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12-10-1888

Letter from December 10-17, 1888

Lavinia Coombs

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Midnapore Dec. 10th 88.

My dear Nellie

I did not think 'twould be so long before answering your letter but - this is the first chance I've got, aside from answering those that seem'd to demand attention first. You wrote shortly after ~~your~~ getting back from Ocean Park and now when you get this 'twill be nearly midwinter and a great deal has happened during this time both of public and private interest. We are made happy by the news we get from home. Harrison is elected and the missionaries have sailed. We are full of pleasant anticipations of their coming both ^{because of} ~~for~~ themselves and because of what they will bring us as tokens of love & good.

will of the dear ones far away. I doubt if they get here in time for Christmas, but the dolls & bags & other things will keep for another year. Our yearly meeting is to be held here in Madras in January and they will surely be here by that time if ^{no accident} ~~nothing~~ happens. We shall be so glad to be all together and to welcome the new comers, but our gladness will not be unalloyed for Mrs & Mrs. Burkholder and Hattie Phillips are to leave for home shortly after this meeting and though we know they need and deserve a vacation we know their work must suffer. If we could go on and on indefinitely without wearing out or getting tired, how fine that would be. If I could keep as well as I have been these six years I wouldn't need to go home for twenty years yet and then by that time I wouldn't

Care to go at all, for every body & every thing would be so changed that the joy would all be taken out of it.

The longer I stay the more I think I shall not go home at the end of ten years unless I'm obliged to. but I confess that for the last few days I have felt like sighing "for a lodge in some vast wilderness" or for "wings like a dove that I might fly away and be at rest" just for a little while for my mind has been so burdened with the iniquities of our own Christian people that I couldn't be happy. I think it will do no harm to write of our trials occasionally and to let home friends see the dark side some times. We had ^{one} ~~a~~ Christian teacher in the Industrial School here and two Hindu teachers. We had tried before to put a Christian teacher in and he bitterly disappointed us but this one had been doing beautifully and we were congratulating ourselves

on the good influence necessarily brought to bear on the pupils, when lo! one day the truth comes out that he is a vile fellow who has seduced a married woman - another Christian and they were both missing.

This woman is one who has been brought ^{up} right among us and has been living an exemplary life all along - a teacher in one of the Ragged Schools - and now this is the out-come of it all. Isn't it discouraging! But then I think of the stories we hear from Christian lands, with all that civilization and Christianity is supposed to have done in the line of heredity and this doesn't seem so awful; for this land is full of wickedness and evil has reigned so long that it is no easy matter to break away from it. Of course I believe in the power of God to save and keep a person here just as well as in America but very

few comparatively of our Chris-
tians I fear, realize the full mean-
ing of the Christian faith

Our religion is so different
from the religions of this land, that
it is hard for them to grasp the
idea of an entire change of heart

Dec. 15th 11 P. M.

We are in the midst of another experience of
a different kind. I am sitting with
Mrs. Burkholder while she watches
by her little boy Jamie who is hover-
ing between life and death.

They (Mr + Mrs Burkholder and
the children) were out on a preaching
tour and enjoying it very much when
this little boy was taken suddenly +
seriously ill with dysentery. They hur-
ried home to Blum store and sent a mes-
senger to Dr. Harry Bachelors who went
out immediately. He was there two days
but Jamie did not improve as he had
hoped but as his own baby was not well

Lates — Sunday 16th

I had to get up just then for some little thing to help Mrs. Burkholder and didn't find the chance or the heart to sit down to write again before Miss Butts came to relieve me and I went off to lie down. The mother would not leave her boy for any rest, though she has been watching with him for several nights and had just taken the long drive of twenty miles from Philipore holding him in her arms. Dr. Bachelor had come back home from the first summons and then the next day came another messenger with a note saying they feared their little boy wouldn't live till morning and would he come out again if possible. He hurried right off — That was

yesterday — Saturday — morning and though he found him a little better than when the ~~note~~ messenger was sent, yet they all thought it best to bring him in here as they could have other ~~the~~ medical advice and better advantages. They got here about dark and the little fellow was so exhausted he seemed in a dying condition then but he rallied a little and we were hopeful till after midnight and then he soon began to show signs of sinking and passed away about 4 o'clock. He was a beautiful boy and the pet of the family. How often that very one seems to be chosen to go. This is the second child she has lost; but she bears it like the true Christian she is.

Monday — 17th

This must go today. I began it a week ago hoping to send it then but couldn't finish it in time. I will speak of some things suggested by your letter. The Ocean Park meetings, The Star, and the Programme

sent, and your letter and Clara's
gave me a very good idea of them
and there seems to be a growing
interest in them. I wish more
of our denominational brethren and
sisters could get to them. I mean
those from the west and south,
but of course it is a long way for
them and a big expense to be borne.

I was as surprised as you at the
impression made on you by Mrs.
Phillips. She is very intense
in her way of working and very
strong ⁱⁿ her convictions but she
is a power for good. I only wish she
was here. We hear that Dr. Phillips
has had a call to this country from
the Union Church at Simla. The call
was telegraphed to him and we hear
that he has accepted. but even if
he does come we shall not likely see
him, for it is hundreds of miles
from Kodaivare. I wish Mrs Phillips
could come too and be with him. I believe
she would rest and get well faster
than she can at home. for it is
a hill station and nice climate and

What is the matter.

Perhaps you would like to know something further of those sinners I spoke of - in the first of my letters. My heart is lighter in regard to the woman at least. Our pastor saw her in the street and brought her to me and I talked long with her, but she seemed hard. We found that she had entered a complaint against her husband that he was a drunkard and beat her cruelly and she had to flee for her life! A part of this was true but I was determined we ~~would~~ ^{should} not have a case in court and have so much extra disgrace brought upon us. Her brother came in to Madison ^(He lives twenty miles away) and she had agreed to retract her accusation, and take it out of court. I went with her to see about it, and then went to the house where she had been living for those few days to get her things and there saw proofs that she had not been living there alone. She seemed a little softened that day and promised to stay quietly in a ^{Christian} neighbor's house

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that she had not been living
there since she received a letter
appeared that her father
was guilty in a very bad way



she wouldn't have to be continually
going off to meetings here and there
and using ^{up} what strength she does
get in that way. But she can't leave
her children yet.

The death of Mrs. Dexter and Miss
Waterman must have been sad
news indeed, and was an unusual
thing to happen both in our summer. Not
that it is an unusual thing for people
to die, but they were both closely connected with
the interest at the Park and their death
while those meetings were in session was
a coincidence

We hear that our new missionaries
left Liverpool the 14th of November, and
so if all goes well they must be in
Calcutta this week, and that will
bring them here before Christmas, which
will be very nice. I will send you
^{Post} a card after Christmas and the
accompanying rush is over.
I haven't had a word from my brother
Elbridge for a long time. I don't know

till we could decide what to do.

To-day that the man in that house came to me saying he didn't believe he could keep her for she seemed very uneasy and didn't want to stay. I went over and called her to come over and talk with me. She came willingly but was in an almost despairing mood. I had a long quiet talk with her and she was all broken down, and prayed for herself so penitently and beseechingly that my mind feels quite easy about her. She will have to suffer, but it is right she should. I only hope she will have strength to bear it.

I must send this off now
or it will be too late again
Yours with love
Vina

Miss Nellie Whittemore

Portland, Maine

19 Ellsworth St.

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