

THE MISSIONARY'S WIFE.

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At the time that the Church Missionary Society began its work it was the opinion of most good men that a woman's work should be confined to her own home, and she was hardly allowed to visit her poorer neighbours and speak to them of heavenly things. We read, for example, in Mr. Simeon's life,* of a meeting, held in 1807, by the Eclectic Society. The subject for their consideration was: "How may pious women best subserve the interests of religion?" "The generality," wrote Mr. Simeon of his brother clergy, seemed to think that they did best by keeping at home, and minding their own business. My ideas did not perfectly coincide with theirs. . . . I rather leaned more to the side of visiting the sick, &c., and they to the keeping almost entirely at home."

These strict views did not, however, prevent ladies from accompanying their husbands into the foreign field, and a very small experience of that field showed our venerated forefathers that women must there be allowed to be spiritual teachers to their own sex, for it is contrary to the customs of most heathen countries to allow men to instruct women. And it is possible that the discovery thus made, of the power and usefulness of some women, did something to disarm prejudice in the home field. For it was a few years after the meeting which Mr. Simeon described that District Visitors' Associations were formed, and it is noteworthy that they were founded by the Venns and other friends of Foreign Missions.

Missionaries' wives were for some time the only women sent forth by the Church Missionary Society, and they have proved themselves worthy of the honour to which they have been thus called. Thousands have toiled unremittingly and uncomplainingly; of many it may be said that "they loved not their lives unto the death"; and they have proved that women can do and suffer, and yet not lose their womanliness.

(1) The ideal missionary's wife is whole-hearted in God's service,

*See Carus' "Life of the Rev. Charles Simeon." p. 162,