

# Missionary Link.

CANADA

In the interest of the Baptist Foreign Mission Societies of Canada.

INDIA

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"The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising."—Is. lx. 3.

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## The Canadian Missionary Link.

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### Our Sisters in India.

PAPER BY MRS. H. M. N. ARMSTRONG, READ AT THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE WOMEN'S BAPTIST FOREIGN MISSIONARY SOCIETY OF ONTARIO.

*Dear Sisters of Ontario and Quebec.*—I am sorry that I can be with you to-day only in spirit, and am not able personally to convey to you my cordial thanks for your kind invitation to be present with you.

The Master who was with me during some years of service in the foreign field, has brought me back again to those who in thought and feeling, in name and speech are one with myself. I meet many who were friends in by-gone days and many more,—may I not class you among them,—who through their sympathy with the work in heathen lands, feel an interest in even the humblest worker there. Pleasant as the revival of old associations, and the meeting with friends must be, through it all I seem to see the eager, waiting faces of the dark-browed sisters I have left, turned appealingly towards me, as though they would say "Have you—will you—forget us?" I do not wish to do so, but rather to bring them and you nearer together, till one common sister-hood binds us all in loving fellowship.

Telugu women and Canadian women are not so unlike as many may suppose. Their color, their dress, their food, their homes, their position in society are totally dissimilar, yet are not all these differences *external*. Their hopes and fears, their joys and sorrows, their love and hatred and jealousy, their motherhood with all its cares and recompenses are much like ours. "Man looketh at the outward appearance, but God looketh at the heart." He loves the Marthas and Marys beneath the burning skies of India as He does those of happier homes in more temperate climes. The wailing of the orphan and the widow in Hindustan strikes upon His ear as speedily and as plaintively as those that rise from Canadian hearths and homes. He sends sunny days to the children there as here, and gladdens their parents' hearts with food and raiment. "Have we not all one Father?" Yes, and we all bear His image; His image marred by sin, twisted by our misunderstandings, yet filled with aspirations and possibilities of greater things, conscious of yearnings that nothing here can satisfy, conscious too of guilt that no effort of ours can wash away. He sees and pities us each and all. "God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation, he that feareth Him and worketh righteousness is accepted with Him." The thought may arise in some minds that those who "fear God and work righteousness" are more numerous here than

in heathen lands. It is certainly true that those who love Him are found chiefly among us, because we only have heard of His love to us. But those who know little more of God than as an avenger fear Him in all lands, everywhere "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness of men," and of this many stand in awe, and those who, following blind guides, work what they deem to be righteousness, are no inconsiderable number among the heathen. If Canadians had not heard the Gospel and Hindoos had, the righteous would be there, not here. "What maketh us to differ, or what have we that we did not receive?" It becomes us not to be "highminded, but to fear." Our Hindoo sisters are what we would be without the gospel. We are much as they would be if they had known of Christ.

There are two distinct classes of women in India—those who live a secluded life, and those of the lower classes, who labor in the fields or wherever they can get work. There, as here, those who work hard every day and scarcely gain enough to eat, have little time to think. It is hard to awaken much thought among them. To earn their rice, to cook and eat it and have time to rest their weary limbs in sleep, is about the height of their ambition. So long as they can work, they give little thought to what the end of it all is to be. In their own expressive way they will tell you, "we cannot get enough to feed our bodies, what is the use of talking to us about our souls?"

Any who have visited among the lowest classes in our own towns and villages have met with much the same reception. In India, however, the poverty is greater, and those who are pinched and strained in circumstances are more numerous than here. Still, a large class of the people hold themselves to be the ladies of the land. They are ennobled by their birth as they suppose. Too refined and modest for exposure to the public gaze, they pride themselves on their seclusion, and find within the narrow limits of their own households sufficient to fill their lives if not their hearts. Many of these fritter away their time in gossiping and such gaiety as befits their station in life; but some among them are pious, and can say in all sincerity as Paul did when he persecuted the Christians to the death, that he was "zealous toward God."

Among this class of people who have more time to think and whose husbands and sons are often educated, thus bringing them into contact with the thought of others, I have found those who were "hungering and thirsting after righteousness." They deemed no sacrifice too great, no hardship too severe, which would purchase for them a little more of the favor of Deity. Their one object in life was to lay up for themselves treasures in heaven. Their prayers were "but vain repetitions," yet they were never forgotten; daily they burned lamps before their idols and made them offerings; daily they fed or clothed the poor; and they did not require some one to ask them to contribute to this or that charity, nor was there any need of collectors calling on them; they gave freely and generously, and rejoiced in it. Their sacred books told them, "By thy works thou shalt be justified, and by thy works thou shalt be condemned." They

knew the "terrors of the law" Alas! for them, they had never heard of salvation by grace. They knew of a just God, but none had told them that He was also a Saviour to "save His people from their sins. They had heard He was pleased with their giving, they did not know of "His unspeakable gift." They had no knowledge of the grand secret of our peace, "the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin," and "going about to establish a righteousness of their own" was all that was left to them. Often I have heard them say, we have made a pilgrimage to this shrine and to that, but there are many more places we must go. There are always more gods to worship, more sacrifices to make, more good deeds to be done, we are never satisfied, we can never say we have reached the end, we never know what we have left undone.

Such people do not always hear the Gospel readily. They have their own righteousness wrought with much toil and care, and poor and insufficient as they feel it to be, it is still precious for the labor it has cost them. They have bought it so dearly that they will not part from it till they are thoroughly convinced that the "robe of Christ's righteousness" is the only one which we can wear acceptably in the palace of the King.

One sad difference between the religious Hindoo woman and her sister in Christian lands is, that the first is a service purely of fear, while ours is a service of love. The one is the spirit of a slave, the other that of a child at home. They are always trying to propitiate an offended God, we rejoice in Him who is the "propitiation for our sins." They bare the burden of their transgressions, working out "their own salvation with fear and trembling," knowing nothing of Him who "worketh in us" and "in whom we are complete." The insufficiency and insignificance of what they have done compared with what they ought to have done, and the mountain of uncanceled sin for which they cannot atone weighs upon their hearts. "God only knows of how many of them it may be said at last as of Cornelius, "thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God." Yet, we know that "by the works of the law shall no flesh living be justified." Peter was sent to teach Cornelius the way of life, because his prayers and alms alone were not sufficient. Yes, my sisters, and when your hearts were moved to send the Gospel to the Telugus, perhaps back of that was the prayer of some poor woman to her Swamy (Deity) that passed beyond the idol to the God whom she "ignorantly worshipped." The prompting of the Spirit in your heart it may be was the answer to her prayer.

Our sisters in India are groaning under the yoke of heathenism, and it is given to us to set them free. How shall we meet them hereafter if we neglect them now? How my heart has ached for the hopeless sorrows I have found among heathen women. When our little children die our friends weep with us and tell us "it is well with the child." When a Hindoo child dies the mother has lost it indeed; as its little body passes out from her sight, all hope of ever seeing it again dies away from her heart. She knows nothing of a heaven of ransomed little ones. Her child has been taken away, they tell her, because she has displeased the gods, and