

DEGRADING IDOLATRY.

The following interesting note from Rev. J. H. Bruce, of Honan, sent us by the F. M. Secretary, will touch the hearts of many readers. O the paths of these poor women travelling in heat and dust, weary miles, with bound and suffering feet, to pour their bitter supplications before a hideous crumbling image! Worst of all is the domestic suffering that lies behind. It means wives abused and rejected because a son has not been born! It means broken hearts crying for relief where there is no ear to hear. We can see and sympathize with Christian missionaries and native evangelists strong along the way injecting a message of hope into these weary souls as they pass on to their disappointment.

My dear Dr. Mackay:—We have just completed an evangelistic campaign at a great religious festival in She Hsen. This Vanity Fair is observed every year for twenty days in the third moon. Thousands of pilgrims go up to this ancient shrine to burn incense and to pray to the Venerable Grandmother for male children. Their failure to obtain does not hinder them from going up the next year with the same confidence.

The shrine is called Tany Wang Chiao and is built high up on the steep slope of a lonely mountain, about three days journey north-west of Chang-te city. One mile and a half away lies the town of Soa Pu, where most of the pilgrims spend a night. They repair to the temple in the early morning, offer incense, present their petition and then, without further delay, begin the journey homeward. Thus on all the highways leading to the shrine, from all points within a radius of sixty miles, there is a ceaseless procession for twenty days,—two processions in fact, one going and the other returning. There are scores of women who walk all the way over mountain and plain,—yes, hundreds of women aided only by stout canes. Many other women are more fortunate in being able to ride; and frequently in this case the woman astride the donkey or mule carries a babe in her arms while an older member of the family sits behind holding on tight while the father leads the way on foot.

To give the water of life to this rapidly moving procession we must be on the alert, for at any one point we only have a few precious minutes to deal out the thirst-quenching draughts, and then whether satisfied or not, on they go to drink at broken cisterns which can hold no water.

Our plan of campaign was to choose three towns along the route of the procession at intervals of five miles and locate at each a number of preachers. At two of the towns we also had women evangelists, four in all, under a lady missionary. The men number 16 evangelists under the supervision of one foreign missionary. In two of the towns the band was again subdivided so that in all we had six bands preaching to the crowds for eight days. The preachers were picked men and all worked strenuously and spoke well, and prayed unceasingly for an outpouring of the Spirit of God upon the preacher and the hearer.

It is safe to say that thousands heard the word preached, and most of them heard it gladly. But to most of them it was a new message. It was a time of scattering the seed upon the waters. Seeds scattered hastily in thousands of hearts and then they were gone. Without doubt Satan will snatch much that fell on the hard-beaten path, much will wither on the rocky soil, and much fall among thorns, but we also believe that much fell in good soft soil prepared by the Spirit of God, and that it will take root and bear fruit unto eternal life. Very many expressed a desire to follow the teaching received. Pray for these that they may be led unto all the Truth.

Changteho, May 22, 1909.

YOUNG PEOPLE IN MISSIONARY CONFERENCE.

By Dr. J. M. Menzies, Honan.

The fourth annual conference of the Young People's Missionary Movement has just closed, and was in every way a success. To a missionary on furlough it was inspiring to see such a gathering of young people met together not merely to hear missionary addresses, but for nine days of genuine hard study of the mission fields of the world, in order to prepare themselves to teach others. It was delightful to note the spirit of Christian fellowship manifested, for almost every Protestant denomination was represented. The total registration was 253, the Methodists having 105; Presbyterians, 71; Anglicans, 29; Baptists, 23. Such distant places as Halifax, Montreal, Windsor, North Bay and New York had their representatives, while together with the foreign mission secretaries were missionaries from India, China, Japan, Palestine, Alberta, and South America.

Two of the largest Toronto delegations had their pastors with them, but one could not but notice the scarcity of ministers. This, I think, was a pity for Whitby last week afforded just the kind of relaxation that many a tired pastor would have enjoyed. Trafalgar Castle, the home of the Ontario Ladies' College, is an ideal place for holding such a conference, and all who were there knew how much the kindness and thoughtfulness of the entire college staff meant towards making the conference a success.

Every forenoon, from the rising bell at 6.30 a.m., till 12.30 was well filled—devotional meetings, study classes, and lectures following each other with an intermission of ten minutes between. But the afternoons were devoted to recreation and the day closed with a short meeting on the lawn, where earnest helpful talks were given, followed by an address in the Assembly Hall on one of the great religions of the world.

Three classes studied "Korea in Transition," two classes "The Moslem World," one class "South America," one class the home mission problem from "Strangers Within Our Gates," and another studied "Servants of the King."

Mr. Goforth's message from Korea and China was very timely and much appreciated. Interesting and valuable were the addresses on the non-Christian religions. Confucianism, by Mr. Stewart, of China; Buddhism, by Mr. Hamilton, of Japan; Mohammedanism, by Dr. Gould, of Palestine; Hinduism, by Dr. Brown, late of India; Judaism, by Mr. Robold, of Toronto; and Mariolatry, by Mr. Ray, of South America. One felt that these men knew what they were talking about. They gave us the present day condition of things, and told us what their own eyes had seen and their own ears had heard. Instead of quoting from others who had quoted before them. It is hoped that these addresses will be printed separately in cheap form and may be had from the mission secretaries.

But what did it all amount to? you ask. What results are to be looked for? One result will be the formation in many congregations of classes for the study of missions—home and foreign, and the leaders of these classes have, many of them, received their inspiration and training at Whitby.

Another result is indicated by the fact that of the 60 volunteers for foreign mission work, who were present, 19 came to the point of decision at this conference, and many more have gone away with a clearer vision of their Lord than they ever had before, and with a determination henceforth to be found in the King's service.

The secretaries of the Foreign Mission Boards, all of whom were present, have had an opportunity of meeting with the young volunteers for mission work, of helping and directing them in their study, and one cannot but feel that had such a conference as this been organized ten years ago the Mission Boards to-day would know where to find the men and women for which the mission fields are so urgently calling.

About 250 delegates rather overcrowded the college residence, and the hope is strongly felt that next year instead of one Canadian conference there may be two or three held in Ontario. Why should there not be held in every province such a conference for the training of leaders in church and Sabbath school in the study of missions. The Canadian Council of the Y.P.M. will be glad to hear from persons interested in arranging such conferences.

A PASTOR'S COMPLAINT.

By C. H. Wetherbe.

Much has been said in favor of the young people's societies which have been organized for the promotion of spiritual culture. Several denominations have societies of this kind, and it has been said by many people that the members of the societies have been greatly aided in the Christian life by such means. But there are pastors who have long felt that many of the members of those societies have been a hindrance to both the pastors and the churches, rather than a positive help to them. Before me is a printed complaint from the pastor of a Presbyterian church in Ohio, as follows:

"I know of no one thing that is so discouraging, that is causing the ministers so many heartaches as the conduct of the members of our Christian Endeavor Societies. They go to their meetings and sing, 'There's sunshine in My Soul Today,' 'When the Roll is Called Up Yonder, I'll Be There,' 'I'm Here on Business for the King,' and when their meeting is out, they are off, leaving the pastor to preach to empty seats. The same condition prevails everywhere, so far as I have observed. There is no enthusiasm, no zeal for the conversion of souls. I know very well the answer to this, that the pastors are not in touch with the young people. I resent the charge for myself, and I know that it is not true generally. But when the members of the C.E. ignore their pledge, and do nothing to help the pastor in his work is it strange that he should become indifferent to their society? As a social organization the C.E. society exhibits some signs of life, but as a spiritual force it has collapsed."

I judge that this complaint is well founded. For many years there have been similar complaints from pastors who were concerned for the best welfare of the young people. And what a farce it is for the members of a Christian Endeavor society to sing, 'I'm Here on Business for the King,' and at the same time hurry away from the church when their true "business" is to stay and receive all the benefit they can from the pastor's preaching, and other aids! They glibly sing, 'There's Sunshine in My Soul Today,' but they have no desire to let out that "sunshine" upon the pastor as he tries to bring life and gladness to his hearers in his pulpit work! Those young people need to be converted.

News has been received of the death of Rev. John Laing, B.A., formerly minister at Belford in the Presbytery of Berwick. Mr. Laing went to South Africa, 1883, as first minister of a new charge in the Upper Umgeni district in Natal. His death occurred, after a painful illness, at Koffyfontein, Orange River Colony, on June 1, 1909.