

By Rev. Paul M. Hoaler, Wuchow, South China

For many years the evangelisation of French Indochina, generally known as Annam, has been brought before many missionary societies. First one and then another society have sought information regarding this field and the attitude of the French Government only to be finally hindered from planting a permanent mission inside the border.

After the French occupation in the eighties' the Catholics were given a favorable status because of services rendered to the Government. Thus the Protestant cause must meet Catholicism as well as heathenism.

PAST ATTEMPTS: A few years ago our Board made some effort to enter this field by way of northern Tonkin but nothing came of the undertaking. More recently the American Presbyterian Board made an attempt to enter from the Laos side but after some time they were compelled to withdraw. The French Swiss Plymouth Brethren have been successful in locating a small mission in Laos near the Annam border but at this time their force is reduced to a single worker.

Although we had once failed to effect an entrance we still prayed for these destitute millions of souls and kept the matter before the Board and some friends at home. And again in July, 1910, the question was brought before the conference of our South China Mission. As a result Mr. Hughes and the writer were appointed to the study of the French language preparatory to establishing a mission in some part of Tonkin or Annam.

A DEPUTATION TO ANNAM: In the month of May (1911), a deputation was sent to Tourane, Annam, to look into the condition of the field with the express purpose of making arrangements for opening a station. We left Hongkong the 22nd of May and arrived in Tourane the morning of the 25th. We had a cordial welcome at the home of M. and Mme. Bonnet, who were to help us in securing a location.

VASTNESS OF THE FIELD: The city of Tourane is a French colony located on the coast of the protectorate of Annam. It has a beautiful and well sheltered bay, which is too shallow to allow large vessels to enter very far, but more shipping would warrant extensive dredging. The Tourane River rises in the western part of Annam and as it nears the coast divides into many branches, forming a rich delta country, which is one of the richest valleys in French Indochina. Situated along this river are about 100 large markets where the missionary in the course of a single itinerary could reach hundreds of thousands of souls. As far as we are now able to judge it seems that this province of Quang-Nam is the key to the situation and from here we could open the other ten provinces of Annam. The province of Quang-Nam has two Phu cities and six Huyen cities while the total population is about 800,000.

The other ten provinces have a total of twenty-four Phu and eighty-six Huyen cities, while the total population of Annam is 6,000,000, and the population of all French Indochina is 22,000,000.

Throughout all of these eleven provinces where the French have located they have made good roads, built foreign and sanitary houses and have planted beautiful gardens. The railroads, which belong to the Government, extend from the Chinese border in Tonkin as far south as Vinh in Annam. From here to Quang-Tri there is no line but from Quang-Tri to Tourane the road is completed and has been in operation for five years. There is also a small line south to Fai-Poo, about twenty miles from Tourane.

RELIGION & EDUCATION: The teachings of Buddha and Confucius and Laotseu are the religions of the Annamites. The Annamese, like the Chinese, may worship indifferently at a Buddhist, Confucianist or Taoist shrine.

The great educational awakening has not come to Annam as it has to China but the French and the Catholics have some schools in the important centers. Beside this each village has its school where the boys may study their ancient literature in the character language, which is identical to that of China. About fifty percent of the men can read but the women do not share the privileges of education.

A PIONEER'S SEED SOWING: The work of our deputation was facilitated by our good friend, M. Bonnet, who is the agent of the British & Foreign Bible Society. He has been located at Tourane for eight years and has been the means of opening up this region to the Gospel. All this time he has prudently and patiently carried on his work, being careful

to maintain a neutral attitude towards political affairs and in doing so has gained the goodwill of the Resident and fonctionnaires. But his work has been more than that of disarming suspicion. He has made many trips throughout Annam and has sold thousands of Scripture portions and Bibles in the Romanized and in the Chinese character. In this way the soil has been prepared, the seed sown, and already the harvest has begun. At first M. Bennet encountered a little opposition from the Catholics but the Resident understood his work and allowed him to continue his labours.

CATHOLIC INFLUENCE Waning: For years the Catholics have enjoyed a strongly entrenched position but at present their power is waning because of the disestablishment in France. The Roman church here, as in their other fields of labor, seems given to political intrigues rather than the cure of souls; more like the agents of the Vatican than the ambassadors of Christ. This mercenary spirit has brought them into disrepute with the fonctionnaires of Annam and tends to increase the prestige of the Protestants. We humbly praise God that this opposition is slowly but surely breaking down and that soon we may preach Christ where he is not known.

The attitude of the officials in Annam toward the Protestant cause is not one of opposition but of indifference. Most of these officials are Free Masons inasmuch as it is generally accepted now in France that success is assured by becoming a Free Mason. Thus Free Masonry and Free Thinking are becoming the religion of the flower of the youth of France. What shall be the fruit of such teaching we say not know, but the Divine Record declares that what they sow that shall they also reap.

Another favorable incident of our trip was the visit to the Resident. He received us cordially and after being told the object of our visit, said that he was glad to meet us and to know that we were coming to Annam.

THE OPPORTUNE TIME: In this initial work of the colporteur, the changed status of the Catholic body, and the not unfavorable attitude of the fonctionnaires and Resident, we have a combination of circumstances which constitute in the truest sense an OPEN DOOR FOR THE GOSPEL. There is every encouragement to enter NOW and the responsibility and ability lies with the Church. In one village the people, M. Bennet informs us, are eager to know the Truth and will soon turn from idols to serve the true and living God. Then, too, there is another circumstance which brings us to a crisis in this undertaking. M. Bennet and his family are to remove to Haiphong, in Tonkin, to carry on his great work in that thickly populated country. Before leaving Tourane, however, he desires that we should come into his home for a short time so that he may help us in the French language and also to insure our being settled beyond interference. For years M. Bennet has sought to interest other missionaries in this field but up to this time no one has heard his call. It is the work of the colporteur to scatter the word but he does not have time for long preaching tours; while the work of the missionary is to preach the Word, instruct inquirers, baptize believers and organize churches.

Dear friends, we shall be without excuse if we fail to take advantage of this golden opportunity.

\$1,000 Needed for First Year: First of all we would ask that the Lord's people everywhere might stand with us in prayer and then we wish to lay before you the financial need. One thousand dollars (gold) extra will be enough for the first year. With this we can buy some furniture which has been offered to us very cheaply. It will also pay the year's rent and provide for the higher cost of living in Annam.

The Word says, "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters." It may be that you have been faithful in sowing the seed in India, China, Africa, or other mission lands, but here is a field where you have never yet been privileged to sow and to reap.

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*A MOMENTOUS CRISIS IN THE CONQUEST OF ANNAM...By Rev. G. L. Hughes, Wuchow, South China.

On May 22nd, 1911, the Rev. R. A. Jaffray, representing the Executive Committee of our South China Conference, the Rev. Paul M. Hoeler, and the writer, as pioneer missionaries, left Hongkong for Tourane, in Annam, for the object of making investigations re the possibility of establishing mission work in that long-neglected land.

PROVIDENTIAL LEADINGS: We had been led to choose Tourane as our objective point by a

series of providential leadings which, in substance, were: that Mr. Bonnet, of the British & Foreign Bible Society, in Tourane, entirely ignorant of the fact that we were preparing for Annam, wrote and told us that, for eight years he had been praying for missionaries to come to Annam, and that he sincerely hoped we would come, and that he would do all in his power to help us.

BIRD'S EYE VIEW OF ANNAM: Before proceeding further with this article it might be well, for the sake of those who are not acquainted with Annam, to give a brief sketch of this country. French Indo-China, consisting of Tonkin, Annam, Laos, Cochin-China and Cambodia, forms the Eastern side of the Indo-Chinese peninsula. It is bounded on the Eastern and the Southern sides by the China Sea, to the North by the Chinese Empire, and to the West by Burma and Siam. In size it is much greater than France. Its population is estimated at about 22,000,000. The Annamese form four-fifths of the population of the Indo-China of today, which moreover differs very little from the ancient empire of Annam. Annam proper is that strip of country, more than six hundred miles in length, which unites Cochin-China to Tonkin. The government is a protectorate. The emperor reigns at Hue with the help of regents and of the chief council of the kingdom, the Comat. The "Resident superieur de France" at Hue, is president of the council and represents the protecting power. The whole of the native administration is under the direct control of French officials. The Annamese are descended from the "kax-chi" which means "separated big toe" and is a peculiarity that enables them to use their big toe in a most skilful manner. Nearly three thousand years before our era they occupied Yunnan, Kwang-Si, Kwang-Tung and Tonking.

LANDING IN ANNAM: This sketch of the country having been given let us now come back to our trip. A two and a half days' voyage brought us to Tourane, a seaport in the province of Kwang-Nam, situated on the Annam coast about half-way between Saigon and Haiphong. Its commodious harbour, with a lighthouse at its entrance, might prove an excellent typhoon shelter but for the shallow water. The appearance of the town from the steamer's deck is not very interesting. A low-lying, sandy land, with a sprinkling of cocconut trees in the distance, does not lend much charm to the place, but after disembarking and looking around a little, one gets a different impression of the town. But it was upon our arrival at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Bonnet that our hearts were made glad by meeting friends of kindred faith. We stayed with them for several days during which time we visited some native villages in the neighborhood and travelled to Hue, the capital of Annam. We also went to Haiphong, the chief seaport of Tonking; Hanoi, the capital of Tonking; then crossed the country to Langson, on the Kwang-Si border. During these spying expeditions we had ample opportunity to converse with different people as to the best place to locate our future work. The following conclusions commended themselves to us as a just reason why Tourane would be the best location:-

WHY TOURANE IS SUITABLE:

1. For a town in the tropics it is considered healthy.
2. Mr. Bonnet desires to sell or rent his property to us. This would protect us from Roman Catholic interference.
3. By our beginning work in Tourane we would have the opportunity to become the heirs of the good-will of both officials and people which Mr. Bonnet has so deservedly secured during his eight years' residence in the place.
4. The Roman Catholic influence in this district is decidedly less than in other ports.
5. It strikes about the centre of Annam.

DAILY INTRODUCTIONS: It might be said that during our stay in Tourane, Mr. Bonnet introduced us to the "Resident" as Protestant missionaries belonging to an American society, who, in a few months would return to Tourane to begin missionary work. He appeared pleased and even told Mr. Bonnet he was glad we were coming. In making us acquainted with officials, bankers and shipping agents we were made known as Protestant missionaries - no attempt whatever being made to conceal the fact.

But although the present circumstances are so unusually favorable to make a start right after our annual conference, to be held in Wuchow next July (1911), yet this start cannot be made until we have the necessary finances to begin this work. On account of the stringency of the Home treasury; we do not, in the least, desire to draw from the regular funds of the Alliance, but rather pray God to move on the hearts of His stewards and thus not encroach upon the regular missionary offering to the Alliance.

OUR PLANS: Our intentions are to start on a modest scale. First, secure a place where we can learn the language and then, at the first opportunity, go out and preach and thus from the inception of the work make the simple preaching and teaching of the Word our chief occupation. After careful reckoning we feel that \$1,000 US would defray the first year's expenses.

RETROSPECTIVE VIEW: Over one hundred years ago, Dr. Morrison, the first Protestant missionary to China, landed in the province of Kwang-Tung.

*** About seventeen years ago, the Rev. A. B. Simpson, the president of our society, while on his round the world tour, heard at Canton and elsewhere, of Kwang-Tung's sister province, Kwang-Si, which was neglected and unoccupied. His missionary soul was stirred. By pen and voice he pleaded for Kwang-Si until a few young men came out to open this, with the possible exception of Hunan, the most anti-foreign province in China. The Lord evidently honored them for today the society's books in South China show a church membership of over five hundred.

PROSPECTIVE VIEW: But, today, across the border of Kwang-Si in the province of Kwang-Nam, in the protectorate of Annam, the Lord of the harvest has given us an "open door and effectual", but to keep this door open and prepare ourselves to give the Bread of Life to the unreached millions behind it, needs, we believe, \$1,000 US. for the first year.

CHRIST & NAPOLEON: Napoleon Bonaparte, before engaging battle with the renowned Mameluke cavalry, pointed to the Pyramids and, addressing his men, said, "Soldiers! Forty centuries are looking down upon you today."

Stewards of the Lord! A greater than Napoleon, who stood "at the treasury" long ago and who died on the cross to redeem mankind, and, who, nearly twenty centuries ago commanded us to preach the Gospel everywhere, is today, looking down upon you to see how much will you, my fellow Christian, lay down for this open door in French Indochina which, according to the report of the World's Missionary Conference, held last year contains nearly one-half of the unreached masses of the continent of Asia!

Dr. J. H. ...