

## Young People's Department.

### BLIND WONG.

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Though there is a school for blind girls in Canton, conducted by Miss Mary Niles, M.D., Blind Wong is perhaps the only blind man in the city who can read. The history of this man's conversion and how he learned to read and write by the Braille system, adapted to the Cantonese, is as follows:—

One day in the spring of 1900, the deacon of the Congregational Church in Canton came into the chapel with two young men, shabbily dressed in clothes he had given them. One was suffering from sore eyes; the other was totally blind. The deacon said that he had discovered that the two men were brothers, sons of a former mandarin, from the Province of Kiang Si. This mandarin had died, leaving his family in destitute circumstances. The elder son had been well educated, but like others of his class, had learned no trade; the younger, through an accident, became blind when five years of age. Gradually the two boys were deserted by relatives and friends and became beggars. As time went on, the blind brother became a fortune-teller, while the older, because he could write, became his assistant. In this way they made a good living for several years; but the older brother began to gamble, and finally deserted his blind brother. It was not long before both were beggars once more, and were again thrown together on the streets of Canton, and here they were discovered by our deacon.

The fact that the father had been a man from the upper class, more than anything else, induced the deacon, who also holds the rank of a mandarin, to succour the two unfortunate ones. Being himself a good Christian man, he most naturally brought them to our chapel that they might hear the Word of God, and that is how I came to know them. Like others who come for the "loaves and fishes," they said they were interested in the gospel. The next Sabbath both came to church and again heard the gospel. During the following week the deacon secured employment for the elder brother, but after that he never came near us, as he began to gamble again. The deacon also did what he could for the blind brother; he secured a home for him in the Viceroy's Asylum for the blind, near the East Gate, where he also received forty-five cents per month for rice. There were 500 blind in this place, and 700 in another place close by. The asylum was four miles from our chapel, yet the blind man kept coming, Sabbath after Sabbath, walking alone through the narrow and crowded streets of the city.

When our season for communion came, he asked

to be baptized, and accordingly was examined and was found to be sound in the faith. The church members, however, raised an objection. They said: "If we receive this man, who has no visible means of support, he will become a burden to us, and we will be establishing a precedent for blind beggars to enter our church. We therefore are not in favor of receiving him." The deacon wisely kept still, because he had introduced him, and was then aiding him a little. Under these circumstances I could not receive him into church fellowship, and he was told to wait. The blind man took no offence at this, and kept coming as usual. His case set me to thinking, and I asked myself: "Is there no way to help these unfortunate ones into the kingdom? Must they, forever, be kept outside the fold?" An idea began to formulate itself in my mind; why not teach this one to read and write, that in time he may become a teacher to the blind?

Although I then knew that I was to go home on furlough in about three months, I resolved to teach him. I had heard of Mr. Murray's System in Shanghai, but that could not be adapted to the Cantonese dialect, but I applied to Dr. Mary Niles, who kindly gave me a sheet containing raised dots to represent the alphabet with thirty-nine sounds; also the numerals up to ten, and dots to indicate the nine tones in the Cantonese dialect, also the period. The dots had value according to their position in an imaginary rectangle. In about two weeks I mastered enough of this system to begin to teach Blind Wong. He proved a bright student, and came regularly for his lesson, six days a week, walking eight miles every day.

When the church members found that I was willing to teach this blind beggar and to associate with him, they became somewhat ashamed of themselves. Moreover, when they discovered that he actually could learn to read, and that the prospects were that he might, in the future, become a private teacher in some well-to-do home, where a blind son might be found, or even a preacher to the blind, they were in favor of receiving him into the church. Accordingly I baptized him in March, 1900. He continued to do well, and in two months' time I had taught him to read, and he had also begun to write, by using a brass frame and an awl. It was a pleasure to me to teach him, and also to see him grow in the Christian life.

The Chinese, who learned of my effort to teach a blind man, were much surprised at the outcome of it. They had seen nothing like it in Canton. To think that the blind could read! It was a decided gain to me in my influence over them. Blind Wong was also a source of surprise to his blind associates in the asylum. The questions they asked him were many, and he had abundant opportunity to testify to his faith in the Lord Jesus.

During the two months I taught him I aided him