

LETTER FROM REV. NORMAN RUSSELL.  
Mhow, C. I., Jan. 10th 1893.

*For the Record:*

**B**ERWAI is a village about thirty six miles from Mhow. It has a population of about five thousand and is the seat of a Holkar Government office. Besides this there are about thirty or forty villages within a near radius and thus it forms an important centre for work.

I had heard about Berwai several times since coming to Mhow, but it was not till some weeks after returning from the hills I had an opportunity of visiting it.

One day about the middle of the rains, Raghu and I went down to Berwai for the day; it proved very wet but in spite of the rain we had a very good field day. First we took up position near the temple and brought down the imprecations of the priests on our heads. But these were not as effectual in driving us away as a heavy shower of rain which obliged us to seek a cattle shed for shelter. Here our congregation was considerably enlarged and proved very attentive.

It was not long however before we were interrupted by a Mohammedan with the usual questions, Who was the father of Jesus? &c. But I would not allow Raghu to answer. I asked the man if he knew why Mahomet had established his religion. It was to put down idolatry "How long have you been in this village?" I asked again "about ten years." Have you ever preached against idolatry? "No." "Well" I said "you have never done anything to put down idolatry yourself and immediately we Christians come to do so, instead of helping us you oppose us. Is that right?" He was honest enough to confess himself at fault and when after the preaching we began to sell tracts our Mahommedan friend was the first purchaser.

I was so much impressed with the importance of this village and its site that I sent two of the men to stay for a week or so during the rainy season. On arriving they made arrangements for a house, but their continued preaching of Christianity drove the landlord to put them out and they had nothing left but to go to the serai or open shed where native travellers lodge. The change, though it gave them no place to put their goods, proved an unexpected source of blessing. Staying in the same serai with his banya master was a young Mahratta Brahmin, who for some years had been a seeker after truth but had heard little of Christianity. He was attracted by our mens' singing of their evening hymn and came to enquire of them regarding their religion. He soon became interested, and when, a day or so afterwards, I visited Berwai I was pleased to see the earnest look he had, and the simple way in which he received the truth. I was somewhat surprised however

at the end of the week to see him accompanying our men on their return to Mhow.

It appears that when his master was leaving Berwai to go into the interior, he wanted to give up his position and stay with the Christians, but the banya would not allow him. However he had not gone more than fourteen miles of the way during which he said that his feet seemed to be dragging him back every step, before he left his master and fled. He had had nothing to eat all day and it was now late at night, heavy rain had fallen and the roads were very muddy, but nothing would deter him. He said afterwards "I was afraid to stop at a village for a drink for fear I might be detained." About midnight our men were awakened in the serai at Berwai by some one calling them and they arose to find poor Y— wet, hungry and tired after his long run. He had left everything behind him in his master's gari, and being hungry, our men wished to give him something to eat. They told him they had food but supposed he would not eat it as he would thus break his caste, and offered him some pice to go into the bazaar and buy for himself. For a few moments a struggle went on in his heart while silent prayers were ascending beside him for help, then he said "If I am going to become a Christian I must eat with the Christians," and he then and there abandoned caste and Hinduism. Perhaps the first step was the hardest.

Y— became an earnest learner and was soon afterwards baptized. His testimony before baptism was a very interesting one. I had shown him the dangers he would encounter in becoming a Christian, the loss of caste, friends and associations, and the subsequent hardships he would have to bear, nor would he find it easy to earn his bread as a Christian. He replied in a beautiful Hindi simile, that as the grain must first be pounded in the mortar before it is fit for use so he was willing to suffer if it was to make him a better Christian. On the day of baptism he removed his Brahmin cord before the assembled congregation and gave it to me. He remained with us and became a teacher in the school at half the salary he received from his former master, and you will be pleased to hear of his steadfast adherence to the truth as it is in Christ. He is an earnest worker and faithful teacher, only last Sunday he came to tell me with great eagerness that two of the people in his Sunday school were wanting to become Christians.

Work begun under such auspicious circumstances was not to be abandoned. I paid a good many visits to Berwai and talked with a number of its leading men. Finally the Bhoras or Mohammedan store keepers and the poor people asked for teachers. I sent a man Raoji to spend part of his time with the Bhora boys and part with the poor people. But again the Devil stood