

# 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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## FROM THE HOME SECRETARY.

Dear Sisters:

It is to be feared we are not communicating with each other through our column as we should. I often feel disappointed, as I glance at it, and find no word from my fellow workers. Though separated from each other we may converse of our work through this silent medium. I am sure we all enjoyed the New Year's greeting from our president, and the few reports from the M. Bands.

Surely the millions of earth who are going down to endless death have a claim upon all Christendom. This claim should especially be pressed upon the children. In our missionary's last report mention was made of one M. Band raising fifty dollars. Let this band continue this sacrifice, for such it is, until they mature, and they can be counted on as men and women for God. "Bring up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." Only a few bands can give as much, but all can do something. Children will grow up selfish unless counteracting influences are brought to bear, and we as a society are guilty before God unless we do our best in this line. The responsibility is resting upon some sisters in each of our churches to see to it, that the children are trained. Our missionary organizes, but the work rests with them, and if they faithfully and persistently attend to it God's blessing will surely be upon them.

The Second and Fourth Districts have appointed superintendents of this work, who are supposed to keep in touch with the bands and bring in a report at the annual meeting. Each District should have an especial care for its bands. Mrs. J. N. Barnes was appointed at our yearly meeting superintendent of the cradle roll.

The time is drawing near when the contributions will be coming in. Dear Sisters, let us make this year even better than our last. Some might say, What is the use of giving when we have no missionary in the field? Do you know it requires a good deal of money to fit out a missionary, pay passage and prepare her for work, whereas, if the same money was expended under the supervision of some missionary, perhaps more might be accomplished. There are schools to equip, Bible women to support; native pastors to support, buildings to erect, native students to educate, and

literature to disseminate, etc. It has been said that if the world is brought to Christ it must be done largely through native agencies. Our corner in India needs all the funds we can get. God requires much at our hands. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." "For every beast of the field is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills." "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts." We are only stewards of the Lord's money, and shall be called to account as to how we spend it. I will now close with the wish that we may hear from many of the sisters as well as M. Bands.

Yours in the work.

P. A. HARTT.

Jacksontown, May 1st, 1903.

P.S.—I have forwarded blanks to the District Secretaries. Hope they have been safely received and promptly forwarded to the respective churches. P.A.H.



## THE WOMEN OF INDIA.

Intellectual, Social and Religious Conditions.

(Continued from last week.)

Quite recently, in one of the cities of northern India, a gathering was held of Mohammedans and Hindus. These men discussed various themes of a social character, and finally adopted a resolution to the effect "that the permanent progress of society without a further spread of education among women is impossible," and then proceeded to define the education necessary, that it should not only embrace religion and morals, but domestic economy and training of children. The Rajputs, who were the chief sinners in the practice of female infanticide, and carried it on despite the prohibition of the government, are now leading, in the province of Oudh, for its banishment. It is a stride far ahead to hear them speaking out against this awful crime. Leading societies, chiefly in Rajputana, are pressing for reforms in marriage and funeral expenses, and some are in favor of widow-remarriage.

A way to an important social reform has been shown by a liberal-minded Hindu in Bengal who died recently. He left a will in which he gave permission to his wife to take fruits and milk on the day of fasting, which the Hindu widow has to observe once in a fortnight. Ordinarily even water is not allowed to the widow on the fasting day, and it is a large concession to allow her fruits and milk. Pundits having been consulted if an injunction like the above left by a departed husband can be followed by a Hindu widow with impunity have decided in favor of the widow. If this example comes to be largely followed, a time-honored but cruel custom will be stopped.

This is action that will have effect, for the natives say they may pass resolutions on reforms and discuss social questions, but platform oratory is not so much needed as action. A meeting was held some time ago in the city of Bombay, where the condition of Hindu widows was discussed and suggestions made for their improvement. There were ten speakers, all of them Hindu women, and though the audience was a mixed one, the presiding officer was also a Hindu woman. Here was action, for one of

the speakers subscribed one thousand rupees for founding a widows' home. When the natives of India are sufficiently interested in these reforms to contribute to their support and development, then something will be accomplished. And there are many evidences of their reaching this point. In the city of Bombay a Parsee girls' association supports three large schools, where special attention is given to subjects such as are likely to be of use to girls in their homes, and one family has contributed nearly ten thousand dollars toward the endowment of classes in knitting and sewing, and quite a large amount of money is in the hands of a committee for the general support of these schools.

Possibly the most radical reform affecting the homes and lives of women throughout the entire country is now being agitated by both Hindu and Mohammedan reformers. They propose to abolish the system of the "purdah" (literally curtain), or the seclusion of the zenana. A prominent Mohammedan in Northern India has recently expressed his views on the subject, saying that the custom is entirely unsuited to the conditions of the present, while the editor of a Mohammedan paper says "the custom is not only needless, but entirely unsuited to the march of progress, as progress is understood at the present day." These men condemn a system that makes it not genteel for a woman, even when veiled from head to foot, to walk on a railway platform to get into the cars. Now she has to be carried in a closed palanquin right up to the window of her compartment, and so conducted into it as not to allow any one to have a glance at her. This paper says the present usage "is something for which religious sanction can not be found, and which the usage of other Islamic countries can not warrant." Among the educated men there is a growing feeling that the bonds of this system ought to be somewhat modified.

A book has recently been issued by a learned Mohammedan jurist, which is startling to the Moslem world, making a plea for the emancipation of the Mohammedan women. Socially and legally he would raise her to equality with man, give her an education, check the demoralizing practices of polygamy, and bring her out into contact with the outside world. He would do away with seclusion, and abolish the veil, which he admits is a wide departure from present customs. While the conservative Mohammedan frowns upon such views, yet there is a radical element among the young men that is heartily in sympathy with the proposed innovations.

The sixteenth session of the National Social Conference of India, which met in December last, adopted a number of resolutions, a great majority relating to reforms among women, such as the remarriage of widows, raising the marriageable age of girls, the Purdah system, and the purity question. The presiding officer in his address said "the definition of social reform was woman."

A little incident of the coronation of King Edward illustrates two sides of the Purdah—the desire to hold to established usages, yet the desire to look out upon the world. A native prince, a representative of Oudh, attended the coronation, accompanied by his wife. Queen Alexandria received this secluded Indian woman privately, but on the day of the review of the India contingent she was invited to the palace, where she was provided with a secluded window, from which she could observe all that passed. The Queen decorated her with the silver coronation medal. This was the first secluded India wo-

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