

## GOOD NEWS FROM HONAN.

LETTER FROM REV. J. FRAZER SMITH.

HSIN CHÊN, April 16, 1891.

DEAR MR. SCOTT:—On several occasions I have had to write when the outlook was anything but encouraging, and, therefore, it is all the more gratifying to me to be able to write that there are evident signs of progress in every line. The number of patients attending the dispensaries is larger than ever before, and the number of those willing to undergo surgical operations is steadily on the increase.

During the last month the doctors at Chu Wang performed three very difficult major operations with good success in each case. In this is seen the wisdom of having two physicians at one station, as operations can be undertaken that one doctor alone, at the present stage in our work, would not think of attempting.

At Hsin Chên we have had as many as twenty-five operations in the week, mostly on the eye, and we have had the pleasure of seeing quite a number who have been blind for years go away rejoicing in that they were able to walk around alone and see to do their work.

But we long to see more of them rejoice because Jesus, the Light of the world, has shone into their dark hearts. We thank God for what He has already done in making the healing of the body a means of blessing to not a few patients and their friends. The spirit of enquiry among the patients was never so manifest as lately, and among those who listen to the preaching of the Gospel, a larger number than usual listen with some degree of interest.

A little over a year ago, a man from a village some 20 miles away came to the dispensary with a blind man, and remained a few days and listened to the Gospel. Very little could be done for the blind man, but he took quite an interest in what he heard of the new doctrine.

On different occasions this same man brought other patients, and at last he acknowledged himself as an enquirer. Others in the village became interested, and soon a little company met regularly to study the Scriptures and to pray. Persecution arose, but they kept on, and soon others joined them.

About two weeks ago, two of the missionaries visited the place and examined some fifteen candidates who had applied to be taken on probation for Baptism. Of this number, eleven, one of whom was the blind man already referred to, were received on probation. Last week three other candidates were received on probation, making in all upwards of twenty in connection with Hsin Chên station alone.

The brethren at Chu Wang, I expect, could give a similar report, so that we have great cause to thank God and take courage. The year of probation may prove too much for some of them, but we pray that the majority of them may stand faithful.

During the last month, too, we have had the pleasure of baptizing the first-fruits from among the women. At Hsin Chên, the wives of our first two converts, the Chous, and at Chu Wang the wife of teacher Wang.

I am sure that those at home who have been praying so earnestly for the Lord's work in Honan, will unite with us in thanksgiving to God for all His goodness, and pray that these tokens of His favour may lead us all to trust Him more fully, and to labour more earnestly in our Master's vineyard.

When we think of the millions in China who have yet to hear the sound of the Gospel, and then think of the terrible wall of superstition which hedges them in so completely and prevents the truth from entering their hearts, we are almost dismayed. But when we realize that we are not alone, and that the work is not our own but our Master's, who is ever with us, then we take courage and press on knowing that the victory is sure.

**Gross Superstition.** The incident given below will show how deep rooted these superstitions are even among the most enlightened of the educated classes in China. No Chinaman is better known among foreigners than Li Hung-chang, and perhaps no Chinaman has been spoken of so highly for his liberality and his interest in things foreign, and especially for his interest in medical missions. Notwithstanding his interest in medical missions and his contact with missionaries, Christianity has not yet made any impression on his heart, as the following memorial to the throne too clearly shows:

"A postscript memorial by Li Hung-chang, Governor-General of Chihli, states that the reason of the second breaching of the banks of the Grand Canal at Hungmiao (about 14 miles from Tientsin) the other day, was owing to the devilry of a river god who had concealed himself in the vicinity of that place. His presence was at first reported by the local rustics, and eventually corroborated by the testimony of all the officers and troops occupied with the task of filling in the breaches there.

This river god is reported to have appeared in various guises to the soldiers and their officers while at work, and this being told to the Commander-in-Chief and Taotais in charge, on the day of the second successful attempt to fill in the breach, a sacrificial stage was erected in honour of this river god, and offerings made to him, beseeching his kind interposition on behalf of the embankments, coupled with the prayer to remain passive and not to spoil the work completed with such labour and expense.

In answer to the prayers of the said Commander-in-Chief and Taotais, it is presumed that the river god promised obedience, for on the day in question, the workers were blessed with beautiful serene weather and peaceful calm upon the waters; which it must be confessed was just the contrary before the sacrifices made to this god, the labourers at the canal being hitherto impeded in their work by boisterous weather, sleet, hard and pouring rains, while the canal itself was one mass of raging waters.

Memorialist, therefore, thinks that a fitting recognition should be made by the Throne to this river god, for his interposition on behalf of an impeded traffic on this canal, and rest and quiet to the people living in the vicinity. His Majesty is therefore requested to bestow a title on this river god of the northern terminus of the Grand Canal, and allow a temple to be built for him there, and entered in the official list of spring and autumn sacrifices by the mandarins of the locality.—Rescript: Let the Board of Rites report thereon.