

Appeal to the Ladies of the Methodist Episcopal Church

An earnest desire to develop among the ladies of our Church greater interest and activity in our Missions, together with the firm conviction that the pressing needs of our Foreign Missions demand our immediate attention, led, in the month of March, to the organization of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society.

The object of this Society is to meet, as far as possible, the great want experienced by our Eastern Missionaries, of Christian women to labor among the women of those heathen lands. Few of us have ever realized how complete is the darkness which envelopes them, and how insufficient have been the efforts hitherto made to admit the light of the Gospel to their benighted hearts and homes. Forbidden by the customs of their country to seek for themselves this light, or to receive instruction at the hands of our missionaries, they are accessible only to Christian teachers of their own sex. The wives of our missionaries have done all that they could. Many of them, in addition to their own families, have the care of large Zenana schools, which they have organized and in which they are daily busied; still they have made earnest endeavors to carry the knowledge of Christ to their sisters by personal visits and labors at their homes. What wonder that, in so many instances, physical strength has failed under such constant and great exertions, and the oppressing consciousness of the magnitude of the work. Their labors have been, however, by no means without reward. Many of their heathen sisters are awaking from their ignorance and apathy, and are eagerly asking after the way of life. These calls for help our missionaries are often utterly unable to answer, because they are already over-burdened.

Dear Sisters! Shall we not recognize, in this emergency, God's voice as speaking to us – for who can so well do this work as we? Does it not seem as though the responsibility were thus laid directly upon us? And shall we shrink from bearing it?

We well know how close is the relation of the mother to the child, and how important it is that the mother's heart be filled with the love and grace of God if her child is to grow up under Divine influence and be guided by Divine wisdom. How then can we more successfully cooperate with our missionaries, and better insure the rapid extension of the knowledge of the truth as it is in Jesus, than by opening the hearts of the mothers to the purifying and saving influences of God's love? We know too how inestimable is the value, and how incalculable the influence of a pure Christian home; and if the influences of such homes are so indispensable in a Christian land, what must be their importance among a people, the depth of whose degradation is, as we are often assured, altogether beyond our realization?

There are many encouraging indications that the Lord has prepared the way for the commencement of this work. Wherever the idea has been suggested, East or West, it has been met with a cheerful and ready response. Through the agency of Brother and Sister E. W. Parker, of our Mission in India, who are shortly to return to their chosen field, auxiliary societies have been organized in several places, and the work entered upon with hearty zeal. At the first regular meeting of the parent Society after the adoption of the Constitution, subscriptions to the amount

of one hundred and ninety-three dollars were reported. Of this sum, fifty dollars were contributed by one lady for the support of a Bible reader in India for one year. Prominent friends of the missionary cause throughout the Church, have hailed the movement with joy, and given it a hearty God-speed. From these and many similar facts, it seems evident that in the good Providence of God, the mind and heart of the Church are ripe for the movement now undertaken.

The present time seems also eminently favorable for such an undertaking. The discussions and exertions of the Church during its centenary year, brought home to us all an unwonted realization of its magnitude and power, and our proportionate responsibilities. The associations then formed by the ladies were most admirably adapted to train them for subsequent harmonious cooperation in other Christian labors.

In like manner, the efforts of our sex during our late war exhibited, as never before, their latent and unemployed power to plan and labor for great and noble ends. These labors being now so happily terminated, Providence has freed our hands for new and yet grander undertakings.

If further encouragement were needed, it would be abundantly supplied by the striking success of similar organizations in other denominations. Such societies have been in operation in other countries for over thirty years, and one in this country, organized in 1861, has now in its service no less than seventy-five Bible readers, has eight hundred pupils under instruction in zenanas, and fourteen schools for girls. Another, organized a little more than a year ago, has already raised over five thousand dollars, and is supporting seven missionaries and eleven Bible readers in fields occupied by the American Board. If in churches of less membership than our own, so much has been achieved by woman's hand, may not we, by united prayerful effort and God's blessing, accomplish a glorious work?

Christian sisters, may we not count upon your cooperation in carrying forward this great work? We believe that God will bless it to the uplifting, enlightenment, and salvation of thousands now in the shadow of death. The prime and immediate necessity is the organization of branch societies throughout the country, wherever our churches have a female membership sufficiently large to sustain an association. Accompanying this appeal will be found the draft of a constitution for such auxiliary societies. Let every reader of these lines take counsel with her own heart and with those around her, and determine to do her utmost in thus furthering Christ's cause. Limited means need be no obstacle in the way of joining in this enterprise, for surely there can be but very few among us who cannot contribute two cents weekly to aid its progress. But let it be clearly understood that on no account ought the regular Church missionary contributions to be lessened. Not one dollar should be taken from those, for the constantly increasing wants of our missionaries are yearly rendering a larger sum necessary for distribution through the Society at New York. A moment's reflection must show, however, that too many of us have been satisfied to leave to our fathers and husbands the contributions in which we ought to have been personally interested. How few of us have ever practiced self-denial in our personal expenditures, in order to add our share to the support of the missionary work!

Apart from all considerations of duty to others, it will be profitable to ourselves to unite together in such associations as are contemplated by this Society. No one can feel an active interest in any matter with which they are not familiar. The stated meetings of our auxiliary societies, if

properly conducted cannot fail to impart to the members much information respecting different mission fields. To aid in furnishing such information for the use of such societies, it is proposed by our Executive Committee to issue a monthly paper, containing the latest intelligence from our missionaries, and particularly contributions respecting the claims, methods, and progress of the work among heathen women. Several of the wives of our missionaries have expressed their readiness, and indeed their desire, to assist us by their communications. This organ will be published at a low rate, in order that it may find the widest possible dissemination. Any information respecting this paper or any interest of the Society, will be gladly communicated on application to either of the Corresponding Secretaries.

Our appeal is now before you. We commend it to your prayerful attention. We are confident that you will cordially welcome and heartily participate in this movement. Sustained by your cooperation and earnest prayers, we cannot fail to achieve glorious results.

‘God be merciful unto us and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us.’
‘That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations.’
‘Let the people praise thee, O God; let all the people praise thee.’
‘God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall fear him.’

Mrs. Bishop Osmon C. Baker, President
Mrs. William F. Warren, Mrs. E. W. Parker, and Mrs. J. F. Willing, Corresponding Secretaries
Mrs. B. J. Pope, Recording Secretary

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