

WOMAN'S WORK IN KOREA

MISS LULU E. FREY, SEOUL

Except for the unparalleled opportunity and the easy access which we have to the hearts and the homes of the people in Korea, I do not know that woman's work presents any phase that is peculiar to that land.

You all know just what the condition of woman is in non-Christian lands. Women's work in Korea appeals to us because of woman's great need. She receives no welcome at birth, and no love in life, and she has no hope in death. The birth of a girl baby is cause for mourning; and if she survives the neglect of her babyhood she is either sold, or given in marriage at a very early age, or perhaps she is sent to her prospective mother-in-law's house to be trained. Her work there is little less than that of a slave. Her place in life is supposed to be that of the cook, of the one who sews, or does any of the household duties. She is always at the command of the father, or the brother, or the husband, to do whatever they bid her do. She is never taught like her brothers; in fact, she is taught that she has not the power to learn. So she remains in ignorance. She has nothing to think about all day long except the household duties, or perhaps the gossip she may hear from neighbors. Her life is spent largely within the walls of the house where she lives and works day by day, for in Korea we have the seclusion of women. She has no hope for the future; she has no knowledge of Christ. She grows very, very tired of this narrow life, and it is not an uncommon thing at all for her to commit suicide in some way, either by drowning or by taking opium, or by some other means, in order to end the misery of this loveless life which she has led.

Now, while the work appeals to us because of the great need of Korean women, it also attracts and holds us because of the transforming power which we see manifested to meet the Korean woman's need. She finds that she has a soul, a soul so precious that One died to save her. She finds that she has a mind and that she can learn even as the men can. Though she may be fifty or sixty years old, she learns to read, and thus she can understand what God's will is concerning her. She finds, too, that she incurs persecution for Christ's sake, and with these persecutions she finds she can be victorious through Him. She finds that she has a Friend in sorrow.

I would like to give you one illustration that comes to me. As I was going along a country road one day, I saw a woman going along with a hoe, and behind her was a man with a burden on his back; and this burden, as we drew closer, we saw to be the form of a baby. It was wrapped up according to the custom. They climbed the hill and put the burden on the ground, and the mother threw herself upon the dead form of the child and cried out her broken heart, while the father began to dig the grave. We tried to comfort her the best we could, but her grief seemed too deep, and she did not understand that Christ was the only one who could comfort her. The following Sunday I saw in our meeting one of our women who had been a Christian only about six months, a woman who had been told by her neighbors that if she became a Christian a very dangerous spirit would haunt her and bring calamity to her. She did not falter, but by and by her only child, a little girl, whom she dearly loved, was taken from her. This Sunday, as she stood with the tears streaming down

her face, she told how the beautiful little girl had died, but that she did not grieve so much, because, as she said, "I am going to meet her there with Jesus." I could not but think of that other woman whom I saw heart-broken on the mountain-side just a few days before.

The transforming power of Christ is not only evident in the heart life, but it goes out into the life of the family. In some cases whole families in Korea have been brought to Christ, and in such cases it makes a great difference in the family life and in the attitude of the men toward the women. They have learned to look to the foreign teacher and to copy him in his way of treating the wife and the children, and the missionary's home becomes a model.

I must speak a word concerning the methods used to reach these women. We have in our churches a place where the women can sit unobserved during the services. In some churches they have a curtain down the center, and the women sit on one side and the men on the other. Sometimes the building is in the form of an L, and the women sit in one part, with the men in the other. For the evangelistic work we have Christian Bible women who go into the homes and carry the message with them. Then there is our dispensary work, where women come for the healing of the body and learn to know of Christ, the Great Physician. The native Christians, with the love of Christ in their hearts, carry the message into the homes and to their friends and neighbors. Often inquirers come to our homes and ask the way of salvation. This suggests that the printed page is not to be despised, because in a great many cases souls are brought to a knowledge of Christ through that agency. This in turn suggests the great problem that confronts us now, namely, the education of the women. They are hungry and thirsty for knowledge. As soon as the knowledge of Christ comes into their hearts they wish to know right away how to read the Bible. The majority of them cannot read at all. To this end we have day schools for the little children and Bible classes for the training of those whom we wish to become workers. For the great mass of women who want to learn, classes are organized, and once or twice a year in the large centers, these are held, and the women come to them from remote places. One woman came 273 miles that she might study, walking all the way, and carrying on her back the rice which she intended to eat while there. Some mothers come with their babies on their backs. You can understand from this how eager they are to learn and what obstacles they overcome.

The work in Korea has been called the miracle of modern missions. Two decades ago the work was organized and the seed sown has brought forth so marvelously that to-day we are embarrassed by success. Every worker in Korea—north, south, east, and west— is singing the reapers' song. Yet there are in Korea countless fields of this ripened grain still ungarnered, and I have been wondering as I have looked into your faces—just as was said by the missionary from Japan—who is to be responsible for these ungarnered fields.