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WOES OF HINDO WIDOWS.

There are two things which missionaries cannot exaggerate, and they are the evils of child marriage and Hindu widowhood. The worst can never be written.

A few weeks ago we took the train, home-ward bound from our village work. The day had been full of sad stories of the ravages of cholera, and of sights of sorrow and sin; and as we entered the zenana carriage (the car for native women) we found it well filled with women and children. Many of the women we at once recognized—by sad face, lank form, and scanty dress—to be widows. We were not warmly welcomed by all, for some were returning from bathing in the Ganges and worshipping at special shrines. Having fresh sandalwood paste on forehead and arms, and being specially holy they rather shrank from our near approach.

One sad face turned to us, and, making room, invited us to her part of the carriage. After talking awhile, we began singing in their language about the love of Jesus. The words seemed so foreign to anything she had ever known in her life; and joy and peace were such a contrast to her own experience, that she seemed stirred. She spoke of Fate, and what a wreck it had made of her life. We spoke words of sympathy, but remarked: "Some people say Hindu widows are happy and are not ill-treated." "Let such take my place, and live the life I live," she replied.

The pent-up sorrow of years was poured out in the story of the woman's life, which followed. We give it in her own words as nearly as possible:

"I was married by my parents when a very young child. I was taught the routine of household duties, and the ceremonies of worship of our household gods. But what good did it do to worship them? What fate has written in my forehead, must be. My husband died, leaving me one son and three daughters. Since the time of his death I have eaten but one meal a day, and that meal is of rice and vegetables only, and must be cooked by my own hand. Every 15th day is the widow's fast day. My one meal is eaten in the morning of the 14th. On the 15th I must not take even a sup of water. Having not eaten since the morning before, I become so weak and faint that often before the morning of the 16th, I become unconscious. If my son, who loves me, thinks I am dying, he may not refresh me with a drop of water to save my life; should he give me such a drink of water, he has to endure one year's penance to atone for sin. Again and again, especially in the hot months, my life has become almost extinct; and I wonder why death has not come, and ended my suffering.

"We are allowed no flesh of any kind, and you know how fond we Bengalis are of fish. Sometimes a large fish is brought into the house, more than the family can eat. And I just long for one taste of it! I see all the others enjoy it, and a good share goes to waste; but I dare not put a morsel into my mouth! This may seem a little thing to you, but such a longing comes over me for a taste of fish that I can hardly endure the sight."

"But why are you bound by such unjust rules?" I ventured to say. "Ah!" she answered. "If I care to choose a life of shame I might break them. And such treatment is the cause of so many of our widows going wrong.

"But the greatest sorrow of all I have not told you. My youngest child, only sixteen, is now a widow in her

father-in-law's house, and has to spend all the days of her life in this round of fasting and suffering. She is servant of the household, and can take part in no special feast nor marriage ceremony, nor in any other pleasure which comes now, and then to brighten the dark life of other women. She is a childless widow. Her fate is worse than mine. How can I ever bear her sorrow and mine, too!"

The poor woman's heart seemed to be breaking. How gladly we told her of Jesus, the sympathizing Saviour. And as we left the car she said, "You will not forget me?" We answered, "No, and you will not forget our words—God's message to you." There will ever remain with us the recollection of the longing look she turned toward us as she said, "No, I will never forget; and you will always pray for me."

As we left her, likely never to meet again until we all stand before God, I wondered how many of our people who nowadays talk about the "philosophy of the Hindus and the beauty of reformed Hinduism" would like to be a woman in India, and live out the life of such a woman where Hinduism has placed her. It seems to us that the fanciful beauty of misty nothingness to which they soar would suddenly become such a stern reality of misery that they would soon change their tactics.

In many long years of work among the women of India I have never found one satisfied, happy heart who had not found that happiness in Jesus. And no amount of reforming such leprosy as Hinduism can ever bring health of soul and peace to troubled hearts. Let reformers unite with God's children everywhere to spread the Gospel of peace, and work and pray till this sad people has found the Saviour.—*Ada Lee, in The Christian.*

—The missionaries in Korea propose to have a missionary conference in Seoul on Sept. 18-25, which time will mark the completion of twenty years since the arrival of the first English-speaking missionary in Korea. Now, there are nearly two hundred missionaries laboring in Korea, and the work in some parts of the Hermit Kingdom is among the marvels of modern missions. Converts are numbered by the thousands, and a land in which a thousand people can be brought together on a week night to a prayer meeting, and on a rainy evening at that, holds out promise of great things for the future.

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