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DEVOTEES OF CHRIST



CHANDRA LILA

DEVOTEES OF CHRIST

SOME WOMEN PIONEERS OF THE INDIAN CHURCH

By

D. S. BATLEY

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Romoni's Daughters, Shushila, etc.

In collaboration with

A. M. ROBINSON

Foreword by

The Right Hon. VISCOUNT HALIFAX,

K.G., G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE

THIS little book does not profess to give a comprehensive list of notable Indian Christian women. Its aim is to introduce a few representative pioneers, forerunners of the splendid band of Christian women of the second, third and even fourth generation, who are to-day seizing the opportunities of service presented to them in religious, social, and national circles.

In a few of these short biographies identities are hidden beneath a pseudonym. The reason for this is that these particular "pioneers" are of the present generation of workers, and while they are perfectly willing that their stories should be told for the glory of God and the encouragement of their sisters, they prefer to remain anonymous.

* * * *

The thanks of the compilers are due to the many friends who have helped to write this little book. These include Miss A. L. Ashwin, Mrs. J. M. Benade (for a great deal of valuable information), Miss A. M. Boileau, Miss C. M. Bradley, Mrs. Channing, Miss M. E. Goodwin, Miss A. M. Hardy, Miss A. J. Lacey, Miss C. F. Ling, Miss H. Owles, Miss M. Sherwood, Mrs. Weitbrecht Stanton, and many others.

Books which the compilers have used gratefully are:

Pundita Ramabai, by M. CLARK

Pandita Ramabai, by NICOL MACNICOL

Therefore, by CORNELIA SORABJI

Susie Sorabji: A Memoir, by CORNELIA SORABJI

Dawn, by PROBHA SIRCAR

An Indian Priestess, by ADA LEE

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“When He ascended up on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. He gave some to be apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers . . . for the edifying of the Body of Christ.”

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*The portrait of Chandra Lila is reproduced by courtesy of the Central Committee on the United Study of Foreign Missions, Boston, Mass., U.S.A.

FOREWORD

THIS valuable little book is pre-eminently a woman's book—written of women by women—and it would have given Lady Halifax much pleasure had it been possible for her to write the Foreword to it. But that is not possible because Lady Halifax is at present out of England. She is fortunate enough to be revisiting in India many of the scenes in that great country where we spent five unforgettable years together while I was Viceroy; years of hard work, but of great happiness. Therefore it has fallen to me to write these introductory paragraphs in her stead, though I cannot pretend that I can adequately fill her place.

The Church of Christ is one Church and forms a single communion of souls throughout the world. Yet, at the same time, each country within that communion has its own hallowed list of the names of those witnesses to Christ whom it specially commemorates in connection with the foundation and spread of His Gospel among its people. In this way, the Church in India too, young though that Church is, has its Saints, amongst whom are the women whose lives and work for Christ are recorded in this book.

The history of India has many a record of noble women, and the self-sacrifice of the women of India is renowned. True happiness is found in work for others and, in spite of the severe restrictions still placed upon their activities by social law and usage, they have already, as these life stories clearly show, a memorable portion in the history of the Church of Christ in India.

But the Book of the Saints is no closed volume. Its shining pages are ever open for those who are worthy to have their names inscribed therein. These women, by their noble work, accomplished much in their time, but the work of the Church is never ended, and their lives are not only a record of achievement but an example to those who will come after them. What they have done can be done again, and so much the less hardly because they have found the way to its accomplishment. The lesson that they teach to Indian women of to-day and of the days to come is the good that each one, walking in their steps behind the Master and by the light of their witness to Him, may yet do for their fellow-men and women.

The people of India stand upon the threshold of a wider political freedom; they are preparing themselves for the duties of nationhood. To-day, therefore, the responsibility of the Church of Christ in India is heavier than ever before, and there is more than ever need for the wholehearted service of the younger generation of educated women. It is to these that this small volume makes a special appeal, and the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, whose work in India Lady Halifax and I had the opportunity of seeing and admiring for ourselves, is doing a notable service to the Church at large and particularly in India itself in publishing these brief biographies of Indian women who lived the lives of Saints.

Halifax

14th December, 1937.

INTRODUCTION

"I sought Him Whom my soul loveth"

MUCH has been written and spoken about "caste" and "untouchability" in India, those intangible, but impassable, barriers which separate individual from individual, and group from group. Deep rooted in the religious sanctions of past ages, they have, until well within living memory, remained unchallenged and invulnerable, and from time immemorial Hindu men and women have lived and died within their narrow limits.

Yet there are certain classes of people, even in Hindu India, for whom the great gulfs fixed by custom and religious observance have no existence. Their ranks are recruited from Brahmans and Sudras, indiscriminately. They overcome pre-historic tradition, and merge their individuality under a new title.

These casteless citizens sometimes, though not invariably, wear a distinctive dress, and carry distinctive insignia. Some of them have homes of their own; they may congregate in special quarters in the villages, and even claim whole towns as their possession. For the most part, however, they have no abiding city. They are the great army of India's "devotees." Those whose bodies are smeared with white ashes, and who wear their hair in matted cones on their heads, are recognised as leaders in the army of the holy ones, and are treated with reverence by ordinary folk.

When they "bring under their bodies" by conspicuous practices of asceticism or self-torture, they are accounted worthy of double honour.

One has seen village women leave their daily tasks, which are numerous and onerous, and hurry towards a main road, that they may "bless their eyes" with a vision of a holy man doing prostrate pilgrimage to Benares. They gaze on his painful and pathetic progress with reverent awe, and return to scrub brasses and cook curries, in a state of spiritual exaltation.

Granted that there are hypocrites in the devotee army of India: that the rank and file are very ordinary people, whose claims to the title "devotee" would be hard to establish: it must still be admitted that numbers of them are sincere and devout seekers after God. The story of Chandra Lila alone, which will be found in the first chapter of this book, is sufficient evidence on this point. Their utter devotion and self-immolation in their search, though expended in "labyrinthine paths," must inspire all who, like themselves, are seekers.

"*I do not want salvation*" (that is, release from personality)—one hears them sing—"I desire only, in re-birth, after re-birth, to worship Thee, O Master."

* * * *

This present volume is concerned with yet another band of Indian devotees, pioneers of a large and growing body whose devotion to their Master shines as a beacon light for all the world to see.

Some of them have already "crossed the flood," and some are still treading the dusty highways of earth. They do not torture their bodies, for they hold them to be temples of the Holy Ghost. They do not sit

apart and receive worship, for they follow One Who came not to be ministered unto but to minister. They wear no material insignia of holiness, nor do they bear sacred marks upon their foreheads. They are ordinary people clad in ordinary garb, but often they may be distinguished from their fellows by the light on their faces. They are not seeking release from personality, but rather have sought and found such a redemption of personality as shall enable them, through the ages of eternity, to serve Him to Whom they have given their devotion: Jesus of Nazareth, the Incarnation of the Only God.

PART I
PROPHETS

"He gave some to be . . . prophets."

"One of God's greatest gifts to His Church throughout the ages has been that of prophets, men and women, who have been His 'spokesmen,' His representatives, to mankind. They may have had other missions, of teaching or healing, but first of all they have been messengers, who have come down from the mountain tops with faces that shine, to point the road to Heaven, and lead the way."

SOURCE UNKNOWN.

THE HISTORY OF A SOUL

*In secret from among the throng
God sometimes takes a soul,
And leads her slow, through grief and wrong,
Unswerving to her goal.*

*He chooses her to be His bride
And gives her from His store
Meek tenderness and lofty pride,
That she may feel the more.*

*He makes her poor, without a stay,
Desiring all men's good,
Searching the True; pure, pure always,
But still, misunderstood.*

.
*He spreads the clouds her head above,
He tries her hour by hour,
From hate she suffers and from Love,
And owns of each the power.*

.
*Thus stricken, reft of joy and light,
God makes her fair and clean,
Like an enamel hard and bright,
A sword of temper keen.*

.
*And when He sees her ever true,
Like needle to the pole,
Upon His work He smiles anew—
Thus forges God a soul.*

From the French of EUGÈNE MANUEL,
translated by TORU DUTT.

CHAPTER I

CHANDRA LILA*

"I will seek Him Whom my soul loveth."

*Oh! that I knew where I might find Him!
His eye would guide me right:
He leaveth countless tracks behind Him,
Yet passeth out of sight,*

*It was the Voice of Revelation
That met my utmost need:
The wondrous message of salvation
Was joy and peace indeed.*

H. TWELLS.

CHANDRA LILA, the Indian priestess who, in her untiring and for many years unsuccessful search for God, travelled India on foot, from north to south, from east to west, is surely one in devotion and courage with saints and martyrs down the centuries.

She was born about the year 1840, her father being the family priest of the Rajah of Nepal. He was deeply attached to his little daughter, and the reproach of her early widowhood was forgotten and her loneliness solaced by his loving companionship. Like the father of Pundita Ramabai (of whom more anon), he defied convention, and taught his little daughter to read and write in her own language and in Sanscrit.

One day he conceived the strange idea of taking the child with him on pilgrimage to visit the sacred shrines of India—an adventure that tries the strength

*Pronounced Chundra Leela.

of a man to the utmost—so that she, too, might acquire the mysterious merit that is believed to accrue from such an act of piety.

They set forth on their travels on foot, the father leading the way, clad in a simple white garment, and carrying a staff. Along mountain roads so precipitous that she had sometimes to shut her eyes to overcome dizziness and fear, Chandra Lila followed with her faithful maid, Sona; the men servants, with bedding and cooking pots, bringing up the rear.

Day after day the little party travelled thus, "in labour and travail, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst"; often, too, in perils of waters, and in fear of robbers and wild beasts. When the young girl grew too weary and her feet ached insufferably, her father would hire a jolting two-wheeled cart in which, for a stage of the journey, she would travel with her maid. In spite of the hardships of the road Chandra Lila enjoyed the adventurous life, and revelled in the beauty of the hills and forests and the green glory of the fertile fields of Bengal. With fervent exaltation she looked forward to the moment when she would be able to bathe in the sacred waters of Mother Ganges.

Father and daughter reached the river at last. With closed eyes and lips moving in prayer, the priest waded out into the sacred stream and dipped beneath the surface. Chandra Lila hesitated a moment on the brink. The water was so dirty, and she was so clean. Then bravely she stepped in after her father and reverently followed his example. She may even then have felt a pang of disappointment, because no sense of blessing or increased holiness came to her. She was destined to feel that pang of yearning disappointment many times in the years that followed.

At the famous shrine of Kalighat—a fearful sight to a child—her father brought a kid for her to offer to the grim goddess, but Chandra Lila hid her eyes at the terrible moment of sacrifice. The shouting worshippers, the streaming blood, the horrid black image, with its lolling tongue, excited and troubled her; but she enjoyed distributing coppers among the blind, leprous, and crippled beggars congregated outside the temple.

At the Festival of the Car, probably at Puri, where the god Jagannath in his gigantic chariot is dragged by his worshippers from one temple to another, Chandra Lila with Sona narrowly escaped being crushed, but her father, who probably took his share in dragging the chariot, seems to have been so much injured that he died in their temporary quarters on the following day. As he lay dying he gave a key to his beloved daughter, and a written message that with it she must unlock a great box which she would find at home, all the contents of which had been left for her by her husband.

After the cremation was over Chandra Lila found her way back to Nepal, feeling very desolate, lonely, and hopeless. When she opened the great chest she found that it was full of gold and jewels. At first she looked on these with distaste; for as a Brahmin widow they could profit her nothing. Then the thought came to her that nothing need now prevent her from going on pilgrimage again. Her soul was athirst for God, for the living God, and she would go on searching until she found Him. The call to this second spiritual adventure grew upon Chandra Lila.

Carefully she made her plans, persuading her maid and another lonely young widow to cast in their lots

with her. Fearing opposition from her late father's household, the three girls set forth secretly on a moonless night. The money and jewels they carried round their waists, sewn into strips of cloth.

The record of the journeys of these three weak, unprotected women, however shortly told, is an amazing story. Along the dusty highways, across the wide sun-bathed plains of India, from Nepal in the north to Ramanath in the extreme south, they trudged. Here they visited a celebrated island temple built on a spot where the legendary hero, Ram, had won a victory over the demon Rabon. In this spot Chandra Lila, after offering oblations in the form of money, rice, and a white cow, purchased a tiny image of Ram which she carried with her everywhere, and worshipped daily for several years. The magnificent temple, with its massive square pillars, brought her a sense of her own insignificance, but left her as far away as ever from spiritual satisfaction.

"Hungry and thirsty her soul fainted in her," and after a short rest this spiritual longing sent her forth on pilgrimage once more. This time she sought the shrine of Darkanath, on the west coast. The journey involved another tramp of several hundred miles, undertaken partly during the hot weather season, a terrible thing in South India, and partly during the almost equally exhausting rainy season.

They reached the sacred spot at last, and worshipped with their foreheads in the dust. But Chandra Lila found her tired soul dust-dry. She rested for fifteen days, and then, bitterly disappointed but not despairing, she set forth with her faithful companions for Badrinath, an almost inaccessible temple, situated far north amid the Himalayan snows.

The sufferings of the trio during this part of their pilgrimage, were very sharp. They were quite unaccustomed to cold, and their cotton garments gave them no protection against the bitter winds. They bought coarse grey woollen blankets, but even when wrapped in these they were not warm. Sometimes stones cut their feet; sometimes they crossed precipitous chasms, clinging to tree-trunk bridges. Their steep path at last grew slippery with ice, but still they struggled on.

At last they reached the gold-domed temple, and long did Chandra Lila crouch before the image which it enshrined. "Up there I shall find God," had been her cry, but in vain did she lift up her eyes unto the hills; her heart remained empty. An overwhelming loneliness encompassed her, and her cry was changed, "Oh, that I knew—that I knew where I might find Him!"

She went next to Benares, the most sacred, and yet perhaps the most unclean, of India's sacred cities, but neither did she find God there. The holy river, into which pilgrims pressed struggling in their thousands, was reeking with cholera germs. Her two companions were stricken, and one by one she saw them die in agony.

She herself escaped with her life, but despair drew very near to her poor, brave heart at last. She joined herself, however, to another band of pilgrims, and dragged herself once more to the shrine of Jagannath. It was while she was there that a Rajah became interested in her story. When he was told of all that she, the delicately-nurtured daughter of Nepal's high priest, had done and suffered to win holiness, he begged Chandra Lila to stay with him, as his spiritual guide.

She yielded to his persuasions, and for seven years she lived on in this pleasant spot, worshipping and worshipped, but utterly unsatisfied. The Rajah built shrines for her precious images—Ram, Shiva, Krishna—and she burned incense before them each in turn, but all to no purpose.

One day there came to her a holy man, all smeared with white ashes, and with his long hair matted with mud.

“Why have I not found God?” she demanded of him almost fiercely.

“Because you have not suffered enough,” came the stern reply.

So Chandra Lila smeared her body with ashes, and put on the scant saffron robe of an ascetic. She put cow-dung on her hair, and wore it heaped in a cone on the top of her head. She gave her body to be burned, and sat in the midst of five fires while the midday sun beat down on her. She tortured herself unintermittently—and still it profited her nothing.

For three long years, in fulfilment of a vow, she buffeted her body to an extent which seems to us Westerners almost incredible. Sometimes she spent whole nights (in the cold season, too) sitting in a pond with water up to her neck, telling and re-telling her beads. “Nobody knows,” she told a friend later, “how long those nights were, nor how I suffered before morning.”

In one night she would repeat the names of the hundred and eight gods on her rosary a thousand times. During this period of her life she never touched cooked food, but subsisted entirely on fruit. When the three years of her vow were ended she cut off her cone of matted hair, and cast it into the Ganges,

exclaiming that she had suffered all that could be required of a feeble mortal, and that still without avail.

Settled down in Midnapore, disciples gathered round Chandra Lila, but her teaching must have been but half-hearted. The old gods were fast losing their hold on her heart.

The frauds practised by the Brahmins daunted and distressed her. In one place, for example, she was told that blood flowed on a certain day from an idol, and that worshippers receiving a piece of cloth which had been dipped in it would have their greatest wish granted, Chandra Lila, after waiting six months for this auspicious day, arrived at the temple too soon, and saw the priest dipping cloth into the blood of a goat which he had just killed. Gradually this and similar experiences drove her to the bitter conclusion that the priests were a "set of liars instead of holy men."

Their avarice was as repellent to her as their lack of candour. At one shrine, after she had given the usual offering, the Brahmin caught hold of the one garment that she was wearing and, cutting away half, took it from her by force.

It must have been about now that Chandra Lila first came into touch with preachers of the Gospel. Missionaries of the American Free Baptist Community were teaching a woman with whom she was acquainted. One day Chandra Lila found her reading a Christian book, and her interest was quickly aroused.

Then two missionaries called to see the celebrated priestess. "There are white women at your door," she was told, perhaps in accents of disgust. "Shall we send them away, Mother?"

"No, no!" Chandra Lila snatched at hope like a drowning man at a straw. "Let them come in," she said decisively.

So they entered and sat down, and brought to that weary and heavy-laden soul, tidings of great joy. Chandra Lila listened with bright eyes and parted lips to the story of Jesus and His love. She bought a Bible for eight annas, and read it day and night. She had been in the habit of reading Hindu scriptures to her disciples. One day she began to read to them from the Bible instead. This created a stir. The simple women, to be sure, were pleased, but among the men there was suspicion, murmuring, open disapproval.

"This new book is a good book," said Chandra Lila, and continued to read. Perhaps she quickly found the words "Whoso drinketh of this water shall thirst again," and to her they needed no commentary. What a thrill must have passed through her as she read on, "Whoso drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst."

Meantime, Christians continued to visit her, and she continued to welcome them eagerly. At last her Hindu disciples revolted, and entreated her to mix with foreign out-castes no more.

"I have suffered many things for the Hindu gods," she quietly retorted, "but until I heard of Jesus Christ I could find no peace of soul."

Later she went to live in a room in a Christian teacher's house, a defiance of etiquette which reduced her Hindu friends almost to despair. A crowd gathered to entreat her to return. Her frightened Christian friend whispered to her to hide herself. Instead, Chandra Lila walked out on to the verandah and faced the throng. They cried out to her to return to their

midst. She, however, beckoned to the trembling Christian teacher.

"Sister, bring me water," she said firmly and clearly. Then amid a horrified hush she took the cup from those "unclean" out-caste hands and drained it before their eyes. There was a groan of anger and disgust. A man spat toward the house. Then the crowd melted slowly away.

The Rajah, hearing that something was amiss, sent a royal elephant to fetch her. The *mahout* was met with the news that he had come too late.

"What?" he exclaimed, "is she dead?"

"No," came the reply, "she is worse than dead. She has broken her caste, and joined the Christians."

So it came to pass that Chandra Lila found the peace for which she had sought in vain so long.

Her pilgrim days were not, however, over. She was still to pass with aching feet up and down the dusty highways of India, no longer seeking for God, but telling other weary ones how He may be found.

After her Baptism she began to teach others, but she could not settle down to ordinary school or Zenana work. She was set free to go whither she would, and great crowds would gather to listen to her. All day she would travel and teach, scarcely stopping for the briefest rest. At night she would cook for herself, and eat her simple meal before she slept. Her eager spirit quickly drove her to "regions beyond." She used to stay away from the Mission for a month at a time, never asking for money, but trusting simply to God to supply her needs. She lacked nothing, for her hearers would ask if she were hungry, and if she answered,

"Yes," they were glad to share with her their curry and rice.

Some of those who listened to her message believed, and renounced idolatry. If in consequence they were out-casted, she never hesitated to take them in and care for them; sure that the God Who supplied her needs would provide for them also.

One of her Christian pilgrimages lasted for several years. She visited the holy places where she had sought peace in vain, and proclaimed to wondering throngs of devotees the true way of salvation. It is not surprising that the Brahmins hired roughs to attack her. When she saw them with stones in their hands she said: "Throw them if you will, but you will hurt yourselves, not me. I do not wish God to punish you."

A man once threatened to beat her Christ with his stick. "He will not break to pieces," she answered calmly. "You cannot destroy our God. He is not made of clay."

Her kindness mingled with fearlessness always disarmed opposition. At a big religious fair in Nepal she was arrested for distributing Christian literature. When the magistrate learned that she herself was Nepalese, he gave permission for her to present good books to her own people.

It was while she was in Nepal that she had the joy of leading her own brother into the light. This brother had previously visited her in Bengal, had listened with deep attention to the Gospel, and returned home carrying a Bible, the gift of one of the missionaries. When she went to him in his own home she found him very ill. He confessed to her that he believed in Jesus, and asked, "Do you think He will receive and have me?" She replied, "That is just what He died to do."

The brother regretted that it was too late for him to come out openly, but expressed an eager wish for Baptism. It was out of the question that a pastor could be brought to that remote spot, and after reflection Chandra Lila decided that it was her duty to administer the rite. As she knelt beside her brother, and poured the water on his head in the Triune Name of love, a sweet smile overspread his face. When he died very soon afterwards, Chandra Lila was anxious that his body should be buried with Christian rites.

Naturally enough, his Hindu friends turned a deaf ear to her pleas, and carried the body to the burning ghat. Torrential rain, however, frustrated all their attempts to set fire to the funeral pyre, and at last Chandra Lila stepped forward and claimed that God, in answer to her prayer, was preventing the fulfilment of the Hindu ceremony.

"Desist," she exclaimed, "before God in some dreadful way prevents you from fulfilling your purpose." Over-awed, they yielded; and Chandra Lila herself read over the remains of her dear one words which spoke of the "sure and certain hope" of the Christian faith.

In spite of the terrible hardships of her earlier life, she was able to continue her ministrations as an itinerant Christian preacher for thirty years. The common people heard her gladly, and the educated classes were deeply impressed by her knowledge.

On one occasion, when she had easily refuted arguments brought by a crowd of women, a Hindu exclaimed, "These females know nothing," and brought to her an erudite Brahmin pundit.

Chandra Lila greeted him pleasantly as an old friend, and explained to her surprised audience that

this priest was actually her disciple. She, in her Hindu days, had been the teacher who initiated him into the mysteries of his craft. It is small wonder that her witness was greatly used of God.

One day an Indian Christian gentleman came up to her, and after a respectful salutation asked if she remembered him. Fourteen years previously, at a Hindu festival, she had proclaimed Christ to a group of Brahmins who, after vainly trying to silence her by argument, had gone away, one by one. A young lad had lingered behind and confessed to her his own unrest of heart. She had urged him to seek the truth in Christ.

"I am that young man," the stranger explained, and he told how, after two years of uncertainty, he had sought instruction and baptism, and had become a professor in a Christian college.

Another among many whom she had the joy of guiding into the way of peace, was an educated Bengali girl, who at an early age was discovered to be suffering from leprosy. Her parents, who loved her dearly, refused at first to believe the dreadful truth, but a second doctor confirmed the verdict, forbade marriage, and strongly advised segregation.

The heart-broken parents consented at last to send her to a leper asylum, and here the poor child, "weeping day and night," dragged out a hopeless and miserable existence. One day she was invited to join others in listening to a woman preacher. A frail-looking, grey-haired widow stood up to preach; she appeared a very ordinary person until she opened her lips. Then her face shone with a heavenly light, and her voice took on an almost supernatural power.

Like cold water to thirst-parched lips came the Good

News to the leper girl. Chandra Lila did not preach one sermon and go away; she stayed beside her, and "set her heart" on leading that lost lamb, hopeless and distraught as she was, into the fold of the Good Shepherd. So life became for the leper girl no longer a waste, howling wilderness, but a road, steep and stony perhaps, but not solitary: a road on which she need walk "never alone," and to which she could lead other sad souls—a road which led straight to the City of God.

In her old age her missionary friends wished to build Chandra Lila "a house to die in." She expostulated vigorously, urging that her death might take place in a train or boat, or in some lonely jungle. They told her that they only wanted her to have a place in which she might rest when she felt tired, and at last she consented. When they showed her the site they had chosen, in a secluded grove of mango trees, she protested again.

"Build it by the roadside," she said, "so that when I am too old and weak to walk, I may crawl to the door and tell the Good News to the people as they pass by." So it came to pass that almost until the day she died she used to sit in her doorway and tell the wayfarers who went by how she had found Him Whom her soul loved, and had sat down under His shadow with great delight and found His fruit sweet to her taste.

One day Christian women coming to minister to her found her lying still.

"All is bright," she whispered; "I have no fear. Look at the messengers who have come to carry me up to God."

So the angels lifted her over the threshold; she rested from her labours, and her works do follow her.

CHAPTER II

PUNDITA RAMABAI

*Will she fight on, 'gainst every ill?
Brave every storm? Stand fast,
Her lofty mission to fulfil
With courage to the last?*

E. MANUEL, translated by TORU DUTT.

IF the Protestant churches had ever adopted the custom of canonising persons of outstanding devotion, sanctity, and power (and what a noble army of confessors and martyrs they could muster), they would surely have accorded a halo to that wonderful woman known to us as Pundita Ramabai. Her story has been often told in print. She was born in 1858 and spent her childhood in a forest hermitage, where her parents had some years earlier taken refuge from the wrath of a community incensed at the father's temerity in teaching his child-wife Sanscrit. To impart this sacred tongue to a low-caste person, or to a woman, is sacrilege to an orthodox Brahmin. Ramabai's father, Ananta Sastri, himself a Brahmin scholar and saint who had spent years in pilgrimage to the holy places and in the study of Sanscrit literature, defied orthodox opinion on this latter point.

When, at about the age of forty-five, and soon after his second marriage, he was called upon to defend his position before a jury of four hundred Hindu pundits and priests, he brought forward a mass of evidence to prove that no such prohibition was laid down in the

Sanskrit scriptures; but although he is said to have silenced his judges, he was still forced to retire to the wilds, and there, amid the protecting fastnesses of his jungle home he first taught his young wife and later his brilliant little daughter, Ramabai, the forbidden and forbidding language.

Ramabai drank in learning like water. Her power of memorising was amazing. At twelve years old she could recite from memory 18,000 Sanskrit verses. She also became conversant with four of the living languages of India. Probably she drank in also the secrets of Nature, and learned to sense the presence of the one ever-present God, amid the marvels and beauties of His handiwork.

At one time Ramabai's father had been under the patronage of the Maharajah, who had treated him with great generosity, and even in the forest home disciples flocked to the saintly scholar for instruction in Sanskrit. But a time came when friends and funds failed and food supplies became scanty, and the family were forced to leave the forest and go on pilgrimage. From that time the three children (two sisters and a brother) toured India on foot with their parents. They must have endured, probably uncomplainingly, many hardships and privations. Their wanderings took them to places as far apart as Cape Comorin in Ceylon and Badrinath in the Himalayas. They saw the sacred cities with their unnumbered shrines and thronging worshippers, their manifest glories, and their hidden shames. Ananta Sastri would tell the strange tales of Hindu mythology in sonorous Sanskrit for the entertainment of illiterate crowds who willingly paid to listen. When his voice failed for weariness his little daughter took up the story. Thus early she became an

object of amazement and superstitious reverence to the throngs who gathered about her.

While she was yet in her teens an appalling famine, still remembered with shuddering, swept the country. The family endured terrible privations. Once they lived for eleven days on leaves and small wild dates.

There came an hour when the father in desperation avowed his intention of drowning himself. As he took farewell of his family, he said to Ramabai, "My youngest, my most beloved child, I have given you into the hands of our God, and to Him alone must you belong."

The girl never forgot those words of solemn dedication. The heroism of her brother, who offered to do any kind of coolie's work to save his parents, deterred the poor old man from suicide, but he succumbed shortly afterwards, and then Ramabai had the pain of seeing her adored mother and her only sister die lingeringly of sheer starvation.

Marvellously Ramabai survived, with the young brother who was all that was left her to cherish. After further fruitless pilgrimages of which Ramabai records that they found nothing but greed and fraud, the two young people found their way to Calcutta. Here Ramabai began quickly to compel the notice of scholars and philosophers. Such a phenomenon had never before crossed their line of vision—a woman, young, unmarried, unveiled, who equalled in learning and intellectual grasp the deepest Hindu thinkers of her time. Many must have disapproved profoundly of this small, proud, fearless female, who faced great crowds of the ruling sex, and expounded to them their own Sanscrit scriptures with so much power. At this time Ramabai was, in name at least, an orthodox Hindu. Almost reluctantly one imagines, under the



PUNDITA RAMABAI

compulsion of her amazing intellect, the Sanscrit scholars of Bengal bestowed on her the title of *Pundita*, Mistress of Learning. She was the first, and possibly the only woman ever to receive this distinction.

Her generous and active spirit soon became profoundly dissatisfied with the religion of her people. On her pilgrimages she had become acquainted with its cruder aspects of cruelty and covetousness. She wanted something holier and more humane, and she was fain to champion the cause of the oppressed and imprisoned women of India. Before she could do so effectually, however, she had, through much tribulation, to enter the Kingdom.

Sorrow after sorrow came upon her. Her only remaining relative, the brother who had shared with her and survived—probably through her ministrations—the horrors of the famine, died. But this was not all.

In 1880 a Bengali lawyer, an educated man who appreciated her talents and qualities, made her an offer of marriage, rather astonishingly, as she was beyond the age usually approved for a bride. She accepted the offer, but found only a brief relief from her loneliness, for her husband died of cholera within two years, leaving her with one little baby girl, Monorama, who grew up to follow in her mother's footsteps.

Ramabai did not give way to repining. She resolved to dedicate the remainder of her life to her suffering sisters, and, with fearless courage, commenced a campaign in favour of female education and of a higher marriage age for girls, which attracted much attention and naturally a great deal of orthodox opposition. She lectured in Poona and the surrounding district, and founded a society of influential high-caste ladies pledged to the furtherance of these aims.

Called at about this time before the Education Commission of 1883, she gave evidence which caused a far-reaching sensation. She described herself as "the child of a man who had to suffer a great deal on account of advocating female education," and spoke burningly of the hostility of selfish men. "In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred the educated men of this country are opposed to female education and the proper position of women. . . . It is evident that women, being one-half of the people of this country, are oppressed and cruelly treated by the other half." The Pundita's appeal for medical aid for women deeply impressed Queen Victoria, and led to the founding of the Dufferin Hospitals. Ramabai had hoped to be a doctor herself, but had been prevented by the growing deafness from which she suffered.

Ramabai's faith in Hinduism was now completely gone; her hungry heart cried out for satisfaction, and at last her great unrest "tossed her to the breast" of the Shepherd Who had long been following her seeking footsteps. One of those who helped her most at this important period of her life was the Rev. Nehemiah Goreh, father of Lakshmi Goreh, the hymn writer. In an effort to meet certain of her intellectual difficulties he wrote one of his most important books: *Is there any Proof that Christianity is a Divinely-given Religion?*

On the advice of wise Christian friends, amongst whom was Francina Sorabji, her close friend, she went to England, spending some time with the Wantage Sisterhood. One of the Sisters "became my spiritual mother, and to her and to Miss Beale, the Principal of Cheltenham Ladies' College, I owe an everlasting debt of gratitude."

The time came at length when the Pundita became

fully convinced of the truth of Christianity, and ready to confess her faith in Baptism. Her decision was strengthened by seeing the loving efforts of Christian women to reclaim their fallen sisters. "When I saw the works of mercy carried on I began to realise a real difference between Hinduism and Christianity. . . . I was hungry for something better than the Hindu Shastras gave. I found it in the Christian Bible and was satisfied."

So Ramabai and her little daughter Monorama were baptised in 1883, and remained in England, studying, until invited to America in 1886. Here the little Indian lady, with her simple dress—the widow's white *sari*—her simple habits, her strict vegetarian diet, her calm, strong face and her stirring message, made a profound impression.

Returning to India well equipped with funds wherewith to build up work for the uplift of her suffering countrywomen, she was followed by the prayer and sympathy of the Church in two continents. Determined to dedicate the remainder of her life to the service of her sisters, and encouraged by her friend, Francina Sorabji, she immediately opened a Widows' Home, which contained at first only one widow. How quickly and amazingly her "home" grew and prospered until it became a large and well-equipped centre, known as "Mukti"—"Salvation"—is a well-known story.

This great "garden city," which still caters for women and children of all castes and classes, had at one time a population of nearly two thousand. A herd of a hundred cattle supplied the huge family with milk. Many wells were dug to provide water, and the surrounding fields, cultivated largely by the women themselves, yielded rice and vegetables.

At first Ramabai received support from enlightened Hindus, for the Home was a charitable, rather than a missionary institution, and Ramabai never deliberately proselytised. She gave love and shelter to the needy, the imperilled, and the wandering; and left her great family absolutely free to worship as they desired.

There is something infinitely touching in the picture of her at this time, calling her little daughter to her morning by morning for family prayers. She did not invite anyone else to come, but she left the doors open. One by one the girls and women joined her. At first they shyly peeped from behind curtains; then they stood in the entrance. Then they sat down to listen to the Word of Life; and at last kneeled all about her, their faces bowed to the ground, and shared in her devotions. Christ in Ramabai, the Hope of Glory, drew these wistful, ignorant souls like a magnet.

When her converts began to ask for baptism there was displeasure among her supporters. Not only Hindu but American friends began to withdraw their support.

Ramabai, however, was undismayed. She had learned by this time to realise the presence of Christ in a new way. In the first instance, she had embraced Christianity because it was better than Hinduism, and held out a hope of salvation. Gradually she realised that more was needed, and after a period of restlessness and distress, her burden was rolled away. She accepted salvation and the Presence of God not as future hopes, but as present experiences, and became serenely happy. With a mind at rest she cast all her care upon God, and never once did He fail to supply every need of her gigantic and growing work.

The great garden city must have required a tremendous amount of practical organisation, with its

well-equipped schools, its agricultural activities, its manifold industries, and its personnel of untrained, illiterate, often physically or mentally unfit, girls and women, whose one passport to admission was their desperate need.

“Mukti” was nothing less than a standing miracle, and at the centre of it, controlling, moulding, guiding the vast community by her personal influence, stood a small, sensitive, highly-cultured, rather delicate woman who combined great spirituality with matter-of-fact common sense. This latter virtue, often missing in the saint, was shown in many ways. She believed, for instance, that every woman should know how to prepare food palatably, and was herself a skilled cook, and fond of making delicious sweetmeats.

But it showed itself, too, in moments when great wisdom was needed. When, after special meetings, a wave of rather emotional revival swept Mukti from end to end, and the girls flocked down to the river-side clamouring for baptism, Ramabai was ready for the emergency. She calmed and comforted and admonished her flock, dwelling herself day and night “under the shadow of the Almighty.”

Such a candle as Ramabai had lighted could not be “hid under a bushel.” Government officials, whom Ramabai sometimes found a trial because of their insistence on certain improvements and safeguards, were deeply impressed by what they saw at Mukti, “an oasis amid the waste places of India’s poverty, disease and misery”—a place where the unwanted widow, the blind, the fallen, the sad, found love and sympathy. It was they who saw to it that her wonderful work was recognised; the Kaiser-i-Hind Medal, which is given “for merit alone,” being bestowed on her.

Toward the end of her life Ramabai suffered increasingly from deafness, and began to live more apart, communing much with God, and spending time in making a fresh translation of the Bible into Marathi.

The road for her "wound uphill all the way," for her beloved daughter, Monorama, to whom she had hoped to bequeath her life-work, was called Home in 1921, a year before her mother. God raised up workers, however, and she was able to leave every post filled, and everything in order, when she herself quietly and willingly laid down her own part of it. At dawn one April morning her gallant spirit passed in sleep beyond the narrow stream of death. But though the tired body passed from sight, the spirit of the Pundita lives on, and the remarkable growth of the emancipation of Indian women during the last decade is rooted in her flaming enthusiasm and her practical service. "She set up a ferment in Hindu society, the effects of which are not yet exhausted."* The example she gave of faith and courage, as well as her executive ability which "stands unparalleled in India," has called forth similar characteristics in the reformers who have followed her. She summed up her attitude to life in a "golden" sentence: "Depending altogether on our Father, God, we have nothing to fear, nothing to lose, and nothing to regret."

Surely for Ramabai "the banks beyond the River were full of horses and chariots come down from above to accompany her to the city gate. And at her departure the children wept. . . ."

* *Pandita Ramabai*. Nichol Macnicol.

PART II
MOTHERS

"I have been to the best theological college in the world, my mother's bosom."

SADHU SUNDAR SINGH.



FRANÇINA SORABJI

CHAPTER III

FRANCINA SORABJI

*“Wherever in the world I am, in whatsoe’er estate,
I have a fellowship with hearts to keep and cultivate,
And a work of lowly love to do for the Lord on Whom I wait.”*

A. L. WARING.

“THEY brought unto Him also their babes that He should touch them.”

The divine intention with regard to holy matrimony, “they twain shall become one,” is very little understood or practised in India: wives are too often despised slaves in their husbands’ homes; but on the other hand, the relations of mothers to their children put some of our modern Western standards to shame.

An Indian woman lives for motherhood. Her baby’s life—certainly her boy baby’s—is more precious to her than her own. In the nature of things—at least as they were till recently—she has no interests outside her home. Where he makes it possible she loves and worships her husband, but it is on her children that the warm wealth of her devotion is out-poured. There is, perhaps, something of animal instinct in her self-sacrificing care, and often a tendency to over-indulgence, which may prove harmful to character. The best mothers, however, are ambitious for the highest welfare, so far as they understand it, of their children. What they have they give. Their devotion in times of sickness is unsurpassed. A mother cannot bear other arms to hold and nurse her child, and she is prepared to watch over a sick babe unweariedly, by day and by night, taking

no care or thought for herself, forgetting even her food.

A high-caste convert, speaking of the influence of her own mother, a strict and orthodox Hindu widow, who fasted frequently and rigorously, said: "She ruled us with her eyes. She always said, 'The discipline of the eye is better than the discipline of the mouth or of the hand.'" This pious mother was not a Christian, probably she never heard the Gospel, but she died with the name of God, "the Adorable One," on her lips. Devoted to her children, she earned their respect as well as their love.

The influence of women such as these has been enormous. The young Indian male might be trained to hold womanhood as a whole in contempt, but he made one exception. The devotion of Eastern sons to their mothers has always been very beautiful. When a youth goes forth to fetch home a bride, his mother in a time-honoured formulary asks him, "Where art thou going, my son?" With a gesture of profound respect and gratitude he replies, "Mother, I go to fetch a hand-maiden for thee."

Sadhu Sundar Singh, the Indian Christian saint, used to bear witness to the devotion, piety, and purity of character of his mother. Her one ambition for her youngest and dearest child was that he should become in deed and in truth a holy man. The example of this beloved mother always tallied with her precepts. Her ceremonial religious observances began before dawn. Every simplest activity of her domestic life was somehow dedicated to God. Yet her religion was very practical, not an affair of superstition or ritual only. Every morning she made a point of definitely helping some poor person in need. Her influence on her saintly son showed itself all through his life.

This Sikh lady, who lived and died a non-Christian, is still typical of many and many a more obscure Indian mother who, amid the seclusion of her curtained existence, devotes her whole being to the service of her husband, her children and her God.

* * * *

That gifted and courageous lady lawyer and author, Miss Cornelia Sorabji, has given us in her book, *Therefore*, an exquisite picture of such a high-souled Indian mother.

Francina Santya lost her own mother in early childhood and became the adopted daughter of an English gentlewoman, who loved and cherished her devotedly and gave her an education which blended in almost perfect proportions the culture of East and West. In 1853 she was married to Sorabji Kharsedji, a Parsee convert and a very gallant gentleman, who had passed through almost incredible hardships and sufferings "for the sake of the Name."

The married couple settled down at Nasik, and their home was "surely among the busiest and happiest in all India." Francina was a devoted wife, a wonderful household manager, and an ideal mother to her seven daughters and one surviving son.

In the early days, at any rate, her task was difficult. Her husband had forfeited a fortune when he became a Christian, and was not well off. The young mother made her children's clothes, nursed and "physicked" them when they were sick, and gave them the elements of education. She had had no "training" but she was a born teacher. "You were taught," says her daughter, "through your eyes and ears and senses. Nothing was

dull repetition; all was thrilling, full of life and movement."

Home duties did not prevent Francina Sorabji from being a mother to the whole village. Among other activities there, she organised industrial work for girls on an important scale.

She was very sincere, very simple, very fearless, and always absolutely the same in her flawless courtesy to rich and poor. Those who came to her for sympathy knew that it would be given to them "ungrudgingly and with both hands." She was extraordinarily kind and forbearing. Her daughter bears witness that it was difficult to remember any occasion on which she reproached or even insinuated accusation toward any one. She never "measured your wrong by her right," and yet those who sought her went away conscious of their own shortcomings and failures, sorry but never despairing, and quite convinced that it was worth while beginning again.

She must have been very patient, for she had a tendency to that "inexorable efficiency" which can become such a trying virtue. Nothing in her sight was too small or dull to be worth taking pains over. She expected others to share her standards, and yet, so great were her tact and sympathy, she never gave offence.

Sorrow came to her. She lost her first-born child, a son. She mourned, of course, but with no abandonment of unrestrained grief. She never brooded or complained. "Trouble to her was but the reminder that there was service to be done in the world, for others in trouble, work which perhaps her own sorrow might help her to do with greater understanding."

After this first great bereavement she had six daughters in succession, and as each one arrived she

was the subject of condolences from her acquaintances. She only smiled and said: "My daughters shall be as sons, and shall work for India."

How wonderfully has her prophetic ambition found fulfilment!

The Sorabjis had at this time no definite connection with any missionary society, but they were both themselves missionaries, in the highest sense of the word. Francina "held her own faith as her most precious possession, and simply could not help wanting to share it with others." Yet her zeal was never misunderstood. She would go about in the villages pioneering in what we now call "welfare work," and gathering the people about her to give them her message of love and healing.

A terrible famine visited the country at one time. To places where the distress was most acute Mrs. Sorabji would go, and in the most casual way, as one might bring home a new pet, would return with some scrap of starving humanity in her arms. Her famine babies were tenderly bathed by herself with warm water, carried out to lie in the sun, and fed with the utmost care and regularity. Years afterwards she would be accosted by bearded men, or shyly blushing wives and mothers with the proud explanation, "I was one of your famine children."

Later, when the family had moved to Poona, there was a terrible and unexpected outbreak of plague. Francina Sorabji at once set to work to allay panic, encourage sanitation, and overcome the prejudices which made the Government remedial measures abhorrent to the orthodox. When plague serum reached India, the rumour got about that the townsfolk were being "inoculated with Christianity."

Although in her own opinion "the best inoculation is fearlessness," Mrs. Sorabji accepted this new remedy for herself, and then went from house to house trying to allay the suspicions of the terrified and ignorant, and coaxing them to submit to the injections.

While they lived at Poona, the Sorabjis founded the Victoria High School, an institution run on the novel lines of co-education of both sex and race. With acute foresight they realised that on co-operation depended the welfare and progress of India, and strove to blend in the curriculum what was best in the ideals of East and West.

During those busy years at Poona the family had a country cottage to which they used to go for rest and recreation occasionally. The children, of course, delighted to spend holidays in this wooded spot, dwelling in tents pitched about the cottage.

One day the mother returned from a trip to this hermitage accompanied by a Hindu holy woman, a picturesque figure in the saffron-hued garment of asceticism, with all her possessions in a little bundle tied to her pilgrim's staff.

This strange being had run out of the woods, and cast herself at the feet of the "Mother Lady" with a tale of banishment and woe. The wide sympathies of Francina Sorabji flowed out spontaneously to the wanderer. She brought her home, to the excitement and amusement of the family, arranged for her board and lodging on strictly caste lines (the pilgrim was, of course, an orthodox Hindu), and made provision for her religious and secular instruction.

For a few months she stayed with her new friends. Then one day suddenly "a wild figure rushed into the breakfast-room, and fell at the feet of her benefactress.

'The road calls me. I go,' she exclaimed dramatically, and vanished, never to be seen again."

Francina Sorabji was not the woman to regret her quixotic generosity. She cheered herself with the thought that the pilgrim had taken with her a vernacular Testament, which she now knew how to read.

In 1887 Mrs. Sorabji visited England and spoke from many platforms on India and her manifold needs. She had great gifts as a speaker; her message, and the personality behind it, made a deep and lasting impression. She had by this time come to be regarded as a noted educationist, whose opinions were in demand among experts.

As was previously noted, Pundita Ramabai was among those who came under Mrs. Sorabji's influence. It was she who persuaded the Pundita to make the visit to England which culminated in her conversion to the Christian faith, and who later helped and encouraged Ramabai in starting and carrying on her Widows' Home.

Some years later Mr. Sorabji resigned his Government post and sought ordination, after which he worked as an honorary itinerating missionary until his death.

Meantime, the seven daughters and the one son grew up; all having received an excellent and comprehensive education. The ideals of service to their country and their God had been set before them from early childhood, but the choice of profession was left to themselves. As one by one they went to England to complete their studies, their mother kept closely in touch with them all. Even in her old age we are told that she wrote five letters daily to the five children scattered about India, and three weekly letters to the three at that time in England.

Mr. Sorabji died in 1894. In his early days, when he rose up and left all to follow a crucified Master, he had been pursued by the most bitter persecution. But that Master gave him much more even in this life, and his death-bed was a scene of peace and triumph.

His wife survived him sixteen years. She spent her last days at Nasik, near the village in which she had lived as a bride, and which had now become an important civil station. Her days were still spent for others, and all her neighbours came to her with their joys and sorrows. She kept open house for the lonely and depressed, whether Indian or European. A couple of destitute Parsee babies, which were brought to her door one day, were adopted by her "without a moment's hesitation."

Her own Home Call came in 1910, and she had a very quiet crossing. Because she was tired, not ill, she was persuaded to stay in bed for a rest, and in a fortnight's time she passed on into her eternal rest, with "no sadness of farewell," for the end was unexpected. Only a daughter, keeping faithful vigil, had a vision of the Christ stooping over the bed on which her dear one was so peacefully resting. "He took her by the hand, and she arose and followed Him . . ."

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No biography of Francina Sorabji could be complete without some further mention of the daughters of whom she foretold that they should be "as sons" and should work for India.

The names of at least five of these daughters are household words in three continents—Cornelia, Mary, Lena, Susie (a short memoir of whose life appears



MARY SORABJI
ALICE PENNELL
née SORABJI

CORNELIA SORABJI
LENA SORABJI

elsewhere in these pages), and Alice, widow of the late Dr. Theodore Pennell of the Church Missionary Society.

Cornelia, the pioneer woman barrister of the Empire, has accomplished much in establishing the legal rights and forwarding the social uplift of Indian women and girls. She is perhaps the most widely known of the sisters.

Mary Sorabji is well known and well loved throughout England by reason of her tireless activity in speaking on behalf of the work of the Zenana missions. Through her inimitable gift of picturesque speech she has interpreted to the women of this country the needs and aspirations of Indian women, and it is no exaggeration to say that the interest of their western sisters in the brave upward struggle of the Indian woman of to-day is largely due to her personal influence. This work of interpreting to each other the women of the two countries came at the close of her life-work for Indian girls.

Lena, whose Home Call came in 1935, also occupied a place in the affections of a wide circle in England as in India. As a girl she was her mother's right hand in the Victoria High School and also in the subsidiary schools founded by Mrs. Sorabji in Poona. Eventually she succeeded her mother as Principal.

Lena's gifts and activities were amazing. In addition to controlling the higher school and preparing candidates for the Matriculation Examination or the Bombay University, she taught French, needlework and lace-making, Swedish drill and Eurythmics, in both the upper and lower schools. She established the Urdu Mission School for Mahommedan poor children and taught Mahommedan secluded women how to

maintain themselves by home industries, giving up her spare time to their activities.

Her artistic genius included painting, book-binding and tooling, and the classic art of telling stories and legends by movement.

After retirement from Poona, at the invitation of the Government of Bengal, she established a high school for Orthodox Hindu girls at Dacca, an achievement for which the Government recorded their appreciation.

Perhaps her greatest gift to England was her prayer life. She was a convinced believer in spiritual healing, and many a sufferer whose name was inscribed on her prayer list felt the influence and the uplift of her devoted intercession. Greatly beloved in more than one continent, her friends hope that her life will some day be written for their inspiration.

The youngest sister, Alice, chose the hard path of a woman medical pioneer in India. After taking her B.Sc. in Bombay she came to London, took her M.B., B.S. at the Royal Free Hospital, and then returned to take up work in the native State of Bhawalpur in Rajputana. Later she was appointed to the Staff of the Victoria Hospital for Women, Delhi. It was while she was stationed at Bhawalpur that it fell to Miss Sorabji to play the harmonium at a special service at which the visiting speaker was Dr. Pennell, who happened to be passing through on a preaching tour. Love at first sight was Dr. Pennell's lot that day, but it was not till some years later that his persistent wooing won the beautiful young doctor as his bride and co-worker. Something of their life-work together at Bannu, on the Frontier, has been told in Mrs. Pennell's biography of her husband.

When the Great War broke out, soon after Dr.

Pennell's death in 1912, Dr. Alice Pennell was placed in charge of the Freeman Thomas Hospital for Europeans, Bombay, and at the close of the War she was awarded the O.B.E for her services.

For a time she returned to Bannu to work with the C.M.S., and then took up private practice among the women and children of Delhi, by whom her skill and care have been greatly appreciated.

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These then are the "continuing witness" to the character and life-work of Kharsedji and Francina Sorabji: daughters of whom they—and India—may well be proud.

CHAPTER IV

SHURUTH MOHINI DATTA

A MOTHER about whom one would like to know more is Shodomini, the wife of Dr. Rama Charan Bose, whose four daughters became famous for their labours on behalf of the women and girls of North India.

Dr. Bose was one of "Alexander Duff's boys"—one among several splendid young Indians who were drawn to Christ through the influence of that great missionary. At first the seed grew secretly, but after taking his degree the young man went to the Punjab, and it was there that, when listening to the preaching of an Indian evangelist, he resolved to come out openly for Christ. After his Baptism he wrote to his father, telling him of the step he had taken, and requesting that his wife, Shodomini, and young daughter might be sent to him. The reply was a bitter and emphatic refusal. By his Baptism he had irrevocably out-casted himself; he must never expect to see his family again.

So Shodomini remained in her father-in-law's house, in seclusion and desolation akin to widowhood, for the deserted wife is an object of contempt. She was, however, kindly treated, and her lovely little daughter, Shuruth, was the pet of her grandfather and uncles.

Shuruth's earliest recollection was of being taken, as a tiny child of three, to Kali Ghat, the famous shrine of Calcutta. Here her mother put rice and flowers into her little hand, and carried her up the steps. But no sooner did her eyes rest on the hideous figure of Kali than Shuruth buried her head in her mother's neck,

and steadfastly resisted every effort to make her look up.

"Let be," said the kindly old priest, "'tis but a baby. She is frightened and does not understand."

But in after years Shuruth herself averred that it was not fear only that influenced her. "Something within me made me feel," she declared, "that I could never bow down to that idol. No attempt was ever made to take me again."

At the age of five little Shuruth was married, but she was not separated from her mother. Five years later her boy husband died. She had known him only as a playmate, and probably her mother, who well knew that life-long shame and suffering attend widowhood in an orthodox Hindu home, wept more than did the child herself. Her kind uncles sought to console her and to lighten her burden by teaching her to read, both in her own language and in English.

* * * *

Some seven years after his father's refusal to allow his wife to join him, Dr. Bose, now Civil Surgeon in Goojranwale, called on an English friend for advice. Opening his heart to him, he confessed that he could no longer bear the intolerable loneliness of his position.

"My Hindu wife is dead to me," he explained. "I loved her, but she will not return to me. Does the Christian law forbid me, in such circumstances, to marry a Christian bride?"

"Write once more," advised his friend. "I know your previous letters have been in vain, but write once more before you take any other step."

Dr. Bose followed this wise counsel, and in due course a reply came which informed him of his father's death, and added that his brothers, to save themselves

from further responsibility, were willing for him to fetch away his wife and daughter.

Dr. Bose immediately accepted the opportunity, and in a very short time the little family were together again. What a strange reunion that must have been! The wife was surely frightened of her outlawed husband, and he may have been not a little timid in approaching his orthodox Hindu spouse. One feels, however, that she must have loved him through those long years of separation, for if she had been unwilling to rejoin him, her Hindu friends would hardly have consented to let her go. He, too, had been faithful amid all his loneliness, and must have welcomed her, his "most sweet and gracious lady," and the beautiful unknown daughter, as gifts from God.

Although her mother was still a Hindu, Shuruth was sent to a newly-founded Christian girls' school. She was then "a fine girl of twelve years, and she made herself at home at once." Endowed with great uprightness of character, an open mind and a thirst for knowledge, she became quickly absorbed in her new life, and made rapid progress in her studies.

Before very long the Bible lessons began to take hold of the girl's imagination, but her acceptance of Christianity was by no means mechanical. At first she clung resolutely to the teaching that she had received from her uncles, but gradually her reverent interest in the Gospel story deepened.

"Jesus is like no other Teacher," she said thoughtfully one day. "He forgave sins, and He cared for women, even for those who were sad and sinful."

Soon after this she began to long for Baptism, and after due preparation she was baptised in her fourteenth year.

It must have been a great joy to Dr. Bose when, at about this same time his wife, "a lady of exquisite refinement and lowly and loving nature," also expressed an earnest desire for Baptism, and with her baby Mona was received into the Church. How little did she foresee what a power for good her little Mona was to be in the future.*

Time passed; Shuruth, "the eldest and tallest girl in the school," exerted a very gentle but powerful influence for good. One day she, with some other girls, asked for the use of a small room, in which they might hold a prayer-meeting. When it was suggested by the Principal that some teacher should help them the offer was firmly but politely refused, for "we know quite well how to pray," said Shuruth.

When Shuruth was seventeen, her mother died, and she took charge of her three little sisters until her father married again. Then she was free to take up some life-work, and was soon teaching in a school at Delhi. Shuruth was a widow, her husband having died in childhood, and had she and her mother remained with their Hindu relations she would have lived the "twilight life" that is the best the Hindu widow can hope for. But as a Christian she was free, and after some years of teaching she married a school-master, Mr. Noto Gopal Datta. Her short married life was spent at Peshawar, where she became the mother of two daughters and a son. While they were still very young her husband died, and, widowed for the second time, Shuruth returned to Lahore, and devoted herself to the education of her children.

But family cares did not absorb her entirely. She never forgot that a Christian's first duty is to win

* See Chapter IX.

others to Christ, and as her children grew up she gave more and more time to various branches of missionary work. As the years advanced she and her daughter Eva made their home with her younger sister, Mona Bose, her other daughter, Leila, being at work as a hospital nurse. From this centre she devoted herself to the evangelization of Hindu and Moslem women, and to the uplift and teaching of poor Christians.

Knowing the background of the Hindu home she was able to get into touch with high-caste Hindu women, and her "purdah parties" became very popular. Both she and her daughter had a wonderful gift of putting the shy Punjabi ladies at their ease.

A woman of culture and refinement and the highest literary tastes, Mrs. Datta was fond of giving good books as presents, and eagerly lent her own to her friends for study. We are not surprised to hear that she was a woman of prayer, and one who seemed conscious all the time of the Presence of God.

Prejudices, she had none; she would give herself wholeheartedly to any who sought her—Indian or European, Christian or non-Christian—so that "each one would believe that she was all in all to them only." So to her came enquirers with problems to be solved, converts needing encouragement, the sick and the sad.

"There was something in the look, in the very expression of the face, and the movement of the lips that dropped sympathetic words, which convinced the suffering and the afflicted that here was a heart to feel for affliction, a heart trained and disciplined in the school of suffering."

Shuruth Datta had indeed a profound regard for humanity, quite apart from creed, and believed all things good of others. No calumny or scandal seemed

to reach her; she looked for fine qualities in every one, and seemed to find them.

“It was an inspiration to meet Mrs. Datta,” writes one who knew and loved her. “It was worth much only to see her face light up with that smile we knew so well, which spoke of earnestness, of sympathy, of peace.” An Englishwoman who knew her long ago in Lahore remembers her as “the essence of graciousness.”

Shuruth Mohini Datta died of cholera in 1905, and three years later her devoted daughter, Eva, succumbed to the same disease. Her other daughter, Leila, who many years ago joined her aunt, Dr. Kheroth Bose, at Asrapur, is still at work there, while her son, “S. K. Datta,” has become a celebrity in contemporary Indian history.

So, by the grace of God, the life that might well have been lived in the seclusion and frustration meted out to Hindu widowhood, became a shining light by which many others have found the path to the life more abundant.

CHAPTER V

ANNA SATTHIANADHAN

It must be about ninety years ago that Mr. W. Cruikshanks, "a very highly esteemed, blind Eurasian gentleman," connected with the C.M.S., opened a Christian school for boys at Palamcottah. One of his scholars, a lad named Saththianadhan, was violently opposed to Bible study, and led his fellow-students in a threatened "strike"!

"If you go on teaching the Bible," he said to Mr. Cruikshanks, "we shall leave your school in a body."

"You may all leave if you choose," was the answer, "but give up teaching the Bible I never will!"

The pupils did not leave, and young Saththianadhan remained, to be gradually, even unwillingly, convinced of the truth of Christianity—a conviction that carried with it "severe mental conflict," for he was not prepared to forsake everything for Christ's sake.

But the time came when secret discipleship was not enough: the call to acknowledge his Master sounded ever more loudly, and at last he came out boldly on the side of Christ. His Baptism, in 1847, emptied the school, separated him from his family and his friends, and led to much persecution.

Young Saththianadhan began his Christian career at the age of seventeen as a teacher in a mission institution, and two years later he met and married Anna, daughter of the Rev. John Devasagayam, the first Indian Christian to be ordained to the ministry of the Church of England, and for nearly half a century connected with the C.M.S.

This marriage, though both husband and wife were very young according to western ideas, must have meant much to the youthful and greatly tried convert. Anna was a "born Christian" with four generations of Christian tradition behind her—the original convert forefather being in touch with the great pioneer missionary, Schwartz. She was well educated and soundly taught, and from childhood she had helped her father in his many-sided mission work, even accompanying him on his evangelistic tours. It followed therefore that she had a definite contribution to make to the upbuilding of the Christian character of her husband, and to his future plans for service.

With her encouragement and at the strong desire of his European friends, Mr. Sathianadhan decided in 1857 to train for Holy Orders, and two or three years later, after ordination, he was sent to Sriviluputhur, to work under the Rev. T. I. Ragland, of sainted memory. Here, in this atmosphere of consecrated service, and under Mr. Ragland's wise guidance, the two young people—still both well under thirty years of age—developed spiritually and mentally, while they threw their whole energies into the work of the extension of Christ's Kingdom in their own beloved land. Anna's special work at this time was the organization of a little school for Christian and non-Christian children, in which she herself taught.

In March 1863, Mr. Sathianadhan was appointed to the charge of the "C.M.S. congregation" in Madras, and here both husband and wife found their life work. Under their faithful ministry—for the two can hardly be separated—the Christian group in Madras, though small and weak at first, "composed chiefly of domestic servants," grew strong and virile, until, at the time

of Mr. Saththianadhan's death in 1896, it was one of the most influential Christian communities in South India.

To Anna Saththianadhan falls the honour of inaugurating in Madras that type of Christian service which has had incalculable results in India—the work of zenana visiting and teaching. It grew naturally out of a little school for Hindu girls which she held at her own house. *Purdah* mothers in some cases wished to meet the teacher of their children; and she herself wished to make the acquaintance of the parents of her scholars.

Her longing that these orthodox Hindu sisters of hers should have the Gospel message enabled her patiently to carry on her visiting, in spite of a great deal of discouragement both from the high caste women themselves and from their husbands. Six years later the C.E.Z.M.S.* took up the work that she had commenced, but placed her in sole charge of it; and for the remainder of her life—some thirty years—she undertook the voluntary oversight of and responsibility for the zenana visiting and teaching in some two hundred orthodox Hindu homes, as well as the staffing of several schools, some for caste girls and others for Christians.

As her daughters grew up they threw themselves wholeheartedly into their mother's labours. There must have been setbacks and failures, yet there was always an atmosphere of hopefulness and courage in the letters written by mother and daughters to friends in this country. They tell of many pupils confiding to them their secret belief in the one True God and in His Son Jesus Christ; they tell also how the Hindu staff of the schools was gradually replaced by Christians,

* The Church of England Zenana Missionary Society.

as more and more Indian girls were trained as teachers.

Mrs. Sathianadhan did not limit her service to these two activities, but ably seconded her husband in all his multifarious efforts to shepherd his growing flock, and to carry on aggressive mission work among their non-Christian neighbours; with results that can never, humanly speaking, be fully realised.

Their usefulness was not confined to their own country, for in 1878 they were invited by the C.M.S. to visit England. Here they spent happy and useful months, paying visits and making contacts which left a lasting impression on both: as they themselves made a deep impression on all whom they met. "His admirable and truly spiritual addresses in many parts of England created a deep impression," wrote Dr. Eugene Stock, "and his wife, whom he brought with him, won all hearts."

Full of fresh enthusiasm and joyous memories the Sathianadhans returned to take up their burden once more, continuing their "cure of souls" side by side for another twenty years.

One who as a young girl often visited their "parsonage," in the later days gives us a delightful glimpse into that consecrated and happy home.

"The Parsonage of Zion Church stands at the end of the long and narrow Chintadripettah Bazaar—narrow and thronged. Beyond the church lies an open tree-shaded place named Napier Park, after a former Governor, and then further on still, Fort St. George and the sea. The Parsonage has this European touch about it that it lies back from the road a few yards, sufficient to allow a little drive and a bank of shrubs to separate it from the dusty highway. Here, in comparative seclusion, yet easily accessible, the dignified

and aged Pastor could often be found seated on his narrow verandah talking to his men friends. They were enquirers perhaps, or the Indian workers under his guidance, or young men seeking counsel and advice. There frequently a young English girl would see him, and be courteously welcomed and taken indoors to his wife. The front room, with chairs and a sofa and tables and many tokens of refinement, told its own story of the daily life of its occupants. Here was quiet comfort and a place of welcome for friends. Here were reminders of the English journey the Pastor and his wife had undertaken, a real adventure in those far-off days. The inner part of the house was built in Indian fashion, round a square courtyard.

“So East and West met in the surroundings of this family to which East and West had contributed so much.

“There was much life in that home. The son, away studying in England, was always remembered; the daughters, before and after their marriages, took a real part in their mother’s work, and the little feet of grandchildren ran here and there in that atmosphere of love. Then there was a sweet younger daughter, Cornelia, called suddenly to her rest, and later on the keen interest of Krupa Saththianadhan’s writings.

“There is a fragrance in the memory of those long past days in a quieter, homelier India.”

Both Mr. and Mrs. Saththianadhan undertook literary work in an effort to provide wholesome literature for their flock. One of the best known commentaries on the New Testament in Tamil is by him, and he brought out also a Church History in English and Tamil. For ten years, at great pecuniary loss, he ran an influential monthly magazine, and for twenty years also, the

Mission School Magazine, intended for juvenile readers. Mrs. Saththianadhan, who with great humility referred to her literary efforts as "handbills," wrote at least two booklets which had a wide circulation among *purdah* ladies—*A Day in the Zenana*, and *A Good Mother*.

It must have been a great joy to Anna Saththianadhan when she found that her clever daughter-in-law, Krupabai, had marked literary ability. It is quite possible that she was encouraged to make her early efforts by the anxiety of her mother-in-law to provide wholesome literature for her pupils. But certain it is that her novels, *Saguna* and *Kamala*, written in perfect English, were excellent reading and had a wide vogue, the young authoress being flatteringly referred to as "the pioneer Indian lady novelist"!

Krupabai Khisty, the daughter of early Brahman converts, was received into the happy haven of the parsonage when she arrived in Madras to take up medical training. In *Saguna* she tells the story of her own reception at the Medical College of Madras—the first Indian woman to enter its portals—"when the whole body of students rose and cheered the delicate-looking girl as she entered."

Unfortunately ill-health stopped her medical career, but, after her marriage to Samuel Saththianadhan—who returned home from England while she was still at the parsonage and quickly fell in love with the clever though delicate girl—her genius found satisfaction in her literary career, which she pursued to the end of her short life.

It was her pen that described the Home Call of the beloved mother when at last the time of temporary separation came:

“It is over. . . . She had stepped into glory. It was only a step. I could almost see her pass. She had already reached the top of the hill. . . . Now the light and radiance that lay beyond the peak encircled her and there, before our very eyes, she seemed to step from the peak into heavenly glory. Methinks I almost saw her entering the golden gates with that soft diffident air of hers, wondering if so much sweetness, so much light, so much happiness, were really hers. The sight opened in a flood of light to my eyes, and angels closed round her bearing the palm leaves in their hands, and she with her bent head was whispering to herself her favourite words, ‘*Yan Vazhvu Yesuve!*’ My glory is Christ. Christ’s Presence came, she seemed to look up, but a cloud shut the whole scene from my eyes. The stars alone were shining and the beating and moaning hearts were around.”

A non-Christian paper—*The Hindu*—paid tribute to the “beautiful life” which had ended so serenely, praising her life-work in warm terms, and adding: “Her simplicity of character, her self-sacrificing love and care for others, her single-hearted devotion to her work, have attracted the notice of all with whom she came in contact. She occupied a unique place in the native Christian Church of Madras.”

* * * *

“Her works do follow her”—and perhaps the most significant tribute to Anna Saththianadhan’s memory is to be found in the fact that her sons, her daughters and their families have followed faithfully in her footsteps, and are giving increasingly valuable contributions to the life of their country.

Her eldest daughter, Harriet, married Mr. E. S.

Hensman, a man of the strictest uprightness and integrity, highly honoured in municipal affairs in Madras. They had a large family, but Mrs. Hensman found time almost to the last to carry on the work of superintending the Biblewomen and taking a personal share in zenana teaching. Mrs. Hensman's buoyant temperament and serene faith made her a welcome visitor wherever she went. She thoroughly enjoyed a joke, and always had a smile and a pleasant word for everyone.

Her charming and cultured daughter-in-law, Mrs. H. S. Hensman, *née* Mona Mitter, whose mother was the fourth daughter of Mrs. Bose, was, under the new Constitution, nominated by the Governor to the Madras Legislative Council, showing that Christian women are taking an increasing share in the public affairs of their country. Both she and her sister-in-law, Miss Hensman, are leaders in Y.W.C.A. circles in Madras—and indeed, further afield; for Mrs. Hensman was chosen to preside at a recent large international gathering of Christian women, held in Ceylon under the auspices of the Y.W.C.A., a duty which she carried through with conspicuous success.

On the passing of the Rev. W. T. Saththianadhan in 1895, Zion Church passed into the care of another son-in-law, the Rev. W. S. Clarke. His devoted and successful work in the parish was shared to the fullest degree by his wife Annie, the Saththianadhans' second daughter, who, with a family of three daughters and one son, yet found time for all the varied women's activities in connection with the Church; superintending the day schools as well as the Sunday schools, and, like her elder sister, not only finding time herself for

evangelistic work in the homes of Hindu neighbours, but setting other members of the congregation afire with a zeal for souls.

Mr. and Mrs. W. S. Clarke, too, have passed on, but the work at Chintadripettah is being carried on by their son, the Rev. S. Saththianadhan Clarke, a true and earnest Christian, who has in his wife, Ramabai, the daughter of Mr. Kadavayanagar, a Telugu convert, a true helpmeet; one who is in the spiritual succession to her grandmother-in-law, and who is carrying on her work.

The name of one more grandchild at least is well known in modern India, that of Padmini Saththianadhan, an established journalist. Some delightful biographies of Indian Christian women, written by her, have recently appeared in *The Sunday Statesman*, a secular paper which has a wide circulation in India.

So the torch lighted and held aloft by Anna Saththianadhan is still burning brightly as it is handed down from generation to generation.

PART III

EVANGELISTS

“He gave some to be . . . evangelists”

*In the secret of His presence how my soul delights to hide,
Oh, how precious are the lessons which I learn at Jesu's side!
Earthly cares can never vex me, neither trials lay me low;
For when Satan comes to tempt me, to the secret place I go.*

*When my soul is faint and thirsty, 'neath the shadow of His
wing
There is cool and pleasant shelter, and a fresh and crystal
spring;
And my Saviour rests beside me, as we hold communion sweet;
If I tried, I could not utter what He says when thus we meet.*

*Only this I know: I tell Him all my doubts and griefs and
fears;
Oh, how patiently He listens, and my drooping soul He cheers.
Do you think He ne'er reproves me? What a false friend He
would be
If He never, never told me of the sins which He must see!*

*Would you like to know the sweetness of the secret of the Lord?
Go and hide beneath His shadow; this shall then be your reward;
And whene'er you leave the silence of that happy meeting-place
You must mind and bear the image of the Master in your face.*

ELLEN LAKSHMI GOREH

CHAPTER VI

ELLEN LAKSHMI GOREH

IN a very small room in the C.M.S. Compound in Benares, a little Indian girl was born on September 11th, 1853. It was not till some weeks later that the mother, who never really recovered her strength, declared her desire for Baptism, though the father had been a Christian for some years.

In the journal of the C.M.S. missionary then in charge of the Compound we find the following entry:

“Dec. 1st, 1853. This morning I baptised dear Nehemiah and Lakshmi’s fine little girl. The poor mother is, I fear, dying. She has been sinking for the last month or more. But she is so peaceful and happy; it does one’s heart good to see her. She told me, when I came in from the district on Monday, that she knew she was a sinner. But she knew also that the blood of Jesus cleanses from all sin.”

Two days later we find the following: “Dear Lakshmi died a happy and glorious death last night about nine o’clock.”

The father of the “fine little girl” was the Rev. Nehemiah Goreh, a Mahratta Brahman of high family and rank, who has already been mentioned in these pages in connection with Pundita Ramabai, who owed much to his faithful teaching.

The story of his short married life was a romantic one. On his conversion to Christianity his wife’s family, also high-caste Brahmins, were so enraged that they took the

young wife home again and refused to let her return to him. "He used to call and see her," wrote his daughter many years after, in a short sketch of her own life, "but she would have nothing to do with him, and called him all sorts of low-caste names."

On her father's death her husband's Christian friends determined to get her back to him somehow, so they got together a band, armed with drums and musical instruments, also clubs and sticks for fear of interference, and marched to her mother's house. Happily the men of that strongly Brahmin quarter were at some public gathering, so no clash occurred. The young wife was "seized," and carried out to a *palki*, in which her husband sat waiting for her!

Perhaps she had secretly desired to return to him, in spite of her fear of breaking caste, for she appears to have accepted the position with equanimity. "Now," she said, "I cannot leave you" (the fact of being near him in the *palki* had automatically broken her caste), "but I will never, never be a Christian."

Her husband was too wise to talk much to her of Christianity; but as, in advance of her times, she was able to read, he gave her books which, together with his loving example, awakened an interest in Christianity which grew ever stronger, though it was not till after her baby's birth that she declared herself a Christian. Three days before her death, when her baby girl, Ellen Lakshmi, was about ten weeks old, mother and child were baptised together.

The young father was desolate and helpless; he had no one to take care of the wee daughter, and thankfully accepted the offer of adoption made by an indigo planter's wife. He himself, after a visit to England, where he was received by Queen Victoria, joined the

Cowley Community. His long life of missionary service was distinguished by zeal and self-denial.

"Nellie" spent five happy baby years with her adopted parents, but tragedy came to break up the family. The planter lost not only all his property, but also his own life in the Mutiny, and Nellie was once more homeless. It was arranged that she should go to the C.M.S. Girls' Orphanage at Benares, but a young C.M.S. missionary and his wife, the Rev. and Mrs. W. T. Storrs, who had often played with the attractive child when visiting her home, would not allow this; so once again Nellie was "adopted," and speedily crept into the empty place left in the hearts of her new parents by the death of their first-born child.

Other children of their own came as the years passed, but these were never allowed to oust the dearly-loved adopted Indian daughter from her share of love. She must have been a most lovable child; and she was, as one of her adopted brothers testifies, in every way one of the family.

A few years after her adoption furlough became due, and with the help of other missionary friends little Nellie was brought to England. On the return of Mr. and Mrs. Storrs to India after furlough she was left at home to be educated, being once more "adopted" by a sister of Mr. Storrs, who already had a family of three girls and three boys, by whom Nellie was received as a real "sister."

In her own records she gives some amusing details about dress. "When I arrived in England I wore a red flannel thing on my head called a *chaddar*. I used to have crowds of children running after me wherever I went, and one day on arriving at the house where I was staying, I got hold of one child and gave her a

good shaking. Afterwards I always wore a hat, generally a sailor hat. The three girls, who were as my sisters, and I always dressed alike. Afterwards, when I was grown up, I wore a bonnet. On arrival at Calcutta on my return to India, when I went to a church on Sunday and saw a great number of my fellow-countrywomen wearing hats and bonnets, they looked so ugly that I determined on reaching Amritsar to throw hats and bonnets away, and wear a white *chaddar*—a decision to which she adhered for many years.

During the earliest years of her stay in England, Ellen went first to a private school in York kept by three sisters, and later to the Home and Colonial College, in Grays Inn Road, London. She was still there when Mr. and Mrs. Storrs came home finally, and they immediately sought her out and invited her to come back to them as a daughter. In this loved English home she made herself useful in many ways, acting as governess to at least one of her young “brothers,” visiting and teaching in two English parishes, where her influence lingered for many years.

She held a Sunday afternoon Bible Class for mill girls, which had remarkable spiritual results; as many as seventy girls used to attend, and it is recorded that these rough girls “simply worshipped her.”

While at her Training College she had often been taken to missionary meetings, and when the speaker was a woman missionary Ellen was inevitably taken up and introduced. The speaker, as inevitably, “hoped that one day I would return to my own country to teach my own people. How I disliked those talks!” wrote Ellen. “I did not in the least want to go back to my own country and teach my own people!”



ELLEN LAKHSMI GOREH

Some years later, while speaking to her Bible Class girls, who were drinking in her every word, she records that, "suddenly it seemed as if God said to me, 'You ought to be doing this among your own people.'" So clear a call could not be disregarded, and Ellen immediately went to her beloved "father," and told him that she must go back to India as a missionary.

At this time Mr. Storrs wrote of her: "She rejoined us in our English home, and has been to us indeed as a daughter. As year by year God's grace has grown and shone but more brightly in her, the wish has increased in her heart to go out and work among her own countrywomen."

The time came when the wish was fulfilled. She offered first to the Zenana Bible and Medical Mission, but that Society was unable to send her out. The Church of England Zenana Missionary Society, however, "joyfully accepted her," and appointed her as an educational missionary to the Alexandra Girls' School at Amritsar. There was much sorrow at parting from her adopted parents and brothers and little sister, who never left her alone during those last few days together. The parishioners "made me plant a tree in front of the church, and had a farewell meeting for me, and presented me with a clock, which is still doing good service." (That is, from 1880 till just before her Home-Call in 1937!) The tree was carefully tended as "a sacred and beloved thing."

So this happy-natured, well-educated and fully-consecrated daughter of India returned to her own country. She went out with the status and salary of a European worker, but from the first she was determined to identify herself in every possible way with her own people.

Fifty years ago it cost more than would probably be the case to-day to make this brave resolution. Like Moses, when he threw in his lot with oppressed Israel, it appears that she, in her early days abroad, had to suffer affliction with her Indian sisters. Those were days, now so strange to us, when converts were encouraged to adopt English dress, English customs and English names—a policy of which she did not approve. Many influences combined in an attempt to keep her separate from her own folk, but, even at the loss of European privilege, she preferred to be numbered among her own people, and though misunderstood in some quarters, she had her reward. The warm-hearted Punjabi schoolgirls simply adored her as the Yorkshire mill-hands had done. One of the many Indian women whom she influenced at this time was Dr. Kheroth Bose, whose story is also told in these pages.

After some years in Amritsar she went to Allahabad, and while visiting among the Anglo-Indian community, was strongly impressed by the need of nursing training in order to help the many sick people. She accepted the need as a call from God, and immediately went into hospital as a probationer. When her training was over, she had the privilege of nursing her own father, the Rev. Nehemiah Goreh, in his last illness.

She was still at work in the hospital when a friend came to tell her that a lady superintendent was wanted for the Bishop Johnson Orphanage for Anglo-Indian children, which had just been opened.

“You must apply,” she told Ellen; but the latter, always very humble about her own attainments, completely refused to think of it.

Her friend, however, was not to be beaten. She

asked Ellen to dinner, produced paper, pen and ink, and said firmly, "Now write your application."

Without a word, Ellen tells us, she sat down and wrote a "glowing account" of herself, her character, her qualifications and so on, finishing up with the statement that no doubt she was by far the most suitable person for the post! Her friend took the joke in good part, but in the end she succeeded in making her write a "proper application."

A few evenings later the Civil Chaplain appeared at the hospital in a great state of excitement. "You've been elected! You've been elected!" he exclaimed, and it transpired that all the European members of the committee had voted for Nurse Goreh.

So for nine years she remained in happy charge of the orphanage, resigning about 1900 "owing to the death of a dear child, which nearly broke my heart!"

While at the orphanage a new wish was born in her heart, and she wrote to Bishop Clifford expressing her desire to become a Deaconess. He wrote back that he had not enough knowledge of the Order to give her a decided answer then, but on his return from furlough in England, he saw her and agreed to admit her to the Order. So on St. Andrew's Day, 1897, Ellen Lakshmi Goreh was ordained Deaconess in All Saints' Cathedral, Allahabad.

Events called her into the ranks of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in 1901, and with them she had varied experience until she retired as an "official" missionary in 1919, but continued to carry on her devoted work for Indian women, first in Kotgarh, at the invitation of the Rev. Chandu Lall, and then in connection with the women's work at St. Thomas's Church, Simla.

In 1930 she went to live at the Bishop Cotton School, and from there continued her regular Zenana work until her health finally broke down in 1932, and she had to go into St. Catherine's Hospital, Cawnpore. Here she was invited to remain, and here, whenever it was possible, she carried on her loving service for others, never failing to "adorn" the doctrine of the Saviour Whom she loved so dearly.

Her Home Call came early in 1937.

She ends a little sketch of her own life with a delightfully humorous touch, speaking of herself in the third person. "She is now in a very dilapidated condition, and is just waiting at the pearly gate till it is opened for her to enter": words which recalled to one who knew her "not only her earnestness, but also her humour and her womanliness. She loved and was beloved."

* * * *

The name of Ellen Lakshmi Goreh is probably best known to English readers as that of the author of the beautiful hymn quoted at the beginning of this chapter: "In the secret of His Presence, how my soul delights to hide." She began to write poetry at an early age, and ventured to show some of her verses to Frances Ridley Havergal, whom she deeply admired. Miss Havergal wrote: "My candid opinion is that God has given you a real gift, which may be and ought to be used for His glory."

Ellen, as has been said, took a modest view of her own attainments. In some verses addressed to Miss F. R. Havergal she alludes to her effort almost playfully.

“An Indian, yet a sister in the Lord,
Thus would thee greet.
Go singing on, for sure is thy reward,
At Home we'll meet.

I know no rules wherewith to guide my song,
I know not if my rhymes be right or wrong,
He speaks, I write—since I to Him belong,
And oh! 'tis sweet!

Forgive the imperfections of my verse
For His dear sake!
It could be better, but it might be worse.
He'll undertake

To waft my simple, feeble notes on high,
Till they re-echo downwards from the sky,
And I some nobler verses by and by
To Him shall make.”

One of her first poems was written when she lay sick of an infectious illness in an isolation hospital. It breathes the spirit which inspired her whole life, a life which had its full share of suffering and illness.

“Laid aside, behold, I lie,
Humbled 'neath Thy searching eye.
Faithful lessons I am taught;
Now I know why I was brought
Here aside, my Lord, with Thee;
I was blind, but now I see.
I do not shrink, dear Master, teach me.
All round is hushed; Thy voice can reach me.

Called away to Jesus' side,
 Here content I will abide.
 Peace, sweet peace, my spirit fills,
 Every murmuring thought He stills.
 All my tears He wipes away,
 Turns the darkness into day.
 Some work for Him e'en here is given,
 A few dear souls to lead to Heaven."

It is recorded that the patients in the beds on either side of Ellen's received special blessing while she was in the hospital.

In a letter to a friend, written very many years later, she bears witness to the unfailing love that helped her all her journey through.

"I seem such a poor, weak, good-for-nothing little woman," she writes, "with no power of endurance. God has been so very good to me, and is providing for all my necessities, in a most wonderful way. It has felt like being carried along, from stage to stage, so that there is never any excuse for anxiety. Please remember me in prayer, that self may always be left behind, and completely lost sight of."

From some verses on "His Will" we may gather that temptations common to man assailed her spirit—"many a fretting care, which I can scarcely bear"—and distaste for work which "appears too commonplace." But at the last—

"With glad, bright thoughts of Him my days abound.
 For now His Will and mine are one, not two,
 And roses blossom where the thorns once grew."

* * * *

A missionary well remembers being introduced, long years ago, to Deaconess Goreh, in Simla. This mis-

sionary was only a recruit at the time, but of course she knew the famous hymn, and was thrilled at the prospect of meeting its author, even though she was aware that writers in the flesh are not always so interesting as their creations! A single glance at the Deaconess's face removed misgivings. Its shining quality certainly bore the "impress of the Master"—there was absolutely no doubt about it—and it was like a cordial to wavering faith. Many years later the same worker met her again, wrinkled, fragile, emaciated with age and illness, but still reflecting in the mirror of her most beautiful face the glory from within the veil.

* * * *

For some time, Ellen Lakshmi Goreh, over eighty years of age, was a patient in Cawnpore Hospital, peacefully awaiting her summons to her Lord's heavenly service, in the secret of whose Presence her soul delighted to dwell. During this time she wrote this last poem, entitled "The Guardian":

I lay me down in peace
 Beneath Thy wing,
 And safely sleep.
 Thy watch can never cease;
 For Thou, O King,
 My soul dost keep.

For all the tenderness
 Which Thou has shewn
 To me this day:
 For strength in feebleness
 To Thee alone
 My thanks I pay.

And if before the morn
Thou bidst me rise
And come to Thee,
Then homeward swiftly borne
Beyond the skies
My soul shall be.

Or if it be Thy will
That I should see
Another day,
Oh, let Thy presence still
Remain with me
And be my stay.

Shortly after the lines were written she passed on, having "retained her mental faculties and her cheerful disposition to the very end." Her body was laid to rest in the Indian burial ground, an Indian and an English clergyman, appropriately enough, sharing the service between them.



JHOT MOHINI CHOWDHURY

CHAPTER VII

JOHOT MOHINI CHOWDHURY

JOHOT MOHINI CHOWDHURY was for many years the devoted friend and fellow-worker of Miss Gertrude Cowley, a missionary stationed at Howrah, Calcutta. Her life has been dedicated since girlhood to Christian service.

She comes of exclusive Brahmin stock and belongs to a family of two sisters and three brothers. Her Hindu grandfather sent his son Bhattarcharjee to Dr. Duff's famous College, which was the spiritual birth-place of so many splendid converts. The young man was one of those who counted loss for Christ the traditional glories of his caste. He became an earnest Christian worker of the Scotch Mission in Calcutta.

His wife, Mohini's mother, was also a true child of God; thus the children were surrounded from infancy by the happy influence of a godly home. The sisters went to school in Calcutta, and were taught by an English-woman, whose influence made a lasting impression upon them. Mohini acquired a first-rate knowledge of English, a gift used freely for translation of English into Bengali in later years.

She writes of her early life, "From my school days it was always my desire and that of my only sister, too, to be a help to our Hindu sisters, and to tell them of Christ's power to save. As soon as we left school we started to visit zenanas, and to teach the women and girls to read and write. It gave us great pleasure to begin this work in our father's parish. But in a couple

of years we were both married, and our work there had to be given up."

Mohini married Dr. H. P. Chowdhury, who had a practice in Burdwan. There his young wife continued her missionary activities, visiting among others a saintly woman named Golap Mukherjee, who, as a baptised Christian, has succeeded, for many years past, in living a consistent life of witness in her orthodox Hindu home.

In 1890 Dr. Chowdhury died, and her brother wished to keep the young widow in a seclusion only less rigid than that enforced by Hindus. His prejudices and objections were gradually overcome, and Mrs. Chowdhury records that, "my dear mother helping me, I was able to dedicate my life *wholly* to the Lord's service." She became attached to the Church of England Zenana Mission in Burdwan, and worked there with Miss Cowley.

"Of fine physique," writes a friend, "beautiful voice, and genial disposition, she was, and is, loved by Indian and English alike. She was able to put before her hearers, whether high-caste or humble, the hopelessness of their creeds, pleading the claims of Jesus Christ, with her own personal love shining in her face, and giving power to her witness. Yet another endowment was her voice in Indian lyric, which was always a great attraction."

From Burdwan she and her friend Miss Cowley were shortly transferred to Howrah, and for many years they worked together in the zenanas of that crowded, dirty and noisy suburb, and also superintended several large primary schools.

Miss Cowley's friendship was "a bright spot in my life". With this friend Mrs. Chowdhury visited Eng-

land, and there spent seven months which left an abiding memory of joy and inspiration. The visit opened her eyes to many things, and her voyage, the discomforts of sea-sickness, and her first impressions of England, were naïvely described in a little book entitled: *Seven Months in England*.

She was very grateful for all the friendships then formed, and especially to Miss Cowley's "dear mother, who took me as her Indian child, and was so kind and loving to me." Her visit to the Keswick Convention deeply impressed her. She realised that "God is still waiting to do miracles for those who will trust Him wholly."

The trip was by no means a holiday. All whom she met were anxious to hear about India. At first Mrs. Chowdhury was overwhelmed with shyness. She had never taken any public meeting, and the idea of doing so—and that in English—was like a nightmare to her. She confesses, "I wept in secret and did not know how to get out of this task. I would have taken a boat back to India if I could."

This uneasy feeling grew on her, till she lost her joy in seeing new places of interest, but, "He who took note of my tears came to my rescue." She had a dream that she was back in her room at Howrah, and that she began to weep and sob, saying to herself, "Here I am back in India! I did not tell those who were so anxious to hear! I have lost my opportunity."

Suddenly she awoke to find herself still in England, and with joy she took a solemn vow that whenever asked to do so, she would accept the call and speak. "I was ready to be a fool for Christ's sake." As a matter of fact, she proved to be a splendid speaker, and her stories of the sorrows and ignorance of Indian

women created a deep impression. She spoke at large meetings, in the Pavilion at Brighton, in the great tent at Keswick, and in other places.

A friend gives a picture of her at a meeting in Cambridge,—“our dear, unassuming, humble-minded Indian sister, in her widow’s sari of soft white silk, walking up a crowded hall, on the arm of a learned professor.” We who in these days of travel and change are used to meeting graceful and cultured Indian women can hardly realise the interest aroused thirty years ago by such a visitor.

Before she left England she was presented with a good magic lantern, with sets of sacred pictures, and “never was a gift more truly consecrated.”

About 1913 Mrs. Chowdhury and Miss Cowley together carried through a long-cherished plan of building a Holiday Home for Bengali Christians (especially for those who have left all for Christ’s sake) where they might find a welcome amid conditions more home-like than is possible in a Mission Compound.

Friends responded to their appeal, and “Elim” in Bihar has become a very peaceful “place of palm-trees” for many a weary pilgrim. After Miss Cowley’s death, a sore bereavement to her friend, Mrs. Chowdhury carried on bravely for a time at Howrah. Another English missionary joined her, but unfortunately died after a short illness. This was a great shock, and not long afterwards Mrs. Chowdhury, whose health and eyesight had begun to fail, retired from active work.

She used her leisure, however, to collect funds for the “Cowley Memorial School” building, which she had the joy of seeing opened in Howrah. Some years ago she brought out a Bengali “Promise-box” or “Honey-comb,” with rolled-up texts and tiny pincers

for extracting them. This has been a great joy to many Indian Christians. Of recent years she has spent much of her time at Elim, mothering the guests, and taking prayers and holding Bible classes for them.

Up to the day of her Home Call in 1940, when nearly ninety years of age, her missionary fervour was undiminished and she is still telling out the "old, old story of Jesus and His love."

The reason of the peace which so evidently enfolded her can be found in a letter written recently to a friend: "These words are a constant help to me. 'I have laid help upon One that is mighty,' and 'Blessed is the man whose strength is in Thee.'"

CHAPTER VIII

“MONI”

IN a pretty stone house on one of the wooded, flower-carpeted slopes of the Himalayas there lived a beautiful and greatly indulged little girl. One day she ran into the hall of worship in her home and faced the hideous image of Kali which was standing there. Most little girls surely are afraid of Kali, with her black face and saucer eyes, and the red tongue lolling from her mouth, in her thirst for blood.

This little girl reacted differently—she put out her own tongue at Kali. Presently, because she grew tired and had to draw it in again before the image did so, she contrived to climb on to a high stool and placed her impertinent little dimpled foot on that ugly tongue! Then she ran happily away, feeling that she had scored a triumph.

That early escapade was very characteristic of the woman who tells the child's life story in a fascinating little book called “Dawn.” That story must not be retold here—the book itself should be bought and read—but some mention of the author cannot be omitted from these pages.

The little girl who defied Kali seems to have led a free and open “tomboy” life, on the North-West Frontier, until she was eleven years old. Her father idolized her; the soldiers in the station made a pet of her. The grandmother and great-aunt with whom she lived failed to control her.

Then quite abruptly she was taken away from the

forests and the mountains, and shut up in a zenana in Bengal. A marriage was arranged, according to prevailing custom, and she was ceremoniously espoused to a young man whom she had never seen in her life.

For any young girl a cooped-up existence behind curtains is unnatural and unkind. For Moni, accustomed to freedom, and abounding in health and good spirits, it was impossible. Had she possessed less vitality, ingenuity, and courage, she must surely have pined away and died. As it was, she seems to have freed herself from bondage in spirited fashion. She set herself to behave so badly that her husband's family would be forced to send her home again. She defied the rules of Hindu convention, kept her head uncovered, and went about talking wildly and screaming. But pained though her "in-laws" were, they did not, however, despair of training her to better ways.

The next thing that the astonishing child did was to venture into the men's sitting room, purloin thence a big gun, and go out into the gardens and fire it! Even this shocking act, though it caused much horror and dismay, did not produce the desired effect. Finally she went out into the women's courtyard and there deliberately climbed a tree! This was the last straw. The rebellious but triumphant little bride was sent back to her parents' house in disgrace.

A sad prospect seemed to be opening before the wayward, clever child. Unless she could be reformed her husband would have the right to reject her entirely and himself re-marry. A wife of youth, when she is refused, has a social position little better than that of a widow. It was suggested that European ladies might be invited to come to the house to teach the girl English and needlework, and perhaps to tame her down and

make her once more acceptable to her mother-in-law.

Naturally the young rebel played up to her new instructress, but to her surprise she found it impossible to make the Mission lady cross. She tried hard it appears, but for the first time in her life she failed to fulfil a wish! That failure constituted the first victory of faith. The girl became interested in the religion of this patient, loving teacher. She was given a copy of St. Luke's Gospel and read it eagerly. The Story of the Cross arrested and enthralled her. She felt as though she could see the whole scene. "He had loved them and done them good, and yet they put Him on the Cross. They had no pity on Him. . . . and yet He said, 'Father, forgive them.'" So "lifted up from the earth" Jesus of Nazareth "drew unto Him" the proud, self-willed, but loving heart of little Moni.

For her there could be no half measures, no long period of secret discipleship. She told her mother that she was going to be a Christian, and that dismayed and alarmed lady placed her under lock and key. She wrote to her father, who was away at the Khyber Pass, and told him of her decision and her plight. He promptly returned home, obtained her release, and expressed sympathy with her resolve. He had to return to the regiment, and on the very same night the daring girl ran away from home, wearing her father's turban and great coat!

The following morning there arrived at a Zenana Mission House thirty miles away, a handsome, smiling youth, who asked confidently for admission.

"This is a place for girls, not boys," said the missionary.

"I am a girl," the new arrival explained cheerfully, and proceeded to discard her disguise and make herself at home in her new quarters.



PROBHA SIRCAR ("MONI")

Surprising to relate, she was not compelled by her family to return home, nor was she cut off from all communication with them. Some of her relations have since become Christians through her influence, and with those who are still Hindus she lives on friendly terms.

As was to be expected, this independent young person provided her new friends with many a surprise, and many a shock.

"I quite understand Christianity," she remarked one day, "but I don't understand these rules. Why can't we be free and do as we like?" Very gradually she learnt to revere authority, and to find the perfect freedom of service to her Heavenly Master.

She gives amusing pictures of herself in these early days. At one time we see her in open rebellion against a junior missionary whom she believes to dislike her. On another occasion, when she has been promoted to be a teacher, she shows herself leaving her slow-witted convert pupils in disgust, and climbing a tree to escape from them. Her courageous high spirits, keenly developed critical faculties, and remarkable powers of initiative, drew her more and more to the front.

It was only to be expected and desired that such a "born leader" should presently be freed from the routine of an ordinary Mission station, and already the urge to go forth in faith had entered Moni's heart. When the opportunity came to take over the superintendence of a Mission station, near Calcutta, she accepted this as the answer to her half-conscious call, but after a few months there the Call came to her yet more clearly to launch out still further into the deep.

She believed that, while she was under an anæsthetic, in an operating theatre, she was led to a decision to

leave all and follow her Master along unknown ways. She came round singing the hymn "Hold Thou my hand," to the great astonishment of doctors and nurses.

Her book tells of more than one remarkable dream which seem to have come to her as a call from God.

Resigning her work in the city, in response to such a call, she opened independent work in Bihar. Since then she has had many adventures, many trials of faith, many disappointments, but nevertheless her book is a marvellous record and tribute to the loving faithfulness of God. Again and again have doors been opened, supplies sent, and workers and money given, in answer to prayer.

She had a great desire to visit England, and a relative presented her with her passage money. On the boat, finding that no service had been arranged, she invaded the Captain's bridge, in defiance of all regulations, to ask for one. Her request was complied with: an actress played the hymns, and the Captain himself preached the sermon, and gave a very earnest address.

Her first visit to England lasted for thirteen months, during which time she spoke at many meetings, and made a number of friends. During a second visit she was clearly guided to undertake definite evangelism, and many who heard her Message recognised and responded to the claims of Christ. Her work in Bihar has grown amazingly, and in her central station she now superintends a Mission House, a Day School for Hindu children, a Converts' Home, and a men's Night School; while ten miles away there is a Refuge for Women, the story of which she has told in a recently-published book: *The Lord God Planted a Garden*. There is an out-station thirty miles away where two

Christian women do evangelistic, medical and educational work. A further call has come to her more recently, as in travelling across the vast country of India, the need of the villages was borne in on her heart. Since then she has visited other provinces, and has been used to kindle evangelistic zeal in many hearts.

Surely when we read this story we should thank God and take courage. Had it not been for that missionary who refused to grow impatient with a wayward pupil, this brave, free spirit might have battered itself in vain against the imprisoning bars of caste and purdah. How often discouraged workers are fain to give way to thoughts of despondency! This one story should for ever forbid such an attitude.

"Thou sowest bare grain, and knowest not whether shall prosper this or that, but God, in His good time, giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him."

PART IV
TEACHERS

"He gave some to be . . . teachers"

"The evangelisation of a country so vast and so thickly populated as India is one that appals us by its magnitude. Moreover caste prejudice, superstition and the purdah system raise well-nigh impenetrable barriers against the progress of truth and freedom. There is one door, however, which is never hard to open, and that is the door into the heart of a little child. It is not easy to estimate accurately the importance of educational missions. Teachers of the right kind quickly win a love almost amounting to hero-worship from their charges. To them falls a rare opportunity to introduce these sensitive and trustful souls to the children's Saviour. The little ones go home, and repeat the old, old Story to their mothers, and so the secret leaven works, until the day shall reveal it."

ANON.

CHAPTER IX

MONORAMA BOSE

SHURUTH DATTA, whose story has been recorded elsewhere in these pages, had three sisters, the eldest of whom, Monorama Bose, was educated at the Alexandra High School, Amritsar, and afterwards went to Elms-hurst School. After passing the Cambridge Senior Examination she went to England with her sister, Kheroth, who was to take medical training, and remained there for about two years. The fourth sister married Mr. Mitter, of Madras.

Mona took her teachers' training at the Home and Colonial Training College in London. She must have had exceptional talents and made very good use of them, for when she was still quite young, not much more than twenty-one, she was offered the post of Principal of the Victoria Girls' School in Lahore. Recently established by Government, this institution was housed in an ancient palace which had once been magnificent, but was then crumbling to decay.

An English friend remembers how Mona sought her advice, as to whether she ought, as a Christian, to undertake work where definite Christian teaching was not permitted. The friend assured her that a very real Christian influence could be exercised, without direct preaching, and urged her to accept the post. She accordingly did so, and held it for many years. The School flourished under her charge, and she became well known throughout the Punjab as a pioneer of education and emancipation for women and girls.

Monorama Bose was known among her neighbours as a good friend and a very capable manager, "gentle and yet strong, and all her work carried on with such grace and ease. There was no friction—all went so happily under her gentle, wise direction." She used to visit those who were ill or sad, and she was "generous with help of various sorts to those in need." A staunch member of her Church and a keen missionary, she did not allow the fact that she held a government post to deter her from running Sunday Schools. She would hold these classes not only in her own apartment at school, but also in the homes of students.

Another of her activities helped to pave the way to future reforms. Her lectures to women on many subjects were very popular, and she was one of the first to organise a Purdah Club, which proved of great benefit to secluded Hindu and Moslem ladies.

When the Prince and Princess of Wales (later King George and Queen Mary) visited Lahore, Miss Bose arranged for the introduction of some purdah ladies of high rank to the Princess of Wales. Some careful organizing was required, as no male could of course be permitted to show his face!

Her work in the school must have been difficult and at times anxious. Some of her students were child widows, and in her efforts to ameliorate their lot she occasionally assisted to bring about a remarriage.

Pioneers in social reform, however, tread on dangerous ground, and at least one tragedy followed the attempt to break with tradition.

A fine young Sikh, a member of the Brahmo Somaj, not wishing to be wedded to a child, sought the hand of a beautiful girl-widow who was under Miss Bose's charge. The marriage took place, but when Miss



KHEROTH *and* MONARAMA BOSE

Bose visited the bride in her new home the poor girl embraced her sobbing. She said her husband's family regarded her with loathing.

"Explain to them," she entreated, "that I am not an impure woman, and that my marriage is not an indecent thing."

Her friend did her best to comfort her and to win over the family. The bride cheered up a little, and showed her visitor her wedding gifts and pretty clothes. But very soon afterwards this young girl mysteriously disappeared, almost certainly poisoned: a sacrifice to age-long and pitiless convention.

Saddened but undiscouraged, Miss Bose continued to fight the battles of downtrodden womanhood. She gradually raised the status of her school till it became famous throughout India. "It may be considered the mother of most of the girls' schools in the Province."

It was by her suggestion that the Queen Mary College was opened. She was offered the Principalship, which she refused, as she was by that time advancing in years. When the Government opened a new College for women, she helped with the scheme, and the High department of the Victoria Girls' School, of which she had been Principal for so many years, became the nucleus for the College.

Amid all her educational activities she found time for much philanthropic work. Twice she assisted in famine relief work, and she was interested in jail reform. She was an unofficial visitor to women prisoners, and a member of the Committee for Prisoners' Aid. She also took an active interest in hospitals and poor relief, and worked personally among lepers. Her wide sympathies were extended to suffer-

ing animals, and she organized a "League of Help" for them.

In 1914 she received the Kaisar-i-Hind medal, to which a bar was added in 1922.

After her retirement from the Victoria School, and from running the Lady Maclagan High School (which was simultaneously for five years under her charge), she became Director of Girls' Education in Kashmir. A year or two before her death she was able to pay a visit to Palestine, Egypt and Italy, accompanied by her sister, Dr. Kheroth Bose.

Her death at the age of sixty-seven, in 1931, was a great sorrow to her sister Kheroth, who had long dreamed of their living peacefully together after their full and active lives of service, when both should have retired.

It is not possible in so limited a space to do justice to a very wonderful career, but a biography of Mona Bose is, we believe, in preparation, and should be a source of great interest and inspiration.



SUSIE SORABJI

CHAPTER X

SUSIE SORABJI

THE sixth daughter of Francina Sorabji must have been in character very much like her mother. She possessed the same wide sympathy, limitless patience, indefatigable energy, and organizing ability. She exercised a similar cheering and stimulating influence on all with whom she came in contact. Miss Cornelia Sorabji, in her little memoir, has painted her sister's portrait in vivid and alluring hues.

"A friend of all the world *and of me*"—such was the pleasant impression which she made on her acquaintances. Her eyes were always speaking to you, "changing with the sorrow or gladness of her friends." So strong was her innate fellow-feeling and compassion, that she simply could not prevent herself from weeping with those who wept. Her sympathy overflowed to animals, rather a rare trait in India, and she had a succession of mongrel dogs, for which she cared, almost as though they had been human beings. She was sometimes known to sit up all night, ministering to a sick dog.

She was given to hospitality, that gracious oriental hospitality that regards itself as under obligation to the humblest guest. She remembered and provided for every little weakness or preference, so that her visitors, very often people who came to her in convalescence, found themselves absolutely at home. Altogether she must have been "a nice person to know," but she was not a sentimentalist or a weakling.

Acute physical sufferings she faced with "gallant and high-hearted courage," and she brought the same quality to bear on the big educational and social problems with which she was brought into contact.

Susie was a happy and healthy child, more tractable, one imagines, than Cornelia, who climbed trees and defied conventions with alacrity, but equally filled with the joy of life. At the age of seventeen, however, she had a serious illness, which left her physically fragile; her heart was often troublesome and she had many attacks of illness.

In later life she suffered from very acute eye trouble. Some mistake in treatment gave her a month of agony, and nearly resulted in total blindness.

It pleased God to lift this heavy burden through the prayer of faith and the ministry of spiritual healing. Her eyes were prayerfully anointed; on the very same day she found her place in her hymn-book unaided, and went out into sunlight with open eyes, a thing which had long been impossible to her. This cure was permanent; for the last years of her life she could see with comfort.

In spite of physical weaknesses, and many other tests to faith and courage, joy, we are told, "was the key-note of her life." She rejoiced in beauty; she loved fun; above all she proved in her life the truth of the advice which she once gave to an enquirer: "You ask how you are to make your life happy? Serve others. There is no happiness like that which is to be found in loving and serving others."

Susie Sorabji inherited from her mother a gift for teaching, and gladly chose an educational career. At first her work lay at the Victoria High School at Poona, which her parents had founded. Later she

established another school, St. Helena's, run on similar inter-racial lines, for students of both sexes, which began in a very small way, and is now famous all over India. Representing six separate religions—Christian, Jewish, Moslem, Hindu, Sikh, and Jain—and as many social and political outlooks, boys and girls from every part of the country, many of them destined to fill positions of high influence in the Empire, have been trained together in this wonderful institution, to be good citizens, good neighbours, and loyal subjects of the King-Emperor.

In days when a dangerous communalism was threatening the peace and progress of India, Miss Sorabji set a dignified example of quiet loyalty, which her pupils faithfully followed. The St. Helena Scouts and Guides stood voluntarily by the Flag of Empire, when many similar bodies had forsaken it. She could not bear the "waste and bad manners incidental to picketing," and the record of acts of violence and terrorism tore her heart.

As she lay on her death-bed, she tried, amid delirium, to give a message to her Guides: "I can't shout," she gasped, "make them shout, 'One Flag, one Throne, one Empire!'" On another occasion she whispered to her nurse, "Sing, 'God Save the King.'"

Infinite wisdom and tact were required in dealing with the school's great mixed concourse of young, intelligent, ambitious spirits. She never seems to have needlessly restricted liberty, or enforced reforms. A change was always desired in the school before it was introduced. In religious matters the utmost tenderness of handling was required, yet Susie Sorabji never hid her light under a bushel. She was a faithful witness to

her Friend and Saviour. Love found out the way to preach Christ, and to win souls to His service. As a little girl she had come with happy trust to the Children's Saviour. When an earnest "missioner" asked the small Cornelia, "Are you saved?" the child made answer, candidly and proudly, "No, but my sister Susie is."

"While yet in her teens," another sister bears witness, "she felt distinctly called of God to the work of winning souls for the Kingdom. After her day's work of teaching was over, she would go forth to seek and win the children of all communities, European and Indian alike." She had a clear, ringing voice, and great gifts as a public speaker. These stood her in good stead when she visited America, which she did on three occasions, to raise funds for the educational work which lay so near her heart.

She was a poor sailor, and never enjoyed travelling. Even her holidays she preferred to spend at home, but she never shirked a journey when called to take one by the voice of duty. She created a profound impression in both Canada and the United States, and raised large sums of money for her work. She made also deep and enduring personal friendships, which were a lasting and precious possession. In spite of her success in raising funds, she knew in full measure that financial anxiety which is the lot of so many workers in the foreign field. She learned to live by faith, taking no troubled thought for the morrow, but relying happily on the heavenly Father, Who never failed to supply each need as it arose.

Not content with catering for the wealthier classes, she supported and controlled two free vernacular schools, one for Hindu and one for Moslem children.

These had been started by her mother, and were as dear to her as the two High Schools. They supplied an excellent education, with vocational training in special cases. A boy from one of these schools later passed successfully into the Indian Civil Service.

Susie Sorabji was a woman of prayer. She took every problem, every need, to the Throne of Grace, with the simplicity of a little child. She knew the secret of mystic communion, and used to listen as well as to talk to her Heavenly Father. Sometimes, after earnest prayer, she would let her Bible open where it would, and take the first verse on which her eyes rested as a message of guidance.

It must have been her prayerfulness which gave to her that wonderful power of sympathy, which drew women of all races to her for advice and sympathy. They were always "certain of finding the busiest woman in Poona at leisure to listen and help."

Her life was indeed a very full one. She regularly visited the Mental Hospital—she had a special gift in dealing with defectives—the Jail, and the various charitable institutions of Poona, as well as supervising her three schools, taking her full share in teaching, and keeping in touch with pupils past and present, her many friends, and the members of her own family.

To these she was deeply and faithfully attached, depending on their sympathy, and "overflowing with gladness" whenever they were able to visit her.

* * * *

Susie Sorabji was no exception to the rule that the whole story of the work and influence of missionaries can never be told to the generation which knew and loved them in the flesh.

This is partly because some of the seed sown is burgeoning underground, and to dig it up for demonstration would kill the plant; or because the tender plant has visible shoots, but needs protection from fierce blasts; or because the plant is of slow growth and the time of flowering is not yet.

But no one who knew Susie Sorabji missed the real significance of her life. Charming she was in social contacts, unsparing of herself in work and enthusiasm in whatever direction—education, welfare work, women's causes, Empire-building. But once again let it be said, at the very core of her heart, and ever present throughout every moment of life's lengthening span, was a passionate longing for the extension of the Kingdom of God.

And her courage in giving her message was as amazing as the non-resentment and often the eagerness with which that message was received, and as we now know, treasured.

After her death, many came saying: "This, and this, she did for me." . . . Among them was a Parsee lad, an ex-pupil grown to independence, who had faced persecution and banishment from his home because of his acceptance of Christianity. Miss Sorabji had encouraged him to family loyalty nevertheless, even to the support of the aged parents who had turned him adrift, and still would not see him.

Of him one may speak openly. He had won through long before she died and after her death brought his two small children to St. Helena's, heartbroken that they would not have her personal inspiration, but eager that they should get what they could of the influences of the spirit which she had implanted.

Space and time fail to tell of the many personal acts

of service which made her a ministering angel to those about her. When the time of her passing came—it was unexpected, swift and easy—there was not a street in the city that did not mourn for her.

And then there was that glorious happening at the graveside—the plant grown to maturity in a night.

For thirty years she had longed that a Parsee friend whom she greatly loved might come into the Fold. The one or two who knew her great desire, knew also of her way of intercession: of the training of her own inner self for the great privilege of praying for another soul: the training in self-discipline, in self-denial, in self-control, in infinite patience, and in love which was like the love of God in its forbearance and understanding.

And she for whom Susie prayed learnt readily enough, and even taught others what she learnt. But confession before men was not easy. It entailed, among other things, the severance of family ties. Yet the very denial of conviction made for timidity and raised barriers between the two friends and co-workers.

But on that sad morning when Susie Sorabji's frail body was to be committed to its last resting place conviction would no longer be denied expression.

"I have seen the vision," was her cry, and this timid one was with difficulty restrained from declaring her faith at the service in the church where the flower-strewn casket lay before the Holy Table. At the graveside, four miles away, to which, unexpectedly, the crowd of mourners had followed, she spoke, in the presence of her Zoroastrian High Priest and of the great non-Christian gathering of her own and other Indian communities.

She said that she believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and wished to ask for Baptism, adding that it was

Susie Sorabji and her life which had taught her where to find Life.

A dead silence followed her declaration. Then with an outburst of praise came the Doxology. And those who sang were in the main Susie Sorabji's non-Christian "children"—the tender plants to whom reference had already been made. One after another of these came up to the confessor of her Faith—"Me too!" "Me too!" said they. They also believed, though their hour of public witness had not yet come.

The days that followed were full of trial for the new disciple. Her community bribed, repudiated, cajoled her; her High Priest himself came counselling delay.

"You loved your friend, she loved her work. Your Baptism will empty the schools to which she gave her life. Be a Christian *at heart*, if you must, without Baptism, or if you must be baptized let it be in secret."

But the new disciple stood firm; "I must wear the colours of my allegiance," she said.

The last temptation was:

"Delay Baptism, and we will send you to the West to study the latest methods of education so as to come back and benefit your friend's schools."

Her family came from various parts of India to plead or scold or go into hysterics. Poor soul, she had to be left to face all this alone. It was her own fight. But she conquered, and there was joy in the presence of the angels.

And, in one short year, not only was her family reconciled, but they came to rely on her as never before. Courage and loyalty and truth in the inward parts had brought their reward.

As for herself—the change in her must rejoice the heart of her friend, Susie Sorabji, as of their common

Lord. Her life shows forth that daily testimony for which every missionary must pray in the lives of the newly-baptized.

Yet another confession before men followed, also a Parsee ex-pupil, who now works at St. Helena's. This child was always deeply religious in spirit, and punctilious in the observance of Zoroastrian ritual, in the keeping of a rule. And that kind of gift is exactly the contribution which many Indian women have in their power to bring to the Church of God.

"She, being dead, yet speaketh." At Susie Sorabji's funeral service the preacher compared her life to that box of precious spikenard, broken at the feet of Christ, when "the home was filled with the odour of the ointment."

Of her speech a young purdah woman had once said, "Her words are to me like attar of roses, I want to sniff them up," and as we read her story we understand with fresh vividness the words of St. Paul; for such lives as Susie Sorabji's are indeed "a sweet savour of Christ unto God."

CHAPTER XI

“WITHOUT LIMIT”

SOMEWHERE about the end of the last century, a little Bengali girl stood with wide eyes and parted lips, gazing up at her weeping mother. “Oh my daughter, my daughter, thy forehead is burned,” the woman exclaimed between her sobs. The puzzled child put her hand to her smooth brow. It did not hurt, and it did not feel rough or scarred. Only gradually did she come to understand that her mother had spoken in a figure. The destiny inscribed on her forehead at birth had been written as it were with a scorching finger. News of the death of the child’s boy-husband had just reached her parents’ home. Her brow was “burned” with the curse of child widowhood.

It was small wonder that her mother sobbed as she looked at her lovely fair-skinned girl, condemned to perpetual widowhood and perpetual privation and disgrace by the laws of her religion. The child herself did not fret much; the calamity had fallen on her in her own, not her husband’s, home, and all that her wealthy and loving Brahmin parents could do was done to mitigate the sufferings of her lot.

They had given her a name which means “without limit,” in honour of the Divine Attribute—perhaps also in token of their unbounded affection.

They gave her, also, the elements of education, and encouraged her to read the sacred books of Hinduism. She pored over the Ramayana and the Moha Bharata; the stories fascinated her childish imagination, but

they did not bring her any sense of satisfaction or peace.

"Without Limit" had an elder sister whom she dearly loved. This sister had given up reading the Hindu Scriptures, and studied instead a book called the Bible, which had been given to her at a Mission School.

She was married, but being young and delicate was permitted to live at her parents' house. She did not know when she might be summoned to her father-in-law's house, and one day she confided to her little sister that she did not want to go there. The child was probably not surprised. A summons to leave the freedom of home for the stern bondage of a mother-in-law's rule is generally a signal for much weeping and wailing. Still she may have been a little shocked, fearing that her 'Didi' (elder sister) was deficient in that devotion to her lord which sums up religion to a dutiful Hindu wife.

But her sister shook her head with a half smile, and a wistful far-away look in her eyes. "It is not as you think, little one," she said. "My fear is that in the house of my husband I may be tempted to give to a man more devotion than I pay to my Master, Christ."

"Without Limit" fell silent in the presence of a mystery which attracted, while it greatly bewildered her. She never forgot those words, but pondered them in her heart, as from day to day she watched her Didi grow frailer and thinner. That her sister should recognize a higher allegiance than wifely devotion was amazing, but that this allegiance was paid to the God of those blind out-castes whom men called Christians was a riddle beyond solution. Yet the child did not seem ever to have doubted that her Didi was doing right.

The young wife was not called to face that supreme test; she never went to her husband's house. She was summoned instead to the presence of the Master Whom her soul had chosen.

It was probably beside the holy death-bed of this unknown Christian that the soul of her young sister was born from above. "My Didi died a Christian," she writes, "though she never had the chance to come out to be baptized." Her sister's wonderful peace, as also her love for Christ, left an ineffaceable impression.

From that time the world lost all attraction for the younger girl. The fate of the soul—of her sister's soul—after death, was the one theme of her thoughtful enquiry. She found no answer in the histories of Ram and Krishna, but the Bible brought her consolation and hope.

Although her parents were very anxious that their younger daughter should not be unduly influenced by Christian teaching, they did not take away the book that had been her dead sister's gift. Occasional visits from Biblewomen or missionaries were permitted, but she says, "My real teacher was my sister's Bible. . . . Gradually, like the sun, the Holy Spirit revealed to me that Christ was the true Saviour." Characteristically she adds: "So I gave up joining in the *pujabs*."*

Not always, even in lands where persecution is unknown, is such courageous witness the corollary of faith, yet this young Brahmin girl when she believed in Jesus, "gave up joining in the *pujabs*." Of course there were protests, expostulations, entreaties. An aunt first summed up the family repugnance in the taunting phrase, "you Jesus-worshipping Christian!"

How her parents, orthodox Hindus of the old school,

* Hindu religious rites.

must have shuddered when they heard that epithet, and how their hearts must have ached when it was not repudiated! Her brothers grew more and more annoyed when they found that she stood firm in her new faith. Harder to bear than their petty persecution was the sorrowing kindness of loved and loving parents.

"I wanted to stay at home and worship Christ," she explains. "I often used to read my Bible, I should say daily, in Hindu fashion; that is to say I never ate anything before reading it, as the Hindus do in their *pujahs*."

For a season this life of secret discipleship continued; probably it became more and more difficult, and at last the hour came when, having attained her majority, the girl felt that she must make open confession of her faith. Her Christian teachers agreed that it was her duty to come away, and arrangements were made for her removal. It was on a winter's night that this brave young widow forsook all, took up her cross, and followed her Master along a road which severed her completely from her home and family.

What a step of this kind costs an affectionate daughter and sister, whose home life has been a happy one, it is very difficult for us to assess. She knows that she will leave broken hearts behind her, and that the ties severed will probably never be re-knit. It was so in this case; although in later years she corresponded with her parents, yet a complete reconciliation never took place.

"When I think," she writes, "of how God brought me out of that well-guarded house, my heart fills with wonder. How patient and loving my Heavenly Father has been in His goodness to me!"

"Without Limit" worked for many years at an

Industrial Mission as an assistant missionary. She had to pass, as all converts must, through many vicissitudes. Illusions melt away and day-dreams vanish amid the practical problems of an Industrial Home. It is with dismay that the new disciple first learns that not every one who calls her Master "Lord, Lord," is a faithful subject of His Kingdom of love.

She was anxious to improve her position educationally, that she might use her talents in her Lord's service. This desire was interpreted by some as ambition, and her pathway was often strewn with thorns. Amid all her difficulties she retained her sweetness, humility and graciousness. It was impossible to be with her and not feel attracted towards her. The ignorant women whom she taught loved her dearly, and she took a motherly interest and pride in their progress.

When, after several years, the time came for her to leave that sheltered home, to take over the control of an important Mission Station, she was well fitted for that responsible and arduous task. For fifteen years she has braved the discomforts of life in a noisy, crowded, dirty slum area; has superintended with tact and wisdom the eighteen Christian teachers, mostly young girls, who live with her; has controlled two out-stations, and supervised the activities of three Bible-women, and has endeared herself to the seven hundred little girls who attend the five schools under her charge.

Her sympathy for the diseased, neglected and unwashed beggars with which the suburb abounds showed itself in an unusual way. She encourages the schoolgirls to bring gifts of soap, of a kind with healing and disinfecting properties, and the workers



“ WITHOUT LIMIT ”

are instructed to give soap instead of coppers to the beggars, and to explain to them its use! Thus little seeds of sanitary reform are sown. The beggars are grateful for the sympathy and take the soap quite eagerly, though there are sometimes murmurs of disappointment.

An extract from a letter written while vigilating, gives us a picture of her at work. "We are just in the middle of school examinations. Some 126 girls are doing their papers down below, while I am trying to get some of my English letters written. We are going to have our school entertainment to-morrow. I am not going away anywhere these holidays, as it is not easy to find places in which S—— and K——" (converts whom she has been instrumental in bringing out) "can stay. So we are all going to be here. I am glad to tell you that B—— takes the other Bible-woman to visit villages along the Amta line. I went with them recently and had a happy day, and sold a good many books."

Her dress is always almost conspicuously simple. From choice she wears the widow's sari, and her young teachers learn to avoid the ever-present temptation to spend too much on clothes and ornaments, not from sternly enforced rules, but by the example of a life continually adorned "with the immortal beauty of a gentle and modest spirit, which is in the sight of God of rare value."

A few years ago she had to undergo a very serious operation. One who visited her in hospital beforehand, was touched by her eagerness to apologise for some imagined failure in kindness on her part in the past. She had no fears for herself, she wanted only to make sure that no cloud rested between her and

any of her friends. By the mercy of God she was restored to health and enabled to return to her beloved work.

The soul of hospitality, she makes her guests feel that they are doing her a kindness in coming under her roof, and lavishes on them all manner of western delicacies, which she herself never touches. One request she will make of them, rather timidly, before they say farewell. "Will you pray with me?" she asks, and as they kneel together she makes known her requests to God with the simplicity of a little child.

There she is still in harness, and please God, may remain so for many years. Readers will in all probability never have the privilege of visiting the dwelling of this gracious daughter of India, or the opportunity of kneeling beside "Without Limit," but they can still pray with and for her, that as her day her strength may be, and that God will use her to turn many to righteousness in the great, sad city where He has called her to work for Him.

PART V

HEALERS

"To another gifts of healing"

*The Healer by Gennesareth
Shall walk thy rounds with thee.*

(WHITTIER.)

*Quick sympathy, hands that brought health
To the sick who looked up and entreated,
A power that went forth as by stealth—
Thus Jesus came God to reveal:
He said, "Lo, the works that I do,
And greater, shall yet be completed."
Lord, we with that promise in view
Would help to spread health and to heal.*

*For man has a virtue within,
A force that is always restoring;
A life that to God is akin:
We help, but 'tis God Who makes whole.
We search, and we struggle again,
Thy deep-hidden secrets exploring;
We fight in the Christ-like campaign
Of succour for body and soul.*

A. G.

CHAPTER XII

KHEROTH MOHINI BOSE

KHEROTH MOHINI BOSE was born in 1865. She received her early education at the Alexandra High School, Amritsar, where Deaconess Ellen Goreh was teaching at the time. This sane and saintly woman exercised a great influence over her, and helped her much in her spiritual life. Even as a schoolgirl Kheroth displayed remarkable powers of leadership; she was popular among her schoolfellows, and much in demand for her musical gifts.

From school she went to St. Catherine's Hospital, and had her first medical training from that wonderful medical missionary, Miss Hewlett, an early advocate of a medical career for Indian women, whose gift for teaching gave to the Punjab and to Bengal some of their splendid pioneer medical women. Students under Miss Hewlett could not, of course, take a complete medical course, for when Miss Hewlett took up medical work, there was no full training or degree permitted to women.

But what her students learned they never forgot. She did not merely impart to them head knowledge; she spared no pains to fit them, mind and spirit, for their life work of healing. Miss Agnes James of the village hospital at Mankar, and Miss Rose Phailbus of Krishnagar and the Punjab, are other "living memorials" to Miss Hewlett's magnificent life-work, and there have been, and are, many others.

When she was only eighteen Kheroth was sent to England and studied medicine at Dr. Griffith's Medical Mission Training School. After two years she returned to Amritsar, whence she was transferred to Tarn Taran. The work in this hospital over-taxed her strength, and in 1890 she moved to Asrapur—"The Village of Hope"—where she remained until she retired from work after over forty years of service.

The work in Asrapur, a small village situated in the Amritsar district on the bank of a canal, was started by two well-loved missionaries, the Rev. and Mrs. H. E. Perkins. Their story is told by Kheroth Bose herself in her little book *The Village of Hope*. Mr. Perkins was for thirty years a member of the Indian Civil Service. He retired in 1866, and devoted the last fourteen years of his life to missionary effort with the C.M.S. He and his wife began their labours at Asrapur in a very simple way, in a spot believed to be haunted by demons. Gradually they gathered round them a little band of devoted fellow-workers. These included a Sikh devotee, won by the patient, humble witness of the "padre Sahib," who refused to be rebuffed.

Kheroth Bose joined them in 1890, and immediately opened a dispensary. The women were very timid at first, but soon began coming in large numbers. As early as 1892 nine thousand were being treated in a single year. A hospital was soon added to the outpatient department, and the work of healing was used by God to bring straying sheep into His fold. One patient, a poor little cripple boy, has lived to minister to a colony of lepers, and to bring the glad light of the Gospel to many a dark and suffering heart.

At first the patients were mostly poor, but after a while upper-class women began to make use of the

hospital, and the opportunity came to preach the Gospel to much wider circles. Wealthy men began to take a personal interest in the sick poor, and in the orphan children at the Mission, and many brought gifts or offers of help.

At a time of terrible famine the colony of poor Christians in the village, living themselves on the borderland of hunger, adopted twelve little wizened starvelings, and brought them up with their own children.

In 1900 the founder of the Village of Hope passed to his rest with complete trust, leaving all his "affairs and burdens in the dear crucified Hand." The promise "I will not leave you orphans" was wonderfully fulfilled at Asrapur, for the work went uninterruptedly forward.

Kheroth Bose's duties and responsibilities steadily increased, but with them came increased strength and ability. She always combined evangelistic with medical work, and profoundly believed in the efficacy of this double ministry.

"The Hospital," she writes, "is an object lesson in love. It is a message that reaches all classes; the proudest and most bigoted are to be seen within the Hospital precincts, lost in wonder that there should be a place where money and position can bring them no more care than is given to the poorest.

"It is easy to believe that God is love when His servants are seen exemplifying that love in the humblest acts of life. Once again the Nazarene wins by reason of the love which is His great gift to His followers."

Never, amid the strain and stress, the unending routine, the constant tax on strength and patience, of

a busy, inadequately staffed hospital, did Dr. Bose forget this ideal of the "double ministry."

Every member of the staff, from the doctor down to the youngest probationer, took a share in the spiritual work. Those who could not preach, sang hymns; those who could not sing showed and explained the Bible pictures. The patients were surrounded as far as possible "by a wholly Christian atmosphere." There were no non-Christian servants, and the sick ones saw about them happy, bright faces.

The Sunday services were joyful times; some patients loved them so much that they would return when cured, and stay over-night, so that they might join in Divine Service. At times Hindus of all classes, Sikhs, and Moslem women who had never been to services of their own, would mix with the Christian women in church, without giving a thought to social or religious barriers. The patients returning home often took with them portions of the written Word.

On one occasion a former patient, a high-caste Punjabi lady, took her precious Gospel to a quiet field and began spelling it out aloud, for she was imperfectly literate. An old serving man, low caste and ignorant, drew near and listened to her. Presently he interrupted with the excited question, "Lady, where did you get that book? It is the good news of Jesus Christ." The reader explained that she had been ill in Asrapur Hospital for many weeks. There she had had lessons in reading, and when coming away had been given the book. "But," she added, "I cannot understand much of it."

"Asrapur is my birth-place," replied the man, "where I received the New Birth. Read to me; I can explain the book to you."

So the high-born, beautifully clad lady read aloud to the poor ragged peasant, and he, who could not read himself, made known to her the glorious meaning, and so "both went away comforted."

Miss Bose's history of the work at Asrapur only takes us to 1910. The succeeding twenty-two years were possibly even more busy and blessed. She was an active member of many committees, and people used to come to her from great distances, for advice on many subjects. Always they found her ready with wise counsel and generous sympathy. She was a pioneer in rural reconstruction and welfare work, and in all matters connected with village life.

One most important branch of her work had been the training of "*dais*," or midwives. The devastating ignorance and complete lack of hygiene of these untrained (through no fault of their own) midwives of rural and indeed, too often of urban India, have become notorious. These conditions have been, of course, largely responsible for the appallingly high infant and maternal death-rates which prevail in the country.

It is amazingly difficult to combat the religious superstition which lies at the root of most of their ghastly practices. Even the educated classes cannot free themselves from these. Trained medical practitioners who have walked the excellent Calcutta hospitals, and have modern theories of asepsis at their finger tips, will allow their own wives and daughters to go through their confinements in dirty, unventilated out-houses, attended by grimy hereditary *dais*.

Kheroth Bose was among the first to scale this wall of prejudice, and her class for training village midwives was wonderfully successful. She composed little rhymes in the vernacular which she taught them

to sing, enumerating the elementary rules of midwifery.

Every year a baby-show was held at Asrapur, and not only the weightiest and best kept babies, but the *dais* who had been most successful in ushering them into the world, received prizes. Health Exhibitions, Welfare Centres, and Baby Shows are now to be found all over India, and *dais'* training classes are run in connection with many hospitals. Yet only a very small percentage of the work crying out to be done has been touched so far.

Kheroth Bose paid several visits to England, and spoke at least twice at C.E.Z.M.S. Annual Meetings. When the C.M.S. delegation visited India in 1921 she was invited to join them in their travels, and willingly placed her wide knowledge and experience at their disposal. A few years later she was asked to join the Mission of Fellowship to England, but by that time her health was failing and she had to decline.

She took a deep interest in the Lady Irwin Tuberculosis Sanatorium, indeed, her efforts were largely responsible for its initiation, and until her last illness she was a valued member of its governing body.

In 1916 she was awarded the silver Kaiser-i-Hind medal, and a bar was added in 1922.

She was a true patriot, and loved her own country devotedly, but her intimate knowledge of the British language, national characteristics and outlook, together with her wide sympathies and commonsense, made her advice and assistance invaluable, especially where questions of official co-operation were concerned.

For the last two years of her life she was in very poor health, and had to leave her dearly loved Village of Hope and live quietly in Lahore. Inactivity was a real trial to her after her long life of active service for

God and her neighbour, and her friends gave thanks with her when her Home Call came.

Towards the end, when she could neither read nor write, she continued to take a keen interest in the outside world, and particularly in Mission news. A friend who daily visited her and read out the day's portions of "Daily Light" and "Great Souls at Prayer," found her always bright and ready to join in here and there. "I shall miss her greatly," says one who loved her, "friend of thirty years, we held sweet communion together; where she was, seemed to be the 'House of God.' "

Thinking of bygone happy days of service together, Mrs. Guilford, widow of the Rev. E. Guilford of C.M.S., writes: "Kheroth Bose had a wonderful way of carrying through her plans without difficulty—there was a charm about her which made others pleased to be with her and work under her. When she took charge at Asrapur, and even before, my husband and I were often there to help, or as her guests, more especially at the large yearly gathering held at Asrapur, called the Prem Sangat Mela—literally "the meeting place of love"—when large numbers of Sikhs, Mohammedans, and Christians would come together to discuss and sing and pray, presided over by the Rev. Wadhawa Mall, the Christian Sikh *padri*, and my husband.

"Glorious times they were those four days . . . Miss Bose like a gentle mother caring for us all, keeping everything working happily. The half-Indian pleasant meals in the Home, her singing in the evening to us, accompanying herself on the *tauss*, a beautiful Indian instrument shaped like a peacock, will always be most delightful memories. . . ."

At her funeral the beautiful verses which have

already been quoted in these pages, written by Dr Bose's old friend and spiritual guide, Deaconess Goreh, were sung:

*In the secret of His Presence how my soul delights to hide,
Oh, how precious are the lessons that I learn at Jesu's side.*

And her friends rejoiced because her brave spirit had passed beyond the limitations of earth into His immediate Presence at Whose right hand are "pleasures for evermore."

CHAPTER XIII

ROSE PHAILBUS

ROSE PHAILBUS, the daughter of Christian parents, living in Amritsar, was only nine years of age, she tells us, when "the call came to make known Christ's Name to others." In 1877 it was the custom in that city for young Christian men to spend the night before Christmas in carol-singing. They finished their programme at six a.m., by assembling at the Phailbus' house for tea, cakes and oranges. The children of the house were naturally excited, and when their mother rose, in the small hours, to prepare the feast, they were allowed to sit up in bed, wrapped in quilts, to look on.

On this special Christmas morning, little Rose watched a Mohammedan servant lighting the fire. "Oh, Ibrahim," she told him joyfully, "to-day Jesus Christ was born. He came to save us."

The man in a very cynical voice replied, "Where is your Jesus? Show Him to me."

The child was distressed, and turned to prayer.

"Oh, Jesus," she cried, "come down and show Thyself to Ibrahim!"

From that time forward a desire was always present, sometimes uppermost, sometimes buried under the cares of the day, to tell others about the love of Jesus.

Another very youthful ambition was to be a healer of the sick. The child would constantly suggest to her companions, "Come, let us play hospital." Rose would always act the doctor, and put on solar spectacles. She would march in to treat her playmates, who lay

groaning and sighing on the floor, and administer medicine, in the form of soapy water to drink, or pounded grass to form a poultice. Another favourite game was "Church," when Rose, as clergyman, would perch on a bed, and preach long sermons, or officiate at mock weddings. Many a young couple since has she sought to prepare for the real marriage ceremony!

When sent to school she did not lose her interest in the sick, and when measles or chicken-pox broke out, she was always chosen to look after invalids.

Her mother died when the youngest child, a boy, was under a year old, so for a time duty called the girl to stay at home and look after the family. Her father, according to Indian custom, planned an early marriage for her with a schoolmaster, but in this matter she opposed his wishes.

"The thought that I must make known the Gospel was uppermost," she says, "and marriage never came into my thoughts." Her father was much disappointed and displeased, and when his daughter, after being brought into contact with the Salvation Army, expressed to him a strong desire to throw in her lot with that organization, the poor man was horror-struck!

Again he urged marriage on his unusual daughter, and she, in desperation, cried to God to save her, if He wanted her for another form of service.

In the meantime a teacher from the Alexandra School had joined the Church of England Zenana Mission and gone to work at Jandiala. She knew something of Rose's inward longings, and invited her to spend a week-end with her. On the Saturday they went together to sing and preach at a neighbouring village. Heavy rain fell on the Sunday, and they were unable to go to church, and so the two spent many quiet hours together, talking of the things of God.

Rose returned home, less enthusiastic, perhaps, for Salvation Army methods, but even more earnestly desirous of witnessing for her Master. "In a most wonderful way God opened the path for me," she writes. "Miss Hewlett came to see me, and asked if I would like to learn medicine. Many obstacles were put in my way, but at last all difficulties were overcome. I threw in my lot with the C.E.Z.M.S. I have never for one moment regretted the step I took that day."

The missionary training under Miss Hewlett was as thorough as the medical. Miss Phailbus says, "It gave me a hunger for God's Word, and prepared me for what lay before me."

Her training over, Rose Phailbus was sent down to Bengal, to open up work in a place where there had been very few converts for many years. The young doctor had to learn a new language; work was strenuous, and there was so much opposition that they had to change the place of the Dispensary three times. She tells us, however, that after a while "God gave us the joy of seeing a soul brought to the feet of Christ, one who later became the Hospital Biblewoman."

In the course of time more women and children were gathered in. They in turn brought others, and quite a number were added to the Church. The medical work grew from a "cupboard dispensary" to a big out-patients' department, having four rooms and three verandahs, and ministering to three hundred patients a day. There was also a Hospital, which became increasingly popular as the days went by. In 1912 Government recognized Miss Phailbus' large and growing work by the award of the Kaisar-i-Hind silver medal, to which a bar was added in 1925.

The evangelistic work was always given a prominent

place. The two convert Biblewomen, in their white widows' garments, would go from ward to ward taking prayers. When she was doing the last round, many a sick one would beg the doctor to touch her, so that she might have a good sleep.

The faith of some of the patients was very real, and they would tell the doctor how Christ Himself had stood by them, saying, "Fear not, you will get well."

God, indeed, blessed His servant's ministry, but of course all was not joy. There were some who would not listen, and some who deliberately enticed away those who were beginning to believe. When the onslaughts of the Evil One were fiercest, Dr. Phailbus used to make a practice of spending some time in prayer after the evening meal. "Some of the nurses and Biblewomen joined her. Sometimes they would pray aloud, and at other times in silence, till about 11 p.m."

Village doctors, in responding to calls from distant hamlets, always encounter a share of discomfort and adventure. Rose Phailbus recalls one occasion when she "reached a village about midnight, in pouring rain, and found the patient lying in the middle of cows and calves, on a wooden bed in a small room. I had to sit on the cow's back to do an operation, the husband holding on to the horns of the cow, while the nurse gave chloroform!"

On another occasion, the doctor rescued a poor woman who had been tortured by her relations. She writes, "I dressed her up as a nurse, carrying my bag. She walked with difficulty, as the soles of her feet had been blistered by making her stand on live coals. At last, at the appointed place, previously arranged, we met the closed conveyance." They started on a thirteen-



ROSE PHAILBUS

mile drive at 3 a.m., on a dark night with no moon. Suddenly the vehicle was stopped, and the door opened.

"How my heart beat! But with all the courage I could muster, holding my stethoscope in my hand, I put my head out, and asked what they wanted. They all fell back, saying, 'This is our Doctor Mother,' and so in safety we passed through."

One afternoon a well-dressed young man insisted on seeing the busy doctor, but would not tell his errand. When at last she went and asked, "in not the sweetest of tones," what he wanted, he bent, and touching her feet replied, "I want your blessing. My mother has told me with what trouble you brought me into the world, and breathed your own breath into me. Tonight I am going to be married, and I must have your blessing." Little episodes like this brought sunshine into the heart, when pressed down with work, hard, nerve-straining, and sometimes very monotonous.

After many years devoted to medical work in Bengal, Rose Phailbus returned to her own land, the Punjab, not yet to rest, though she was suffering from heart trouble, but to continue bravely carrying on her double work of physical and spiritual healing.

One of her last acts, before she retired in 1935, was to collect the money to build a new "Family Ward" at Narowal, where she had been for eight years in charge of the Women's Hospital. Indian non-Christian gentlemen, who appreciated her efforts to combat suffering, had been among the chief contributors.

On the occasion of the opening ceremony, the Mohammedan doctor in charge of the Men's Government Hospital was one of the speakers. He expressed an affectionate regard for the work, and said he

believed its success to be due to Miss Phailbus' personal interest in each patient.

One episode in his own experience he could not forget. He called on some business matter, and found the lady doctor at prayer, with an open Bible before her. To him, as a Moslem, ceremonial devotion at fixed intervals may have appeared, no doubt, a seemly occupation, but when he apologized for interrupting he found that this was no mechanical performance of a rite. She quietly explained to him that she was engaged in praying for each patient by name. Here was no cloistered devotee, but a busy doctor, in full work, ministering to the sick in a large hospital, where admissions and discharges were of daily occurrence. The Moslem doctor confessed that the incident "set him thinking." Might it not well have the same effect on most of us?

An English fellow-worker writes: "I spent many years as a co-worker with Miss Phailbus, and looking back over those happy days of partnership, in the service of the Master, one feels that this has been a privilege indeed.

"Loved and respected by all, from the Rani to the lowest sweeper woman; healing and helping countless sick and suffering ones, in home or hospital, and above all, winning and bringing from darkness to light many sin-sick souls; such was the devoted and untiring work of Miss Rose Phailbus. Many rise up and call her blessed. Yet she, if commended, would say, 'Not unto me, O Lord, but unto Thy Name, be the glory.' "

In a farewell message on her retirement Miss Phailbus wrote: "As I look back on those forty odd years of service, the storms and difficulties seem small compared to the joy I have had in winning souls for the Master, and

in building up and strengthening those converts in the most holy faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. Some have already gone before, and some are still in the flesh, waiting with me, till we also hear the 'Home Call' and see the Master face to face."

Cheerfully she concluded: "I am told by the doctors that after vegetating for some months, I may still be able to undertake something—but that remains to be seen. If the Lord hath need of me He can supply the grace and strength, as I have often proved. 'He hath commanded' my strength."

* * * *

"Where is your Jesus? Show Him to me," said the Moslem servant to the nine-year-old Christian child. And most patiently and perseveringly, from early girlhood until, in a ripe old age, she answered her Lord's Home Call, did Rose Phailbus of Krishnagar and Narowal strive to fulfil his request.

CHAPTER XIV

“GRACE”: MEDICAL MISSIONARY

GRACE—the English meaning of her Indian name—was born in the C.E.Z.M.S. Hospital at Bangalore. Her mother died when she was but a little child, and her father a year later. They were converts from Hinduism's highest caste, and they had taught their younger children the Name of our Salvation. The eldest son, however, clung to the glory of his Brahmin origin, and remained an orthodox Hindu. When his parents died he took charge of some of the younger children, and speedily branded them with the Brahmin caste marks; but later on, despite all his efforts, two of these younger sisters discarded the symbols of caste, and were received—surely in answer to the prayers of their parents—into the one flock of the one true Shepherd.

Little Grace, happily, was looked after by an elder sister, and from the first she was brought up as a Christian. From her early days, she had a great ambition to become a doctor. Just at the right time for her a Missionary Medical College for Women was opened in South India at Vellore, and she became one of its first students. Here she made the acquaintance of a young Indian lady of her own social position, who was taking training as a nurse.

This girl must have been a rather wonderful person. She was very rich, and she was a Brahmin, and the profession of a nurse is one which a Brahmin, even if on the brink of starvation, would usually regard as



DR. "GRACE"

impossible. Yet this young woman faced up to all that a hospital training involved, and pluckily carried it through.

When Grace arrived to begin her medical course, it was natural that the two high-caste girls should be mutually attracted. In nature they must have had much in common, and a warm friendship sprang up between them. Grace was poor; she hoped by means of scholarships to earn her training fees, but her new friend was wealthy and generous, and as the friendship ripened she offered to meet all Grace's expenses, even to the cost of her medical books.

It seemed an excellent plan. The nurse had more money than she could spend on herself, and how could the surplus be more usefully employed? The doctor in charge encouraged her generous impulse. One stipulation, certainly, was made by Grace's new friend. When their training was finished the two must take up work together in a Government hospital. Otherwise, she said, all the expenses undertaken on Grace's behalf would have to be refunded.

The girl readily agreed; the prospect of working with her friend was most inviting. She threw herself heart and soul into her work, and her training career was most encouraging.

The days of training came to a successful close. The promising young woman doctor would naturally have a choice of well-paid Government posts, with easily earned private fees attached, open to her. But in the meantime her ears had been opened to hear another Call. She came to realise more fully that she was not her own but "bought with a price", and her desire was to glorify God in her body and her spirit which were His.

When a missionary doctor wrote to her, and asked her to come and work with her in a far-away and unhealthy province, Grace felt constrained to accept the invitation. And yet—surely the thing was impossible? She had promised her Brahmin friend that she would either work with her or refund all the money, a very large sum, expended on her behalf.

Where God calls, however, nothing is impossible. Grace resisted the attractions of Government work, its freedom, its good pay, its opportunities for private practice, and other allurements, and shouldered her burden of debt. She bade farewell to her non-Christian friend—that must have been the hardest wrench of all—and went to the distant Mission Hospital. There month after month, and year after year, uncomplainingly, and asking help of no one, she stinted herself, so that she might repay, out of her meagre salary, the “debt” incurred for her books and training.

The path of obedience to the heavenly vision proved very steep and difficult. The climate of her station was far from salubrious, and she suffered from constant attacks of malarial fever in a severe form. Her sisters and other relatives disapproved of her going there and showed their disapproval by ignoring her existence, and never answering her letters. So loneliness and sickness were added to the burden of debt.

The brave soul never faltered. She threw herself heart and soul into her work as a missionary doctor. “The reason,” writes one who knows her, “why she is such a good doctor and surgeon is that she has never lost her love of study. However weary and hard-pressed she may be, if there happens to be one patient—‘in’ or ‘out’—whose case is at all baffling, she knows no peace of mind till she has studied it from all

points and angles, from her numerous books. She gives of her very best." She must have found consolation in the love and gratitude of those to whom she ministered. But she received yet further rewards, for gradually opposition was overcome, her sisters became reconciled to her, and her health improved.

On the retirement of the missionary doctor, Dr. Grace took over the work, and has since been in full charge of the enlarged and important hospital. She is loved and respected by patients and staff alike; her words and touch of sympathy mean more to them than the actual medicine administered, though this is always given with prayer and faith.

"The hospital is growing rapidly," writes a friend, "but its doctor still remains the quiet, gentle, reserved woman that she ever was. The people of the place call our Hospital 'the Jesus Christ Hospital,' and truly our doctor reflects her Lord and Master Jesus Christ."

PART VI

“NIGHT-LIGHTS”

“Ye shine as lights in the world”

INTRODUCTION

THE last chapter of this book will introduce you to a few of Christ's devotees who have lived quiet and perhaps inconspicuous lives, but who have been willing to let their gentle light shine quietly and comfortingly through the darkness, content to be but lesser lights, so God be glorified.

The writer remembers staying some time ago at a school house after the boys had gone home for the Christmas holidays. The furnace heart of the heating system had ceased to glow, and the shadowed dormitories and chilly class-rooms lay silent and empty. Abruptly the wind blew from the north, and "sharp frost" was forecast over the radio. The house-keeper came to the headmaster's wife with a box of night-lights in her hand.

"I am just going round with these," she explained, "to put them where the pipes are most exposed. We do not want any trouble when the thaw comes."

One looked at the humble box of night-lights, and thought how ridiculously inadequate they would be. But all through the long black hours of darkness they showed their tiny sparks in the solitude of that great building. Their impression on the darkness was infinitesimal; on the biting cold one would have said that they could make no impression at all. Quietly, meekly, they burned themselves out, and in the morning their shrivelled little husks were thrown away.

But they had done their work.

The water in all that vast system of pipes remained unfrozen. When the frost broke there was no agonized

ringing up of over-worked plumbers from that particular school. There was no damage, no danger, no expense, all because of the night-lights.

Well, there are people like that. God has stationed them here and there in His world, often in the places most exposed to the black frosts of oppression and indifference, of misery and sin. This last chapter introduces you to some Indian "night-lights." One or two of these have been stronger and brighter than others, but for the most part they have been very small and unassuming. When the frost breaks, and the eternal morning dawns, we shall know what has been accomplished by the unnoticed children of God, who, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, have shone for a little season as lights in the world, holding forth the Word of Life.

CHAPTER XV

MATRONS, BIBLE-WOMEN AND OTHERS

I

MATRONS

BIDHU MUKHI BUXI

ONE day, many years ago, a new superintendent, or matron, came to look after the women in the Industrial Home at Agarpara. She was a middle-aged woman, and arrived accompanied by her husband, a retired pastor. The worker whose place she was taking expressed the fear that the new matron would not make a success of her job, for she was "such a cow-like person." The description was not intended to be insulting. To an Indian a cow does not suggest stupidity or inertia, but rather stands for qualities of patience and meekness.

Converts and enquirers are often a very mixed multitude, usually ignorant, often undisciplined and slow to obey, sometimes quarrelsome, and not infrequently jealous of one another. It seemed to the outgoing matron that the qualities of the lion rather than those of the cow, were required for their effectual supervision.

Mrs. Buxi, however, made good in her new and arduous post, where she governed a varied throng of industrial workers, and later she was transferred to a more important sphere at Baranagar. She is a living example of the truth of the old parable of the traveller's

cloak. Where winds of wrath and punishment fail, the sunshine of her gentleness prevails. It is, after all, the meek who inherit the earth.

She is a thin, frail, rather timid person, with a small wry smile, that breaks out when encouraged into a soft laugh full of enjoyment, for she has a keen, though quiet, sense of humour. She knows the frailties of human nature pretty well, after her long years of experience, but whenever possible, she takes a kindly view of them, hoping all things, believing all things, and pleading often, like the keeper of the vineyard, for patient treatment toward the unprofitable.

Hers was at one time a very strenuous life. She had to know and deal with the vagaries of curry powders and chutneys and jams, as well as those of the women who manufactured them. She was constantly in request at the show-room, the loom-room, the sick-room, or the office, and her husband, old and infirm, demanded full-time service during her off-duty hours.

He was once heard to grumble, "My wife is at every one's beck and call, and so she neglects her proper husbandry"; but no one who knew her would have endorsed the accusation. Indeed she nearly killed herself by her devoted "husbandry" during the last few weeks of his life, and perhaps it was then that the people of Baranagar first realised what an absolute calamity her loss would be to the Converts' Home. When he had gone they tenderly nursed her back to a measure of health again.

The task of arranging or forbidding marriages among the converts falls largely to her share, and always she shows sympathy and understanding, and an earnest desire for the happiness of the prospective bride.

The writer enjoyed two or three weeks of intimate companionship with Mrs. Buxi, during a spell of “flood relief work” in a remote village of Eastern Bengal. One has recollections of sleeping with one’s head on her knee, during a tiring night journey, of constantly asking and taking her advice over the many problems of the work, of laughing with her over the subterfuges of some of the applicants for relief, and of sharing her sympathy with others.

It was she who checked the handing of a soiled and ragged garment—many such having been sent to us for distribution—to a sightless beggar. “Oh, Mem,” she protested quickly, “the blind must have the best.”

At all times she was a delightful fellow-worker, humble and yielding and self-sacrificing, and yet firm where principle was concerned.

Indian women often show a tendency to put a large portion of their salaries on their backs in the form of jewellery and silken attire. Someone remonstrated once with Mrs. Buxi because she wore such inexpensive and simple clothing. “If you do not dress in accordance with your station,” said this friend, “the women will not honour you.”

“If the women honour me for my clothes only, their respect will not be worth very much, I am afraid,” was the quiet reply.

Certainly they have no need of costly adornments who have put on, “as God’s elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering,” and dear Mrs. Buxi has won not only the respect, but the sincere love of all the girls and women who have ever been under her charge.

MUTHUVADIVU KOHLHOFF

A Converts' Home had been opened in Palamcottah for women and girls who felt compelled to confess Christ openly, and who could not safely remain in their Hindu homes. The new Home needed a matron, of course, and the coming of Mrs. Kohlhoff was a matter for great rejoicing. She was a young widow, and a perfectly lovely woman in her widow's sari of spotless white. She wore no jewels—not even the necklet or ear-rings which widows sometimes retain—for she had renounced all jewellery, even during her husband's lifetime, feeling strongly that her adorning was not to be the "wearing of gold," but a spirit consecrated to God's service.

Her husband had been a pastor, and at one time had given his services to the Salvation Army, and probably Mrs. Kohlhoff's association with the Army had fostered her spirit of fire and enthusiasm and love for souls; her gift for singing, too, which was an undoubted asset in a Converts' Home, would have found full scope in the Army.

The matron in a Home consisting of women of various castes and ages, unused for the most part to any semblance of discipline, must have tact, great patience, zeal and inexhaustible "motherliness." Mrs. Kohlhoff came of a high-caste family, but was completely free from caste pride, and surmounted the difficulties that arose in the daily routine with dignity and wisdom. In her the women witnessed an example of humility, specially evidenced in the matter of food; her readiness to partake with all being a constant reminder of the new life they had entered and the oneness of Christ's



FOUR GENERATIONS OF CHRISTIANS
MRS. KOHLHOFF *on the right*

family. As a co-worker, too, her European sisters found in Mrs. Kohlhoff a true helper, especially the younger and more inexperienced missionaries who sought her advice in times of perplexity.

She had a large family of step-children and children of her own, by whom she was much beloved. But dearly as she loved them, she always made room in her heart for other people's children, and for all lonely young people. She was particularly helpful when new converts came, and those who had left all for Christ's sake found in her a loving friend, whose ready sympathy and constant prayer sustained them in the seasons of loneliness through which they were bound to pass. In times of crisis she was at hand to urge them to keep on trusting God.

Sometimes the relatives of the convert women would come to the Home to try and persuade them to return to their own homes and the Hindu religion. At such difficult times Mrs. Kohlhoff would lovingly deal with the visitors, telling them stories of God's love and Christ's sacrifice for the sin of the world; urging them, too, to choose the same "better part," as had the loved one whom they had hoped to take back with them.

In times of danger and stress she boldly rose to the occasion. Once, during a law case over a question of guardianship, a Hindu lawyer declared that he would neither eat nor drink till he had put Mrs. Kohlhoff in prison; and he very nearly succeeded, as he somehow contrived to have her placed in a temporary "lock-up". Fortunately, her European co-workers heard of it in time to reach the magistrate before night-fall, and he immediately gave orders to have her released. Far from being troubled or upset, Mrs. Kohlhoff gloried in the experience of being "counted

worthy," and during the short space of her imprisonment, spent the time in witnessing to all around her of Jesus and His love.

Many were the battles that she and her fellow-missionaries fought together for souls during her thirty years as Matron, and there will be many in the Heavenly Home who under God owe all to her prayer and faithful endeavour. Her joyful service on earth ended in December, 1936, leaving all who had known her to rejoice on every remembrance of her, and to thank God for her devoted life of faithful service to the King of Kings.

II

BIBLE-WOMEN

"The women that publish the tidings are a great host"

In the life of most Mission stations, not devoted exclusively to educational work, Bible-women are a familiar feature. Whence they received their English designation one knows not; male evangelists are not called "Bible-men"! The Bible-woman's Indian appellation is "Guru-Ma" (Reverend Teacher-mother), a much more dignified title. Still, by whatever name they are known, the "order of Bible-women" is ancient and honourable (one imagines that it may have been inaugurated with the first woman convert), and its members usually carry their insignia of office (cumbersome vernacular Bibles) about with them. These are commonly encased in gaily-coloured chintz or cretonne bags, and show up brightly against the simple white

garments of their owners. The name "Bible-woman" is on the whole not inappropriate, though some prefer to class all women evangelists as "zenana workers."

There are people who disapprove of the employment of Bible-women. They say that Evangelism should not become a trade. But such a contention cannot possibly stand in view of our Lord's dictum: "The labourer is worthy of his hire," and there can be no reason why a woman, if an earnest Christian, should be precluded, any more than a man, from "living on the Gospel" which she preaches. Critics may comfort themselves with the reflection that her salary is usually very small!

One thing is quite certain: an Indian evangelist, and especially a convert, has a far better chance than a European of getting her message across to non-Christians.

A European worker was once reproached by a rather timid Bible-woman, who had been persuaded to go alone to a Hindu house to preach.

"Never ask me to go to a house without you again," said this timorous soul indignantly. "When I told them that Ganges water could not wash away their sins, one old man was quite angry with me. He said, 'We can endure to hear such words from ignorant foreigners, but not from one of ourselves.' So please will you do all the preaching alone for the future?"

Needless to say one drew a directly opposite lesson from the incident, and wondered whether it would not be wise to hand over all evangelistic work to Indian agents, only trying to see to it that they were suitably equipped for the task.

The keen and well-trained Bible-women can and do exercise a tremendous influence for good. They

are the friends and advisers of simple villagers and secluded gentlewomen alike. They are consulted on domestic problems, called in to settle disputes, invited to pray beside the sick. Many volumes could be filled with stories of their devoted lives, and only when the day of revelation comes will it ever be known how much Christian India and Christian China owe to their steady, love-inspired service. This little book can give only brief introductions to a few representative members of the order.

Here is an extract from the report of a Bible-woman of half a century ago, presumably translated by the missionary in charge of the station.

“I teach thirty-two women. I speak to about twenty daily (i.e., those who listen only), so that including those who read and those who listen to the reading of the Bible, the monthly number is about four hundred. Three old women when dying besought me to continue teaching these things to their children, and their last words, and those of two young women and one old man, were asking Jesus to forgive their sins, and give them Heaven. . . . Many have given up going to their idol worship in the temples. . . . Some women call me secretly and say, ‘Will you come and pray with us, and also teach us to pray?’ ”

Times have changed, but surely it is a matter for thanksgiving to reflect that the above extract might have been written yesterday.

"JOYFULLY READY" OF THE NILGIRI HILLS

This name was given by the missionary with whom she worked to one of her helpers, because whenever summoned to set out on a preaching tour, with its attendant hardships and discomforts, this sturdy evangelist would nod her head vigorously and express her willingness to start.

She was of dark complexion, and had the artificially elongated ear-lobes considered such an ornament in South India. She was far from beautiful, except when she sat amid a group of ignorant hill folk and talked to them, "with her face alight with the light of God."

Her preaching had great power. One day she ended, according to her unvarying custom, with the story of the Crucifixion, and a poor woman, lifting her clasped hands above her head, exclaimed, "I will never worship any other God but Jesus Christ." A year later, when she was seen again, she said that she had kept her vow, and refused to accompany the rest of the family when they went to the heathen temple to do *pujah*.

"Joyfully Ready's" energy was untiring. Six or seven visits entailing a great deal of walking in between would be as much as her European companion could manage, but she would plead, "Do let us go over there. If we don't visit them to-day, when will they hear?"

Alas, when? So few are the labourers that the opportunity might quite possibly never be repeated, and so she would have her way, "in weariness often," but with unquenchable zeal.

She had her faults, like the rest of us, but never was there a more whole-hearted fellow-worker. She

was never "sick nor sorry" on her tours, but uniformly cheerful, and untiring in her efforts to make the lowest and most degraded understand her message.

In the evenings she had sometimes to trudge half a mile to get water for her cooking, and if she met other women on the same errand "Joyfully Ready" would buy up the opportunity once more, tired out though she must have been, and follow the great example set in far-off Samaria by the Saviour of the world.

She was always the same dauntless bearer of good tidings, whether visiting the jungle villages of the Wynaad, the wild, shy Todas of the hill-tops, or folks of more civilized tribes. Her special favourites were the down-trodden and out-caste "Panniers." Whenever she saw a group of these by the wayside, she would ask to stop and speak to them. She overcame their timidity by her earnestness and love, and explained to them the black, red, white and golden pages of the "Wordless Book," that wonderful stand-by in the presentation to the ignorant of the simple facts of the Gospel. Even the multiplicity of languages did not daunt her. She thought that if only one spoke long enough and loud enough, something would go in! Perhaps "Joyfully Ready" was right. Such great earnestness and such great love as she possessed, find their way across to simple souls, without the aid of language.

RAJDEI OF THE PUNJAB

"About fifty years of service" is a fine record, not unknown in missionary circles, but more unusual among Indian Mission workers. Rajdei was one of these. Many years ago an English officer in the Indian Army married

an Englishwoman who was an earnest soul-winner. One of her activities was a small Sunday school, for any children of the regiment who cared to attend. Among her pupils was a Sikh girl, who became converted, and married a Christian man. This woman had no children, and was very fond of a niece, Rajdei, whom she used to invite to visit her. After her husband's death, this convert widow became a Bible-woman, and she occasionally took her niece with her when she went out preaching.

The girl was deeply impressed by the Gospel message. A fervent desire sprang up in her heart: "Oh, that all our Hindus, who are longing for *mukti* (salvation) and go on pilgrimage to many places to obtain it, could hear this message." One is reminded of Naaman's "little maid." The child was filled with a desire that she might be separated to do the work that her aunt was doing, and proclaim good tidings "so easy and so glorious."

Rajdei's parents were non-Christians. The fulfilment of her wish seemed unthinkable. Their religious customs demanded child-marriage, and this little maid was duly contracted to a man whom she had never seen before. He turned out to be of a violent and passionate disposition, and a year or two after the wedding he was involved in some disturbance and sent to prison.

His wife, Rajdei, by this time the mother of a little girl, was given a home by her Christian aunt, and later, as she earnestly desired to be baptized, she was sent for instruction to a Converts' Home at Amritsar. The easy path of seeking divorce from a husband who had ill-treated her, and was actually in prison, was suggested to her, but she bravely put away the temp-

tation. When he was released he came to see her, but made no objection to her staying on at the Mission, where she was then earning her living by going out as companion to an elderly Bible-woman.

After a while her husband became much softened, and himself asked to be prepared for Baptism. Gradually he improved in character, though till the end of his life he found it difficult to overcome the popular idea that women were of no account, and might be beaten on the smallest provocation.

He once said of his wife: "If it had not been for my good wife I should have become a hardened criminal."

Early in her career as a Bible-woman, she was roughly handled in a village, and beaten on the head, and this made her very timid for a season. She met with opposition and indifference at first, but her sweet patient face and gentle manner disarmed hostility, and gradually her sterling qualities won the love and respect of all among whom she went. She could count upon a friendly welcome, and upon being asked to "come again soon."

Thus God, moving in His mysterious way, fulfilled her childhood's desire, and she became a channel for His "easy and glorious" message of deliverance. Her faith was very simple and child-like. She believed in the speedy return of her Saviour, and would often pray that if there were any unsaved soul in her district, for whose sake the Master tarried, that lost one might soon be brought into the fold.

This worker was not highly educated, nor expensively trained for her work, but her simple faith and self-sacrificing zeal stood her in better stead than mere book-learning, in accomplishing the work which God gave her to do. In her preaching she made a free

use of simple illustrations. "If we go by train, we must have a ticket," she would say. "If we get into a wrong train we shall find ourselves at some other destination. . . ." "If a small child asks for a knife, no wise father will give it to him."

"If a little child falls down into mud, its mother does not cease to love it," was a favourite explanation of the love of God for sinners. "Her love is unchanged, but she must bathe it and make it clean, before she can take it on her lap again."

When Rajdei retired from active service at a ripe old age, she settled down to enjoy a well-earned rest. But a grand-nephew was taken ill with tuberculosis, and it was found that he had not long to live and that he must be segregated.

With superb courage and love Bibi Rajdei offered to give up her comfortable little home to go and live outside the compound with the poor lad. As long as he lived she nursed him, and by her bright witness and loving ministration made the wearisome path as easy as possible, accompanying him even to "the grave, and gate of death" by which he entered into the Eternal Home.

Then Bibi Rajdei returned once more to complete her well-earned rest.

DASHI

Another worker whom we will call Dashi had fifty years of service to her credit. She was quite a child, only twelve years old, when she became a Christian. She was physically robust, and in her prime used to walk long distances, over rough fields, to preach in the villages. She could go on talking and teaching

for longer periods than most people find possible. In all her work she was faithful, and even in early days, when people were bitterly prejudiced against Christian teaching, she found her way into home after home.

"Just sit down, and let me sing you a hymn," she would coax, when met with indifference. The hymn drew an audience, and little by little her hearers learned to trust her, and they found in her a real, sympathetic friend.

"The big teacher has been such a good friend to us that we love her very much," said one of her old pupils. "Even when she was not teaching regularly in the house, she would always come if anyone was ill. If there was a new baby, or a new daughter-in-law come to the house, she would come and rejoice with us. She has given all the babies socks or little coats. When we were in trouble she always came to comfort us."

Such testimony as this could be borne to many Bible-women. More startling is the declaration that "she has both the Hindus and the Mohammedans of this town completely under her control!"

Dashi's was evidently a forceful personality. Coming round a corner suddenly, and finding two boys of her acquaintance smoking forbidden cigarettes, she knocked them out of their mouths with her umbrella! The boys took to their heels, but her vigorous measures were not resented.

She would ask the reason for non-attendance from absentees from school, and drive truants there in front of her. A young woman, who was prostrated with grief by the death of a little daughter, has borne evidence that no one could do anything with her until the Big Teacher came along. Twice in one day she visited the house of sorrow, and spoke words of

comfort to the poor mother, until at last she persuaded her to get up and look after her house and family.

Two leading men of the town where she laboured, and whom she had known from childhood, when they heard of her resignation came to beg her not to leave them.

"Why can you not stay here?" they asked. "We don't want you to work, but just to live amongst us. When you die we ourselves will dig a grave in the Mission compound and bury you. And we will put up a monument to your memory."

SOROJINI AND ROJONI

Sorojini of Bengal was a young widow, who came to a Mission House as to a City of Refuge, to escape the perils and terrors of a Hindu city. She was a woman of sweet and courageous character, and one who knew her well has described her as "one of the truest converts I ever knew." Her earnest and consistent Christian life caused her to be singled out to be sent to a distant Mission for a course of Bible training. In the Compound there was a large and deep pond or tank, in which the workers used to bathe. One day a young English worker was swimming there, when she became entangled in weeds and water-lily stems. Her cries for help were heard by Sorojini, who immediately sprang into the water, and at the risk of her own life brought the missionary ashore. Nor would she accept any thanks. "Think what you have done for me," she said. "Why should I not do some small service for my sisters?"

In addition to her labours as a Bible-woman, she mothered a succession of the waifs and strays who

were brought to the Mission House, a voluntary labour of love, which by no means all Christian workers are willing to undertake. By her sweet influence she drew a sister and an aged aunt into the fold of Christ.

Another well-known Bengali Bible-woman was Rojoni. Her little daughter used to attend a Mission school, and the child would go home, as so many do, and recount the Bible stories to her widowed mother. Presently the teachers used to notice a white-robed young woman, who crept unobtrusively up to the verandah where the school was held, and listened spell-bound during the Bible lesson. Faith came by hearing, and one morning the young mother arrived at the Mission House, leading the child by one hand and carrying a small bundle in the other. She asked quite simply for admission to the Converts' Home, and for teaching with a view to Baptism. Not long afterwards she was joined by her aged mother.

Rojoni had much to learn; she was independent, and of a hasty temper which caused consternation on more than one occasion. Her growth in grace, however, was steady and rapid, and in course of time she became an experienced and trusted Bible-woman, and worked in that capacity for a number of years.

She knew her job, and she knew her hearers, and young missionaries, privileged to go out with her, learned valuable lessons in the art of house-to-house evangelization. Pressing her audience to taste and see that the Lord is good, she would recall how a *mem-sahib* had once given her a new fruit, called an "ah-pel." "At first I would not eat it," she would explain to her hearers. "I said, 'I have mangoes and bananas and jack-fruit.' I feared that the new thing would poison me. Then I saw that others ate it and enjoyed it, and

at last I also tasted it, and truly I found that it was very sweet."

Up to extreme old age Rojoni continued to bear faithful witness to the sweetness of the fruit of the Tree of Life, which had satisfied the hunger of her own heart.

* * * *

These are but a few instances of the activities of that vast band of Bible-women of the passing generation. No doubt the Bible-woman of the present and future is and will increasingly be better equipped educationally for their work; but they can never be more whole-hearted and earnest than those who led the way.

III

MEDICAL WORKERS

AGNES JAMES

Nearly forty years ago a new Mission Station of the C.E.Z.M.S. was opened at Mankar, a large village in the Burdwan district of Bengal. No medical help was available for the women and children of that district, though the need was as urgent as anywhere in India.

Miss Hewlett, of Amritsar, was once more applied to, and in response Miss Agnes James, who had just completed her training, was appointed to the post.

The "Doctor Mem", a Punjabi lady, small of stature, shy and retiring of disposition, and physically not robust, duly arrived at Mankar in the year 1900, and there she has faithfully laboured ever since. At first she was in charge of a modest dispensary, held on the

verandah of the Mission House. This developed into a delightful "cottage hospital," called "the House of Hope," and her dispensary is a handsome building, tiled and brick-built, and containing well-equipped consulting, compounding and dressing rooms.

Bengal was to her a foreign country with a foreign language. Quietly she settled down to her task, completely mastered the unfamiliar tongue, and set to work to win her way to the hearts of the villagers.

At first she encountered much prejudice and suspicion. Regular opposition was organized by an unfriendly party of Hindu wine-sellers. The credulous peasantry were informed that the new doctor wanted to take out the eyes of child patients "to make into ointment and send to Queen Victoria." Once there was almost a riot when the Mission folk were accused of "kidnapping" a homeless child, whom Miss Harding, now one of the veteran missionaries of the Society, had befriended.

Very gradually distrust and opposition melted under the sunshine of Agnes James' unfailing kindness, conscientious attention and skilful treatment. At first in-patients were few and far between, but soon they came from long distances, and the doctor's name became a household word in numerous scattered villages.

Many a weary journey by bullock-cart has she taken to minister to sick ones unable to come into hospital; many a child-mother's life has been saved by her skill, and many a young out-patient proudly claims special attention as having been "the doctor-mem's baby."

She has had her share of suffering; fever, cholera, blood-poisoning, a severe operation, have at different times interrupted her work; but again and again she

has returned to her ministry of healing, determined at all costs to carry on. Sometimes her patients have included her European fellow-workers, when with unwearied devotion she has combined the duties of doctor and nurse.

Agnes James' work has not been done in the lime-light, but it has proved and will prove to have been far-reaching and permanent in its results.

SOME HOSPITAL NURSES

When the terrible Quetta earthquake of 1935 brought crashing to the ground (among thousands of other buildings) the Zenana Mission Hospital, there happened to be only one nurse on night duty in it. Awake and dressed as she was, she could doubtless have saved herself by making a dash for it when the quaking began, but probably the thought of doing so never so much as entered her head.

There was a very sick woman in the ward where Nurse L—— was, a woman who could not walk or help herself in any way. The nurse bent beside her, and somehow succeeded in lifting her on to her back. She was staggering over the heaving floor with her burden when the hospital fell, and both were buried under the falling masonry. Amazingly they were not immediately killed, and at intervals L—— spoke to the patient, and at first she received answers. Then there fell a dreadful silence. Hours afterwards the rescuers dug out the two women. The patient was dead, but the nurse recovered from her injuries.

It is a single incident; probably many like it occurred on that night of terror and heroism. Yet it has its significance. She was a farmer's daughter, a Christian,

but not a particularly brilliant girl: in fact, she seems to have been rather rough and difficult to train. She had a hasty temper, and had been warned that unless she overcame it she might not be able to continue her training. For this very ordinary woman quite suddenly the path of duty became the road, if not to glory, at least to a display of gallant and high-hearted courage, and *she took that road.*

The women's mission hospitals of India all have their staffs of Indian nurses. From every one of them it almost certainly required courage to take up that profession. Nursing has no tradition of romance behind it in India. Rather there is a tendency to regard it as a humiliating and degrading calling. The Indian girls, by far the greater number of them Christians, who have become nurses in their native land, have had to unlearn many old things and learn many new ones. They have had to sacrifice their prejudices, overcome their reluctances, and change their sense of values. It is a very fine achievement, both on their part and on that of the missionary sisters and doctors who have trained them, that such a large proportion of them have become patient, efficient and reliable nurses.

Many of them are evangelists as well, and love to pray with their charges, or to explain to them the lantern pictures of the life of our Lord. "We like coming here," said a poor woman to a medical worker, and when asked why, she replied, "Because you not only tell us about Jesus, but you show Him to us."

A highly nervous temperament is not perhaps the best foundation on which to build up a nursing career. Nurse Noni had such a handicap, and it was a sore trial to those who had the responsibility of training

her. Would she ever be able to take responsibility? She was a Christian and a good girl, but any kind of a crisis found her on edge; and the thought of bearing pain herself terrified her. If she was faced with the extraction of a tooth or an injection on account of some epidemic, Noni would immediately become hysterical, and no amount of tactful persuasion, of stern command or cheerful common sense had the least effect!

One day a little lad was brought to hospital by his parents. He was terribly badly burned, and after some days' treatment the doctor decided that a grafting operation must be done. Would the father give a piece of skin to save his wee son from a life-long disfigurement? No, he would not—the idea was unthinkable! Why should he, a man, undergo pain and loss for a small boy? Disfigurement was no handicap—let the lad do the best he could.

The doctor turned hopefully to the young mother, but even for her the ordeal was too great. No, no, it was quite impossible!

What was to be done? The grafting was necessary, but if the child's own parents refused to part with an inch or two of skin, who else would be willing?

"Will my skin do, Doctor?"

Could Doctor believe her eyes? It was Noni, the nervous, who spoke; Noni, a quiet confident nurse!

"But, Noni, you can't bear pain! It will hurt a lot, you know."

"If it is necessary for the little one, I can bear it," said Noni cheerfully.

It was suggested that she might take time to think it over, but she remained firm in her offer, and that afternoon she sat quietly and unflinchingly in the

surgery while the doctor, feeling it almost as acutely as the nurse, cut from her fore-arm the required amount of skin.

Noni was not completely cured of her dislike of pain and her general nervousness by this supreme act of self-sacrifice; but her superiors had seen a shining example of what the love of Christ could do in the heart of one of His simplest followers, and they rejoiced and took courage.

Another notable instance of heroism has recently come before the public notice. An Indian manservant was seized by the strange, terrible insanity known as "running amok." When he attacked the Nursing Sister in charge of a Mission Hospital, two Indian nurses on duty rushed unhesitatingly to her help. One was killed and the other so severely injured that she also died. These two young girls laid down their lives for their English friend, even though they were unable to save her.

These girls were quite ordinary Mission Hospital nurses; when opportunity suddenly beckoned they became heroines.

Meanwhile "the trivial round, the common task" are bringing to Indian Christian women countless opportunities for self-denial, and forming a road by which not only they but the ignorant, suffering women and children to whom they minister are brought "daily nearer God."

* * * *

So on this high note of courage and devotion to duty as shown forth in the lives of both "flaming beacons" and "lesser lights," these short biographies close. If the perusing of them brings to the readers one-tenth

of the inspiration which the writing of them has brought to the compilers, the latter will be well repaid.

These representative women of the Indian Church would hardly have recognised themselves in the guise of either pioneer or heroine. They would have aligned themselves, as do their successors, with other women—and men—of all climes, who have heard the voice of the world’s Saviour, and have become His devotees.

I heard Him say, “Come, follow”—that was all.
 Earth’s joys grew dim; my soul went after Him.
 I rose and followed, that was all.
 Who would not follow if they heard Him call?