

VALOROUS VENTURES

A RECORD OF SIXTY AND SIX YEARS

of the

WOMAN'S FOREIGN MISSIONARY SOCIETY
METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

by

MARY ISHAM

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FOREWORD

THE Koreans have a word for the sixtieth birthday which they consider an epoch in life. That word is *Hankap*. While the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society was celebrating its *Hankap* in Columbus, Ohio, in 1929, the proposal was made that the history of its sixty years be set down, ere the fashion of them was forgotten. Why ever *was* there a Woman's Society? Why this peculiar organization? What had it accomplished for the Church, for the Kingdom, for the womanhood of the world?

The suggestion led to official action. Then this appointed writer began the search of records, beginning with the yellowing pages of Vol. I. No. 1. the *Heathen Woman's Friend*, June, 1869, and reaching into far places, running up fascinating byways of adventure, of personality and of dreams-come-true. Before the chronicle was completed, there came upon the world "the Depression" which compelled the Society to "lay aside every weight" and gird itself for one thing—to maintain "the Field." Year by year, in that devotion, this publication was deferred. When, in 1935, the Home Department fixed the date, time had slipped away until it seemed essential to add a chapter, a resume of the years 1929-1935. So the book divides into—Sixty Years and Six.

These pages are presented, not as adequate, not as worthy of those to whom they are dedicated, but as a record, circumscribed in space, of the vision, faith, courage and devotion of those who have wrought to make Christ and his transforming power available to other women. They bring a story of women rather than of an organization, for the word Society herein used signifies "this company of women"

who have believed that, "with God all things are possible" and that, "the impossible is just as possible as the possible, only it takes a little longer." The impossible has come to pass in the sphere of womankind. It was a broad-minded leader of the Church who said at the beginning, "The help of pious females must not be spurned." Whatever woman had in those days was a "gift" not a "right." We bring tribute to those who have risen triumphant over circumstance to find a way to serve and, in blessing, have been blessed.

Space forbids mention, by name, of many and great women, missionaries and workers at home, who have brought gifts of personality, prayer and sacrifice for "this cause." He whose record is not shortened rewards all.

Acknowledgements are due to many who have supplied information, records, incidents for this volume; have suffered themselves to be quoted or have read manuscript to insure accuracy. Among those who have so contributed are Mrs. Thomas Nicholson, Mrs. F. F. Lindsay, corresponding and home base secretaries and missionaries. To them and to Miss Effie A. Merrill, Miss Annie G. Bailey and my husband for invaluable aid,—my gratitude.

MARY ISHAM.

Chicago, Ill.
March 1, 1936.



GENERAL HISTORY

THE SPIRIT MOVED

Back of every great event in history lies some great urge, some trend of thought, some long nourished dream, some indomitable faith. The Woman's Foreign Missionary Society did not spring from a suddenly conceived meeting of eight women on a rainy day, but it was the breaking forth of long hidden forces. The Nineteenth Century has been called, variously, the Missionary Century and the Woman's Century. In this Society the two are one.

The divine call came to a cobbler in England and, in spite of the thunders of shocked ecclesiastics, William Carey became a foreign missionary. Three young men held a haystack prayer meeting and the American Board resulted. The finger of God touched our Methodism and in 1819 "a large number" of the men of the Church came together and organized The Missionary and Bible Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Two days after its formation, on motion of Rev. Dr. Joshua Soule, it was "Resolved: that the females attached to the Methodist congregations be invited to form a society auxiliary to this." "The help of the pious females must not be spurned," said the Rev. Dr. Nathan Bangs.

On the fifth day of July, 1819, The Female Missionary Society of New York, auxiliary to the Missionary and Bible Society, was organized and Mrs. Mary W. Mason, a lady of outstanding gifts and graces, was chosen as first directress, which office she held for more than forty years. Her appeals to the "females in our churches" to "leave nothing unattempted which promises to promote the advancement of the Redeemer's Kingdom" found a response in the hearts of the women. Auxiliaries were formed in Baltimore, Boston, Philadelphia and many cities in New York State. By dint of much self-denial and many humiliations, sometimes begging missionary gifts from door to door, "being vastly encouraged by the gift of twenty-five cents from a brother in the church," by spinning, sewing, and "doing without," they secured more than twenty thousand dollars for the treasury of the Parent Board during the almost fifty years of the society's existence.

When, in 1833, the Missionary Society sent Melville Cox to Africa, a fresh interest stirred the Church. When that Society sent Mrs. Ann Wilkins to Africa, the Female Society rallied to underwrite her support and a very tender correspondence between Mrs. Mason and Mrs. Wilkins ensued, to the profit of both missionary and society. After the death of Mrs. Mason, the Female Society, already diminished, presently lapsed.

In 1848, following the sending of the first Methodist missionaries to China, The Ladies' China Missionary Society, auxiliary to the Missionary and Bible Society, was formed at the challenge of Dr. Stephen Olin to a Methodist woman who was active in an Evangelical Society, "Because," as she said, "there is no avenue for woman's work in the Methodist Episcopal Church." During the first year \$300 was sent to the Parent Board.

Dr. Erastus Wentworth, missionary in Foochow, moved by the condition of women in China, wrote, "China needs an army of women ready to lay down their lives, if need be, for their own sex," and suggested the founding of a school for girls. Concerning this appeal the Board graciously announced, "If the ladies feel heartily disposed to undertake the work and have the good hope that they can accomplish it in a given time, the Board will accept their

services in this respect and will execute their will." The projected school was opened Nov. 28, 1859. The Misses Sarah and Beulah Woolston were appointed in charge.

The Woman's Union Missionary Society, organized in 1860, enlisted the co-operation of women in a half dozen leading denominations. It was an advance step in that it was an independent society, and not an auxiliary. It was, however, of brief duration. The women of the Congregational Church withdrew in 1868 to form their own society and other denominations followed.

Shortly came the Civil War, with its costly sacrifice in life and treasure. In those tragic years, women learned to conduct businesses and tend the farms and clothe and nurture the children when the heads of families volunteered or were drafted into the armies. They learned to work together for the men in hospitals and on the firing line and to carry on when, under black headlines, dreadful lists of "killed in battle" ended long suspense. Woman-consciousness grew in these persons thrust out into independent life and action.

Meanwhile, in 1856, William and Clementina Butler sailed for India to spy out the land and establish a mission, settled in Bareilly, and shortly found themselves in the vortex of the Sepoy Rebellion. Fear for their lives grew in the hearts of Methodist folk at home. Not for months did the story filter through of their escape to the mountains.

On the very day the rebellion broke out, Dr. and Mrs. Humphrey, with Rev. and Mrs. R. Pierce, the first reinforcements for the infant mission, landed in Calcutta. Months later, Dr. and Mrs. Butler came down from their refuge in Naini Tal to meet their compatriots. In Delhi, now fallen to English arms, they paused to see the wreckage of the old Mogul Empire and, incredibly, watched for a time the military trial of the Nawab of Bullagurh who had turned the English under his protection over to the Moslems for massacre. The trial was held in the throne room of the royal palace. Weary with standing, Dr. and Mrs. Butler seated themselves on the empty throne of the great Moguls.

In that dramatic situation, the man who had escaped from the fury of the sword had a vision of the winning of an empire for Christ. Pity stirred in his heart for the mul-

titude of children, orphaned sufferers of war, and then and there he drafted a letter to Dr. Durbin, Secretary of the Missionary Society, asking for funds and for authorization for the establishment of an orphanage. Three times in that letter he appealed to the "brethren and sisters" in the home Church. In 1858 a grant of \$1,000 was received and provision was made for both boys and girls. So bitter was the opposition of the Moslems that, up to the close of 1860, but thirteen girls were received. The first little girl was brought by Dr. Butler to his wife in 1858. "She was a dirty little waif, half starved, pockmarked, blind in one eye," but even so, a symbol of helpless Indian womanhood to the young missionary wife who literally received her with open arms. Shortly thereafter, English soldiers uncovered a little girl who had been buried alive, with only her face exposed as she waited death. These two formed the nucleus of the girls orphanage, which was cared for by Mrs. Pierce in Lucknow.

In 1861 a famine fell upon the war ravaged land, so devastating that parents sold their children for two or three rupees apiece to find respite from starvation. The British Government rescued many children orphaned or abandoned by their parents. Dr. Butler volunteered to care for one hundred fifty boys and as many girls, and the children were delivered in cart loads at the mission gate — and so were the orphanages filled. In 1862 the girls were removed to Bareilly to the orphanage on the site hallowed by the martyrdom of Maria Bolst, a young Eurasian who was Mrs. Butler's interpreter and helper before the mutiny. The following year, Rev. and Mrs. Thomas were appointed to the orphanage. Under their wise conduct the girls found a Savior, new freedom, new decencies of life. Their evident happiness and well being went far toward overcoming prejudice against the missionaries.

With the establishment of peace, Dr. Butler made large plans for occupation of the field and in requests for reinforcements specifically asked that "two single women be included in the party." A notable group of missionaries, including Rev. and Mrs. Edwin W. Parker, Rev. and Mrs. James Baume, Rev. and Mrs. J. W. Waugh, Rev. and Mrs. J. R. Downey, and Rev. James M. Thoburn

reached the field in 1859. These pioneers laid the foundations for Indian Methodism. In 1864 the India Mission Conference was organized with seventeen missionary members, 117 church members, and ninety-two probationers. This organization effected, Dr. and Mrs. Butler returned to America.

As the missionaries opened stations and sought to establish churches, the wives, unnamed and unconsidered in the conference, sought to reach the women who fled from the missionary himself. In 1859, the Parkers were stationed at Bijnor, and here Mrs. Parker opened the first veranda school, luring Indian girls and teaching them to write on the sanded floor. Others followed her example and tiny day schools were opened.

In 1866 Rev. James M. Thoburn, touring among the villages, pitched his tent one evening. Pondering difficulties of reaching the people where the women covered their faces and fled at his approach, he paced to and fro before his tent. A vulture, wheeling overhead, dropped a feather from its wing. Stooping, he picked it up and fashioned from it a pen, which he put to use in writing a letter to his sister, Isabella Thoburn. In it he unburdened his heart and expressed the conviction that the only way to break down this barrier to the gospel was to bring girls into central boarding schools where they might be taught. Lightly, he added, "How would you like to come out and take charge of such a school if we should decide to make the attempt?" But Isabella Thoburn did not take the question lightly. Her reply was prompt, decisive, affirmative, but embarrassing, for "the brethren were by no means sure that they wished single females added to the mission!"

Miss Thoburn continued her successful career at home. In India converts were being won, here and there, and a missionary with prophetic vision declared that the time would come when a hundred converts would be won in a single year. For this rash statement he was reproved by the secretaries at home!

But the missionary wives, quietly experimenting for a decade, saw the way to the evangelization of India through winning her helpless, degraded, unhappy women. Aside from the orphanage, no boarding school was established until, in 1868, Providence brought to Mrs. Parker's care

two little girls. With them, she opened a school in her home. But nine years without furlough had broken the health of this missionary and she was ordered home. Mourning most of all that this long sought opportunity was lost, Mrs. Parker turned her face toward America. Other like-minded missionary wives, Mrs. Waugh, Mrs. Messmore, and Mrs. Judd, implored her to tell the women of the home land the desperate need of their Indian sisters and beg them to come to their aid.

That need the brethren now saw. In February, 1869, Rev. J. H. Waugh addressed the secretaries, saying, "Some one hundred girls and young women are breaking over the customs sanctioned for centuries and are learning to write." Others wrote urging that little progress would be made until the women were reached. They faced a shut door and the key was not in their hands. Only women could enter there. Much impressed, Dr. Durbin wrote letters urging that single women offer themselves to the missionary society for service in India.

By all the tokens, here was a clear call to the womanhood of Methodism. And in their hearts the Spirit found response.

On the long journey home, Mrs. Parker, little hoping to return to India, mourned for the Indian girls she had left behind. On reaching America both Dr. and Mrs. Parker began with every opportunity to plead the cause of Indian womanhood and the obligation of Christian women. On the last day of 1868, Mrs. Parker addressed a little company of women in Brooklyn urging the organization of a woman's society. They were responsive to the appeal, but decided that the season was inauspicious. "A little later" they would be ready. By so much they missed being "The Founders."

The Hour

In March, 1869, Dr. and Mrs. Parker visited Dr. and Mrs. Butler in Boston. We may well believe that India was the theme of their conversation — not reminiscently but constructively. On March 14 Dr. Butler preached a missionary sermon in St. John's Church of which he was pastor. Mrs. Lewis Flanders, deeply stirred by the message, came to the parsonage at the close of the service.

Earnest conversation ensued. Mrs. Parker talked, woman to woman, of what heathenism had wrought for woman-kind in India and of "the powerlessness of the missionaries to do anything to alleviate their state and expressed her deep conviction that unless Christian women took up this work as a special and separate duty it would not be practicable to evangelize India to any great extent, as women alone could have access to women there."

To this statement Mrs. Butler added the note of feasibility of such action by displaying the constitution and periodical of the Woman's Board of the Congregational Church, which she had helped to organize a year before, and relating the progress already made. Addressing Mrs. Flanders directly, she said, "Mrs. Parker and I would like to see a Woman's Foreign Missionary Society in the Methodist Episcopal Church. Cannot you help us?"

Nothing daunted, Mrs. Flanders replied, "If others can do this the women of the Methodist Episcopal Church can do it, and it is clearly their duty," and straightway volunteered to present the matter to the ladies of Tremont Street Church, of which she was a member. This she proceeded to do two days later at the meeting of the Ladies Benevolent Society, where about thirty ladies were present. She spoke so convincingly, first to individuals, then to the whole company, that immediate action was taken by appointing Mrs. Flanders and Mrs. Joshua Merrill a committee to invite Mrs. Parker and Mrs. Butler to address them the following Tuesday and explain more fully the importance and practicability of such a society. How joyfully those ladies accepted! Notices were then sent to the twenty-eight Methodist churches of Boston and vicinity, inviting ladies to this meeting.

ORGANIZATION OF THE SOCIETY

Possibly the most famous rainy day since the flood was March 23, 1869. Many a woman watched the skies — and stayed at home. It is related that Mrs. Parker put aside urgent protests, but she and Mrs. Butler donned their bonnets and shawls and sallied forth in the storm, only

to find Tremont St. Church locked! Taking refuge in a doorway, they awaited Mrs. Flanders who summoned the janitor to open the door.

Eight women in all gathered in a small corner room to pray and to listen while Mrs. Parker told in thrilling fashion of the needs which burdened her heart, of the shut-in women of the zenanas, and of the call of the Master to Christian women — the only hope. Mrs. Butler again told of the organization of Congregational ladies. Then the eight convened together and with God, and "a resolution to organize was taken." A committee on the nomination of officers was appointed with Mrs. Flanders chairman. A list of names was presented and accepted. After the doxology was sung, adjournment was taken until the following Tuesday. So, simply, the story was told by one present. Besides the missionary ladies there were present Mrs. Lewis Flanders, Mrs. Thomas A. Rich, Mrs. William B. Merrill, Mrs. O. T. Taylor, Mrs. H. W. Stoddard and Mrs. Thomas Kingsbury. Who may doubt that by the testing of the rainy day a band of "Invincibles" founded the new Society?

Again notices were sent out, and on the ensuing Tuesday, March 30, in spite of another torrential rain, some twenty-six ladies met in Tremont St. Church to complete the organization. Much had been done during the week. Mrs. Parker, Mrs. W. F. Warren and perhaps others, in the Warren home had considered the essential constitution which was presented and adopted, "By and for the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church" that thirtieth day of March, 1869. "A large number of ladies joined and some became life members" — such was their faith.

That first constitution fixed the name, the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society and the aim, "For the purpose of engaging and uniting the efforts of the women of the Church in sending out and supporting female missionaries, native Christian teachers and Bible women in foreign lands, and set the dues at one dollar per year, "that membership might be within the means of every woman in the Church." It further provided for the usual officers, to be elected at the annual meeting, placing the emphasis upon the duties of the corresponding secretary which marks

the organization to this day. It constituted the officers an executive committee for the administration of business. An imposing officuary for the new Society was then chosen. Mrs. Osman C. Baker was president. Among the forty-four vice-presidents, with residences ranging from Boston to Chicago, St. Louis, and Baltimore, were the wives of the bishops of the Church, Mrs. Morris, Mrs. Janes, Mrs. Scott, Mrs. Simpson, Mrs. Ames, Mrs. Clark, Mrs. Thomson, Mrs. Kingsley; with Mrs. John P. Durbin and Mrs. W. L. Harris, wives of the secretaries of the General Missionary Society; wives of governors, of college presidents and leading pastors and notables of the Church. Mrs. William Butler and Mrs. Lewis Flanders were among the forty-four. Mrs. Wm. F. Warren, Mrs. E. W. Parker, and Mrs. Jennie Fowler Willing were corresponding secretaries, and Mrs. Thomas A. Rich was treasurer. The election of these officers was later reaffirmed.

At once the need of a periodical was recognized. The choice for editor fell upon Mrs. Wm. F. Warren, young, talented, cultured, but lately returned with her husband from the mission in Germany. After much persuasion, Mrs. Warren consented. The essential financial backing for the enterprise was furnished by that staunch friend Mr. Lewis Flanders, in a guarantee of \$500.

So was the first motif written, the theme of the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society which, through the years, was to be expanded into a tremendous symphony, re-orchestrated year by year.

The First Reaction

These things were not done in a corner, nor without opposition from "the brethren." On March 17 Dr. Parker addressed Dr. John P. Durbin, secretary of the General Missionary Society (henceforth to be referred to in these pages as the Board or the Parent Board) acquainting him with the proposed organization and asking his advice. Dr. Durbin replied promptly, "counseling mature deliberation in view of the great gravity of the subject, and advising the ladies to confine their attention to two points, (1) To raise funds for a particular portion of our mission

work in India, perhaps also in China; (2) Leave the administration of the work to the Board at home and the missions on the field."

This communication was known to the ladies before their organization, but it was not their aim to form another "auxiliary society." They had upon their hearts the poignant needs of the women in Christless lands, needs men had found themselves unable to meet. Before them was the *final* report of the Female Missionary Society, auxiliary to the Missionary Society. They had faith that women were able to manage the affairs of a society. They desired that their work should be co-ordinated with, but not subordinated to, that by and for the men. In the succeeding weeks "much was written and said" and compromises were made. On April 23, Dr. Durbin invited the ladies to a conference which was held in Boston, May 7.

"The secretaries found the missionary spirit manifested by the ladies worthy of all commendation, but were apprehensive of collisions at home and abroad," records Dr. J. M. Reid in "Missions and Missionaries of the Methodist Episcopal Church," while the secretary of the new society recorded that, "Dr. Harris inquired solicitously how the ladies proposed to raise money, stating his fear that their success would interfere with the receipts of the Parent Board." Dr. Durbin proposed: "You raise the money and we will administer." He continued, "Could you ladies make the necessary arrangements for Miss A. to go to India, obtain bills of exchange, take care of her on the voyage, provide a home when she arrives? No. Your work is to forward the money for Miss A. to New York. We will credit it to your Society, keep you informed of her needs, take care of her in sickness and in health. I think this to be the purpose of your constitution."

Mrs. Dr. Twombly spoke the minds of the women then: "We women feel that we have organized an independent Society. We will be as dutiful children to the Church authorities, but through our own organization we may do a work which no other can accomplish."

The upshot of this conference was, indeed, a compromise. The "conclusions" as published in the first issue of the *Heathen Woman's Friend*, June, 1869, were: