

The Children's Record.

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CHILDREN OF THE

Presbyterian Church in Canada.

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LETTER FROM REV. DR. SMITH.

My Dear Children :

I write you a few lines from China not because we have done much work to tell about, for we are still busy with the language, but because I have so many little friends in Canada who are anxious to hear about China. We sometimes wish we were children again as the little children learn to speak Chinese so quickly.

I think I knew more about China before I left Canada than I do now, or rather I should say I now see the people, the country and things as they really are, and I am only beginning to realize how difficult it is to give anything like a correct idea of our surroundings. There is one thing I am more convinced of than ever, that is the terrible lot of those who live in a land where there are no Bibles, no Sunday-schools, no churches, and where so many millions know not the true and living God, and have not yet heard that He sent His only Son Jesus into the world to die for their sins.

No doubt you are anxious to know more about the children in China. Well! I have seen a great many children and they are not so very much unlike little girls and boys in Canada. They laugh, cry, and play like other children. It is well they enjoy the little pleasure they have, for at an early age they are turned out to work with the older members of the family, and henceforth with the majority it is a struggle for life, with very little to cheer the monotony of their dull lives.

They live for this life alone and know nothing of the future. A missionary the other day asked an elderly man if he ever thought about death. "No," said the man, "not very much," and the missionary asked, "what about after death?" "Oh," replied he, "I have nothing to do with that, but I suppose they will take me to the hills and the dogs will eat me." He knew not that he had an immortal soul capable of happiness or misery hereafter.

When in difficulty or trouble they know not the comfort derived from taking all to the Lord in prayer, and their only solace seems to be opium, which is indeed a terrible curse. A few weeks ago I was called in a hurry to see a Chinaman who had attempted suicide. He had a good position and received a large salary, but he was a heavy opium smoker, and not being able to pay his debts he decided to put an end to his life. He was unconscious for three days when he died as he had lived, without God and without hope for the future.

There has been terrible distress in many parts owing to the famine, and hundreds of children as well as grown people have died of starvation. In many cases children and wives were sold in order that the rest of the family might live. The following incident will illustrate a common state of affairs.

Late one afternoon a native preacher overtook a man about fifty years of age, pushing a small wheel-barrow on which was seated a poor sallow little child, while an unspeakably haggard woman wearily followed on foot. The night was bitterly cold and they called at an inn, and after much importunity were allowed shelter. As they did not order any food they were asked the reason why, and they said that with two children they had fled from the famine and had not been able to find a place where they could get enough food to sustain life. They saw nothing but death before them, and they longed to get back home to die, but they had no money and were forced to exchange their seven year old boy for two measures of