PRAYER BELL

July-August 1956

INDIA'S FRIENDLY BULBULS

RAMABAI MUKTI MISSION

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FAREWELLS AND WELCOMES

By ELIZABETH MORRIS

‘When will Auntie return? What will happen to us while she is gone?’ These were among the questions asked when I left Mukti a year ago on furlough. The sadness of leaving was mixed with looking forward to the welcome awaiting me in my home country. My sisters and other relatives and friends were waiting as the ship came into Liverpool harbour on June 16.

The time at home was very busy but very blessed, with only a few spare moments now and then. Folks at home were very kind. Miss Laird arranged meetings in Scotland and helped in many ways, which I deeply appreciated. Miss Rea kindly arranged for meetings in Ireland. I felt that God had really blessed the small ministry that through His help I was able to do, and my own heart was blessed through God’s children at home.

Just one year from the date I arrived, June 16, there were farewells through tears and smiles, as my ship sailed from Liverpool. One thought of the day when partings will be no more. As I looked forward to the welcome in Mukti, I prayed that God would comfort those left behind in the homeland.

After a rather rough voyage, I arrived in Bombay July 6. It was good to see Miss Fletcher on the dock waiting for me. After going through Customs, the night was spent in Bombay, and on the following day our train pulled into

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A YEAR OF UNCEASING PRAYER

By CAROL TERRY

Golden rays from a cross streamed through the midnight darkness toward a map of India located at the front of our church, while all night long the Mukti family bowed in prayer for this land of Hindustan. Over the map were written the words in gold PRAY WITHOUT CEASING, and this command the five hundred people gathered there were literally fulfilling.

A year of unceasing, unbroken prayer is being held by the Christians of India, different days being assigned to churches and missions. The twenty-four hours assigned to Mukti began at 6 p.m. on June 21. The atmosphere in the church was quiet and reverent, but one of intense intercession. The country of India was divided into twenty-four sections, and each hour a leader presented the needs of a different part of India. Although the tiny ones were led back to their compounds at ten o'clock that evening, it was two o'clock in the morning before the twelve-year olds could be persuaded that they should have some time off for sleep. Some of the teen-agers and women continued on through the night. Between the sleepy hours of two and four in the morning, the numbers were the smallest, but at no time were there less than forty-five people praying in the church. At dawn the numbers began to swell again, and the meeting finished as it had begun the day before with five hundred hearts bowed in intercessory prayer. A telegram of greeting was sent to the next church scheduled to continue the stream of unbroken prayer.

A testimony meeting following the prayer time could not be stopped as planned by the leader, for people stood up all over the church to testify of blessing and challenge received during those twenty-four hours of prayer. As the church rang with testimonies, there were notes of cleansing, of victory, of a new understanding of the needs of their own country for prayer, of dedication of lives to His service. Those who spoke ranged from the one-line testimonies of the little Blossoms to mature women of God with years of faithful service on their records; and we realized that for unceasing prayer, God had given us unceasing blessing.

Are there those in other countries who will take up this challenge of continuous prayer presented by the lowly church of India?
The land of India is rich in birds. Some are strange and beautiful in plumage; some excel in song; while others are just plain crows and sparrows.

The nuisance value of crows and sparrows is so great that few have a love for them, yet the Saviour made special mention of each of these. When He wanted to remove anxiety concerning physical needs, He said, 'Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them'. When He wanted to make clear our heavenly Father's concern for individuals, He said of the millions of mischievous sparrows, 'Not one of them is forgotten before God'. 'Not one' is indeed hard to grasp when we think of how numerous these little creatures are; but the lesson He wants to teach is that if our Father knows each tiny sparrow, we can surely trust Him to watch over us. 'Ye are of more value than many sparrows'.

I was surprised to see so many crows and sparrows in Mukti. The sparrows did not annoy, but the loud, raucous 'caw, caw' of the crows and the flapping of their strong, black wings did disturb, and I wondered how I would endure it. In learning endurance, I have gained a new respect for both the crows and sparrows. The crows are valuable to India for their work as scavengers. Though a despised one, that is surely an important job. Then I remembered that the ravens, or crows, were among the fowls of the heavens which by God's command Noah took with him into the ark and that the raven was the first living thing to be released. I can imagine how the raven chafed at the restraint of the ark. The fact that it was his preservation would mean nothing at all. If the window of the ark was accessible to him, I can see him beating those strong wings that were made for the air in protest at the confinement, even though the rain continually poured. When the rain ceased to fall, Noah put forth the raven as a test. He returned not. Once free, he never again, as did the dove, seek the shelter and protection of the ark.

In some of our girls at Mukti I have seen that raven-like restlessness. Temporarily they forget the shelter and protection of Mukti, which has truly been their ark. They forget that from which they have been snatched; forget the constant care and attention of helpless, infant years; forget opportunities of school years and the patient forbearance of
OF BIRDS

Jones

the loving and careful nursing through sickness; forget the teacher and missionary. They forget all in the feverish longing to be outside the restraints of home. Yet many of our girls come safely through this period of restlessness because you pray and our God is faithful to hear and answer prayer. For the missionary dealing with them, there is the lesson learned 'Not by the wine drunk, but by the wine poured forth'.

When God found a hiding place for His servant Elijah by the brook Cherith, He commanded the ravens to feed him. God gave to the rasping crows obedient hearts to carry out His commandments. And no matter how eager some of the girls appear at times to throw off restraint, we have seen God work a miracle of wondrous change in the most stubborn hearts, in answer to the prayer of faith; and the girls have become new creatures in Christ Jesus, prepared by His Spirit unto good works, ready with obedient hearts to become God's messengers in places where courage is required.

As for the sparrows, they are everywhere. The Psalmist sang, 'The sparrow hath found an house . . . where she may lay her young, even thine altars, O Lord of hosts'. This is literally true in Mukti. But for the constant vigilance exercised, the overhead congregation in Mukti's church would soon outnumber the one below. The most inaccessible places high in the rafters are chosen for nesting; and it is no small task to oust them.

Two things I learn from the sparrows. First, they will build themselves in anywhere, even in the house of God. Second, that God has time for them in spite of all their mischief. As we survey the broods in all our compounds, we see that all the children are lovable, yet some can show as much mischief on occasion as the sparrows. The hearts our Saviour purchased with His blood can, if unwatched, become nesting places for the naughty, mischievous sparrows of evil thought. We need your prayers for these in our care, that they may be kept and led on to the overcoming life, to the glory of the Lord who bought them and to whom they are of great value.

Though the crows and sparrows have been most conspicuous to me, there are many other beautiful and interesting birds in this land. The little tailor birds are both neat and industrious in their work. As they prepare for their nesting
season, they gather the leaves of trees and diligently sew them together with cobweb silk, using their sharp beaks as needles. Into these nests they insert a lining of cotton wool or down, and the nest is suspended either in a low bush or tree, or even on verandahs. I peep into our sewing room and there watch the girls and women patiently drawing and counting threads. With needles and silk they bring out on the fabrics they hold beautiful colourful designs. These are Muki's neat and industrious tailor birds.

The clever weaver birds build for themselves marvellously constructed nests of woven grass, which they suspend from the outer boughs of trees by short, plaited ropes of their own weaving. These nests are better known than the birds themselves, for, although so clever, these little creatures are of very insignificant appearance. In Muki I see our rope-makers, the basket-makers, the cane-workers, as I watch the process right through from banana stem and bamboo to the finished product. Here are our clever weaver birds. Mostly these women and girls are blind and never see the work they produce, but they continue in it patiently and cheerfully, seeking to do a worthy job; and they are known more by what they do than by what they are.

In the mornings one sees the gentle doves fly round here and there, even walking along the verandahs, continually reminding us of their presence with their soft coos. I look into our kitchens and see girls and women busy in the preparation and cooking of food for our large family. How cheerfully they perform the task! I watch fascinated as I see some dexterously spin the dough round and round in their hands, shaping it into the round, flat bread of this land. Others are busy watching the giant pot of vegetables cooking on the huge stove. Still others are cutting vegetables for later meals or patiently cleaning grain, but all are happily and cheerfully busy. Yes, these are the home-makers, some in their apprenticeship, some practised hands, but all, like the gentle dove, loving the home and contented with the sphere of toil and love it offers.

Perhaps the best known and loved of all Indian birds is the bulbul. There are many types of this bird, some most colourful and handsome; but what attracts and endears most is their friendliness and cheerfulness. Their sweet, melodious notes strike the ear pleasantly and bring cheer to the heart. As I walk around Muki and see the colourful garments and the gracious manner and bearing of so many, see their love of the beautiful in the plants and flowers they
love and tend so carefully, and everywhere I hear the cheery note of song, I know these are Mukti’s bulbuls. They remind one of forest trees, of laughing, bubbling streams, of colourful flowers swaying in the breeze. Their cheerful song and laughter bring joy to the heart.

But that is not all. I am told that India has her skylarks, though I have not been fortunate enough to see and hear them. But I see and hear them here in Mukti, our own dear girls and children. I have heard their songs herald the dawn; and I have heard their evening songs. I make no extravagant claim when I liken them to the skylarks and nightingales. Oh that I could describe the purity and sweetness and richness of their notes! They fill the church; they resound from the school and the compounds, filling the air with song, true song—songs of the Lord, of nature, and of their native land. As I have heard picked voices vie with nature’s sweetest songsters, as the melodies have rolled out with full-throated ease, I am sure that they reach the ear and heart of the Saviour, bringing joy. I sometimes picture them all joining the choir of heaven, those ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands, singing ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing’.

Yes, I believe in answer to your prayers and ours, they will all be there—our tailor and weaver birds, our home-loving, gentle doves, the bright, sweet, friendly bulbuls, the larks and nightingales, with their notes of liquid sweetness. And I know that in that mighty symphony of praise, our dear heavenly Father will want the crows and sparrows to share.

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Kedgaon station. On the platform were missionaries, girls and women from Mukti, and Hindu folks from the villages. One Hindu man showed his appreciation of my return by presenting a garland of flowers. At the mission gate, crowds of girls and women lined both sides of the street waiting to welcome me. The Mukti children placed a garland of flowers about my neck and a bouquet in my hand, after which I was escorted through lines of welcoming faces.

When I reached my room with its newly stoned floor and whitewashed walls, the girls of the Rescue Home crowded about me and themselves answered the questions they had asked when I left a year ago: ‘You did come back to us; and God did keep us safe and well while you were gone.’
FAMILY NEWS

By Gladys Fletcher

The mother of Lillian Doerksen was called into the Lord's presence soon after Lillian arrived home on furlough. We ask our friends to uphold the family in prayer.

We thank the Lord for bringing Miss Morris safely back to Mukti on July 7 after her furlough in England.

Another note of joy is that Miss Williams passed her first-year Marathi examination successfully.

The Ramabai Mukti Mission is an international, undenominational Mission of evangelical faith, with representatives in the home countries as follows:

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