

THE BORDEN MEMORIAL HOSPITAL IN CHINA

TO UNDERSTAND the scope of our work in this hospital it will be well to survey the district of Kansu, which contains about twelve million people. The province consists mostly of rounded earth hills, cultivated almost to the summits in the short hot summer, but bare and yellow in the winter time—a time of intense frost but bright sunshine. The monotony of these hills is broken by two other characteristic features—the one, valleys that are watered, wooded and populous, compared with the sparse population of the hill lands; the other, rocky mountains with pine and birch and poplar woods, and everywhere flowers. Among these mountains wild beasts are also found. Thus neither are those quite wrong who call Kansu a waste of ugly yellow earth, nor are those utterly mistaken who find here some of the prettiest scenery in China.

Once Kansu was the border land. The Tartars, lords of the soil, were for the most part unable to withstand the impact of the higher civilization of the Chinese who came up the valleys and settled down as farmers. The Tartars were either forced out or absorbed, with the exception of a hilly district where they have preserved their own individuality and speech by adopting Moham-medanism. These "East Countryside Moslems" then, may be looked on perhaps as true natives. Possibly their presence near to the beautiful strath of Hochow has exercised an influence in bringing the "foreign" or Arab Persian Moslem to that district, where now perhaps they form forty per cent of the population, the rest being Chinese. Another famous element is the "Sala"—fierce men of a strange tongue that moved down centuries ago to a district round Hsuein-hua wedged in between the Chinese and the Moslems.

But question as to the origin of these elements in the population of Kansu is of less consequence to us here than the ever acute one of race hatred—Moslem versus Chinese. The latter hates the Moslem as a turbulent treacherous foreigner—a thief who has stolen from him some of the fairest of the land. While the Moslem hates and despises the Chinese, whose authority he would easily throw off, were it not for the weight of the other seventeen provinces of China lying beyond the mountains to the Southeast.

“Moslems are pigs!” was the taunt hurled at us by a country woman the other day who mistook the preachers perhaps for Moslems. And the strange spectacle is presented of warlike Moslems compelled by force of circumstances to outcheat and outmanoeuvre the despised Chinese. Can a people be both truculent and servile, at once the bottom and the top dog? By race wars the Moslems have been cowed but not conquered—compelled mostly to live in settlements outside the cities for fear of treacherous attack, and for this cause as well as for their own convenience, Moslem colonies have sprung up, most comparable to the Jewish colonies in Paul’s day.

The Moslems for the most part speak only Chinese (except for the Tartar and Sala who in addition have their own talk) but they do not read it as a rule. Some can read Arabic but very few can explain it, so that often neither Arabic nor Chinese books are of use to them. They are divided into sects “Heu-Huan” and at present we have in prison in this city one of them who has been giving himself out as Jesus.

The missions working in Kansu are the Christian and Missionary Alliance and the China Inland Mission. The work in every station is mostly Chinese. Lanchow, the provincial capital is three days’ journey from Hochow and has a Moslem population of 5,000 in four main clusters in the different suburbs of the city. The hospital is built in memory of the late William Borden, who had hoped to work among Kansu Moslems himself, but died in Egypt on his way out.

The hospital consists of a main two storied building, for out-patients and operations, and a number of in-patient pavilions, those for men and for women being separated from each other by the doctors' houses. There is a special Moslem block both in the men's and women's sides, with kitchens where Moslem cooking can be done. About seventy-five per cent of the patients are Chinese, and twenty per cent are Moslem, with a few Turks, Tibetans, and other foreigners. Patients come from many distant places—five, ten and fifteen days' journey away, some traveling all the way solely to see the doctor. The people show an increasing disposition to trust us for operations, and among all classes we have some friends—officials, soldiers, students, merchants, and farmers. There is accommodation for about one hundred and fifty patients, but it will be some time before all the beds are needed.

The staff consists of two medical men, two nurses, with twelve student helpers and four girls training to be nurses.

As to spiritual results—we observe that the Chinese are more easily approached and more receptive than the Moslems. Yet several Moslems have already made apparently sincere profession of faith while in hospital. One was a Mullah, a leper, living two days' journey away; another a young widow. Some show much interest for a time, and then the interest seems to wither away. Others regard a courteous assent to all we preach as a means of obtaining healing of disease. We know only of one Moslem convert in Kansu who has remained staunch, and have heard of one Chinese convert who has become a Moslem. On the whole, the Moslem work here is beset with difficulties and needs much prayer—and blood—and tears—if the Moslems of Kansu are to be saved.

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