

Vietnam
Precious Fruit in Annam.

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"Now the time was the time of the first ripe grapes . . . and they cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes . . . and they brought of the pomegranates, and of the figs, . . . and showed them the fruit of the land" (Numbers 13:20-26).

When the two faithful spies brought back a report of the land of Canaan, they had nothing to tell of the giants, and of the high-walled cities they saw there. They said, "This is the fruit of it. . . . Let us go up at once and possess it." But alas, the people could not enter, in because of unbelief. The giants loomed too large in their vision. They forgot the promises of their God, and even the beauty of the luscious fruit could not entice them to go in and possess all.

It is the time of the first ripe grapes in Annam, and there are the same reports to give of the land as were given by the faithful and the faithless spies. There are high-walled cities, seemingly impregnable to the gospel, and the giants of the land are exceedingly great. We are but grasshoppers in their sight. But the fruit of the land is good, and it is time to gather it, and through God we are well able.

It is difficult to describe well anything that is beautiful to the eye, and more difficult still to tell of those whose beauty appeals to the soul. One should exhibit the clusters of grapes to make this beauty known, and we would it were possible to actually show you this fruit of Annam—newborn souls—that you might feel the fellowship of their spirits and see the new light that shines through their eyes, that Light of the world which has just dawned upon them. Sometimes we wonder as we look at them just what their thoughts are, what strange joy they must experience in being translated from utter darkness into light.

Recently a photograph of this cluster of fruit was taken, and it stands before me as I write. It is the first photograph of the newborn church in Annam.

There are several young boys from the Sunday School,—the last to be baptized,—fine little fellows who determined to follow the Lord, in spite of their parents' displeasure.

One young woman is there who came to us five months ago, saying she wished to follow the Lord but could not come to church, because her parents forbade her. Now she is happy, because the Lord has answered prayer, and the mother, too, wants to be a Christian.

A few other women are among the number, wives of Christians. One is old Ba's daughter who was so ill last year. She had been sick two months and was near death, they said. The Lord healed her in answer to prayer, and very soon she was well and strong again. Both she and her husband were convinced that Jesus is the true God and have become His followers. Two years ago this man had turned Ba out of his house because she refused to worship her ancestors.

Most of the converts are Ong Thays—men of the student class. One is a very young man named Khan. He wants to be a preacher, and asks Mr. Irwin to allow him to read the Scripture and to lead in prayer in meeting!

There is dear old Ong Thay Yan, a simple-hearted man who received the truth with gladness in an honest heart, and who is not in the least ashamed to tell others of his Saviour. He loves to hear of the coming of Jesus; nothing gives him such joy. "Shall I go up when He comes?" he asked. "Well, that's good enough for me."

Thay Hoe and Thay He are members of the royal family, who have forsaken friends and the prospects of high position to obtain the peace their souls longed after.

Ong Thay Irom is one of the brightest converts. He was

an ardent worshipper of demons, but grasped the truth of salvation through Jesus very quickly. He is naturally very vivacious and energetic, and in spiritual things is equally quick. "My heart is always glad now," he says, "and I know the Lord is there; for when I first read the Bible, I could not understand it at all, but now the truth flashes into my soul so quickly; I understand it very well."

Irom was the one who brought Benh to hear the gospel, and the second time he came he opened his heart to the Lord Jesus and was saved. Benh is a big man—big in body and soul, with a childlike faith that is beautiful. He prays for all the needs of his life. When his engine does not run well, he tells the Lord about it, and it goes. He is an engineer on a train running to Hue, and in that city he has witnessed to many of God's power to save the drunkard. He tells of going into a man's house in Hue and finding him sick in bed. He first ordered him to throw away all his Annamese medicine, and then prayed with him for two hours! A few hours later the man went to market, the first time he had left the house in two months. Benh's great sorrow is that his wife still insists on worshipping the devil. At first he tried to force her to become a Christian. "Benh has a true heart," one of his friends told us, "he loves the Lord very much; he beat his wife today for not coming to church." "Beat his wife? Why, that is very bad!" "But he did not beat her very hard, and he did not know it was wrong."

The last of all is the preacher, dear old Ong Thay Thua. He is one of the most precious fruits, in whose life the fruits of the Spirit are so manifestly growing. His great concern is that he may be faithful to his trust and in no way cause others to stumble, to whom he preaches the truth, by an inconsistent life. How wonderful is the power of the gospel, which, in so short a time as two years, has transformed this man from a heathen, a worshipper of devils, into a minister of truth, one whom God is using as His mouthpiece to proclaim the glad tidings to the sin-bound, devil-chained souls of this land.

Surely the Lord is waiting for the precious fruit of the earth in Annam, and He will surely find means to gather it in before the great harvest day!

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