

Sometime in the winter of 1842-3, Mt. Holyoke was visited by a returned missionary, Dr. Perkins, who laid before the Faculty the request that a young woman might be set apart from the school to go with his party on their return to the East, to work there among the Nestorian women and girls. Miss Lyon called a meeting of the teachers and pupils, and urged them to take the matter into prayerful consideration. Out of that band of twelve teachers, six ultimately consecrated themselves to the work of missions as the result of that meeting. Miss Fiske was proposed as a suitable one to go; but her mother, then a widow, objected on account of the delicate state of her daughter's health. After some time, however, no one else being found to go, the request came back to Miss Fiske; and, as the time fixed upon for the departure of the missionaries was very near, no time could be lost in making the decision. After a sleepless night, Fidelia consented to go, provided her mother's consent could be obtained. It was late in the afternoon of Saturday when the decision was communicated to Miss Lyon, and not an hour was to be lost. Procuring a conveyance, Miss Lyon drove with her pupil to Shelburne, Miss Fiske's home, which they reached at eleven o'clock. The family was roused up, the startling errand upon which they had come was announced, and the rest of the night given up to the earnest inquiry into the will of God in the matter. It was a strange midnight meeting in that quiet farm-house—a strange ending to a night so peacefully begun, but the following day the mother's faith prevailed, and she was enabled to say, "Go, my child."

On the 1st of March, 1843, at the age of twenty-seven, Miss Fiske embarked for Persia. The sea voyage ended, a journey of seven or eight hundred miles, through lonely and inhospitable regions must be made to reach their destination, but at length, after enduring many hardships, the missionary party reached Urumiah, a town in Persia, near the borders of Lake Urumiah, where they settled down to their labors. It fell to Miss Fiske's lot to work among the Nestorian women, at that time, a peculiarly ignorant and degraded class. These women were the farm and household drudges; and, what was worse, with no idea that anything else was possible to them. Betrothed and married when mere children, and thenceforth doomed to hardship and abuse, looking upon their husbands as simply their masters—their owners, to whom the most abject deference and obedience were due, accustomed to bending and abuse, and being taught that they had no soul, consequently no life beyond the grave, they had come to consider themselves as mere animals, and to expect no better treatment than might be accorded to animals capable of rendering to man the same services as themselves.

The young missionary found their homes—if such they might be called—dens of vermin, filth and disease; but with patient trust in God she went down to their wretched abodes and began to tell them of God. Fancy her feelings then, when, after giving them in a little lesson some of the most rudimentary ideas of Christian truth, and when done questioning them in regard to what they had learned, she met only the stupid answer, "We do not know; what do we know? we are only donkeys!" their language affording them no word for *woman* but an English word *donkey*.

At length Miss Fiske concluded that the only hope of evangelizing these women was through their daughters; and for this purpose she set herself resolutely to accomplish. She accordingly undertook to open a boarding-school for girls, a school in which she could have them

altogether in her own hands to board, clothe, educate and influence in every way. This, she found on trial, was no easy task. Such a course with their daughters these parents thought would prevent their being married in childhood; and besides be establishing a dangerous rule for women, whose proper and natural position in life must be one of abject submission and subordination to man, with no idea that anything else was either possible or desirable; and even Miss Fiske's fellow missionaries were extremely doubtful of the practicability of her plan. However, knowing only the two Persian words "daughter" and "give," she began to beg for the little girls; but, alas, with no success! Several girls indeed came as day-pupils but they were liable to be taken away at any time, and she was beginning herself to be very doubtful of success, when one day she saw a man approaching leading two little girls, one his own niece, and the other a child from a neighboring village. The missionary ran to meet him, and he placed their little hands in hers, saying as he did so "They are your daughters, no man shall take them from you." Miss Fiske wept tears of joy over her new-found treasure, and from that day her work was increasingly successful. But what a task! They were to be cleaned, fed, clothed and guarded with the most vigilant care, taken with her wherever she went, and taught everything. But could a generation of young women be raised up to act as the future teachers of other women, possessed of cultured minds, Christian hearts, hands skilled for useful toil, and with sound practical ideas of life and its needs, she felt there would be hope for the women of Persia; and this hope she lived to see verified. Her "daughters" increased in number, slowly at first, but more and more as her work came to be understood, until at length her premises required enlargement, the girls became anxious about their souls, and in the year 1846 God granted a great out-pouring of His Spirit upon the school; so that Miss Fiske, writing home about that time, was able to say "Prayerfulness has thus far been strikingly exhibited in those hopefully converted. They love their closets, and it is one of their greatest trials that they cannot have a prayer-closet as they wish. I have many little meetings for prayer with them. It is delightful at such times to hear those who have just begun to love the Lord pleading for entire consecration to Him, and also with the deepest apparent feeling wrestling for the salvation of their impenitent friends. Can it be, I often think at such times, that these are indeed sisters in Christ, redeemed by His blood, and made heirs of heaven? If so, what an inroad has been made on Satan's kingdom! God has brought to pass in a day what years of man's labor could never have effected."

Towards the end of 1847, Miss Rice, an American lady, also from Mt. Holyoke Seminary, joined Miss Fiske in the Mission, and soon after her arrival a new awakening commenced in the school, and from the school "spread through all the district, till in some of the villages scarcely a house could be found without praying members. The women among whom Miss Fiske had labored so long and unavailingly, now came crowding around the premises at all opportunities, entreating to be taken in for a day or two to learn the way of salvation. Night and day the teachers' private rooms, as well as the school-rooms, were crowded with women whose one anxiety was to know how to " flee from the wrath to come." At the end of this revival season, as we are told by Miss Fiske herself, "All the girls in the school over twelve years of age were hopefully converted."

At the end of sixteen years, Miss Fiske was forced by failing health to return to America. We are told that,