

## A JOURNEY TO HONAN

BY REV. MR. SLIMMON.

HSIN CHEN, 1st June, 1895.

DEAR RECORD,—The Honan Presbytery some time ago directed its missionaries to write you in turn, so I will try to obey and tell you something of our coming. Messrs. Goforth, Malcolm and I left Toronto 20th Feb., and reached Chu Wang 30th April, nearly seventy days.

The ocean voyage had its lights and shadows. Old Father Neptune, as usual, for the first few days, made the good things provided by the steward seem vanity and vexation of spirit. The bulk of the passengers indulged in the usual sneers at the foreign missionaries, and in their discussions, which were held at intervals between their games of poker, and flavored with brandy and cigars, they decided that missionary work was a failure, and, at any rate, the heathen were perfectly well satisfied with their own religions, and that people had no right to go and force upon them another religion which they did not want.

The brighter side of the journey were the pleasant hours of fellowship with the few earnest Christians such as are usually found in every company. Then there were the soul-refreshing studies of Scripture, and the blessed meetings held among the sailors.

Your three missionaries were specially encouraged in the meetings held down in the fore-castle, by seeing souls converted to God.

There was one case, that of the boatswain's mate, which was specially interesting. At the first meeting, sitting in one of the back seats, he seemed to be eagerly drinking in every word. He at once began searching the Scriptures to see if these things were so, and soon the light shone in, and he was converted to God. At the following meeting he got up and gave his testimony, and a clear and decided one it was. He is a man of very strong character, and is sure to be a power for good among a crew that was noted for its rough, Godless character.

Sunday, 17th March, saw the party in Japan—plucky little Japan, which has been creating such a diversion in the East, much to the disgust of the Chinese. The latter simply refuse to believe that they have been beaten by Japan. The Chinese officers who have been in action have come back to their homes with the tale that not only Japan, but England, France, Germany, Russia and all the Foreign Powers have been fighting against them.

One cannot but admire the signs of vigorous life in Japan, while the cheerful spirits and polite manners of the people send everyone away with good wishes for them and their country. May they soon be led to a knowledge of the true God, without which all the energy and vigor of the nation will but prove a curse.

At Shanghai many old friends were met, but we could not tarry, for Honan was our goal, so the steamer up the coast for Tientsin was boarded, and we were soon away.

A sad incident, which shows how lightly life is valued by the Chinese, took place as we were passing the great forts at the mouth of the Yangtse River. The Chinese purser had occasion to rebuke his servant, who at once flew into a terrible passion, and, after raging around for a little, deliberately jumped overboard. The steamer at once stopped, but though she waited for some time, no more was ever seen of the poor Chinaman.

It was terribly sad—a soul hurried into eternity without God; and yet, he was only one of the thirty-three thousand that perished that day, and perish every day in China, in the same hopeless condition. Let those to whose care the Gospel has been committed ponder over this and speak with God about it.

Other incidents of the three days' voyage to Tientsin were the touching at Chefoo, and being chased by one Japanese man-of-war and overhauled by another.

At Tientsin we were met by Mr. H. J. Boswick, who has shown so much kindness to our mission, and who soon had our party under his hospitable roof. Many missionaries who had been forced to leave their stations in the interior, owing to the unsettled state of the country, were residing in the city. They were chiefly women, as the men had for the most part remained at their posts. But they were one and all wishing that permission be granted them to return to their fields.

Four busy days were spent at Tientsin, making purchases, getting passports, searching for a house-boat for the voyage inland by river to Honan. At last all was ready, and we were on board our home for the next month or so.

The style of the Chinese house-boat seems to confirm the story of its origin. An Emperor, giving orders to his carpenter to build a boat, was asked for a pattern or plan. His mind being occupied with affairs of state, he kicked off his shoe and said: "Make it like that." And they are all just like "that."

Real China had been reached at last, and Chinese ideas and methods were predominant now. No travelling at thirty or forty miles an hour. It took a day and a half to get over the next three miles, and it might have been a week and a half if the travellers had not sent for three river policemen or "blockade breakers."

The canal on which we were to travel was simply packed. I am sure some of the boats would be stuck there for weeks, but our "blockade breakers," with their official helmets and rods of office, by dint of squeezing, yelling and anathematizing, together with a liberal use of their "rods," got the boat through in one day.