

WORK AMONG THE CHINESE, ETC., IN B.C.

LETTER FROM MR. COLEMAN TO THE F. M.
SECRETARY.

Lulu Island, B.C., 8th July, 1895.

DEAR MR. MACKAY,—From the above address you will see that I am at the salmon canneries.

Very little work has been done as yet in canning, as very few fish have come near the mouth of the river, but a great deal of work is going on getting the canneries into working order, such as making tins, mending and making tools and machinery, boats and nets, etc. Quite a number of new frame buildings have been put up this year for the accommodation of the workmen and workwomen. Two new canneries have been built.

By every stage and steamer there comes a goodly number of white men, Chinamen and Japanese, and the Indians are coming in whole families, men, women and children, old and young, in their canoes.

The canneries are supposed to be closed on Sundays, but a great deal of work goes on in some, if not all of them; while outside, the work goes on nearly the same as on other days; stores are open and gambling houses, men mend their boats and nets, and put up buildings, just as if God had never said: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy."

There are four Chinese Christians here whom I have met, three of them keep stores and they opened them yesterday, as on other days. I remonstrated with them, but with no visible result. One of them not only keeps his store open on Sunday, but he has an idol in it, which, however, he says is not his but his uncle's.

All this, and much more that I have heard and seen, teaches me what I learned thoroughly in China, that we ought to be very careful in admitting Chinamen into the fellowship of the Christian Church, see that they understand what they are doing, and have fully made up their minds to obey the will of God, as given in His word, even where it seems against their worldly interests, and is contrary to the practice of those around them.

When I returned from Eburne last Friday, I found Dr. Lin Yikpang, of the Methodist Mission, waiting to take the steamer for Ladner's Landing. I persuaded him to stay over Sunday with me. He went away this morning.

We had splendid opportunities yesterday for preaching the Gospel to goodly crowds of Chinamen, Indians, Japanese and white men. We each spoke three times in Chinese, and I also spoke three times to those who understood English. We spoke in four different places.

I also talked to a crowd in a gambling house. This house is kept by a Chinaman named Ta'u.

Chau, nicknamed Hak Kwai Chau, i.e., "Black Devil Chau," not on account of his character, though that is black enough, but on account of his complexion, which is not so very black. Besides being a gambler, this man is a prominent member of the Chinese Secret Society which is supposed by many white people to be Masonic, but is really a society of men combined for the purpose of protecting one another in wickedness, and terrorizing and blackmailing their countrymen. We call them "Highbinders." He has also, at times, it is said, been engaged in the traffic of women for immoral purposes. Some years ago he was an earnest open opponent of the Gospel, and I tried to hinder the preaching, but now he does not do these things openly, and outwardly seems quite friendly. I talked to him very plainly, but he puts the matter off in a light joking way, saying "I'll join the Church at the end of the year." This caused a good deal of merriment among the bystanders, who would probably, as soon expect me to worship their idols as Ta'm Chau to become a Christian, yet our God may even work this miracle to their amazement, and perhaps salvation, for his conversion would doubtless influence many others, as he has been a leader in evil so he might become a leader in good.

I am sorry that I have not got a supply of tracts in English and other European languages and in Japanese also, as I think I could distribute them here to the glory of God and the good of men. There are two churches within a mile or so of each other, one Methodist, the other Presbyterian, but great numbers will not go to either.

I was surprised to learn the other day that there is a boat population on the Fraser River. People who live in boats all the year round, and as one man said to me: "No missionary ever comes near us."

It seems strange to me that people who will not go to hear the Gospel when they have the opportunity, yet make it a matter of complaint that no one seeks them out with the Gospel. I never hear them complaining, that no one seeks them out to minister to their bodily wants. No, they look after that themselves, and go to great trouble and pains to supply their own physical needs, but expect some other person to go to the trouble of supplying their spiritual needs, that they may have the gratification, in many cases of refusing to accept it, even when it is brought to their very doors.

Your letter telling me of the Board's action in transferring me to the mainland, came duly to hand, and Mrs. Colman and I expect to move soon.

Hoping and praying that His Kingdom may speedily come, and His will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

I remain, yours truly,

C. A. COLMAN.