

HEATHEN CLAIMS AND CHRISTIAN DUTY.*

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 traveller, 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 travelling 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 one.

In the few words that I shall address to 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 the fields whitening unto harvest, nor have I heard the songs of rejoicing labourers bringing the sheaves home. But I have seen work done, the seed sown in tears by labourers sent out by you, honest work which has made me more and more earnestly desire to help the cause of missions from a personal knowledge of the work in the mission fields, but not among the lower races, or the fetich 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 travelled are the regions of great, elaborate, philosophical religious systems, such as Buddhism, Hinduism and Mohammedanism.

Naturally, among those at home there is a disposition to look at the work done. On my part there may be too great a disposition, possibly, to look at the work left undone, because it seems to me 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 those enchantments, for enchantments they truly are, and set our faces towards the wilderness,

* From an address delivered in Exeter Hall, London, by Mrs. Isabella Bird Bishop, F.R.G.S., and Honorary Fellow of the Royal Scottish Geographical Society.