

THE OPIUM MISERY IN CHINA.

OUR Missionary in Honan, Rev. J. Frazer Smith, M. D., writes in *Medical Missions*, of the opium curse, as follows:—

"I have been much surprised at the evidence given by some medical men who profess to have had a large experience with opium users, and who, nevertheless maintain that its use is beneficial to health.

My experience of five years as medical missionary in the province of Honan, China, has been the very reverse, and all that I have seen would almost lead me to question the veracity of the men who have given such evidence, or, at least, to say that their experience must have been limited, and, therefore, that they do not really know what they are talking about.

I have seen some tens of thousands of opium users, and have treated a few thousand, who have been addicted to opium in some form or other, and to a greater or less extent.

A couple of hundred of all grades have passed through my hands who wished to be cured of the opium habit, and I know whereof I speak when I say that I have not yet met with a single person whose health has been in any way benefited by the continuous use of opium. On the contrary, even in the case of apparently healthy men living in good circumstances, and therefore able to provide themselves with every necessary, I have almost invariably found, on close examination, that they had some trouble which they themselves admitted was caused by their indulgence in opium. It is difficult to find an opium smoker with what might be called good average health.

Nearly all Chinamen who are slaves to the drug will use the strongest terms in denouncing opium as a curse to their nation, and almost without exception they say they would like to break off, but they have not courage enough to fight the terrible craving even for a few days. Much has been made of the fact that it is only the poorer classes who suffer so dreadfully from the continued use of opium.

The poverty of the people of China as a whole is almost proverbial, and only a very, very small minority of its 400,000,000 are even in fairly comfortable circumstances. Add the opium curse to the pinching poverty which already exists throughout the whole empire, and, even according to the evidence of the gentlemen already referred to, we are perpetrating a terrible wrong.

Time would fail me to tell of the individual cases that have come directly under my notice where property has been squandered, position lost, and body and soul ruined by this fascinating demon of opium.

Not very long ago I was called to attend an official of some fifty years of age, a man above the average intelligence, and who had had every

possible advantage, and whose father had left him in possession of considerable property. He began at twenty years of age to smoke opium, because it was fashionable to do so. For a few years all went well with him, and he advanced step by step in his official career. But, alas! the opium demon had set his eyes upon him and already had him in his clutches. Gradually the grim monster began to tighten his grasp upon his victim. By degrees his property was all used up, and no longer able to hold a high position, he was forced to take one a few grades lower. He felt his disgrace very keenly, but this only made him use a little more of the subtle poison. About this time he contracted dysentery, and I was called to help, but it was too late, he had no strength left to fight with any disease, and he died without a shilling left in the house to support his wife and family, and nothing to bury him, which to a Chinaman is a terrible disgrace.

This is no isolated case. Even among the official classes such cases are far too common. The opium user dreads diarrhoea and dysentery as a terrible plague, and no wonder, for very few who have taken opium for a length of time can ward off an attack of either. Many cases that might be helped are given up as hopeless at the very first, because they say, "An opium smoker was never known to get over diarrhoea like this."

DESOLATION IN HONAN.

I have travelled through the greater part of Northern Honan and know something of the havoc wrought by the opium curse in depopulating the country and bringing it to ruin. Whole towns in a tumble-down state and almost in ruins, which thirty years ago were flourishing and prosperous. You ask the reason why and you get for answer, "Opium using and famine." It is estimated that in the towns and cities in parts of Honan, about seven out of every ten male adults are addicted to opium, and four out of these seven are injuring themselves and ruining their families by using it, and are what the Chinese say, "beyond remedy."

What will the next thirty years do for this fair garden of China at the present rate of ruin? What can we as Christians do to prevent the misery, the suffering, the degradation, and the death which is caused directly from this monster vice? God help us to do all in our power to bring the traffic to an end.

Isin Chen, Honan, March 30th, 1894.

"Along the west coast of Africa there are now about 225 churches, 40,000 converts, 100,000 adherents, 300 schools, 40,000 pupils. Thirty-five languages or dialects have been mastered, and parts of the Bible and other books have been printed in these languages, while it is estimated that 8,000,000 of the natives have more or less knowledge of the gospel of Christ."