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## Contributors and Correspondents

### LETTER FROM DR. FRASER.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

Notwithstanding my wish in all my letters to your paper to avoid making false statements or producing false impressions, I find in the BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN of January 14, and February 11, as well as in my letter to the Knox College Students' Missionary Society, published in your issue of February 25, which demand some explanation and correction.

In my letter of November 4, 1875, which appears in your issue of January 14 this year, and in which I give some account of the roads here, and what may be seen and heard on and beside them, I notice the sentence, "Here are not carriages—not even ox-carts." Now the truth of this statement altogether depends on what is meant by the "here." I wrote it in perfect good faith, and as far as it applies to the part of North Formosa that I have seen it is correct, but inasmuch as the letter is headed FORMOSA, it is incorrect, as I have been credibly informed that a day's journey south of this there are plenty of ox-carts. This but illustrates how necessary it is to be careful in what one writes, so as not to mislead those who read and believe. I fear that in these days the demand for news is excessive, and the supply is consequently less reliable in quality. It is much more easy to make mistakes than be correct. I do not, however, wish to insinuate that other newspaper correspondents make mistakes—only to correct my own.

In the BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN of February 11, appear some extracts from a private letter, which I may say were furnished, not only without my knowledge, but contrary to an often expressed wish, that none of my friends would even undertake to publish extracts from my letters to them. While I am just as responsible for those statements as if they appeared in a letter written expressly for publication, I must be allowed to make some explanations which would perhaps not have been necessary had the whole letter been published, and certainly would not, were your readers all as intimately acquainted with me, and with the condition of the work here as my correspondent who furnished the extracts.

If it should be thought from the sentence "When the news of the union of the churches reached us there was a praise and thanksgiving service in North Formosa," that the Christians here have been told about the divisions and denominations in the Christian Church in other lands, and were rejoicing with us that the breaches were being healed, nothing could be farther from the truth. The people here have not been told about denominationalism, except to be clearly informed of and warned against the errors of Rome, because there is a Roman Catholic mission in the south of the island, and because an attempt was made some time ago, which however failed, to establish one in the North. Differences of opinion spring up readily enough of their own accord without missionaries being so foolish as to sow the seed of denominational strife and bitterness. In the extract, *North Formosa* means simply my own house, and those who engaged in the service were simply my wife and self. If I had been writing for the public eye I should have allowed myself less freedom of expression, and taken more care to avoid possible misunderstanding. I wish now particularly to call attention to this point as I see it is noticed in the March number of *The Presbyterian Record*. I hope this explanation will catch the eye of the Editor, and note be made of it if he has the necessary space.

In the end of the same extract I am astonished to find the sentence, "Since Mr. Mackay went away I had begun to preach in the Chinese language." I think this statement one sure to mislead, and perhaps fitted to do much harm, one most certainly not fair to myself, as not being the whole truth, not fair to anyone who might think of coming out here, as he would be almost certain to conclude that the language could not be at all difficult to acquire, seeing that I could preach in it in ten months after my arrival, and still be engaged in house-building and in the hospital, and more than all, unfair to other missionaries who may have spent a very much longer time before feeling that they could say they had begun to preach. The statement, "I have begun to preach in the Chinese language," when separated from the context in which it stood and made without any of the qualifications which accompanied it, and preceded it in former letters, needs explanation. If by preaching is meant setting forth the truths of Scripture and the gospel of Jesus Christ in broken sentences, and with many mistakes, with little freedom to myself, and I fear less profit to the hearers who are considerate enough to listen, then I did preach last November, because Mr. Mackay and all the helpers were away at a Mission Conference, and I felt that I must say what I could by way of exhorting the people to stand fast in the truth in which they had been instructed; but to call such feeble attempts as I was then able to make in Chinese, preaching—could only be allowed in the confidence and privacy of a letter to one whom I knew would be delighted to hear that I was able to do anything, and whom I thought would understand perfectly what I meant by the word. It now remains for me to add that the way in which I was able at that time even thus

to venture to speak to the people, was by devoting my attention exclusively to the study of the spoken language. If I had taken up the study of the WRITTEN language, or "character" as it is called, and insisted on being able to read and write every word I was able to speak, I would not, I do not think, be able to speak so as to be listened to yet. This is why I think the partial statement so unfair and dangerous. Other missionaries have learned to read and write at the same time as they learned to speak; some in a shorter, some in a longer time, and it is only just to those men that with the public statement that I was preaching in Chinese in ten months after my arrival they should know from my own hand what sort of preaching it was, and that at that time I know nothing about the character. The same qualifications are also due from me to any who may think of coming out here as missionaries, that they may not labour under false impressions created by me. To speak with reference to the "character" I dare not. It is so different from the European languages, and any knowledge of it is so elementary, that it is much safer and wiser for me to say nothing about it. If any one wishes to know whether the study of the Chinese—spoken or written—is easy or difficult, the only way I imagine in which he can know is to come and study it. There is such a diversity of gift in the matter of studying languages that what one finds difficult may by twenty be pronounced easy, and vice versa.

Now, although this letter is already too long, I crave a little further indulgence while I note a point or two in my letter to the Knox College Students' Missionary Society, published in your issue of Feb. 25. The students will excuse my referring to the letter, as they have allowed it to become public property. And first, in writing of the work here I notice that all through my letter I have used the pronoun *our*, which is fitted to lead people to suppose that at these different places I had helped and was still helping to do the work, which is not true. The whole work at all the stations has as yet been done by Mr. Mackay and those of his converts whom he has trained to help him. From this standpoint it was wrong of me to use the word *our*, as identifying myself with work which I have done nothing to promote save inasmuch as the seeing of a few patients from day to day in the hospital has helped to impress the people favourably, or incline them to receive the gospel which they hear from Mr. Mackay and the helpers. Then the letter, while looking like a full account of the work was not really so. In setting out it was my intention to give many more interesting particulars, but I saw my letter growing long, and was afraid lest it should tempt the students to dispense with the reading of it.

To give any sort of a fair account of the history and condition of the work at each of the stations would need a separate letter for each place, and this account could only be written by Mr. Mackay himself, who of course knows all about the work from the beginning. I hope sometime he may take the time and write the account, as it will form a chapter in the great history of the Christian Church which no one else can contribute. And it will be a chapter full of interest for the friends of the heathen and all who love to hear of the prosperity of Zion. The Lord has greatly prospered his work in North Formosa, and is continuing to do so.

I hope you will find room for this very long letter. My sense of justice and fear lest I should mislead instead of really informing, and thus hinder instead of advance the cause I have at heart, must be my apology for making such a claim on your space. We were all glad to hear by our last mail from home that there is prospect of another labourer for this field. Thanks to the Lord of the Harvest! May He yet send many more!

Yours very sincerely,  
J. B. FRASER.

Tamsui, May 24, 1876.

### Home Mission Debt and Assessment.

Editor BRITISH AMERICAN PRESBYTERIAN.

SIR,—As it was agreed at the meeting of Assembly to distribute the debt resting on the Home Mission Fund, over the Presbyteries according to their membership, would it not be well for the Committee to correspond with those pastoral charges and vacant congregations that have not returned their membership? It is plain that those Presbyteries which are faithful in the matter of returns will have a larger share than really belongs to them if this is not done. Such a plan of raising money, in its very nature, works unjustly. Let the injustice be kept within as narrow bounds as possible, and if loyalty to Presbyterianism requires the filling up of statistical tables, let disloyal ministers and managers be reminded of their duty.—H.  
July 3, 1876.

### Gems.

1. Keep a list of your friends, and let God be first on the list, however long it may be.
2. Keep a list of all the gifts you get; and let Christ, who is the unspeakable of all, be first.
3. Keep a list of your mercies, and let pardon and life stand at the head.
4. Keep a list of your joys, and let joy unspeakable and full of glory be first.
5. Keep a list of your hopes, and let sorrow for sin be first.
6. Keep a list of your enemies; and, however many they be, put down the "old man" and the "old serpent" first.
7. Keep a list of your sins; and let the sin of unbelief be set as first and worst of all.

### MRS. MURRAY MITCHELL ON ZENANA LIFE AND WORK.

Among numbers of visitors whom the royal visit to India has attracted thither is a Mr. Morier Williams, Professor of Sanskrit at Oxford. In giving an account of his observations, he makes the following curiously inconsistent remarks, which we give in their original contexts.

"With regard to female education, although its bearings on the moral and intellectual and even physical progress of India can scarcely be overrated, very little, I fear, has yet been effected. The truth simply is, that before we can raise the women of India, we must first raise the men. When we have thus elevated the men, we may safely leave the women to their keeping. The women will then be raised to the level of the men by the act of the men themselves without our interference. At present Hindu women are generally faithful wives and devoted mothers, and have great influence with their families; but they are grossly ignorant, and to their ignorance bigotry and subjection to the Brahmins, the maintenance of superstition and idolatry, which would otherwise lose ground among the men, is, I suspect, mainly due."

With all respect to the said Oxford professor, if the elevation of the women must wait for that of the men, and the men are to be retained in superstition by the influence of the women, the Christianization of India would seem to be as insoluble a problem as the case of the man who would not enter the water until he had learned to swim! Mrs. Murray Mitchell, in the very interesting volume which we have already noticed, points out the "more excellent way" towards which, though it is true that comparatively little has yet been effected, so many earnest workers are devoting their best energies.

"The more one knows of zenana work the more important it will appear. The arguments for it are drawn usually from the state of the poor neglected women, and too much cannot be said from this point of view. Their condition is as sad as can possibly be pictured. A Hindu lady once said of the life they lead, 'It is like that of a frog in a well. Everywhere there is beauty, but we cannot see it; all is hid from us.' There could not be a more apt illustration. But there is also another side, where the arguments are equally cogent, namely, the influence on the men which the elevation of the women would exercise. At present they are a hindrance to progress among the men. There is no obstacle the missionary has to dread so much as the influence of mothers over their sons. It is a great mistake to suppose because the women are shut up within their zenanas, that they have no influence. A wife has not much power with her husband, but a mother has unbounded influence over her son. She says to him, 'Take all the geography and history, all the learning the padre can give you, but when he speaks to you on religion, do not believe a word he says.' His teacher hopes he has made an impression on the heart of a young man, who had left him seemingly thoughtful and solemn. He goes home; his mother's known eye detects his state of mind, and she speedily counteracts the whole. It is the older women chiefly who uphold superstition. In many cases where the man of a family, being educated and enlightened, do not care for the observances of their faith, the women do; and all the more that the men are indifferent, thereby grievously offending the deities, as they suppose, they zealously perform all that the Shastras enjoin. Their religion is all they have; and they cling to their superstitions, and their goddesses, and their Brahman priests. They are jealous of innovation, and are the props of orthodoxy and custom. Indeed, the zenana may be said to be the stronghold of Hinduism. Therefore, let us attack the citadel if we would fully vanquish the foe."

"Let us teach the women equally with the men. Our great missionary societies equip their colleges, and send forth their missionaries, and set up the most perfect organizations—but chiefly for the men. Until in equal measure the great undertaking is faced of giving Christian education to the women generally, we cannot entertain any reasonable expectation of evangelizing India."

After such a testimony from one who has had such abundant opportunities of observation, there are few who will not feel the importance and the privilege of aiding, through the Zenana Mission, so grand an object as that of the evangelization of India. Here is a little further account, in detail, of zenana life, as seen by Mrs. Mitchell in person.

"I ought first to say that the word 'zenana' (*zenan-khana*) simply means 'the house of the women,' or in other words, the harem of Bengal. As soon as a woman marries, etiquette, or rather hard custom, requires that she must then retire within the zenana, never more to con. into the outer world; and you know that her marriage—or betrothal, which here is held as marriage—takes place when she is still quite a child. From the age of eight or nine, then, the women of the higher and middle classes are doomed to a life of seclusion and ignorance, and as in the case of widows, very often also to degradation and misery. The more enlightened native gentlemen are now anxious to change this state of matters. They are not only willing to let their wives and daughters be educated, but they earnestly desire that they may be trained so as to become intelligent companions for themselves. The younger ladies, too, are eager for knowledge, and wish to be taught to

read and work, and employ themselves as we do. They have longings and desires after change, and seem to be seeking for something, they hardly know what. But they cannot come out to schools and colleges to receive the training they wish for. We must carry it to them, and by the visits of qualified teachers to their secluded homes, give them the blessing of a good Christian education."

Mrs. Mitchell then describes the interior of a native "Babeo's" mansion, and after the apartments of the men have been spoken of, goes on to the portion occupied by the zenana.

"We ascend a short stair; and lo! we are in 'the house of the woman.' At the top we are met by a gentle, timid-looking, rather pretty, and wonderfully fair young creature, dressed in an airy wavy costume of purple gauze, spangled over with gold. Her beautiful glossy black hair is plaited into a large knot behind her head, in which pretty silver ornaments dangle. She has a large nose-jewel, with pearls and emeralds, earrings and necklaces, bangles, and heavy silver anklets; and round her waist she wears a beautiful zone of massive silver. She receives us rather shyly, but with evident pleasure, and takes hold of your hand to lead you to her room. Doubtless you would expect that this room should resemble somewhat those we have seen in the babeo's quarters. On the contrary, this is bare and comfortless in the extreme. The walls have once been whitewashed, but now are dirty and spotted, and literally garnished with cobwebs; for it is considered a sin to kill a spider. A tiny window, high up, and grated with iron stanchions, looks out to the tiled roofs of other houses. There is some matting on the floor, and a cot at the upper end covered with a white sheet and some round bolsters; there is also a boy of some sort. And this is the furniture of the apartment; there is really nothing else. This, and many other rooms like it, open off a veranda, which looks into a court or garden, rather, for there are three or four sickly-looking trees, and a well or tank, which seems stagnant, for it is covered over with green slime. This melancholy garden and the tiled rooftops make up the whole view which the poor women who dwell here from year's end to year's end have of the outer world. And this is only a type of other zenanas, where the surroundings are very much the same."

"Chairs will be brought out for us, as we do not take kindly to the floor; but the lady in the spangled gauze, and her teacher, Miss F., will deposit themselves in the matting. And now the lesson proceeds. Not, however, before an old, hard-looking woman has taken up her position on the door-steps, eyeing us very suspiciously, and keeping zealous watch over every word the lesson contains. This is a very orthodox and most bigoted widowed aunt whom no courtesy or kindness on our part can tempt quite into the room while we pollute it with our presence. The pupils, however, does not seem to mind her much. The reading, which is from the Bengali version of the "Peep of Day," proceeds in the most steady manner in spite of the duenna. The young creature asks questions which show much intelligence and deep interest in what she is taught. She is naturally very quiet and shy; but it is pleasing to see how her eagerness for knowledge overcomes the timid shrinking which she showed at first, and is natural to her."

"The scene in the next house we go to is quite a contrast to this. We are received with a storm of delight by six or seven bright young girls, who throng around Miss F. as if they would eat her up, so demonstrative is their joy at seeing their teacher. She chatters Bengali as fast as they do, and makes me envious who can do nothing but smile and shake hands, and reciprocate in expressive pantomime their kind greeting. I avail myself, however, of my companion's Bengali tongue, and have nice little chats with each as she is presented by name. These are the daughters and daughter-in-law of the house. The mother soon makes her appearance,—a pleasant, clever-looking woman, wonderfully young and fresh, but evidently a widow from the plain garments she wears and her shaven head. She has no clothing on the upper part of her person, and is simply enveloped in a coarse white clunder, or sheet, edged with a black border. She wears no ornaments of any sort. This is the 'bow-ma,' as the head of the house is called; and Miss F. says she is a person of great influence in her family. She has a number of sons, and three young creatures whom we see are their wives, and are called 'sows.' The eldest son is in England, which is a great concern to the old lady, as she fears he may be too 'high' for them, as she expresses it, when he returns, and will not fall in with the old ways. She does not seem to fear his becoming a Christian, and does not mind his losing caste; she only dreads his affections becoming estranged from her or the family."

The following picture, however, shows the darker side of Zenana life:—

"The position of the young Hindu lady is sometimes hard enough. After marriage, while still quite a child, she must live in a strange house, among strange women, and must not even visit her own mother but by the will of her mother-in-law. She must yield the most unquestioning submission, not only to her husband, but to this mother-in-law, and indeed also to her elder sisters-in-law. If she is a woman of character and some strength of mind, this changes as she grows older, especially if she becomes the mother of sons. But while she is young she must not speak in the presence of the older women unless spoken to; she must not unveil herself; she must not eat with them, nor even sit down except expressly permitted to do so."

"The simple truth is this—the life of millions of women in India is one lasting ornel wrong from their birth to their death. One of their own nation has thus described it:—'The daughters of India are unwelcomed at their birth, untaught in childhood, enslaved when married, accursed as widows, and unlamented when they die. I am afraid this is too true a picture. They are the slaves of tyrannical and absurd superstitions, which take away their freedom both of mind and body.' "In the outer life of the nation, then, the Hindu lady has no part, no recognized position at all. And what has she to fill her own everyday life? Alas! little indeed. She has no knowledge nor cultivation; she has nothing to do; so the dreary hours are spent in sleeping, or cooking, or making garlands for the gods, or looking at her jewels, or braiding her hair. This is her condition at the best; but if she be a widow, then woe to her! She may be betrothed as a mere child to a boy who sickens and dies. Or she may have been married to an old Koolin Brahmin with one foot in the grave, who may have fifty wives besides; but he is of the highest priestly caste, therefore an alliance with him is highly honorable. But he dies. She may not have known him, hardly seen him; nevertheless she is now a widow for life. She is thenceforward held as one forsaken of God and man, and fit only to die. British law has done this for her, that she cannot be burned on the funeral pile with her husband's dead body; but I am not sure that this is not the more merciful fate—to endure the real rather than the life-long dying. She is stripped of her good clothes and jewels; her hair is cut off; she must sleep, not now in a bed, but on a mat on the floor; she must eat only one meal in the day, and that of the coarsest food, and by herself, not with the family; she must fast often besides; and while the fast continues, she must not drink a drop of water, even though she should be dying. She must do the meanest work of the house, and be the servant or drudge of everyone. And worse than this,—henceforth no love nor sympathy can come into her life. No one must say a kind word to her, nor even give her a pitying look; for their superstition tells these women, that if they are kind to the despised widow, they will probably be visited by a like calamity themselves. "Now what we want to do is to change all this; and by God's blessing on zenana work, all this is being changed."

"One thing which is very pleasing is the manner in which the zenana teacher is received, and the position she holds in the families to which she goes—she is invariably welcomed with the most demonstrative joy. Her visits seem to bring life and brightness to these dull homes, and her pupils long for the hour when she is to arrive. When there is sickness or trouble, her sympathy and help are counted on and prized, and she is the adviser in every difficulty. One old widow told her teacher it was 'sunshiny' the day she came, and 'cloudy' when she was absent."

The zenanas, of course, are a feature of the higher caste life of India. Here are a few words about the condition of the women of the lower castes.

"It would be impossible to tell how ignorant the lower people are; and the worse is, that so little seems to be done for them. When you ask any of these poor women the very simplest question about God, or their souls, or sin, or a hereafter, they stare; and say, 'How should we know? we are *qurub lok* (poor people); we know nothing; or, as I have heard them say more than once, 'We are only women—how could we know?' as if the simple fact of being a woman was enough to account in this wretched land for any amount of ignorance. What we want is a thoroughly organized woman's work, to reach the women of every class. No, only those of the higher classes, who live in the zenanas, but the poor, who have to live in huts, and cook, and work, and have no one to care for them or to teach them anything—and there are in all India more than a hundred millions of them! The very thought oppresses the heart with a sort of despair. But with God all things are possible."

The following extract gives some idea of the evils and suffering which the system of early marriages entails on poor children.

"There was an exceedingly pretty, bright child of eight or nine, who looked shyly and smilingly at Miss H., whom she had not seen since her marriage; for this poor child, who ought to have been playing with her dolls in the nursery, was a married lady. The red mark which is made with powder across the forehead, and the slender circlet of steel round her waist, showed her betrothal had taken place. I spoke to the bonnie little thing, and would have taken her on my lap, but she slipped away, and sat down beside a woman who had just come in, circling her arms round her, and putting her head lovingly on her breast. No wonder! This was the child's mother. The chief 'bow' explained that she was only on a visit to them, though this was her father's house; that she had only come for 'the pooja' (or worship), this being the time for the members of a family to reunite—but that very soon she must return to the house of her husband's family, to be under the control of her mother-in-law. When the poor child heard this, she burst into a bitter cry and sobbed as if her heart would break; the tears streamed down her face, while she clung to her mother, and would not be comforted. I could hardly keep from crying along with her. This is no exceptional case; the same tale could be told of every Hindu girl from the age of seven or eight, though, of course, some are happier with their new relations than others. From the day a girl is married she belongs far more to her mother-in-law than to her own mother."

(To be continued.)