EMPTY PLATES AT CHRISTMAS

RAMABAI MUKTI MISSION
INDIA

Yale Divinity Library
New Haven, Conn.
Carefully preserved in Ramabai's own room is her Bible here pictured. Notice the long list of names pasted therein for prayer. Wherever there was any blank space in her Bible at the close of a book, Ramabai pasted names of the children and women composing the Mukti family, then numbering 2,000, for whom she prayed individually.

THANKSGIVING AND THE NEW BIBLE
By Gladys Fletcher

On this, the last Sunday of the old year, the church bells are sounding out the call to worship. There is an urgency in their ring. They seem to say, 'Come, bring your gift of thanksgiving unto the Lord; lay it before Him with praise and worship'.

From every direction come lines of children, their shining brass plates full of wheat or rice. Some bring brown sugar or fruit, having gone without their Christmas dinner that they might
have an offering to give the Master. Groups of elderly women converge on the church, some carrying grain. Many have money wrapped in white paper. Who are these holding on to one another's shoulders? They are our blind women and children. They walk slowly, bringing with them their offerings of grain or soap, and some have a piece of material. A sound of the bleating of goats fills the air, competing with the noise of hens and roosters. These are some of the gifts our Christian families have brought to the Lord.

Soon our church is filled with a thousand people, ages ranging from wee babies to old men and women. A hush falls upon all as the pastor raises his voice in prayer; and then all stand to sing one of the great hymns of the church, 'Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing'.

Now comes the call to offer unto the Lord our God our thanks-giving gift in gratitude for all His mercies and loving-kindnesses throughout the past year. What a stirring sight it is to see the great congregation come forward and place their gifts before the altar. There is the little boy who tightly clutches his toy engine and suddenly puts it on the big brass tray and turns away, the little girls who give their precious dolls to Him, the woman with her $21.00 (£7-10-o) for the offering, it being the proceeds from the sale of eggs and goats' milk, she herself only earning $4.00 (£1-10-o) a month.

Our people are poor but gave gladly and willingly to the Lord, in order that the revised edition of the Ramabai Bible may be speedily printed. They with us realize the urgency of the need to have the Scriptures in the simple language of the people, that souls may read for themselves the blessed gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. That is the reason that when the offering was counted, it was found to amount to the astounding sum of $400.00 (£141-0-o), which was double that of last year's offering.

Will you, too, join hands in prayer with our Mukti folk that this vision may be accomplished in the near future to the glory of our blessed Lord?

'The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it' (Psa. 68:11).
As never before in history, the common people of the world are learning to read. Millions have had their eyes opened to the printed page. They have been given the priceless gift of reading. Looking into the past, one is struck with the evident fact that this phenomenon is definitely linked up with the proclamation of the Good News—the publishing of the Word of God. Where God's people took His Word, the literacy revolution began.
But the contemporary picture is not the same. The nations of the world have taken up the cry for literacy; and today, while millions clamour for something to read, the church lags in producing enough of the Word to satisfy their hunger. This is very evident in India. There is a shortage of Bibles in many places. Such is the case in western India, where twenty million people speak the Marathi language. The Ramabai Mukti Mission is seeking to alleviate this need. Pandita Ramabai translated the Bible into simple Marathi so that the common village people might understand it. Now we are looking to the Lord to provide the money needed to publish a new edition of this much needed Bible.

Here are seven reasons why we believe you will want to share in this work:

1. This Bible is in simple language, purposely directed to those thousands who have had very little education or who are newly literate.

2. It is to be printed in good, clear, large type so that the simple village people may read it without difficulty.

3. There is a shortage of Bibles in western India, and we need to meet this need as soon as possible in these critical days.

4. This Ramabai Bible is faithful to the original, translated by a Spirit-filled servant of the Lord, who ever sought to be true to the Word of God in this great ministry.

5. Pandita Ramabai's translation has now been prayerfully and carefully revised by scholarly men and women who love the Lord and believe His Word. This revision was necessary due to the change in the Marathi idiom through the years.

6. This new edition will have the Scofield Reference System included, thus increasing its usefulness to Bible readers and students in western India.

7. The revision and preparation for this new edition has already involved years of hard work and much expense, but step by step God has provided the personnel and the money to meet this initial expense, which indicates to us God's blessing on this undertaking.

We believe that God will send the money in as it is needed, and open the way for the printing and publishing of the Ramabai Bible in His time. We also believe that you will want to have a share in this work of God. Pray and give as the Lord directs and be a partner in this ministry with us.
EMPTv PLATES AT CHRISTMAS

By Ruth Bollman

'Twas on Christmas afternoon that the kittens scampered hither and yon in the great Mukti kitchen. Tabby's vigil beside the rice sacks and Sandy's parade among the spice bins, Spotty's game with the measuring cup, and Whitey's tour of the silent pots and pans—all these were left for only the sparrows to see, for Mukti's kitchen was empty of the busy hands that daily worked in its every nook and corner. Beyond the fact that it was Christmas, there was a reason for the silence. Twilight drew her curtains over another blessed Christmas day, and the supper bell that had rung out for over sixty years felt no eager hand this night. Missionary hearts beat low and hard when the twilight turned to starlight with no supper for our children. When one group of these precious ones reached for cup and plate, the question came to one who saw, 'Could it be that the children had forgotten their vow? Had they decided that the price was too high? If they asked for food, it would be given, yet what could be prepared in a moment?' As the missionary watched, she saw those girls quietly and soberly gather in their little circle just as they always did at meal-time, but this time with empty plates and cups in front of them. Then one young girl stepped forward. 'Let us pray. Father, Thou hast given us the most precious gift of heaven—Thy Son. Thou hast given Thy Word to tell us about Him. We thank Thee that the Bible will soon be ready for printing. Use us to help give Thy Word to our people of India. There isn't much that we have to give Thee. We have neither silver nor gold to lay at Thy feet. Accept our Christmas supper and use it for Thy glory. In Jesus' Name. Amen'.

A hush hovered over each little group as mats were spread side by side for our hundreds of girls. The children went to bed supperless on this Christmas night because by their own suggestion and wish they had asked that the money be given for the printing of the Bible that would otherwise have been spent on their Christmas dinner. Not a tear nor a sigh could be heard as the angels stooped to hear the night-time prayers of girlish lips. The lights burned low. Our heavenly Father wrapped the devotion of our children in the mantle of His love as He bid them good night.
OUR MUKTI CHRISTMAS

By Juanita Harrell

This Christmas of 1956 was my first Christmas ten thousand miles from my home and family. Surprisingly enough, I cannot recall spending a sweeter Christmas anywhere.

Although I have lived in Mukti for only four months, I already have a family of fifteen children. Christmas preparations for my children began in late November with the task of seeking to ascertain the gift each child should receive. Then followed many trips into Poona, hunting into every nook and corner it seemed, to purchase the desired articles.

A few days before Christmas, decorations appeared everywhere. How beautifully the children decorated my room! From each corner was strung fancy, multicoloured paper, with a bright star in the center and pretty balloons hung from the ceiling. I, in turn, helped the children to hang red and green streamers in their room.

The night before Christmas will always be a happy memory. We missionaries visited each family, singing the well-known Christmas carols. The first home we visited had the children gathered about in a manger scene. In another, on a table surrounded by candle-light was a group of miniature dolls representing the scene at Bethlehem.

And then Christmas Day! Of all the ones that came forward to receive their gifts, a little six-year-old girl from my family will, I feel sure, always come to my mind as I recall this Christmas of 1956. When Shalini was asked many weeks before Christmas what she would like, there had been no hesitation in her answer—`A doll'. As the doll was presented to her the morning of the 25th, she looked as if she could hardly believe that it was her very own to keep and love. Throughout the happy Christmas days the look of wonder and thankfulness in Shalini's eyes continued to impress me. We trust that she, together with all of her Mukti sisters, will seek to express their gratitude in lives of loving devotion to the One of whose goodness we have been so deeply reminded this Christmas time.

`Thou crownest the year with thy goodness' (Psa. 65:11).
The Ramabai Mukti Mission is an international, undenominational Mission of evangelical faith, with representatives in the home countries as follows:

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