

# A French Pastor's Tour Through Indo-China

M. ALFRED MARTIN

For some time I had been kindly invited by Rev. W. G. Sheppard, the Agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society in Shanghai, (of which I have been sub agent in French Indo-China for several years), to visit the colporteurs of the Society, who are working under the direction of the missionaries of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Annam, Cochin-China and Cambodia. The object of my journey was to be, primarily, to inspect their work, encourage these humble but faithful servants of our Lord, and make them realize our warm Christian sympathy, while at the same time giving them some advice.

My pastoral duties in Tankin have hitherto hindered my making this journey, but at last in the month of June it was possible for me to make an extended tour, accompanied by the Rev. E. F. Irwin and one of the zealous young native students of the Bible School at Tourane who translated my messages from French into Annamese. On this trip I not only had the pleasure of inspecting the excellent work done by some of these colporteurs, but I also, as a former missionary among the Pahouin cannibals, greatly enjoyed seeing the work of evangelization and deeply appreciated the spiritual results striven for and obtained.

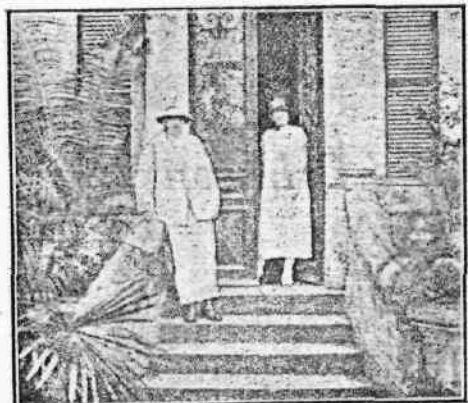
The work accomplished has been true missionary work in every sense of the term. First there has been the preparation and clearing of the soil, then the spiritual conquest, and now the building up of the church. An intense and well-directed battle has been waged, year after year, against superstition, ignorance, and paganism,—in a word against Sin. One can see clearly how under the constant influence of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and the example of the Christian homes, prejudice has disappeared, morals have improved, hearts have been opened, and souls have been won to Christ the Saviour.

The journey from Haiphong to Saigon was made in one of the regular coasting steamers. From Saigon throughout Cochin-China and Cambodia there are excellent autobus services, rapid and comfortable, because of the good roads maintained everywhere by the government. These two provinces are amongst the richest rice-producing districts of the world, and consequently the natives are well fed and well clothed, even though notoriously lazy. The annual floods, in some parts submerging the land to a depth of several yards, bring with them deposits of rich alluvial soil, thus obviating the need of fertilizers, so that a comparatively small outlay of money and labor produce fine crops. Consequently the people are ready to spend their easily-earned money freely, and therefore also willingly buy the Scripture portions and other Christian literature. The sales even of our more expensive books have been splendid, and we can but hope and pray that some at least of this seed has been sown

on good soil and will bear fruit some thirty, some sixty, and some even one hundred fold.

At Saigon I preached, on June 14th, to a native Christian audience particularly attentive and thoughtful. The preaching which tells of the Heavenly Father, the God of love, the Saviour of the world, is that which finds its way to the hearts. After the sermon many of those present partook of the Holy Communion.

At Pnompenh we held two meetings during which we exhorted the Christians, the members of the church, to follow with increasing faithfulness in the footsteps of Jesus Christ, our divine model. Here as in Saigon we felt that



Pastor and Mme. Martin.

we were speaking to souls who had found repose and peace in the Gospel.

At Battambang we found a new-born church, a small nucleus of Christians, whose faithfulness and consecration will prepare a "new people" for God.

At Chaudoc, Mytho, Long-xuyen and Vinh-long there are equally encouraging results. The work of the missionary, aided by the native evangelists and Bible Society colporteurs, has already borne much fruit.

I do not wish to give any statistics, for fear of being inexact, but I was profoundly rejoiced and edified to meet, in all these churches and outstations, members who were firm in the faith, rejoicing in their knowledge of the truth, who give evidence of the faith that is in them by a complete change in their lives, and who prove by material sacrifices that their most earnest desire is to be worthy disciples of the Master.

The church at Sadec made a profound impression on me, for there is no resident missionary, but only a native student-evangelist and his family, with eight colporteurs assisting. One finds here a large chapel well filled with Christians, whose joyous and open faces and personal testimonies prove that this work is certainly not the fruit of some human code of moral teaching, but truly the fruit of the Gospel which regenerates and saves.

Returning to Saigon we began our return journey to Hanoi overland, traveling some

twelve hours by train to Nha-trang. Here I visited the Resident of the province and told him of my desire to place a colporteur there. In order to avoid misunderstandings I later also asked the Resident-Superior at Hue to kindly consent to this. I received a most cordial welcome from this latter important French official, and very soon we will have a colporteur at Nha-trang. The same took place at Vinh where the Resident, whom I have known a long while, and who has been the "Chef de cabinet" of two of the governor-generals, authorized me to install a colporteur in his province also. We have rented a house where this colporteur will live. This colporteur will have a splendid field of labor.

Two days further by auto from Nha-trang brought us to Tourane, a distance of some five hundred miles due north from Saigon. In this, the first station of the Christian and Missionary Alliance in Indo-China, opened in 1911, we passed Sunday, June 28th. I preached here in the morning and again in the evening in a well-organized, live, missionary church. Men, women and children filled with their persons and their voices the large building so neat and well arranged. Some French people were also present. I will never forget the day I passed there, for all I saw, all that I heard was the manifest proof that the Spirit of God is all-powerful to transform the hardest and most darkened hearts.

It is surely quite possible that not all these Christians, not all these church members, walk in the light of the Gospel. As with so many others, be they of the white, the black or the yellow race, so these Christians also have made their slips, their failings. It may even be that some have only been "made white" on the surface,—have been content to "cleanse the outside,"—and have neglected the internal cleansing. But these exceptions, if they exist, do not at all diminish the value of so many lost sheep who have been sought, found and saved by the Good Shepherd.

From the midst of Indo-China's millions comes the call for help, more and more important. There are yet many shadows to chase away, sin under a thousand forms to resist, souls to be won to Jesus the Redeemer. It must not be that these cries of distress from so many heathen hearts remain unanswered. The Church of Jesus Christ must cause her Saviour-King to reign,—oh, teach us to say with more of faith and love, "Thy Kingdom come."

For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. 2 Timothy 1:12, 13.