

## VISITING PROSPECTIVE OUTSTATIONS

Arriving in the first town we next asked everybody to come to the temple grounds for an evening meeting. And they came. No room could hold the crowd. We moved a table outside into the court yard and planted a Chinese candle on it to serve as our only illumination. In the flickering light from this candle, the sea of faces on all sides appeared almost like phantoms as we looked at them, and even the gods from within the temple seemed to look more indignant than they do in broad daylight. And no wonder that they did. Their real impotence was alluded to several times and the people laughed at them, right in their own temple. Also at this meeting each of us visitors had his turn for comments. The meeting ended in a general conversation and discussion.

When the people were finally dispersed and it was time for sleep the bad news was that the place was full of bedbugs. Experience has taught us, that vermin keep away from oil cloth, so this was put at the bottom of my sleeping arrangement and I had to risk it. The night was passed very quietly. A splendid rest was had right in the presence of the gods and the bedbugs.

Early the next morning we proceeded swiftly to the next town. Our belongings were brought to an acquaintance of the evangelist, who had a farm close to the town we purposed to call at. The cook went with our baggage.

Coming into the main street of this market town, we were greeted by a grey-haired man. We followed the old man into his home. This man was seventy-three years old. He was partly deaf, so we could not communicate freely with him. Many children were followed by curious crowds of men and women; these people did not want to listen; they only came to see. They were afraid of our tracts. In the crowd I singled out a man of letters and offered him a small tract. Without looking up, he declined the offer. The evangelist talked to the crowds in the courtyard, I spoke to those who ventured into the room. Also here was found a "seeker". He promised to come to our services in the city.

By the time the town population had come and gone, we decided to retire to the adjoining farm where we expected a luncheon was being prepared for us. Great was our disappointment when we arrived at the place and were told, that the noon meal was over and nothing was left. Worse still, the master of the house did not at first recognize his former acquaintance, and was much agitated at the arrival of the accompanying strangers. The man was small in stature, he was lame, and wore a long "pigtail." Each time he bore down on his diminutive foot, the pigtail reached almost down to his heel. His movements were, however, very swift. As he was a man of letters, he conducted a primary school in his home. At our arrival he ordered his "scholars" to leave the room as he had other things to look after than such foolish and stupid children. Believe in the Jesus-doctrine? Yes, indeed! At his front door we held a meeting for the village folks. When we made known our wish to proceed to the next town, he declared such a thing should never take place that day. It did not happen every day that such honorable guests came to his unworthy home and the night must be passed under his low roof. As we, however, insisted upon leaving, he again became very vociferous that we should stay. I am quite sure, however, that he thanked heaven when we were well out of sight!

On our road to the next market town we were overtaken by rain. Arriving in town the native worker had counted on the good will of a farmer friend but upon investigation it seems that the friend had disappeared.

## Visiting Prospective Outstations (Cont)

Looking around we were allowed to step into a combination store. The combination was that of a drug store and a dye shop. The place was so small, that when our few belongings were brought in, there was very little space left. The quarters became so thronged that someone in the crowd was led to suggest another house close by. The house alluded to was empty, but it had three big holes in the roof. But these people were all very brave, each bringing along a narrow bench and soon the house was filled with listeners. The leaks in the roof were forgotten, and the people paid close attention to the Gospel message.

Back to the combination store, we had to make some plans for an evening meal. As we were considering this problem the school teacher came to our rescue. He asked us to come into his apartment for the evening meal. Bringing along my provision basket, we were led to the room of learning and refinement, a low mud hut, about ten by fifteen, which served as bedroom, kitchen, school room, and what not. The meal was finished in a hurry, under the eyes of many onlookers. It appeared to them that I did not understand a word of all their remarks, and so their remarks about us became somewhat uninhibited and personal.

Now the scene suddenly changed. A man came in bringing along a New Testament, which he had secured ten years ago in Kioshan and since that time he had been a Christian believer. The man, however, knew very little of Christian teaching and a splendid opportunity was opened to explain the "way" to this man. The school master listened also very closely to this quiet talk, we had together. While we were talking together word came from the evangelist to participate in his program in the courtyard. So preaching and conversation were kept up to a late hour.

Our host was kind enough to invite his guests to an inner room to spend the night. The odor of the room was more than I cared for. No other place was left other than a small space right inside of the business counter. After spreading my blankets, I asked the lingering ones, politely of course, to go home, and invited them to come back the following day.

"But what is this noise?" "Ah, that is nothing but rats." Yes, but they are very impudent. By placing the pillow in the opposite end of the bed some relief from the noise was obtained. But the night did not last so long anyhow. As soon as the first ray of light dawned, the doors were thrown open and the people came back as they had been invited to the previous evening. My bed arrangement occupied most of the vacant space in the room so I was obliged to turn out for the day. There was no need of dressing, as the clothes were kept on all night.

As we had three more towns to explore during that day, we started out early in the morning. In each of these our experiences of the previous towns were generally repeated. In every place we found seekers after the truth. Have we not a right to believe that God has many people in these six market towns? By bringing these people the Gospel, it will become known who His people really are!

Handwritten M. Nesse Suiping, Honan May 5, 1916

