

**HEATHEN CLAIMS AND CHRISTIAN DUTY.**

BY MRS. ISABELLA BIRD BISHOP, F.R.G.S. AND HONORARY FELLOW OF THE ROYAL SCOTTISH GEOGRAPHICAL SOCIETY.

From an Address delivered at the Anniversary of the Oleaners' Union of the Church Missionary Society, in Exeter Hall, London, November 1, 1893.

It is not as a mission worker in even the humblest department of mission work that I have been asked to speak to-night, but as a traveler, and as one who has been made a convert to missions, not by missionary successes, but by seeing in four and a half years of Asiatic traveling the desperate needs of the un-Christianized world. There was a time when I was altogether indifferent to missions, and would have avoided a mission station rather than have visited it. But the awful, pressing claims of the un-Christianized nations which I have seen have taught me that the work of their conversion to Christ is one to which one would gladly give influence and whatever else God has given to one.

In the few words that I shall address you to-night, I should like (for I cannot tell you anything new or anything that you do not already know) just to pass on some of the ideas which have suggested themselves to my own mind in my long and solitary travels, and perhaps especially since I came home, full of the needs of the heathen world, and to some extent amazed at the apathy and callousness of the Christian Church at home. I have visited the Polynesian Islands, Japan, Southern China, the Malay Peninsula, Ceylon, Northern India, Cashmere, Western Thibet, and Central Asia, Persia, Arabia, and Asia Minor. In each of these countries I have avoided, as much as possible, European settlements, and have scarcely lingered so long as I could have wished at mission stations. My object was to live among the people, and I have lived much in their own houses and among their tents, always with a trustworthy interpreter, sharing their lives as much as possible, and to some extent winning their confidence by means of a medicine-chest which I carried. Wherever I have been I have seen sin and sorrow and shame. I cannot tell of fields whitening unto the harvest, nor have I heard the songs of rejoicing laborers bringing the sheaves home. But I have seen work done, the seed sown in tears by laborers sent out by you, honest work, work which has made me more and more earnestly desire to help the cause of missions from a personal knowledge of work in the mission field, but not among the lower races, or the fetish-worshippers, or among the simpler systems which destroy men's souls. The reason, perhaps, why I have seen so little missionary success is because the countries in which I have traveled are the regions of great, elaborate, philosophical, religious sys-

tems, such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and Mohammedanism.

Naturally among those at home there is a disposition to look at the work done. On my own part there may be too great a disposition, possibly, to look at the work left undone, because to me it seems so vast and so appalling. The enthusiasm of Exeter Hall has in it something that to many is delightful and contagious. We sing hopeful, triumphant hymns, we hear of what the Lord has done, of encouragements which a merciful God gives to inadequate and feeble efforts, and some of us perhaps think that little remains to be accomplished, and that the kingdoms of this world are about to become "the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ." But such is not the case, and I think that we may, instead of congratulating ourselves upon the work done, though we are thankful for what God has enabled us to do, bow our heads in shame that we have done so little and served so little. And I would like to-night that we should turn away from these enchantments, for enchantments they truly are, and set our faces towards the wilderness, that great, "waste, howling wilderness" in which one thousand millions of our race are wandering in darkness and the shadow of death, without hope, being "without God in the world."

The work is only beginning, and we have barely touched the fringe of it. The natural increase of population in the heathen world is outstripping at this moment all our efforts; and if it is true, and I believe it has never been contradicted, that four millions only have been baptized within this century, it has been also said without contradiction that the natural increase of the heathen world in that time has been two hundred millions, an awful contemplation for us to-night. It is said that there are eight hundred millions on our earth to whom the name of Jesus Christ is unknown, and that ten hundred and thirty millions are not in any sense Christianized. Of these, thirty-five millions pass annually in one ghastly, reproachful, mournful procession into Christless graves. They are dying so very fast! In China alone, taking the lowest computation of the population which has been given, it is estimated that fourteen hundred die every hour, and that in this one day thirty-three thousand Chinese have passed beyond our reach. And if this meeting were to agree to send a missionary to-morrow to China, before he could reach Chinese shores one and a half million of souls would have passed from this world into eternity. Nineteen centuries have passed away, and only one-third of the population of our earth is even nominally Christian.

We are bound to face these facts and all that they mean for us to-night, and to ask ourselves how we stand in regard to this awful need of the heathen world.