

*10/5-2*

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### THE MISSIONARY WORLD.

#### CHINA'S APPEAL AND CHRISTENDOM'S RESPONSE.

The Rev. George Owen, of Peking, says:

An old man, I know not when nor where, wasted and worn by disease, and literally clothed in rags, sat by the wayside begging. But he never uttered a word; his appeal was voiceless. The thoughtless crowd passed him by unheeded; his dumb misery did not touch them. But one gentleman was so much struck by the old man's woe-begone appearance that he went up to him and said: "Are you in want? Are you begging?" "Oh, sir," said the old man, "I am sick, cold and hungry." "Then," replied the gentleman, "Why don't you beg?" "Beg!" answered the old man, holding out his thin, wasted hands, and looking at his poor rag-covered body: "I am begging with a thousand tongues!" It is thus that the heathen beg at the door of the Christian Church. It is their misery that begs. They sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, morally and spiritually degraded. In the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans Paul gives a terribly realistic picture of the condition of the heathen world in his time. But that picture is true of all time and of all heathen nations. Take China, for instance. It is literally true of the Chinese "that professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image like unto corruptible man, and to birds and beasts and creeping things." The moral picture in every detail except one, is equally true. Yet China has an excellent ethical system, perhaps the best outside the Bible. But mere moral teaching is very powerless against human selfishness, passion and lust. It is like a finely constructed engine with cold water in the boiler, or like good seed without sufficient sunshine to quicken and ripen it. The rapid spread of opium smoking in China is painful evidence of the moral weakness of Confucianism. It has shown itself powerless in China's hour of need. A century ago opium smoking was scarcely known: now nearly every village has its opium den. Writing last year of the city of Soochow, Mr. Du Bose says: "Fifty years ago there were five or six opium smokers in this city; now there are 50,000."

"Having no hope," said Paul of the Ephesians. He might have said it of the Chinese today. During the twenty odd years I have lived among them I have never met a heathen man or woman who professed to have any hope beyond the grave; nor have I seen a word of hope on the tombstones of the dead. When a heathen Chinaman lies down to die he believes he is going down to hell to expiate his sins, and, having completed that expiation, he expects to be reborn into this or some other world as an insect, a reptile, a bird, a beast, or a man.

Woman in every heathen land is degraded. She is degraded in China. The "three obediences" summarise her duty. "When young, let her obey her parents; when married, her husband; and should she become a widow, her sons." To obey is the whole duty of woman. Her feet are crippled to compel her to keep at home—a prisoner and a drudge. She is seldom taught even to read. Boys' schools exist everywhere; girls' schools are almost unknown. It is a common saying in the land of Confucius that "the absence of ability is a virtue in woman." Buddhism tells woman that there can be no immediate salvation for her. When she dies she falls at once into the dread "Lake of Blood," not for any sin of hers, but simply because she is a woman. And, when she has passed through that fearful ordeal, the highest she can expect is to be reborn into the world as a man!

How sorely the heathen need Christ! Their darkness, degradation, and hopelessness cry aloud for help.

And these needy ones are our neighbours now. The application of steam to navigation has bridged the ocean and made the whole world near. It was when Paul was at Troas, with only the narrow neck of the Aegean between, that he heard the Macedonian cry: "Come over and help us." Nearness emphasizes most things; it brought home to Paul Europe's need. We come into close contact with all the heathen nations. Thousands of Englishmen live in India, China and Africa; our ships are found in every harbour, and our manufactures in every market. Those that

need our help are both near and known, and their cry should be very audible. These heathen lands are also open to us. A century ago the great heathen nations were mostly closed; now the world is an open door. China, with her eighteen great rich provinces and teeming population, is accessible to us. India is part of our own Empire, and we are free to preach Christ to her 250,000,000 souls. Madagascar waits to be evangelized, and Africa is stretching out her hands unto God.

But the Church is deaf. Few hear the cry of the perishing, Christless multitudes. There is a beautiful story told of Buddha, how, while quite a young man, he was so distressed by the world's misery that it haunted him in his dreams, and he would start at night in his sleep and cry out, as if answering someone: "My world! Oh, world! I hear, I know, I come!" Would that all God's children heard that same cry of woe! I wonder how many do hear it? How many of us pity earth's sinning, dying multitudes that they haunt us in our dreams? Not many, if I may judge by the feebleness of the response. Look at China. There are only 786 Protestant missionaries, male and female, in the whole of that great empire. There are parts of China where you may travel for a month without passing a single Protestant mission station. As you journey you will pass day after day great walled cities, populous towns, almost numberless villages, and all without a man or a woman to tell them of Christ. As I pass along the streets of our English towns and villages I see churches and chapels on every hand, and the sight is pleasant to my eyes. None here need perish for lack of knowledge; all may hear of Christ and be saved. But I think of China with her masses of ten, fifteen and twenty millions of souls, without a single missionary among them, and I weep for China.

In the whole heathen world to-day there are only about 7,000 or 8,000 missionaries, male and female. That is the Church's response to the world's bitter cry. Is it adequate? Does it express our love to Christ, or meet the need of perishing men? Volunteers for missionary work are comparatively few. China's and India's and Africa's cry for help does not touch many hearts. There is no great constraining missionary enthusiasm even among the young. Our missionary societies are not overburdened with offers of service. Parents send their sons as emigrants, soldiers, sailors and traders to many lands, but are slow to send them as missionaries of the cross. Few men and women of independent means consecrate themselves and their substance to the Lord for work among the heathen. How few such we have among the agents of this Society! The contributions of our churches, too, are miserably small. A few give liberally, but the great bulk of our people give almost nothing. The cry of the heathen world is unheard or unheeded, and the help begged is not given. Great Britain and Ireland spend \$725,000,000 annually on alcoholic drinks; London spends 75. per head every year on its theatres; our churches spend only a few pence per member on missions to the heathen.

This neglect is very perplexing to the heathen themselves. There is something strange and incredible in an 1800-year-old Gospel coming to millions now for the first time. It is hard to believe in a Saviour who saved us 1,800 years ago, of whom we hear only now. Often when I have been preaching to the Chinese and pressing on them the offer of salvation, they have looked up at me and said: "If Christ is what you say he is, why have we not heard of him before?" I have never been able to give a satisfactory answer to that question. I pass it on to you. Why is it that after 1800 years of Gospel light there should be so many millions who have never even heard the "glad tidings of great joy?" Shall we add another century to those already gone?

But there is danger of another kind in present delay. Our intercourse with Eastern nations is introducing among them Western thought and Western science—thought and science without God—and every year's delay makes our task the harder. Besides, will the world remain the open door it is to-day? China may not. America and Australia are shutting out the Chinese in a very arbitrary and high-handed way, and the Chinese may retaliate by shutting us out from China. Other complications are possible and probable. But whatever the future may be, to-day China is open; we enjoy full freedom of action, our