

## HINDRANCES TO EVANGELISTIC LABOR IN NORTH CHINA.

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Ancestral worship, bondage to one another's opinions, and other hindrances, meet us daily. Christianity develops independence of thought and action, which are not found among the heathen. Every one fears the vile and bitter language of his neighbor. Whoever embraces Christianity cannot escape censure and reproach from the heathen, whose tongues are poisonous arrows. But the chief hindrances to our work in the homes of the poor in the North, and, to a large extent, all over China, are the poverty of the people and the degradation of the women. In China millions toil incessantly to earn a scanty livelihood. Many waste their time in idleness or dissipation. A few are possessed of wealth, but they are so full of pride and self-importance that they treat with mingled feelings of contempt and indifference every effort to preach to them "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ."

Everywhere are met miserable opium-smokers, bearing on their saddened and emaciated countenances marks of a lingering but certain death. The families of such are impoverished and neglected.

China has vast natural resources, but the intense conservatism and superstition of men in power is such that rich mines are practically undeveloped, and manufacturing interests, for the most part, neglected. One result is that China's vast population cannot be supported in comfort. Industry is so cramped that millions who are anxious and able to work cannot secure remunerative employment. The crushing poverty that abounds cannot be fully understood by those who have never lived among the people. In some parts of China strong men work the entire year for wages varying from one to five pounds. Carpenters, weavers, and other craftsmen are considered fortunate if they can clear twelve shillings per month. It is not surprising that men utterly unable to secure the simplest necessities of life for themselves and families lose heart, and overcome by mental distress, are not unfrequently driven to sell their children, or even take their own lives. Owing to rebellions, frequent famines, and other causes, multitudes have lost all the land and property which they inherited, and

large families once living in comfort are reduced to pauperism.

In the North, especially when winter approaches, great numbers flock to the cities, hoping to find some means of warding off starvation. Daily, wretched-looking, ragged men, women, and children, in great numbers, may be seen shivering with cold, hastening from place to place, begging for food and picking up cinders and scraps of whatever can be burned or eaten. It is painful to see the withering skeleton of an infant, on the arms of a hungry and almost naked mother, crying for food. At night, hundreds of these poor people, suffering the pangs of hunger and cold, having no homes, crowd into little huts or sheds, or under the arches of the city wall, and sleep with no covering but a little straw or seaweed, which they may have been able to gather. In early morning, from these dens of filth and darkness these people issue forth to find, if possible, some means of prolonging a life of hunger, cold, and often of vice. Language utterly fails to express the abject poverty of thousands and tens of thousands. It seems almost incredible how beings bearing the image of God can become so wretched. There are no poor laws, no poor tax, no work-houses, no asylums, no hospitals, and no provision for feeble old age or helpless infancy. The blind of both sexes grope their way along the streets begging from door to door. Those who have, daily give something to the repeated cries of distress; but what is this among so many! There is no systematic effort to alleviate suffering, to raise the fallen, to reclaim the vicious, to heal the sick and clothe the naked. No voluntary agents devote themselves to supplying the wants of others. The life-long and daily burden of vast numbers is, "What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewithal shall we be clothed?" When such are expected to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, the question is constantly asked, How is it possible for people, who are compelled to work every day or starve, to keep the Sabbath?

Another great hindrance to the spread of the Gospel is the degradation and ignorance of the female sex. Women are regarded practically as property of the men. A man may sell his wife and daughter, and the law fails to protect them. Polygamy is lawful, and of common occurrence among the official and wealthy