

1906, Feb/March.

Viet Nam

A Personal Letter

FROM G. LLOYD HUGHES

Dear Mr. _____

Several times since leaving the American and English shores I have thought of writing to you and the beloved friends. But since coming here, so much has to be done that not until now have my thoughts materialized into action. I am glad to tell you though that I have not forgotten you in "the sweet hour of prayer," and I am sure you have been praying for me also.

When thousands of miles separate us, how comforting and blessed it is to know, that

"There's a cable underlying every ocean wide,
For the chains of prayer are stronger
Than the Pacific tide.
There's a ladder up to Heaven, everywhere we roam;
And our daily prayers can never
Find us far from home."

My voyage from New York to Hong Kong, including my several weeks in England and Wales was, on the whole, pleasant, and very interesting and edifying.

What a delight it would be for me to take you and the Alliance friends to Plymouth, England, then to the Ashley Downs Orphanage (George Muller's), spend an afternoon among the ancient colleges of Oxford, and from thence to the busy city of London with its teeming millions, then across country to rugged, but beautiful Wales. Again, leaving old England behind, stopping at Gibraltar, with its frowning heights, honey-combed with guns of the heaviest caliber, that ever keep watch over the straits. Our next stopping place would be Genoa, the birthplace of Christopher Columbus. The magnificent ruins seen here would make you think of Italy's past greatness, when, known as the Roman Empire, she was the mistress of the world. Naples comes next in order with Vesuvius still in action, while close by are the buried cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum. The next day, in passing through the far-famed straits of Messina, we would pass Stromboli, an active volcano in the sea known to mariners as the "Lighthouse of the Mediterranean." A few more days would bring us to Port Said, through the Canal to Suez, then after four or five days' sailing, or rather steaming through the warm placid and shark-haunted waters of the Red Sea, we arrive at the Brill Island of Aden, to the south of Arabia, where probably Solomon's ships called for provisions.

Another six days would bring Colombo, the capital of Ceylon, to view. A few hours ashore enables one to see one of Britain's secrets as a successful colonizing power.

Our next port of call will be Penang, at the entrance to the straits of Malacca. After that comes Singapore, at the southern extremity of Malay Peninsula, and the most southerly point of Asia. It is extremely hot here. Between here and Hong Kong the temperature lowers.

All praise and thanks be to God for His Fatherly care of me during a voyage of over 13,000 miles. As you know, I travelled alone, and yet, not alone, for has not the Captain of our salvation promised to be with those who "go" out in His Name?

I suppose that by now, you and the friends are anxious to know what I am doing. Of course, the major part of my time is taken in language study. I have been on the language for about three months now. So far, I have been mostly occupied in getting the tones firmly fixed in my mind. Before proceeding further, I must endeavor to tell you what these tones are. However, their absence in the Western languages makes it difficult for me to define them, and much more difficult for one who has never studied the language to understand them. They may be described as variations in pitch whereby a different meaning is given to a word.

Their importance may be gathered from the fact that a slight difference in tone makes a great difference in the mean-

Anticipates going
to Lung Chow, from
whence Tonkin will
be entered.
Lung Chow not
yet occupied.

ing. For instance, difference in tone only distinguishes the words "Pig" and "Lord," "soft leather" and "dignity" in the spoken language. I ought to have said that, in the Cantonese, which is that branch of the Chinese spoken language that I study, there is, according to a certain authority, twelve well-defined tones. I only use one, though. I shall possibly use more when I have advanced.

Another great disadvantage the student has to battle against is the lack of textbooks or helps. These things I mention that you may see the necessity of prayer. For, while the acquisition of the language is not by any means easy, yet, I believe that with God and much *plod* it is possible. Praise God for that. How often have I gone before the Father when a difficult and seemingly insurmountable difficulty confronts me. And as many times as I have sincerely spread the matter before Him, has He helped me. Again I praise Him. I ask for your prayers that for His glory I may get an accurate and fluent command of this language.

After being in this receiving home for about a year I shall, most likely, be sent to Lung Chow—a city about 500 miles west of here, near the Tong King Border. So far, the city of many thousands of precious souls has never had a resident missionary. It has never been entered by a Gospel messenger, with the possible exception of two or three who have travelled through on their way to Anam.

In the course of a week or so, Mr. Hess, our superintendent, together with another missionary named F. W. Davis, expect to go there with the express purpose of starting a work. Their time for starting will be decided to a great extent by the condition of the West River.

The strategical importance of this place cannot be overestimated. Situated as it is in the extreme west of the province, it will become a great center from which the Gospel light will radiate to the outlying districts that remain unevangelized. Then, when work is begun in Tong King, the northern part of Anam, it will, doubtless, become the base of operations for that large field. That being the case, we certainly need your prayers. Pray especially that a solid basis may be given to the work from the very first. Remember daily our brethren, as most likely they will have to negotiate quite a little with the natives. Above everything, also pray for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit among us.

In order to get another view of the work in this province, let us come to Wuchow. We have a chapel here, where the daily street preaching is done, also another one where the Sunday services are held. The mission's school for preparing evangelists is also in Wuchow. Recently we had about twenty baptisms and some are to be baptized again very soon.

These are great bargain days for eternity. Time, talent or money spent for God in the propagation of the Gospel in the heathen lands is not in vain. Five or six per cent. is considered a very high interest in the commercial world, especially in reliable houses, but Jesus promised a thousand per cent. on a bank that cannot fail. I praise God for the privilege of being in China at the most momentous period in the world's history—when the Son of God is expected to make His appearance from the Heavens.