

BOYS AND GIRLS

Heathen and Christian Benevolence in China.

(Mrs. Harlan P. Beach, in 'Life and Light.')

It is not uncommon to hear some zealous Chinese probationer exhort a heathen friend with the words: 'You ought to join the Jesus sect. It won't cost you any money for their worship.' Poor souls! It is no wonder that a religion which is 'without money and without price' appeals to them.

In a heathen home the first expense is for the idols themselves. The paper gods which

ears of spirits, good and evil, are electrified by this means at an annual expense of hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Here on one of the business streets is a little shop, which has for sale gayly decorated cakes, piled up into fantastic castles, pyramids, and towers, and trimmed with knots of fringed gold and silver paper. These are some of the offerings to be left for the gods at the temple by the devout worshipper. In another shop are various articles manufactured from paper for the same purpose. The most common imitation is of money, some of the copper cash—big

in various ways. One form of appeal, which is commonly made for temple repairs, is especially hard to resist. Among the street noises, some day, will sound the beating of a sharp metallic gong, and soon a pitiful figure, beating it, will come in sight. It is a mendicant priest, in soiled and ragged garments, carrying on his back a standard from which float several flags, and, horrible to see, his cheek pierced with a skewer, which he has vowed to wear until the sum is raised. The priest photographed here carried his for a month. So, in great ways, and small, their religion makes financial demands upon them. It is estimated that if the sum expended were averaged to each person, it would be about one-third of a cent daily, and that the entire amount for a year would exceed four hundred million dollars.

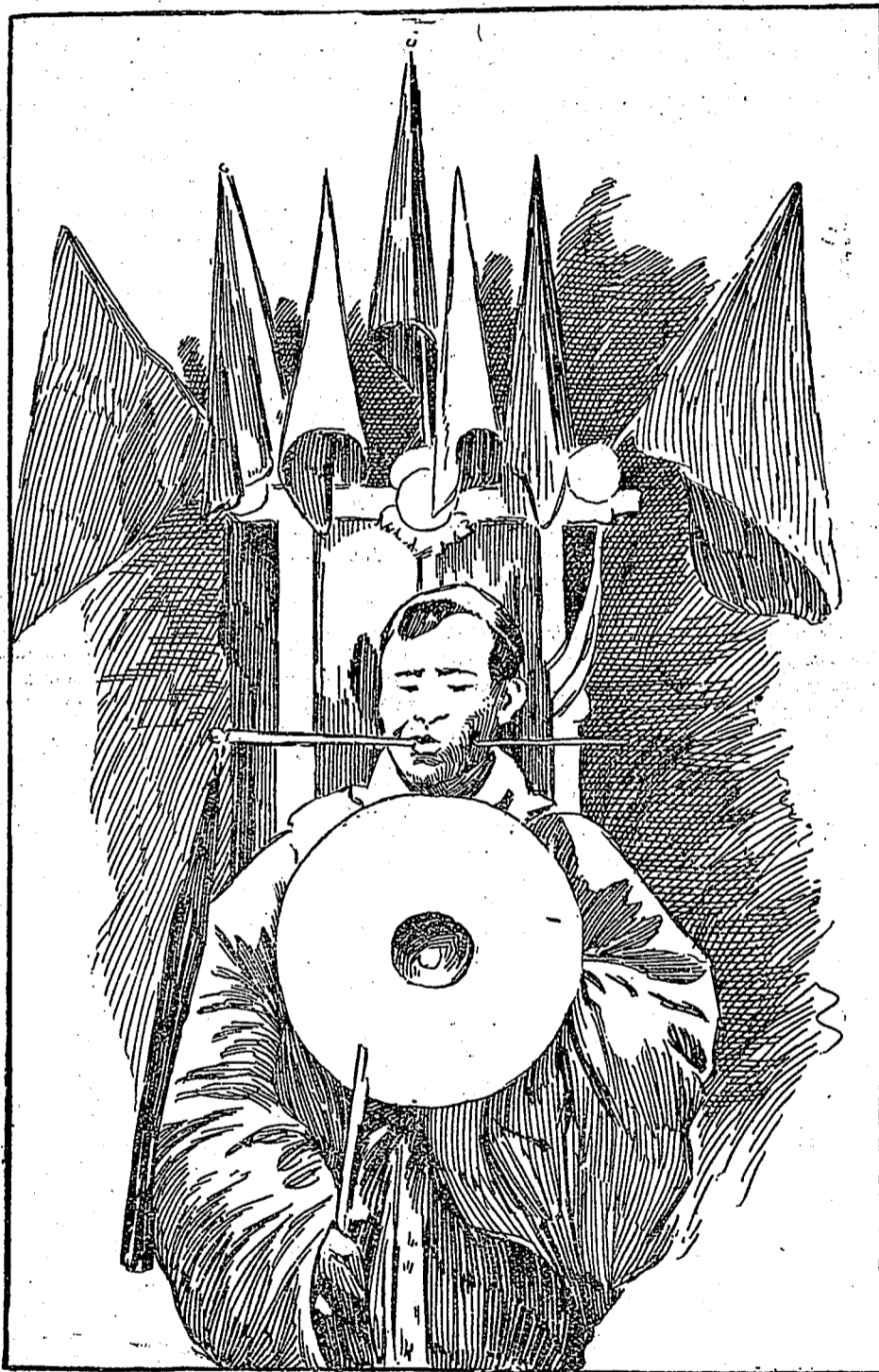
While the change to another religion strikes them as a relief in point of expense, it is doubtful if, after all, their offerings are grudgingly made. Certainly the universal and constant daily service is an example to us. Although the first impression of the new convert may be that, henceforth, his religion will cost him nothing, his eyes are soon opened. It is true that he does not any longer need to buy his gods, or to confess sins and offer thanks with incense and sacrifice. But the calls to serve with his substance him from whom all that he has came, are not over. Probably the habit of spending money in heathen worship is some help in Christian giving. But the motives are so different in each, that the training in the one hardly answers for the other. There was nothing in the old system to teach them unselfishness. It is the reigning principle of the new one.

Another reason why gifts from native Christians do not swell to larger amounts is because that, as yet, most of the church members are from the poorer classes. Many of them are so very poor, too poor to eat meat or in the north, even rice; too poor to have fire in their homes except at night; to buy water enough to keep clean; to have house room enough to live decently. There are so many little mouths to fill, and little backs to cover, and crops so often fail because of floods or drought—how can the missionary ask of such people that they carry on the work of the Lord?

And yet in just such barren soil has blossomed some of the sweetest flowers of loving sacrifice and self-denial. The average annual contributions of church members throughout China is not discouraging. A careful estimate in 1890 showed it to average a dollar per member, which in money value to them would be equal to ten times more. Sixty-eight churches were wholly self-supporting.

There are a few cases where wealthy Chinese have come into the Church, and their liberality has been all that one could wish for. One illustration is Mr. Tsang, of Foo-chow, whose gift of \$10,000 to the Methodist Anglo-Chinese College, is well known.

One of the features of our Sunday morning service at Tung-cho, is the thump in the collection box of the string of copper cash always thrown in by one of our Bible-women. She decided early in her Christian life to give one-tenth of her meagre salary to the Lord, and she has never failed to have it ready. As the years have gone by, and little grandchildren have crowded around her door, we have wondered if their



A MENDICANT PRIEST.

are pasted on the gateways into the courts, on the doors of the houses, and over the kitchen fireplace, do not cost much. But if there is a little Buddha in a handsome shrine in a corner of the room, and ancestral tablets to the spirits of the departed, the outlay is considerable.

When the family wish to say their prayers, it must be with burning incense. A religious feast comes around, and all night long the air resounds with pounding fireworks and crackling firecrackers. If it is the New Year's feast the booming continues for the greater part of ten nights. The

discs, with square holes in the centre—others gold and silver paper 'shoes,' the shape in which these metals are moulded for circulation. But the objects of sacrifice are not confined within a few special shops. Flowers, grain, meat, silk, and jade—all are given in costly offering to heaven and earth, sun, moon, and stars, gods and spirits, to be wafted heavenward on wings of fire.

The services of both Buddhist and Taoist priests, not only at funerals but at stated periods afterward, for readings and prayer, are not among the smallest items of expense, nor are the collections which they solicit