

PLEASANT HOURS

A PAPER FOR OUR YOUNG FOLK

A TYPICAL CHINESE SERVICE.

BY THE REV. GEO. E. HARTWELL.

This service was held Sunday, November 13, 1892, in the outer court of our mission, which is being used at present as a chapel. It began at the orthodox hour of half past ten. To call the people together a gong was beaten immediately in front of the chapel. That beautiful hymn, "Jesus loves me," heartily sung by the few Chinamen who regularly attend our services, soon attracted a court full of people. The preacher was a Chinaman. A few verses in the third chapter of St. John's Gospel were read and the sermon began.

One peculiarity about a Chinese street congregation is their continual motion.

contained a large live rooster, a quarter of lamb, a piece of pork, and a dressed duck. These were set down in the midst of the people. Everybody's attention was turned to this tray, but the preacher never paused. This official had been cured of an ulcer and, according to Chinese etiquette, had brought the customary articles of food to express his gratitude.

A TRAVELLING MEAT SHOP

next appeared. This consisted of two neatly devised frames attached to the ends of a long pole, and carried across the shoulder of a man. From both frames dangled large slices of different kinds of meat. The shop was hung in a very conspicuous place, to vend his meats, as I

effectually reach these women. Shall the women of Canada disregard their sisters in China? Almost every woman had a baby. Were the babies good? Yes, in baby fashion. Babies are babies the world over. But think, dear reader; these babies are soon to be the boys and girls in our very midst, and later, the men and women.

Literary men, tradesmen, and labouring men occupied the remaining space. The Chinese resemble the Athenians in that they are always ready

"TO HEAR SOME NEW THING."

Peddlers with various kinds of wares were conspicuous. Two or three cloth merchants with their heaps of cotton by their side occupied one seat. Resting his load

but only to give place to a new congregation. Strange to say, the preacher paid no attention to these interruptions. He talked straight along after the manner of a Chinaman. The first part of the hour he stood; then, resuming his seat, stood only when his subject required greater emphasis. Once in a while he would pause as though collecting his thoughts, and then plunge into his subject with greater earnestness. Sometimes he would speak colloquially, sometimes exhort, and sometimes invite.

He reached one climax so naturally and so effectively, I felt that the Chinamen when well versed in Scriptural truths

WILL MAKE NOBLE PREACHERS.

He began at the beginning of the Gospel,



A WEDDING PROCESSION.

The preacher may have seventy-five hearers in his presence throughout the whole service, and yet preach to three or four hundred people.

THE ODDITY OF THIS SERVICE

consisted in the strange figures that at one time or other made up the congregation. The first to attract attention were Buddhist priests dressed in long flowing yellow robes. They listened attentively for a few moments and passed out. Then two young men entered, holding upon their right arm a large hawk. I expected to see them offering their birds for sale, but afterwards learned that these birds were held in much the same esteem in Chen-tu as pug dogs are by some in America.

Next I observed a man dressed in furs and wearing a hat which ranked him among the smaller officials, attended by a few friends, enter the court. In his train were servants carrying an elaborate tray, which

thought, at the close of the service. Instead of this he listened attentively awhile, then shouldering his burden, passed out.

THE NEXT ATTRACTION

was on the street. A bride passed by on the way to her husband's home. In her train were a large number of ragged boys carrying Chinese mottoes, men carrying flags and trays of provisions. All went well until a band reached the doorway and started a Chinese march. Suddenly, there was a rustling through the congregation, and presently from all sides rushed forth the small boy.

In a few moments

PEACE WAS RESTORED,

and my eyes wandered over the then assembled congregation. The rows of seats upon the right and at the back were occupied by women. Only a woman can

of bowls upon the back of another seat, was a pottery man. Standing near the preacher, and listening attentively, was a man holding a long crooked pole from which dangled fine combs, tooth brushes, salt spoons, and an assortment of Chinese trinkets beautifully carved from horn. Near by arose a similar stick, with foreign safety matches attached. A boy peddling peanuts next made his appearance in the aisle. A travelling restaurant where hot rice was served at all hours established itself in a vacant corner of the court.

Sometimes a group of literary men would enter, read the hymns upon the walls, listen awhile to the preacher and pass out. Sometimes the women would get restless and talk, until the speaker, stopping to take breath, attracted their attention. Sometimes some one would cry

"TSEO" ("LET US BE GOING");

and half the congregation would withdraw,

and ended with the description of the ascension. In this description every eye was fixed upon him; there was a great silence. He was sitting when he began. As he drew near to the moment of our Lord's ascension, his voice was almost hushed, then stretching forth his hands he began to wave gently upward, rising slowly to his feet as his emotions arose, and carrying with him the rapt attention of the motley crowd, he verily reached the clouds whose fleecy folds he parted with a gentle movement of the hand and ushered the Prince of Peace into the presence of the Mighty One. He sat down. It was twenty-five minutes to one. The service was over two hours long. Many sat and listened attentively throughout.

Chen-tu, December 13th, 1892.

Dear Editor,—I fear this article is too long [not at all.—Ed.] It is a description