

## SISTER SANGHAMITTA.

Sister Sanghamitta has arrived in Chicago, where she will stay a few months. She is on a visit to the United States, partly to see her family, partly to rouse the interest of the people of this country in her work, and partly to gather new strength for the continuation of her labors in the far East.

One would think that a lady of title, born in the pale of the Roman Church, who renounces her home to go as a missionary and teacher in the garb of a Buddhist nun to a distant country beyond the sea, must be an eccentric character, perhaps restless or even of an irritable disposition. But such is not the case.

No one who meets her can fail to be impressed with her dignified demeanor, which betokens the calm self-possession of a mind that knows its aims and has acquired perfect pacification and composure.

Sister Sanghamitta, formerly known in the circles of Honolulu as the wife of His Excellency Señor A. de Souza Canavarro, renounced, it is true, her home, but what she gave up was society life, not her duties as wife and mother. Her children, three sons and a daughter, are scattered. Her only daughter entered a religious order of the Episcopalian Church. One of her sons is a mining engineer in California; another is in the employ of the Southern Pacific Railway; the third one, the only child of her second husband, the count, was educated by her until he could go to college. He is now a student in the Punhaho College, Honolulu. Señor Canavarro is in the diplomatic service of Portugal. For the last ten years or more, husband and wife have lived apart, the separation being partly forced upon them by the count's prolonged absences on his official duties; but the two have continued to remain in amicable relations, and even now, since Señora Canavarro has renounced the world and her title, they are the best of friends and have not ceased to keep up a correspondence.

When her youngest son entered college, the mother's life was reduced to the social formalities of her position, and feeling the emptiness of society life, she desired to make herself useful to the world and to sink her personality in some helpful work for the good of mankind. She had done charitable work at home, but that did not satisfy her; she wanted to cut herself loose from the limitations of her social position and start an entirely new life. She therefore decided to go to the far East, the cradle of religious and philosophical thought.

When asked why she became a Buddhist nun, Sister Sanghamitta answered: "Because I am a Buddhist; but when I became a Buddhist I did not renounce Christianity. I am a Christian and will remain a Christian; but my Christianity widened, and my faith has expanded. I have not lost Christ by understanding Buddha. The spirit is the same in Buddhism and in Christianity."

Sister Sanghamitta renounced her home, but she did it because peculiar circumstances of her life, which it is not for us to judge, gave her the freedom to do so. She is far from encouraging wives to leave their husbands or mothers to neglect their children. On the contrary, she says that she has repeatedly upon certain occasions when women have showed an inclination to leave their homes, insisted that it was their duty to stay with their husbands, and as for doing service in the far East, she declares: "I have grown into the work, or rather the work has grown into me; but when I see the conditions in the United States, for instance the neglected negro in the South and his lack of education, I would say to the women of America: 'Do not go to India; stay at home; you have duties here which claim

your first attention.' But while Americans should not neglect their duties at home, they might sympathise with my work abroad and be interested in the conditions such as I found them as well as in the way in which I hope to relieve part of the suffering caused by neglect and ignorance."

Sister Sanghamitta has assumed a name which is sacred to the Buddhists of Ceylon. Sanghamitta was the daughter of Asoka, the Buddhist emperor of the third century B. C., famous mainly on account of the rock inscriptions which he ordered to be chiseled in various parts of India. He sent Buddhist missionaries to the Diadochian kingdoms, among them to that of Ptolemy of Egypt and to Antioch of Syria, and convened the first Religious Parliament in the valley of the Ganges. When the Singhalese, having been converted to Buddhism, requested Asoka to send religious teachers to their island, his son Mibinda and his daughter Sanghamitta, both having embraced a religious life, established themselves in Ceylon. Here Sanghamitta distinguished herself as a *thera* (i. e., a teacher), founding schools and orphanages and forming a centre from which missionaries went forth to Burma and Siam.

Señora Canavarró adopted the name of this Buddhist saint because she proposed to do the same kind of work in the same spirit. During her stay in Ceylon she was the Mother Superior of the Sanghamitta Convent at Colombo, which included an orphanage as well as a day school, a report of which with pictures of the site of the convent and of the Mother Superior in the midst of her scholars appeared some time ago in *The Open Court*, 1899, No. III., pp. 513. Her children call her *Nona ama*, or in English "Lady Mother," a name which has universally been adopted by the people of her new home.

Sister Sanghamitta will return to the East *via* England, where, in our opinion, she ought to be able to arouse much sympathy for her work, for England is directly and politically, while we are only indirectly and on general humanitarian principles, interested in the elevation of the women of the British dependencies.

Sister Sanghamitta will presumably not go back to Ceylon but will locate in Calcutta, because there, she says, she is more needed, and there the misery of the native women is greatest.

Our best wishes accompany her, for we are convinced that she can accomplish a work for which very few persons are adapted. Perhaps there is no one else who could do the same things that she does; and undoubtedly in her own quiet way and with her practical methods she will sow seeds of blessing in India, the fruits of which will be plenty and grow ever more plentiful in the time to come. P. C.

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#### PÈRE HYACINTHE IN THE ORIENT.

Father Hyacinthe has started with his wife, Madame Loyson, on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Their original plan had been, as he proclaimed in a conference given at Paris at the time of the Exposition, to hold meetings of brotherly union on the spot sacred to three religions,—that of the Jews, the Christians, and the Mussulmans,—to emphasise the common points of the three faiths, and, while not slurring their differences, to offer them an opportunity of meeting and exchanging opinions on religious topics. Father Hyacinthe has done much in behalf of the Mussulmans, and has called attention to their religious sincerity, their wonderful faith in God, and their deep religious earnestness. He is highly esteemed by the Sultan, and it was almost a foregone conclusion that on the strength of his personal relations with the Sublime Porte permission would be given by the Turk-