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# OUR MISSIONARY REVIVAL.

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*A Paper Read at the*

SECOND ANNUAL MEETING

*OF THE*

CANADA CONGREGATIONAL

*WOMAN'S BOARD OF MISSIONS,*

MONTREAL, JUNE, 1888.

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PRINTED BY REQUEST OF THE BOARD.



## OUR MISSIONARY REVIVAL.

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“ Well,” said Mrs. Martha Brown, turning from the window, “ it is certainly going to be a rainy afternoon, when no one will come in and we cannot go out ; so you will have plenty of time to tell me all about that Church Mission Club of which your whole family has been talking ever since I came, nearly a week ago. Why, only last night, your husband hunted through nearly every book on the shelves, and when I asked him what he was looking for, he merely answered, as if it was an every day occurrence, ‘ I am trying to get all the information possible about the modes of travelling in Africa, as that is the subject of my paper for the meeting of our Missionary Club next week.’ Tuesday night your Tom came down to tea in his Sunday clothes, with his nearly invisible moustache most carefully curled, and when I said : ‘ Going to a party to-night, I suppose ? ’ he straightened himself and responded, ‘ Not exactly, Auntie, it is the night when our Missionary Choir meets for practice ; ’ ‘ When did *you* learn to sing, Tom ? ’ ‘ Sing ! I never *sing*. I play the violin in the orchestra which leads the singing, and, I tell you Aunt Martha, we are going to have some grand music at the next Club meeting.’ This morning I found little Bess and Mrs. White’s Amy busily at work cutting pictures from an illustrated paper, and when I asked if they would not cut themselves with the scissors, Amy laughed and said, ‘ Oh no, Auntie, they are round-pointed, and mamma got them on purpose for us ! ’ ‘ But what are you cutting,’ said I. ‘ Oh ! ’ said Bess, ‘ pic-

tures, Auntie! nice pictures for our Mish'nary sc'ap-books. 'Missionary scrap-books, indeed! What does a baby like you know about missionaries?' 'I does, I know a dood deal, Aunt Marfa; I'se got a mish'nary jug for pennies.' 'Well, well, child,' said I, 'bring it here and I'll give you five cents for it.' So off she ran and brought the little jug, and I dropped in the money, wondering all the time what made your whole family so interested in missionary work. I saw nothing like it when I visited you five years ago. I remember you took me with you to a ladies missionary meeting, but there were very few present, and the church basement was stuffy and smelled of coal oil. The president did nearly all the talking, and, altogether, it was so stiff and doleful that we were glad to come out into the fresh air and use our tongues again. Now, do sit down, please, and tell me what has worked this transformation."

"Yes, Auntie, I am very glad to have a chance to do so, and you are quite right about the condition of our society when last you were here. We were so nearly killed by routine and monotony that we were as useless and uninterested as the private soldiers in an army would be if they were entirely without exercise and compelled to sit still and see the officers do all the work and enjoy all the fun. Soldiers would rebel or desert, and it is not strange that our ladies thought the meetings 'stupid,' and so stayed away. Mrs. Pompous, our president, gave liberally, and was a good, well-meaning woman, who really *wished* people were interested. Clad in elaborate toilets, she was accustomed to harangue her plainly-dressed hearers upon the duty of denying themselves in the matter of dress that they might give more money to the Board. Her zeal was so great that she rarely failed to lecture those of us who *did* go to the meeting, because so many stayed away. She was almost sure to select hymns so mournful in sentiment that no one cared to sing, even if, as was rarely the case, the tunes were familiar. After lengthly-opening

exercises she would take up some missionary magazines, leisurely look them over, and select items for herself or the secretary to read. Of course these were all good, but they lacked connection, and Mrs. Meek, our secretary, had such a modest, and retiring voice, that only those next to her could distinguish any words. Mrs. Pompous used often to declaim about the 'scholarly manner' in which the secretary's reports were written. I suppose she was correct. At all events we *could* not criticise what we never *heard*."

"Our minister's wife used to worry about the small attendance and the lack of interest, and would try to suggest improvements. Doubtless had she been able to devote her time to it she might have effected many changes, but she had small children and rarely any servants. You know her husband's salary was not large, and seldom promptly paid. She did her very best, however, and, but for her personal influence among the ladies, we could never have kept together as well as we did."

"Why in the world didn't you choose new officers and see if that wouldn't help things?" asked practical Aunt Martha.

"For two reasons, I think. One being that Mrs. Pompous had been in office several years, had a good social position, and we had become so accustomed to her methods, that we had grown apathetic. Besides, we were, to a certain extent, rather proud of her elegant dress and dignified appearance when she represented us in the annual meetings of our county branch or the General Board. The other reason was that she herself gave us very little opportunity. When our ladies met to elect officers at our annual meeting she would always say:—"Ladies! it is now in order to appoint the officers for the coming year. There is no necessity for the formality of a ballot, and, as no one has resigned, I will put the vote thus:— All in favor of re-electing the present board of officers will signify it in the usual way?" two or three hands would be slowly raised, and, without calling for

'contrary minds,' Mrs. Pompous would declare the vote to be 'unanimous' and announce that the old board was re-elected. The fun of the thing was that it was all done so innocently, Mrs. Pompous evidently supposing it a waste of precious time to so much as even refer to the subject."

"It is pretty evident to *my* mind that your *society* needed a missionary as well as the heathen across the ocean, but Hester, how much money did you raise?"

"We *tried* to raise twenty-five dollars a year, but had very hard work to do it, and usually were obliged to hold a bazaar just at the last. People took an interest in that because it gave them something to do, and, in fact, was the only work provided for them. For this reason perhaps it did some good, but most of us spent four times as much for the bazaar as would have paid our full share of the fund we wished to raise, while we wearied our bodies and strained our nerves until we were really too cross to live with. Still I suppose we should have gone on in the same fashion had not Providence interposed in our behalf and put it into the mind of Mrs. Pompous to spend a year or two in England, whither her husband was called in the course of his business. The secretary at once resigned, saying she could never think of serving 'in the absence of our beloved president.' The vice-president, never having practiced at all, was perfectly useless as a presiding officer, so it was agreed that until suitable officers could be found we would each take our turn in conducting a missionary prayer-meeting once in every two weeks. It was decided to hold our meeting, which we thought would be smaller than ever, at the houses of the members, and it was arranged that the lady at whose house the first meeting was held was to conduct the next, and so on, thus giving the hostess an opportunity to welcome even late comers. The first meeting was appointed at the parsonage, and our minister's wife asked each of us to bring one friend with us, while unbeknown to us,

she invited her Bible class of young ladies to spend the same afternoon with her. When our pastor announced from the pulpit the place and hour of our meeting, she was much amused to see their looks of astonishment and dismay. A few quiet words from her after church sent them home with happy faces, and it was *our* turn to be astonished when we entered the cosy parlor of the parsonage and found it already half filled by the group of bright girls who were practicing gospel hymns around the piano. The trailing vines and blossoming plants in the sunny windows were in strong contrast to the stiffness and dreariness of the church basement, and punctually at the hour Mrs. Newcome gave out a hymn which, under the leadership of the group at the piano, was sung with an enthusiasm quite unheard of during the old regime. A few verses of Scripture were then read and we were all asked to kneel while prayer was offered. Very short and simple was that prayer, such as a child might have uttered, yet reverent and earnest in its appeal to the heavenly Father for his blessing on the exercises of the afternoon. Accustomed, as we had been, to hearing Mrs Pompous rehearse the whole plan of salvation from the creation to the judgment, it did not sound like what *she* would have styled a 'masterly effort,' but the Lord himself must have heard and answered, for after it the ladies seemed to feel unusually ready to speak and pray, and the hour was gone before we knew it. All the way home the ladies were talking about the good meeting they had been having, and wondering how they could make the next as interesting. This was the beginning of better things for us, and having once discovered how helpful our young lady friends could be we were more and more anxious to induce them to join us. When first asked they demurred and insisted that they were too young to meet with 'old married women.' They admitted that they would have no objection to having Miss Maria Stetson meet with

them, although she is over forty, but they really couldn't admit little Mrs. Winchester to a 'young ladies society,' although she is barely twenty, because, as they declared—'she is an old married woman.' Of course we did not oppose them. That would have transformed a mere *excuse* into a real *objection*. We simply set our wits to work, and found so many things each one was needed to do that they became interested and, not being reminded of it, soon forgot all about the 'dreadful difference' in the ages of the workers. The musical members were organized into a choir which was regularly supplied with a list of the hymns to be sung at each meeting, and this being done the day before, the girls could have sufficient practice to enable them to lead our singing with spirit and precision. Two or three, who were good writers, were delegated to send out programmes before each meeting, with invitations to attend, to all the ladies in the parish. Others attended to the distribution and collection of hymn books, and so in various ways we kept them busy. By this time we had concluded to banish the word 'bazaar' from all connection with the raising of our missionary funds, and to adopt a weekly system of systematic giving. The mite boxes were opened every two months and the money handed to our treasurer to send away, as the Board esteemed it much better for its work to get small <sup>amounts</sup> ~~accounts~~ at regular intervals, than to have the total for the year come in at the last minute. Now, for a wonder, our treasurer having accounts to keep and reports to make, became most punctual in her attendance."

"The efforts to interest the younger ladies reacted upon the older ones and so we became mutually helpful to each other. We arranged courses of study in missionary geography and history, taking several weeks to each country, and studying its climate, manners, customs, people, products and religions. We drew maps and explained them, and exhibited curiosities from the different countries, surprised ourselves to find how many



such hitherto unsuspected treasures were to be had among the bric-a-brac collected by our friends. Sometimes we had short papers—'five-minute papers' we called them, but whatever we did we were careful to have every item of the work well laid out beforehand by the 'preparation committee,' and, if it was at all possible, each member was assigned some part in every meeting. After a while we chose a new president, vice-president, and secretary, so altering our constitution that at the end of every six months the president's term of office should expire, the vice-president becoming president for the ensuing six months, and the other officers being chosen by ballot, it being understood that no person was to have the same office for more than six months at one time. Once in two months the vice-president was to preside over the regular meeting, under the supervision of the president, and both were to overlook the work of the 'preparation committee,' in order to make sure that every member was in her proper place and doing her proper work.

"Like many country churches, we had a mission <sup>band</sup> board which had held a nominal existence for some time, and from the manner in which it was conducted had gained the name among the children of the 'bazaar society.' Mrs. Blake, our pastor's wife, suggested that the young ladies, while still keeping their places with us, should attempt to carry out some much-needed reforms in our Children's Band. After much careful thought and prayer it was decided to make special efforts to obtain the attendance of every boy and girl in the Sabbath school under 15 years of age, and to form them into classes with a young lady directress for each class. Mrs. Bright, whose warm heart and personal magnetism endeared her to all little folks, and whose brisk, business-like qualities well fitted her for such a position, took the superintendency. The officers, such as president, secretary and treasurer, being chosen by the children from their own number, and well-drilled in their respective duties by Mrs.

Bright. The Band meets every Saturday afternoon in summer, but not so often in winter on account of storms and bad traveling. After the opening exercises of songs, Scripture verses and prayer, twenty minutes are spent by the classes in reciting to their directresses the missionary lesson previously assigned, and then the officers take their places beside Mrs. Bright and the general programme is taken up. Sometimes map lessons are given, tiny essays are read by the older ones, little poems recited, pictures of foreign life exhibited, and the whole is interspersed with lively singing. They particularly enjoy 'jug-breaking day,' when they have a fine time counting their little savings, and the treasurer is proud to accompany Mrs. Bright to the post office, and send off the grand total to the 'Board.' They are not allowed to ask any one for money for their jugs, but must earn it, or save it from their very own. Of course they are permitted to receive a gift like yours this morning to Bess, but their contributions are expected to be obtained almost entirely as results of their personal self-denial. Perhaps they might get more money in other ways, but it is not the money so much as the correct knowledge of, and interest in the cause, that is most needed in our children's work to-day. The child who is trained to deny itself now, to give the pennies to the cause it has learned to love, will be the most likely to give its thousands of dollars later on, or to labor in missionary fields."

"True," assented Aunt Martha, "but tell me about those scrap-books. What have they to do with missions?"

"Oh, they are quite an institution in the Band. The youngest children could not read, and so the directors in charge of them taught them to collect and cut out all the pictures they could find in papers and magazines illustrating the customs of the different countries where missionaries are stationed. They paste those of each country in a book by itself, being allowed to do so as soon as they have learned, and are able to recite, the

story connected with each picture. Bess has a book about India, another about China, and is now making one of African scenes, of course adding to the others as she finds pictures."

"Surely you do not let her cut up your missionary magazines?" exclaimed the surprised Aunt.

"Indeed I do, Auntie; I look them over and select any I particularly care to preserve, and give her the remainder. It is far better thus to help my child to become interested in the subject of missions, than to hoard away my magazines until they form a dusty pile on a high shelf. Besides, all the most important items are collected and published in the several yearly reports, and the bound volumes for reference are always to be found in our club library. It would do you good, Auntie; and you would devote all your carefully-kept magazines could you hear the children answering questions and telling stories in what they call their 'scrap-book examination' at the Band. They know far more of Chinese pagodas, heathen temples, praying machines, native customs and the actual work of the missionary teacher and preacher than many of the older ones."

"Perhaps you are right," said Aunt Martha, slowly, "I know there ~~are~~ so many nice missionary magazines and papers nowadays, that I cannot keep up with *current* news, to say nothing of hunting up *back numbers*. But what is the club that your husband and Tom were talking about, and what has it to do with your Ladies' Society or the Mission Band?"

"I'm coming to that directly. Our missionary revival was not one of those sudden spurts that die out soon and leave things in a worse state than they were at first. It was a steady growth in interest. We prayed and worked, and when the Lord opened a door for us we quietly stepped in. We ladies had improved our own society so much that we longed to help along in the church missionary concert, yet, having been taught, ever since we were babies, how anxious St. Paul was to have women

‘keep silence in church,’ we used to go each month with heads and hearts brimful of the subject, and yet sit like so many wax figures, and watch our poor pastor carry the meeting along as best he could, helped (or hindered) only by two or three brethren who would rise, and solemnly read a ‘few extracts’ from the *Missionary Herald*. Now I readily admit that the *Herald* is one of the best of such magazines, and very instructive; but I suppose the newspaper and the dictionary are equally so, yet we do not expect our gentlemen friends to read definitions or news items to ‘fill up the time’ in our social gatherings. We expect them to study the meanings of their words, and read their papers at home, and come to our houses prepared to talk entertainingly and intelligently upon matters of current interest. If they were trying to get a friend elected alderman, or mayor, do you suppose they would go to the preliminary meetings and wait solemnly for each other, rise with reluctance, and only after being urged to do so, and merely read a few ‘items’ from some political paper? Not much, I fancy! Do you think the chairman would have to say: ‘Don’t wait for each other brethren. There are a few moments more. Don’t let the time be wasted?’ No, indeed! *His* trouble would be to secure for each his proper time, and each speaker’s words would come with all the eloquence of which he was capable, as he extolled the virtues of his favorite candidate. Why should not men show as much enthusiasm when they have met to plan for the enlargement of Christ’s kingdom on this earth? Thinking these things over, we decided to try an experiment, and see if more interest could not be aroused. In this we were greatly helped by Mrs. Bright’s brother, a young man who had recently returned to this country after a five year’s residence in Japan, and who was now paying her a visit. Fortunately for us, he had brought home a number of pictures illustrating various phases of Japanese life, which, being adapted for use with his stereopticon, he kindly consented

to exhibit for our entertainment and instruction. Mrs. Bright still further aided us by offering us the use of her house for an evening gathering, so we had a notice given the next Sabbath, stating that the members of the Ladies' Missionary Society would be pleased to welcome all the members of the congregation to a six o'clock tea at Mrs. Bright's house, after which there would be a stereopticon entertainment and other exercises. Of course everybody came, for a stereopticon was a novelty in Northville, and the large, old-fashioned farm house had seldom held more genial company than assembled there that evening. Little tables had been scattered here and there about the rooms, and nicely buttered bread and cheery cups of tea, or milk, were served by the older members of the Mission Band, who developed into very polite and attentive little waiters.

"Immediately after tea, when every one was still busily talking, curious wailing sounds came to our ears, and, before the uninitiated had quite decided as to their source, in came good old Deacon Oldtime, with the bass viol he used to play in church 50 years ago, before the day of the omnipresent cabinet-organ. With him were two or three of the young men with their violins, the instruments having been hidden at our request until tea was over. What a good time every one had singing the grand old tunes, and with what spirit and energy the silvery-haired Deacon played. He grew younger with every tune, and was by no means ready to stop when the arrangements for showing the pictures were completed. These comprised, not only views of foreign life and customs, such as are usually collected by travellers, but also pictures of various mission stations, with their school-rooms and churches, and even the faces of some of the noble band, who have left home and friends to work for the Master in the 'Sunrise Kingdom.' As we gazed upon the screen we seemed to see the children in their schools, the people in the churches and many other things which now, for the first time, became real to

us. In the intervals between the pictures, two or three 'five minute' papers were read, descriptive of the work thus illustrated. At the close, our pastor asked two of the brethren to offer brief prayers, one that the exercises of the evening might awaken in the hearts of all present, fresh zeal and enthusiasm in missionary work, and the other for the conversion of Japan, while he himself followed these with a tender, earnest prayer, for all missionaries and their work, whether in home or foreign fields."

"As we were walking home, with the soul-inspiring strains of 'All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name' still ringing in our ears, we overheard our Tom say to his chum: 'I say Ned! call that a missionary meeting do you? Guess you've made a mistake, Anyway, it isn't much like what they have over at the church. If they were anything like this one I'd go every time!' During the next few days we discovered that Tom was not the only one who held these opinions, and that our experiment had been eminently successful. The consequence was that a Church Mission Club was <sup>organized</sup> ~~authorized~~, consisting of three branches, the first being our Ladies' Society, the second the Mission Band, and the third including all the masculine part of our congregation too old for the Band. When a young lad is 15 he is given a certificate from the superintendent of the Band entitling him to membership in ~~the Band~~ <sup>the Club</sup> of the Club, which, like the other branches, has its regular officers, and raises and disburses its funds separately. Our pastor is *ex officio* President of the Club, and the president of each branch is a vice-president of the Club. The only difference the new order of things makes with the ladies and the children is that they have the added pleasure of belonging to the Church Club. We meet every month, on the evening formerly occupied by the missionary concert, and have reports from the secretary and treasurer of each branch, short papers on missionary topics, by both gentlemen and ladies, an exercise by the

Mission Band, and the missionary news for the month reported by a committee of young men, to each of whom a particular country is assigned. One of our boys, who is a promising amateur photographer, is constantly on the lookout to obtain copies of pictures appropriate to our work. Deacon Oldtime and his beloved bass viol, with its accompanying violins, were the basis of a good orchestra, and a choir of young people was speedily formed, under whose leadership our singing has become thoroughly inspiring, and proves a great attraction. No long speeches are permitted, and the short, but heartfelt prayers, each for a definite blessing, are very different from the formal utterances so often made to 'fill up the time.' Letters from different mission stations are procured each month, and read at the meeting; while at the close a new missionary leaflet is given to every one present. Whenever possible, we secure a visit from what Bess calls—'a real live mish'nary.'

"Of course we soon outgrew the accommodations of a private house, and this led to the renovation of our church basement. Pulling down blinds, cleaning the film of white paint from the window panes, freshly tinting the walls, and letting in unlimited supplies of fresh air and sunlight, soon dispelled much of the mustiness, and an open fire in the big fire-place did the rest. We had learned, however, that a church, like a house, needs fresh air and sunlight *every day* to keep it in proper condition. So we raised a small sum and hired a poor widow living near the church to keep the room thoroughly warmed, aired and dusted, opening it for use from three to nine o'clock every afternoon and evening. The broad window seats are kept full of ivies and geraniums, cared for by the young ladies, and pictures on the walls, chairs, instead of straight-backed, wooden benches, a large book-case well filled with books of history and travel, as well as literature more distinctly missionary in character, and several small tables covered with religious papers and maga-

zines, have worked such a transformation that you would hardly know the place. In short, instead of a dreary hall, we now have a pleasant parlor in which to hold all our church meetings, and, in consequence, find them all much better attended. At hours when there are no meetings the room is quite extensively used as a reading room by those who wish to consult the books and papers, and by enlarging our stock of reading matter, we hope largely to increase its usefulness in this direction. One of our members has just given us a cabinet with glass doors to hold our missionary curiosities, and another, a furniture dealer from the city, who spends his summers here, has sent us four comfortable easy chairs. The children are especially proud of the room, in its new dress, and keep it bountifully supplied with ferns and wild flowers in summer.

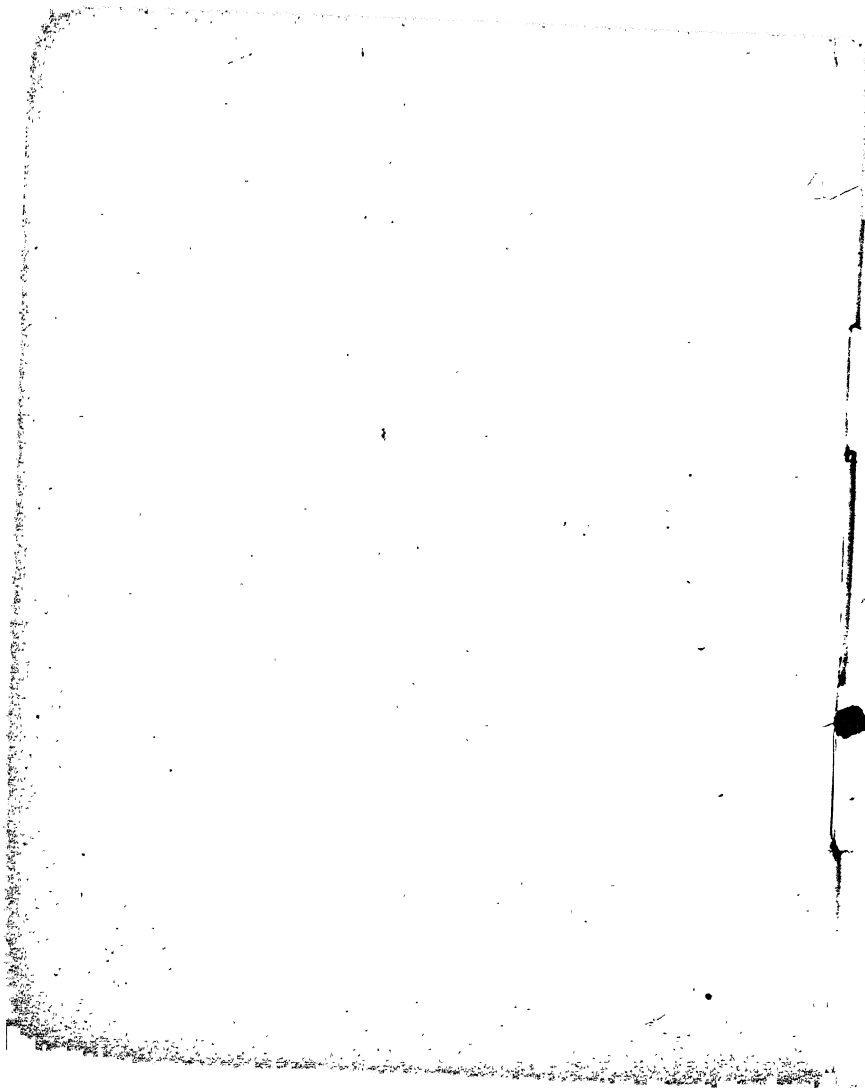
“Some objected of course. That is all some people *can* do. Those who said that if people *wanted* to go to a missionary meeting they would go anyway, and that it was a great waste of money to do all this—were assured that the expense was very little, nearly everything being given to us ; and as these people invariably had their own houses richly furnished, and seldom attended church we didn't care for their criticism. Deacon Old-time had something of a struggle, for he loved what he called the ‘dear old ways,’ but he also loved the base viol, and, in the end, the attractions of the musical instrument won the victory. The hardest people to get along with are those who claim that in making what they call ‘such a fuss’ about *foreign* missions, we shall forget the *Home* Missionary cause, and criminally neglect the interest of our own church. The facts and figures show the contrary to be the case. For instance, last year we gave more to home missions than in any *two* previous years. We increased our pastor's salary and paid it promptly every month, which we *never* did before. The Mission Band alone raised as much for foreign missions as we ladies used to give—and supported a

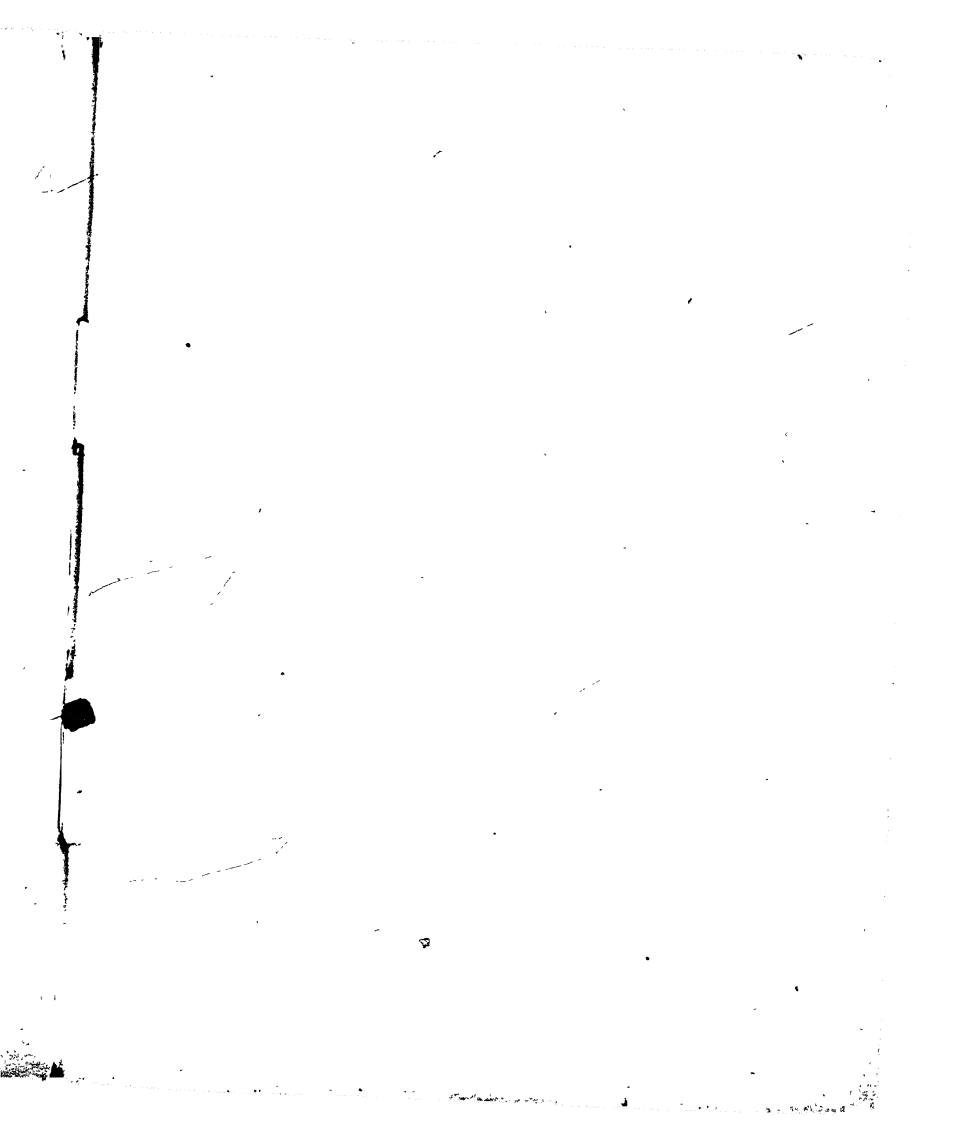


child in a school in India, while the two older branches of the Club supported a lady missionary in China. The best of it all is, that in being thus aroused to work for missions the church has become united as never before, conversions have been frequent, and next fall we hope to send out a missionary of our own—a daughter of the church. Oh Aunt Martha, I am sure no society can fail of interesting its members and accomplishing good if it secures systematic giving, intelligent study of missionary work at home and abroad, and constant work for every member, surrounding and supplementing all with fervent, earnest prayer to our heavenly Father for his help and guidance.”

ELLA F. M. WILLIAMS.

MONTREAL, June, 1888.





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