

BEGGARS IN PEKING, CHINA.

BEGGARS are almost everywhere. They sleep among the ruins of old temples, in gateways, like hogs in corners, or by some wall. At the city gates, thoroughfares, or bridges, are squads of them. They follow, or rather run, alongside of your cart, begging. Some "sit by the wayside begging" or "lie at the rich man's gate," and often the body is almost covered with sores.

The clothing in some cases is fairly good. Often, however, only a piece of tattered cotton cloth thrown over the shoulders, extending little below the waist, and a pair of worn out slippers constitutes the covering of one of these creatures in midwinter.

I have met them running across the ice in this way begging for a cent. They contrive to get up a kind of hideous cry so as to arouse pity. Women and children will sob and wail, making a continuous cry for long periods at a time, but the ears become accustomed to such sounds and the heart seems to forget pity, for these same persons year by year keep up their begging, and on seeing them again one comes to recognize them, know their worthless character, and to regard it doubtful charity to give them money.

One benevolent soul gave one of these pitiable mortals \$8.00, hoping to get him up out of that state, but the very next day the same beggar came back again, with his money gone, perhaps lost in gambling—for they are fearful gamblers. They will even pawn the clothes off their backs in order to get money with which to gamble.

A poor, wretched young man came to our front gate one cold night. His cries could be heard for a long distance, and a pair of cotton trousers constituted his clothing. When I saw him he was lying on the cold ground. A number of people gathered around him. "Poor fellow," "he'll soon freeze to death here," "we ought to get him away before he dies," were among the expressions of the bystanders, but the wretched creature continued to lie shivering with cold. It seemed our duty to help the poor man, so we did, and got him a cheap warm garment and food. Yet we had reason to believe that he had lost his clothing by gambling. Still his condition was so pitiable, we could not refuse to help him.

As you may suppose, such persons suffer fearfully from cold, though it is said they rub some kind of oil on their bodies so as to deaden sensibility, and then too they are accustomed to it. Some of them carry about a pan of coals with which they warm their hands, and perhaps their rice, but having no shelter and insufficient clothing many of them freeze their hands or feet, or are even frozen to death. In our coldest season, with-

in a few days, *seventeen hundred* of these poor wretched creatures were hauled out of *two* of the gates of this city. If one remembers that this was in a few days (the thermometer being about zero) he will get some idea of the number and suffering of these forlorn beggars. Among them are gray-haired men and women, middle aged women with a babe in the bosom and other children following at the heels, and young men and girls. Among them are the sick, lame, blind, and diseased; while the persons of almost all are unkempt and filthy, in fact it seems that some of them think the filthier the better.

What I have said of these miserable people has been said of them as individuals, but they are a distinct class. Many of them have no cues (the distinctive mark of a Chinese citizen), and they are an organized body. Their leader or "head man, in order to collect the poll tax allowed by law, apports certain of them in certain neighborhoods, with the advice of elders and constables. During the day they go from one door to another and receive the allotted stipend. . . . They sit in the door and sing a ditty or beat their chop-dishes and sticks to attract attention, and if the shop keeper has no customers he lets them keep up their cries; for he knows the longer they are detained so much the more time will elapse before they can come again to the shop."

But not only are these beggars in the city organized, they also form bands of desperadoes and robbers. They infest important highways so as to make travel and transportation difficult and unsafe. I have been told that if merchants at Tientsin, for example, desire to send a quantity of silver up to Peking (90 miles), there must first be a handsome stipend given to the leader of this gang, or else robbery will be very likely to take place on the road. So it is, these things go on and have gone on for centuries.

There are certain causes, however, for these vagrants being as they are. Dense population, floods, famines, drunkenness, opium smoking, profligacy, gambling, etc., are among the causes. Perhaps the Emperor would do more for this class if he knew more about them, but his person is too sacred to be seen by such, and his eye too good to look upon their misery, so that this awful wretchedness and beggary continue under the very shadow of the palace of the "Son of Heaven," and probably will continue, for in China, more than anywhere else, perhaps, one can confidently predict that "the things that shall be are the things that are and have been."

The saddest part, however, about all this is that those poor creatures so wretched here look forward to no bright future, for they have never heard the good news of salvation through the merit of Jesus Christ. *Rev. A. M. C.*