

Northern Messenger

VOLUME XXXV., No. 32.

MONTREAL, AUGUST 10, 1900.

30 Cts. Per An. Post-
MRS. W. M. PROZOR, 8,000
RUBENI GALLON, QUE.

In a Buddhist Temple.

(Miss Carling, of Chiangchiu, in 'London Missionary Society Chronicle'.)

We had been living in Amoy eleven months, and our first examination in the dialect of that port loomed in the distance. It was in search of a quiet corner in which to cram our 'It, Ji, Ham' (a Chinese primer) that Miss Parslow and I had gone to Chiangchiu, the city where we have since found a home. From the moment of our arrival there, however, the native Christians, especially two Bible-women, showed by their frequent friendly visits that they were eager to make our acquaintance as soon as possible.

These two women called one morning and announced their intention of taking us to see the 'South Temple,' so named from its situation in the south quarter of the city. One cannot very well be otherwise than 'up' in the points of the compass, the principal streets of the city being built in the form of a cross, at the extremities of which are the city gates, directly facing the cardinal points, after which they are named. In those days—six years ago—we attracted a good deal more attention as we walked along the streets than we do to-day. A dozen or more children and a few adults followed us into the temple. One of the priests having unlocked the door of a room in which were placed three very large gilded images, the children eagerly described their merits to us.

When they paused for a moment, I asked: 'Why are the idols here?' One little boy, who seemed surprised at my ignorance, put both hands reverently together, and, bowing very low towards one of the idols, said: 'For us to do this too.'

I then asked: 'Of what use are they?' There was a slight pause, and then came the answer: 'They take care of us.' 'Are they always here?' I asked. 'Yes.' 'Do they never go to your houses to look after you?' At this they all laughed. 'Oh, no,' they said; 'they cannot move.'

'Can they hear us talking?'

Again came a pause for consideration. One boy was sure they could, another was doubtful, but the rest answered emphatically 'No.' I then began to tell them about



FIVE BUDDHIST PRIESTS.

the God who 'hears,' the Bible-women supplementing my remarks, which, owing to my limited knowledge of the language, were necessarily few and simple. The priest seemed interested, and asked many questions, such as 'Where is God?' 'How old is he?' 'Who told you about him?' 'What is he like?' etc.

On the following Sunday, as I passed through our Sinkio (New Bridge) chapel to the seats reserved for women—behind a high screen, and, alas! behind the pulpit—I noticed this priest among the worshippers, but I learned afterwards from Mr. Joseland, who was preaching, that he only remained a short time.

Priests are usually kind and courteous to all visitors, offering them tea and sweetmeats, and conducting them round the temple and grounds, proud to show all the sacred treasures, and to answer questions about them. They are strict vegetarians, and take their food in silence, always sitting in the same seats, and on one side only of the tables.

The few I have seen have kind, earnest

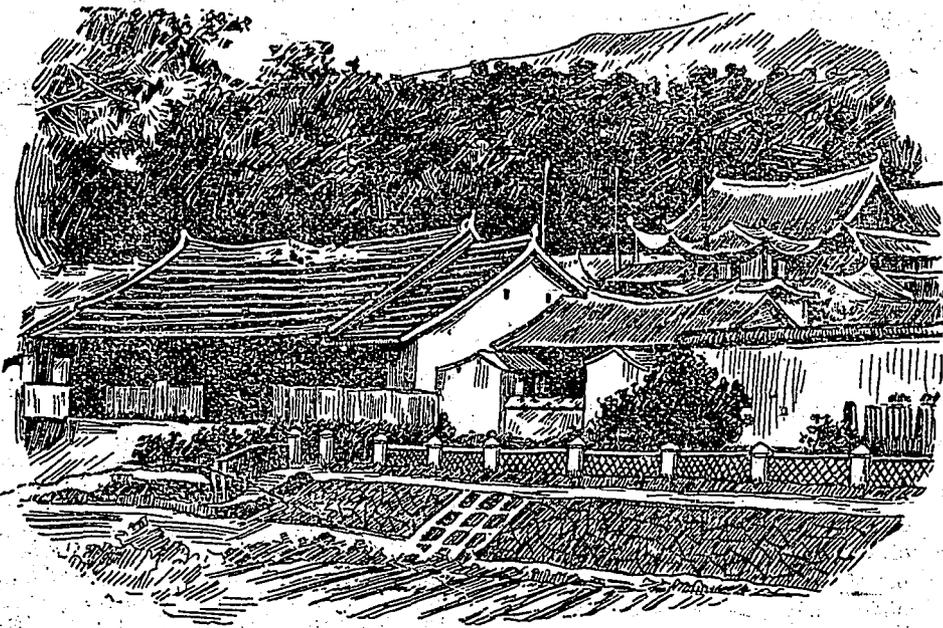
faces. On their clean-shaven heads they 'bear the marks' of nine burns, a symbol that they have renounced the world, 'choosing rather to suffer affliction . . . than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.' As they kneel to receive their ordination, cones of charred sandalwood and saltpetre are fixed in position with an adhesive mixture, and then set light to.

They spend much time in worship, marching round repeating phrases aloud, and prostrating themselves before the images with an appearance of reverence and sincerity, waiting, surely, for 'him whom they ignorantly worship to be declared unto them.' Temples are often built on hills and mountains, and are always placed so as to command the best view possible. They are cleaner than ordinary dwelling-houses, and Europeans have sometimes proved them to be cool and pleasant retreats in the summer months. Pilgrims always find a welcome, with food and shelter, there. The temples are kept in repair, and the priests supported, by the voluntary contributions of the people. These are sometimes thank-offerings for blessings received. Mr. Barber, of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, has said that 'the Chinese give the best of all nations in the world to charitable objects.'

The accompanying photographs of the Kushan Monastery, near Foochow, where five hundred priests reside, and of some of the priests themselves, will give a general idea of Buddhist temples and priests in the Fukkien province. The photographs were sent to me by a native Christian who has recently visited the monastery, and who writes: 'The five priests shown standing in the arbor seemed particularly ready to listen to the Gospel. Their earnestness moves me to pity; I cannot forget it.'

A Subtle Danger.

When a boy I visited a Christian family of wealth, refinement, and fashion. One afternoon nearly all went to the theatre, myself for the first time. The play was amusing, and, the title would imply, perfectly innocent. But a ballet dance was presently



KUSHAN MONASTERY.