

## 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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### VILLAGE WOMEN OF INDIA.

(An address by Marion Olivet, M. D., a missionary of the Canadian Presbyterian Church.)

When one thinks of India and her nearly 300 millions of people, there is apt to come into the mind a thought of great cities like London or New York. India has her great cities not a few, yet it is not in these, but in the villages that are scattered all over the land that the great mass of her population is to be found. All the mass movements towards Christianity which have taken place in India have been from among the village people—notably through the work of the Church Missionary Society and the London Missionary Society in South India, in the Telegu country under the American and Canadian Baptist Missions; in the Northwest Provinces under the American Methodist Episcopal Mission; and away north in the Punjab in the district in which the American United Presbyterian Mission works.

Our own Central India is, if I may use the word, rich in villages. Many of you have seen the map prepared by Mr. Russell, in which the villages are represented by dots, strewn thick as stars in the milky way. Mr. Russell's book, "Village Life in India," just out, will tell you, and tell you well, something of what has been done amongst the villagers to win them for Christ.

In looking over my diary a few days ago, I came across this entry: July 12, 1896. "Surely the Lord has opened for us a door in Bighlipur. The women are all so respectful, and some of them listen so well. My heart was cheered in paying a visit to an old hospital patient to find her and her husband anxious to have me read the Bible to them. Had an interesting talk with them on the burial and resurrection of Christ." Reading this over I said to myself: "I will just take Bighlipur to illustrate what I want to say about village work." It is a village of perhaps eight or nine hundred people, about five miles from the hospital, and as it lies near to the main road, is accessible during the rainy as well as the dry season.

I well recall my first visit to that village. It was during my second rainy season in India. I was awakened about one o'clock in the morning to go to the help of a poor woman in this village. She had been ill for some days. The village midwives, finding the case beyond their skill, also, had come in an ox-cart for me to go to her aid. The night was beautiful with the clear moonlight shining down upon us, and I can

recall thinking as we rode along that road, the day dreams of girlhood's years, there had never come to me the thought that I would be riding in an ox-cart with a Hindustani woman on an errand of this sort.

We went into the house, and I noticed in passing through that there were several yoke of oxen, and so I judged that the family was what we might call well to do village people. A dozen or more women were in the room around the sick woman. I soon found that the case required only a very simple surgical operation, and in not more than ten minutes from the time I entered the room her trouble was all over. The women were all amazed and in their ignorance and superstition thought a god had come to their help. They prostrated themselves at my feet and called down all manner of blessings upon me. Then when I asked for the cart to take me back to the bungalow, I had to be taken first to the house of the patel (head man) and there the leading men of the village assembled to do me honor, and offerings of coconuts, fruit, etc., and five rupees in money were presented to me, and then a number of the men conveyed me part of the way home.

A visit to Bighlipur usually means a whole day, for in a village of that size in which are to be found so many different castes, we will have four or five centres into which the women gather around us. Unless it is the season when these women are all at work in the field I usually stop first at the house to which I was called that night. There we are always sure of a large gathering, and as many of these women have often been at the dispensary, and some of them have been in the hospital, texts of scripture, some hymns and some knowledge of Christian truth are already in their minds. Here we spend at least two hours, and then go to a Mohamadan house where we have a gathering of five or six. Our third group is usually on the verandah of a carpenter's house, the old carpenter himself being always a very respectful listener. Then perhaps we finish with a gathering of the Bilai and other low caste women under a large tree at the outskirts of the village. It was to the Bilai caste that most of the famine women whom we cared for on the hospital compound belonged. Even when there is no famine in the land these women live on very meagre fare, all their livelihood being the few pice or the grain they receive as daily wages for their work in the fields; yet among them I have found some lovable women. True, the famine-stricken, because of all they had passed through, seemed to have only their animal instincts remaining, and for the first two or three months their one thought was "more to eat." The bread of life, though daily presented to them with prayerful painstaking, seemed to fall upon dead hearts. It was as though you had sown some new and rare seed in your garden, and daily you looked, but looked in vain, for signs that it had sprouted, when lo! one

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**MURINE FOR TIRED EYES.**

morning, when you had almost given up hope, you went out into your garden and found any green leaves showing above the ground. So it was with these famine women. Once they began to show interest in the Bible lesson, the fruits began to appear in their life and conduct.

I spent the last Sabbath afternoon before leaving for Canada in talking separately with five of these women who were candidates for baptism, and have all since been baptized and are living clean, wholesome lives. They had been with us for nearly a year, and as I talked with each, seeking to get her ideas of what being a Christian meant, my heart was greatly rejoiced by some of the answers given. To one of them I said: "Raddha, how do you know that prayer to Jesus does any more for you than taking Ram's name?" "Oh, Miss Sahib," she replied, "when I took Ram's name, I didn't take it to get my heart made clean; but when I pray to Jesus I ask him to keep me from quarrelling with the other women, and I don't quarrel now." Another said, "I would be ashamed to have Jesus see me steal."

Thus it is that Jesus does for these poor, ignorant women what he has always done for them who call upon his name. He delivers them from sin and teaches them to love and practise holiness.

### HARTLAND CRADLE ROLL.

Reverdy and Beverley Prosser, Pauline and Fay Shaw, Weldon Ward, Alice Ward, Ralph Rideout, Aubrey Rideout, Bessie Jones, Baby Jones, Edna Allen, Helen Orchard, Ruby Orchard, Curtis Orchard, Herbert Bradley, Fay Bradley, Ruth Bradley, Herald Alexander, Dorothy Johnston, Marguerite Christie, Mabel Morgan, Eleanor B. Davis. Collected, \$1.10.

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### NOTICE.

The annual meeting of the Woman's Mission Society of the Sixth District will be held in connection with the District Meeting at Norton, King's Co., on Saturday, July 9th, 1904.

BLANCHE P. GOSLINE,

Secretary-Treasurer.

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