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Annam and Its Opportunities.

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Author not indicated, but prob. Lewis H.

A.W. p. 121, 122

It is nearly six months since I arrived in this beautiful land of Annam where during the day the sun shines in all his glory and during the night the brilliant stars gleam in the dark blue sky. We never tire of our walk by the sea at the sunset hour, when often the sky is resplendent in tints of rose, and gold, and azure as the sun sinks like a ball of fire behind the lofty purple mountains and throws a shimmering pathway of light across the blue waters of the bay. Then as one watches and waits in the deepening twilight, the after-glow lights up the western sky, and colored rays shoot upward almost to the zenith—the last “rosy-fingered” messengers of the king of day. How one longs for the day when the “Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings” and shed the light of His love on these millions of souls who are still in such spiritual darkness. Then shall the “beauty of holiness” be a fitting complement to the beauty of nature.

This afternoon we were attracted by the sound of drums, bells, flutes, etc. In a little Annamese home near here an old grandmother died a day or two ago, and the funeral procession was about to start. Some of us went to look and take pictures. The procession took a long time to get into proper order, as evidently everything had to be arranged according to the ancient custom.

At the head was a lofty banner with several large characters inscribed on it. Next came the shrine containing the sacred ancestral tablets, carried on the shoulders of several men. The son of the deceased rested his chin on it and walked backwards all the way to the graveyard. Then came the hearse supported on long poles and carried by about twenty coolies. Behind the hearse walked the daughter-in-law, with head and shoulders bowed and her hair streaming around her. At different points in the procession were groups of Taoist and Buddhist priests chanting their prayers, ringing bells, etc. Many white banners were borne along on either side by white-robed boys.

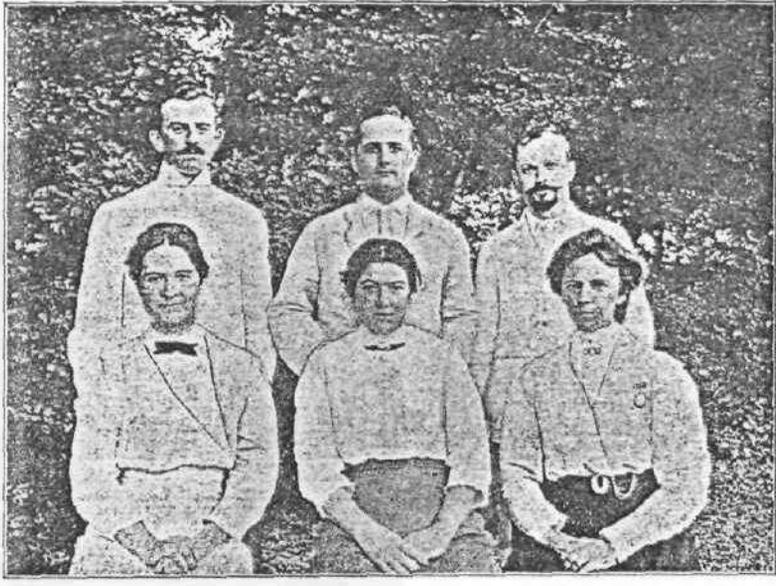
I have visited the people more than once, and my teacher and I had a long talk with the old lady. Later she came to the meeting and came to visit me in my room. Poor old soul! She heard the gospel story with intelligence and interest, and I have been wondering these days how much of it she may have taken in and understood.

The funeral was conducted with much pomp and with regard to all heathen customs. Yesterday I stood at the entrance of the home and watched the relatives take their turns in frequent prostrations before the shrine, which I suppose contained the ancestral tablet. The spirit of the deceased is supposed to enter this tablet; therefore

fruit and food are offered before it, and tapers and incense sticks are kept burning. Behind the screen was the coffin with candles burning on it. To one side was a table around which was seated a group of well dressed Annamese. A little farther off were the musicians, filling the place with their weird and wailing music. In an adjoining room the women were busy preparing quantities of food, for the living must feast as well as the dead. This is all so sad from the Christian's point of view, but it is very hard for the Annamese to give up their ancestral worship. According to their custom, this old lady will have to be worshiped by her son as long as he lives, for the women share equally with the men in the matter of receiving worship, although only the sons can perform these rites.

I have also had a talk with the son. He is well educated and intelligent. He has also attended our meeting, but I wish and pray that he might accept the gospel. His little daughter is one of my special friends. She often comes and visits me and has learned the whole of “Jesus Loves Me,” which we have translated into Annamese. She is a

bright child and comes regularly to the services. I trust she will learn to love Jesus while she is young. To-day she was riding in a ricksha behind the funeral procession, sobbing bitterly. I believe she really loved the gentle old grandmother. The saddest part to me in such cases is that I cannot truthfully hold out any hope of a happy future together with the loved and lost. Oh, how completely lost they are! Without any assurance of a heavenly home or a happy reunion. One can only



TOP ROW: MR. BIRKEL, MR. HOSLER, MR. SODERBERG.
LOWER: MISS RUSSELL, MRS. HOSLER, MISS HAZENBERG.

commit them to a merciful God, knowing that He will deal justly and gently with these souls who knew not the light. Surely, ours is the greater responsibility for not bringing them the gospel sooner. Think of it! Nearly two thousand years since Jesus died, and now, probably for the first time in all these ages, there is a little handful of Protestant missionaries here with hearts eager to tell the beautiful story of Jesus and His love. When I talk to my teacher about Jesus, and of how long ago He came to earth, she, too, seems so surprised that we have only come now. And even now in this twentieth century—this century of open door, of big business, of immense wealth, of thousands of rich, luxury-loving church members—we are so pitifully hampered by the lack of men and money. One wonders what the Christian men are doing—whether they, too, like the five foolish virgins, have fallen asleep, and have forgotten the Master's command to “go into all the world and preach the Gospel.” How great will be their regret when, perhaps very soon, the cry shall go forth, “Behold the Bridegroom cometh,” and they may hear Him say

surely if any young man is disobeying this last and explicit command of Jesus, the oil in his lamp must be perilously low. We know that all are not called to the mission field, but for those who have the necessary qualifications, the "burden of proof" rests with those who stay at home. There is work on the mission field, especially pioneer work, as this in Annam, which can only be done by men; such as opening up new stations, and making frequent trips into the interior, parts of which are almost unexplored. Remember the 20,000,000 or more in this land, who have practically heard nothing of the Gospel, except a few who have learned the distorted Roman Catholic version. Can the winning of a few extra dollars, or the gaining of a fleeting reputation compensate for the loss of the eternal reward which shall be theirs who dare to chose the best?

We are trying to reach several of the outlying villages. In some there is an interest shown, but in others the people are like those over whom Jesus wept, who "would not" be gathered in. It is often a comfort to me to remember that even Jesus met such a varying reception, some even begging Him to go away. Surely, the servant does not need to expect better treatment than the Master. "In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

One Sunday afternoon I was speaking to a group of people in a near-by village, a man who happened to be there asked me to come to his village next Sunday. This I did, and have held a meeting in his house every Sunday since and have always had an attentive audience. Last Sunday it was so interesting to find an elderly man there, who had read the Gospel of John in Chinese Wenli version, probably a copy he had bought from a colporteur of the B. & F. B. S. He voluntarily acted as my assistant in repeating and explaining to the others what I said, and seemed to have an understanding of the Gospel. Oh, pray that this man and many others may be enlightened by the Holy Spirit, and that they may thus learn to know Jesus. Almost daily I have an opportunity to speak to several women and girls in the neighborhood and often visit in their homes, many of which are near our mission compound.

We have now a few copies of the Gospel of Mark in the colloquial, but not enough for general distribution or sale. They just beg for these Gospels, and it is so hard to have nothing to give them—no tracts or anything in the colloquial, only in the Wenli, and this is like a foreign language to most of them and must be translated. We are longing and praying for a small printing press of our own here in Tourane. Wuchow is so far off, and the postage on books so high that it is difficult for us. Annam is a foreign country as regards China, and so for things from China we must pay postage and customs as if they came from America.

We have at last, after long delay, got a little chapel. It is only a large-sized Annamese house, built of bamboo and grass. It was bought ready-made in a village and brought here in sections. However, we are well pleased with it, and no doubt the people will feel at home in it. We wish we could keep it permanently, but the French law will only grant us a temporary permit, as this is a French concession, and the houses in the city limits must be built of brick or stone. At our first service we had a good attendance, and we solicit the prayers of God's people that He may give us a rich harvest of souls in this chapel.

This week Mr. Hosler has been a long way up the river in the interior, where in many places the virgin forest

comes down to the water's edge, and "Ong Cop," i.e., Mr. Tiger, roams unhindered, especially as the Annamese have a superstitious fear of killing his majesty. These forests and mountains are chiefly inhabited by the stalwart, savage race known as Mois. These people have no written language, and are far less intelligent and persevering than the Annamese. Their language is quite different, and is said to be much easier because of the absence of tones. They are, I believe, entirely without the Gospel, even the Roman Catholic variety. Here is a fine chance for some enterprising, earnest missionary to "come over and help us" by learning their language, reducing it to writing, and then giving them the Gospel. What finer lifework than this for any Christian man! A journey of a day or two by "sampan" up the river brings one into the heart of their country.

" * * * so much to do,
So little done, such things to be."

Surely "it is high time to awake out of sleep," to "work while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work."

I have tried to give you a glimpse of the sunshine and shadow of missionary life in Annam—the boundless opportunities for service, contrasting with the loneliness, the absence of loved ones in the homeland, and the other minor tribulations. But we know that as the glorious mountains are around about Tourane, so the Lord is round about His people; and as we can ever hear the music of the boundless Pacific, as its waves roll in on the shores of Annam, so God's great love is ever going out towards these people.

Probably Grace Hazenbury