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BEGINNING MISSION WORK IN TONKIN

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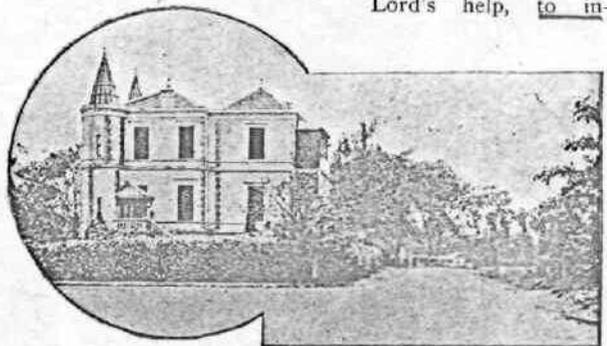
This is exactly the last day of the thirtieth week of our sojourn in China. We are not yet in our proper field, but praise God, we are no longer far distant from it. For in spite of the innumerable drawbacks with which Satan endeavored to throng our way, Wuchow has at last been reached. And here in constant communion with the Lord, and in the happiness of obeying His voice, we live in companionship with our brethren and sisters of the South China Branch. Just two days after our arrival, we began to mechanically sing over and over again the different tones of the Cantonese dialect, and this at the tedious rate of six hours per day and for more than a month; after that, we ventured on reading and betook ourselves to memorizing characters and meanings. The Lord wonderfully helped us along that line, and it was not very long before we could grant ourselves the very explainable satisfaction of articulating a few short sentences. It is to be noticed that the Cantonese dialect is not that used in Tonkin and that it can hardly be identified with the Anamese language. However, if we first commenced to study Cantonese, it was because of the total impossibility wherein we found ourselves of obtaining an Anamese teacher, in a place so far distant from Tonkin as Wuchow.

study Anamese on French territory would be not only fruitless but fatal to our prospects for that field, we decided to remain in Wuchow and temporarily take up Cantonese study.

On the 9th of August, the Executive Committee decided in favor of my making the said trip, to the double end of first, securing an Anamese teacher willing to come to China; and second, finding out about the place the nearest possible to Kwang Si, wherein we could, in the Lord's time, plant and let shine the first banner of the cross. For the work's sake, and in order that no intemperate opposition on the part of the Catholics might be incited, it was agreed that I should travel not as a missionary, but incognito, and, like Joshua's messengers, "spy secretly the land" (Josh. ii. 1).

The French conception of the Indo-Chinese domain included, as indicated by its name, the whole of Indo-China and should have had, as a geographical basis, the basins of the five great rivers whose waters originate in a cluster from the same region, and take, as they run toward their respective deltas, the form of an open hand. These valleys are those of the Red River, the Mekong, the Meanam, the Salwin, and the Irrawaddy. Only the first two belong to France; they embrace a vast region, unprovided, in the west, with

protectorates, but to write a few words in order to rectify an error, and enable the friends of our future work to know the true name of the field to which we have been sent by our God and Board. We are, both Mrs. Dayan and myself, preparing, with the Lord's help, to in-

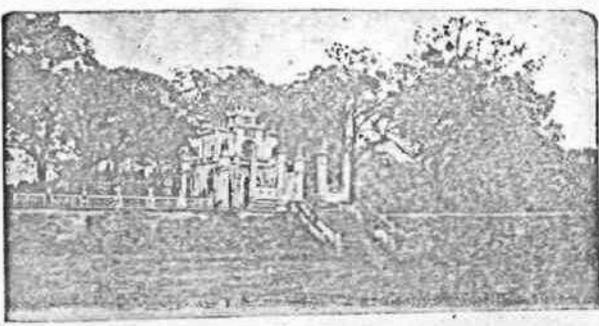


BOTANICAL GARDEN, HANOI, TONKIN

augurate mission work not in Anam, but in Tonkin. In the latter, which adjoins Kwang Si province, the Gospel has never been preached, and for more than five centuries the Catholics have had it completely in their power. The former appears on the map in a zone of a lesser latitude, and is in the same condition of spiritual misery.

The "Wo Kwai," a Chinese river boat under foreign command, makes a weekly trip to Hong Kong. By the way, it is the boat nearly all the missionaries take to descend the West River. The fare is comparatively low and another advantage to foreigners is that they are admitted to the captain's table for a very reasonable disbursement. I left the mission Friday, August 16th, very late in the night, and unexpectedly, having received a note inviting me to go and pass the rest of the night on board in order not to miss the boat, which intended to sail at dawn. I ran down the hill in the silence of the night somewhat sorry not to have been able to bid the brethren and sisters goodbye, but infinitely rejoicing in the assurance that their daily prayers would, doubtless, follow me all the way.

Oh, the joy, the ineffable joy, to go to the place to which God has called us!



PAGODA OF GRAND BUDDHA, TONKIN

Furthermore, the opinion was held that this dialect and language presented some similarity to each other, and that the study of one of them would make easier the comprehension of the other. And as, on the other hand, attempts to

natural frontiers and divided into five distinct parts, namely, Tonkin, Anam, Cochin-China, Cambodia and Laos. It is not my design to treat of geographical, historical or economical questions concerning these colonial possessions and

Arrived at Hong Kong on Sunday I resorted to Dr. Hager's hospitality, and at the American Board Mission took from the day the rest all Christians are intended to enjoy. It was a real rest to



ENVIRONS OF HAIPHONG

both my soul and body, a sweet rest poured into the inner currents of my being by the most precious meditation and French New Testament reading. On Monday, early in the morning, I was outdoors anxiously looking for some steamer bound for Tonkin, and inquiring about fares and dates of sailing. On prospectus the French Indo-Chinese colony is shown to be connected with Hong Kong by a regular bi-weekly service of navigation; but, in fact, departures are eminently irregular and vessels sailing to Haiphong from the great English port, or vice versa, are far from being so frequent. However, after three long and intensely warm days of laborious search, I succeeded in embarking on the so-called packet boat, "Hue." Properly speaking it is neither more nor less than a small "cargo boat," hoisting the French colors, although entirely equipped with a non-French crew, and sailing at the languid rate of six miles per hour.

I quitted Hong Kong at ten o'clock Thursday morning, August 21. The weather was terribly threatening, the sky overcast and the sea white with foam. A southeast wind of peculiar violence was sweeping over the whole amphitheater of



THEATER IN HAIPHONG

the city. And as a more positive signal of the approaching typhoon, one could clearly notice the high-hoisted flag fluttering over the dome of the harbor's meteorological observatory. While ashore,

trying to secure a "sam-pan," the thought many a time came to me as to whether it was not wiser and preferable to postpone my voyage to a later date. But, casting away all hesitation, I wound up my courage by this verse, "The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore."

At one o'clock we were in the open sea. The sea was raging. The rolls of the ship became so rough that I soon resolved to reach my stateroom, which I did, dizzy and a prey to violent seasickness complicated with an attack of intermittent fever. And here I am alone with God. I never feared before the awfulness of the waves, and instantly took the assurance from the same verse which, obstinately and unbidden crossed my mind:

"The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in . . ." I kept on balancing with the ship; I prayed and once fell down off my berth, and felt cold and warm, and perspired, and slept, and woke, and slept again.

At nine o'clock Friday morning we reached Quang-Tcheou-Quan, a French military concession granted by China about three years ago.

Here we saw the embarking of one hundred and twenty-five soldiers, who, having finished their three years' service, are at the eve of being liberated at Haiphong and permitted to go back home, via Suez Canal. For three days and three nights the ship is to be thronged with their noisy steps, and odor of their "drinks," and to ring with their licentious shoutings. One night I took the liberty to go down in the hold where they were crowded, and as I appeared in their midst determined to tell them about the world's Redeemer; a long and patriotic song burst out in the vicious air, and fifty hands tendered me the "drink." I am glad to say that they

were not slow to recognize whose messenger I was, and that, in return for their "alcoholic generosity" they received a good "portion" which the Lord gave them through my mouth. It was

a delight to me to sound the Gospel of Jesus Christ to this troop of compatriots and let them know that the question of salvation deserved more care than their eagerness for emptying bottles. For an hour and a half they kept laughing and ridiculing. Notwithstanding this, I gave my message. I sowed; may the Lord take care of the seed and make it grow in these wandering hearts to His honor and glory. Toward the end of my impromptu speech, I could already feel the joy of the fact that one of the soldiers, a bright young man of about twenty-five years of age, was quieted, and not as waggish as the rest. I met him the next morning and for more than four hours talked earnestly with him about Rome and Jesus' teachings. I gave him my own New Testament, the only one I had, and took the promise that he would read it carefully.

We left Fort Bayard during the night, and the next morning reached Hoi-How, in Hainan Island, from whence, a few hours later, we were again on the way to Pak-Hoi. We stopped but a few hours at Pak-Hoi, just enough time to give and take some cargo, and started



CHINESE STREET, HAIPHONG

again en route to Haiphong.

We entered Haiphong at three o'clock in the afternoon, and anchored in the midst of the harbor, which can easily be likened to a large basin of a dirty and pretty concentrate solution of minium.

I am vaguely told that France expects by means of important dredgings and fitted buildings, to transform Haiphong into a center of transit apt to rival with Hong Kong, and engross, to its own benefit, the whole traffic of the Far East. For my part, I believe that no one of those who know the present condition of the Red River would consent to give credit to such a utopian idea. On the other hand, it is peremptory that, from the natural situation of its hospitable harbor, Hong Kong is already ranked amid the greatest commercial ports of the world, coming, I presume, the seventh or eighth after London.

For the first time I find myself here; and yet all that surrounds me is familiar to me. It looks as though I passed through many places absolutely like this

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but in the most diverse latitudes, in Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Upper Egypt, Canada, Japan, China. The general plan of Haiphong reminds one particularly of some young American city. The same causeways, intersecting each other at right angles, the same blocks of buildings or lots for sale, the same squares, the same stores and dwelling houses where the architect's genius proved itself in the happiest association of stone, brick, wood and iron.

A great many works have been published during the last ten years on Tonkin, its port and interior cities. I read a number of these publications, whose authors, as faithful chroniclers, narrate what they have seen. But in my rambling through this port I find hardly anything that could be identified with their writings. And instead of huts and marshes and pirates, I could behold splendid buildings and broad avenues on which, side by side, walked the white-clothed civilian and military, and the horse and the bicycle ran as noiselessly as on any Parisian boulevard. Haiphong has a number of well-kept squares and greenswards, and a beautiful boulevard shaded by fine Persian lilacs. There are stores, cafés, and many superb hotels; in these Europeans can spend their idle hours in reading all kinds of Old and New World reviews. Every evening on the boulevard the French population, nine-tenths of whom are functionaries, gather to interchange opinions and views. While walking near by the hotel, patiently waiting for the supper bell, two groups of animated old men passed me discussing the telegrams of the day and the news that had been brought by the last mail. On the splendidly illuminated terrace of the hotel a hundred joyful and noisy people swallowed the appetizers, vermouth, cocktail or absinthe, which, in the worldly Frenchman's mind, constitute an essential part of the meal. Truly, I felt as though I was in some corner of Paris. At supper my only mess-mate was Lieutenant B., a wealthy and highly educated officer, who, owing to his two years' sojourn in the colony, was well versed in the various questions concerning it. It goes without saying that we talked a great deal about Tonkin, Tonkinese, railway, trade, militarism and missions. What I learned through that companion and through my observations and readings will give material for my report, which will closely follow this.

Things in Haiphong are nearly twice as dear as in Hong Kong. I have been only two days here, and my money, a very limited amount, is already more than half spent. On the first morning I began to hunt for a teacher. Two advertisements had been inserted in two different newspapers. I spoke to the hotel keeper and to accidental friends I promised reward; I called at the mayor's house; I visited the postmaster, the manager of the bank, the school-

master's private house. In a word, I filled up my time running hither and thither; but no teacher was found. The invariable advice was to go to the capital where I might meet with my desire. Last night, before retiring, I knelt down before God and told Him the whole desire of my heart along that line; and this morning I feel it is His will for me to go to Hanoi.

Here I am in Hanoi, the Paris of the Far East, as many like to call it. I wish I could describe the picturesque scenes and luxuriant delta which I have just passed through; but I feel unable to pay such a tribute in a language which is not mine. I leave it to others. Twenty minutes in a *pousse-pousse* (jinriksha) on a straight level road, two small turns to the left and to the right, and I am in the heart of the French city at the door of a hotel crowded with people coming from neighboring countries to participate in the coming exposition. In the streets the military element predominates. Truly pretty is this young capital grafted into the ancient Anamese city, Kesho, its elder sister.

As in Haiphong, attempts have been made by means of several influential men, and the only native who offered his services was of an exorbitant ambition exceeding fifty dollars per month besides food. I felt convinced that the only place to apply to, with some chance of success, was the "Mission"!

I resolved to solicit an interview with the Bishop. At ten o'clock I was at the Mission, an immense and splendid Oriental-styled building, enclosed in a garden surrounded by a beautiful line of agaves and inhabited by the richest tropical types of the vegetable kingdom. As I stepped forward toward the principal entrance "a boy" started out from the *conciergerie* (porter's lodge) and, in order to know the person I wanted, silently handed me the "tableau" on which the different Fathers' names were printed. This funnily reminded me of some middle class restaurant in Paris in whose vestibule, very near the door, the high-booted *garçon* requests the entering customer to point with the finger the "number" of the chosen meal, in order that the corresponding dishes might be brought without delay from the underground kitchen. I chose number one, Bishop G., and, five minutes later, I was in a cordial *fête-a-fête* with His Grace. The Lord must have certainly put in my mouth the right answers, and all he knew about me was my name and my nationality. I gave him the former through my card; he took the latter from my accent. After twenty minutes of talk I had the assurance that my teacher would be in my room the same day in the afternoon. What more could I expect? I thanked my dignitary and praised and am still praising God for the wonderful manner in which He led me in this difficult circumstance. Bishop G. led me through his garden and introduced me to a number of other fathers. I left him carry-

ing in my hand nearly sixty photo-engravings of Tonkin, kindly presented to me.

I was not to be deceived; for at seven o'clock that evening one of the fathers, Rev. P. G. V., came to my room and brought me the promised man. Blessed be God who gave me this victory through my Lord Jesus Christ.

It is somewhat regrettable that I could not carry my second point; my desire was to travel through the length and breadth over the northern part of the country and find out about a place wherein a first station might be established. But this was impossible. However, I rejoice to say that through the short trip I made all day yesterday up to Langson (on the Chinese border) I could get a faint idea of the district in which we might begin our work. This morning as I with my teacher am preparing to sail back for China, I feel an infinite joy, the joy of the Lord, welling up in my heart. Surely His goodness and mercy followed me every step of the way and even mine enemies rendered useful service unto me.

WHO IS DOING YOUR WORK?

In all the world there is nothing so wonderful as "God's way with a soul." This, the actual experience of one woman, may have its message for others.

She had a beautiful girlhood, rich in all that love and wealth could give. Then trouble came and everything was swept away from her—parents, husband, children and wealth. In her anguish she prayed passionately for death; death alone was refused her.

Her brother took her abroad, hoping thus to lift her from her grief, but though several years passed so, she still prayed for death. Then one night she had a dream. She thought she had gone to heaven and saw her husband coming toward her. She ran to him full of joy. To her terror, no answering joy shone on his face, only surprise and almost indignation.

"How did you come here?" he asked. "They didn't say that you were to be sent for; I did not expect you for a long time."

"But aren't you glad?" she cried.

But again he only answered, as before, "How did you come? I didn't expect you," and there was no gladness in his tone or eyes.

With a bitter cry she turned from him. "I'll go to my parents," she faltered. "They, at least, will welcome me." So she went on until she found her parents; but instead of the tender love for which her heart was sick she met only the same cold looks of amazement, the same astonished questions. Faint and heartbroken, she turned from them, too.

"I'll go to my Saviour," she cried. "He loves me, if no one else does."

Then, in her dream, she reached the Saviour. She was right—there was no coldness there; but through His love the sorrow of His voice thrilled her into wondering silence. "Child, child, who is doing your work down there?" Then, at last, she understood.