

## "LOVED MUCH."

MRS. S. K. WRIGHT, London, Ont.

THE mellow sunlight of a cloudless October afternoon shone through the open windows of the Methodist Church, at Clintondale, where a group of women, with their pastor in the midst, were discussing the, to them, all important question: Shall we organize an Auxiliary of the Women's Missionary Society? A Mrs. Mervin from an adjacent city, had lately come to Clintondale, who was an earnest missionary worker, and her heart was pained at the indifference manifested to the mission cause by the women of Clintondale. She had thought and prayed over the matter, then thought took action, and this gathering of women was the result.

Her placid face wore no signs this afternoon of the deep under-current of anxiety which one might suppose she was enduring, but the face was a true index of the mind; she had done her part, and felt she could leave results in the hands of Him, who, seeing the end from the beginning, would give what was best; so what need for worry or anxiety.

One after another had spoken, some opposed, while others who had caught a measure of Mrs. Mervin's enthusiasm were in favor of an organization. There was silence for a moment, which was broken by their pastor's voice, "After giving this matter careful consideration, I feel, that, situated financially as we are, we would not be justified in undertaking any fresh work. We must guard our own finances most jealously, so had we not better put the idea completely from us, and bend ourselves resolutely to the task of freeing our church from debt and keeping up the other funds which you know were much behind last year."

"He's a thinkin' of his 'sellery' I'll be bound," whispered Mrs. Hoskins in acid tones to Mrs. Mervin who was sitting next her.

"Please do not say that about Mr. Wilfred," was quickly responded, "he has never given us cause to impute such a motive to him, and it would be better for matters to remain as they are rather than engage in any enterprise without the approval of our ———"

The whispered conversation was abruptly closed by the voice of gentle little Mrs. Mattin who had not previously spoken. There was a visible tremor in her voice betokening the effort it cost her. "I greatly feel the burden of our church debt, I know the parsonage lacks much needed improvements, and that last year found us financially behind the two previous ones. I must confess that I think differently upon these matters than I did a few months ago. This leaflet, 'The Voices of the Women,' given me by Mrs. Mervin has opened my eyes to the fact that we owe a duty abroad as well as at home." The little pink leaflet fluttered still more in the trembling hands as she continued, "and while we are freeing ourselves from debt, the heathen are perishing, and will that excuse justify our indifference, our non-doing? Will God hold us guiltless when the great day of reckoning comes?"

The tears which had bravely been restrained now choked her utterance, and a solemn pause ensued, in which hearty and devout thanksgiving went up from Mrs. Mervin's heart to Him who was so graciously and wondrously using those whom she at one time thought "cared for none of these things," and then with a face all aglow, as such faces are whose owners daily live as "seeing Him who is invisible," Mrs. Mervin rose to speak. For fully five minutes, impressively, eloquently she pleaded "for the two hundred and fifty millions of heathen women, who with bowed heads and crushed hearts are dragging out their sunless lives, some as fettered crippled Chinese, some in Moslem harems, while India claims twenty-one millions of these as widows, condemned to lives

so terrible in their misery that happy is she who is offered upon the funeral pyre of her husband. Is it enough then," Mrs. Mervin asked, "that we contribute in the regular way to missions? Does not God lay upon us the women of today—occupying a place we would never have reached had it not been for Christianity—special claims? Does not God ask that we as women dwelling in the full tide of Gospel light and privileges should give as a thank-offering a share of our time, our means, our prayers, to those other women dwelling in the dense darkness of superstition, idolatry, and degradation?"

Mr. Wilfred's face had worn a strangely, solemn look as Mrs. Mervin was speaking. When she concluded he said, "Sisters, I must confess I have never given the special work the women are doing in the mission field the careful thought and study I should have done before expressing an opinion. I have really looked upon it more in the light of a hindrance to the General Fund and the home work than anything else, but after what I have heard this afternoon I cannot do other than acquiesce with any decision that you in your judgment may see fit to make."

An expression of opinion was then asked for, when it was decided almost unanimously, that the women of Clintondale Methodism should form an Auxiliary to the Woman's Missionary Society.

Then came the work of electing officers; many, indeed all, wished Mrs. Mervin to fill the position of President, but she so positively but quietly refused that it seemed useless to press the matter. She in turn nominated Mrs. Wilfred, and in a few graceful, well chosen words expressed her desire for their pastor's wife to be their leader in this new undertaking.

A momentary flush of pleasure passed over Mr. Wilfred's face, quickly succeeded by a look of pain as he thought of the utter impossibility of his girl-wife assuming leadership in any form of Church work except that of a strictly social character. His eyes sought Mrs. Mervin's face for explanation. Had he known and trusted her less thoroughly he would have thought this but a touch of the keenest wrong. His parishioners could not do other than like the golden-haired, laughing girl, who two years ago had become his wife. Yet all seemed to take for granted, nothing must be expected from her. "She is no help to her husband in his work," many said, a fact no one attempted to dispute or deny. What then could be the meaning of the stand Mrs. Mervin had taken? many faces, besides the pastor's, asked that afternoon by mingled looks of bewilderment and perplexity.

Mr. Wilfred felt he must say something, but what? He had longed and prayed, oh, how often, that his wife might take some part in active Christian work. Now the door was opened and he sadly felt she was not ready to enter.

"Sisters," it was Mr. Wilfred who spoke, and no one guessed what the effort cost him, "you made a wise choice when you selected Mrs. Mervin for your President; she is the one for the position, and while grateful to her for mentioning Mrs. Wilfred's name in this connection, I am sure that were she here she would feel like declining the honor paid her. As you know, it would be work to which she is wholly unaccustomed, and I fear, would consider the responsibility entirely too great. I would therefore beg leave to ask Mrs. Mervin to revoke her decision."

"Mr. Wilfred will perhaps pardon my saying 'I am not the one for the position,'" said Mrs. Wilfred in low tones; "when I tell him that for hours I prayed over this question, for I somehow felt that we were going to have an Auxiliary, and I knew so much depended upon our choice of President, and very clearly God seemed to show me our pastor's wife was the one He would have us choose as leader. I fully agree with Mr. Wilfred in regard to the great responsibility, but we have such a strange Arm on which to lean that even