

A True Story of a Chinaman.

(Baptist Missionary Herald.)

Jim was a Chinaman. When a child he had been stolen from his home and sold to a company of playactors. He did not know his relatives; indeed, he did not know that he had any. He was alone in the world, and a kind of slave to the men with whom he lived. When old enough he was taught to become an actor, usually taking the part of a girl. He was a bright lad and handsome, so he was liked by the people who wished to hear him rather than the other players. Jim received many favors and presents from those who came to see the plays; yet he had to share all the presents with his companions—and often his share was very small—but, as people did not know this, he received as many presents as ever.

Very early Jim had been taught by his

had forsaken his image, and that other gods had done the same. The images were made of wood, and had been attacked by white ants, and eaten so thoroughly that nothing but the shell of the images remained. They said that it would be useless to pray or offer anything to such idols; the boy went back to his company with a heavy heart. As his companions had given worship over to him, and as they seldom asked him anything about the temples of the gods, Jim said nothing of his disappointment; but he thought a great deal. He was glad to hear the men say that, since the place was such a poor one, they would move the next day to a larger town.

When that town was reached, and Jim had leisure, Jim went to the temple where his god's image was. The old priest in charge bade the boy wait, as the idol was dirty, and must be cleaned before any offerings were

playactor's god broken in pieces. A couple of priests were there lamenting the misfortune, but doing nothing to remedy it.

'It is too bad,' said one of the priests to the lad, 'that the typhoon a few days ago destroyed the temple so completely. It seems impossible to get the people to rebuild it. A few of us thought that if we could get your company to come and give plays for several days it might make the people willing to give money to rebuild the house of the gods. We can then get another idol instead of the old Siu-kang-tia; and by a little work can put the others in such good repair that they will seem like new. Perhaps the typhoon came that we might get a new temple, for this was old and decayed.'

Jim went back to his company silent and serious. When asked what was the matter, he could not answer. But he visited no temple, he made no offerings, he worshipped no idol while his company remained in that town. Nor did he seek for a temple in the city he visited. He seemed to be like his companions, almost godless; he really was altogether without a god.

When asked why he did not worship Siu-kang-tia, he replied that Siu-kang-tia had proved unable to take care of himself, so could not possibly be trusted to care for others. Then he added that he did not mean to worship any gods. He declared that gods who could not keep white ants away, could not keep themselves from becoming dirty, and could not protect their homes from the power of the storm, were surely unable to take care of men. After that Jim visited no temples; he offered nothing to idols, and would have nothing to do with idolatry. Then his comrades gave him the name of 'No-God-Jim.'

Jim saw one day in a city where he was stopping, a number of men crowding about a door. As he had nothing to do he joined the group, and found them in a large room, listening to a foreigner. The man spoke Chinese so plainly that the actor had no difficulty in understanding; and, to Jim's surprise, the foreigner was talking about a God whom he called a spirit, and said that he never should be worshipped as idols are. This was strange talk to Jim and he listened attentively. Then he pushed his way through the crowd until he got inside the room. There he stood and listened until the preacher—for the foreigner was a missionary—ceased speaking.

At the close of the service Jim remained to ask questions. To each question he received such answers as satisfied him; and his interest in the newly-discovered God was great. The more he heard the more he wished to know. Since his company had nothing to do, as work for playactors was dull, the youth spent much of his time at the chapel where he had heard the missionary. By-and-by he became a Christian. He said that at last he had found the God he had sought in vain in temples and in forms of idols. This God satisfied his heart, but the others made it the more hungry.

After he became a Christian Jim refused to answer to the name of 'No-God-Jim,' but he said that he was now an entirely different person. He was Jim-of-the-one-true-God. He had been a no-god man because he had sought a god for his body, while his soul was the one that needed a God, and was starving for him.

'I was as a man trying to satisfy his hunger by eating smoke,' he said. 'I could see, taste, smell it, and feel my eyes become sore and blinded by it; but my hunger did



ONE OF CHINA'S IDOLS

companions to worship Siu-kang-tia, the god of playactors; and as the lad grew and was able to understand, he became a faithful worshipper of this idol. As soon as he had time, after his company came to a new town, Jim asked about the temples, and went to the one having the image of his god, and worshipped Siu-kang-tia most earnestly. Every day, as long as the company remained in a town, the lad found his way to the temple, where he spent some time in worship.

One day the boy found the priests greatly excited. They told him that Siu-kang-tia

presented. As an excuse for the dirt, the priest said he had been away, and no one had attended to his idols. This made Jim think more. When all was ready he worshipped the idol, made his offering, presented his petitions, and left the temple. He was disappointed, but could hardly say why. He was glad, though, to hear one of the men say that the company had been invited to another town a few miles away, to give entertainments for several days.

A greater disappointment awaited the lad at the next place. He found the temple of his favorite in ruins, and the image of the