

✻ PALM BRANCH ✻

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MAY, 1897.

There is an interesting article in the February number of *Woman's Missionary Friend*, in regard to "Romanized Chinese". The question is asked: "How can the Christians of China become a reading people?" Very few of the women who have accepted Christianity can read the Bible for themselves. The trouble is that thousands of characters must be learned before they can read one book and many more must be added before they can read others. Not many of the women and girls can attend school long enough to become able to read the New Testament, and even after that they cannot go on alone. Only the little children can attend the schools; the older girls are promised in marriage and the poor, tired mothers have too many cares, so they have to depend on hearing. Sometimes they have a sermon on Sunday, but when the men fill the church the women must stay at home. In small villages the preacher only comes once in several weeks. It is asked, "How can mothers bring up their little ones in the Christian way when they cannot read the Bible themselves and apply the truths to their own lives?" How much can we expect from an American woman who can neither read nor write! and how much less must we expect of a Chinese woman in a heathenland! It is believed that a remedy has been found in what is called "The Romanized Chinese". By this means the necessary number of characters is reduced to thirty-one: our own English letters a, b, c, ch, d, e, g, h, i, k, l, m, ng, o, p, s, t, n, a, e, o, u, ai, au, eu, ie, io, i, oi, ui. These may be easily learned and combined in such a way as to represent the thousands of characters of the Chinese language. So a brighter day is dawning for the women of China. The Bible, Bible picture book and hymn book have already been published under the new system, and a paper for the benefit of the common people.

BREAD OR A STONE?

LUKE XI. 11.

My Hope lay hid
 Beneath a coffin lid,
 No joy henceforth, no sunshine anywhere,
 No balm in all the air,
 Naught save low-brooding clouds and dull despair.

Chill and benumbed I lay
 Till breaking of the day,
 When lo, the flutter of a tiny wing,
 I heard a robin sing,—
 O God, could this be Spring?

I bent above the ground
 Where all my hopes were bound,
 And lo, a crocus flower had won its way,
 Battling with storm and snow,
 And all the winds that blow,
 Into the light of day.

It searched me through and through
 As eyes of angels do,
 And then it seemed to say
 Hast thou no faith, poor soul, thro' this dark hour,
 In resurrection power?

Why, after me will be
 The fair anemone,
 And violet blue,
 The little children too,
 With blossoms in the hand,
 Twining their daisy garlands lovingly,
 And all will bring to thee
 The glad, sweet prophecy
 Of light and life and love in Summer land.

And I was not alone.
 Forgive, dear Lord, I said,
 That I have clasped a stone
 Where Thou would'st give me bread.

St. John.

S. E. SMITH

QUESTION DRAWER.

Q. Would it not be a good idea to have, each month, a map of the country which is our Field Study?

A. Yes, it would be a grand idea! a very great help to us all. But alas, our little paper could not bear the expense. It would have to be self-supporting, and a great deal more than that before we could afford such an outlay. The time seems far off.

Q. Is it necessary when we send an order for Palm Branch to give the name of the Branch to which we belong?

A. Indeed it is. If you only knew how much trouble it would save, you would surely never forget to do so. There are several orders coming from places not to be found in the Report, such as *Devizes'*, *Bullocks' Corners*. We would like, at the end of the year, to be able to give credit to the right Branch.

Q. Do you want poetry from the girls and boys?

A. No, we do not. We cannot make room for it. That is one reason. Another is, that it is much better for the girls and boys to begin by writing good prose; it will give them a better style by and by. The best thing for our little friends to do is to study the works of the great Poets as well as the rules of Rhetoric; they will form their taste, and be found very helpful in all kinds of writing. In the meantime we would be very glad to receive short prose articles from them on any missionary subject, such as *Rev. Mr. Kirby* suggested some time ago—the different religions of the world and the advantages of Christianity. *Cousin Joy* will also be delighted to receive all the little letters her Cousins may care to write.