

The New Day in Missions

THE NEW STATUS OF WOMEN IN NON-CHRISTIAN LANDS.

By Rev. H. C. Priest.

"The old maid has come to India to stay and to be useful. Modern conditions are producing a large crop of grown-up girls who decide to remain unmarried and to devote themselves to the new avenues of usefulness that are opening up." So said Dr. Joshi, of Bombay, India, a native Professor of English in the Bombay University, in an illuminating address on the present situation in India given before the Women's Canadian Club in Toronto a few days ago.

Such a statement concerning India's women and by a native of India is extremely significant of the changing conditions of the women of the East. Unwelcome at birth, betrothed irrevocably often in infancy, at the latest before she reaches the age of ten, to a man arbitrarily chosen for her, doomed-it may be to child widowhood or entering into married life at twelve years of age and in some cases earlier, largely uneducated, for only one in one hundred and forty-seven of the women of India can read and write, passing her life in the enforced and unnatural seclusion of the zenna. The lot of the women of India has been one of appalling social and moral wrongs. The hall-mark of Hinduism, it has been well said, is its degradation of women.

At the same time, it would be wrong to give the impression that all Indian women are unhappy and conscious of their need. They are, many of them, bright and attractive, patient sufferers usually accepting their fate without a murmur. Many of them are loved and kindly treated by their husbands. Nevertheless, while this is all true, not only in India, but throughout the non-Christian world, woman has been regarded as belonging to an inferior order, and the crimes against womanhood have been among the outstanding social evils of those lands.

But a new day is slowly but surely

dawning. There is a new valuation of women throughout the East, both by the women themselves, and also by the community. "Every thinking person," said a Japanese statesman in a recent address, "realizes that no nation rises above its womanhood." Such a sentiment uttered by a Westerner would be regarded as obvious and commonplace, but from an oriental statesman it marks a new era of thought concerning womanhood.

When the new medical school for women was projected in Vellore two or three years ago, through the union of American and British Boards, under the leadership of Dr. Ida Scudder, the Government of India assumed one-half the maintenance of the school provided six women would enter as students. When the school opened, sixty-nine young Indian women applied for admittance, of whom only eighteen could be admitted. Fourteen of these went up for examination and took the highest rank in the Madras Presidency. The following year there were no less than eighty-five eager applicants.

Of no small significance is the fact that colleges for women have been established recently in India at four important centres—Lucknow, London, Lahore and Madras. The Maharaj Kumar of Tikari recently bequeathed seven million dollars to found schools in which girls from five to sixteen years may study in residence according to modern methods.

In Lahore a group of well educated Indian women has been developing for some years extensive community work, demonstrating such questions as hygiene, sanitation and the care of children.

Still more remarkable than any of these remarkable incidents: Two years ago at the meeting of the Indian National Congress at Delhi, a body which meets annually for the discussion of social and political questions by the leaders of Indian thought, where the main question was the new political reform measures for India, several hundred women were