

LETTER FROM REV. NORMAN H. RUSSELL.

THE GREATEST POWER IN INDIA.

Mhow, Central India, Aug., 1892.

For the Record.

INDIA cannot be said to have been Christianized, but undoubtedly the moving force in the great Empire is Christianity. The whole development of India, her present and future history, revolve about the name of Christ. This seems an extravagant statement to make concerning a heathen land, and probably would be admitted by few people, even Europeans in India, outside of the missionaries and their friends. But I believe it can be borne out by the ample testimony of those who live nearest to India—people who can feel the pulse of her national movements and who know every feeblest attempt within her that makes for righteousness.

First, the name of Christ is probably one of the best known in all India. To friend and foe alike "Yishu Masih" (Jesus Christ) seldom needs introduction. I have watched crowds again and again, when the Word was being preached, listen attentively to a presentation of God's righteousness and sin's sinfulness until the name of Jesus was mentioned, when with a look of disgust some would turn away, while others would brighten into deeper attention. Entering a village not long ago, I began by asking the people "Do you know Jesus?" "Yes, sahib." "Do you believe on Him?" "Yes; why shouldn't we, seeing what He has done for us?" Some time ago I went down to speak to the native regiment. They were new men and didn't know me, nor could my dress distinguish me from any civilian. They were all gathered round me, not knowing what I was going to speak about, but I had hardly uttered a few sentences before I heard a whisper behind me: "Oh, yes, it's about Yishu Masih."

Not only is the name of Christ known, however, but the incidents of his life, either wholly or in part, are perhaps better known, at least in the centres of missionary influence, than any other individual. There are heathen boys in our schools who would shame any ordinary Sunday school boy at home with his wonderful knowledge of the minutest details of the life of Christ. The reason is, they learn it daily and take an interest in it. But outside of the schools also, among every class, whether in town or village, we find many familiar with the details of the life of Jesus of Nazareth. They have probably heard them from some passing preacher, or they have visited the preaching centres in some bazaar; or, it may be, they have sought to know about this Jesus, that they might refute Him. For, as Paul said, we have to rejoice that by Mohammedan and Hindu alike, "in every way,

whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached."

No name is held up so conspicuously before the people of India as the name of Christ. It is preached to them; it is sung to them; it is shown to them in pictures and magic lantern views. I have entered a village and been greeted by the children with the first verse of a well known hymn, "Yishu Masih prava sachaiya." I have opened up my picture rolls and immediately the figure and face of Jesus were chosen out by the crowd.

Moreover, the literature of India is largely Christian. No one but must regret that the English novel, and too often the worst of them, have crept into India. Nor is the country without a number of aspirants to novel fame on their own account, though I can't speak of their productions. But among the masses the Bible and books on and about Christianity are most frequently found with those who can read. This must be so when we hear that the North India Bible Society, whose work extends only over a limited portion of India, and in one language, printed last year 122,558 copies of the Bible and its portions, to say nothing of 270,206 tracts by the Tract Society.

In few ways is money better invested than in these Bible and tract societies. A beautiful edition of the Gospels is published at the remarkably low price of one pice, or about one-half cent. In Mhow and its vicinity alone during the past few months we have sold nearly 400 portions of the Bible, besides hundreds of tracts, and much has been given in free distribution.

With Christ preached, sung and read into the hearts and minds of the people of India, we need say nothing as to the power he must exert on their hearts. Perhaps those most deeply affected would be the last to admit it, however. The prevailing sin of India to-day is pride; it stands out more prominent than her Himalayan mountain chain. It has swollen her cheeks till her very eyesight is obstructed and she cannot see herself. India acknowledges the beauty, the grace, the sovereignty of Christ, but she will not bow to Him because He was not born a Brahman nor inaugurated his religion in India.

But bend or not she cannot but give way to an overwhelming force, and so she has compromised with her pride and adopted a religion, that is half way. Christianity has acted on India as the law did on Israel—it has been her schoolmaster; it has revealed to her sin. A confession such as the following from a recent Hindu writer is not uncommon. He says: "Have we got in Hindu society that blunt honesty, truthfulness, independence of spirit, evidenced in impatience with injustice and indignation at tyranny, that profound sense of individual responsibility in the collective which characterizes the English? I say we have not."