

THE WRONGS OF INDIAN WOMANHOOD.

[We gave in our last issue the introduction to a series of articles from the *Bombay Guardian*, on this subject, also the chapter on *Murals*. The writer follows with articles on *The Zenana*, *Child Marriage*, *Enforced Widowhood*, etc. Then follows a statement as to what the Government has done and what Reformers have attempted and partly succeeded in accomplishing. The writer then proceeds to give what seems to be the reason of this partial failure, and the real remedy for these evils].

In spite of the absorbing subjects of the years which we have enumerated that have filled to a large extent the public mind, there is still a root cause why the reformers are not more successful in their efforts. *They have no moral motive power.* When one uses the word reformer, the mind instinctively goes to men like Wicliffe, Luther, the Huguenots, the sturdy Hollanders, the Pilgrim Fathers, Wilberforce, Garrison and others. Visions of flame come before us, enfolding in their fiery embrace men like Latimer, Ridley and Cranmer. The dictionary says a reformer is one who *effects* reform. How shall we define the word in its usage in India? It is often applied to all the educated class indiscriminately. A man may possess the highest culture, and yet be far from the ranks of the reformers. Some men are prepared to suffer a little for the cause of reform, but not too much. Until Indian reformers are willing to suffer even to the loss of all things, to order their own lives according to their convictions, to do right because it is right regardless of consequences, we do not use the word in its legitimate sense. Some one has said, that India has never seen a real reformer yet.

The protest is often made that Europeans are not patient enough with the reformers, and do not understand their awful social difficulties and complications.

We know these trials are very sore, but what is needed is the power that comes from the truth apprehended in the words: "Whosoever loveth father and mother more than Me is not worthy of Me." If a man is not willing to forsake all that he hath, "*he cannot be My disciple.*" "Whoso seeketh to save his life shall lose it." We do not see how men can ever be happy or retain self-respect, who do not live up to their own convictions.

The hollowness of some so-called reform is illustrated by the four methods of reform, enunciated once by a reformer in a public meeting:

1. By the *Shastras*. When they agree with the reformers, quote them.
2. Interpretation. Interpret the *Shastras* so as to make them agree with you.
3. When interpretation fails, appeal to reason and conscience.
4. When that fails, ask for legislation.

We feel the reformers fail for three reasons. (1) They seem to lack the spirit of self-sacrifice. (2) They seem to lack in courage and perseverance. (3) They have not learned the value of example. A lack of conformity to our talk makes it useless. The Social Congress is accused of only passing resolutions. The highest moral influence that can be exerted by any being is EXAMPLE. Advice, precept and sanction all have moral power, but are only rendered operative by example. The world has this moral motive power manifested in the atonement of Jesus Christ. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" for its redemption, and it is argued, "*Hereby* know we love, because He laid down

His life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren."

It is nothing but the love of Christ that gives men power to suffer for others, and compensates them for the loss of all things. This is the moral motive power that has made reformers and martyrs in Christian lands, and without which the Reformers will never accomplish any thorough or lasting reform in India.

In our previous articles we have canvassed the subject of the hope of help from Government and the Reformers, the two sources to which many look for the redemption of Indian women. But we confess the out-look for women from either source at the present is not very bright. Government under the most propitious circumstances has been slow to act in making changes, much less is it likely to do so now in the presence of its present absorbing questions, and in the face of the present discontent and strong race feeling.

And the Reformers? To many the disappointment from this source has been most bitter. We give them credit for all that has been done, but so much that we had a right to demand from educated India has never been accomplished. Hon. Justice Scott, of the Bombay High Court, well said in a letter to Mr. Malabari: "If you wait till individual Hindus take up and carry through, single handed, without any outside aid, any great change in their social system, you will realise the fable of the countryman, who sat by the river bank and waited for the stream to run dry before he crossed over to the other side. It is not in human nature to expect great changes to be effected in a society by its own members, when the advocates of change have to face family estrangement, social ostracism and caste excommunication as a probable result of their efforts." Caste which holds the whole fabric of Hinduism together has been too much for them. They will denounce it and yet obey its demands enough to keep within its sacred precincts socially.

Even Ram Mohun Roy, who has stood the highest in the ranks of Indian Reformers, "in the eyes of the law always remained a Brahmin. He never abandoned the Brahminical thread, and had too lively a sense of the value of money, to risk the forfeiture of his property and the consequent diminution of his usefulness and influence [as he saw it. E.] by formally giving up his caste. In fact, though far in advance of his age as a thinker, he laid no claim to perfect disinterestedness of motive as a man. . . . He died a Hindu in respect of external observances; his Brahmin servant performed the usual rites required by his master's caste, and his Brahminical thread was found coiled round his person when his spirit passed away. In all his *Anti-Brahminism*, he continued a Brahmin to the end. Even after his death it was thought advisable to keep up the fiction of a due maintenance of caste."* His body was not interred in a Christian burial ground, though he died in Christian England, lovingly nursed to the end by Christian friends; but was buried in the private grounds of his hostess. And this will continue to be the history of Reformers until they have a different motive power for effort that will enable them to suffer the loss of all things and to receive that which will compensate and satisfy their hearts for what they lose.

And the women themselves, will they agitate their

* "Religions Thought and Life in India." By Sir Monier Williams.