

PRICE ONE PENNY.

Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts.

15, TUFTON STREET, WESTMINSTER, S.W.

Work among Women & Children in the Far East

3. NORTH CHINA (Peking).

IN the south-west corner of the Inner or Tartar city of Peking there is a group of buildings, or compound, surrounded by a high wall and gate, which is the present home of the English Church Mission. The Mission is not now on the original site, for these buildings were entirely destroyed in the Boxer rising in 1900,



VIEW IN MISSION COMPOUND—THE MOON GATE.

and since then, it has been found best, first to rent, and then to buy a better compound, where the existing good Chinese houses could be adapted at much less expense than would be involved in the erection of new buildings.

The southern part of the compound is approached by a little door at the end of one of the covered verandahs so common in Peking. Over this door, on a black tablet in gilt Chinese characters, are the words "St. Faith's Home." Here live all the women workers of the Mission under a simple rule of common life, and prayer, and work. Their dress is a neat grey uniform of an ordinary Western type, as there is no need whatever now for Missionaries to adopt Chinese dress. The main houses of these yards, which all communicate with one another, face south, the doors opening into the rooms direct from the deep verandah. All the rooms are on the ground floor—upper stories are quite rare—and the floors are of square grey bricks covered with a Chinese reed matting. The northern wall is usually unpierced by windows, but the southern is only three feet high, the rest of the house front being filled in with light wooden screen work covered with white paper, which may be replaced by glass if more light is required. The partitions between the rooms are of similar screens, highly ornamental, but allowing the slightest sound to penetrate.

The Head of St. Faith's Home, Deaconess Edith Ransome, three years ago succeeded her sister, Deaconess Jessie Ransome, whose work for nine years is a treasured memory of the English and Chinese workers alike. To the Deaconess belongs the organisation of all the work among women and girls, and the decision about minor details connected with the work of the members. These at present (1909) are four in number. One has charge of the girls' school, which will be referred to later; another works mainly among the women, though school claims part of her time; the two others are trained nurses, and work under the supervision of the English Doctor, who lives in another part of the Mission premises. A very important part of the Deaconess' work is the training of the Chinese Biblewomen, to fit them for visiting the country stations and giving consecutive instruction to the women there who cannot get other help.

If a visitor came to see the Mission in the winter months, she would be taken first to the **Women's School**. This is a large room, hardly furnished except by the brick platform where the Chinese lay their thin mattresses, which is warmed from underneath by little moveable stoves. The autumn and winter are leisure times in the country districts, and it is then possible to collect a few women who are preparing for Baptism or Confirmation, and perhaps some Christians who want to learn more, and bring them up to the city, where they work away most earnestly with Catechism, Prayer Book, and Bible. The lessons are given partly by the Deaconess, but a good deal is done with the supervision of the Biblewoman, who sits among the group of women, all quietly droning over their own particular books, ready to instantly name a character the pupil has forgotten, or explain the "doctrine" in even simpler words. As time goes on, and there are more capable Biblewomen to send into the country, this school may develop into a class room rather for Peking women, who could leave their homes for an hour or two a day for

instruction. The most experienced Chinese woman worker at present is Mary Hung. She has been a Christian for many years, and is a Manchu of a class above those who usually come to the Mission. Lately she has been for a long visit to a new district, where there has been hitherto only one Christian woman, but one who has so inspired many of her relations and neighbours with desire to learn of Christianity, that they sent an urgent request for a teacher to be given them. Mary Hung has been teaching numbers of women who, with their families, thronged the little courtyard, and even mounted the low

flat roofs in their eagerness to hear. A permanent teacher for this place is much needed. Another worker is Grace Lin, a gentle, quiet little Chinese woman, very distrustful of herself, but quite a power, perhaps from her loving unselfishness. She has also been sent into the country to a place where there are a good number of Christians whose wives and daughters need teaching. The Church Councils of these stations sent a special request for a teacher for their women to the Deaconess, who, though sorely needing Mrs. Lin's help, has spared her for a time.



GRACE LIN.

Close to the Women's School is **St. Faith's Oratory**. This build-

ing, three years ago, was the idol house of a Buddhist Temple, and now, by a little adaptation, and after services of purification and dedication, has been transformed into a seemly and dignified Chapel for the use of the Community, and also of the women and girls who come here from school for their private prayers. In this Chapel are also held services and instruction for the "Associates of St. Faith's Home." These are some of the keenest and best instructed of the women, who are banded together in this Association for special prayer and work on behalf of the Church. There are also English Associates both in China and elsewhere, who are willing to keep the same rules and offer the same service.

Almost touching the Chapel is the **Ward for nursing Chinese Women**. This can hold up to twelve patients, women and children, and is a nice sunny building with its own private yard, all within the women's compound. The patients are under the care of the English Doctor, and the nursing members of the Home. The Biblewomen go in at stated times, and talk to the patients and show them pictures.

There is still an important part of the work which has not yet been described, viz., the **Girl's School**. A doorway with the Chinese legend, "Entering or leaving shut the door without fail," brings us past the garden, intersected by typical Chinese corridors and verandahs, to the school yard. This is overlooked by the windows of the member of the Home who is in charge of the School, a measure thought necessary not to offend the Chinese ideas of propriety. Chinese girls are to a certain extent secluded, especially in the City, but not to a degree at all approaching the shut-in life led by their Indian sisters. The yard is paved with rather uneven bricks, which save from much dust in this wonderfully dry place, though the glare in the summer from them is rather trying.

Very likely 30 or 40 of the girls may be found steadily engaged in drill with dumb-bells or wands, for the modern Chinese girl is to have the same chance of physical development as her western sisters. Some will seem to march and move rather awkwardly, and it is because they have had their feet bound as children, and only released them after much persuading and coaxing of mother, grandmother, and aunts on the part of the child who is always willing to "loose foot." A few years ago most of the children were "bound-footed." Here, in the north, they are as a rule less tightly bound than in the south, and less inconvenience is caused, but on the whole, the custom tells against the general health, and these pupils are inclined to be lazy. When a rule was made that all new pupils must unbind, it was feared that parents would be unwilling to send their children, but this has not been so on the whole. Now the fashion of large feet is spreading even among the heathen, and all the Government schools insist on unbound feet.

The schoolroom is a long bare room, several partitions having been taken out of the original building. The desks are very high and not sloped, to allow of the Chinese characters being written properly; plain hard wooden benches, to which backs have only just been added, chairs on low platforms for the teachers maps, and gay scrolls on the walls make up the furniture. The elder girls are given the honour of a classroom to themselves. The subjects taught are very much the same as in an English elementary school, with, of course, the exception of the Chinese Classics for the elder girls, for we are careful in all work to denationalise them as little as possible. They all enjoy the class singing lessons and make a very creditable attempt at singing from the sol-fa notation. Their ear can be trained to fair accuracy, though the fact of the Chinese scale being different from that in modern use makes some intervals very difficult for them to sing. The Chinese manage to sing the Gregorian tones in Church

music quite well, owing, no doubt, to their being written in a scale somewhat similar to their own.

Through a passage is reached the dining-room, set out with high square tables, at which eight can be seated on high narrow Chinese benches. A typical meal would be boiled cabbage with savoury turnip or other pickle, rice, substantial buns of ground maize, and meat two or three times a week. All is eaten with chop-sticks from little basins on the bare table and washed down with plenty of weak tea. In ordinary school time the girls can not be spared to give help in the kitchen, but on holidays and special occasions many would help in the endless chopping which is an essential part of Chinese cookery.



GROUP OF SCHOOL GIRLS AND BOYS.

The dormitories are of two sorts, some having the brick platform or "kang" to sleep on as described above, others having wooden beds made simply of trestles and loose boards, very easy to keep clean. The dormitories have to be warmed with stoves in the winter, as there have been accidents with the heated "kang" and considerable risk of suffocation from the fumes.

The Chinese women teachers have their own little sitting-room, where they can read and prepare work undisturbed, though in the middle of the school-yard, for the Oriental cares nothing for mere noise!

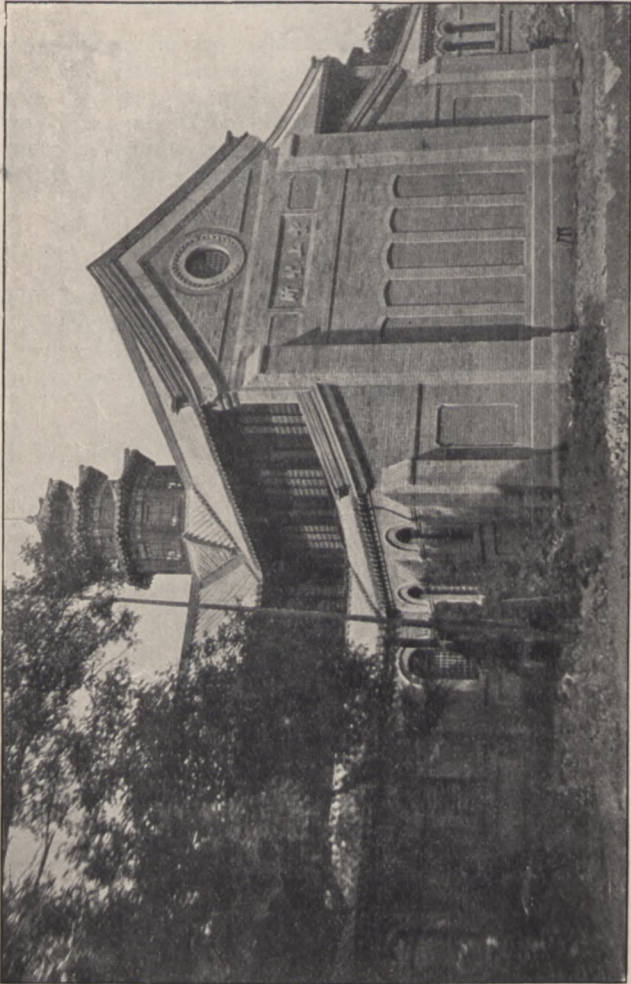
The children are, on the whole, a happy, merry company, much enjoying a visitor from outside, and quite free from shyness in their

questions and remarks. They are almost all boarders, some orphaned in the Boxer rising, and others with Christian parents in the country stations, all more or less poor. A certain amount of "Food-money," about 2s. a month (!) is paid by all who have parents, and the rest of the cost of support of the children is met partly by the contributions from friends in England and branches of King's Messengers, who have adopted children, and partly from the sorely-burdened Mission funds. There are a few day scholars, not Christians, who pay low fees. Some have shown an interest in the religious teaching they have heard and have wished to be instructed for Baptism, but in more than one case relations have "hindered."

The adapted Chinese buildings, picturesque though they be, are possibly not as convenient and good for modern education as the fine colleges which other Missions are able to build and staff, but it is not wasted labour to teach the girls to keep their Chinese houses and clothes in good order, for the majority on leaving school will marry and have a country home in one of the out-stations. Education in China, especially as regards women and girls has developed so very rapidly in these last few years that many problems have to be faced, for instance, how to obtain advanced teaching for our best girls who may want to qualify as teachers, and for whom with the present resources no special provision can be made. Another difficulty is that Government Schools are being opened all round and needing qualified Chinese women teachers, of whom the supply at present does not equal the demand, and it is a great temptation to the Mission teachers to leave the scantily-paid posts in our schools and teach in the new schools at greatly-increased salaries.

A new piece of work which has been taken up recently by a Member and Associate of St. Faith's Home is the teaching of very elementary English in a school opened by wealthy Chinese as an honest attempt to help their women-kind to better education. The Mission was invited to undertake this work, and though it meant the expenditure of a good deal of valuable time, and though it was not directly missionary work, the Warden and Head of St. Faith's Home thought that the opportunity should not be allowed to slip. Even if it goes no further, a little prejudice and ignorance will have been overcome, and it has been possible to make friends with some of the teachers over the preliminary cup of tea when the Mission Workers attend to give their lessons three days a week. One teacher, whose husband is in exile for writing papers criticising the Government, is quite the life of the mistresses' room. Another, a Japanese, gives lessons in making artificial flowers, knitting, and crochet, and two young Chinese teachers give lessons in music, singing, and drill. The children wear dark grey skirts in winter, and light blue in summer with a silver badge on the chest. Most have unbound their feet to a certain extent, and wear trousers loose at the ankle in the fashion of South China.

In conclusion, mention must be made of the beautiful **Church of our Saviour**, which stands at the entrance to the whole compound, and is built partly in memory of Deaconess Jessie Ransome and her work among the women in North China. Morning and evening the



THE CHURCH OF OUR SAVIOUR, PEKING.

little bell—once in a heathen temple—is struck with a wooden hammer, and calls into the Church the orderly procession of boys and men, followed by girls and women, each sex having its own side in the Church, though it is not necessary to have a curtain down the middle of the Church as a division, after the manner of the Corean and South

China Churches. The behaviour in Church is excellent, and the singing is hearty if not always very tuneful. There is a dignified carved pulpit, the gift of the Chinese Christians, and on a tablet in one of its panels is the text in Chinese characters, "Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this that this woman hath done be told for a memorial of her."

We commend to our readers this work among the women and girls of China. A new ideal is being placed before them and the unbound foot is typical. No longer will it be customary for time to be wasted on the embroidery of marvellous little shoes to be worn out in a month, when the only answer to any suggestion of a more useful occupation is the smiling reply, "Why to-day; there is to-morrow and the next day?"

Information as to vacant posts on the Staff of the Mission and the necessary qualifications may be obtained from the Candidate's Secretary, Women's Work S.P.G.

Information as to the support of Biblewomen £12, Scholars £6, may be obtained from the Hon. Sec., Biblewomen, Scholars, etc., S.P.G. House, 15, Tufton Street, Westminster, S.W.

Speakers should apply to the Secretary S.P.G. for information with regard to slides, maps, books, leaflets bearing on the Mission.

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„ (2) (Evangelistic), in preparation.

North China.