

LETTER FROM REV. DR. SMITH.

ONE OF OUR MEDICAL MISSIONARIES IN HONAN.

MY DEAR YOUNG FRIENDS:—It is quite a long time since I wrote my last letter to you, but, I have not forgotten you.

Perhaps, you may think it strange, if I tell you, that even Foreign Missionaries, at times, find letter writing no easy task. Some boys and girls, as well as older people think that the missionary should always have some stirring news to tell.

I have nothing in that line to write about at present, and therefore will try to tell you something about the

HSIN CHÊN DISPENSARY

and some of the patients we see there. The Dispensary is open every day from 10 a. m. to 12.30 noon, or as long as the people come.

The large room, which serves for a Street Chapel and waiting room, is 27 x 14 feet and has a door opening on the principal street of the town. There is a platform at one end of the room with chairs, on which the clerical missionary, together with the native helper, sit to receive the people, and to preach to all who are willing to sit on the benches, which which are arranged in rows in front of the platform. During the last few months an average of over thirty a day have sat and listened, for a time, to the preaching.

The room where all the sick people are seen adjoins the large room, and communicates with it by a door at the back corner farthest away from the platform. This little room is 8 x 13 feet, and contains a bench, two chairs, a small table, and two cupboards for medicines, etc.

We see all kinds of patients, men and women, old and young, rich men, traders, farmers and beggars. It is not unusual when the missionary is earnestly preaching, for a man to come in and walk right up to the platform and point to his eye; or perhaps he will uncover his bosom, or one of his limbs, and, without saying a word, thrust himself before

the speaker. This procedure turns the attention of the audience away and the preacher is forced to talk to the man and point him to the door leading to the dispensary.

At other times, the person afflicted will enter the room, and in a loud commanding voice demand to know where the person is who professes to cure diseases, as he has an important disease which must have immediate attention. A man of this stamp requires a number of words of explanation from the speaker in charge, and probable is requested to sit down and wait a little while until the patients within have been attended to.

But such a man wants his ailment seen to at once, and therefore turns a deaf ear to all such talk, and goes forward and thumps vigorously at the dispensary door, calling out at the same time. "I have a disease, let me in quick!" If admitted, he may find the doctor busily engaged, it may be at an operation, but that makes no difference, this man pushes forward and calls out his troubles, and with difficulty is persuaded to sit down and await his proper turn.

An occasional murmur is heard from him, and at last his turn comes and he is called to take the chair, which, for the sake of light, is placed near the open door. After all the noise and worry perhaps the man's ailment is unimportant, and a dose of castor oil makes him go away happy, or perhaps it is a case that has been allowed to run on for a length of time, and is now almost past help.

We ask him where he lives, and find out that his home is not more than five miles away, and that if he felt so inclined, he might have seen about his trouble several months before. Having received his medicine all his hurry is over, and if he happens to meet a friend as he passes out on the street, he will squat down and light his pipe and chat for half an hour in the most leisurely manner.

Another patient comes in almost out of breath and announces that he has come to ask about a disease. He is questioned closely, and describes a number of symptoms very minutely; and at length he is asked to put