

THE

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In the Interests of the Baptist Foreign Mission Societies of Canada.

INDIA.

VOL. IV., No. 8.] "The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising."—*Is. lx. 2.*] April, 1882.

"Women that are at Ease."

Women at ease! not women that are *at mischief* at least, not directly; but simply women "at ease," and therefore doing mischief indirectly—these are the subjects of the prophet's earnest call in the name of the Lord. He thus sounds out his message:

"Rise up, *ye women that are at ease*, hear my voice, *ye careless daughters*; give ear unto my speech. Many days and years shall ye be troubled, *ye careless ones*. For the vintage shall fail, the gathering shall not come. Tremble, *ye women that are at ease*, be troubled, *ye careless ones*."

When these words were spoken, things were going very wrong in Jerusalem. Evil was called good, and good evil; there was hypocrisy, and villainy, and oppression. Children lost their respect for the aged; the poor were crushed under burdens too heavy for them; and those who, as "leaders," were looked up to for advice, caused the people to err. It was not so much that the highest class oppressed the lowest, as that a general disregard for one another followed a sad defection from God.

At such a time as this, the influence of woman would have great weight in the scale, and it appears she had full opportunity of exercising it. But what was the condition of the "daughters of Zion," as described by the Lord Himself? They were haughty, fond of vain dress, and wanting in modesty of demeanor—see Isaiah iii., and because of the sad state in which the Lord found the women of Jerusalem, the judgments of Jerusalem were to be increased.

I think we must link together the solemn call of the 32d chapter of Isaiah with the rebukes of the 3rd, and consider that, though some years intervened, they refer to the same sort of women—women who, in the midst of abounding iniquity and distress, and threatened judgment, allowed vanity and self-indulgence to take such hold upon them as to make them careless and indifferent to it all.

Whatever were the causes, the fact is plain that they were "at ease," when their hearts should have been stirred and troubled; that they sat still when they should have been up and doing.

The circumstances which led to the prophet's message to these women have now passed away, for Jerusalem is

in the dust, and her "daughters" have had to weep for themselves and their children; but the description of character has its counterpart now, and sadly too many in number are the "women that are at ease." Let us try to illustrate the picture.

Here is one, with a busy heart in her home-life. Not rich in this world's goods, she has yet enough to bring up her children respectably and well, and from morning till evening she gives her time and thoughts to the concerns of her house, the arrangement of her table, the management of her wardrobe. Let her hear of sin, or misery, or error abroad, she says "I have no time to trouble myself about these things", and the Church and the world may go wrong, but she cannot disturb herself about it.

Here is another, with abundance. Her husband has been successful in his speculations, or, perhaps, inherited a large fortune, and they seem together to have said, "Soul, take thine ease for many years, eat, drink, and be merry." Every wish that worldly goods can gratify is fulfilled. In her richly furnished home she can secure luxurious repose and entertaining society. In her well-kept garden she can leisurely stroll, and admire her plants. In her carriage she can, without fatigue, enjoy the air, and she does it all as a sort of lawful heritage, upon which the world outside has no right to intrude.

A third is a daughter at home, with no particular claim upon her energies. She gets up when she likes and lies down when she likes. Bringing no moral influence to bear upon the ordering of her time, the choice and the measure of her occupations are according to the fancy of the moment, and when she is tired the book or the work is dropped, and something else resorted to in order to "kill time."

Tell either of them that sorrow, or want, or ignorance abounds, and the tale will make but a feeble impression; some trifle may be given to quiet conscience, but there will be no earnest outgoing of sympathy; no personal sacrifice, no loving thoughtfulness. The heart, wrapped up in self, keeps the ear averted from the voice of God and man.

And yet many of these women are capable of better things. It is the state of being "at ease" that, like an opiate, has lulled into insensibility some of the finest natures, and robbed the world of an amount of influence that might have incalculably enriched it.