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Monthly Letter Leaflet.

WOMAN'S F. M. SOCIETY, PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CANADA.

(WESTERN DIVISION.)

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FOREIGN LETTERS.

FROM MRS. WILSON.

NEEMUCH,
September 30th, 1886.

You ask me in your last letter for news of our Neemuch field, and for information concerning the prospects of work among the women here.

I think you know about our boys' school in Old Neemuch, and also about the dispensary, both of which were opened last year, before we moved from Mhow to Neemuch, Mr. Wilson visiting them every two or three weeks during the few months that elapsed between his choosing of Neemuch for his field and our coming to reside here. The school is steadily growing under Bala Ram's care, and the average attendance is now about forty. Bala Ram takes the English and the higher vernacular classes, and an assistant teacher attends to those who are not so far advanced. For some time much restlessness was shown among the boys during the daily Bible lesson, and some of them refused to answer the questions put to them on the subject of the lesson. Lately, however, two or three of the Mohammedan boys, who seemed to cause most of the trouble, have left, and now Bala Ram finds no difficulty with his class. About half of the boys attend a singing-class held once a week in our church building, and some of them are learning to sing our Christian hymns very nicely. So far they have learned only hymns written in the style of their own sacred songs, and sung to purely native tunes. But they are fond of English tunes, and, fortunately, we have translations in the same metre of many of our best English hymns, so by and by we intend to teach them these. One of the Rajputana missionaries (of the U. P. Mission) told me that many object to the singing of Indian tunes to Christian hymns, as the

majority of them are associated in the minds of the people with very immoral sentiments. There seems to me to be a good deal of force in this objection, and yet one is unwilling to discard music that is really the music of the people, and which must have an attraction for them that any other music cannot possess, unless they are trained to hear and sing it from childhood.

The Dispensary is at present in charge of a Mohammedan, who has had a good deal of medical practice, and who seems to be very successful in his treatment of cases. We would like very much to have a Christian doctor, but there are not many in India, and each mission that sends any of its young men to be trained in medicine finds at all times plenty of work for them as soon as their education is finished. The daily attendance of patients is about sixty or seventy, of whom a number are women. Almost every morning a short religious service is held before medicine is distributed, between thirty and forty people usually being present. Mr. Wilson finds this one of his most attentive audiences. The building in which our school and dispensary have accommodation would make a fine hospital, and we sometimes look forward far enough to see its rooms filled with patients, and presided over by a lady from our own Canada. I think each of our stations has a covetous eye on Miss Oliver, and is wondering who will be fortunate enough to secure her after her year at Indore is ended. There is certainly plenty of room for a lady doctor in Neemuch. Miss Beatty spent a week with us lately, and in that time was sought out by, and gave medicine to, several women.

Since last I wrote to you we have opened a girls' school in the Camp bazar. You know something of the difficulty there is in starting a school for girls in India. The prejudice of the people against allowing their daughters to learn to read is, as a rule, very great. Then, if low caste girls come to us, high caste girls will not, that is unless separate rooms are provided for them. The Christian school is, of course, in some ways specially objectionable. We had our school-room open for nearly two weeks before any children appeared as scholars. Soon, however, the roll showed thirteen names, and for some weeks every girl was in her place every day. For some time reading, writing and sewing only were taught, but as all seemed going very smoothly, we one day gave a singing lesson—singing, of course, a hymn. The next morning only nine girls came; four were not allowed to come on account of the singing lesson. This happened some weeks ago, and our numbers still stand at nine. This morning the teacher (a native Christian woman) told us that the parents

of three of our present number object very much to the hymns, and threaten to remove the girls if we do not stop teaching them. I hope it is only a threat, however, for we cannot think of spending time and money on school work unless it be directly used as a Christian agency.

The school is held in one of two large rooms which we have rented in the bazar, for church and other purposes. For some time our hours were from seven to ten o'clock. Now the children are gathered at eight, and school is dismissed at eleven. In the hot season the former hours are preferable, but for a number of months now we shall find eight o'clock as early as the girls will come.

In our Indian girls' schools we have an "institution" that is not known in Canada—a caller in you might name her, or him. At Indore I think the "caller" in most of the schools is a woman. Ours is a man. You know that children of good caste are not allowed often to go freely through the bazar, so in order to get them to come to school some one of sufficiently high caste must be employed to go to their homes for them, and chaperone them to the school door. None of our girls are of high caste. They are all Hindoos, but the parents of most of them are rather poor.

From eight to nine reading and spelling are taught, from nine to ten writing and singing, and the last hour is given to sewing. Four of the girls have made really wonderful progress in reading, and their sewing would not do discredit to a Canadian child who had been practising for a year or two. They are making just now patchwork quilts, of which they are very fond, and we are looking forward to getting some sewing materials from a box which we hear is being sent out from Canada, for the use of the different schools here.

Would you care to hear any particulars of school expenses? As I suppose you know, almost everything in the way of work, material and books has to be given. I think that it is the same in all the schools. Five of our girls last month paid the small sum necessary to buy a first Hindi book, and more are doing the same this month. Slates, however, which cost us about ten cents a piece, they will not invest in. We must give those, or rather the use of them, for we don't allow anything to become private property unless paid for. All sewing material, too, has to be given. Our teacher gets eight rupees (about \$3.20) a month, and the old Brahmin who calls the children four rupees. So you see that in the meantime our expenses are not heavy. You will be glad to hear that two little friends have sent me \$15 for our school, which I intend to use in providing sewing materials and

other things that will be of much use to us, and yet that we *might* do without, rather than ask the Council for them.

I should like to tell you something about Mr. Wilson's village work, which is in some way the pleasantest of all mission work, but must reserve it for another time, as I do not like to put it in a "corner" of a letter. This year, too, Mr. Wilson hopes to be able to spend some time in district work, which is just what I have called village work, but on a larger scale. At present only villages within a few miles of Neemuch are visited in the early mornings. When tents are provided for us we shall be able to make an extended tour, and visit many villages.

I must tell you, though, something rather amusing that we heard the other day in one of these little collection of huts called villages. Mr. Wilson was questioning a group of men who had gathered around him about their religion, asking what gods they worshipped, and what religious ceremonies they performed, etc. "Oh," they said, "we worship God in our temples, just as *you* worship in graveyards."

We are very glad to hear that so many ladies are entering on medical study with the view of coming to India. There is certainly room even now for a number. I know we would like very much to have one here. No one finds so easy an entrance to the zenanas as a lady doctor, and no one is more welcome in any place.

MRS. JAMIESON'S DESCRIPTION OF THE NATIVE PREACHERS.

TAMSCI, July 19th, 1886.

Long ago I promised to tell you a little more about the preachers.

1. They are decidedly "taking" in appearance and manner; faces and hands, dress, hair, everything about them neat and clean.

Their faces show the intelligence gained not merely from books, but by quick observation and careful study of everything around them.

Their habit, morning, noon, and night, of criticising and being criticised gives them a bright wide-awake look that is certainly attractive.

In manner they are polite, not forward, but not bashful. In contrast to many Chinese, they receive a stranger quietly, making no fuss or outward show, but, as we learn to know them better, we find more and more that underneath this quiet exterior are

genuine kind hearts, whereas the heathen often make much pretence of a warm welcome, only to revile us as soon as we are out of hearing.

2. I was surprised, and I confess at times thoroughly ashamed of my own ignorance, when we came out to *Formosa* and found young men, some of whom had been students but a few years, referring in their preaching or in conversation to things that I knew absolutely nothing about. Their knowledge of the world, its kingdoms and their history, and of all the natural sciences — apart from the Bible and Bible history, and their own superstitions — is thoroughly practical and useful to them every day.

Their minds are kept fresh by constant study; though at distant stations all are continually taking notes of Dr. Mackay's teaching, borrowing copies from students present with the Doctor. Some time ago A. Hôa showed me more than two hundred writing books that Dr. Mackay examined and marked one forenoon; this work, he said, had to be done monthly, many converts as well as preachers writing.

3. All are practised debaters. We have heard many a spirited discussion on both sides of the Pacific, and can only say whoever would meet these men should stand on sure ground and be well-armed. Sometimes I almost wish some stranger who could do sharp and heavy firing would try to put them down.

4. They keep themselves posted in general news from all over the world. Sometimes I pick up the papers, and purposely run over the latest items, lest a preacher ask me, as one did lately, of something I know nothing about.

They watch mission news, and I assure you take the deepest interest in the whole Canadian Church. They know when the General Assembly meets, and wait eagerly for reports. By newspaper accounts they know ministers and prominent public men in Great Britain and America, and, though with modesty, yet without hesitation, express their opinion on public questions of the day.

5. Everywhere we find that in public worship singing is lively, prayers as a rule are short, addresses shorter or longer just as the people seem eager to listen or not to, but they must never be too long, so as to weary those listening. Converts at each station meet for worship at hours suitable to themselves, much depending on the distance they have to come.

6. In preaching, not only the subject chosen, but the way of handling it, is adapted to the needs of the audience. This is

where a native thoroughly trained has such an advantage over a foreigner ; not only on the platform, but day by day a preacher—to use our Lord's own lesson —is *fishing* ; he knows just what bait to give, how and when to rebuke, to advise, to show kindness, to teach, to speak or be silent. In the country medicine is dispensed as soon as the service is over. A great deal of very important preaching is done elsewhere than on the platform.

7. Elocution has always held a prominent place in daily drill. Of course all are not *equally* talented in speaking any more than in anything else, but every man is required to speak *naturally*, like himself, not like some one else. From the first each is taught to know his own talents and his failings, and as far as possible to improve the one and correct the other.

8. In the older preachers the characteristic of independence has become strongly marked ; joined with their humility and ingrained hatred of all sham and pretence, it makes them in our eyes men of sterling worth. Years of experience and many times being tried have made them at last immovable as rock ; with them no being suddenly elated or suddenly cast down, but steadily, firmly, faithfully preaching the Gospel and trusting in God.

Perhaps you think I speak highly of them. I can but give you my own impression from what I have seen thus far. They are not angels, but they are faithful, devoted men. True, they owe much to Dr. Mackay ; he taught them, counselled them, rebuked them, slept on the ground, travelled and suffered with them, and always himself bore the heaviest burden, but they stood with him from first to last, through everything they have been loyal to him. People in Canada do not know them. I admire them ; rather I admire in this dark land the beautiful, clear, unchanging light of the Daystar risen in their hearts. They know, they believe in, they adore our one true God ; their faith in Him is intelligent and unwavering, and bears fruit in their daily lives.

9. Tân Hé, the ordained pastor at Sintiam, is a man whom one cannot see and hear without liking, why I can scarcely tell. Humility is written on his face, he is gentle and patient, and the opposite of frivolous. In seeing and hearing him one is impressed with the thought that he has *reserve power*. I could listen to his preaching for hours. He is beloved by converts and heathen.

10. A Hòa is constantly helping Dr. Mackay in overseeing and managing the whole mission, so we see him very often. Noon-day or midnight he is always ready to go or come or do any-

thing for the church. His one concern is for the mission. In his devotion to Dr. Mackay he reminds me of Timothy with Paul.

In character A Hôa is kind and patient, but he is a SOLDIER, his very nature strong, full of energy and force ; he has already stood, he is ready to stand anywhere, for the truth. Whether in short dress wading through the mud, or in long silk robes entertaining a mandarin, he is just the same ; always straightforward and strictly truthful, with him no pretence and no concealment, no making bad good under a false idea of charity ; wrong is wrong, right is right, and if he sees wrong that may be made right he does not hesitate plainly to point it out. I used to think we should shut our eyes to our neighbours' faults. What a mistake ! If more of us were A Hôas we would help each other more, and all make faster progress towards Heaven—a *true friend*, ready to do anything, not afraid even to wound in order to help another.

EXTRACTS FROM MRS. MORTON'S.

TUNAPUNA, TRINIDAD,
Nov. 11th, 1886.

Don't expect a glowing report. My experience is that everything lasting grows as slowly in the spiritual as in the natural world. Red Hill School might have done very well had not the teacher run away for a fortnight while Mr. Morton, who was unwell, had gone to the Islands for his health. We could get no one to put in his place, so could only wait till he ran back again, which he did, professing to have been ill. Of course it had a bad effect on the school, and it was some weeks before the average was up to what it had been before. A good work is going on by means of this school. We have secured a much better room than we had at first, and it is used as a place of meeting on Sabbath, and fortnightly when the catechist visits it. The room is always full on these occasions. Mr. Morton and myself visit it fortnightly ; he goes among the parents, while I take all the girls I can gather and give them a lesson in sewing ; afterwards I visit the women. Hindi only is taught. The children are making good progress, but the teacher is only second-rate. There is one encouraging feature about this school—a good proportion of the children are unusually regular in their attendance. I have fostered this by giving a small reward monthly to all who miss not more than two attendances. There is a nice girl called

Chando, who has been most regular from the first, and has made excellent progress. She is of a larger size than most of our girls. I want to reward her in a special manner at Christmas. After the Christmas examination I will give you more exact particulars as to what the children have done. Pray for the teacher. He is not baptized, though we believe him to be at heart a Christian; he belongs to a bigoted Mohammedan family. He was one of our first pupils in this district, but was taken from school while we were at home, and sent miles away to study his own faith. The result was seemingly not satisfactory, for after about three years he came to us, grown almost to manhood, asking to be employed as a teacher. His name is Emain Baksh. He is married, and is a clever and interesting lad, quite polished in his manner, good looking, and with a proud carriage that often distinguishes Mohammedans. He is good at teaching the Hindi hymns, and will, we have every reason to believe, develop into a thoughtful Christian when family ties are somewhat loosened for him. The Macoya School has not accomplished so much—Christians are in bad odour on the estate, through mis-doings of one whom they revered, about which I will inform you at some other time—but it is near our centre, adjoining Orange Grove, where is my daughter's school (voluntary), and we will not give it up. The building is about as unsuitable as possibly could be, the teacher not very bright. This you will notice is a drawback with which we are every day contending—inferior teachers. Agnes goes once a week to Macoya School, and gathers in the girls for a lesson in sewing. As to the building, you will understand that we are entirely at the mercy of the manager where the school is on an estate, and have to take what he gives. In this case the manager could give *no* room, so we use a shed owned by the coolies themselves, for which we pay a very small sum monthly.

NOTICE.

Treasurers and secretaries are requested to send in their reports to the Board early in March.

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