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Pamphlet

WOMEN TO WOMEN

THE WORK OF THE C.E.Z.M.S.

LAST year saw the centenary in this country of the organized work of women in the Mission Field, and thus 1935 marks the beginning of a new era, the first year of a second century, and a fitting moment for a women's missionary movement to review the past and to plan for the future.

The "sphere of influence" of the particular society whose work we intend to appraise is confined to two countries and two islands—and for the purpose of this present article, to one-half of the inhabitants thereof—the women and girls of India, China, Ceylon and Singapore.

Quite a short time ago this subject could have been dismissed in a few words, for practically nothing was known—or knowable—about the large majority of Eastern women, except that they existed behind closed doors, or curtains, as the case might be.

How different is the situation which confronts us to-day. It is astonishing enough to consider the change in the position of Western women during the last twenty years. It is still more astonishing to find that in India, for instance, women have leaped across the political chasm which it took Western women generations to bridge, and have already become enfranchised in nearly every province; and that in one case a woman has been not only elected to a Legislative Assembly, but actually chosen as Chairman of its deliberations.

Even in our own country the evidence of this change is to be seen in every university town. Girl students from the Far East and from Africa, in increasing numbers, are competing with not only our girls but our young men—competing with and out-stripping them: girls whose grandmothers, and possibly whose mothers also, never ventured to leave the seclusion of the zenana in India, or the "inner apartments" of China; capable girls, who can shake all our pre-conceived notions of Eastern womanhood with a sentence.

"Ah, you English people think we are still so *very* jungly, do you not?" protested an ambitious South Indian girl student recently. She was gathering statistics as to the achievements of missionary societies in the realm of female education in India. "Leaving the education of girls to missions—that is what they did," she added bitterly, "to charity—for that is what it meant! I tell you my heart was torn with bitterness when I read that finding."

What would Miss Cooke, the first educational woman missionary to reach Calcutta, have said to such robust criticism? Probably she would have agreed, for she must have been a determined and far-sighted woman to start her day-school work in the teeth of the dictum that "All who know most about the country regard her attempt to bring Hindu girls together into schools as idle as any dream of enthusiasm could be."

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EARLY DAYS.

Great faith and consecrated courage would naturally characterize the pioneer women who took up their life work in the face of such adverse criticism. For them, residence in a "heathen" country was not only a spiritual adventure, but also actually a physical one.

Their work was in no way a rival effort to that of the older societies; it was indeed a necessary complement thereto, for no male missionary could obtain access to the secluded caste women and girls of India. Yet to leave them untouched was to stultify and even to nullify the work amongst the men and boys.

Beginnings, though small, were surprisingly encouraging. The education of the children was the first objective, and it was for this purpose that the "Ladies' Society for Promoting Female Education in the East" was formed in Calcutta in 1824. Just a few tiny day-schools were opened, with little girl pupils—so little, never older than the "marriageable" age of nine or ten years—mostly of the non-secluded classes. A year later some 400 girls were at school.

Soon came the realization that some wider policy was needed if that invisible host of women who lived behind the *pardah* was to be reached. So the Indian Female Normal School and Instruction Society was founded in 1852, again in Calcutta, and a Normal School opened, where a few Anglo-Indians and, later, young Indian widows, came for training as school and zenana teachers, to join hands with the slowly multiplying number of women missionaries in the task of taking the Light of Life to those whose lives were, for the most part, spent in almost complete mental darkness.

Within twenty years the I.F.N.S. & I.S. had some twenty-five stations, in which firmly established evangelistic and educational work was flourishing, and its Home Committee had gradually taken over full responsibility.

THE EMERGENCE OF THE C.E.Z.M.S.

A further development followed in 1880, when the women of the Church of England evinced a growing desire for a direct rather than an interdenominational channel through which to express their longing to serve their Indian sisters. This desire culminated in the formation of the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, and involved a division of work between it and the original society. Since then the two Societies—the I.F.N.S. changing its name shortly afterwards to the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission—have developed side by side without overlapping.

1880 to 1935! The C.E.Z.M.S. is quite young in comparison with some of the older missions, but it must be remembered that it was born "grown-up," for it started life with sixteen well-equipped and rapidly developing mission stations in North and South India, and with thirty-two missionaries already on its roll.

The share taken over by the C.E.Z.M.S. held marvellous promise, and it is of interest to note that of the original sixteen stations, all but three still have resident missionaries.

Zenana visiting had been widely developed, and as more Indian

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Christian women became available, they were trained as zenana teachers or Biblewomen.

The results of those early "Zenana Missions" can hardly be over-estimated.

"My mother was one of the early zenana teachers," said the wife of an Indian Christian of some standing in England, "and her mother learnt all she knew from zenana missionaries; thousands of women in India got their only education in that way."

"We have no quarrel with Zenana missions," said a Hindu lady, speaking in London recently, "but for Zenana missionaries the secluded women of India would have had little chance of education."

Schools of varying type were in existence in every station, but no fees could be charged, for in most cases the parents thought the education of girls completely unnecessary. In tiny day schools and in important ones such as the Fort School at Trivandrum, in the very heart of Brahminism, and the Alexandra School at Amritsar, which later passed into the hands of the C.M.S., the daily Bible lesson and the singing of Christian hymns brought the message of Christ's love not only to the children—the wives and mothers of the future—but through them to their homes.

The "ideal dream of enthusiasm" had become a reality.

MEDICAL WORK.

Medical missions for women were in their infancy at this time, though the crying need for such help was being daily more urgently voiced. A qualified American woman doctor, Miss Swain, attached to the Women's Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church, reached India in 1869, and in 1872 and 1873 respectively, two other American women medical missionaries arrived.

Miss Bielby, of the I.F.N.S., who reached Lucknow in 1875, and Miss Hewlett, who joined her in 1877 and went later to Amritsar, had both received some medical training, and found this of great value in reaching the women whom they had come to help.

As far back as 1866 a civil servant had tried to tackle the terrible problem of the native midwife, and had opened a class for *dais* in Amritsar. After many vicissitudes this class came under the care of Miss Hewlett in 1878, and through her ability and initiative it became well known as the Amritsar Dais' School—the pioneer effort to put midwifery on a sound footing in India. A year later, in the same city of Amritsar, Miss Hewlett opened a small hospital for women, which came into the hands of the C.E.Z.M.S. in 1880.

St. Catherine's Hospital, as it later became known, has now 100 beds, and is a fully recognized training school for nurses, with four daughter hospitals, and a splendid record of service and achievement.

But to Dr. Fanny Butler, who went out under the C.E.Z.M.S. in 1880, falls the honour of being the first fully qualified European medical woman to reach India.

For nine years she spent herself in relieving the sufferings of Indian women, and in breaking down the walls of prejudice within which age-long custom had imprisoned them. During the last period in

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Kashmir she was very successful, and the medical work she established at Srinagar has continued till the present day.

One of her gifts to India was the finding, and inspiring for service overseas, of an English nurse of great ability, Miss Elizabeth Newman, called by the Rev. C. E. Tyndale-Biscoe "the Florence Nightingale of Kashmir." A woman of little education, by her own personal letter-writing, to any and everyone whom she knew to have charitable leanings, she collected a lakh of rupees and built a hospital for women—only to see it swept away by flood, and to begin again to collect and rebuild. Such was the stuff of which the pioneer nurses of the Society were made.

Fifty-five years ago Fanny Butler and Mary Scharlieb, of beloved memory, met in this country for a short time—the one on the eve of setting out to take up her life-work, the other just home from India to finish her training, which she had courageously started in Madras. Five years ago one of Dame Scharlieb's last acts was to contribute a Foreword to a short memoir of Dr. Butler, written by her niece, in connection with the C.E.Z.M.S. Jubilee celebrations of that year.

One more medical pioneer only can be mentioned : Dr. Kheroth Bose, who retired as recently as 1934, the Jubilee year of her connection with the Society, and was called to her rest in 1935.

One of a brilliant and consecrated Christian Indian family, whose leadership has done much for the Indian Church, she came to England in 1886 to finish her medical training, and then for a time rejoined the staff of Amritsar Hospital. Later she went to work in the Christian village of Asrapur-Atari—the Village of Hope—and the Hospital there is entirely the result of her devoted labours. She had been in complete charge of the station, with its important evangelistic and welfare activities, for many long years.

Space fails to tell of other medical pioneers whose life-work it was to found and build up twenty hospitals, each of which has proved a centre of hope and life to many thousands of Indian women.

The beginnings of such work seem sometimes almost accidental. Could anyone, for instance, have foreseen that an Englishwoman, tramping the Nadiya district of Bengal, with one native servant and a canvas bag containing medicines and books : camping here and there for a few days ; treating with simple remedies the poor and suffering people who crowded to meet her, and preaching to them of the Great Physician, was, in effect, founding a hospital ?

Yet in such wise has much medical work been built up from tiny beginnings, and the hospital at Ratnapur, in the centre of the vast Nadiya district of Bengal, which now ministers to some 10,000 village patients annually, is the result of those tramps abroad.

To-day European and Eastern women doctors and nurses serve side by side in twenty-one hospitals* of the Society, three of which are in China.

THE CALL TO ADVANCE.

Youth is the time for growth, and before long offshoots of the original tree were climbing vigorously upwards and outwards.

* The Hospital of the Good Shepherd at Quetta was destroyed by earthquake in 1935.

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In 1883 the young Society was urged by missionaries of the C.M.S. to extend its activities to China, "to assist Mrs. Stewart in the very important work of training and superintending native Biblewomen, and in visiting Chinese ladies of position."

The challenge was taken up, and an appeal for funds was made to the country, with the happy result that in 1884 the first C.E.Z.M.S. missionary joined Mrs. Stewart in Foochow.

In 1890, one of the first Chinese women to embrace Christianity—Mrs. Ahok, the wife of a mandarin—braved the peril of the seas in order to place before the "hot-hearted sisters" in England the needs of Chinese women, and five years later twenty-eight C.E.Z.M.S. missionaries were at work in the diocese of Fukien.

It was in this year—1895—that to missionaries of both C.M.S. and C.E.Z.M.S. was accorded the "crown of martyrdom," and as ever in the history of the Church, their sacrifice sounded the call to advance. The roll of the Society's missionaries in China steadily lengthened, and even so they were unable to encompass the opportunities opening out on every hand.

In the dioceses of Fukien and, since 1915, Kwangsi-Hunan, through the ministry of teaching, healing and evangelism, missionaries of the C.E.Z.M.S. have co-operated with the C.M.S. in the building up of a strong Chinese Church, of which they are themselves to-day loyal and active members, working in fellowship with Chinese leaders in every branch of Christian endeavour.

1934 saw the Jubilee of the Society's entry into China, and the fruit of those fifty years is to be found in this very leadership—for many Chinese Christian women who were educated in C.E.Z.M.S. schools and who found their inspiration to service in the fellowship of their missionary sisters, have, as occasion demanded, taken their places naturally and valiantly in the forefront of the forward movement.

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In the meantime Ceylon had claimed the interest of the Society. Sons of Kandyan chiefs were scholars at Trinity College, Kandy (C.M.S.), and the appeal for women missionaries came through the lips of these students, who had begun to realize the limitations of their womenfolk.

In 1890 a school for the daughters of Kandyan chiefs, now known as Hillwood, was founded, and its history proves that it has nobly met the need which called it into being. It has been successful, not only in giving a first-class education, but also in drawing into the circle of Christ's love many gifted young women, who to-day are in the van of social service in Ceylon.

Elsewhere in the island the Society has important work, including a bi-lingual Boarding School with 170 pupils and some village primary schools. A growing hospital and a bi-weekly dispensary serve two needy village areas, and really effective evangelistic witness is being given in both districts.

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As a strategic centre for the preaching and the spread of the Gospel,

Singapore is possibly unique. To this port come peoples of almost every race, and it is the natural "gateway to the East."

It was in 1900 that the School for Chinese Girls in Singapore was bequeathed to the Society, on the voluntary demise of one of the older societies, the Female Education Society. The School had already acquired a wide reputation. Old students had scattered north, south, east and west, carrying with them the Christian ideal of home-making, and in some places opening small schools, in which they endeavoured to pass on the ideal of service learned in their own beloved school. The connection of the School with China has always been very close. Some of the Chinese girls have married Chinese pastors, and have gone back as missionaries to their own land. One such young couple were sent many years ago on a mission to Korea, and became actually the pioneer missionaries to that country.*

To-day Singapore looms larger than ever in strategic importance, and this school, with its long tradition of usefulness, its up-to-date curriculum, and its emphasis on fundamental things, continues to make a vital contribution to the building up of the Church of Christ in the East.

PHILANTHROPIC ACTIVITIES.

In the space allotted to this article, it is impossible to do more than touch upon much of the Society's work, but an attempt must be made to indicate something of its more "specialized" activities. The disabilities of the huge population of blind and deaf and famine-stricken cried aloud for philanthropic effort, and individual missionaries heard and answered the summons with surprisingly and sometimes embarrassingly successful results.

To-day the Society has two Schools for the Deaf in India, and has recently passed over to a Board of Control in Ceylon its large School for the Deaf and Blind at Mount Lavinia. Three schools for blind girls in China present a standing witness to the non-Christian population of the transforming power of Christ's love in the heart of an "unwanted" and helpless child. Some of the older girls from these schools are acting as village evangelists, and also as fully-trained masseuse-Biblewomen in hospitals.

Missionaries of the Society, too, pioneered in work for the Blind in India, though the schools which they founded later became affiliated to other societies.

Another tremendously important "side-line" is the Industrial work, started in varying circumstances, but mainly to ensure a means of livelihood to women converts—who, on their profession of Christianity, have been forced to leave their homes—or to destitute widows, or children who, rescued maybe during times of famine, have grown up in the Society's orphanages.

The story of the building up of such industries is a romance in itself.

Here a missionary, after many unsuccessful attempts, is helped by an old gate-keeper to start a carpet-weaving industry; and years later she has the satisfaction of receiving an order to make the white rugs for the royal marquee at the Delhi Durbar, and later of seeing

* See HOT-HEARTED : Some Women Builders of the Chinese Church.

Baranagar carpets awarded the Gold Medal at Wembley Exhibition.

Here, another missionary literally endangers her eyesight in learning and passing on the elements of lace-making for the sake of starving village women. Royalty has since accepted specimens of the lovely lace made in this station.

Again, one can but mention the fact that the Society has many links with the Union work which is such a happy growth of these later years. In the Medical training centre at Vellore, in mission sanatoria, in the Christian Women College in Madras, and in training colleges and similar educational institutions in China, the C.E.Z.M.S. is proud to have a share.

THE GROWTH OF EDUCATION.

The extent of the Society's educational work is perhaps hardly realized in this country. In some 200 schools, girls of every caste and creed are being taught. In one suburb of Calcutta alone over 700 children are on the rolls of the C.E.Z.M.S. primary schools, and it is of interest to note in passing that the missionary in charge is an Indian widow. One of the Boarding High Schools can boast as many as 300 boarders, while a typical Middle School in South India has well over 500 pupils. Similarly striking figures could be quoted for the Society's schools in China.

Indian parents are increasingly alive to the importance of educating their daughters, and within the last few years some of the Society's larger schools—one here and another there—have, at the urgent request of parents and municipalities, been raised to High School standard.

In the past, the educational mission has been largely used as a method of evangelism, but of late years there has been increasing emphasis on the duty of giving to the children of the Christian community a more advanced education, so that they may be fitted to act as leaders in the new India which is gradually emerging.

That this aspect of educational work has not been neglected is clearly shown by the fact that in some provinces at least, not only in mission girls' schools, but in Government schools also, a large majority of the teachers are baptized Christians. It is a telling fact, vouched for by a Government Inspectress—an Indian lady—that many among this pioneer band of Indian teachers were once "child widows," who, but for Christ's messengers, would have lived sorrowful and frustrated lives instead of, as now, guiding the footsteps of the awakening womanhood of India.

WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

It has always been the policy of the C.E.Z.M.S. to encourage and rely on the help of its Indian and Chinese sisters, and in this course it has been richly rewarded by the faithful and inspired fellowship of many who, as missionaries or assistant missionaries of the Society (medical and otherwise), as nurses, Biblewomen, or teachers, have consecrated their gifts to the service of their own people. The policy of encouraging leadership is being increasingly pursued to-day.

The urgent problem of shepherding the women who are coming

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into the Church in the Mass Movement areas has to be considered side by side with the evangelization of the thousands still in purdah. The very fact that the purdah system is passing—slowly as regards the Moslem community but everywhere with increasing momentum—brings an added sense of urgency to this latter duty. Both types of evangelism seem to be equally vital to the growth of the Kingdom.

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In purdah to-day—leading India to-morrow—that seems to be the order of the day, and as ever more women appear on the Indian stage, so their power and influence grows ever more apparent.

Although it is a happy fact that Indian women leaders have so far steered a wise course—that they have banded themselves together without thought of class or creed to do the best that is possible for their daughters and their country—there are many true friends of India who view with some trepidation the rapidity with which the changes are coming : who fear, to use the words of their own poet, Tagore, that many are rushing into the fray “ with torches unlighted.”

It is not the moment for Christ’s servants to relax their efforts to pass on the true Light.

“All that is best in the Women’s Movement,” said an Indian Christian lady in Government employ, a few years ago, “has its roots in the faithful teaching given by zenana missionaries in the past.”

A SERVICE OF FRIENDSHIP.

It has been carried through very quietly, this many-sided service of women to women. Faith and love and prayer have been its key-notes. Few widely-known names, hardly any spectacular events, appear in the Society’s records, though Government has most generously recognized the service rendered by one and another.

“It is the unknown people,” wrote the Dean of Durham lately, “who, to give but one instance, are responsible for the astonishing change in the Indian attitude towards Christ. His Name is honoured in India to-day because of the Christian lives of thousands of whom the world knows nothing.”

If women missionaries can be numbered among those thousands, and if by continuing to offer service and friendship they can lead their Eastern sisters to a knowledge of Him Who is the Way and the Truth, and in Whose Light only can they see light, then surely there is still a field of service in which the Western woman of to-day may well find a satisfying life-work.

The opportunity is there, recruits and supporters are needed.

“Who then is willing to consecrate [her] service this day unto the Lord?”

A. M. ROBINSON.

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