

# A SISTER OF CHARITY IN CHINA

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BEING A SERIES OF LETTERS  
WRITTEN TO HER FAMILY



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Berkeley, Xavier, Sister, 1861-1944.

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## A SISTER OF CHARITY IN CHINA

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THERE are few things in the life of the Church more wonderful, few of its signs of continuity more striking, than the admirable sameness, under all the accidents of time and place, of certain characteristics impressed upon it in its infancy. The very words of the *Gloria* have never ceased to resound for nineteen hundred years; and the martyrs of every time and nation, of every age and station, have shown, under all the infinite variety of surrounding attributes, certain unalterable traits, which caused an eyewitness of the death of some of the English martyrs of the seventeenth century to exclaim: "Humility and obedience are the two infallible marks and the essential properties which distinguish true virtue from false. . . . There is an obstinacy which imitates constancy and paints in false colors all the other virtues, but can not imitate obedience and humility, because it knows them not."

So in the records of all true missionary labors we find an echo, more or less loud and clear, but each invariably true, of that first record by St. Paul of his own work among the heathen. If, when reading the story of the death of the Blessed Gabriel Perboyre, we are amazed to find that the humble martyr of scarce sixty years ago had the supreme honor of a death—in its betrayal for thirty ounces of silver, scourging, and crucifixion—so like that



of our Lord that it reads like a page of the Passion, so also is it not only in the life of St. Francis Xavier and others to whom the Church has given the glorious title of apostle, but in the accounts of the labors and journeyings of more than one missionary priest in every age and every clime, that we catch an echo of the famous Epistle to the Corinthians, that glorious opening chapter of a book not yet completely written.

Women have also had, since the beginning, their own well-defined and contributory share in apostolic labor; and under the white cornette and grey habit of more than one Sister of Charity of to-day there beats a heart as valiant and tender, and a brain as fertile in penetrative, soul-subduing influence for good, as at any period of Christian history. It is our privilege to publish extracts of a series of letters, extending from 1890 to 1902, addressed by a Sister of Charity in China to her family, which occupies a high rank in the English nobility; and if their perusal should chance to bring a glow to the heart, perhaps something like a blush to the cheek of the fireside philanthropist, these very lines convey the message of Sister Xavier, and her plea that the charity of America and England may lift the standard so long gloriously held by France, and which now seems falling from her hand, paralyzed abroad by the suicidal policies of recent years in all that once made the *Gesta Dei per Francos*.



Ning-Po, from which the greater part of the letters are dated, is one of the chief towns of the Province of Tche-Kiang. It is about 100 miles south of Shanghai and

has been called a Chinese Venice, situated as it is on an arm of the sea, which here becomes a tidal river; and intersected by canals running in every direction, and malodorous in the extreme. The walls of Ning-Po, built of stone and very high, are one of the sights of China, encircling the town for five miles, and wide enough to admit of two wagons driving abreast on the top. Six gates give admission to the town; and in the very heart of the labyrinthine Chinese quarter, far removed from the European Kampo, stand the convent, workshops, orphanage and hospital of the Sisters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul. They are the only Europeans who live in the quarter, where the roofs of the houses almost touch across the narrow streets, paved with cobblestones, on which the refuse lies; for the Chinese throw it all into the street or the canal, until the pigs and other domestic animals have made away with it, or time decayed it. The doctor penetrates into this part only when he is sent for; and the orphanage is within the Kampo.

## I

The first letter is dated Shanghai, October 26, 1890,—at the long-desired end of the journey:

“What we felt when at last we set foot on Chinese soil, and for the first time knelt before Our Lord in our new home, it is easier to imagine than tell. God grant we may do all the work that He has in store for us here, and win many souls for heaven!”

Sister Xavier describes the beauty of Singapore and the harbor of Hong-Kong:

"The sight of the Highland tartan made my heart bound, though it was not the *Black Watch*. . . . I was agreeably surprised with the Hong-Kong Holy Infancy. About three hundred children, from a few hours to eighteen or twenty years old, so clean, bright and intelligent. It was too amusing to see the little mites of six or eight flying about, doing their morning housework better and quicker than children many years older. Their embroidery and needlework are beautiful. At eighteen they are given high pieces of wood under their heels, and their feet are wrapped up tight, as without these precautions a husband would not be forthcoming. The missionaries send the gentleman to call, the affair is settled; and these marriages often turn out very well,—the contrary is the exception. The difficulty is that the Chinese like their boys, and make presents of their girls; so there are not sufficient Christian men forthcoming for the requirements of the maidens. This overcrowds the orphan asylums with big girls. A certain number get vocations, and after a long trial turn out useful members of the community."



"October 30.—My destination is Kiu-Kiang, Kiang-Si. My business will be the hospital and dispensary,—for the Chinese, of course. It is three days' journey from here; we go up the Yangtse-Kiang in a steamer. It is the house that is the farthest in the interior, in the southern division, and the nearest to the site where Blessed Perboyre was martyred. I hope we shall make a pilgrimage there. We start to-morrow."

The next letter, dated November 15, gives a pretty description of the three days' voyage up the broad Yangtse-Kiang,—“a river worthy of the name.”



"For many hours the banks could be seen only as a line on the horizon, the river being about ten miles broad. After a long



AT THE DISPENSARY.

stretch of country, which was as flat as a pancake, we came to lovely scenery: mountains rising up one behind the other, villages

nestling at their feet round picturesque pagodas, the river looking almost like a sea in the foreground, and the whole lit up morning and evening by such brilliant lights. . . . Kiu-Kiang was reached late on Monday night. The Sisters at the hospital heard the steam-whistle, and came on board to welcome us. There are four Sisters here—three French ones and myself. . . . It is for the hospital and dispensary that an English Sister is required; as the doctor, Dr. Underwood, is a Scotchman, and most of the Europeans on the concessions are English-speaking. . . .”

“Every morning for a couple of hours the dispensary is thronged with every species of human misery, which the doctor, a very kind-hearted and clever man, sees gratis. . . . The most fearful legs and eyes are what principally appear. Really, the unfortunate Chinese have marvellous powers of endurance. They allow themselves to be cut, their eyes to be turned inside out, with hardly a shudder. One man actually held the basin while the entire half of his lower jaw was being drawn, or rather broken, out. Operations take place nearly every day, and are very successful as a rule. It is terrible to see the misery and suffering around,—diseases brought on by their wretched food and filth. And yet their souls are in a worse plight. Nearly all we receive are pagans; we have the consolation of baptizing those who are dying, and also any sick babies brought to the dispensary.”

The next sentence alludes to one of the prevalent beliefs in China—that Christians cut out the hearts and eyes of children and young people to use in charms and medicines:

“Others are beginning to realize that we do not cut out hearts and eyes; but not much can be done to their dull pagan



minds during their short stay in the hospital. It will require some generations of Catholicity to put religion into them. The hope of the mission is in the children, though they say the hospitals do more toward killing prejudice. . . . The hospital has been established only about eight years; it was a missionary architect's first trial, and, unfortunately, is built of wood, which lets in the heat in summer and every draught in winter. It is very picturesque, with its verandas, under which the Sisters sleep in summer, the heat is so great. At present it is like May or June in England. . . ."

"We are just off to Benediction at the parish church, which is at our gate; and, oh, the singing! During the whole of Mass the uproar goes on. Everyone has his own key; he who squalls loudest prays best, and some devout women keep up a high soprano through their nasal organ. The first Sunday I spent in one convulsion, this species of devotion was so unexpected. The Chinese sing in this way all their prayers, and they seem able to go on like wound-up machines."

"In the dispensary their mealtime is rather like the feeding hour at the Zoo. Now I am up to them; so two faithful satellites barricade me in with chairs; the assault is then all in the front; and the poor creatures, their basins being filled, depart to their beds, where they devour their food with the help of their two little sticks. . . . Last year twenty-three thousand people came to the dispensary, and one thousand and sixty-three to the hospital, which has to have very elastic walls."

The study of Chinese, without which "nothing can be done for their unfortunate souls," occupies Sister Xavier's every spare moment; and her "dear Chinese" are already very close to her heart.

"And, oh, the state they are in, poor creatures! Sister Superior is longing to have two suits for each patient (the Chinese in winter keep on their clothes in bed), so that on their arrival they should be washed (every rag taken off them, and put away till their departure), and dressed in the hospital clothes. Every Chinaman has for winter a shirt, plain trousers and padded trousers over them, a padded long coat and a plain coat on the top. They may not have a plateful of rice to eat—and often do not,—but they *will* have padded clothes, which it is said they put on at the first frost and do not take off till the next summer."

"Sister Superior was meaning to put off the luxury of cleanliness till she had the wherewithal; but I told her to get the stuff, padding, cotton, and I would try to get the money. We are indulging in new padded counterpanes, in which they roll themselves up; and it would be such a pity to let them get *alive* as they will by delay. . . . It was suggested, as no other means seemed available, to give the men clean garments under and over, and leave their filthy padded ones between; but at such a sandwich I protested."

"In this hospital the patients get rice and vegetables daily, meat four or five times a year, and fish on Sundays. In most hospitals out here they get the two last-named luxuries frequently, but here they can not afford it; and yet strengthening food goes much further toward curing these half-starved creatures than medicine."



"*March 19, 1891.*—The Chinese are charitable to one another, and give beggars food and clothing for fear of a curse, of which they are terrified. Begging is a regular trade; they have a kind of king, to whom some shopkeepers pay as much as ten dollars

a year to keep his subjects from their door. Next to nothing can be done for the souls of that wretched class, except pop them into heaven if possible on their deathbeds. Of course they would willingly become 'rice Christians' any day. The country people are of quite a different stamp, and, though not converted, carry into all parts of the country—for they come from three or four hundred miles—the knowledge that there is a God who loves the poor and causes them to be cared for. If a missionary goes to their villages, he is well received."

While the poor country people were carrying this message of love and charity to their distant homes, the troubles of the summer of 1891 broke out. On June 8, Sister Xavier writes:

"Before you get this, the telegraph will have told you if anything has happened at Kiu-Kiang. We have had three trying days. On Saturday the 'down-boat' brought us the tidings of the tragedy at Wusiey, also a letter from one of the murdered men, showing how little on Friday evening danger was anticipated. Wusiey is three hours up the river; it is not a European concession, so there are only a few ministers, one missionary occasionally, and one custom-man. . . . The riot began in the usual way. A Chinaman, bringing a little boy to the Protestant church was attacked and beaten by the mob. He took refuge with a mandarin, who was unable to protect him; but the man managed to escape. The people's blood was then up; soon the Catholic church and every European building was in flames; the minister was beaten to death before his church, and the custom-man before the house of a minister, whose wife he was on his way to defend. The women and children fled to the Chinese magistrate, who also, unable to resist the crowd, hid them, threw open his doors,



and about midnight smuggled them on board an up-steamer. The whole was the affair of an hour."

"It is the first time since Tientsin that a Chinese crowd has murdered Europeans, and this has struck horror into everyone. The poor fellows were both unmarried, fortunately. They lay all Saturday exposed in the street, until the arrival of H. M. S. *Porpoise*, with the Consul on board; and then they were taken up to Hankow. . . . Thank God all the city Sisters are here! There are three men-of-war—a French, an American, and a German. There may be burning, the people are so excited; but that is all. The Chinese authorities so far have behaved very well, as their place depends on their exertions. It is not so much the natives of the towns as a large band of rebels, who work up the rabble. All the various officers come in to cheer us up, and vow their devotion to the cause."



"*July 21.*—Everything is quiet at Kiu-Kiang now; and there is better news from the interior, where the mandarins are doing their best to prevent and to punish. We shall not be certain of real peace till after September, when the examinations take place. At Nankin there will be about thirty thousand students, which means an increase in the population of eighty thousand, as they are all followed by friends, servants, and a kind of pedlars hoping to make a fortune out of such an occasion. It is the same in all the capitals of provinces, according to their size and importance. These students may not work, though they sometimes come of quite poor families. If successful, they eventually get posts and become mandarins; if not, opium or the river is a very usual course. They are often a riotous lot, and that is why these examinations are rather dreaded."

"I saw a good deal of the mandarins while in the city, and they were very amusing. They are on the most friendly terms with the Sisters. They enter in the most easy fashion, seize chairs, and over tea and biscuits discuss orphanage news, the health and ages of the Sisters, etc., etc. . . . They are talking of building a small barracks near the Sisters' house, to afford permanent protection. Some more French sailors are being brought here to be nursed. We have a large room set apart for European patients."

"*August 6.*—It is very gratifying to see how anxious the authorities are to keep our heads on our shoulders, and at the present time there is not the slightest chance of anything being done to separate the two. Yesterday some known rebels—not Kiu-Kiang people—were seen hanging about the orphan asylum; and five were caught by the native detectives, who are very clever. The *Tao-tai* (native magistrate) is kept well to his work by the presence of an English and a French man-of-war; the latter is the same that was here at the time of the disturbance."

"The commander is a fine man,—so devoted to the Sisters. It was he who, on that momentous occasion, told the *Tao-tai*, 'Do your work quickly, or it will be done for you,' and turned the cannon of the three men-of-war full on the town. Every man was landed on the *bund*, armed to the teeth to await events. . . . The Chinese are terrified by cannon, and the Taotai had only to shout to the shrieking mob surrounding the orphanage that they were to disperse, or within an hour Kiu-Kiang would be no more; for them to fly, and his soldiers to be more than active. The European soldiers were deeply grieved at not being allowed to strike and give the Chinese a lesson; but that would have destroyed the mission for years, though for the moment it would have caused a fright."

"*September 14.*—Since our Chinese friends have taken into their heads to be so fond of setting places on fire, one is very slow to buy, or make improvements. Anyhow, before they began, a nice little washhouse with bath-places was finished, a good cement flooring put down in the hospital to try to keep down the damp. . . . It is to be hoped that all will not come to an untimely end. We hardly expect it, as the 'aspic' is mounting guard, and the actual Kiu-Kiang people have no real dislike for the Sisters. . . . There is perhaps some danger for the Sisters in the city, though our commander of the 'aspic' would be over the walls at the first sign of trouble: he even has ladders ready. Here I assure you there is no danger, except from fire; and that is not likely. Chinese soldiers, as well as a couple of Europeans, guard the concession at night. . . . Besides, could we be safer than in the arms of Providence? 'Rocked in the cradle of the deep' comes into our mind when we go to bed at night."



"THE CENTRAL HOUSE,  
Shanghai, October 4, 1891."

"We are expecting daily to hear of further trouble in the interior. Several hundred men from Hou-Nan, one of the worst provinces in China, are said to have entered the Kiang-Si, bent on mischief. Well, I shall see none of their doings, as I shall not return to Kiu-Kiang. Ning-Po is my destination, and Sister Visitatrice will take me there on Thursday. . . . I am replacing a Sister who died last April, and who acted as English interpreter. We hardly expected two English Sisters to be left long together: we are precious from our rarity out here."

"'Maison de Jésus Enfant, Ning-Po,' will now be my address.



It is the oldest Sisters' house in China: I believe they have been in possession over forty years; and there is still among them one old Sister who was at the foundation. They have all the works there: dispensary, women's hospital, catechumenate, orphanage; and they also visit the poor. It is only fourteen or fifteen hours from Shanghai; so if the war, which people declare is inevitable, takes place, the Sisters will have to abandon for a time some of the other houses, but not Ning-Po."

"On our way down from Kiu-Kiang we travelled with four of the Sisters from Tchang. Poor things, they had rather a dreadful time! The disturbance began in the usual way. A child was brought to the Sisters, . . . a pretext to raise a tumult, as the parents came screaming about the convent, and this, of course, collected a mob. They first attacked a minister's house next door, which they thought belonged to the buildings, and then invaded the Sisters' house. The community were in the chapel with the children, receiving Holy Viaticum, though they had already communicated that morning. Strange to say, the rabble stopped halfway up the chapel, then rushed out to open a gate and let in some of their friends."

"On their return they found that the Sisters and children had retreated into the sacristy; the superior, and the chaplain who still held a ciborium half full of Hosts, standing at the door. With infernal rage they flung themselves upon the altar, tearing down crucifix, tabernacle, etc., and smashing everything. The Sisters in the sacristy were attacked with sticks and stones, and their preservation was little less than miraculous . . . . The ciborium, strange to say, was never touched. The priest received some hard blows, and blood was streaming from a cut in his head; but it is said that once or twice when blows were aimed at the

ciborium, the wretches seemed unable to strike. The Sisters had dispatched for a mandarin, who at last arrived. He promised to care for the children, assisted them to gain the door, and then left them to the care of a few satellites. . . . At last they reached the *quay*, and were taken on board the steamer. They were all bruised, covered with blood, their clothes half torn off, etc. . . . They had a truly wonderful escape. . . .”

“Mr. Everard, the consul, seeing all flying to the boat, took up his quarters in his consular chair, determined not to leave. The mandarins were evidently afraid of the British flag; for no one attacked the consulate, though the mob was cheered on while pillaging other places.”

At Ning-Po Sister Xavier found herself in a more quiet district, the province of Tche-Kiang being more advanced in every way. Its inhabitants, after forty years' contact with the Sisters of Charity, treated them with respect, and allowed them, in all safety, to go about visiting the sick and baptizing dying infants.

## II.

Many of Sister Xavier's letters are now written on board the native *sampans*, as she does her visiting among the riverside villages:

“This river travelling reminds me of the picture of the Sister of Charity and the pig by the water side. . . . It is much the same in reality, though the babies are not actually exposed to die among the rushes. . . . Babies are put outside the door to die—poor little things!—as death brings bad luck into a house; but more often their sufferings are summarily put an end to.

A woman at the hospital here had drowned five of her children in a bucket—the wretch!—and with that, thought she had been most kind to them, saying death was preferable to bringing them up to misery.”

“*Wednesday Evening.*—We have had a fair day. Twenty-four baptisms in about eight or ten little villages dotted among the rice fields. We take women with us, go in different directions, and meet the boat at a certain hour. They speak here quite a different language from the Kiang-Si, and it is rather a curious feeling being quite alone among a people one can hardly understand or make understand.”

“Everything is quiet here now, and likely to remain so till the spring, when connoisseurs in Chinese matters expect another outbreak. Poor people, I wonder when they will realize that missionaries, at least, come out here only for their good? . . . It is said the whole system of government and ideas will have to be turned upside down, as they are so imbued with the most absurd as well as the very lowest forms of superstition, carried into the most ordinary actions of life,—are so double-faced, and withal so proud, so full of contempt and dislike for foreigners, that a revolution is probably required to show them things in their right light. . . . If the authorities do their duty, all is safe; but most of them are members of secret societies, and are torn between the conflicting feelings of dread of losing their situations and hatred of Europeans.”

The isolation in which the small band of Sisters lived at Ning-Po was extreme.

“We are in the heart of the Chinese city; never see a European except the missionary who says Mass, and an occasional one from Kampo or the interior. . . . At Kiu-Kiang, lying on



the highroad between Shanghai and Hankow, we knew more or less what was happening around us."

The rare visitors brought disquieting news, and forecasts which were to prove true; though the word Boxer does not yet appear:



A ROOM IN THE HOSPITAL.

"All say that a general, well-organized revolt will take place before long, and the affairs in the North are most likely the commencement. . . . The mandarins get double orders from Pekin,—one to be shown to Europeans and made public, and the other to be acted upon."



In December, 1891, the charge of the women's and children's hospital is given to Sister Xavier, and she sets upon her new duties with characteristic energy. The hospital is in "true Chinese style—open wooden framework for windows, to be stuffed with rags on cold nights." Her superior, although her purse has been drained by the Holy Infancy orphan asylum, is having the dilapidations repaired.

"I am telling her," writes Sister Xavier, "to get it done properly once for all, and I will see that she is not summoned for debt in consequence."

The action, or rather inaction, of the great powers does not favorably impress those who are in the front of the line of fire, in case of disturbance. Sister Xavier writes (December 23):

"Matters have been coming to this pass since the Tonquin war, when, the Chinese feel sure, they got the best of it, and they despise Europeans accordingly. The way in which the disturbances on the Yang-tse were taken confirms them in this opinion, and made everybody foretell the revolts, which are, however, beginning rather sooner than expected. . . . All were deeply disappointed that no blow was struck, to show the Chinese that the powers were in earnest; and it was on England they all depended,—or at least principally so. The French, of course, are the protectors of the missions. . . . But not much assistance can be expected from France, whose conduct with regard to religion is well known to Chinese authorities, and does untold harm. . . ."



The New Year dawned amid these clouds ; but an event full of promise for the cause of religion is, nevertheless, recorded in the first letter of 1892 :

*"January 18.*—A new Order of Chinese Sisters is to be founded here on January 25. It is to be composed of virgins who are now scattered over the vicariate; they are to make a two-years' novitiate, during which they will also have to study; afterward they will make their vows, and then go into the interior as schoolmistresses, catechists, etc., etc. The priests at Shangai have an Order of the same description, founded for some time; and it is doing much good. The Sisters return to Tgi-ka-way, which is the mother-house, for a month every year. Many missionaries say there is nothing like women for propagating the Faith. They are sometimes now sent into the villages to sound the people, and feel the way before anything is done; for the missionaries do not go unless there are some who are catechumens, or who wish to be so. Sometimes the catechists are most successful, especially where Protestants have begun to give some idea of religion, for, while these make very few converts, they seem to pave the way for Catholics. One catechist in the interior has in a short time gathered together as many as a thousand catechumens, who as yet have never seen a priest, the nearest one being five or six days' journey from them."



Besides the new Order for virgins, a work for widows is founded; and the next letter, while telling of it and of the coming of the Christians from the interior for the Sacraments after several days' journey, takes up a theme which is to be found in most of the subsequent letters,—a note of compassion for the hard-worked priests of the



province; a cry, almost passionate sometimes in its energy, for more laborers in this ripening harvest.

"*Ning-Po, January 29, 1892.* . . . It is a real comfort to do something for those poor priests in the interior. Some come here for rest, looking such wrecks. Of three on the other side of the street, one receives the last Sacraments to-day; another looks more like a corpse than a man; and the third can neither eat nor sleep, but always has a racking headache. The last two are quite young. The great trials that they have to undergo and the innutritious food, soon tell upon them; though, of course, they hold on as long as possible. They look upon this place as a sort of mother's home, and are nearly all from France."

"The whole country is now upside down in consequence of the Chinese New Year. We can not go out between January 20 and February 20, as it is considered unlucky to touch medicine, and each day has its own particular diabolical practice. We are glad of the time to get the hospital and dispensary in order, as the rest of the year is rather a rush."

It is said of Blessed Gabriel Perboyre that shortly after his martyrdom he appeared to his brother, saying: "My hands are full of graces and no one asks me for them." By the Christians in China his memory is held in veneration and his intercession invoked, as the following incident testifies:

"*Ning-Po, March 30, 1902.*—The Chinese priest I mentioned the day he received the last Sacraments is now up, and, though very weak, goes about. When the end was evidently near and all the symptoms of immediate death were showing themselves, as

a last resource he was wrapped in the cloak of Blessed Perboyre and a relic put upon his breast. Since then he has rallied in a wonderful manner; and, though not actually cured (for he remains weak, and at times has a good deal of pain), still, not to be dead, but to be as he is, is a perfect miracle. He would be a great loss to the bishop, as he is very European in his ideas, and able to cope with all the mandarins in Chinese business. . . .”



Many strange things come under the observation of the Sisters of Charity in China. Cases of possession are occasionally brought to the hospital,—“as their people are often glad to get rid of them.” And Sister Xavier describes the horrible voluntary torture of the penitents in the processions in honor of their deities,

“Having their arms transfixed by a small iron bar, to which hangs a weight, to cause extra agony. . . . And, strange to say, the ghastly wounds in their arms heal very quickly. They have an extraordinary system of mutilating themselves. A bonze has been coming to the dispensary for some time, having chopped his left hand, probably to end a quarrel; though they generally content themselves with part of a finger. One woman took a knife, chopped off her hand, and brought it to her husband to pay him out for abusing her; though the general rule is to take opium. Then they know that the unfortunate husband is simply beggared by all the relatives of the deceased. A workman was found dead one morning in his master’s house; it was supposed he had quarrelled or been rebuked, and so had taken opium. Numberless relatives cropped up, as is usual on such occasions; the master was called upon either for a large sum

or for the life of his eldest son. It is useless to attempt to obtain justice, as that is given to the highest bidder, and therefore brings ruin with it; so it is best to submit, and pay to one set of people rather than to two."

From time to time the practice of infanticide among the Chinese is denied, and said to be a made-up story of the missionaries.

"It is useless, however," says Sister Xavier, "to have recourse to denying a fact. . . . Until they [the babies] are a month old they have no souls, so to kill them does them no harm and saves them from much misery. One poor little baby we met when out the other day was wailing in a corner: the mother declared: 'Why, that baby costs a penny a day to feed; so now I let it cry away, and it has gone to skin and bones.' She would not give it to us; so baptism at least secured for it a happy eternity after such a little life of suffering. One young mother had a little boy a fortnight old for sale: her husband, an opium-smoker, had sold the first and kept the money, so she meant to be beforehand with him this time. . . ."

"The children they wish to bring up they are foolishly fond of, giving in to their every whim, so that the young tyrants rule the house. In most homes, however, you see a poor down-trodden little girl, the future daughter-in-law, bought as a baby and treated as the family slave until her wedding-day, if she survives so long. One was thrown at our door last week, really eighteen, the size of a child of ten, unable to walk, black and blue, with a hole on the top of her head from being beaten in with a stone. Poor little creature! . . ."

"When one thinks, however, of these people being pagans, and of the cruelty one finds sometimes even in our Christian



countries, one can not be surprised. We get accustomed to expect very little, and in consequence when traits of devotion and gratitude do show themselves they are doubly welcome. . . . Yet how fond one gets of them in spite of dirt, etc.! But, of course, that is part of our vocation. Anyhow, I am infinitely happier surrounded by my poor Chinese with all their sores and misery, physical and moral, than in the smart European hospital at Shanghai. . . . Life will not be long enough to thank God for so great a grace."

"It is delightful here, seeing the mission work so full of life and vigor. . . . I defy any Catholic in Europe or America to know all by heart an equal number of litanies, prayers for visits to the Blessed Sacrament, for all the feasts of the year, for every kind of occasion, each with a particular chant,—generally women and men alternately. . . . To-morrow, Pentecost, there is Confirmation; and during all the week a retreat for catechists has been going on. The great cry is for catechists and priests,—the first to go and prepare the way, the second to follow when a band of catechumens is collected. The harvest does seem ripe, if only there were more laborers! . . ."



"*Ning-Po, September 20, 1892.*—We are having a roasting summer. People say that for years it has not been so hot. We were a couple of months without rain; rivers were dried up and drinking-water was most precious. Fasts were prescribed by the *Tao-tai*; pigs were not allowed to be killed. The *Tao-tai* had to go down on both knees before any reptile caught in a spring, in order to make the divinities propitious. Daily we met processions of idols all over the town. Meanwhile we were reap-

ing a harvest of souls, for the poor babies could not support the long-continued heat. Over thirty, forty, or even fifty baptisms in a day, or often in an afternoon. . . . Really, God's providence is wonderful! Over and over again apparent chance leads us to some out-of-the-way nook or hamlet, not visited for ages, to find children simply waiting to die, dressed out in their smartest clothes according to Chinese fashion; so that we almost hurry out of the house not to be present at the last moment, our work being done and the soul being safe."

"On more than one occasion the Sisters have been hailed by the father, who declared that his child had been dead for hours and just come to life: could it be saved? Of course the little one had had a long faint or stupor before drawing its final breath, which Our Lord seems to have delayed for hours, until the waters of baptism had flowed over its head. We don't care to have such cases often. Though the child may be at death's door, if we have entered the house and looked at it, we have killed it. If we tell parents there is no hope, it dies because we have decreed it so, and therefore at our next visit the babies are all hidden away. We prefer that the children should linger, or revive for a time."

"The other day regular tropical torrents of rain made us take refuge in a den and gave us time to take an inventory. It was about half the size of our study and made two rooms. In the parlor were two tables, three benches, a heap of every conceivable kind of rubbish, a grandmother, a mother, two children, five hens, and eight pigs. Through the litter we made our way to the youngest baby, who ere now has taken flight from a pigsty to its celestial abode. . . ."

## III.

Evident traces of early Christianity are by no means rare in China. In one locality is an old statue of the Blessed Virgin with the Holy Child in her arms, which has been worshiped as a goddess from time immemorial; and in a letter dated "Afloat, October 16, 1892," we read:

"In one place a picture of our Blessed Lady is kept among a band of pagan families with the greatest reverence and devotion. The pagans declare that the Holy Mother of God, as they call her, has worked many wonders for those who have prayed to her; and the picture is kept in the family that has last received a mark of her protection. The catechist seized the opportunity to explain who Our Lady really was. The pagans were much impressed and begged for books to learn more about the Faith. A scholar who came to the Sisters at Hankow to be cured of opium-smoking declared that a similar picture had been treasured up in his family for nine generations. . . ."

"In Southern Kiang-Si, Bishop Coquet is perfectly crushed by all he has to go through. Chapels seem to be erected only to be burned. Really, ours seems to be the most consoling part of the work,—paddling up and down the rivers gathering in our harvest of souls. . . . The roll of the punt, and jerks and bumps against bridges, etc., do not improve the aspect of my epistle; but in the house we never have a moment. . . . I have a dream—not yet mentioned except to the Sister whose office it is to visit the poor,—and that is to get a boat for ourselves, keeping a man who could paddle the boat, and work the garden when at home. It would cost much less than what is paid now four or



five times a week for a day in the villages. . . . At present we often have a quarter or half an hour's walk to get the boat, and daily quarrels between the men and our women as to the price. Sometimes they won't row; occasionally they leave us in the boat while they jump off to have a few sharp words with an unamiable passer-by. . . . They could bring us back almost to our very door; for Ning-Po, in fact all the Tche-Kiang, is very like Venice, so far as canals and rivers are concerned."

The extremes of heat and cold are great in China. We have had the scorching arid heat of summer described in these letters. This is what Ning-Po had to offer the following January:

"The milk in the kitchen, the only place where there is a fire, was a hard, unbreakable block; the ink froze on one's pen; even the bread was a frozen mass. The dispensary work was very trying. The medicines were blocks of ice, and had to be kept in hot water, freezing if taken out for only a few minutes. . . . What the poor must have suffered in their hovels, open to the cutting wind in every direction, is indescribable. . . . The priests who were out on mission work had a hard time, and experienced great difficulty in getting about with the rivers all frozen. They bring back, however, most consoling news of the progress religion is making in every direction. Catechumens are coming in by hundreds, and seem, on the whole, to be a promising set. . . ."

The needlework of the Chinese women and children is of surpassing beauty, and is one of the chief means employed by the Sisters to help their poor neighbors. We can imagine, therefore, with what a heavy heart Sister Xavier wrote February 12, 1893:

"We are under the sad necessity of refusing work from having no sale for the embroidery. It has struck us that America might be a good place to dispose of some. Americans admire it very much. . . ."



THE GIRLS' WORKING ROOM.

"At Hankow the Sisters are rejoicing at a really wonderful cure. A military mandarin, twenty-six years of age, son of a mandarin of high position, was terribly injured by an explosion of gunpowder; arms, chest, back, face—the left arm especially—were in a frightful state. . . . Five days after this they

sent for the Sisters, who found the poor fellow in a pitiable condition, flesh and clothes all matted together; nothing had been done since the accident. . . . The Sisters had him brought to the hospital and wrapped him up in a piece of Blessed Perboyre's cloak (his sister's greatest treasure). The pain from that moment ceased; he has become gradually better, and at present though still with the Sisters, there is hardly any sign left of the accident. His father, half crazy with joy, is loading the Sisters with presents. The *Tao-tai* brought them himself (one of the greatest marks of honor that can be bestowed in China); and some characters traced by his orders and sealed with his seal are to be placed in the dispensary and over Sister Perboyre's door. 'Skilful hand, mother of the unfortunate,' is the translation. It is hoped that this cure will do much toward killing prejudice. . . ."



A letter of July, 1893, makes the first allusion to the projected workrooms for Christians and pagans together, —rooms which are now a happy reality.

"You little realize what a boon it will be to these poor people and to the mission if we succeed in obtaining a permanent sale for their embroidery. Most of the Christians are very poor. For a year or so they worked for a shop in Paris, and during that time their homes were a little less comfortless and they had enough to eat. Pagans worked as well, and there were dreams of a workroom. Alas! all fell to the ground last winter. The Chinese can imitate anything they see, so with good models they would succeed."

"The Holy Infancy is our principal work. The children are brought to us when only a few hours old, usually because the



parents are too poor to rear them and do not quite care to kill them,—a very common practice, especially when there are too many girls in a family. . . . We put the mites out with nurses for two or three years; they are then brought in here and kept till a marriageable age—say sixteen or seventeen years. They meet their bridegroom at the altar steps for the first time. We see the poor creatures peeping over their shoulders to get an idea of the man they are to be united with for life. . . . Altogether, the Chinese women have a sad life of it until they have a son; then they are respected and called by their son's name. . . .”

“We often go to a place, three hours' river boating from here, which always reminds me of Killarney. A lovely lake, winding through most picturesque mountains, which come down to the water's edge. . . . The people are simple countryfolk, not the least like the turbulent race on the Yang-tse River. . . . The outbreaks in Mongolia two years ago and last year have done more good than harm here. On all sides catechumens are begging for instruction, . . . and in real earnest too; for they have much to suffer from friends and relations. . . . The missionaries, too, are very strict, so as to have Christians with sufficient grit in them to stand persecution. . . . The great outcry is for priests. In this large vicariate there are only eighteen; and they hardly know how to face the huge amount of work they have to do. Most of the Christian centers can be visited only once a year.”

“*Oct. 17, 1893.* . . . The missionaries have suffered a good deal lately. They have come from the interior, some of them looking like walking specters; and one, alas! never arrived at all. He succumbed at Hankow, having had a long six days' journey in a little boat, where he was placed, after receiving the last Sacraments at Kintchou, in the hope of reaching medical aid in time

to be saved. He was only forty, one of the most valuable men in the vicariate, as he was such a good Chinese scholar, and overflowing with zeal and energy. He was doing wonders in a huge district. He worked with three young Chinese priests. Hundreds of catechumens, it seems, were flocking into the Church. The great cry is for priests and catechists. . . .”

“It seems as if Almighty God wishes to show how He can do His work without anybody. Formerly Christians were so few, conversions so difficult, that the priests more than sufficed for the work. Now that thousands are begging to be enrolled, it is overwhelming. In one town in the Taitchou district, where formerly there was hardly a Christian, now over three thousand are studying; in another, seven hundred have destroyed their idols and been inscribed; and it is the same in all directions. To face all this work there is one European and one Chinese priest. . . . These good missionaries must always be prepared for death, as often a confrère will have several days’ journey to reach a sick priest. Father Prizzi died with his Christians around him suggesting the ejaculations he had generally used when attending their dying friends. . . .”



“*Ning-Po, Jan. 1, 1894.*—Nearly every day now women come in for work; and yesterday, to our joy, a pagan woman came to ask to stay a little time in our house, to learn,—a very great step, if you knew the terror they have of spending a night in the house, even those who receive us most cordially at home. . . . You would be amused if you saw how they come trembling into the house the first time, peeping about to make sure we are not stealing their souls from them; for they are firmly convinced

that we can deprive them of their souls by looking at them, and that yet they can go on living. . . . Poor people, they are so full of these absurd beliefs and traditions, it is a real miracle of grace when they are converted. . . . And this miracle is being worked, without any apparent human means, in all directions. The catechumens are reckoned to number between eight and nine thousand. . . .”

“To return to our Ning-Po work. Fr. Ferrant, the superintendent of the business, hopes to open some kind of makeshift workroom at once; as funds come in, things will settle themselves. . . . I am glad that the scheme of making our own satin is approved of. It could also be begun on a small scale—a few looms, sixty dollars each, in what in Europe would be called a shed. . . . We have the land for mulberry trees: large tracts were bought during the rebellion of 1861. The trees can be procured in any quantity from the Christians in Tso-fou-Pang, where there are forests of them, and the inhabitants live by their silkworms. Perhaps after a time this scheme will be carried out. . . .”

“*Feb. 23, 1894.* . . . It is strange how the Faith is spreading in the province; and that without the teaching and preaching which have to be carried on in most pagan nations. . . . Sometimes there are striking examples. . . . One pagan, who acts as schoolmaster and doctor on a small island off the coast, went to visit a neighboring island—Ninnay. He met with the Christian catechist, and after a time became a catechumen. Shortly afterward he had a terrible trial,—his eldest son, though quite a boy, was intentionally killed in a quarrel. In China the eldest son—the *ako*, as he is called—is the idol and hope of the entire family. All pressed the father to avenge himself in the customary way—



ruin the family of the murderer and destroy their house. The man refused,—he was a Christian, would not seek revenge but would leave the matter in the hands of God. A few days later the eldest son of the murderer was killed by an accident; shortly afterward his second son suffered the same fate, and his third and last was brought to death's door by a violent fever. The schoolmaster-doctor was asked if he would come and try to save the only remaining boy. 'Of course,' he answered, 'I will come and cure him'; and so he did. All the pagans are so astounded that nearly the whole island are now catechumens, and our friend the schoolmaster has just arrived for final instruction before baptism."

"This is the way that they are drawing one another into the Church,—mostly simple village folk or fishermen. The cry on all sides is for priests. The catechists are doing wonders, but what can a mere handful of priests do for these thousands of catechumens? Each one is doing the work of five, but how much remains undone! Bishop Reynaud does not know which way to turn to meet the calls made on all sides. He has at present only nineteen priests, all told; and, to add to his troubles, Death continues its work among them. One received Extreme Unction to-day; three or four more seem to have one foot in the grave, but they still remain at their posts."

"It is a glorious work for those who hunger and thirst after souls. They can come and gather in the harvest which others have sown in suffering and disappointments of every description. The Faith is spreading fastest in districts where missionaries, now dead, had spent their lives in most ungrateful toil without any apparent result."

## IV

The next letter, probably in answer to a question from home, alludes to some of the strange things which come under the observation of the Sisters:

*"March 29, 1894.*—It is very true that necromancy is much practiced in China, and it is often a great temptation to the Christians in times of difficulty, when they are anxious to know what is likely to happen. . . . Not only where people are, but where they have been and what they have done, is often very correctly told. With newly-baptized Christians, it is most common for the devil to appear to them and try to terrify them. For a long time I thought it imagination, but it seems to be true. A woman who died in the hospital last week was tormented, or rather frightened, several nights, until she was protected with medals. One queer illness I have often met with outside, but never have had a case inside the hospital. They declare that the devil comes to them every night and makes them eat all kinds of horrible things. The poor creatures certainly eat next to nothing during the day, look terrified to death, waste away and die. I should like to have such a case, to see what it really is. . . ."

The Chino-Japanese war, with its consequences of heavy taxation and depressed commerce, brought great suffering to the Chinese of Ning-Po.

"We know not what to do," writes Sister Xavier (January 3, 1895), "to relieve the large number of poor infirm creatures who are thrown on our hands. Rice is so dear! One paralyzed girl, with a rope around her neck, was being dragged to be drowned in a canal. She was rescued and brought here by a Christian. . . . We have nowhere to put the women. It is a terrible thing to be

obliged to refuse them admittance. . . . Let us hope that Providence will come to our aid. It would not cost much to erect what is absolutely necessary in the way of accommodation. . . ."

The distresses of war quickened into yet greater activity the inventive charity of Sister Xavier. She was already helping the women and girls, and now her thoughts were for the boys.

"*Jan. 20, 1895.*—It is impossible to tell you the comfort it is to be able to give work to these people, or how thankful they are to get it. It is the poor boys who are going to the bad, simply because there is no helping hand to put them in a position to earn their living. If we could get together means to put up a few looms, it would be a small beginning, which could by degrees develop itself. We would like to begin with the satin-making. It is the trade of the place; and satin, if not sold in China, can always be sold elsewhere; so results are speedy and sure. Perhaps St. Joseph, who knew what it was to face great poverty, will take the matter in hand, and send us enough to make a tiny start."

"*Ning-Po, Feb. 19, 1895.*—Our former doctor has been sent to attend a large hospital of Chinese wounded at Ninchang. The bandages must all be broad, as most of the wounds are said to be on the backs of the soldiers. Our Sisters have a hospital at a place about six days' journey from Tientsin."

"Here there have been disturbances caused by the soldiery passing through the town. They wanted to break into the Sisters' house and to search it, saying that European soldiers were hidden inside. The authorities, however, behaved very well, and with great energy scattered the mob and placed guards in front of the house. . . . Since then we hear that disturbances have broken



out again; and it was thought wiser to send to Tientsin six Sisters, most of whom are young and have not been long in China. . . . We are anxiously waiting to hear of their arrival at Tientsin; for a six days' journey in carts and barques, across a country overrun by a wild and undisciplined soldiery, is rather dangerous."

"The people here are as quiet and as steady-going as usual, though they have no commerce and everything is very dear. In consequence, we receive many presents of children; and we hope that the much-needed establishment for boys may soon be started. . . ."



"*Ning-Po (or rather Afloat)*, April 17, 1895. . . . To-day news comes that peace is at last made, thank God! Our Sisters' hospital at Tientsin is full of Chinese soldiers, and they have established an ambulance. The Protestants have done the same. The Chinese had made no preparations for the wounded, and some who have arrived at Tientsin were hurt a month ago."

Cholera followed in the wake of war; and the calm and equable pen which has narrated the dangers incurred from fanaticism, fire and sword, describes the new infliction:

"*Ning-Po (Afloat)*, Aug. 26, 1895.—Here there has been a cholera panic,—a great many cases, most of them bad ones; but not a regular epidemic as at Shanghai, where seventeen hundred natives died daily during several days. Many Europeans also fell victims; and among the Auxiliatrice Sisters, five died within twenty-four hours. Providence has watched well over the Sisters of Charity; surrounded as they are by the dead and dying, not one has taken it, nor a missionary either. The weather

has improved, and the cases are now diminishing, and prove less fatal. . . .”

“A sad affair has happened at Fokien,—the massacre of five women, four children, and one man. The Consul was talking about it a couple of days ago, and told me the English Consul at Fouchou had warned them repeatedly not to go to that place. He could understand their running the risk if it was necessary for the accomplishment of their work; but it was not wise of them to go as they did, for mere pleasure and fresh air; and so it proved. The Consul says that unless the cannons are heard, and something striking is done to show that Europeans are not to be touched, there never will be peace in China. All these commissions end in nothing, and the Chinese laugh at them. Near Canton, a missionary took another line of action. When he and his Christians were attacked, they all collected in the church and presbytery—a ‘walled-in’ compound,—got hold of firearms and ammunition, and stood a week’s siege.”

“Here at Ning-Po the people are perfectly quiet: not a rumor in the city. If there was anything, we should hear of it through the Christians quicker than anybody else; for now they are very numerous and always on the lookout.”



In September Sister Xavier writes that her new hospital is now in working order.

“Such a nice one,—a great contrast to my former barn, which was unhealthy to a degree, and much too small. . . . God is certainly blessing the work in the Tche-Kiang; you would be surprised how all is changed even in the few years that I have been in China. The embroidery is going on very well; we have

just sent a large box to England. If we had funds we would start a place to make better satin than we can buy in Ning-Po. It would soon pay its way, and would employ and train many hands. . . ."

"*October 1, 1895.* . . . We have good news of conversions in the Taitchou. One thousand new catechumens at the central church appeared for the Feast of the Assumption,—a nice offering to Our Lady. There are two very energetic young priests in that district,—a European and a native. Their last capture was the captain of a band of thieves, who brought over all his men. It will be curious to know the result. Piracy there is a lucrative and a very common profession. . . ."

The letters of November give news of fresh chapel-burning by the bonzes near Chusan,—speedily checked by the appearance of two men-of-war; of the death of another zealous and overworked priest; and of the ordination of some young Chinese priests after a training of fourteen years.

"They are all promising and full of zeal, but not very healthy," writes Sister Xavier. "Study is a dreadful strain on a Chinaman, though some of them are very clever." She adds regretfully that they "do but replace the six missionaries who have died since I came here—four years ago. One is dying now, in great part from overwork. He had a huge district, numbers of catechumens, and he went preaching, instructing, and vomiting blood, until he brought himself to his present condition. . . . In some districts it is killing work, as the catechumens have increased so rapidly, and everything depends upon their being well instructed. Whole villages in the Taitchou have begged for instruc-



tion. In one place they have given over the pagoda to make a chapel, smashing the idols themselves. They are very much in earnest, and certainly have obtained the grace of conversion in an extraordinary way. . . . They are, as a rule, good, simple, hard-working countrypeople, and will in time make excellent Christians. But God must send priests to the rescue, and no doubt He will in His own good time."



One of the greatest blows which can fall upon a community—the loss of a beloved superior—occurred before the end of this eventful year; and on November 21, 1895, Sister Xavier, in announcing the apoplectic stroke which had seized "our good superior, Sister Saloniak," adds her simple panegyric:

"Over twenty years superior here, only fifty-six years of age, she was full of life, most energetic in visiting the poor and in making baptism expeditions; in fact, it was going out on a bitterly cold day that gave her violent bronchitis, which we fear accelerated the attack. She dropped quite suddenly when dressing, without there being a symptom before. . . . Her work seemed accomplished, so her *Nunc Dimittis* is sung; but it is so sad to see her lying there, not knowing any one. . . . We are so short of hands, but God knows what He is doing. Three Sisters arrive at Shanghai this week,—a French, a German, and an English one. But what is that to fill up the vacancies caused by death and sickness? Besides, a new house is to be founded at Kiang-Si. . . . The house is built; the people and the missionaries are calling out for the Sisters. They can hardly be kept waiting any longer."

The satin-making scheme for the boys is slowly being realized. Three or four have been apprenticed; and the eldest, remarks Sister Xavier, with justifiable pride, "already works better than his master." A welcome gift of five pounds is invested in two cotton-beating machines, worked by the feet; and this is her plan:

"We will get a couple of youths to work the machines, to earn enough (about from twenty to twenty-five dollars) to buy themselves one each, with which they will return to their village; and be replaced by other boys, who will do the same. Thus little by little various families will be helped; for when they have a cotton machine, a good living can be earned; it is an excellent though very tiring trade. A few little five-pound notes do turn out very useful, don't they?"

## V.

Early in the year 1896, Sister Xavier's letters tell of hard work, of cholera, and at the same time of remarkable success:

"This is one of the most important houses in the province, having usually four hundred souls within its walls, and two hundred more outside dependent on it. At Pekin the Sisters have over eleven hundred souls to look after and to feed. At Kiu-Kiang we have for a considerable time been compelled to refuse to receive children for want of room. It is terribly sad not to be able to take children into the houses. . . . We have had rather a trying time. Three Sisters ill; a young one very bad with fever. Imagine, she went up to 107½, and continually to 105. Now, *Deo gratias*, she is out of danger, but very weak. This

letter is being partly scribbled by her bedside. Next month we hope for our new superior. She will indeed be welcome, we are so short of hands."



AT WORK IN THE LAUNDRY.

"April 15, 1896.—We had such crowds for Easter,—a very consoling sight, as it shows how religion is spreading. . . . And coming here is such a difficulty, especially for the women, with their small feet. Some have to spend several days and nights in boats."



"Another example of the results of that dreadful foot-binding was brought to us last Friday: a little girl of ten with both feet dropping off. All we had to do was to cut the tendons, etc., and the feet dropped off, and she is left with two stumps. When healed over, she will perhaps be able to get about with two wooden feet. Several of our cripples inside do. They bind the feet so tight, it stops all circulation, often breaks them at the instep so that they are quite doubled up; and they use terribly hot water to soften the feet for all these purposes. Our Holy Infancy children do not have their feet bound, but the extern pupils do; and it is quite an undertaking. At Sister Foubert's, at Kiu-Kiang, all the orphans have to have small feet, as otherwise husbands could not be got for them."



Letters reporting how chapels in the Southern Kiang-Si are destroyed almost as soon as they are put up, converts cast into prison on the most flimsy pretexts, and how even "perils from false brethren" are not unknown, alternate with glad accounts of the Chinese Christian virgins who four years previously had entered upon their religious life, and who now, having made their vows, are going out in bands to different mission centers as schoolmistresses and catechists; "and they are terribly needed" to instruct the women.

So great an influence does the Chinese woman possess when once, after the novitiate of suffering and slavery of her early life, she has given birth to a son, and is the mistress of the house, that—

"If she becomes a Christian," writes Sister Xavier, "she generally draws after her the husband and children; but if the man

comes first, he often remains a tepid kind of creature, and the home is pagan. . . . The missionary (in the Taïtchou district), a very energetic young man, has the greatest faith in the influence of the women, and will not baptize a man unless the woman is also a Christian, to keep the home and the husband straight. . . . It is extraordinary what influence the Chinese woman can often exert, where everything is done to lower her. She is sold almost like a beast to her husband, who has the right to resell her, though it is considered an ugly thing to do. She has not even a name, but is called by the name of her son—*Lipa-am* ('Lipa's mother'). When bought as little girls . . . they are considered and treated as slaves; and very, very frequently they die of bad treatment, are tossed into the canals or thrown out of the house when reduced to the last extremity. . . ."

"To-day one of our girls was married, her husband paying twenty dollars for her. Among the Christians they are not allowed to pay more than fifty dollars, which must be spent on the trousseau, to break them of this idea of selling. . . . Some of our children turn out really well; though this early married life, surrounded by pagans, is full of difficulties. The other night, returning rather late from a distant village, it was quite dark, when far along the river we could hear the *Ave Maria* being chanted. On coming up to a little fishing-boat moored to the bank, we found that it was one of our girls and her husband deep in their Rosary, and quite heedless of passing pagan boats. . . . One thing all fairly good Chinese have is great devotion to Our Lady, and I think that she gets them to heaven in spite of their faults. . . ."

"November 16, 1896. . . . We have a French man-of-war here on her way to the Taïtchou, where one of our chapels—a former

pagoda—has been burned, and where a mandarin is making himself most objectionable. Our new house in the Kiang-Si is doing so well! The people are most sympathetic and kind. A refuge for lepers, who are very numerous there, is being begun. That disease is comparatively rare here. I have seen only three or four cases. . . .”

“*November 25, 1896.*—There is little news to give you: one day is so like another, with hardly ever a breathing moment. We are in much need of two more Sisters to get through the work properly; but it is difficult to secure them from Europe, and Chinese vocations are comparatively few. To have to learn French and to be ready to go to any part of China is a great deal for Chinese girls to face. . . . What suits them best seems to be their Chinese orders; they are local affairs, attached to one vicariate and under its bishop. . . .”



The fields whitening more and more for the harvest, and the number of the laborers, alas! so few, is the constant theme of the letters, as the wonderful workings of grace unfold themselves before the writer's eyes:

“You know that Tche-Kiang has a population of about twenty-four millions—and hardly a priest for a million of people! For one is now dying on the other side of the road; and two others are terribly delicate, but they work away still. The seven young priests ordained last year are a Godsend, though they only fill up the gaps made by death: they do not increase the number of laborers.”

“I am sending you by this mail a sketch drawn up by the Bishop. . . . So many Europeans have the same opinion of the



Chinese, formed from the 'port' specimens they meet, and the double-faced mandarins who so often are too sharp for them. This opinion is far from correct with regard to the mass of the people, who, away from the ports, live their simple lives much the same as the countryfolk and small countrytown people do at home. Even here the difference between the Ning-Po and the village people is striking, and farther away it is still more so."

"There is a third part to this sketch, 'The Hopes of the Future',—which I will send later on. I should like to have it translated and printed; it might open the eyes of some to what China really is, and God might use it to awaken some vocation for the Chinese missions. . . . I am enclosing an account of our work during the past year. You will see the baptisms used to be between three and four thousand annually. This last year not quite two thousand. God send us Sisters, and quickly! . . ."

"Up in the north of the province (Taitchou) there is more trouble, about a silly quarrel in which a Christian fought a man who refused to pay him a couple of dollars he owed. He was seized by the mandarin, marched through the town with the *kang* on his neck and the inscription, 'This is the way in which we shall treat all Christians.' He was thrown into prison where he still lies. A Chinese prison is something awful. The satellites receive no pay worth speaking of, so they torture the prisoners—hang them up by their thumbs, and will not release them until bit by bit, they make them sign away to the executioners their house, land,—in fact, everything they possess. Continually there are affairs like this going on. . . . The Christians have a great deal to put up with, and they must feel that they have European protection to be able to endure it. . . ."

"December 16, 1896.—In the boat to-day I have been able to

read the manuscript I am sending. . . . It gives an idea of what has been done during the last few years; for formerly there were hardly any Christians in the Tche-Kiang: they had been quite annihilated during one of the persecutions, and flourishing Christian centers had entirely disappeared. During the Sisters' first year, there were in all Ning-Po only two Christian families—the *Chus* and the *Ous*. And it was much the same all through the district. Even ten years ago it was a very barren land, catechumens few and far between. God has blessed the work at last, has He not? If He would only send more laborers! But of course He *will* in His own good time. . . .”

“June 10, 1897.—The cheque arrived most opportunely when all the purses had run dry. . . . We are generally in low water in June and July, as the allocations of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith and the Holy Childhood reach us only in August, and they hardly last until the end of April. After that we live on bits and scraps—*i. e.*, casual donations. The works have doubled and trebled. . . . In time perhaps the children's earnings will do something toward meeting the expenses of the house. . . .”

“Among our day scholars, a girl who has lately come proves a little of what I told you about women. Her father, a pagan, was taken ill, about three months ago. Tchingvong instructed him in the principal articles of faith; taught her mother (a new and not very bright Christian) how to baptize, and made her administer the sacrament when she saw there was no hope. They are the only Christians in their little village. The mother then caught the same illness. Tchingvong instructed her for confession, her First Communion and Confirmation, and brought her here, where she received all before she died. . . .”

"*Ning-Po, April 15, 1898.*—It is very strange people do not see at once the absolute necessity of English-speaking priests in China at the present time. In the ports the souls of Europeans are going to destruction for want of them; in the missions it will be the great means to prevent a civil war, or something like it, between Protestant and Catholic natives. The tension between them is terrible, and will go on increasing. . . . The presence of an English-speaking priest would do much to settle matters. . . ."

"*Ning-Po, April 22, 1898.*—Here the great tide of conversion is going on in the most extraordinary way,—ever on the increase even in money-worshiping Ning-Po. People are continually asking us what steps they can take to become Christians. Among all classes it is the subject of the day. A catechist was telling me how, to his intense astonishment, every one in the country, rich and poor, is inquiring about Christianity. Oh, if we only had priests at the present moment, they would need simply to speak and all would believe! . . ."

"Sister Germaine found one woman almost speechless. She murmured that for two months she had been asking her neighbors to carry her to the hospital, but they would not. Sister Germaine told her the absolutely necessary truths; and, more by signs than words, the poor creature declared that she believed, and began rubbing her forehead. Thinking she was in pain, Sister did something for her relief. 'No,' muttered the dying woman: 'baptism, baptism!' Sister then made the woman who accompanied her ask again if she really believed, and wished to become a Christian. 'Yes; tell the Sister to baptize me quickly,' was the answer. This was done; and soon from that hovel, where the poor inmate was dying as much from want and misery as from illness, went forth a bright soul heavenward. What an exchange!"



## VI.

Nearly all the Chinese missions are French, and the lack of English-speaking priests mentioned in Sister Xavier's letter of April 15, is once more insisted upon:

"April 24, 1898.—The Bishop is craving for priests. You know all the open ports are really English in tone, language, and everything else; to meet this, a sprinkling of English-speaking priests all through China is what is required. . . . I had another proof to-day of how much an English priest is needed in *this* small port,—how much greater must the need be in the large ones! It was an affair of some importance, in which the Catholic mission ought to join with the other Europeans to prevent trouble. No one connected with the business could speak French; word was sent into the city to ask me to go to the settlement and explain the affair to the Fathers. . . . These are temporal matters: what about the spiritual ones in some ports where there are so many Catholics! . . ."

"It is extraordinary how the spirit has changed during the last three years. We cannot go out without being questioned on religion. . . . On all sides the great topic among the people and even among the scholars is religion. All we want is priests. God grant they may soon come!"

An instance of the new spirit abroad in Ning-Po is given in the account (dated October 7, 1898) of the presence in state of the *Tao-tai* and all the mandarins at the consecration of Bishop Ferrant.

"One result is that a mandarin, the general of the troops in Ning-po and the neighboring towns, with all his family, spent the

afternoon with us yesterday. We had made his acquaintance when we were called in to doctor his wife's teeth; so we invited him to the consecration, and asked him to call and see our house. This he did, and he was so delighted that he returned with all his family. As they never leave the *yamens*, they were enchanted, and marvelled at all they saw. The *Tai-tai* is a very intelligent woman, so are her daughters and her daughter-in-law. . . . Chinese women as a rule, if properly educated, would be very superior. . . ."

The same letter speaks of the supposed murder of the young Emperor:

"There are sad doings at Peking. The report of the Emperor's murder, though contradicted, is still firmly believed. He was making such reforms,—in fact, overthrowing paganism with one blow by handing over the non-imperial pagodas for educational purposes, and sending all the bonzes to the big central monasteries.

"*October 11, 1898.*—We are passing through a series of changes. For one month reforms were going on apace: *yamens* being overthrown, pagodas and bonzeries offered to the missionaries to turn into colleges, etc., etc. Then came the Emperor's death, and everything was revoked, awaiting further changes. All are now in expectation of what is going to happen. It is extraordinary how quickly news is known through the city. When the riot took place at Shanghai it was known among the people while it was still going on,—before the Europeans on the Concession had got the telegrams."

The following year saw the great work of the industries for Christian and pagan boys in good progress,—bringing

the latter and their families into continual contact with the Sisters, and overthrowing all prejudice. There is a pretty picture in a letter of March, 1899, of the good done among the girls and boys.

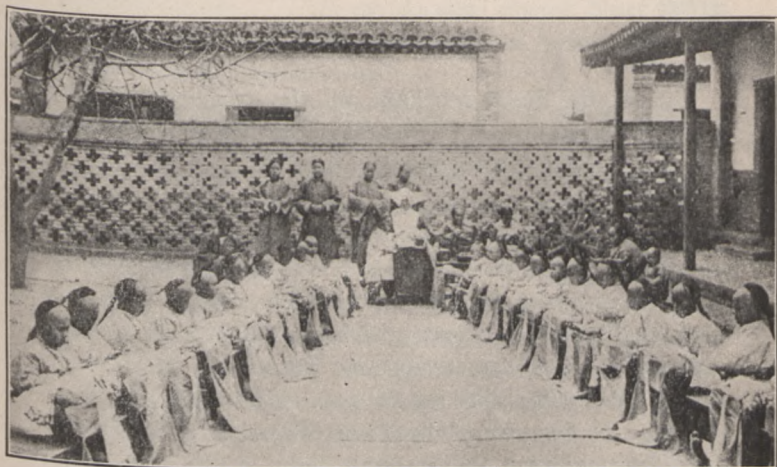
"Many homes outside are entirely kept by the work they get from us. In some cases they would be actually starving except for this,—women are so badly paid, as a rule. One sees these poor girls sitting at their doors—or, when there is a big piece to be done, several together in the courts of their little houses,—working away, hardly lifting their eyes; yet seeming very happy over their work, for it means so much to them. It raises their position. A breadwinner is a person to be considered and respected; even in matrimonial arrangements it has its weight, and wins for a girl a better match. If you could but hear them in the workroom after the day's labor is over,—the noise and almost screams of laughter of all those young people! It makes one thankful that they have some happy days in their otherwise very dark lives."

This is Sister Xavier's account of the boys:

"There seems to be a real blessing on our little weavers. . . . We picked out the children in the greatest peril,—some poor little men with very doubtful characters. But the result is more than we could have hoped for. These small boys, who were on the high road to become a disgrace to society at large, are now perched by their looms, as serious as judges, working like little men, and doing so well. It is true, the work once over, they are regular little *diables* for noise and pranks. But they are practical in their way, all the same; and duly informed the priest that if in the evenings they were taught reading, writing, and ciphering, they would keep quiet and enjoy it, as then they would be able



to become master-workmen, and not be cheated. Their evening education is, therefore, going to begin,—rather to the relief of the rest of the establishment. . . . After work is over all kneel down in the shop and chant their night prayers, pagans of their own free will joining with the Christians. . . .”



CHINESE BOYS MAKING LACE.

“Chinese children are most winning, warm-hearted, truthful, and honest. They grow up such hard-hearted liars and thieves because they are taught, trained, even punished to make them tell lies and be ‘sharp.’ . . . This kind of work among the outside poor, to preserve our own youth and assist the pagans, had not yet been tried; and if we succeed here, it will doubtless extend elsewhere, and be the means of saving numberless souls, besides forming happier and more prosperous families. Get many

prayers for these works, and also for more missionary vocations. I forgot to tell you the apprentices are paid as soon as they can earn; thus when their apprenticeship is over they have a little sum in the bank (for the money is not given into their hands) to start life with, unless the poverty of their families requires it before."



In 1900 the Boxer rebellion, and the murder of the German Ambassador at Peking, filled the whole world with dismay. Sister Xavier writes (June 25):

"The anxiety and suspense are now intense. All fear that the silence will be broken by the account of some fearful catastrophe. . . . Our largest house in Peking is next to the cathedral, and has over one thousand inmates, not including a large number of refugees. It is a great comfort to feel that all is in God's hands, and nothing will happen except what He permits. May all turn out for His greater glory and the conversion of this unfortunate people! . . . For over a month our Sisters in the North have been fully expecting and preparing for a violent death. Mgr. Favier, Bishop of the Northern province, warned all the foreign ministers of the terrible rebellion that was brewing, but none of them would believe him until it was too late. . . ."

The heroic defence by a mere handful of French and Italian sailors of the Catholic Mission in Peking is matter of history. Sister Xavier writes:

"Only on September 2 came the first authoritative account of the missionaries and Sisters in Peking. Eight missionaries dead (two massacred, several burned in their churches), two Marist Brothers, and dear old Sister Jaurias. During the siege she was

the heart and soul of the establishment, going about cheering and encouraging, in spite of being close on eighty years,—forty-five years in China. Everything was done to destroy the orphan asylum,—arrows of fire, bombardment, and mines. These last, at one explosion, killed seventy people, among them all the little ones in the *crèche*. . . . The day the allies entered, Sister Jaurias broke down, . . . and expired peacefully on August 22. . . . A beautiful end to a beautiful life.”

“It is really miraculous that during the two months’ siege not a Sister was wounded or killed. . . . At the hospital, which is near the legations, the Sisters were still there on July 16, having refused to leave their house, crowded with refugees. At two o’clock next morning some men from the legation rushed in and compelled them to leave. An hour later the Boxers invaded the house, bringing carts to carry off the Sisters. Like wild beasts they rushed over the place, yelling out for the nine Europeans; they fell on their knees, offering incense, imploring that they should be delivered into their hands, to be taken to the pagoda for execution. At last, disappointed in their hopes, they fell upon the Christians in the house, and murdered every one except two servants, who escaped to tell the sad tale. One young aspirant, seeing herself in the hands of these wretches, sprang into the flames and expired kneeling. Two virgins who assisted the Sisters were flayed alive, etc., etc. Certainly China has a glorious band of martyrs this year. May they draw down God’s blessing on this unfortunate people!”

Between fifteen and twenty thousand was the number of the martyrs; “for scarcely one apostatized,” writes Mgr. Favier in his first letter from Peking after the siege, “we are twenty-seven thousand Christians instead of



forty-seven thousand. I venture to predict that within five years we shall number fifty thousand."

"We are sending you a souvenir of the siege of the Peitang [Pekin] in the shape of small cannon balls," says Sister Xavier in a letter dated June 13, 1901,—“two of the thousands that were fired into the asylum. They must remind you of the special Providence that watched over and guarded all the Sisters in China. Last year six houses were in imminent peril, three burned to the ground, the Pekin asylum battered to pieces; but not a single Sister met a violent death, though during the siege the sight of a cornette was a sign for a volley of bullets from the Boxers. An altar was promised to the Sacred Heart, if no Sister was killed; and it has just been erected at the central house. The columns on each side of the statue, and those supporting it, are made of balls fired into the Pekin asylum."



Here we must bring these extracts to a close. Crushed but not broken, strengthened by adversity, the works of the Sisters of Charity revived after the passing of the storm. In May, 1903, Sister Xavier went to England to make known her wants. The cry is still for vocations,—for help to carry on the work, a cry that is heard from all missions throughout the world. May it find an echo in many hearts and prove an incentive to American Catholics, to give a generous support to the SOCIETY FOR THE PROPAGATION OF THE FAITH.