

CHINESE POVERTY.

A paper read before the Shanghai Missionary Conference, by Mrs. A. H. Smith, on "Domestic Life in China," published in the *Advance*, drew some striking pictures of Chinese poverty and the hardships imposed on women:

The second obstacle to women's education we find in the pinch of poverty. As the Chinese proverb says, "Even a child may not eat ten idle years of food." The mother must work to keep the wolf from the door, but why may we not have the little, useless children to train? "Because," the mother replies sadly, "I cannot afford to have the children study. The boy, though small, can rake fuel for the fire and manure for the field. My wee girl can already spin, mind the baby, and wait upon me." If little hands drop their small work, older ones must take it up; and so sharp and cruel is the haste with which in this poor family consumption treads upon the heels of production, that little jaws must cease to grind, and stomachs to crave, if little hands cease to labor. "Well, we will feed your children while they study." "That is very kind of you," she says, "but they have no decent clothes. Every one will make fun of them if they go in such tatters to school."

Some of the poorest of our Christian widows hire themselves out to work for rich families by the season. They dare not miss one day from the harvest, or from the cottonfield, for their coveted meeting and lesson, lest their places be filled by others, and they lose the chance of gleaning at the end of the season. We know of doors where the only weapon to keep the wolf at bay is the little shining needle of the mother. She must have her stint done to-night. You speak to her, she answers you without looking up; for, as the saying runs, "You raise your head, you lose one stitch; you lower your head you lose another." How fast her needle flies, though night has come; the children are all curled up fast asleep, and it is so piercingly cold her hands are numb. It seems a marvel each time she sees to thread her needle. Her lamp! let us rather say her corner of Egyptian darkness! Her eyes are fast giving way under the continual night work and the daily smoke. Some melancholy day will see her quite blind. Then poverty will hold the family in a still sterner vise. Pray, where is her education to come in?

The possible depths of Chinese poverty may be shown by two examples: one of a family where the wedding of their son found them too poor to buy a fifteen-cent mat for the k'ang of the bride. They borrowed one. The new wife, who had a comfortable bed quilt as a part of her dowry, felt guilty to be warm while her new mother-in-law shivered under a tattered excuse for a comforter. After the rest were asleep, the bride would steal out to the other room, put her nice warm covering over her new mother, and go back to her own comfortless bed to shiver. In another village, a dispute as to who should bear the expense of less than two cents' worth of oil an evening, has been known to break up a religious meeting. "But the people are not all as poor as that," says your new missionary, whom no doubts appal and no facts suppress. Unwittingly she thus brings you to the third obstacle:

The multiplication of manual labor. Rightly to understand Chinese life we must turn our backs on the great facts of political economy, and move the hands of the world's great clock back to the times of our great-grandmothers. We long to give our Chinese sister a Christian training. Christian training is instruction, or building up. It is first, as a preparation, intellectual. Even a divine Christ must be intellectually apprehended to be revered. We must wake up our sister's mind; but that is a work of time, and her time, alas! has already so many calls upon it. "Why, how is that?" says the new missionary. "With such a small house, no elaborate cooking, no fussy dressmaking and millinery, no pillow-shams and no church fairs, one would think she might have oceans of time." We will invite her to come and study with us a month.

Intense longing and regret flit across her face. Her "Outside," as she quaintly calls her husband, "needs a new blouse." "Well, bring the shears and we will help you. Fix upon such a miserable little

obstacle as that, to blockade the way to the kingdom of heaven! Here is the sewing-machine all threaded; bring us the cloth."

Nay, softly, O sanguine Occidental! The cloth is out there in Nature's lap, tucked away in the cotton-pods. The woman brings it in, four catties of cotton, a great lapful of hard white wads. Her skilful fingers and feet are soon flying at the cotton gin. After four hours of hard work the seeds are disposed of, and the gin goes back to its corner. Next comes the musical clang of her bow. A whole day of patient, steady labor is needed to reduce those little hard wads to a snowy, fleecy mountain of picked-up cotton. Next comes the cheerful hum of her little spinning-wheel. She is never idle, seek her when you may. But five days slip by before the thread is all spun. We watch and sigh. Next, out comes the clumsy old loom. How monotonous the click-clack of its cradle! How slowly the shuttle goes, though our friend is reputed a good weaver! Five days more have glided away into the eternal past, when a piece of cloth, twenty-five feet long, poor, coarse and narrow, drops from that antiquated loom. Eleven days and a half out of her month gone, and we have only just got to the shears! Another day sees the garment done.

The new missionary cannot sew for all the Chinese women, furnishing time and foreign thread; but she means to see this one experiment through. The woman is a bright one; her mind is being wasted. We will polish it, quicken it, set it fermenting with new ideas; in short, make yeast out of her, with which to leaven a great mass. Then no one will begrudge the day's work and the foreign thread.

"Come and begin to-morrow," she says, as the woman sews on the last button.

"Thank you so much, I should be so glad," says the woman, "but I cannot possibly. My mother-in-law needs a new quilt, my boy has no stockings, my two little girls have no wadded drawers, and my father-in-law needs a new pair of shoes."

"How long does it take you to make him a pair?"

"Five days."

"And you make the shoes for the whole family?"

"Of course," replies the woman, wondering if the queer new teacher supposes that shoes grow.

"How many pairs will keep all seven of you shod for a year?"

"About thirty."

"And how many wadded garments do they need?"

"Good years we have each of us two, that is fourteen in all; and it takes me a month of steady work, with four or five days more, for the bedding, and half a month for the summer clothes."

"Over two hundred days of clear, solid sewing!" ejaculates the new missionary, "even if you never had an interruption! And the cloth for all these jackets and drawers, comforters, stockings and shoes, does it all lie out there, eleven days away from the shears?"

"Why, yes; where else could it be?"

The wind is all out of that missionary's sails. They only flap dejectedly. "Time?" she thinks, "Time? Why, one person ought to be appointed to eat for a Chinese woman, and one to sleep for her, while a third does her breathing! What a mistake to have an 'Outside' at all! One should be all kernel, and no shell. Oh, for the freedom of those happy lands, where one might at least find an old maid to educate!"

OUR TEACHERS' MEETING.

BY THE REV. STEPHEN H. EVANS.

Ours is only an average Sunday-school board. Few of our teachers have had special advantages. They are hard-working men and women. They teach, not because they cannot well avoid it, nor because they have better qualifications for teaching than others, but because they love Jesus the Christ, and want to work for him.

Our teachers' meeting admits no one who is not directly interested in Sunday-school work. Special work demands special conditions, and our teachers insist upon exclusiveness.

The time of our teachers' meeting is Friday night. By consultation with the pastor, this evening was sacredly set apart

for us. It interferes with no other meeting in our busy church, and no other meeting is allowed to interfere with it. We meet in the church, having appropriated one of the smaller rooms. We put in easy comfortable chairs, that could be moved at will, and a degree of sociability was provided for that would have been impossible with the old, stiff benches.

On a long table, in the middle of the room, are books of reference. On the walls are large blackboards and the best maps to be had, both of geography and of topography. On the table also lies a large historical atlas, a glance into which gives the contemporaneous history of any great event or epoch in Scripture history.

In one corner of the room is the teachers' library. Here is an excellent collection of works, constantly being added to, upon Bible introduction, interpretation, history, biography, manners, and customs, Sunday-school history, work, and methods, etc. It is for the teachers only, and is wholly independent of the regular library; and, to make sure that it will not be neglected, it is a standing rule that one-tenth of all receipts in the school, exclusive of missionary or benevolent collections, shall be applied by the book committee to this teachers' library. This is not a very large sum, to be sure; but, judiciously spent, it has given us helps we could not otherwise have had.

You will see by this that our teachers look upon Sunday-school teaching as a work that needs the best possible preparation. But it is not enough to have a teachers' library, however well used it may be. Some books this library cannot have in sufficient number to supply all the teachers. There must be personal expenditure. We go on the principle that, to do anything worth doing, or to be anything worth being, costs, not time and energy only, but money. Our teachers maintain that it never pays for a mechanic to work with dull tools rather than spend enough money to buy a stone to sharpen them on. Every class knows the difference between dullness and sharpness, between emptiness and fulness, and we think every teacher ought to know it also. Each teacher in our school has invested in the following for personal use:

1. A teacher's Bible, with wide margins for notes.

2. Notes on the International lessons, by Hurlbut or Peloubet,—some take both.

3. "Teaching and Teachers," by Trumbull.

4. "The Sunday-school Times."

Our teachers' meeting is held for one hour only. The ladies and gentlemen of the board, being busy people, have no time to idle away. They know the meeting will begin on time and end on time. If any other important work must be attended to on that evening, they know it can be done after the teachers' meeting. Work is the business of the hour.

Let me say what this meeting is not. It is not a place to begin the study of next Sunday's lesson. The lesson has been studied as thoroughly as possible all the week. Teachers come to this meeting to get in step with each other; to report to each other the results of their labor as students of the lesson; to condense all their work into a compact result; and to ask God's blessing on the work of preparation. It is not a place for debate, but every teacher is permitted to state his or her own views. No one gets offended. Everybody is so much in earnest that all are sure to be right in spirit and meaning. It is not a place to set wrong people right,—we have none of that kind; nor is it a place to set right people wrong.

A CLERK, who resides at Albany, N. Y. (street and number not reported), recently built a house which cost him \$3,000. He calls it his "smoke-house," for the reason that twenty years ago he gave up the habit of smoking and the house was built by the money thus saved. A word to the wise is said to be sufficient.

SCHOLARS' NOTES.

(From Westminster Question Book.)

LESSON XII.—JUNE 21, 1891.

CAPTIVITY OF JUDAH.—2 Kings 25: 1-12.

COMMIT TO MEMORY vs. 12, 13.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"Come, and let us return unto the Lord."—Hos. 6: 1.

HOME READINGS.

M. 2 Kings 25: 1-12.—Captivity of Judah.
T. Isa. 20: 1-16.—Foretold by Isaiah.
W. Ezek. 12: 1-16.—Foretold by Ezekiel.
Th. Jer. 8: 20-9: 16.—Foretold by Jeremiah.
F. Lam. 2: 1-22.—Lamentation over Jerusalem.
S. Psalm 80: 1-19.—Prayer for Deliverance.
S. Psalm 137: 1-12.—Weeping in Captivity.

LESSON PLAN.

I. Jerusalem Taken, vs. 1-4.
II. The King Carried to Babylon, vs. 5-7.
III. The City Destroyed, vs. 8-12.
TIME.—B.C. 589-588; Zedekiah the twenty-first and last king of Judah; Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon.
PLACES.—Jerusalem; Riblah, 75 miles north of Damascus; Babylon.

OPENING WORDS.

Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, was the youngest son of Josiah. He was placed on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and reigned eleven years, B.C. 594-588. The intermediate history is found in 2 Kings 23 and 24 and in 2 Chron. 35 and 36: 1-10. Parallel accounts, 2 Chron. 36: 11-21; Jer. 39: 1-10; 52: 1-16.

HELP IN STUDYING THE LESSON.

V. 1. Tenth month—parts of December and January. Tenth day—still observed as a fast by the Jews. Nebuchadnezzar—the most powerful of the Babylonian kings. Ports—overlooking towers. V. 2. Eleventh year—the siege lasted eighteen months. V. 3. Fourth month—July B.C. 588. V. 4.—The gate between two walls—the besiegers entered from the north, and the king fled toward the south, down the Tyropoean Valley, between the two walls of Moriah on his left and Zion on his right. This path came out in the king's garden—at the south-east corner of the city. Toward the plain—Revised Version, "by the way of the Arabah," the valley of the Jordan. V. 6. Riblah—the headquarters of Nebuchadnezzar, who was at the same time besieging Tyre. Gave judgment upon him—as a common criminal, not as a king. He had violated his oath of submission to Nebuchadnezzar. Ezek. 17: 13-19; 2 Chron. 36: 10-13. V. 7. Put out—carried him to Babylon—thus two apparently inconsistent prophecies (Jer. 32: 4; Ezek. 12: 13) were literally fulfilled. V. 8. Fifth month—parts of July and August. Seventh day—his orders were not fulfilled until the tenth day. (Compare Jer. 52: 12.)

QUESTIONS.

INTRODUCTORY.—What is the title of this lesson? Golden Text? Lesson Plan? Time? Place? Memory verses?

I. JERUSALEM TAKEN, vs. 1-4.—Who besieged Jerusalem? How long did the siege last? To what straits was the city reduced? What was the cause of all this suffering? Jer. 16: 10-12. What was one of their great sins? Jer. 17: 20-23. How did the siege end? How did Zedekiah attempt to escape?

II. THE KING CARRIED TO BABYLON, vs. 5-7.—Where was the king taken? To whom was he sent? What was done with his sons? With Zedekiah? What prophecies were thus fulfilled? What other kings of Judah were then in captivity?

III. THE CITY DESTROYED, vs. 8-12.—What was done with the temple and the city? With the people? Who alone were left in Judah? How long after the division of the kingdom did this happen? How long after the captivity of Israel?

WHAT HAVE I LEARNED?

1. That God is true to his threatenings as well as to his promises.
2. That he will certainly punish those who continue in sin.
3. That he may use kings and armies as his scourges.
4. That if we neglect our privileges they may be taken from us.

QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW.

1. Who besieged Jerusalem? Ans. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon.
2. How did the siege end? Ans. The city was taken and destroyed.
3. What was done with the king's sons? Ans. They were slain before his eyes.
4. What was done with the king? Ans. His eyes were put out, and he was carried to Babylon.
5. What became of the people? Ans. They were carried as captives to Babylon.

LESSON XIII.—JUNE 28, 1891.

TEMPERANCE LESSON.—Isa. 28: 1-18.

GOLDEN TEXT.

"They also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way."—Isa. 28: 7.

HELP IN STUDYING THE LESSON.

Our lesson passage denounces the sins of Israel and foretells the woes about to come upon the nation. Samaria shall be cast down by a sudden invasion, as a just judgment upon sensual and impious Israel, vs. 1-4. To the remnant in Judah, Jehovah himself will be a crown and a protection, vs. 5, 6. Yet even these imitate the example of apostate Israel, and in their self-indulgence cast off the authority of God, vs. 7-13. But their contempt of God and their self-reliance shall only hasten their destruction, vs. 14-22. The passage has been very appropriately selected for a Temperance Lesson, as drunkenness is prominent among the sins denounced by the prophet, and fearfully prevalent in our day.

QUESTIONS.

To what period does the prophet in this chapter refer? What was the state of Judah at this time? What the condition of Israel or Ephraim? Upon whom does the prophet pronounce woe? How would this woe be brought upon them? Why were Samaria and Israel to be thus destroyed? Who were here meant by drunkards? What does this teach you about the sin of intemperance?

What promise is made to Judah? vs. 5, 6. What charge is brought against them? What is their contemptuous reply? How does the prophet answer them? What important declaration does he make? vs. 16.

WHAT HAVE I LEARNED?

1. That drunkenness is a most fearful sin.
2. That it is loathsome and disgusting.
3. That it leads to destruction.
4. That God's wrath is upon those who are guilty of it.
5. That we should avoid the very appearance of evil, and therefore abstain from the use of all intoxicants.