

SHORT ARROWS.

NOTES OF CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WORK IN ALL FIELDS.



A CHINESE BETROTHAL.

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BUT where are the young couple? We had just arrived in China, and, eager to see something of native social life, had gladly accepted an invitation to be present at a betrothal ceremony, the more gladly that in both contracting parties we felt an interest. [So writes a missionary in Shanghai, who goes on to tell the story of the betrothal she witnessed.] The bridegroom-elect had been from early childhood connected with our Mission, was a decidedly Christian youth, and was now enrolled among our native helpers; and the maiden, also a Christian, was an assistant teacher in a Chinese boarding-school, carried on by valued fellow-workers. Well, we had to learn that the young people were "nowhere" as regarded that day's proceedings—nowhere, at least with reference to each other—an exchange of presents was to be their only intercourse; and presently, at the doorway of the aforesaid school, there arrived four Chinamen carrying trays laden with offerings from the *fiancé*, consisting of a mass of small boxes, baskets, flowers,

made of gay-coloured and gilded cardboard, wire, and paper. All were deposited on a table ready draped for the purpose, and then female friends bore them to the retreat of the bride. Thereinto we were allowed, by special favour, also to penetrate. It was the private room of one of the lady managers of the school. Here the damsel and her mother were supposed to be bewailing the event of the day, with its prognostication of parting; and to the question, "Are you very happy?" the girl replied, "You should not ask me that." But certainly two more contented countenances could not have been seen, and no wonder, since, as we were told, the girl's father was a drunkard, and her home wretched in consequence. She stood with her back to us, facing a couch where many of her gifts were spread out, but it was merely by stealthy glances she noticed them. The only objects representing any value were two glass boxes containing each six dollars, fastened singly to the bottom with silken threads, amidst nuts of many kinds, painted or covered with silk; there were pea-nuts in pairs, one large, one small, bound together in emblem of the betrothal tie. We were next called to inspect the gifts provided by the lady for her suitor. A black

satin hat, knee-boots of black cloth, a blue silk waist-scarf, and watch-pocket embroidered with gold and silver braid—all destined to be worn on the wedding-day. These were now placed on the trays which had borne his presents to her, and which we now observed were covered with handsome silken cloths, lined with a different colour, and finished with gay borderings. Indeed, the elaborate painstaking and skill, and, from an Oriental point of view, the tastefulness shown in every detail of the day's ceremonial, struck us greatly. Also we were impressed with the conviction that it would be no less undesirable than impossible to uproot the national customs of this people in our efforts to implant Christianity, save in so far as such customs savour of idolatry. The gentleman, meanwhile, at his home in the neighbouring native city, was entertaining his kinsmen and near friends, including some of our missionary party. The marriage is to follow in a year, and the young *fiancée* is steadily pursuing her school-work, her face beaming with happiness which she is now under no obligation to conceal.

A MAGAZINE FOR THE BLIND.

It will be remembered that not long since allusion was made in these pages to Moon's type for the blind. Now, we would desire to call the attention of the reader to the "Braille" type, a more recent mode of finger-reading. This has been chosen by the editors and publishers of a new magazine called *Santa Lucia*, as "the most modern, the most convenient, and the most generally useful of all those now in vogue;" so says the prospectus. The letters and abbreviations are pricked by a peculiar instrument and method, which are sufficiently simple to enable the sighted to print books for the sightless; thus giving occupation to many who have leisure to help in good works, and affording pleasure to those

afflicted with blindness. The originators of *Santa Lucia* have long been engaged in this gratuitous and interesting occupation, and it gradually dawned upon them that a magazine of a higher class than those at present obtainable by the blind would be of great benefit to them. Accordingly they have, at great labour and expense, commenced a work which will be, it is hoped, beneficial and permanent. They have obtained permission from numerous publishing firms—Messrs. Cassell amongst them—to reproduce copyright works, and from many high-class authors to reprint in "Braille" their productions. Thus they have started with a fair hope of success, and their first number, which appeared in March last, promised well for its successors. This monthly magazine will be sent post free for two shillings to subscribers in all parts of the United Kingdom. It is feared that the price will exclude many readers of "Braille," greedy as are all the blind of intellectual food; therefore a sort of appeal is made in the following terms by the editors:—"Subscriptions for copies for the use of those whose means do not enable them to subscribe on their own account are respectfully solicited." These editors deserve every support in their energetic and spirited undertaking. All communications are to be made direct to the Misses Hodgkin, Childwall, Richmond-on-Thames.

WHAT MONEY CANNOT DO.

A young Indian chief once remarked at a religious meeting that there is a very fine gentleman, of shy and modest character, sleeping a great deal of his time, when he ought to be about doing good, and that gentleman's name is *Mr. Gold*. Great and wondrous things this *Mr. Gold* can accomplish—holy and blessed things when working in the name of the Lord. But the poet has wisely warned us not to let the horse run away with the horseman; dollars are not almighty, therefore let us not bow down to them and worship them, nor reverence our fellow-creatures simply because they have put money in their purse. Little Paul Dombey asked a question we sometimes seem in danger of forgetting—"Papa, what is money, after all? What can it do?" There are grand and glorious ends that money cannot attain; there are flowers of rest and joy that no golden guineas could buy, and that may belong to the poorest without money and without price. We heard once of a would-be minister who paid some labourers to attend a service he proposed conducting; but when the good man's eyes were closed in prayer, his congregation filed quietly out. Money has no power whatever to confer the grace of God upon human hearts, or to obtain the presence of the Holy Spirit amid any congregation; nor can money bribe the solemn presence of death, or smooth the dying bed, or comfort the traveller through the Shadow-valley. When we are entering His presence Who calls us to give an account of our stewardship, stocks and shares and dividends, even if secretly idolised of old, are judged more truly then. May the richest, as well as the poorest among us, be able at that hour to say simply, with one whom God was calling from earth's passing show, "I am ready; I am wrapped round in Christ."



A BLIND READER.