

VILLAGE MISSION WORK IN HONAN.

THE great majority of the inhabitants of the Province of Honan, as indeed of North China generally, live in cities, towns and villages. Large cities are somewhat numerous throughout the province, and contain a population varying from 20,000 to 60,000 persons. The cities are surrounded by brick and mud walls, and outside of these there is a broad ditch which can be filled with water in the event of an attack by foreign or native foes. Some of these cities have a large trade, while others seem in the last stages of decay.

Towns which are much more numerous than cities, have, in many cases, mud and brick walls also, and usually contain a dense population, with fairly prosperous industries. In cases not a few there are cultivated fields within the town walls.

The great plain is dotted with villages in all directions. Their number can not easily be found out by a stranger, and must be so great as to be almost incredible. A farm steading, gentleman's villa, or isolated house of any kind, is a sight that scarcely ever meets the traveller's eye in North Honan. Occasionally temples are to be met with at some distance from the centres of population, and are the exception that proves the rule to be what has been stated. A village is recognized easily by the presence

of clusters of trees in its immediate vicinity. In all probability it was for purposes of mutual protection that the people collected in such centres in former times. At the present day that all-important end is ensured by this means. Persons whose business calls them away some distance invariably endeavour to reach their home in the village ere darkness comes on. Boatmen aim at securing anchorage near one of the many villages on the banks of the Yem Ho each night, while the traveller, who is not well acquainted with the road, and has not reached his inn with daylight, has often great difficulty in getting proper directions. From the top of a small hill a few miles distant from Hain Chen, between *200 and 300 villages* can be descried, while the city of Hua Hsien, 14 miles distant from this, is said to have *4,000 towns and villages* in its jurisdiction. Seen from a distance many of the villages seem cosily embowered among the trees, but the pleasant impression experienced at a distance is dispelled as we approach them more closely. To prevent any misunderstanding, readers of this article must avoid concluding that Chinese villages are in many respects similar to those in Canada. The contrast between the two countries is very great. The village church is *not yet*