

Mrs. Woo

A TRUE STORY.

(F. G. Bogert, in the 'Christian Intelligencer'.)

A missionary and his wife were sent to a crowded district in China to establish a station. They had not been there long when they heard of Mrs. Woo. She was a widow of about sixty-five years of age, living all alone in a dirty little hut, and earning fifty cents a week by braiding silk. The people said that Mrs. Woo had a demon; and so she had—a demon of an uncontrolled temper. Only angry replies were given to those who spoke to her, and her temper, when fairly aroused, terrified the whole community. The neighbors, poor as they were, said they would gladly bear the expense of a coffin to see her buried.

The missionary's wife frequently passed Mrs. Woo's house, and, whenever she saw the widow sitting by her door, saluted her pleasantly. At first the only reply was a surly muttering or a scowl; but after a while the greeting was returned, and in time the missionary stopped to chat with Mrs. Woo about her silk braiding. It was not long before the missionary began to speak of Christ and to invite Mrs. Woo to the meetings. One Sunday she came to church. Dirty and unkempt, with a defiant scowl, she was a contrast to the women around her. But she learned the Scriptural text, which each week was hung up in front and taught to the entire congregation.

The next Sunday Mrs. Woo was there again, and she continued to attend regularly and to learn the text and hymns. The first change noticed in the woman was a regard for her appearance; then the hard look on her face began to soften, and the outbursts of temper to be less frequent. At the end of a few months Mrs. Woo applied for admission to the church, and was received.

One day she came to the missionary's wife and said: 'I want to learn to read. I want to be able to read the texts that are put up in church every Sabbath. I want to read the hymns and the Bible.'

The missionary's wife offered to teach her if she would come to her house every day for one hour. Think of it! an old woman undertaking to learn those difficult Chinese characters, three or four thousand of which must be known in order to read the New Testament! It was a weary task, and one requiring infinite patience on the part of the missionary; but both teacher and pupil persevered day after day for months and months, until Mrs. Woo could read the Gospel of Mark and the familiar hymns. Then the lessons ceased.

Soon after this, the missionary noticed that Mrs. Woo was no longer braiding at her door when he passed, and when an assistant told him that Mrs. Woo was not working he called to inquire into the matter.

'Have you much work now, Mrs. Woo?' he asked.

'I'm not working any more; I'm preaching all the time.'

'Preaching all the time! But how do you live?'

'It's this way. You remember the red handkerchief you gave me last Christmas?'

'Yes.'

'Well, I fold my Bible and hymn book in that and start out in the morning. I go to several houses, and in each the people say: "That is a very pretty handkerchief you have." And I say, "Yes, would you like to see it?" Then I open it and take out the Bible, and read and preach, and then I take out the hymn book and read hymns. Then I go on, and by and by I reach a house when it is time to have rice, and the people ask me to have some, and I eat, and then I show them my handkerchief. In the afternoon I go on preaching, and I reach another house in time to have rice; and so I live.'

Rejoiced as the missionary was to learn of the work Mrs. Woo was doing, he could not approve of her manner of living.

'The people will call you a "rice Christian,"' he said, after trying in vain to show her that she could not keep on in that way. 'They will say that you are making money out of your religion; that you became a Christian so that you need not work any more.'

Finally they agreed upon a compromise. Mrs. Woo was to work in the morning and to go about preaching in the afternoon.

In time the missionary and his wife went home on furlough. 'There will be no interest among the women when we return,' said the wife sadly. 'There are good workers for the men, but there is no one to look after the women.'

The furlough ended and the missionary returned to China. It was the first Sunday, and he went to church to meet his people again. The men came in and took their seats. Then women began to come. Presently all the seats were filled and women stood in the aisles. Last of all came Mrs. Woo, leading two of her friends, and pushing her way through the crowd to a place as near the front as she could go.

The next day the missionary called on Mrs. Woo.

'How have you done it, Mrs. Woo? How did you get so many women to come to church yesterday?'

'Oh, I just went on preaching. I would go from house to house with my red handkerchief, and I would read the Gospel to the people, and then I would sing hymns to them. On Saturday I say, "To-morrow is worship day; you must go to church." When they make an excuse, I say, "I will come for you if you will go." Then on Sunday I go to the houses for the women. Last Saturday I said, "You must go to-morrow; the missionary will be there." And I stopped for those who did not like to go alone, and so they went to church.'

The missionary thought that Mrs. Woo's faithfulness should be rewarded. At his request she was enrolled among the regular workers, and paid from the missionary fund, that she might devote her whole time to teaching.

Instead of the woman with the demon, the terror and hatred of the neighborhood, Mrs. Woo became the best colporteur in the field, distributing more literature and reaching more people than any other assistant.

The recent outbreak in China brought death to all the foreigners in that station except to the missionary from whom I heard this story. 'But the work has not stopped,' he added in closing, 'for faithful Mrs. Woo is left to tell the story of Christ.'

Be Ye Also Ready.

(L. T. Thurston, in 'Christian Endeavor World'.)

It was in a Christian Endeavor meeting that a young girl gave this bit of personal experience.

'Just before Christmas,' she said, 'I was in a gallery where there was a large picture in which Jesus was the central figure. As I stood looking at the picture, a child in the crowd behind me asked, "Who is that, papa?" and the father replied, "That is Jesus Christ."

"Jesus Christ—who was he?" asked the clear child voice again.

'In a low tone the father answered, "He was one who healed the sick, and cured blind and deaf people."

'I turned and saw a poorly dressed little girl with eager, earnest eyes fixed on her father's face. An instant, and I was swept along with the crowd; but as I passed on a voice in my own soul said, "Why don't you take that little child aside and tell her the wonderful story that she has never heard?"

'I turned then, but the throng was so great that it was some minutes before I got back to the picture, and though I searched eagerly all through the gallery, the little questioner was nowhere to be seen. I have never been able to forget her, or to forgive myself that I was not ready to improve the opportunity that the Lord gave me that day.'

As the young girl took her seat, the pastor added: 'Dr. Chalmers once spent the night at the house of a friend where there was another guest who was not a confessed Christian. The two had some conversation together in the evening, and slept that night in adjoining rooms.

'During the night the stranger died, and no one knew of it until morning.

'Dr. Chalmers could not cease to regret his lost opportunity. "Ah," he said, "God has rebuked me. I know now what St. Paul means by being 'in season and out of season.' Had I addressed that old man last night with urgency, it might have seemed to human eyes out of season, but how seasonable it would really have been!"

If we Sunday-school teachers did but have this feeling when we meet our scholars, could we fail to speak to them with earnestness and power?

One Sunday, as I went into church, I was told that one of my scholars had died of diphtheria since we last met in the Sunday-school. How differently I should have spoken to that girl if I had known that it was my last opportunity! Surely we need to keep ever in mind the words of the Master, 'Be ye also ready.'

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