

A Visit to Our Eastern Asia Missions.

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ROBERT H. GLOVER. July 10, 1915

XIV. Through Annam and Tonkin.

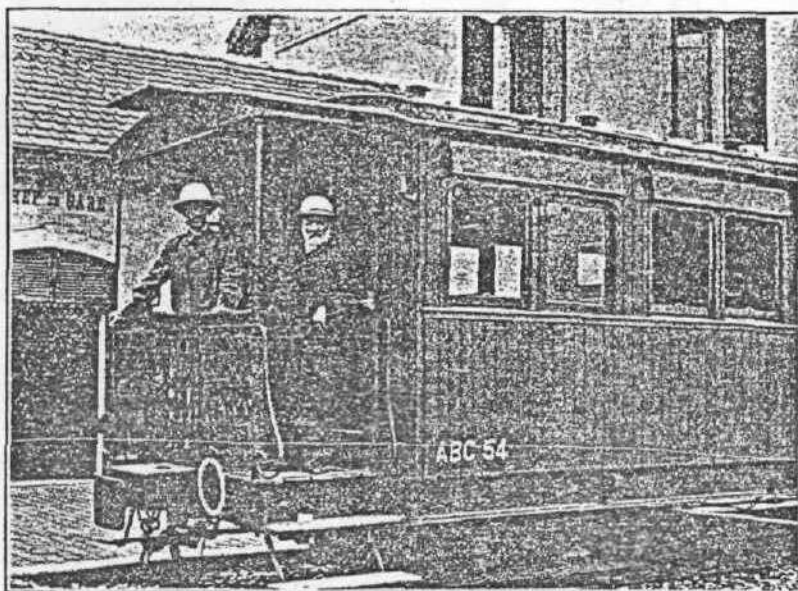
After a calm and restful voyage down the China coast from Shanghai we came to anchor on the morning of February 24th, in the outer harbor of Hongkong. Ordinarily our ship should have steamed directly into the inner harbor and its passengers have gone ashore promptly. The approach to this British port, however, brought forcibly to mind the fact that war is on. All vessels are required to enter and depart by one stipulated channel. A little earlier the approaches had been mined and vessels had to be piloted in and out for safety, but since all German men-of-war have been swept from these far-eastern waters the mines have been removed. A close watch is kept up, however, by police patrol launches, and all vessels arriving are subjected to a long and rigid process of examination, usually requiring several hours. The presence of a German or Austrian among the passengers would bring complications, and even a German name on the passenger list meant more investigation and delay. Leaving the colony is attended with even more difficulty than arriving. Every passenger must apply in person to Army Headquarters, give satisfactory evidence as to his identity and movements, and obtain a permit to board a vessel. In our case as bound for French Indo-China we had to secure a British passport, affix to it our photo and have it countersigned by the French Consul, a good-sized fee being charged for each item, and even all this did not exempt us from the customary visit to the Provost Marshal—the third such

visit—for permission to sail on a certain date and vessel. One can imagine the cost and inconvenience of such regulations to the traveling public, as Hongkong is one of the largest shipping ports in the world. And there is the further fact that, owing to the war, steamer movements and connections are much less certain than ordinarily. These combined reasons actually held us up for a whole week—

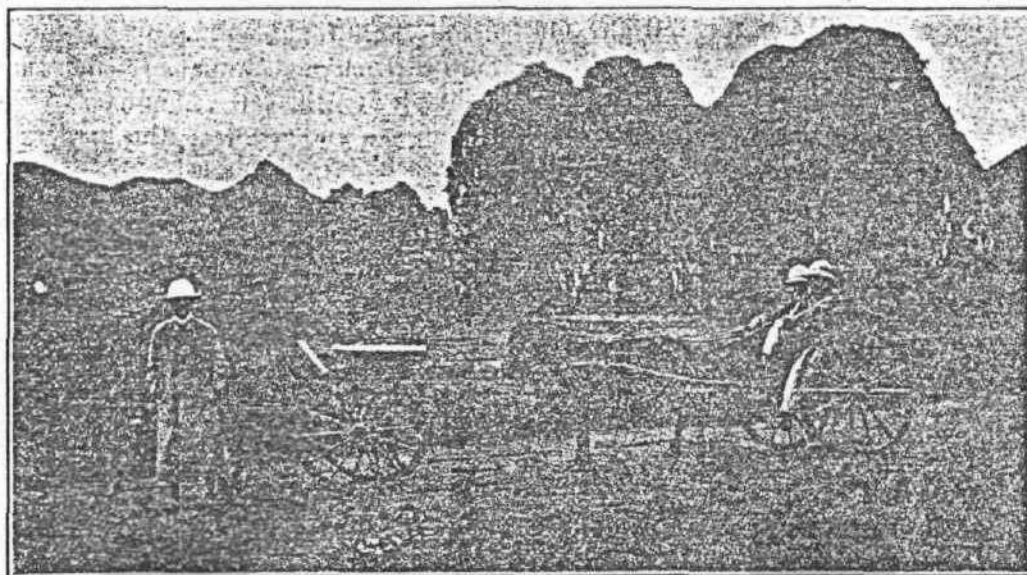
precious time which we would fain have added to our all too short visits in these southern fields. But as the great thing just now among the civilized nations is killing one another, those who are more peaceably engaged must of course give way. We managed to work in a visit of one day to old Macao, our first home in China, twenty years ago, and the base at that time of Christian and Missionary Alliance operations for the opening of Kwong Sai Province to the gospel. It is a rarely beautiful spot, and to us it is peculiarly sacred with associations of earlier missionary joys and sorrows.

At Hongkong our little party broke up, Mrs. Glover and Bobbie with Miss Parmenter taking West River steamer for Wuchow, and the writer joined by Mr. Hess, our South China Chairman, finally getting away on March 3rd, for Haiphong, the main port of northern Indo-China, for a visit to the Annam field.

Just here a few general notes may serve to give some of our readers a clearer idea of this newest mission field of the Christian and Missionary Alliance. French Indo-China is that section of southeast Asia bounded on the east and south by the China Sea, on the north by China, and on the west by Burmah and Siam. Its area is much larger than that of France itself, and it consists of five provinces—Tonkin, Annam, Cambodia, Cochin-China, and Laos. Its combined population may be put at about twenty million. These are mainly Annamese and various aboriginal tribes



MR. HESS AND DR. GLOVER IN ANNAM.



ON THE CHINA - TONKIN BORDER.

Nearly three thousand years before our era they occupied the three southern provinces of China as well as Tonkin. Internal struggles divided them into two sections, the people of the plains and of the hills respectively. China seized this opportunity of setting up a new Chinese dynasty and held the country in subjection for over a thousand years (B. C. 111 - A. D. 968). Thus governed by Chinese man-

known as the Mois, Thais, Tchams, etc. The latter have been driven back for the most part to the mountainous interior in the west and north. The Annamese are descended from the Giau Chi (literally "separated big toe," from this peculiar feature of their feet), who were once established in the south of China.

darins the Annamese became strongly influenced by Chinese civilization. The literary and moral code of Confucius gave definite shape to Annamese thought and religion, with results distinctly seen even at this late day, for the religion of Annam is the Chinese mixture of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism. The Oriental mind makes no effort to reconcile conflicting theories, so that religion and superstition are strangely intermixed. The worship of ancestors and of genii are the things which practically guide and control the whole life of the people.

In 1861 the murder of some Roman Catholic missionaries and converts caused France and Spain to step in and take Saigon, the capital of Cochin-China, and within the next few years all of that province fell into the hands of France. Not until 1885, however, was the northern province of Tonkin finally conquered and the entire country acknowledged as French territory. The union of the five provinces was effected as late as 1898. The government is a Protectorate with a French Governor-General, French residents distributed through the various provinces, and minor Annamese officials called mandarins. A native king still reigns nominally at Hué over Annam proper.

As a financial enterprise Indo-China has not been profitable to France. She has expended an enormous amount of money upon her colony. We were quite unprepared to find such Europeanized cities as Hanoi and Haiphong with their broad, well-paved streets, beautiful parks and boulevards and handsome public buildings and residences. Many hundreds of miles of railway and telegraph lines have been built, and carriage roads second to none we have ever seen extend throughout the country, the rivers and gulleys being spanned with the finest bridges of steel and concrete.

Yet with all these innovations Indo-China is still a benighted heathen land. It is true that Roman Catholicism has been disseminated to some extent and boast not a few churches and converts. But alas, investigation finds it but a superficial thing of form tolerating all the old superstitions and moral vices and giving no new spiritual possession to its so-called converts. One of the most pathetic sights we looked upon was in a huge church in Hanoi, where a hundred or more natives knelt, vacantly staring into space while they repeated over and over some unilluminating formula lined off for them by a group of small boys in front who were apparently detailed by the priest for that duty. It went to our hearts with a great pang that these poor souls should thus be given the stones of empty formalism in place of the satisfying Bread of Life.

As many of our readers know, the Alliance missionaries in South China have for many years been prayerfully seeking an entrance for the gospel in Indo-China. The long closed door at last swung open when the rupture came in France between church and state, and this providential opening was promptly taken advantage of, and a first station occupied at Tourane, a seaport in southern Annam. Later on work was begun at Paifoo, a small town 20 miles farther south. These places were therefore the destination of Mr. Hess and the writer on their recent trip of visitation.

Landing at Haiphong after a voyage of two days from Hongkong we were met by Mr. Soderberg. It had been decided for us to travel overland to Tourane in order to get a better idea of the country in view of the questions

before us at Conference. This meant a matter of some 540 miles, the first and last thirds of the distance being spanned by a good railway, leaving a gap of 180 miles between the two completed sections. Formerly the palanquin and the ricksha were the only means of conveyance for this stretch, but times have changed and the auto-car has found its way even to this remote land. Securing a car owned and run by a Chinese chauffeur, we actually covered the 180 miles in a single day, crossing eight waterways by native ferries en route. It was certainly novel to spin along in such modern fashion over roads for the most part as straight as an arrow and as level as a tabletop, through Oriental towns and villages and tropical crops and scenery.

Tonkin, the northernmost province, especially that part of it forming the delta of the Red River, is by far the most fertile and populous. Rich fields of beautiful green rice stretch out on every side as far as the eye can reach. Dotted here and there are villages surrounded by thick hedges of bamboo and tropical shrubs. As in China the country people live in bamboo or mud huts with straw roofs, built around mosquito-breeding ponds, while temples and pagodas built of brick and stone are situated on high hills. Annam is a poorer province and while yielding varied products—rice, maize, sweet potato, sugar-cane, castor-oil plant, cocoa-palm, banana, etc.—has little over for export.

Our interest of course centered in the people. The great mass are poor, ignorant and worn by the drudgery of hard toil. Their customs are more crude and their manners more coarse than the Chinese. Some of the better classes dress attractively and are really good-looking, but the almost universal custom of blackening the teeth with lacquer and chewing the betel-nut gives to all a most repulsive appearance.

The week of fellowship and conference together at Tourane was a very precious season. The little Alliance missionary band in Annam now numbers nine adults, nearly all still at the language-study stage. This task is doubly hard for them because of the necessity of acquiring both French and Annamese and the very limited helps available for the latter language. The work is yet in its beginnings and rendered the harder by the lack of native helpers and of Annamese Bible translation or Christian literature. Some very difficult problems met us at this time, but fervent prayer brought Divine guidance, and the fact that the decisions made were with the hearty concurrence of all concerned brought no little rest and joy.

The time seems to have come for the separation of the Annamese work from that of South China, making it a distinct field. But it is felt to be a little early yet for full autonomy, so a provisional field government has been arranged for the time consisting of Mr. Hess as Superintendent, and an Advisory Committee of Annam missionaries. Mr. Hess and his Executive Committee in South China have consented to his spending four months of each year in the Annamese field, where his wise and prayerful counsel will be of much value to this young Mission.

It was further decided to take immediate steps toward opening work in Hanoi, the capital of Tonkin, and making that important center the headquarters of the Annamese Mission. Its size, location and facilities make it much better adapted than Tourane for this purpose, while the latter place is still amply worthy of being worked as a

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station. As soon, therefore, as suitable premises can be rented the majority of our missionaries will (D. V.) move to Hanoi with Mr. and Mrs. Hosler in charge. We are sure the friends at home will rejoice in these new steps looking hopefully toward the development of this important work. No field in the world is darker and needier; opportunities for missionary work are practically unlimited, and at the same time there are some peculiar difficulties not present in other Alliance fields. It is moreover to be remembered that the Christian and Missionary Alliance is the only Protestant Mission in all Indo-China. For these reasons the Annamese work and workers claim a special interest in our prayers.

As the French mail steamer was several days late we were obliged to make the return journey north also by land, and instead of crossing by sea to Hongkong again we continued by rail northward through the entire extent of Tonkin and entered China near Lungchow, the most westerly Christian and Missionary Alliance station in Kwong Sai, near one of the sources of the West River. At this point we must leave off for the present, as our article has grown too long, and hope to write again soon.

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by Dr. Glover
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