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Oriental Missions
in
British Columbia



By
M. M. C. LAVELL
Smith's Falls

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Since the future of every land is determined by the character of its citizens and the purity and stability of its home life, loyal Canadians everywhere must be strongly impressed with the importance of this branch of the work of the Woman's Missionary Society.

Canada has wonderful natural resources, wealth untold in her mines, forests, fisheries and arable lands, scenic beauty unsurpassed

in any other part of the world; but what of her citizenship? Shall that take a secondary place, while we strive to develop these natural resources? A thousand times NO!

While the tide of immigration sweeps over the land, it must be met by earnest effort, its course directed, the impurities and wreckage of centuries of superstition and error removed, lest at flood it cover the land with loathsome infection and impregnate the soil with the poison of evil customs and degraded habits.

Foreigners from Europe and Orientals from Asia are coming in large numbers to our shores, and in a few years Canada will be to them—*home*—they will have a part in our national life, and vitally influence it. Whether that influence is for good or evil depends on the church to-day, and her missionary zeal in holding out to

these darkened lives the uplifting, restraining and illuminating power of Christian truth.

We can hardly bear to think of heathen homes in Canada, and yet Miss Martin, of the Chinese Girls' Home in Victoria, writes:

“Heathenism has still a strong hold upon many of these people, although some of them have been living in our Christian land for twenty years. The three days of dragon-worship held here recently proved, by the enthusiasm the people manifested in its ceremonies, by the gorgeous display in their processions and in their centre of worship, and by the lavish expenditure of money upon all the preparations in connection therewith, how truly many of the people love and believe in their old

heathen rites. There is much need for our constant and earnest prayers that these powers of darkness may give way before the light of the Gospel."

A visit to one of the cities of the Coast during the Chinese New Year (which lasts about two weeks), would *loudly* emphasize the need of educating and enlightening the Celestial as to the one living and true God, the spirit of light and truth.

If, in the midst of the din of Chinatown, one could think rationally at all, our practical minds would be horrified at the enormous amount of money spent for fire-crackers to chase away evil spirits, and yet literally miles of them are burned every year.

A prominent Chinese merchant of Vancouver, a few years ago casually remarked to a friend, that during that New Year

season he had spent five hundred dollars in fire-crackers and whiskey.

Buddhism, too, has planted its foot upon our soil, and it is ours to check its onward march.

Among the Japanese residents of Vancouver, chiefly workers in the saw-mills, are a number from Goshu, in Japan, where Buddhist influence is strong and these men and their wives are greatly attached to their old faith.

They have established in this Canadian city a Buddhist Mission, with its Buddhist altar and priest in charge; the priest being supported partly by the Japanese Buddhists in Vancouver, and partly by contributions from the Hong wanji Temple in Japan.

May not our zeal for carrying the Gospel message across the seas blind us to the dangers lurking at our own doors?

From its inception, this Oriental work at the Coast has been one of our most important branches. It began in 1887, and was the result of a strong appeal from the Rev. J. E. Starr, of Victoria, B.C., to our Woman's Board, asking that some steps be taken to rescue the Chinese girls brought to this country for immoral purposes.

The revelations were of so startling a character that the Executive resolved on immediate action, trusting that the several branches, when they met, would endorse this new undertaking. Accordingly temporary quarters were secured in Victoria; the arrangements being consummated when the General Board of Missions undertook to provide the building, which was to be known as the "Chinese Rescue Home," and sent to our Treasurer \$250 as a token of approval, with the recommendation that this

work for Chinese women be left entirely in the hands of our Society.

At that time, from one to two hundred enslaved Chinese women and girls were annually being sent to our shores, and the legal difficulties which rescue from their owners involved, were without end. But with earnest, persistent effort the work was pursued, and wonderful, indeed, have been the results. The little seed has become a great tree.

If, as Sia Sek Ong, a converted Confucianist once said, "The conversion and Christian training of one Chinese woman is of more value for God's work than that of twenty men," this seed-sowing among the enslaved outcasts *must* be far-reaching in its results. It is something to know that at the end of ten years of faithful effort, not one of all the girls rescued and taken into

the Home returned to her former life. Instead, many of them married, and established comfortable Christian homes of their own, and eternity alone will reveal how great has been their influence. To have succeeded in "checking the traffic in slave girls more effectually than could possibly be done by paid officials," is no mean tribute paid to the Woman's Missionary Society by the Royal Commissioner on Chinese Immigration.

In all, one hundred and sixty-seven have passed through the institution, but no statistics can convey an idea of the dauntless courage and steadfast purpose of our workers, who often risked their own lives to save these girls from the thralldom of vice and shame.

Last year, a new building, valued at ten thousand dollars, was erected, which

is most complete in all its appointments. This is known as the "Girls' Home," for so amazingly has the work developed that the Home originally designed for rescue work alone has become a centre from which radiates missionary work along many lines. Besides singing classes, a kindergarten, a Chinese night-school for boys, a mission band, regular evangelistic work among the Oriental element in the city, and the visiting of the Chinese and Japanese women in their own homes, there is the day-school, where both English and Chinese are taught, and which has always been one of the most encouraging features of our work. From the start it was well attended, the children of some of the leading Chinese merchants being pupils. Their fees nearly paid the salary of the Chinese teacher.

Owing to the prejudice against Chinese attending the public schools in Vic-

toria, the Sunday-school room of the church was rented especially for them, and school opened in January, 1909. Miss Martin says:

“It occurred to us that here might be an opportunity of reaching some of these children, most of whom come from heathen homes; so with the consent of the teacher, we have been going one afternoon each week to sing with them, hoping thus to interest them in the Gospel hymns, and by this means lead to more definite Christian work. We are forced to move slowly The explanation of the hymn we sing is about all the teaching it is wise to attempt yet.”

A large boarding-house has been secured for the Japanese Mission headquarters in Victoria, and thus the expansion

of the work goes on. But it is no longer confined to this one centre.

The wave of immigration from the Orient brought a number of Japanese and Chinese women to other points on the Coast, and our workers resident in the Home in Victoria saw the need of reaching these women through evangelistic and educational work.

For some years an effort was made to reach the Japanese in Vancouver by occasional visits from our missionaries, and through a Japanese Bible woman; this of necessity was unsatisfactory, and had but limited results. Very evidently a resident missionary in Vancouver who understood the Japanese language was necessary, and in the summer of 1908 Miss Preston, who had labored for many years in Japan, took up this important work. In her letter of August of that year she says:

“I find a wide field and a very needy one.” There are over seven hundred Japanese women and girls in Vancouver alone, and very few Christians among them. Many of them lead very busy lives cooking in large boarding-houses or working out by the day, and a few act as servants. 'Tis true there are a number of Japanese women of the better class, some well educated, but the majority are of the lower class, and ignorant, and owing to the busy lives they lead are hard to reach.

Of the whole number, not many of them know much English. Most of them speak Japanese only, and live secluded in their own homes (narrow quarters at that), and Miss Preston says their joy is pathetic when they find she has lived in Japan, and can speak to them in their own language.

Though the greater number of Japanese women in British Columbia are in Van-

couver—713 according to the latest statistics—there are about 30 in New Westminster, 149 at Steveston, 76 on Vancouver Island, and 144 scattered in different parts, making a total of 1,112.

One of the greatest obstacles to be overcome in the Vancouver work is the influence of the Buddhist Mission. Miss Preston says:

“This mission makes our work much more difficult, as many are parishioners of the Temple, and stand in fear of it, or are restrained by their connection with it, so that our hand is less free than otherwise.”

As though they had taken a leaf out of our book, this Buddhist mission carries on its work much as our missions do, with night-school, Sunday-school and other services.

The Oriental work in Vancouver has, so far, been conducted almost entirely along evangelistic lines, but this winter some effort was made to reach the children in the Japanese public school, which has an attendance of about eighty-five, from different parts of the city. These children were all invited to the Saturday afternoon meetings, when little ones are gathered in from the streets, and an effort made to interest them and teach them some of the simple gospel truths. Prizes were given at Christmas for correctly reciting the Lord's Prayer, and these children had a prominent part in the Christmas entertainment in the church.

The Japanese are very anxious to have a Home in Vancouver, where women and girls could find a safe boarding-house. Miss Preston feels that certainly a W. M. S. headquarters is needed, separate from the church, and which could be a home for the

missionary, where meetings could be held and where women needing help and protection could be received.

Regular meetings are now carried on in eleven different places, generally in a Japanese home which is central in each community. Besides, work in Fairview, Mt. Pleasant, and Cedar Grove (all sections of Vancouver City), and work in connection with the Vancouver church, meetings are held in Upper, Central, and Lower Steveston, important summer centres near the mouth of the Fraser River; in Sapperton, near New Westminster, where an evangelist is stationed, in Millside, three miles away, in New Westminster, Port Moody, and one visit has been made to Barnett, on the C. P. R., where a large saw-mill is located. At this place there are one hundred and twenty-five Japanese men and seven women, but Buddhist influence is strong here, the

priest from Vancouver Temple visiting regularly among them.

The Chinese work in Vancouver has, of necessity, been largely in the hands of the Chinese Bible-woman; but the progress, though slow, has been steady, and the interest seems to be increasing. Last fall, the report showed about seventy Chinese women and one hundred and fifty children in Vancouver, besides scattered groups outside the city, fourteen in New Westminster, four in Ladner, and others here and there.

Miss Chan visits New Westminster and Ladner once a month, but the work is mainly carried on in Vancouver. Here there is a flourishing mission band, meetings for women, and Saturday afternoon meetings for children, but the field is large and needy, and we must increase our efforts if we would keep pace with the needs of the advancing years.

The Oriental question is indeed a serious one for Canada, and the church cannot afford to treat the situation lightly. China and Japan are coming to us, bringing with them *Our Opportunity*. Shall we not loyally carry forward this work so nobly begun—a work built up by costly sacrifice and patient, loving service—a work which means so much to the future of our own land?

Price, Five Cents Each.

The Woman's Missionary Society
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