



STREET BEGGAR, CHINA.

CHINESE POVERTY.

This half-naked street beggar is an illustration of the extreme poverty common in China.

A Chinese proverb says, "Even a child may not eat ten idle years of food." The mother must work to keep the wolf from the door but why may we not have the little, useless children to train? "Because," the mother replies sadly, "I cannot afford to have the children study. The boy, though small, can rake fuel for the fire and manure for the field. My wee girl can already spin, mind the baby, and wait upon me." If little hands drop their small work, older ones must take it up; and so sharp and cruel is the haste with which in this poor family consumption treads upon the heels of production, that little jaws must cease to grind, and stomachs to crave, if little hands cease to labour. "Well, we will feed your children while they study." "That is very kind of you," she says, "but they have no decent clothes. Every one will make fun of them if they go in such tatters to school."

Some of the poorest of our Christian widows hire themselves out to work for rich families by the season. They dare not miss one day from the harvest, or from the cotton field, for their coveted meeting and lesson, lest their places be filled by others, and they lose the chance of gleaning at the end of the season. We know of doors where the only weapon to keep the wolf at bay is the little shining needle of the mother. She must have her stint done to-night. You speak to her, she answers you without looking up, for, as the saying runs:

You raise your head, you lose one stitch, you lower your head you lose another. How fast her needle flies, though night has come, the children are all curled up fast asleep, and it is so piercingly cold her hands are numb. It seems a marvel each time she sees to thread her needle. Her lamp! let us rather say her corner of Egyptian darkness! Her eyes are fast giving way under the continual night work and the daily smoke. Some melancholy day will see her quite blind. Then poverty will hold the family in a still sterner vice. Pray, where is her education to come in?

The possible depths of Chinese poverty may be shown by two examples: one of a family where the wedding of their son found them too poor to buy a fifteen-cent mat for the k'ang of the bride. They borrowed one. The new wife, who had a comfortable bed quilt as a part of her dowry, felt guilty to be warm while her new mother-in-law shivered under a tattered excuse for a comforter. After the rest were asleep, the bride would steal out to the other room, put her nice warm covering over her new mother, and go back to her own comfortless bed to shiver. In another village, a dispute as to who should bear the expense of less than two cents' worth of oil an evening, has been known to break up a religious meeting. "But the people are not all as poor as that," says your new mission-

ary, whom no doubts appal and no facts suppress. Unwittingly she thus brings you to the third obstacle:

The multiplication of manual labour. Rightly to understand Chinese life we must turn our backs on the great facts of political economy, and move the hands of the world's great clock back to the times of our great-grandmothers. We long to give our Chinese sister a Christian training. Christian training is instruction, or building up. It is first, as a preparation, intellectual. Even a divine Christ must be intellectually apprehended to be revered. We must wake up our sister's mind, but that is a work of time, and her time, alas! has already so many calls upon it. "Why, how is that?" says the new missionary. "With such a small house, no elaborate cooking, no fussy dressmaking and millinery, no pillow-shams and no church fairs, one would think she might have oceans of time." We will invite her to come and study with us a month.

Intense longing and regret flit across her face. Her "Outside," as she quietly calls her husband, "needs a new blouse." "Well, bring the shears and we will help you. Fle upon such a miserable little obstacle as that, to blockade the way to the kingdom of heaven! Here is the sewing-machine all threaded; bring us the cloth."

Nay softly, O sanguine Occidental! The cloth is out there in Nature's lap, tucked away in the cotton-pods. The woman brings it in, four catties of cotton, a great lapful of hard white wads. Her skillful fingers and feet are soon flying at the cotton gin. After four hours of hard work the seeds are disposed of, and the gin goes back to its corner. Next comes the musical clang of her bow. A whole day of patient, steady labour is needed to reduce those little hard wads

to a snowy, fleecy mountain of picked-up cotton. Next comes the cheerful hum of her little spinning-wheel. She is never idle, seek her when you may. But five days slip by before the thread is all spun. We watch and sigh. Next, out comes the clumsy old loom. How monotonous the click-clack of its cradle! How slowly the shuttle goes, though our friend is reputed a good weaver! Five days more have glided away into the eternal past, when a piece of cloth, twenty-five feet long, poor, coarse and narrow, drops from that antiquated loom. Eleven days and a half out of her month gone, and we have only just got to the shears! Another day sees the garment done.

The new missionary cannot now for all the Chinese women, furnishing time and foreign thread; but she means to see this one experiment through. The woman is a bright one; her mind is being wasted. We will polish it, quicken it, set it fermenting with new ideas; in short, make yeast out of her, with which to leaven a great mass. Then no one will begrudge the day's work and the foreign thread.

"Come and begin to-morrow," she says, as the woman sews on the last button.

"Thank you so much, I should be so glad," says the woman, "but I cannot possibly. My mother-in-law needs a new quilt, my boy has no stockings, my two little girls have no wadded drawers, and my father-in-law needs a new pair of shoes."

"How long does it take you to make him a pair?"

"Five days."

"And you make the shoes for the whole family?"

"Of course," replies the woman, wondering if the queer new teacher supposes that shoes grow.

"How many pairs will keep all seven of you shod for a year?"

"About thirty."

"And how many wadded garments do they need?"

"Good years we have each of us two, that is fourteen in all, and it takes me a month of steady work, with four or five days more, for the bedding, and half a month for the summer clothes."

"Over two hundred days of clear, solid sewing!" ejaculates the new missionary, "even if you never had an interruption! And the cloth for all these jackets and drawers, comforters, stockings and shoes, does it all lie out there, eleven days away from the shears?"

"Why, yes; where else could it be?"



CHRISTIAN CHINAMAN PREACHING.

The wind is all out of that missionary's sails. They only flap dejectedly "Time?" she thinks, "Time? Why, one person ought to be appointed to eat for a Chinese woman, and one to sleep for her, while a third does her breathing! What a mistake to have an 'Outside' at all. One should be all kernel and no shell. Or, for the freedom of those happy lands, where one might at least find an old maid to educate!"

CHRISTIAN CHINAMAN
PREACHING.

The great work of evangelizing China must be carried on largely by the Chinese themselves. All the churches in Christendom can scarcely hope to do more than furnish sufficient missionaries to plant the germs of the Gospel in different parts of that vast empire, in the hope that God will raise up native missionaries to carry on the good work, and this hope has not been disappointed. There have been several native missionaries who have proved very eloquent and successful in preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ to their countrymen. The picture annexed shows one of these standing in a doorway, and proclaiming to a group in the street the unsearchable riches of Christ. They seem to be very intelligent and docile hearers, and doubtless the seed thus sown in many places is followed with very blessed results.

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