

**A pleasant change.** The pioneer missionaries in Honan have had, during the past six years a trying time. Rev. Dr. Smith and family last summer went across to Japan for a little rest and change. In a private letter home he tells of the contrast. "It is a great treat to us to be among green grass and trees and shrubs and flowers once more. Then to live beside a beautiful clear mountain stream is worth a great deal after the muddy rivers of China. We had strawberries, the first in five years. Almost as good were the potatoes. You see we never get them till late in the autumn and they are poor at best and do not last for any length of time. Other articles of food are mentioned showing that in little things that are not often mentioned, our missionaries are not yet living in Paradise, except that they have well marked tokens that the evil one is doing what he can to hinder the work of God."

**Dr. Smith in Japan.** Dr. Smith writes of the people and the mission work of Japan:

"There is such a difference between the Chinese and the Japanese. The Japanese are so clean in everything that it is a pleasure to live among them. It is amazing the progress the Japs have made in a little over thirty years. If with all their advancement they would only realize that apart from the religion of Jesus there never can be true and lasting greatness it would be better for them. Much has been done by the different missions, and they have much encouragement, but only a beginning has yet been made. Many of them are quite anxious to take everything that is brought to them except the religion, and that is going to make mission work all the more difficult as they become independent of foreigners."

They are supplanting the foreigner in all departments very rapidly and they will soon be able to do without his help. Even some of those in the Church are beginning to say to the missionaries that they can do without them, but they still want foreign money. The weak point in Japanese character is their terrible conceit. Too many of them fail to appreciate what has been done for them."

**In and Out in Honan.** Dr. Smith writing to his brother from Hsin-Chen, Honan, December 8th, says.—There has been a five days' fair and everything passed off very nicely indeed, not a single hitch, and so we are very happy.

It shows that the people are becoming more accustomed to us and that they are gradually beginning to look upon us as they look upon their own people, and not to treat us so rudely. Of course this does not mean that they will hate us any the less, or that they will never do any bad tricks on us again.

We have had a number of enquirers around

during the past month, a number of them, I believe, fairly trustworthy, but alas, the loaves and fishes have too great an attraction for many. At times it is only after the most careful watching and enquiry that one finds them out. At other times the avarice and greed come out very soon and they cannot stand the test.

Sometimes one gets discouraged and thinks what those who call themselves Christians at home, sometimes do and say, and one blames oneself for being so suspicious of the poor heathen. But after all it is not the numbers, but the quality we want.

It is a very difficult matter to persevere in sifting and testing and rejecting, when the church at home is so eager to hear of converts. We have a couple of men, who are anxious to be taken on probation, who have two wives each, a very common thing in China. If a man has two wives he is generally fairly well off, or he could not afford the luxury. The great reason for marrying a second time is the desire for children. If a man has none by his first wife he marries another and sometimes a third. I operated on a man last spring for cataract who has three wives. The three of them came to thank me for benefiting him. We are going to discuss at next meeting of Presbytery what to do with men having two wives.

**The Old Story.** Dr. Smith again writes: "I have had two operations for cataract since coming here, besides many other operations."

One of the cataract cases was a teacher who came last April quite blind, and I operated on the right eye and he went home seeing, and afterward went up to his examinations and got a higher grade. Since that I operated on the left eye and had good success, and now he has two good eyes. Sad to say he does not take the interest he should take in the gospel. He was much interested in April when he did not know whether his sight would be restored or not, but now that he has a higher degree he seems proud and feels as if he does not need the gospel. How like to what is often seen in Canada; men get anxious and seek God's help when in trouble, but when all goes well they forget him. Thus in kindness He often sends trouble to recall them to Himself.

**Using her talent.** Mrs. Merriman, a gifted lady from Nova Scotia, an indefatigable worker for missions when at home, who as an invalid had to seek a warmer climate, tried Trinidad, her young daughter accompanying her. Amid the loveliness and languor of the Tropics they are not idly enjoying the scene, but are both doing what they can, the daughter assisting in one of the week-day schools, and both working in the Sabbath School, helping on in that blessed work of lifting up the heathen to life and hope and heaven.