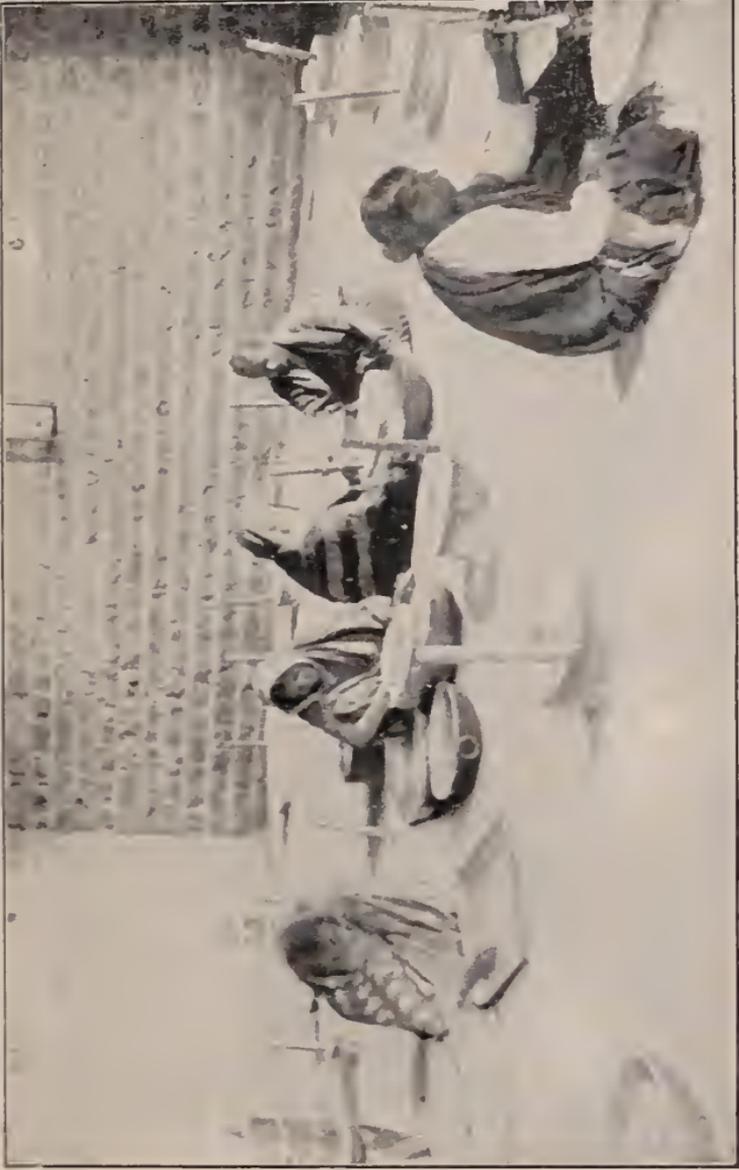
THE GARDENING STAFF WITH WATERING POTS

rible state of things existed; and Ramabai felt she must go and gather some of the poor girls from these places. She knew that the emissaries of evil were busy already, and felt she must be up and doing. She waited on God to know His mind about it. She writes: "The treasury was quite empty; and when the quarterly balance sheet was prepared in the middle of October, there was no balance left at all. Reports of the widespread famine and the wicked traffic in girls reached me from many sides. Still there was nothing to be done except to wait and pray. The Lord did not try my faith very long. The very next day a cheque for Rs.272-2-0 was sent for Mukti, and another daily need was supplied in a wonderful manner. It was then made clear to me that I must step out in faith, and receive as many girls as the Lord would have me reach. So the work was begun at once. Workers were stationed at different places to search for young girls. There was no money for buying material to build new sheds, so some old material was gathered, and a shed was prepared to shelter the newcomers."

Ramabai was happy in having some good workers to send on this errand. They have done the greater part of the work, though Ramabai paid, at least, three visits herself to the most terribly afflicted districts. She says of these women that they have shared all the hardships in the famine relief work. "Gangabai, who has been in

this work from the beginning, has gone through many hardships. She has spared neither strength nor time to do all she can for the famine girls. She is a splendid worker, called of God to gather many girls, and seems to have a special gift in this line of work. Kashibai and Bhimabai are both converts from Hinduism, Kashibai gave up her comfortable home, her husband, and all, for the sake of following the Master when He called her. She is a very simple woman, very timid and unacquainted with the wisdom of the world. Bhimabai was a Hindu Fakir, had travelled a great deal, visited many sacred shrines, bathed in the sacred rivers and tanks to have her sins washed away; but all to no purpose. At last the Lord took compassion on her and revealed Himself to her as the Saviour of her soul; and now she is a happy Christian, preaching the Gospel to hundreds of village women.

“ These three simple and almost illiterate women, protected by the strong and mighty hand of God, have travelled alone for hundreds of miles in jungles, villages, cities, on highways and byways, in search of starving and dying young girls. They have walked for miles in the burning sun; gone without food and rest; worked incessantly for the salvation of the dying hundreds. Their work will be recorded in the Book of the Lamb; for no one who has not borne the hardships of work among famine-stricken people, and been with



ALL GRAIN FOR BREAD IS GROUND BY WOMEN WITH THESE PRIMITIVE HAND MILLS

them for days and nights, can appreciate their labour and know what they have to endure. I see the Gospel declaration—1 Corinth. i. 26-29¹—verified when I see these and other simple Christian women used of the Lord for His service. They are doing a work from which many a mighty man would shrink.

“It is but a small thing to fight a great battle and win a victory with many titles, compared with the heroism of such women. They must be truly blind who cannot see the strength and high courage which the Spirit of Christ gives to the most timid and despised women of this country. I have more than one hundred noble young women in my schools alone who are nobly sacrificing their comfort, even their lives, in the service of their sisters. Since their conversion to Christ they are so changed that one who was acquainted with them before they were Christians could hardly recognise them now. God be praised for His wondrous love, which can turn the selfish, unruly, and devilish heart, and reflect into it the beautiful image of His meek and loving

¹“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence.”

Son! It rejoices my heart to see some of the girls saved from the last famine going out into the famine districts with my workers to save the lives of their perishing sisters in the present famine [1900].

“It is hard work to gather and save girls and young women. Their minds have been filled with such a dread toward Christian people, that they cannot appreciate the kindness shown them. For instance, many of the unconverted girls in my homes have a great fear in their mind. They think that some day after they are well fattened they will be hung head downward, and a great fire will be built underneath, and oil will be extracted from them to be sold at a fabulously large price for medical purposes. Others think they will be put into oil mills, and their bones ground. It is only lately that our girls gathered from the last famine have begun to lose these dreadful thoughts; but the minds of the new one are filled with more dreadful ideas than these. They cannot understand that any one would be kind to them without some selfish purpose.

“Bad men have succeeded in gathering large numbers of girls by enticing them away, and selling them to a bad life. It is too shocking to the refined feeling of refined people; but facts are facts, and Christian mothers ought to know them, that they may be prompted to pray and to work hard for the salvation of young girls—perhaps of the same age as their own sweet

daughters. Let the thought and love of our daughters move our mother-hearts to come forward and save as many of the perishing young girls as we can. I have found out to my great horror and sorrow that over twelve per cent. of the girls rescued by my workers have been ruined for life, and had to be separated from the other girls and placed in the Rescue Home. The bodies of some of these poor girls are so frightfully diseased that there is no hope for their recovery.

“The Word of God says ¹ :

‘Open thy mouth for the dumb

In the cause of all such as are appointed to destruction.’

And woe will be to me if I do not obey the command, even at the cost of losing the favour of the high and mighty of this world. Many a careless official has allowed children to be taken away by people who will turn the boys and girls into slaves and concubines. The poor children who have been sheltered in poorhouses and eaten food from the hands of people of other caste, will not be taken back into their caste, but will be in lifelong slavery if they are ‘adopted’ by Hindus or Mohammedans. The Contagious Diseases Act, which has again come into force under the name of Cantonments Act is a great power on the side of the devil, and enables wicked people to carry

¹PROV. xxxi. 8.

on their evil traffic in girls for the 'benefit' of the British soldiers. Missionaries and others in their rescue work have found it much more difficult to get girls than to gather boys from famine districts. Men and women who are engaged in this traffic in flesh and blood were very busy for months gathering girls before any of the relief works and poorhouses were started. Whenever they saw any of the Christian people coming to the rescue of the girls, they started such alarms and told such dreadful stories about Christians, that in many cases the girls refused to place themselves in charge of Christians' schools, and have gone to their destruction."

The foregoing vivid description from Ramabai's own pen is a portion of a Report issued by her in May, 1900. A few more extracts from the same, concerning the present condition and progress of the Mukti school, will bring my narrative near to its close.

"From a small beginning of temporary character, the Mukti school has grown into a permanent and large institution. Three hundred girls rescued from starvation in 1897 have received regular secular and Christian instruction. They are the children of many prayers; much love and labour have been bestowed on them; and I am able to say, with great joy, that the workers have not laboured in vain. The money which so many friends have sent for them has not been spent in vain. The Lord is very good to let us see the fruit

of our labour; and He is giving us abundant joy as we see the girls growing in grace and proving themselves worthy of the love and labour bestowed on them.

“ Five hundred and eighty in the Mukti Sadan, and sixty girls in the Kripa Sadan,¹ are being trained to lead a useful Christian life. The number of the inmates of these homes is doubled, and will increase as days pass by. God is greatly blessing the work, and the prayers of our friends in all parts of the world are answered daily. Including the hundred girls of the Sharada Sadan, I have altogether nearly seven hundred and fifty girls under training. It will be easily imagined that they need a large number of teachers and helpers to train them. I have only sixteen paid teachers from outside in these homes. There are eighty-five other persons to help me in the three institutions. Thirty-three teachers, ten matrons, and forty-two workers in different branches of industry, are daily labouring for the good of their sisters and their own improvement. Although they are dependent on these schools for their daily bread, they may be said to earn their own living, as most of them receive no pay, or have but nominal pay. The Sharada Sadan has trained seventy teachers and workers in the past eleven years; and the Mukti school has trained nearly

¹Kripa Sadan—Home of Grace—is the name of the Rescue Home started last year.

eighty girls to earn their own living in the past three years. Eighty-five of the old and new girls have found work in their own mother institutions; and sixty-five of the old girls are either married or earning their living as teachers and workers in different places.

“A question has often been asked, namely: What is going to become of all these girls? It is not difficult to answer it. India is a large country, and a vast amount of ignorance prevails everywhere. Men and women of education and character are needed, to enlighten this and the coming generation. I have had a hundred requests from missionaries and superintendents of schools to give them trained teachers, Bible-women, or matrons. I have had quite as many, perhaps more, requests from young men to give them educated wives. It will not be difficult to find good places and comfortable homes for all these young girls when the proper time comes. My heart is burdened with the thought that there are more than one hundred and forty-five millions of women in this country who need to have the light of the knowledge of God’s love given them! All the work that is being done by missionaries and their assistants in this vast land is but a drop in the ocean. It will be very small help to add our particle to that drop. But every particle added will increase the drop; so it will be multiplied, and permeate the ocean until it becomes a stream of the living water that flows

from under the throne of God, to give life and joy to this nation. My aim is to train all these girls to do some work or other. Over two hundred of the present number have much intelligence, and promise to be good school teachers after they receive a few years' training. Thirty of the bigger girls have joined a training class for nurses. Some of them have mastered the trade of oil-making. Others have learnt to do laundry work, and some have learnt dairy work. More than sixty have learnt to cook very nicely. Fifty or more have had some training in field work; but want of rain has stopped that branch of our industry, which will, I hope, be started again after the rain falls. Forty girls have learnt to weave nicely; and more than fifty have learnt to sew well, and make their own garments. The rest, small and large, are learning to do some work with 'the three Rs.'

“ One of the smaller girls rescued from starvation in the last famine is taking charge of a few of our blind girls. Miss Abrams very kindly taught her to read the blind characters. The girl herself is studying hard while engaged in teaching the blind girls to read the Scriptures. Besides reading the Scriptures she teaches them tables, mental arithmetic, and geography, in her spare hours. She sees to their bathing, taking meals at proper times, and can be seen going about her work with her family of the blind and

feeble-minded girls. Her heart goes out to the weak and friendless; and, as soon as she sees some one who is not loved by other girls, she befriends her and takes charge of her at once. She is a truly converted Christian girl, trying to follow in the steps of her Divine Saviour. This and other instances of converted girls endeavouring to do what they can to alleviate the sufferings of their sisters while yet in school and busy with their work, are a great encouragement to us workers, who thank God for being so good as to let us see that our labours are not lost.

“Some girls who are not intellectually bright have a mother’s heart, which is full of love for children. They are appointed as matrons, and have small groups of children under their charge, and love and care for them. These very girls, who are so gentle and loving now, were very wild, greedy, and selfish, before their conversion to Christ. One would hardly have believed that they could ever be so changed and become what they are now. But the Scripture says nothing is impossible with God. His love has won their hearts, and He has made them new creatures in Christ. It must not, however, be understood that our school and mission, and the workers connected with them, are models of perfection. We are all very defective, make many mistakes, and our flesh many a time gets the better of us. You will find many faults in us, if you look out for

them. The Lord knows that we are nothing but dust. But He in His supreme love does not give us up for lost, but chastens and brings us back into the right way, and lets us know why He chastised us. We thank Him with all our hearts for His unspeakable love and mercy.

“ Most of my helpers have joined the Bible Training Class taught by Miss Abrams. The daily study of the Word of God has made them willing workers. ‘ The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.’ We have found that nothing helps so much to make matters straight as the study of God’s Word. Out of this Bible Training Class I hope there will rise a trained band of Bible-women, who will take the Gospel to their sisters in their own homes. Some girls have already begun to go about in the villages around here. They are working as Zenana Bible-women and Sunday School teachers in their spare time.

“ Khedgaon is by no means a romantic place. The girls have to walk a long distance in the burning sun, bare-footed and without umbrellas, to go to bathe by the wells. They have to rise as early as four in the morning in order to get their day’s work done. . . . School is always closed on Saturdays, Sundays, and other festival days. In long holidays, as in May and December, they have to do some little work in order to keep their minds busy. The girls who cook in the

morning have to rise as early as two o'clock. Two classes, having twenty-five or thirty girls in each, have to cook and serve by turns. Those who cook in the morning have their rest in the afternoon. Their time of work is changed after a few weeks. When one class has mastered the work assigned to it, another takes up the work, and the former one begins to learn something else. In this way all the girls are trained to do almost every kind of work done here. All get from seven to eight hours' sleep. They are neither over-fed nor get too delicate food; but none of them are under-fed. They get three good meals a day, as a rule. The weak and sick ones, as well as the very little children, have milk and other nourishing food. We have a regularly trained hospital nurse—a good Christian woman—to look after the sanitary condition of the place. She has a large band of girls working under her. No time, labour, or money, has been spared to save life and make the girls comfortable. But weakness produced by prolonged starvation, and the extreme heat caused by want of rain, have been difficult to cope with. Yet I cannot but thank God out of the fulness of my heart for so wonderfully protecting so many hundreds of lives from plague and famine. Although life at Khedgaon is hard, the girls look fat and healthy, and are full of spirits. I find that hard work makes better women of the girls. The easy and

comfortable city life is, of course, preferred by the flesh; but life in places like Khedgaon, with fewer comforts and harder work, is more conducive to bodily and spiritual health."

A member of the Poona and Indian Village Mission, who visited Ramabai about this time, writes: "As we walked through the extensive grounds of Mukti Home, I was deeply interested to learn how the Lord has led this child of His to double the capacity of Mukti in a few short months. 'When I determined to rescue hundreds in Gujerat last August, I had not a pice in hand; but after the determination had been made, the Lord sent Rs.242, she said: 'this money was an earnest of thousands sent during the months to follow.'

"We paused in our walk before a substantially built stone wall, eighteen inches thick and four hundred feet long, partially roofed over by tiles; running parallel at a distance of eight or ten feet another stone wall will be built a few feet high, and thus, partitioned at intervals of fifty feet, eight dormitories will be ready when the monsoons break. These walls were entirely built of the stones taken from the ground in the excavation of four wells. A little further on, I observed a temporary building without walls, hedged about with prickly branches, making an exit impossible. 'This ward,' said Ramabai, 'is for children having infectious

diseases.' In other buildings were children in various stages of weakness. There were little ones in cots, so emaciated that one wondered how the spark of life had been preserved; there were weakly ones able to totter about—children who had grown prematurely old through suffering, but who, with careful attention and nourishing food, such as arrowroot, condensed foods, and milk, would be able to study and to work in six months' time. How could one help but praise God for bestowing such kindness and care upon these waifs? It was a pleasure to learn that an Indian Christian trained nurse was teaching some of the older orphan girls to serve in that capacity. Out of eighty teachers and helpers in Mukti Home, sixty-four are old orphan scholars, most of whom were rescued in 1897. 'Are they truly converted women?' I asked. I shall not soon forget the look on Ramabai's face and her words: 'Yes; they are truly converted; it would be impossible for them patiently to care for such repulsive and loathsome cases if the grace of God was not in their hearts.' There was much to praise God for, in all that one saw and heard that memorable evening. Here in Mukti Home were scores who had been truly converted to God; and in a few months' time there will be probably a thousand¹ in the shelter of a real Christian Home;

¹On August 3rd, 1900, Ramabai reports having received one thousand five hundred and fifty, and they were still coming.

trained in an eminently sensible way to regard work as honourable, living simply as natives live, and fitted for lives of usefulness.

“Pandita Ramabai is a spiritually-minded Christian, one whose testimony, by life and lip, has no uncertain sound—a woman who believes the Bible to be the inspired Word of God, and whose teaching is untouched by the fatal poison of higher criticism; one who believes unreservedly in the efficacy of the atoning blood of Christ for the guilt of sin, and who reckons upon the power of the Holy Ghost for service; a woman equipped by God to lead and to organize, and under God’s grace to educate and train India’s sons and daughters for lives of service along Holy Ghost lines.”

Ramabai’s reference to the necessity of the girls having been really converted before they could care patiently for the newly-arrived victims of famine, is accentuated by a description of some of these cases, written by a missionary who has cared for many of them, and who says: “Some have had bowel troubles, piles, etc. These need special attention as to diet. Others have great boils and sores to be washed, cleansed out, bandaged, and treated every day. Others have bad sore eyes. Some have a kind of whooping cough with vomiting of blood.

“But the most dreaded of all, and what is so painful, is the famine sore mouth. When once it has a

headway in the mouth, nothing but prayer can stop its progress. It eats great lumps of flesh out of jaws, roof of the mouth, and eats the gums away from the teeth, and teeth drop out. We have had several of these cases, and the odour from them is almost unbearable. While trying to wash their mouths, which was done every two hours, the effort would almost take away our breath. Frequently the poor sufferers are released by death caused from the awful disease eating into the windpipe. When that is the case no earthly help can avail. God has wonderfully delivered from pain and death; but some were in such a frightful condition we could not but be glad when death released them.

“Some have the famine sore head. This is not so obstinate, but may linger for months and even years without entirely healing. The head is sometimes, when we first get them, one mass of blood, pus, vermin, and scab. It has to be scraped and cleansed, then watched closely till healed. All have fevers and more or less pulmonary troubles from exposure to the cold night-air. Some you can scarcely locate their trouble. They seem to be in a decline; and though they eat heartily they waste away.”

Another missionary who visited Mukti in May, 1900, says: “This place has improved much since my last visit here a year and a half ago. Many buildings have

gone up and more are being built, the plans all drawn up by Ramabai. Palm and other trees have been planted; flowers and shrubs, also an artificial pond with water lilies and ferneries, make the place very beautiful and attractive. Things are kept scrupulously clean. One of the workers told me Ramabai has a real mother's heart; and when she has to punish one (which is often necessary), she is miserable until the girl is conquered and comes and asks her forgiveness; then she kisses her with weeping, and they go away and pray together."

[Ramabai is unique in her methods of punishing as well as in other things. One visitor relates how she found a shamefaced little girl tied up among the calves. On questioning her as to why she was there, she confessed to having been convicted of pilfering. Her contrition was evidently genuine, and the visitor thought the same punishment would not be twice needed.]

"The pupils are separated into companies: girls of one size and age being put in one room, and the next size in another, with several older girls to look after them. In this way they are marched out to the dining-room, the little girls of five or six years coming first, two by two, and so increasing in size until the full-grown girls close up the ranks. In like manner they are marched out to the well daily, which is some distance from the house, for their baths. Each one car-

ries her clean *sari* on her head which is put on there after the bath, and the dirty one washed and carried home to dry.

“It was quite an interesting sight to see the long, straight line of girls marching down the road, two by two, the other morning. I fell into line and marched with them to the well. How they did enjoy plunging into the deep reservoir of water; and what screaming and laughing and talking as they splashed around in the water, throwing it on each other! After bathing, all fell to washing their clothes; even the little ones washing away till helped out by their older sisters. The water is drawn from the well by six strong bullocks, a large stream continually flowing into the reservoirs and from there out into the fields in which Ramabai has large fruit plantations and vegetable gardens.

“The Rescue Home here is by itself, and has seventy-five women now. They grind their own flour, do their own cooking, and have their own hospital. As I entered their compound, I was surrounded by a company of contented-looking women, all speaking to me at once and all trying to touch my hands. My heart was melted in pity for them. Some looked healthy and strong, and others were smitten with consumption, and others with still more dreadful diseases. I thought what a wonderful and broad salvation this is, to take in these low outcasts, and prepare a home of refuge for



REV. C. B. WARD AND THOMAS FRANCIS WITH FAMINE CHILDREN

them, as well as for the respectable and moral. It being the hour for prayer, they all sat down on the ground and commenced singing. Some of the older girls come in with Bibles—and one read a chapter; another prayed. As I showed a kindly interest, eyes moistened and faces softened, and I thought how much might be done with a little sympathy. I felt that Jesus had been near.”

But to return to Ramabai's Report. She goes on to tell of a time of testing and trial in temporal supplies. “The storeroom was almost empty, and the saries of our girls and most of their blankets had turned into old rags—there was no money to buy new saries and blankets. But saries had been ordered from the cloth merchants, with the understanding that they were to take all back if by a certain date their bills were not paid; not one of them, however, was touched. Grain and other necessities of life were not ordered for the month. Many people could not understand why I had to make certain changes in food, etc. But the Lord knew all about it. He let the trials come at certain times, and let the house and treasury be quite empty only to fill them again. He made me realize from time to time that His ‘hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither His ear heavy, that it cannot hear.’¹ No one was informed about the needs at times of trial; but according to the command of God² all requests

¹Isa. lix. i.

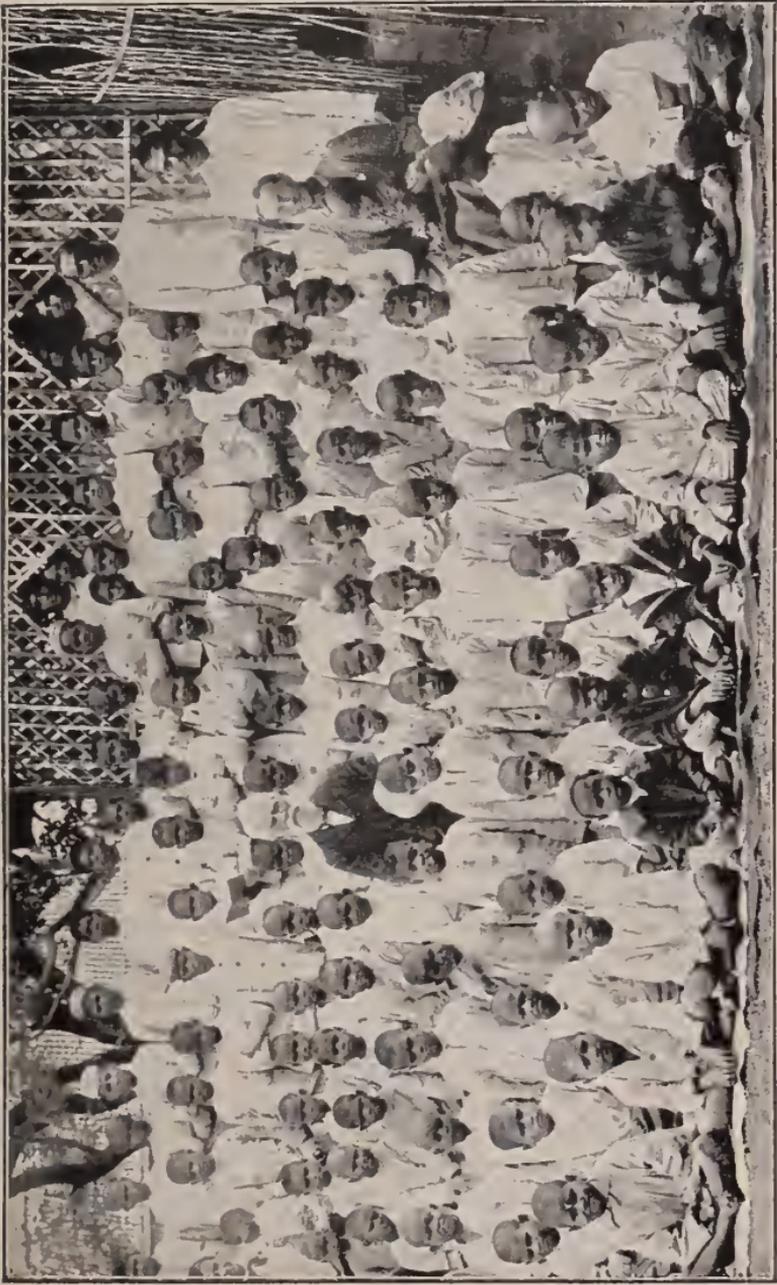
²Phil. iv. 6.

were made known to Him, and He did keep my mind in perfect peace in Christ, and sent help in His own good time, to buy not only grain, but saries and blankets, etc., for the old and new girls.

“The work of rescuing girls went on and is still going on, in spite of all difficulties and trials; for God makes it very plain to me from time to time, by removing obstacles when they come, that it is His will that this work should not be stopped until He Himself stops it. Agur’s prayer¹ is being answered in our case. We are not allowed too much or too little of food and clothing and other comforts. Moreover, the Lord is teaching our Christian girls to deny themselves a little for the sake of others, that they may meet the expenses of their Christian instruction and other church expenses. He sent us a message one day to give up one of our meals on Sundays to save money to feed the hungry and poor, and to help His work in other missions. Most of the girls very cheerfully came forward with the request to cut off one of their meals on Sundays, and the money thus saved has been used to feed the Lord’s poor and to help on His work in other places.

“The question of self-support of Indian Christian Churches is becoming a very serious one. The Indian Christians are very poor, it is true, and will not be able to pay the high salaries and bear the heavy expenses

¹Prov. xxx. 8, 9.



REV. AND MRS. D. O. FOX AND MISS MCGROTTY, WITH RESCUED FAMINE BOYS

of fashionable churches. But as Hindus neither they nor their parents looked to some other nation, or to the high priests, for the support of their temples and their priesthood. As Christians there is no reason why they should not train themselves and their children to deny themselves, and to systematic giving. The Lord showed me this was my opportunity to practise and teach what I believed; and I am very thankful to say that the experiment has proved to be a success, and the Lord's promise in Mal. iii. 10 has been literally fulfilled. Some of us perhaps give one-fiftieth or one-hundredth part of our income to the Church, and that too with great reluctance, and call it tithe; but little realize that the tithe is no less than one-tenth of the whole; and that is the income tax God would have us give Him for His poor. If we give one-twentieth or fiftieth part and call it a tithe, or give very little with great reluctance, we are robbing God of His dues, and robbing ourselves of great blessings which He is eager to give us if we only accept them by fulfilling the conditions. This, to me, seems to be the true cause of the material poverty of the native Christian Church in India. We must not expect that God will give us many spiritual and temporal blessings unless we cheerfully fulfill the conditions on which He has promised them to us."

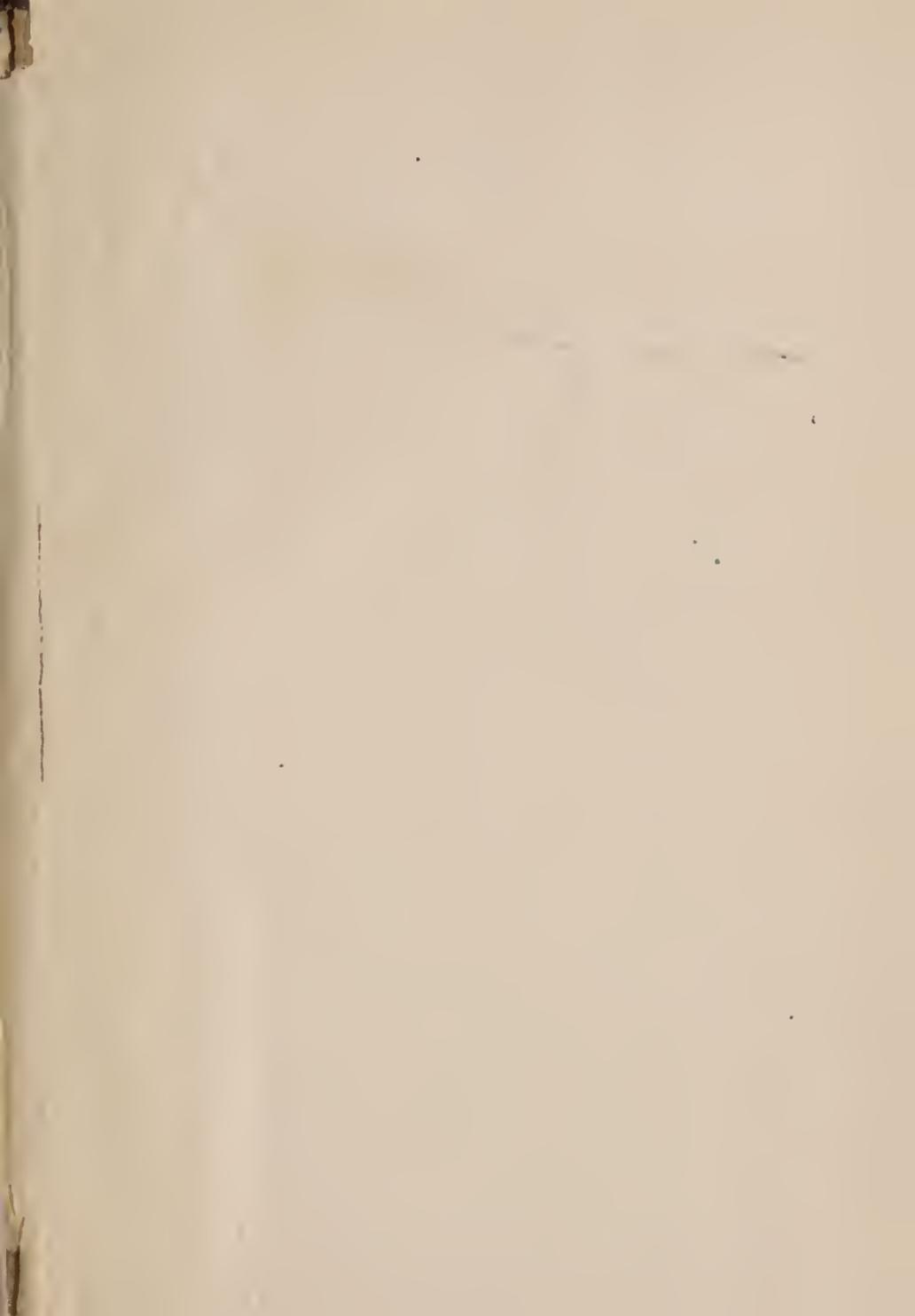
Ramabai concludes her most interesting recital of the condition and growth of this wonderful work with

a paragraph which will do equally well for the close of this volume; and here we must leave her.

“ God gave me a special message from His Word a few days ago to give all the friends who are helping the Lord’s work at Mukti and other missions, which I pass on to you. It is this: ‘ He that giveth unto the poor shall not lack.’¹ You have denied yourself in many ways for the sake of giving money for the poor women and children sheltered in our homes, but you have this rich promise from the Lord as your reward. God bless you all. As for me, I have His sure word to depend upon. ‘ He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?’ Now, ‘ Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God, and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.’ ”

¹Prov. xxviii. 27.





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