

## A Glimpse of Women's Mission Work Sixty Years Ago.

When I returned home from our last meeting, going into my mother's room, I said, "Mother, the ladies of the missionary society wish me to prepare something to read at the next meeting. I am sure they know much more about missions than I do. I felt like refusing, but as Mrs. Langdon proposed me I did not like to do so, and after I spoke the thought flashed across my mind, why not ask my mother how they carried on mission work when she was young? Will you not tell me what you did to help the missionaries?"

For a few moments she was quiet, and a shadow of sadness passed over her face. I was almost sorry I asked, for she had been very ill, and I knew she was looking back through a vista of fifty years, with its lights and shadows, to her girlhood's home. Then brightening, she said, "Yes, indeed, I will. It seems but yesterday since we gathered in Colonel Totten's parlor to organize our society. I left New York when I was fifteen years old and went to live in the city of B., then a mere village. The First Presbyterian Church was a small wooden building

"At that time the civilized world was becoming aroused in the cause of missions, and 'Preach the gospel to every creature' was heard from all our Christian pulpits. In our own land, Mr. and Mrs. Newell and Mr. and Mrs. Judson had bid farewell to home and friends. After waiting long months, we heard that the Newells were not allowed to remain where they had intended to make their home, but had been obliged to remove to an island near the mainland, and also of the persecutions of the Judsons, and we remembered the words of our Lord: 'Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' The work of our society was in making outfits for missionaries, home and foreign."

I said, "Most of the ladies of our society are interested in all departments of the work, and would like, I think, to hear what you did. I suppose the missionaries required a great amount of work done for them?"

"Yes; their journeys were often long, and a large quantity of clothing was needed. To obtain funds for material the society sewed for the families of many of its members. Sewing-machines were unknown, and in those days people were expected to sew nicely. Many a shoulder must have passed over the older members as a fine linen garment was handed to a group of laughing girls, and often a quiet afternoon was spent in picking out their stitches. Of course the girls never knew how much trouble they made, but Mrs. Totten called this home mission work.

"At last our first outfit was ready to be packed; it was for a young missionary and his wife, who were going to India. What a busy afternoon we had as we put garment after garment into the box, and many a little article was added for the toilet—articles of use and beauty that would gladden the young wife's heart in that distant land. Because she had chosen to leave home and friends to work for the Master, that was surely no reason why she should give up everything that makes life beautiful.

"When the packing was finished and we stood around the box, all were silent for a moment; then Mrs. Butler, our president, said, 'Let us ask God's blessing.' It was the first public prayer that had been offered in our society, and amid profound silence the timid woman asked

God to bless those who would wear those garments, and to bless our efforts. Her voice often faltered, some of the words we did not hear, but He, who knew what a struggle it was for her to kneel at His feet in public, heard it all and did bless us.

"As our society grew in number we took under our care two children in the Cattaraugus mission, naming one of them Joseph Hanford for our minister, the other Anna Hanford for his wife, who came to us a bride; she stayed a few months, then God took her, leaving us very sad and his home very desolate.

"The society of B. was composed chiefly of families coming from New York. of New England origin (as was my mother), and, like their Puritan ancestors, they were firm of purpose; having once put their hands to the plough, there was no turning back."

"I suppose," I said, "your father and brothers would scarcely have thought you capable of organizing a society and managing it in all its details as women do now?"

"I do not know what they thought; but woman was always the power behind the throne, and I am glad to have lived to see the day when a gifted woman can speak to other women in public without being condemned, as she would have been less than fifty years ago. But she must be careful not to abuse her power. Step by step she is going higher, and as long as the gentleness and modesty of her home life characterize her public life, all will be well.

"I can better illustrate how the seed sown in our little society took root by telling of an incident that took place in the life of one of those merry girls who attended our meetings.

"Madge Marvin was full of life, making sunshine out of everything. Madge was to be married to a young army officer. Ah! well I remember Madge as she stood under the chandelier, with its soft wax lights, surrounded by beautiful women and a brilliant array of officers in full dress. Madge's heart was light, and as she passed a group of friends, in which were some of the ladies of our society, she said, 'There is a mission station near the fort; I'll watch them for you,' then added with a laugh, 'Perhaps, if it is very lonely, I may get converted myself.' Words lightly spoken, but how prophetic!

"She left us, and by and by we heard of her, and from her, how she carried her brightness into that lonely place, enjoying everything, seemingly as happy as ever. A year passed, a little child was given her, beautiful, and the darling of all. One morning, in midwinter, word came to the mission station that Lieutenant Dayton's baby was dying. They went to his house, and there, over the cradle was Madge trying to awaken her darling, who was asleep in death. Then the missionaries that Madge proposed to watch, were watching her. For a time her life hung by a thread, and at last, as the blossoms came out, she grew better and returned home. Shortly after she united with the church, and when she returned to the West she went to work nobly. She treated the Indians like men and women, and they learned to love her, and in the poetic language of their race named her the 'Weeping Willow,' after seeing her bending over her baby's grave. But Madge did not give her life to sadness; her brightness came back, and when we met her in after years we saw a new beauty in her face—the beauty of holiness. Many letters our society received from her, telling of her work and thanking us for clothing and books sent."—*Woman's Work for Woman.*