

## The Woman's Missionary Society.

[This Department is in the interests of the W. M. Society. All communications for it should be addressed to Mrs. Jos. McLeod, Fredericton.]

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### A BRAHMO WEDDING.

We attended a wedding, last Saturday night, which was interesting in itself, and also interesting because showing the changes since zenana work was begun in Midnapore. This wedding was held in one of the houses where Mrs. Philips and Mrs. Burkholder thirty-five years ago found one of their first zenana pupils, a twelve-year-old "bo" (daughter-in-law) who must veil her face and not speak in the presence of her husband. Today that "bo" is the widowed mother of a large family of grown-up children, and the bride that night was the daughter of hers who has remained unmarried to the age of twenty-six, and that evening sat at the table with us and her husband after the ceremony, as we took refreshments, where she now and then joined in the conversation in English—not bold or forward, but properly quiet and modest as becometh a Bengali bride.

But this family are now Brahmans, which accounts for much of the change, for to become a Brahmo means to become half Christian so far as customs are concerned. Their women are allowed more liberty, girls are allowed to remain unmarried longer, much more attention is given to female education, and in religion they renounce idol worship and become what might be called Indian Unitarians.

The marriage ceremony was much like a Christian marriage. Their open court had been made into a hall by stretching coverings over bamboo poles for a roof, draping the more unsightly places with native cloth and spreading mats on the ground. Lights hung from the ceiling and on the wall of the house, a table with bouquets (just back of which was the motto "God bless the happy pair!") with chairs for the guests and officiating parties, made quite a pleasant room. The smiling bridegroom (after having missed the train and delayed the service a couple of hours) was patiently waiting in one of these chairs dressed in full English costume with white kids; and on the bride's appearance, dressed in white silk with a veil arranged in such folds as to completely hide her face, a band of Bengali musicians announced the fact by a blare from their instruments such as only those instruments can make, and the ceremony began.

There was first a signing of papers in the presence of the proper government official, to make it a legal act,

then an introduction of the contracting parties to the audience, giving their genealogy back to their great-grandfathers; afterward prayer, and then a pretty little ceremony of binding the right hands of the bride and groom with a garland of flowers; then, while so standing, the bridegroom read the following: "In the presence of the great and ho'y God and Father of us all and before this audience, I take you to be my wife. In joy or sorrow, pain or pleasure, I will stand by you. In all the aims and holy purposes of this God-given life I will earnestly strive to be one with you. I will make you happy as long as I live with hy heart's love. I will earnestly pray day and night that your life may be adorned with all the fullness of wisdom, piety, and virtue which God designs. I give our united hearts, lives, and all we have to the the Lord, and offer them for his service." (This is, of course, a translation.) The bride then read the same with the simple change of words "husband" for "wife." They then together repeated a prayer and exchanged garlands and rings, then a long blast from a conch-shell was sounded which proclaimed the deed was done. Then the officiating priest, or whatever he may be called, who was the bride's eldest brother, gave them some excellent instruction, the last hymn was sung and again that blare of trumpets, from somewhere on the roof, announced the ceremony was over. There had been several hymns during the ceremony sung by the bride's sisters, who were just out of sight behind a curtain where the lady guests were gathered, peeping out, here and there, curiously watching all the proceedings. There were no ladies in the audience in the improvised hall except the bride and ourselves.

After it was all over came congratulations and salutations, and then refreshments of fruit and nuts and Bengali sweetmeats in a room where a table had been laid for just ourselves and the bride and groom. The latter conversed fluently in English, and was evidently a very happy man. —L. C. Coombs, in *March Helper*.

### WHEN INDIA TURNS TO CHRIST.

A special development of the work in India, the *Bombay Guardian* says, is the system of colporteurs, of whom there are nearly seventy, their total sales reaching 52,000 copies or portions. The expenses connected with the circulation of the Word by this method exceed the amounts received from the sales, but this is inevitable. If the same number of copies could be sold at a fair profit over and above the cost of production, the colporteur's expenses would be almost wholly met.

When India turns to Christ the earning power of the poor may be as much above the line of sufficiency as it is now below it, and then instead of needing help the churches will be

able to stand alone, and reach out a helping hand to others. It is noteworthy that contracts for 120,000 copies of Hindi and Urdu Scripture portions are being made with Christian presses in Allahabad, Benares, and Lucknow.

### Mission Notes and News

—In 1902 Southern Methodists gave to missions \$17,500 more than they gave in 1901.

—The old Moravian missions in Greenland, which date from Hans Egede and 1721, have been transferred to the care of the Danish church, which also has missions in that field. The whole people, almost 10,000 souls, with the exception of a few hundred inaccessible heathen on the East Coast, are now under a uniform Christian influence.

—The accessions from heathenism to Christianity number about a quarter of a million annually. Competent authorities give the population of the world as 1,544,500,000. Of this great total, 535,000,000 are Christians. Mohammedans number 245,000,000; Confucianists, 300,000,000; Brahmanists, 214,500,000. Jews number nearly 11,000,000.

—It will be a surprise to many to learn that there are nearly as many ordained missionaries laboring in Africa as in India, the number being respectively 1,158 and 1,169. Of unordained men there are many more in Africa, 634 to 464. But there are 120 more missionaries' wives in India—899 to 799 in Africa, and an overwhelming preponderance of other missionary women, 1,304 in India to 480 in Africa. The deadly nature of the climate of some parts of Africa and the social conditions of vast territories are a natural and proper explanation of the comparative fewness of women in Africa.

—There are now in India 2,535,122 Christians. Added to these the Eurasian Christians, and we have in all 2,775,716. In the last ten years there has been an increase in ordained missionaries of 156; female agents 3,271; ordained natives, 165; catechists and preachers, 2,406; congregations, 561; communicants, 122,609; adherents, 306,291; Sunday-school membership, 150,179; pupils: male, 66,514; female, 29,354; Zenana pupils, 7,235. This is the increase in 1900 as compared with in 1890. The pace of progress is continually improving.

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