

SUPERSTITION IN CHINA.

[While we do not deem it best to have a separate department for the "Young Folks," we propose to have in each number a few brief papers specially adapted to that class, hoping to interest them in mission work.—Eds.]

The following letter from Rev. D. N. Lyon we have preserved for years as one of the most interesting and instructive exhibitions of the superstitions prevailing in China and the difficulties the missionaries had to contend with. During the summer of 1878 there were troublous times in Central China. Persecution raged, against Roman Catholics mainly, but involving Protestants too.—Eds.

"Perhaps the cause that gave rise to so unsettled a state of things was the threatened breach of peace between England and China concerning the Margery affair. Bad and designing men took advantage of the general apprehension that there would be war, to keep the people in a constant tremor of excitement. The first means resorted to was to cut off people's queues, and circulate reports that it was done by evil sprites. The loss of a bit of a queue was a harbinger of death to the person within thirty days. The priests, however, soon found a remedy in the way of charms in the form of a little yellow paper bearing some mysterious characters. The sprites who did the mischief were said to emanate from us, though in Hangechow no serious demonstration was made against us. This excitement passed over, and we were just beginning to breathe easily again, when another rumor came sweeping down from the north like a great tidal wave—sprites in the shape of little paper men entered people's houses at night and fell upon the bosoms of sleeping innocents, gradually expanding till the poor victim was just about crushed to death. These paper men, it was said, were sent out by the missionaries. Two weeks ago to-morrow I was out to visit the out-station at Zang-Peh, and found the whole country in such an uproar as I had never seen before. The usual means of warding off ghosts was resorted to, viz., beating of gongs. The people at every village and hamlet had a strong guard, who, through the whole night, marched around beating their gongs, and once in a while setting up such a howl as made one think that the demons of the lower regions had broken loose. Our chapel is about a mile and a half from the market town of Zang-Peh, where the American Baptist Mission has a chapel. On Saturday the Baptist native assistant came to our chapel and said that the people in the town were very much enraged, and had stoned their chapel and threatened to tear it down and kill the Christians. On consultation with our natives, it was thought best for me to go to the local magistrate and ask him to quiet the people. I did so, and though the magistrate was not himself at home, his deputy sent some runners to the town of Zang-Peh and told the people they must by no means touch the foreign chapel. On the return of the magistrate he issued a proclamation, and all became quiet. I came home on the following Monday, and on Wednesday night the Sing-z pastor came, saying that a mob had looted the chapel at that place, and was only hindered from tearing it down by the appearance of the local mandarin with his soldiers. The next day Mr. Dodd and myself went to the Tao-tai here in the city, and laid the case before him. We were very well received, and he promised to do all in his power to quiet the people and restore us again to our chapel as before. Since that time a great number of proclamations have been issued by the provincial governor and other mandarins, explaining to the people that the sorcery said to have been practiced was originated by the 'Society of the White Lily,' and that the Christian missionaries have nothing at all to do with it. So the excitement passed off, and what the devil designed as a hindrance to the cause of truth will rather turn out for the furtherance of the Gospel."