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RAMABAI MUKTI MISSION
PRAYER BELL

March—April, 1949



MISS WELLS BIDS US FAREWELL

On February 4 we gathered once again at Mukti's gate, not this time to welcome missionaries, but to say farewell to Miss Wells, who was starting on her way to America after many years of service for the Master in India. The children came from school almost without a word and took their places each side of the paths, while the older women stood in the background waiting to say their last "salaams" without too great a demonstration, as Miss Wells had expressed the hope that she would be allowed to leave quietly; yet at the last many pressed forward, stretching out their hands to receive a personal touch, for among these were women to whom Miss Wells had been helper and comforter for the greater part of their lives. To think of facing life without her actual presence was almost more than they could bear to contemplate. The children presented flower bouquets and others presented garlands as tokens of love and respect.

Accompanying Miss Wells was Miss Hansen, and as we watched these two veteran workers passing through the lines of children, giving their last words of advice, we wondered what it feels like to go home to retire. There would surely be memories of victories won in lives for the Kingdom of God, and there would also come the memory of some who had not resisted unto death, but had allowed the enemy to win back ground he had lost, but through it all would come the joy of having been called and chosen to serve the Master in His appointed place.

May the peace of God continue to garrison the hearts of these, His children, and may we, who still serve Him

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THE WORD OF GOD PREVAILS

“Sowing, sowing, yes, Lord, the sowing has been long. Teach us to reap”. This was our prayer as we set out for Supa at the beginning of the new year. What a joy to go in our new station wagon instead of pushing into a crowded bus. We were only a small group, our band of eight including six bible women, among whom was blind Priti, and then a nurse, and myself. From the very first a wonderful spirit of unity existed.

This time of the year is a very busy one for the farmers, as they gather in the best harvest of years. The farmers like us to visit them in their fields and sing and speak to them there. One afternoon we had an invitation to go and drink sugar-cane juice, which was being crushed and then boiled in shallow pans six feet in diameter and made into brown sugar. The first thing we noticed on arrival was a small stone daubed with red ochre. Placed in front of it was an offering of sugar. They had picked up a stone from their field and made it into a God! Oh, the blindness and superstition! The juice was full of questionable bits and pieces. We placed a clean handkerchief over a glass, into which the juice was poured. Impatient at the slowness of the straining, our host hurried it on by stirring it vigorously with his dirty finger.

Every evening a group of young men gathered at the bungalow. They loved the singing of the gramophone. Over and over we played our few Marathi records, explaining their meaning. In this group were two young Mohammedan men. The evening Muktabai spoke, they argued a great deal and referred often to the Koran. The next evening I was to speak, and, feeling very burdened, much time was spent in prayer. At 9:00 p.m. a group of twenty-five arrived, bringing the Koran with them. Praying for help and guidance, I spoke on the “Call of Abraham” and God’s call of men today. Gradually the whispering and fingering of the Koran stopped, and for one hour they listened. After a closing word of prayer, they went quickly and quietly away. How we praised God for victory and the silencing of their intended arguments. Pray much that these young men may come to know Him, whom to know is life eternal.

—GLADYS FLETCHER.

A BIBLE-READING

BY RAJAS DONGRE

How shall they hear without a preacher, and how shall they unearth the treasures of God's Word unless they can read?

Literacy is the key that opens the Bible, and therefore is part of our ministry in the new India of today. Have you heard that more than sixty per cent of our church members in India are illiterate? Only fourteen per cent of the whole population of India is literate. How can the illiterate enter fully into the riches of God's Word until they become literate? Literacy and leadership for the future India go hand in hand. Our Mission could produce leaders for the Indian church. Miracles happened here in Pandita Ramabai's time, and they would continue to happen, if only we had her faith in our Lord.

The bell chimes daily to summon all our field workers—men and women, old and young, Christians and non-Christians. Down drops the axe, the spade, the plough, the sickle, whatever they have in hand. Work stops, that they might study, that they might become literate, that they might become Bible-reading Christians and better workers.

When the literacy school opened, the room was packed. Some had to stand outside the window to peep in, some had to crane their necks, some had to stand on tiptoe to see above the heads of others, but they were all eager to learn and to understand. Our Bible women and some of our Junior and Senior matrons became our teachers, and at first they attended classes in order to learn the methods of teaching.

Every morning we all collect in the Gospel Hall for devotions, and together a hymn is sung and prayer is offered. Then the group divides into twelve or thirteen classes, each having a teacher to pay individual attention to the pupils. Some men brought Tamarind twigs, with thick tamarinds hanging at one end, and said, "Beat us, but teach us". Have you ever heard of people being keen on examinations? Here in the literacy school they beg to take examinations, in order to be promoted and thus obtain their green, brown, or red books to read. The Government hopes to send us certificates to distribute to the men and women who pass their literacy examination. They are all longing to obtain these certificates.

CHURCH FOR CHRIST

Sometimes at the beginning of the classes we have Bible stories, sometimes gramophone records are played, or a talk is given on current events, or on the life of a great leader. This gives variety and keeps the pupils fresh and alert. Moral lessons are given, as well as instructions on bringing up children, family life, and on the walk of the Christian life. Our aim is to help them to read the Word of God, that the fullness of the Christian life might be theirs.

The missionaries have supplied the school with papers, crayons, cardboard pieces, slates, pictures, posters, charts, blackboards, etc. These have been a great help in the conducting of the school. Some of the pupils have been quick at reading, some backward, some slow because they need spectacles. Soon after a fortnight, the majority of pupils asked for promotion. It was granted to a few, who were presented with books before the whole school. Soon there were remarks from the pupils, such as, "So and so had better be removed from our class, because he is slow and wastes our time," or "I shall be able to read better and more rapidly if I am put into the next class," or "I want that green book because I can read better now".

Our reading books now have a worn-out appearance, for some put their fingers right on the print when they learn to read. In some books the letters are quite rubbed out. Some try to learn passages by heart to show how fast they can read.

The fine co-operation of Miss Woodward and Miss Schrag have made these literacy classes possible, for it is those who work under them who form the members of the classes. Miss Woodward and Miss Schrag have offered every facility and appreciation is expressed for their whole-hearted help.

Literacy is only a key, a tool, a means to an end, and when we make people literate, we must follow up with the teaching of the Word of God, that we might have a Bible-reading church. Illiteracy is out of place in our new India. The task of the future is gigantic. We need to turn out from Mukti a succession of high-minded, public-spirited, Christian leaders to serve Christ and their country. May our Lord show our men and women of the literacy school His love and light, and may they be able to read the Word of God for themselves in the near future. This is our aim and prayer regarding the literacy work.

HUNGRY FOR THE LIVING BREAD

The Bethel families looked forward with much rejoicing to the special meetings of the new year under Rev. Fred Schlander, and surely it was a great treat for all, especially for those who look up to him as their spiritual father.

The theme of the messages was "Repentance unto Death" and "Repentance unto Salvation." The first example given was of Saul, who was exalted from being a herdsman to a king. He had great opportunities, but failed to exalt Him who gave him the kingdom. Only after being reproved did he repent, but his "repentance was unto death." Another example was Achan, who also sinned greatly, but was not willing to repent. He kept hardening his heart until there was no other way. Then finally he confessed his wickedness, a "repentance unto death." It was also pointed out that King David sinned, but when his eyes were opened, he repented a "repentance unto salvation."

The meetings were well attended by our Christian families. We do believe that He who has begun a good work in them will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Several business men came, and one, who lives six miles away, was invited. He came and brought another man with him. The following night he brought at least twenty more, and they continued to come until the meetings were finished. One man said, "I'm captured by the messages. I cannot stay away." Yes, they are hungry for the Living Bread. Weeks have passed since the meetings concluded, but the people are still saying, "We just can't forget those messages. After all, the Jesus way must be the best way." One man, who was told about the meetings and who came to the concluding ones, said, "Why didn't you let me know sooner about the meetings? The more I hear about them, the more I wish I had been to all of them."

The closing messages were about the suffering of Christ and the finished work on Calvary. One of the Hindu men made the remark, "Oh, how much He suffered for us." Do pray much for these who have heard and were touched, that they might not only believe mentally, but repent and be saved unto the uttermost.

—MARIE SCHRAG.

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in this needy land, walk so closely with Him that we, too, may be able to look back with the assurance that He has led all the way and will go with us until He calls us to serve Him in His presence. —ISABEL CRADDOCK.

LIFTED BY HIS LOVE

God has recently in His grace poured out blessing upon us in Mukti, and in Krupa Sadan, our rescue home. During the Divali holidays we had a week of meetings conducted by an Indian, lady evangelist, Mrs. Tobitt. During the week a number of our rescue home girls were broken by the realization of their sin, and came through to a glorious knowledge of forgiveness and justification through the cleansing blood of our Lord Jesus Christ.

After the evangelist left us, the blessing did not cease, but the Lord continued by His Holy Spirit to strive with our girls, and fifteen in all have made a profession of accepting Him as their Saviour. Some are still under conviction, and in the heart of one dear girl, for whom much prayer has been offered, there is a struggle going on between the pleading voice of the Lord Jesus and her own pride and obstinacy.

Among those who found the Lord was a girl who had been sinned against by her own stepfather and who had fled to us for protection from him. She has a little boy whom she spoils dreadfully, but after her conversion she testified that the Lord had spoken to her and showed her that she must not spoil her child, but bring him up to serve Him. Another girl, who had fallen deep into sin, went to the missionary's room and confessed between great sobs not only the sin which brought her to Krupa Sadan, but the dishonesty and deceit which she has practiced since being here. She has two sweet, little girls, whom we trust will become jewels in His crown.

One girl who found the Lord was Shanti, who was sent to us because she was completely unmanageable. When she first came, she refused to do any work whatsoever, was rebellious and sulky, but now the sulks have vanished, and the joy of the Lord shines in her smile. Among the most promising of the converts is Gunwantibai, a widow who, because of sin, is in Krupa Sadan. One day she was working with the tears streaming down her face. She was asked what the trouble was, and she replied, "My sins, oh my sins." After having received the Lord Jesus as her Saviour, she asked, "Can a woman who has been sinful ever preach the gospel?" And then she continued, "I know I am not worthy, but, like the man in the Bible, whereas I was blind, now I see, and I long to tell people." She is now glorifying the Lord Jesus by her life and testimony here and seeking His will for her future.

One girl, who was quarrelsome, publicly apologized to all with whom she had quarrelled and promised that in the future, by the grace of God, she would quarrel no more. Thus in Krupa Sadan sins were confessed and forgiven, and the shouts of quarrelling turned into songs of praise, and we believe that the heart of the Lord Jesus was made glad.

Will you join with us in prayer for these who have been lifted out of the horrible pit, that they may grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, and that each one will become a woman of God to His honour and glory? Will you also pray for those who have not yet yielded to Him and for those whose hearts are apparently untouched? Will you pray that the Spirit of God will continue to do a mighty work in our midst, that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified?

—MURIEL ASBERY.

LANGUAGE EXAMINATIONS

We are glad to report that Misses McGregor, Siemens, Stone, and Terry have passed their second-year language examination, and that Miss Holmes-Libbis has passed her first-year examination.

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COVER PICTURE

PANDITA RAMABAI

The Prayer Bell is the official publication of the Ramabai Mukti Mission, Kedgaon, Poona District, India.

Copies will be sent upon request.