

History  
of  
VN Church

# The Birth of the Annamese Church

By REV. I. R. STEBBINS, Annam, French Indo-China

THE Holy Spirit created in the heart of Dr. A. B. Simpson a desire for souls in Annam as early as 1890. The fire began to burn in the hearts of such dauntless pioneers as Rev. Robert A. Jaffray, Dr. R. H. Glover, and Rev. Isaac Hess, in 1900. For ten years repeated invasions of Annam by these men, to spy out the land, were repelled by stubborn, fanatical French officials, who considered that Rome had brought Christ to Indo-China.

But God was working, and the first pioneer missionaries of 1911 to 1914 found at Tourane, Annam, a humble French colporteur, Mr. Bonnet, scattering the seed which was finding good ground in unexpected places. Gospel portions in Chinese characters were also being spread in all sections of Annam. Twenty years later the writer met Annamese who had purchased copies of these books and gave testimony to the faithful labors of this French Christian pioneer.

Is it not amazing that the Holy Spirit led Mr. Bonnet and our first missionaries to start work at Tourane, the least important, the most inconspicuous, and the smallest colony of Indo-China? Our missionaries went to work in a little French concession five miles square. Why did they not begin in Cochin-China, French possession, instead of walling themselves in by the protectorate of Annam, near the Annamese Roman Catholic Prime Minister, a hostile royal family, a determined Papal del-

egate and bishop, who together said, They shall not pass? Efforts by our first missionaries to go beyond the Tourane concession to Faifoo, thirty miles away, brought a quick clamping down of great restrictions on missionary activity. The World War forced one-half of our staff of enthusiastic pioneers to return to the United States, and the remaining four were completely stopped from all activity except such as could come into their back door.

Would God answer the prayers of Dr. Simpson for Annam? Could it be hoped, facing such overwhelming difficulties, that success would be won? Could the missionaries survive opposition like that?

Digging in, our missionaries determined to hold the line. Mr. and Mrs. Cadman worked hard translating the Gospels and the Book of Acts; and Mr. Cadman, who testifies to getting his start as a printer's devil in London, became the printer of God's Living Word. A tiny press brought into circulation the mightiest weapon—God's Word—which "like a hammer breaketh the rock in pieces." Mrs. Cadman, born in South Africa of missionary parents, among a group of Andrew Murray's friends, loved the simple gospel songs of Moody and Sankey, and she and Mr. Cadman were not too busy to produce a hymnbook with some of the choicest hymns. The Irwins patiently plodded on in house-to-house visitation, and held gospel services in a tiny, thatch-

roofed chapel in the Mission compound. At times Mr. Irwin was tempted to wonder why God had brought him from a successful business career in Canada to be what he thought was a total failure in Annam. He did not then know that from among the first forty converts of the first Annamese church would come the first President of that church, and families who would send forth twenty of their children as flaming evangelists.

A terrible typhoon nearly cost the life of Miss Marion Foster who arrived unannounced in 1917. She brought new courage to the four faithful, doughty pioneers, who had learned the value of trench warfare. How true that "little is much when God is in it!" How wonderful that

"God has His best things for the few  
Who dare to stand the test."

Those faithful four warriors, the Cadmans and Irwins, are still in French Indo-China through this present terrible war. They are surrounded by the enemy on every side, yet with them is their mighty Captain, the Lord of Hosts, "He that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth." Mr. Irwin, Chairman of the field, remains undaunted, believing for a final and complete victory for the gospel. Mr. Cadman guards our large press and publication work, which has scattered teeming millions of pages of Good News. There, after thirty years, they are still at the front, pounding the enemy's Maginot Line.

Where are you, friends of God's great enterprise? Shall we accept defeat at the moment when victory is just at the door? French Indo-China awaits our help, our faithful prayers, our liberal offerings in men and money. Sixty tribes are still waiting to hear the gospel for the first time. In Laos and Cambodia the ground is scarcely broken, and from among eighteen million, only the first fruits have been gathered, about fifteen thousand Christians.

Who dares to say the day of miracles is past? For the moment our work seems hindered. Shall we not cry out to God for the souls of men in French Indo-China, who have never yet heard of Jesus, nor had a chance for hope of heaven?