

## Our Contributors.

### Routine of Mission Work in Formosa.

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Friends in Canada often ask missionaries what constitutes their regular routine of work, and how it compares with the work of a pastor or theological professor in the homeland. Some seem to think that one missionary is wholly occupied teaching, and outside of his teaching hours has the same opportunities for private reading and study as a professor at home, and that he has Sundays and holidays to himself, and that the other does nothing but travel about superintending churches and preaching. Something like this is the system followed in the neighbouring missions of the English Presbyterian Church in South Formosa and Amoy. But in North Formosa the weakness of our staff makes such an arrangement difficult. However much a missionary may feel the truth of the dying charge of the late Dr. McKay that the prime need of this mission now is the development of the educational work so as to provide better trained pastors for the native church, the constant calls for superintendence from our widely-scattered churches are too insistent to be denied. A man of average energy cannot see the need without trying to meet it. Therefore, the time he should have for rest is given to helping needy churches and poorly equipped native brethren. The result is that when a missionary combines the study of the language, (which to a man of student tastes will be continued to the end of life), with teaching theology in a difficult foreign tongue and doing evangelistic work, his week knows no day of rest, neither the layman's Sunday nor the clergyman's Monday.

The hard worked pastor at home, the man who wishes to keep up his studies as well as attend to the manifold duties of his pastorate, often complains bitterly of the number of interruptions and distractions which interfere with what he considers his regular daily work. I once heard a highly esteemed and hard working minister publicly denounce the "lasses" who had no brains enough to know that his forenoons were sacred to study, and were always interrupting him. Here the case is the very opposite. We have too little to distract us. There are no Church Courts here, no Ministerial Associations or Alumni Conferences, practically no social intercourse or opportunity of brushing up one's ideas against those of other people; no libraries or reading rooms, and books and newspapers are costly in the East. At present in Tamsui there are three foreign families, the two at the Mission and that of the British Consul, while at Tawatua, thirteen miles away, there are half a dozen unmarried men. This is the foreign community of North Formosa. In a little community like this men soon get tired of each other, unless they happen to be unusually congenial. An authentic illustration of this happened some years ago in a neighboring mission. Two Scotchmen, a minister and a doctor, had long laboured together, the only foreigners in the whole region. They were both worthy men and at home would probably have been excellent friends. But shut up to their selves they had grown thoroughly tired of each other. One day as they met, just as they had been doing daily for years, the doctor burst forth on his colleague with "Man, but I hate the very sight of you!"

What his clerical colleague's reply was we are not told, but before long there were some new members added to the staff of that mission.

In the more remote and isolated missions it is the utter lack of distractions which constitutes one of the heaviest burdens a missionary has to bear. Under it active men are apt to throw themselves into their work with an energy which soon wears them out. They have nothing to take their minds off that work or give them any diversion. Many men become irritable or moody, and it is largely the isolation which accounts for the sometimes painful dissensions which have arisen in various missions. The difficulties of which Canadian friends have written to me, the languages, the climate, the long tramps under a Formosan sun or in down-pours of rain, the chances of plague or cholera or malaria, from which the natives are never free, or of a meeting with the head-hunters who are unusually active just now, — one soon gets accustomed to these things and hardly gives them a passing thought except when actually stricken with disease; but the exile and isolation is an ever-present burden, and presses upon the spirit every day. I would now gladly welcome things I used to consider annoying interruptions, something to break the monotony. But as it is impossible to have here as in the homeland, fellowship with men of kindred habits of thought, tastes and training, the only earthly resource is to work.

What our work consists of can be best understood from an account of a week or ten days' duties. The week including the first Sunday in December is a fair example, for while the distance travelled on foot was rather more than usual, it was counterbalanced by the fact that we had exceptionally fine weather.

On the afternoon of Saturday, December 5th I left Tamsui in company with my Chinese teacher, Tan Theng, and two students, for Tho-a-hng, a station about thirty miles distant on the southern branch of the railway. In accordance with what seems to be a custom in this Mission we traveled Third Class, in a car crowded with unwashed coolies and reeking with the smoke of bad tobacco, opium breaths and various other odors. From remarks I have heard made by both Chinese and Japanese, I am convinced that the Mission loses more in prestige than it saves in money by the missionaries' traveling thus, for Oriental peoples judge a man or a cause by outward appearance still more than Westerners do.

Arrived at Tho-a-hng we had to partake of a cup of tea with the preacher there who is one of our best men. But our destination for that evening was Lam-kham, five miles or more of a very rough road and only one hour of daylight to do it in. It was a decidedly fast walk for the missionary and a trot for the three Chinese. The students did not mind, but it was just a little hard on the teacher who is now past fifty years of age. But he had taken many a long tramp with Dr. McKay, and seemed glad to be at it again. At one place we had to cross quite a wide stream on stepping stones. The stream was high and about half of the stones were covered with several inches of water. There was no time to consider ways and means of getting across, so we splashed

through and trusted to the rapid walking to prevent any evil effects.

Daylight was gone when we climbed the hill on which stands the neat Lam-kham church. The preacher, who is a younger brother of Mrs. McKay, had supper ready for us and we were soon hard at work with the chop-sticks. I make no pretence of being fond of Chinese food, but a hungry man cannot afford to be dainty, and after having set the pace on the march I do not fall very far behind at the table.

Meanwhile the beat of drum had announced to the Christians a Saturday evening service, and soon a congregation of over forty assembled. To these the missionary preached, then the teacher spoke effectively, mingling his exhortations with reminiscences of the visits he had paid them twenty five years ago in company with their late beloved father in Christ, and had kindly words of not a few native brethren who had been faithful to life's end. The students led the singing and otherwise assisted in the service. After the service the elders and other fathers in the church remained till towards midnight talking with the Bok-su whom most of them now met for the first time. Then we sat outside still later enjoying the glory of the full moon which lighted almost like day the mountain side on which the church is built and the plain below stretching away to the south. Like many another chapel in the midst of a heathen people this Lam-kham church is a monument to the heroic missionary who gave his life to the people of North Formosa. And it makes one's heart glad to see that the love they bore him in return is deep and true and undying.

But we had to be astir and on the march early next morning, and could not talk or muse all night. The backless benches of the chapel were placed side by side, a piece of straw matting thrown over them, and a couple of blankets added for covering. Here the three Chinese slept, I was accommodated with a Chinese bed, certainly no great luxury. The hard board bottom of the bed is covered with a single thin piece of matting adding as much softness as would a sheet of wrapping paper. It would have been much more comfortable to have rolled oneself in blankets and slept on the open hillside, as I have done in the Canadian woods. But here insects, poisonous snakes and malaria make that out of the question. So I had to take the bed, which had the additional discomfort of being much too short.

At seven in the morning we were again on our way. It was a perfect day, like early September weather in Eastern Canada. Our road for the first mile was the usual narrow footpath between muddy rice fields and pools of stagnant water. Even at that early hour we met the Christians we had addressed the evening before, wending their way to morning service. Leaving the rice fields we scrambled up a high hill, and saw our day's work before us. Over twenty miles away by the road we had to travel was Tamsui, the mountain peaks about it rising high above the surrounding country against the northern sky. Between the hill where we stood and Tamsui harbour was a lofty plateau broken by a single deep valley. In that valley was the village of Khi-a, about half way along the plateau was another, Pi teng, and in the low land near the harbour was Pat li-hun. Our work that day was to walk these twenty miles or more of mountain paths, preach in those three places, and after the evening service cross the mouth of Tamsui harbour home so as to be ready for Monday's duties.

There was no time to be lost. The air was