

POPIH INFLUENCE IN CHINA.

No one can be more sensible than I am of the spiritual poverty of the Chinese nature, and of the difficulty which every missionary must encounter in his attempts to purify and enrich it. Let me give you an illustration from last year's experience, at the close of which it was our painful duty to cut off ten from our communion. Five of the ten were excommunicated on account of their having joined the Roman Catholics, of whom one had left us because we would not assist him in certain difficulties about land, and the rest because they expected to better their temporal condition in various ways by entering the Romish Church. Most of the new Roman Catholic converts in these parts are nothing better than broad-and-butter Christians. The expectation of procuring the help of the foreign priests in their law-suits, or in their poverty, is the principal motive which draws them into that communion. When I spoke to these five about the folly and sinfulness of the step they were on the point of taking, they told me frankly that they were believers in the truth as it had been taught to them by us, that they had no faith in the distinctive tenets and practices of the Romish Church, and that if we would only give them the help which they sought they would abide with us for ever. They were told, of course, that we would not have them at any price, that they were mere deceivers, and that there is no room in the true Church of Christ for Christians of their type. I have not seen them since, but I know they have found their way into the Romish communion, having, I have no doubt, most conscientiously promised to renounce Protestantism and the devil! To them the whole affair is a mere commercial transaction. Of late nearly all the churches here have suffered more or less from the influence of this Romish policy on our converts. The fact that men who have been members for years, and who are well instructed in Christian truth, can be led astray in this pitiable fashion, shows how thoroughly secular the Chinese mind is in its native condition, and how hard it is even for Christianity to spiritualize and ennoble it. No one can know better than the missionary himself how weak, ignorant and imperfect some of the converts are. Among the oldest Christians in this place are to be found the coldest and most lifeless; and among those who have joined us in recent years not a few have shown themselves to be unblushing hypocrites. But in spite of all defections and disappointments, the kingdom of God is taking root and spreading. Many of the converts are long-trying Christians, who show in their lives that their hearts have been changed by the Spirit of God, and evince their genuine devotion to Christ by their efforts to make known the truth to their friends and others. For instance, one of our deacons, who is a ripe Christian and an excellent preacher, has taken to Sian's place at the hospital, and is giving his services gratuitously to the mission. This has enabled us to transfer Sian to Hiau-Kan without increasing the staff of our paid agents. It is an interesting fact also that Wei, our other evangelist in that district, is supported by the native church at Hankow. This little church looks after its own poor also, and defrays all incidental expenses connected with public worship.

On my last visit to the Wei village in Hiau-Kan, I had a beautiful illustration of the influence of a godly life upon the heart of a parent. A young man of that village joined the church about three years since. His father was bitterly opposed to the step, and up to my last visit could not be persuaded to come near me. On my last visit, however, he came to see me, and in course of conversation, said, "I know that there is a Holy Spirit in the religion of Jesus." He was asked how he knew, and his reply was, "I know because the

heart of my son has been changed since he became a Christian, and because he is a new man altogether." I then told me that his heart opposition to Christianity had passed away, and that he hoped soon to follow in the footsteps of his son. This testimony in respect to the change in the son I knew to be true. He is unquestionably a new man altogether.

At the Liu village, in the Hiau-Kan district, a leper was recently baptized. He is the scholar of the village, and though a leper, a man of some influence. On my previous visits he conducted himself with much haughtiness. It could be easily seen that he was taking in every word and every idea; but he seemed to treat the message with sullen contempt. On my last visit he came forward as a candidate for baptism; and on being catechised, he evinced a remarkable ripeness of knowledge. He was as humble as a child, and as respectable as he could be. After his baptism I asked him to pray, and he offered up one of the most remarkable prayers I have ever heard from Chinese lips. I left him still a leper in body, but, so far as I could judge, wonderfully cleansed in soul.

On my last journey I had an illustration of the difference between the Romish and the Protestant mode of propagating the faith in China. I met with a Roman Catholic native evangelist, who gave me some interesting details concerning his work and his mode of carrying it on. His main occupation consists in going about the country baptizing dying children. He appears among the heathen as a native doctor, offers his pills and powders gratis, and avails himself of the opportunity to sprinkle the child with a few drops of holy water in the sacred name, and thus rescues the soul of the child from the "Infants' Hell." When asked if he seriously believed that a few drops of water could make such a momentous difference between one child and another, and that the good and just Lord, whom he and I worshiped, carried on his government on principles so unrighteous and absurd, his only reply was that such are the teachings of his Church, and that it is for him simply to believe and obey. I advised him to read the New Testament, and to take his creed direct from it. I was told subsequently that one of our native assistants had offered him a copy of the New Testament, but knowing that it was to him a forbidden book, he declined to accept it. While conversing with this man, I could not but contrast his ignorance with the superior knowledge of our native evangelist, and thank God that our propagandism in this vast empire is based on the Word of God and inseparably associated with its open and wide spread circulation.—*Rev. Griffith John, in Christian World.*

FARMERS AT MEETING.

Every one needs the benefit within himself of the public Sabbath service; and the farmer not least. The farmer's line of life, like every other, has its peculiar dangers along with peculiar advantages and opportunities. He lives somewhat more by himself, usually, than most other men; and he has space thus for quietness and for reflection, and hence for strong individual growth. He is independent, too, somewhat, in comparison with most other men; and this tends in the same direction to make him strong in himself. Some of the best specimens of American manhood have grown up under these conditions. But such a man might easily be too much alone. His thoughts might settle down too much upon his farm and his occupations on it. He might come to think too little of his social relations and his public duties. He might miss the refinement that may come through wider intercourse with men, and the enlargement that results from entering freely into associated action with others. Such a thing sometimes happens, and the independent and stout-minded husbandman becomes cramped and fixed in narrow bounds of thought, and degenerates toward roughness and boorishness. This is, and has been, the exposure of an agricultural life, the world over, and in all ages.

That our American farmers so generally escape it is due in part to our form of gov-

ernment, with the engagement it involves, and in a very large part also to the worship of our churches on the Sabbath Day, in which great numbers of these men, happily, are accustomed to have a share.

They have special need of attendance upon these services. We do not say greater need than other men, who have their own peculiar exposures also in other ways; but a special need, upon the grounds already referred to. The public worship of God on the Sabbath contributes to supply the very elements in the farmer's life that might otherwise be wanting. It lifts his thoughts above his farm, while it does not make distasteful for him his work as a farmer. It brings enlarging conceptions and refining sentiments to bear powerfully upon him. It puts his strong individuality into relations with the welfare of other men; and into harmony with the purposes and the law of God. It takes him thus beyond the being a firmly-planted and sagacious tiller of the soil, and makes him also a steadfast, considerate, widely-looking, benevolent and pious man—beyond which there is nothing further to be reached. It aims at least to this end, and presses toward it. And the same kind of influence is exerted upon the farmer's wife, and upon his sons and daughters. And they all need it.

Now we might have begun and stopped with saying that it is the duty of every man to assist in maintaining the public worship of God, and to attend upon it; and that the farmer has no right to neglect it; which is most true. But we choose to state it, as we have, in a somewhat broader form, and to point out a little the obvious need the farmer has, for his own sake, to become engaged in these public exercises of religion. And even if we were to say nothing of interest beyond this world, it would still be true that for the growth upon these farms of manhood and womanhood strong and enlightened and refined, attendance upon the orderly and instructive and elevating services of the Sabbath Day cannot be dispensed with.

These things are sometimes forgotten or slighted. The mischiefs we have spoken of have followed, and they are appearing now in many households. There is need that ministers and active Christians in all our country towns should turn their thoughts and efforts diligently in this direction. And there is need that all farmers especially should do it themselves. We suppose most of those to whom this paper goes are already regular attendants upon Sabbath worship. But there may be some who are in danger of becoming inconstant or irresolute in it, or the children may be in danger, or the young men and women who are just setting up households for themselves. All good principles and purposes need to be sometimes looked over and strengthened. Strengthen this. Do not mind harnessing the horses if you live at a distance from the place of meeting; you will be paid for the work. The horses themselves, you growing more considerate with this variety of Sunday travel, will not get harm by their labors. If you have to walk, walk. Your soul will be refreshed, and your body on the whole better-cared for than if you settled down all day at home. Some of us have had experience in this matter, as well as observation, and we know the truth of what we are saying.

Do not begrudge the money it may take for the somewhat better clothing you may think you must get for your wife or yourself. Perhaps you both need it; and perhaps you cannot put your money to any better use. But quite likely your dress is well-enough as it is. And anyway, if you go to the right sort of a meeting, you will learn there as well as anywhere how to be mindful of decency and real comeliness, and careless of vain show and fashion.

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