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# W. B. M. U. TIDINGS.

February 1894, Amherst N. S.

No. 4.

## MOTTO FOR THE YEAR.

“Lord what wilt thou have me to do.”

We hear much of a Hindu woman's degradation, seclusion and ignorance; of her helplessness and hopelessness, and the half is never told or known. Shut in from all the world, without books, without music, or even the knowledge of a song to sing; without needlework or fancywork, or any occupation or amusement whatever save what the naked little children make, how can she escape an almost vacant mind, if not hopeless imbecility? If she is a wife she may arrange her cloth and her jewels becomingly, and contrive dainty dishes for her husband, of which she will partake when he is satisfied; but if the one to whom, probably, as a baby she was betrothed, happens to die, even these poor pleasures are denied her. She is a reproach, an outcast, accursed; in all God's heaven no star casts a ray of hope to her. What influence can such a one exert or what power can she yield?

A whole race of women have lived for generations under these conditions, and remain intelligent and lovable, with a native refinement marvellous to see. Perhaps you will be startled if I say that they hold the destiny of their country more completely in their hands than the women of any other land: that they are the ruling power in India, although this power is exercised

so quietly and out of sight. Represented power is a ways the most dangerous.

All the influences of civilization and religious light from the New World has fallen on the men alone. It has no means of reaching the hidden retreats where the women dwell. The only rays of light that have penetrated there have been carried by the missionary women, sadly few in number, who have been able to reach their sisters in their seclusion, and tell from house to house the story of the cross. I believe this, above every other reason is the cause of the slight hold Christianity has taken of the caste people of India. A caste woman has not even her father or brother to care for; she was separated from them in early childhood. Her whole life has been one bent, one direction in which to grow, and that is out through her husband and sons to the world beyond. To keep her husband and sons loyal to her is her one ambition, and there is nothing too hard nor too high for her endeavors after it.

When you urge a Hindoo to give his reasons for not accepting the Christ of whose claims he is intellectually convinced, he will be slow to give it, but it is almost invariably: "I cannot break my poor old mother's heart." "I am afraid of my mother's curse." "I cannot give up my wife and children." It is a woman's influence that holds him back. Many of these men love their wives and children more, perhaps, love the tasty breakfasts and savory dinners that no one else will take the trouble to cook for them. For one reason or another, all find it inconvenient, at least, to have no home especially as hotel life and restaurants are incompatible with caste. How to have a home one must please the women who dwell there. If a man wishes to be a Christian, he has not merely his wife or wives to contend with, his mother and grandmother, his brothers' wives, and all the women of the establishment (usually

at a few) club together to bring him to his senses; they will coax him first, but have no end of devices for bringing him back to the faith, if coaxing fails.

The only thing a man can do, and what every Caste man who has become a Christian has been obliged to do, is simply to leave them all, literally to run away and leave with them his property, his house, his children and everything he possesses. I remember a case in point—a wealthy and influential high Caste man, who I have no doubt, is a converted man, and was baptized by my husband some years ago. This man was remarkable for breadth and strength of character sterling worth and great independence. He was practically King in the district where he lived, and thought he was able to be a Christian and make his household submit or leave. He was wealthy had two wives and a large "following"

When he came to the native preacher to ask for baptism, and to offer himself to the Church, a crowd of retainers came with him, among whom were his two wives weeping and tearing their hair, one to whom he was strongly attached beat her head against the wall of the house until they had to hold her to keep her from killing herself, which she declared she would do rather than see her husband a Christian.

But none of these things moved him, he deferred his baptism, but avowed constantly his faith in Christ, and his purpose to confess His name publicly in baptism. He did so, he came and was baptized; but held to his property and one wife. He had no children.

His friends found they could do nothing with him, for he was too far above them to fear them. However, they determined not to lose him, and all rallied around him again. His wife said "he was wise and good, and she would cook his rice and be a Christian too." The rest of his household said that if he, in his wisdom,

thought it best to be a Christian, they could not gain say it; he was greater than they; they would be what he was. So they cooked his food and ate with him as before, and treated him well. It was not in human nature not to feel flattered with all this deference to his opinion.

For a year his conduct was exemplary; but soon the heathen influence by which he was surrounded began to tell upon him. His wife and relatives made trouble when other Christians came to eat with him and defiled the dishes. It was only a matter of eating and drinking, and he thought it hard not to consider their wishes, when they had borne so much from him. Strong attachment to his wife who remained with him induced him to withdraw more and more from intercourse with other Christians. He said he knew it was wrong, and was really worried to death. After a while his other wife came back unbidden. Again and again he promised to break away from them all. He believed in Christ and worshiped Him only. He said there was nothing for him to do; but build a small house and live alone—that he could not be a Christian and live in his heathen home.

These women are standing right across the path of Christianity in Hindostan. The work of converting them, numanly considered, is restricted to the labors of Christian women among them. Sisters, here is a work especially yours, which no one else can do. How will you do it? With lukewarm zeal, spasmodic effort, and indifferent success? Or with all your hearts unflinchingly, till it is accomplished.

MRS. H. M. N. ARMSTRONG.