

## The Romance of Missions.

BY O. B. JOYFUL.

"There," said Mary, "that settles it finally."  
"Settles what?" I asked in some astonishment, for Mary—she is my wife—so thoughtful and quiet, rarely gives vent to her feelings by exclamations of this kind.  
"The romance of missions," she replied, at the same time tossing the Zion's Trumpet which she had been reading, upon the table.

I fancied I detected an unwonted bitterness in her tone and the fact that she threw aside the paper proved to me conclusively that Mary was vexed and troubled. On such occasions I have always found it best to let her surcharged heart free itself, so I ventured another question in the hope of drawing out the cause of her grief and with it the sting from her heart.

"Well, what about the romance of missions, anything new? Has somebody at last discovered it and written a book on the subject?"

"No, not exactly. But the Rev. Dr. Dontknow has finished his three months' tour around the world and has been addressing the people of Shady Lane and Saint's Rest churches upon India as a mission field. The Trumpet which came in this week's home mail contains one of his addresses. For sanctified ignorance and platitudes concerning missions it eclipses anything I have read. Among other things he says 'The romance of missions has passed away.' Indeed! when did it ever come into being except in the brains of ill-informed persons who never set foot upon mission soil? Some orator once let loose the phrase in an unguarded moment and inasmuch as it had a merry jingle and spoke of things far remote from civilization, it has been doing service ever since in study, sanctum and on the platform. It has wrought untold mischief, meantime, like all other missionaries, and has hindered the progress of missions in every denomination both at home and abroad. But now the Rev. Dr. Dontknow says that 'the romance of missions has passed away.' If he means that this phrase and the false idea of mission life and work which it expresses, are to be invalidated, retired from the service, without pay or pension, I am heartily glad."

"The romance of missions! One might as well talk about the romance of war! Who ever heard of the romance of Thermopylae, Waterloo, or Balaklava? Who ever heard of the romance of Chickamauga, Shiloh, Cold Harbor, Petersburg, Gettysburg or the Battle of the Wilderness? Some of those who never carried a musket or smelled powder in battle talk very glibly of the glories of war; but the men who stood in the forefront amidst the enemy's onslaught with shot and shell, with bayonet and sword, never speak in that strain. Carnage and death are not the usual concomitants of romance and glory, however much the ignorant may talk and the poets may versify. The romance of missions! Forsooth, I wish the Rev. Dr. Dontknow had paid some of our stations a visit so that we might have shown him a few things; however brief his stay might have been it would have been vastly more informing than to pass us by altogether. But he was in a hurry and he wanted to see Lucknow, Delhi and Allahabad, so, much to my regret, he said, he pressed on in order to get a glimpse at least of the famous shrines and temples of India. Just as though the handiwork of the Lord in living temples was of less importance than heathen architecture! But the Trumpet says that the Doctor is full of enthusiasm concerning missions, and that henceforth he will be heard as the best exponent of their feasibility, desirability and utility. He announces that he has some suggestions "as to the locating of new stations, the appointing of new men, and the scale of expenditure and equipment which are necessary for jungle stations, which he proposes at an early day to lay before the Board of Managers and the Committee. The Doctor illustrates his addresses by a free use of the stereopticon and they are accurate and informing beyond anything yet given to the churches. His views concerning consolidation of the work, greater economy on the part of Missionaries, less frequent and shorter furloughs for the homegoers find a hearty response in the minds of those who hear him. His hints to new Missionaries on how to acquire the language leave nothing further to be said on the subject. They are admirable, and, together with the Doctor's handbook on comparative philology, should be furnished by the secretary to all future appointees. The Doctor certainly made excellent use of his time when abroad. He has vindicated afresh the reputation he has always possessed for thoroughness in the mastery of great and difficult subjects together with their details. He is the most up-to-date man on missions in the denomination. He has been on the ground, has seen, heard, investigated, weighed, judged and concluded. In short he knows missions." Mary again tossed upon the table the paper which she had momentarily retaken for the purpose of reading aloud the above extract. As she did so, she again said, "That settles it. The romance of missions may have passed away; but so long as such stuff as that is printed and circulated among the churches and believed by the Board and Executive officers of the society, the romancing about missions will continue."

I was filled with amazement both at what Mary had read and at her own words. I could not think it possible that a man of Dr. Dontknow's ability would allow himself to go on record in any such fashion as this; and in all the years of our married life I never had known Mary to give voice to quite such cutting sentiments as she had just expressed.

"The romance of missions! I wish the Rev. Dr. Dontknow had been with us to-day!" So saying, she arose and left the room. I noticed that her lips quivered as she said 'good-night' and her eyes were suffused with a flood of tears. Missions to which she had dedicated herself, and for which she had given her all, had been wounded in the house of their friends and her sensitive heart had felt the blow. It was the crowning grief of the day; the one straw too much for the back of the patient burden bearer.

We had been up since the first streak of dawn and had been driven incessantly by our duties. There was the usual routine of work with the schools, the evangelists, the Bible women and the directing of household affairs. But in addition to this there were hundreds of people clamoring about us for relief from the famine which is upon the land, and for whom we had neither work nor money in sufficient quantity. The dark figures with their bony frames kept coming and beseeching until it seemed as though the eyes which looked out from the hollow sockets would burn their way into our very souls. Mingled with the worthy were the unworthy, the beggars for miles around. Each one had his pitiful tale and each one had to be refused again and again, and the more obdurate and incorrigible ones finally were ordered from the premises. There were calls for medicine by the score, and while Mary was in the village, whither she had been called to see a Brahman woman, who later in the day died, I was attending one of our preachers who had all the symptoms of cholera. By vigorous treatment he was pulled through the first attack and gave every promise of being able to be about in a short time. But shortly after I left him, his relatives thought he ought to have something to eat and so fed him abundantly with solid food. Just as we finished a hasty breakfast, his wife came running saying that the preacher was worse and dying. I rushed off to see him, and by sharp questioning found out that he had been fed "just a little." But it was enough to undo all that had been accomplished and to make the case doubly serious. This was not a time for reproof, anger must be held in check, and whatever was to be done must be accomplished quickly. Mary joined me in the work and together we were with the sick man till four o'clock in the afternoon, when again we saw the good results of our treatment. Then we scolded and strictly charging them not so much as to give a drink of water without our permission we went home only to be confronted by a crowd from a village some twelve miles distant. They brought a child who had fallen into a pot of boiling water and had sustained a frightful scalding. Bandages had to be made and applied with cooling and healing medicines, and the father and mother provided with a place to stay so that the child could be near at hand and receive treatment for at least ten days. The relatives who had come had neither food nor money, and finding that they still had work to keep them at home so that they need not be put on the famine relief, I gave them sufficient to purchase food for the way and instructions to proceed to their village the same night. It was now dusk and the famine coolies were coming from their work. The rolls had to be called and the pay for the day given and then the next hour devoted to hearing requests, reports of the gang bosses and the giving of directions for the next day's work. Finally we shut the doors and sent away a dozen or more who still lingered to ask for special favors. The head was in a swim and the limbs trembled from very nervous strain and exhaustion. We sat down to dinner; but we could not eat. We went through a few motions and formalities each trying to deceive the other concerning the loss of strength and appetite; we essayed conversation and even once, laughter, but it was useless. The day with its work and cares still clung.

After dinner I remembered that there was a package of papers and letters on my table—the morning's mail, and in it the home mail—lying unopened. I told Mary, and together we sat down promising ourselves a treat from the home mail. We expected a letter from the Secretary of the Board—in fact we had been expecting one in every mail for the past nine months, but aside from a few printed circulars asking us to contribute toward the cancellation of the debt of the Society; and apart from another printed form in which we were notified of a fifteen per cent. reduction for our work during the year we had received no word from mission headquarters. It did seem that when the reductions were announced, the Secretary might have added a little more than his signature to the printed form—just a line or two of inquiry or encouragement—but then the Secretary is very busy and cannot be supposed to attend to such things. Business is business. I had no specific and important question for the Board to pass upon and a letter was not called for—the printed circular and the signature satisfied every requirement in the case. Then, we expected replies from churches and personal friends to the letters we had sent

asking for aid for our famine sufferers. And, moreover, we longed for a cozy, chatty, sympathetic home letter—just such as any exile would welcome when fatigued and depressed in body and mind.

We opened the package. It contained eight letters—one from the tax-collector asking that I remit my income-tax by special messenger at once. Think of being taxed for the privilege of administering food to the hungry, clothing to the naked, medicines to the sick and the gospel to the people! One was from the local mission treasurer, saying that owing to the rise in "exchange values" our salaries would be paid to us at a reduction of thirty rupees to the hundred dollars; a third was from one of our school teachers in the farther corner of our field, saying he should have to ask for an increase in pay as prices had more than doubled in the bazars and in addition to supporting himself, wife and two children, his father and mother had now to be cared for. Would I not increase his pay by a rupee per month? The fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh, were from Madras and Bombay. Two contained advertisements merely; one was a bill for medicines which were on the way, and the other was from the publishing house, saying that the tracts and books which had been lost in transit could nowhere be found, that the publishers had made every effort possible, but without success. I must now present my claim to the transportation company if I wished further redress. The remaining letter was from America. Now there would be something good for we recognized the well-known handwriting of Mary's mother. The seal was broken, and as we read our hearts overflowed. Yes, at last the aged man was gone, and on the other side of the sea, in the twilight of life, another widow was waiting and longing for God's chariot to come.

Mary had always enjoyed a certain page in Zion's Trumpet devoted to furnishing food and comfort for the inner life. She had picked up the paper in hope of finding some word which might now cheer her heart. But her eye caught the black faced letters on the first page, "India as a Mission Field, by the Rev. Dr. H. E. Dontknow." Instantly she began to read and with the result already made known at the beginning of my story. Poor soul! after such a day of experiences and such a sorry disappointment in the home mail, could she be blamed for her outpouring of a full heart in speech and in a renewed burst of grief?

After she had left the room, I caught up the paper and read for myself the address of the celebrated divine. I had no sooner finished it than my eye caught a paragraph on the opposite page "A testimony to the worth of Missions by the Hon. I. C. Quickly." This gentleman had just returned from a special junket on state business to the East and had unhesitatingly affirmed that he saw with his own eyes Missionaries at work! In three separate cities which he visited he knew of their conducting evangelistic services, schools and dispensaries. He saw the people coming about them and receiving help and he could testify that they were earnest and intelligent, although, as he believed personally, mistaken in what they were seeking to accomplish for the East with its great and congested populations. The editor of the Trumpet said that he gladly gave space to this testimony as it confirmed what the Trumpet had all the time maintained, namely, that it is worth while for the church to sustain missions abroad, and that the missionaries do not idle away all their time as some have slanderously reported. "The words of the Hon. I. C. Quickly confirm in a striking manner the address of the Rev. Dr. Dontknow, printed on the previous pages, and both show conclusively that the practical has at last dawned and that the romance of missions has passed away."

I laid aside the paper and removed my glasses. I could read no more. Although I had heard the phrase, "the romance of missions" many times it never seized and possessed my mind as at this moment. The romance of missions! The romance of missions!! I found myself saying it over and over again and before I was aware of it I was asking myself this question "In the events of to-day where was the romance?" I found none. If there had been any I was too weary and dull sighted to perceive it. And then—I burst out laughing with the thought—how silly of me to sit here and review the events of the day looking for romance. Had I not just read the speech of the great Rev. Dr. Dontknow and the testimony of the Hon. I. C. Quickly together with the editor of the Trumpet's comment, and had not all agreed that the romance of missions has passed away? of course. How foolish and vain I had been in my imaginings. I saw it all clearly.

Just as I had settled this point and had resolved to go to work on my accounts in the endeavor to get a balance-sheet for my report, another question thrust itself upon me, "In all the years of your service as a missionary where have been the romances?"

I may have been a simpleton for not shaking myself free and going at once to my work over accounts for the year. But if it were a fault, a weakness, I must confess it. I halted, I thought, and as I thought I fell into a reverie. The archives or memory were opened and I lived over again the early days of my life as a missionary. My experiences arose before me in wondrous order and with remarkable clearness. These crude, utilitarian days

in which I write, had globe-trotters compassing in nature from the grandeur of Niagara and the glories of the thing in grace is criticism the plan of redemption the veracity of scriptural facts of Christ's blessed and most outpouring enlightenment, uplift, depraved race. No measure by their clasp polish and aimless stone and stained glass tables—no, these world was younger and was younger and more me and my field of

There is no need to come about that I decision was reached the main point at ment I had just finished the enjoyment of the of instructors and Henceforth I was to had been ordained to consecrated myself to My spirits were aglow of our sailing approach appreciate the romantic ordination, marriage shore. If ever he felt and conquer the earth that his greatest hope. Alas! What do the: and victory have been

In fancy I was again together with my voyage and for the land. There were two our few earthy belongings and the dishes; the wearing apparel; together with a port boxes were closed, and then a hurried tour addresses delivered to Then came the keen friends and parents—ing down her fur breathing out her bliss the deck of the great vessel glided slowly off for the East. W from view and by the we were indeed well brushed aside and the was the romance of life? It was all very

Again we were at Thames. This voyage Among those who to soldiers and officers belts fairly blazed counter-marchings, reveille kept us in a reeling till night. Some a court martial was The entire set of ship and one of them was There was card play on deck and at break of two, every male a whiskey bottle. The where one might escape in one's own cabin. was the fact that the rule for the party, and said "where do to accomplish?" I any work among the "You're a fool!" I tell you that Christ always worse. You you have your code give these fine notions He never is a good chuck you overboard the romantic side to Where the rest for e

At last we reached an old water-soaked likely to be swamped spent the next few home-to-be, far to long we had been ac who prided themselves faithfulness to business to learn that a n the price asked for second price, a third learn the art of "je gain." We had to spoke pigeon-English tables, etcetera—a ethical business prin our quarters for the But there was no alt us, it was certainly spend days in makin in so many hours at robbery.