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# W. B. M. U. TIDINGS.

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MOTTO FOR THE YEAR.

“Lord what wilt thou have me to do.”

PRAYER TOPIO.

“Pray that we may be able to send out four Missionaries this autumn, two male Missionaries and two single ladies.”

## Superstitious Worship in India.

THREE miles from Ramapatam, one of the stations of the Telugu mission, and on the high road leading from Nellore to Ongole, is a small village called Tettoo. Here we have a chapel where a school and regular Sunday services are maintained.

In the early part of last year, cholera was very prevalent in all that region. Many people died of it in the villages, and also travellers by the road and the canal. A woman travelling to Mas was attacked by it and died at Tettoo, under a mango-tree, just opposite our chapel. As she had died of cholera the people would not allow her to be buried in the village, but cast her body out among the cactus and thorn bushes near the jungle, and threw some earth over it.

About three months afterwards, a very superstitious man, one of the potters of the village, on returning home one evening, reported that as he was passing the place where the woman had been buried he heard a voice, as if it were her spirit, saying that if he would clear away the cactus and build her a proper tomb he would be cured of his disease from which he was suffering. As soon as he told this foolish fancy or wilful falsehood, it was believed and those who heard it told it to others. And the next day they went to the place and began clearing the ground, and brought stones and mortar and built a tomb over the remains of the woman. And soon people began to flock to the place from all quarters to be cured of their infirmities and diseases. The blind, the lame, the lepers, those who were supposed to be possessed by evil spirit, and all sorts of ailing ones came to worship. Most of them could not tell what they worshipped, whether it was the grave or the body or spirit of the deceased woman, and when questioned they would say they came because others came, and they did as others did. So rapidly did the superstition spread that within a few weeks thousands were coming not only sick people, but also their relatives and friends, and multitudes more out of mere curiosity and all sorts of tramps and adventurers, fortune tellers, jugglers, acrobats, religious beggars, etc. People came hundreds of miles, Hindus of all castes, and Mohammedans, rich people and poor, old and young. Within a month or six weeks from the time the folly commenced, the crowds had increased so that there were ten thousand people there at one time. Shopkeepers set up booths made of mats for the sale of supplies for the worshippers, peddlers of all sorts of trinkets flocked to the place, and side shows of various kinds were started.

The great majority of the worshippers were women, and the manner of their worship was as follows : They first went to the place where the woman died under the mango-tree, and there each one paid a small fee equal to about two-thirds of a cent. The money was received by two men who sat

there for that purpose, and it was placed in safe keeping by the village officials. The promoters of the worship had taken the clothes of the dead woman or at least what they said were her clothes, and tied them up in a bundle and hung them on the tree under which she died. And they had also the old dirty ragged palm-leaf mat on which she lay when dying. After the worshippers had paid their fee, they first walked round the tree several times with clasped hands and bowed heads, and then devoutly pressed their foreheads against the bundle of clothes and kissed them ; then walked round the old mat and bowed reverently to it and coming to the spot where the body had lain as soon as she was dead, each one took up a pinch of earth from the place put it in her mouth and swallowed it. Although each one took only as much of this sacred earth as could be held between the thumb and fingers, the number of worshippers was so great that within two months an excavation had been made in the ground about six feet wide and two feet deep. They then went to a tank or artificial lake near by, which was muddy and thick with the tramping and bathing of the multitudes, and having immersed themselves there they went to the tomb, about a quarter of a mile distant, and after having walked around it several times, presenting offerings of coconuts and sweetmeats and burning sticks of scented wood, they prostrated themselves, in their wet clothes flat to the ground, with their faces to the earth and their hands stretched out in an imploring attitude towards the grave. And there they would lie for hours, motionless, in concentric ranks, the heads of all lying towards the sacred spot. We walked round about them on several occasions and among the prostrate ranks, and on one afternoon made a rough estimate as to their number and concluded that there must have been nearly a thousand women lying thus their minds fixed on the poor victim of the cholera, and hoping for some help or blessing. I think it was the most pitiable sight I ever witnessed ; the poor lost creatures in the depths of their depraved superstition.

This great concourse of people afforded an excellent opportunity for preaching the gospel and the opportunity was improved by us nearly every day until we left Ramapatam for America. In the afternoons, accompanied by native preachers, we went to the place and preached to attentive crowds and distributed tracts and scripture portions until dark. Some of the hearers, especially the Mohammedans, were disposed to defend their religion, with ifs, superstition and folly, but for the most part the crowds gave an attentive hearing to the truth. And we hope that in not a few minds the things which they heard may remain, and help to bring them out of darkness to Him who is the Light of the World.

W. B. BOGGS.

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ALTHOUGH Thy work be laid  
In most unworthy hands,  
I dare not be afraid;  
He strengthens who commands;  
He sends His strongest angels to the weak,  
The Altar coal when untaught lips must speak.  
God's are the will and deed.  
None holds a gift but must supply a need;  
The heart's voice saying, "Woe is me,  
If I do not this work," is Destiny.

CARL SPENCER.