



HE land generally known as Annam, or perhaps more properly as French Indo-China, lies on the southern extremity of the East Coast of Asia. It is bounded on the north by the two Chinese provinces of Kwang-Si and Yun-Nan, and on the west by the Kingdom of Siam, and on the east and south by the China Sea.

Annam, or French Indo-China

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The divisions of Indo-China with their populations are approximately as follows: In the north, Tongking, with a population of about 11,000,000; further south is Annam, with a population of about 6,000,000; again to the south, Cochin-China, population about 3,000,000; and south and west is Cambodia, population about 1,000,000.

Here then is a population of over 20,000,000 and to-day not one Protestant missionary of the Gospel among them.

Burmah and Siam have had the Gospel for nearly one hundred years; Canton province, China, has had its missionaries for over one hundred years; even the inland province of Kwang-Si has had missionaries for fifteen years, but Annam has been left to this day without one messenger of the Gospel to live among its benighted millions and tell them that there is a Lord Jesus Christ who is able to save from the guilt and power of sin.

The people are in many respects akin to the Chinese, under whose government they formerly were subjects. They also partake of many of the Malay characteristics and evidently form a link between these two races. The Annamese are called by the Chinese "Kauchi," which means "separated toe." The name has a singular significance and arose from an ancient peculiarity of the race, namely, that the great toe of the foot was separated from the rest to an extreme degree. As a people they are generally a quiet, inoffensive race, by no means as

industrious and enterprising as their Chinese cousins. They are in fact considered rather an indolent, slack and shiftless people and for the large part poor, as a consequence. In matter of dress they differ slightly from the Chinese, adopting in fact, the old

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fashioned costume of the previous Ming dynasty. They wear no queue and do not shave the head. They are considered the least attractive of all the Indo-China races. Notwithstanding this they are, however, a people

with immortal souls and a people that need the blessed Gospel of the Son of God, the Saviour of the world as much as we do. Many Christian people have a kind of condescending compassion, a kind of patronizing pity for the "poor heathen," and consequently feel moved to do something for the salvation of their souls. Do we realize that they have souls as precious in our Father's sight as ours?

Do we understand that Jesus loves them, and died for them, as much as for us? Do we feel, as we ought to feel, that we are their debtors to give them the opportunities of the Gospel? Yes, we are debtors even to the "barbarian" and who can tell what "the Gospel of Christ," the "power of God unto salvation" may do for even these neglected races of mankind.

The native religions of these people are Buddhism, Confucianism, Spiritism and Roman Catholicism. The former heathen religions are practically the same degrading systems that are to be found in China and other eastern lands, and the latter, so called Christian religion, is of the same type of corrupt Romanism that is found in South America and other such countries. The system of "making converts" is a wholesale one. Whole villages may enter the Roman Church at once without any real head or heart knowledge of the new religion; all that is required is a conformity to the outward ritual of the Romish Church. such "converts" are not worthy of the name. The fearful darkness of heathenism is but deepened by the presence of the Papacy. The only redeeming feature is the presence of a few French Protestant chaplains, whose work, however has been entirely among the French residents. At intervals during the past years there has been an agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society in Annam who has done blessed work among the natives. The wonderful success of this Bible work only serves to show what might be done were regular

3 - missionary work to be opened up in the land. Why is this vast field left without the Gospel light? Think of it again.

Among the 11,000,000 of Tongking there is no Protestant missionary work being carried on at all. In the Kingdom of Annam there is not one Protestant missionary at work among its 6,000,000 of people. And again, Cochin-China and Cambodia, with a combined population of probably not less than 4,000,000, and no Protestant missionary work carried on among the people. I ask again: Why is this vast field left without the Light of the Blessed Gospel of the Son of God? Is it because of its geographical position, just off the beaten track of the world's travel and commerce? This surely can be no excuse before our Father's face. Is it because the race is an inferior one and not worthy of the Gospel? See what Jesus has done for the wild and savage tribes of Africa and the Islands of the Seas, compared with whom the Annamese are civilized. This can be no excuse to offer. Is it because we feel that the Romish Church is there and it is unnecessary for Protestant missionaries to go? Why then do we send missionaries to South America? A slight knowledge of the facts of the case is sufficient to prove to the true Christian that the missions of the Roman Catholic Church cannot serve as a substitute for the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ. The fact that Romanism is there is but an added reason why the True Light should shine amid the darkness. Is it because it is feared that the French authorities would not tolerate the opening of Protestant missionary work in the land? This is a mere supposition. An honest attempt has never been made to establish a Protestant mission in Annam. Two comparatively recent events may be indicative of the movements of the providences of God in this matter. First, the friendly relationship that has been established between France and Britain in the past few years, and second the disestablishment of the Romish Church in France. That these two events will bring about a more tolerant spirit toward Protestant missions in French Indo-China by the French Government we doubt not.

Early in the year 1899 it was the privilege of the writer to make a brief visit to Tongking from his inland station in the province of Kwang-Si, China. The object of the trip was to gain information as to conditions in that land. One incident at that time made an impresson on the writer's mind more than any other, and it is typical, we trust, of the entrance of the Gospel into that great field still without the message of salvation. On crossing the border from old China into the newly acquired land of Tongking the first stopping place was a town called Dong-dang. The shades of evening were fast falling around us as we found ourselves (a Chinese worker, chair coolies and myself) in the center of the busy market town, inhabited by Annamese and Chinese, and guarded by French soldiers. We knew not a soul in the place and several

attempts to inquire as to a place where weary travelers might spend a night of rest seemed utterly fruitless. We could get no satisfaction, we could find no one who could understand Cantonese, and there seemed to be nothing of the description of an inn in the place. Standing thus helpless in the middle of a strange town at nightfall, my thoughts turned to Him, who is an ever present help in trouble, and I lifted my heart in prayer for guidance,—“Lord, where shall we go?” When I opened my eyes I felt a distinct leading to enter the first door that presented and so I pressed my way through a pair of tall doors before which we stood. The building entered proved to be the native yamen. I felt impelled to press my way from one room to another till I came face to face with an Annamese gentleman, who proved to be the local, native official. I addressed him in the Cantonese tongue, requesting to be directed to a place where we might spend the night, and to my surprise received an answer in clear Cantonese: “You may stay right here if you wish, sir,” he said; “I have plenty of room.” Needless to say we praised our loving Father and thanked our kind host, who at once invited us to his reception room, poured out tea and entertained us royally. He had long and earnest conversations with this man about the Gospel of Christ, the first witness we were privileged to give to an Annamese; we presented him with some Gospel portions and some Christian literature which he could read in the Chinese character, and praying that the Spirit that led us to him might speak peace to his soul, we were off on our journey again the following morning at the break of day.

Our prayer since that time for Annam has been that as the Lord led and opened the way in this particular case, ~~that~~ so He would, when His children go forth to possess this land¹⁰ open unto them a “great door and effectual”¹¹ that no man can close.”

In connection with the work of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in the province of Kwang-Si, South China, the Lord has in the past years of steady service given a line of stations from Wuchow; on the eastern border of the province, to Lung-Chow on the western border, a distance of perhaps over four hundred miles. The city of Lung-Chow, as will be seen by the accompanying map,

is situated very near the border of French Tongking. The opening of this station has been fraught with much strong and continual opposition of Satan, probably because he well knows that it is to be the stepping stone into the unevangelized “region beyond.” A work has been established there, however, and a little church has been organized of those who have been saved from heathen darkness. This, of course, is a Chinese church. A Missionary Home is at this time being built and we are praying the Lord of the harvest to thrust forth workers for the field of Tongking. This station¹⁵ on Chinese territory, and yet

within a day's march of Tongking^{It} is an admirable place for the study of the native Annamite language. Missionary candidates for this field must also have the French language fluently.

Three passages of Scripture have continually come to mind with reference to this most needy and neglected field. They are these:

II. Chronicles xvi. 9: "The eyes of Jehovah run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him."

Ezekiel xxii. 30: "And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, and that I should not destroy it, but I found none."

Isaiah vi. 8: "I heard the voice of Jehovah saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?' Then said I, 'Behold me, send me.'"

God's extremity is man's opportunity. Oh, for men who have some of that divine tenacity of purpose displayed in young Elisha, when three times, told by the old, stern prophet to "Tarry here," still pressed through and received the call and the unction to prophetic ministry. See II. Kings ii. Oh for men in whom the Word of God is burning like fire in their bones and who say with Jeremiah. "I am weary of forbearing, and I cannot stay."