

God has too manifestly in our church and country honoured converted priests in leading souls to the Saviour for us to cast discouragement in the way of any earnest priest coming to us for instruction and protection. But what shall we do with such? To give them missionary work till we have thoroughly tested them and before they have gone through a course of instruction we cannot. To procure them employment in Montreal suited to their circumstances and education is practically impossible in these times of commercial stagnation, even were it always expedient. To clothe and board them free of expense during their period of probation, even if we had the means, is irksome to the better class of them who are willing to work at anything for a livelihood rather than appear as objects of charity. And yet the Lord is bringing these men to us and we dare not repulse them. The Board will be gratified beyond measure to receive the names and addresses of any gentlemen requiring the services of French teachers, willing to employ such persons as from time to time come to us, where they will be surrounded by healthy Christian influences.

Meantime we must incur the expense of boarding and clothing them during their period of probation, trusting that the Lord will provide the means to enable us to do so, as well as to meet the increased expenditure of the Board in the payment of the salaries of those of their number to whom we give employment as missionary teachers.

R. H. W.

*F*ormosa.

LETTER FROM REV. G. L. MACKAY
Toa-liong-Pong, 29th May, 1879.

LAST night in Toa tin-tia, a large commercial town not far from where this chapel stands, the ceremony of ascending a "ladder of knives," was performed. In an open space just overlooking the Tamsui river, a pine pole about forty feet high and 6 or 8 inches in diameter was put into the ground two feet deep. Four strong ropes were tied around the top and the other ends fastened to posts fifty yards away.

This upright pole had square holes a foot apart, the lowest being a few feet from the ground. Into these holes knives or swords three feet in length were thrust with edge upwards and securely wedged. The number of swords on this occasion was 36. Another pole twenty feet long was spliced to the top of this one and from it flags were waving aloft. Seven small furnaces in a line were placed at right angles to the pole and these were filled with burning charcoal. About one hundred people were walking hither and thither looking at the

preparations going on. Let them look whilst we go a hundred paces to see the sorcerer who is to ascend the ladder. He is in a house sitting in front of an idol with his hands on a table, and his head leaning on them, another man is busy ringing a bell, burning incense, and reciting formulas to induce the god to leave the idol, and enter the sorcerer. In a few moments the latter is supposed to be under the afflatus of the former, jumps up, strikes his hands violently on the table, dishevels his long black hair, shouts like a demon, and cuts his tongue, face, and head, as if no nerves existed. Thus bleeding and acting like a maniac he is led forth amid the beating of gongs, shouting of devotees, and firing of crackers. Let us take the lead and return to the ladder and watch the proceedings. The crowd at this juncture became greatly excited, for the sorcerer walked barefooted over the red hot coals in the furnaces, then went slowly up the ladder: arriving at the top he rested a few moments, then descended on the opposite side and disappeared amid yellings and shoutings of the blind devotees. Strange proceedings! Why, you ask were all these things done? Without giving a lengthy and minute account, I reply they were done to frighten hateful demons, and appease beloved gods. (Chinese demons are simply souls of dead men.) As on previous occasions I witnessed these proceedings not out of mere curiosity, but to learn more and more of their customs, manners, and idolatrous rites. And above all to preach Jesus and Him crucified. Standing in the crowd I had abundant opportunity of doing so. Scores admitted the absurdity of such rites, whilst the Literati (?) seemed ashamed and left the ground. They would not stand discussion.

Seven years ago, I venture to declare that instead of a few hundreds being present, thousands would have been there shouting "great is the goddess of mercy" great is the Pearly Emperor." *There is a change. Let God be praised,* but don't suppose that all are ready to embrace the gospel and follow Jesus. Don't think for a moment that we have only to stand and preach, when behold a chapel is built and converts gathered in. *There never was a greater mistake than that.* No one in distant Canada knows the toils and tears bestowed on this field before this one and the other one was brought in. Still, we rejoice: there is a great change. By God's grace the gospel has been triumphant during the past seven years. Some are intellectually convinced. Many partly ashamed, whilst hundreds are more careless about their idolatrous rites &c. Such are some of the changes here. Are there great changes in Canada? Are the people *praying, working, and giving* for these poor idolaters. According to my humble judgment in this our day, we need more work and less