

WOMAN'S MISSION.

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Royal British Commission, Chicago Exhibition, 1893.

WOMAN'S MISSION

A SERIES OF CONGRESS PAPERS

ON THE

PHILANTHROPIC WORK OF WOMEN

BY EMINENT WRITERS.

ARRANGED AND EDITED,

WITH A PREFACE AND NOTES,

BY

THE BARONESS BURDETT-COUTTS.



"So womanlie, so benigne, and so meeke."—CHAUCER.

No. 3205.

B. Kofeburov.
1894.

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St. Dunstan's House,
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1893.

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TO HER ROYAL HIGHNESS
PRINCESS CHRISTIAN OF SCHLESWIG-HOLSTEIN.

MADAM,

The Report of Philanthropic Work, promoted or originated by Englishwomen, which it was the desire of your Royal Highness that I should prepare, is now completed. The difficulty of even an approximately just record of this work will be by no one better understood than by yourself, familiar as your Royal Highness is, not only with its more salient evidences, but with those undercurrents, which, whether through giving or receiving, sweeten and refresh the daily life of nearly every Englishwoman. In reflecting over the methods within my reach in order to carry into effect your behest, two only seemed to offer any feasible means of obtaining reliable information upon a subject embracing, necessarily, besides home organizations, all those missionary, religious, or social efforts undertaken, often under difficult surroundings, by Englishwomen for the benefit of distant and alien races, or on behalf of their own kith and kin settled in foreign countries.

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One method was to collect all the regular published reports of Societies, Institutions, etc., and to collate these into a summary, together with any printed matter relating to charitable effort which I could obtain from other sources. This plan, though affording the advantages of statistical form and economic detail, appeared to lack that vitalizing touch which is given by individuality, and which is essential to a full understanding of personal work. It also had, in addition, the disadvantage of excluding all record of the gentle homely lives which are so constantly found actively employed in charity throughout this country, and whose quiet work diffuses sunshine in many an unknown circle.

The second method was the one I adopted, namely, to seek for information direct from individuals—from the heads of all religious communities, the presidents or active promoters of philanthropic or social organizations, both large and small, and from women engaged, either singly or in combination with others, in charitable work—and ask from them (a request most willingly and kindly responded to) a personally written report of women's work within their cognizance. This latter plan secured many of the advantages of the former; for, of course, it did not preclude statistics or economic details, whilst it gained the charm of personal narrative to which I have alluded. It also gave an opportunity of obtaining illustrations of the work in which many were engaged,

which will somewhat relieve the monotony of mere paper records. A list of these will accompany the Report, and they will be exhibited in the space assigned me in the Women's Building at Chicago.

I am desirous here to record my indebtedness to the small Committee of Ladies who have been working with me in the general organization requisite to set on foot all these inquiries. Possessed of an intimate knowledge of philanthropic work, and freely giving a large amount of time and labour, they have rendered me invaluable assistance in the production of this Report, which I hope will in some measure carry out your Royal Highness's wishes.

It only remains for me to thank your Royal Highness in the name of the women-workers of Great Britain (who will perhaps in this respect permit me to represent them) for having taken the lead in bringing the matters herein contained to the knowledge of their kinsfolk across the seas on the great occasion of the Chicago Exhibition, which, I trust, among many other noble results, will join not only two, but all nations of the world in a common bond of sympathy with Women's Philanthropic Work.

I remain, with the greatest respect,

Madam,

Your Royal Highness's most dutiful and obedient
servant,

BURDETT-COUTTS.

PREFACE.

SINCE the first inauguration of International Exhibitions in 1851 by the Queen and Prince Consort, in London, none will rank among the nations of the world as more remarkable than that which is to be opened in Chicago this year, and which will give to 1893 a significant and unique place in the history of the material and social progress of the world. The former—the material—has been perhaps the main feature in previous Exhibitions. The latter—the social—which might almost, in the far-reaching scope here given to it, be called the moral part of the Exhibition, receives at Chicago a prominent and peculiar consideration.

Moreover, under this second head, the department of Women's Work takes its place for the first time, and both on that account, and by reason of the special regard given to Philanthropy, much of the deeper and more lasting interest excited by this great Exhibition, will, I think, gather round the Section for which this Report has been prepared. It is fitting that the close of the nineteenth century should focus and illustrate in a definite form the share which women have taken in its development, of which, in my humble judgment, the truest and noblest, because the most natural, part, is to be found in philanthropic work.

The scheme of this Section has been so generally made known, that it is only necessary formally to record in the case of Great Britain, that, having been invited by the Royal Commission to act on its Ladies' Committee, I was further requested by her Royal Highness the Princess