

1917

Việt-nam

History

## Missionary Department

### Two Burials at Sea.

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#### A Heathen Burial.

A few minutes ago all that was mortal of an Annamite was consigned to an ocean grave. As soon as life was extinct, the body had been wrapped in canvas and heavy weights attached. Less than an hour afterward the body was heaved overboard without any ceremony whatever beyond the momentary stoppage of the engines and the blowing of the siren, the latter for the double purpose of farewell and to mark the midday hour.

He was only an heathen Annamite coolie! One of many tens of thousands such in France and on the way there to help in munitions work. A very insignificant pawn of microscopic value indeed in the great world-wide tournament of the nations. Are not thousands of men daily laying down their lives in response to the call of country and the upholding of the vital principles upon which it is believed depends the peace of the world?

Therefore the normal and routine life of the steamer has been quickly resumed, if it had been at all interrupted by the sudden death and quick burial of this fellow voyageur. His death merely involves striking his number and name from the roll, and the reduction by one in the total number of coolies to be reported upon arrival in port. Perhaps if later on the question is asked as to whether anything out of the usual occurred on this trip, the death of this coolie may, possibly, be remembered.

Such is seemingly the present day value, in the sight of many men, of the soul of one of these heathen! Yet the one inexorable fact still remains true: a single human soul, no matter of what race or clime, is exceedingly more precious in the sight of God than all else in the world (Matt. 16:26).

Dear reader, are you to be included among those who think as above and set such a small value upon a human soul? Are you among those who are so culpably indifferent as regards the eternal welfare of the souls of these heathen? These questions are easily answered by another question. Are you

praying for their salvation? If not, are you not then to be included among the above?

#### A Christian Burial.

This sad incident of the present voyage revives treasured memories of a previous burial at sea at which the writer was present. Seven years ago the even tenor of shipboard life while crossing the Indian Ocean bound for China was broken into by the death of an old Japanese gentleman, a Christian, one of the trophies of the gospel in Japan.

As the sun was sinking into the western horizon in a halo of splendor and glory, the steamer's engines were stopped, and constant throbbing ceased. An unusual stillness and calm reigned everywhere. In the stern there was a respectful gathering of the captain, passengers, and crew around the canvas enshrouded body which was covered by a Japanese flag. Heads were bared as a Japanese passenger, another trophy of the gospel in Japan, reverently read the burial service and then offered a heartfelt prayer to the only true God. Finally the body was committed to the deep to await until "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven . . . and the dead of Christ shall rise first."

Praise God! in this instance the "Gospel-Link" between the heathen and this one-time heathen Japanese had been linked in the will of Him "who will have all men be saved" had been accomplished. But how sad is the contrast between the passing to glory of this Japanese Christian and the death of the poor Annamite which has just taken place. Have you failed to do God's will and neglected to give this now eternally lost soul the gospel? God grant that the striking contrast between these two burials at sea may inspire us with a stronger determination to put forth all our strength in prayer; in going to the point of real sacrifice; and, if "called," to go and preach the gospel to these 15,000,000 Annamite speaking heathen in French Indo-China.

*A. W. Jan. 1918, p. 216*