RAMABAI MUKTI MISSION

PRAYER BELL

July 1926

Our Dear Friends,

We received a letter a few days ago headed "Praise God from Whom all blessings flow." The contents of the letter, telling of spiritual and temporal fruit, caused us to do so, and many times since out of full hearts we have said, "We do praise Thee Lord."

The last few weeks the winds have been terrific, and the daytime heat intense, and while we longed to have our fellow workers back from the hills, we rather dreaded the heat for them. Then the Lord stepped in, the very day after Misses Browne, Macgregor, Myerscough and Smith returned, He sent us such a lovely downpour and cooled us all, rain again the next day, and now as we write, it is pattering down beautifully. Only those who have lived through a long drought can imagine what sweet music it makes.

Our last really good rainfall was in 1914, and each year since then the grain has been sold at, more or less, famine prices. Last year was a slight improvement on the previous one, in this respect, and now this year a great hope has sprung up in our hearts, and we are expecting a real good monsoon and harvest.

Then the hope and expectation is stretching out for spiritual showers and fruit which will gladden the heart of our Lord.

At the beginning of the year the Lord made one of His promises a real living word to us, "All thy children shall be taught of The Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children." Right after this word was illuminated, the storms increased, and the enemy has been busy, but lately we are seeing signs that he has over-stepped himself, and that some of his very devices for destroying are becoming warning signs. A desire to gather for prayer has been manifest in different groups of our young people.

Do please pray for them that they may also have a great love for the word of God. We seek to make them understand that prayer is talking to God from our hearts, while Bible-reading is listening to what God wants to say to us, and naturally we realize that this is tremendously important. They know that if they do not listen to their teachers in school, that they are not likely to pass when the tests and examination days come along. Pray please that we may all have hearing ears, understanding minds, and obedient hearts.

The day before school re-opened we had somewhat of an upheaval. We were expecting the children who had been home for the holidays back, and suddenly we found that they had been in contact with chicken pox.

Quick thinking and planning was necessary, and we had to segregate 35 young girls and little children. "Except the Lord keep the city" the watchman waketh but in vain, but the Lord is our Keeper and we are expecting Him to protect us. Amongst the segregated, one came down with chicken pox; so she with two others who live a long way off are in segregation camp and the others have returned home to their parents till the epidemic has run its course.

We are grateful to our different friends who keep us nicely supplied with English New Testaments, Gospels and tracts. Miss L. Couch, who goes daily to the railway station, finds many young men and some young women too, who are eager to receive these English Books.

In the office also we frequently have post cards asking for a copy of our Holy Book, sometimes the request is very quaintly worded, but they generally show a real desire to read the Book.

The distribution of the Marathi Bibles, New Testaments and tracts is another story, which we hope to give you later in Miss Macgregor's account of the Printing Department.

We think you will be interested to hear about our blind girls.

When Miss Craddock had to go home on account of illness, Miss Browne looked after their industrial work along with the needlework for a few months. Now for the past year Miss Jackson has been looking after them entirely, and they have had a good year.

We give Miss Jackson's report. "Bartimeus Sadan School and Home." "In school there are 33 women and children. The youngest is 8 years old, and the eldest of uncertain age but certainly well over 40."
"They are all blind or partially blind with one exception, she is deaf and dumb. Three are slightly defective mentally, considering their afflictions they do remarkably well. These spend half the day in the Industrial school, and half day grinding corn for the daily bread making."

"Ten are rope making, they make all the rope that is used in Mukti. None is sold as we need a great deal here in connection with the moats for drawing water out of our 12 wells, for bullocks, in the cattle sheds, for building purposes, for children's cots, for the printing room and for tying up various things."

"There is one man engaged for making the heavier ropes, as it is too difficult work for the women, this man is lame and partially blind, but he does good work."

"One woman works all day making bead bags, these find a ready sale."

"Good strong door mats are made by our blind girls from coir, these are knitted, and for knitting needles, they use long sticks of cane."

"Bamboo stools and chairs are made by the girls, and they do all the cane work repairs for Mukti."

"Some months ago we commenced to make baskets of the fibre from plantain trees, which we get from our own plantation. After the fruit is taken from the trees, they are cut down, and were formerly thrown for the animals, and often wasted. Now we strip the trunks, shave off the pulp, then tear the fibre into shreds, and sun dry it, then it is ready for making up into baskets. The grass is long, even and strong. For working various designs on the baskets, some of this fibre is dyed a number of shades and is quite effective."

"As this plantain fibre has not to be bought the basket making is quite a profitable industry, and so far, the demand for the baskets is greater than the supply."

"Our girls also make good raffia baskets, but as we have to buy the raffia, and coloured is very expensive the making of these is not so profitable as the other baskets."

"The girls have taken a great interest in the banana fibre work, and they are learning to make the baskets very nicely. They welcome any change of occupation, it gives them a new interest and helps them to forget their affliction. Work makes them feel less dependent and helpless."

"A little while back, when in Bombay, I went to see a loom for weaving yarn into bed tape (a strong broad tape which is stretched tightly on bed frames, and makes a very comfortable substitute for springs) the loom is quite a simple, inexpensive one, and we hope soon to get this new industry started."

"We have use for this tape in our hospitals, and any surplus could be sold easily, as good tape is in demand."

"In the day school we have 2 classes. Marathi 2nd. and 3rd. Standards. All subjects possible are taught in Braille system. The subjects taught are Geography, Grammar, Reading, Writing, Spelling, Arithmetic and Poetry. In the English class Standard 1st is taught, and Braille is used as in the Marathi classes."

"The day school is held in the morning, and in the afternoon the children are taught the various industries."

"In the home there are 24 girls, these all do their own washing of clothes, and 15 make their own bread, the other 9 girls have their cooking done for them."

We are sure that you will not forget to pray for the Bartimeus girls. Their mother Pandita Ramabai, in her characteristic way, gave them this name, and hoped that they too would meet the Lord Jesus, and receive their sight.

We thank you for your loving interest in them, and in us all as a family here.

Yours in grateful fellowship,

per. pro. M. LISSA HASTIE

M. W.

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