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## Late Eventide in Annam.

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A silent, breathless night in Annam; the silvery moonlight falling on bay, and mountain, and meadow, lighting up many a humble hut-home, where perchance a mother or elder sister is singing a quaint lullaby in a minor key, for the benefit of the baby in the swinging basket.

"An infant crying in the night,  
An infant crying for the light;  
And with no language but a cry!"

To and fro swings the basket, swiftly, violently, and soon he sinks into dreamland, as yet blissfully ignorant of the great questions of life: Whence come I? Why am I here? Whither am I going?

How to win the children of Annam for Jesus—that is a problem awaiting solution. The bright, eager boys and girls with their scant clothing, their black eyes, their funny shaven heads with only one or two tufts of hair—supposed to be needed to help them effect an entrance into the spirit world, should they die thus early. All we can do at present for these "other" lambs of His fold is to try to attract them to our Sunday School, and tell them the story of the Good Shepherd and His love. According to French law, we are not allowed to open day schools for Annamese children, so this very usual avenue of missionary service is closed to us.

On Sundays one and another come skipping, running into our little bamboo chapel. Merrily they greet the *Ba* (lady), sit down on the hard wooden benches, and are ready for Sunday School. The hymns they know best are "Jesus loves me," and "What can wash away my sins?" Soon their young voices are singing the songs of Zion, not very tunefully, but, even so, the angels in heaven must be glad to hear these notes of praise from this heathen land. Then they compose themselves to listen, turning their serious faces towards the pretty colored pictures of the Sunday School chart. Their black eyes are often full of interest as we tell them the dear old Bible stories.

Doubtless their thoughts often wander to the picture post-cards which they are to get at the end of the period; cards which are sent to them by Christian children over in the wonderful, unknown land of America. We promise them a Gospel portion in the *Wenli* language when they have ten cards to show us, and, as they are so eager to have books of any kind, they try to earn one.

Just try to realize, if you can, the difficulty of teaching Sunday School where many cannot read, and where, even for those who can read, we have no hymn books, no Bibles, no helps of any kind in their own language. This is one reason we are so anxious to get a small printing press.

In a recent Sunday morning service we received an object lesson in the Biblical method of discipline. The Annamese father believes that Solomon knew what he was talking about when he said, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." A father and his family were present. He has several times been to our Sunday School with his children, and he listens and sees to it that they listen too! That morning it was funny to see him use a supple but strong cane when they did not behave. They evidently did not think it funny at all, but the effect was excellent, especially when during an interesting part of the sermon the rod of chastisement was brought down with a resounding whack upon the shoulders of the eldest boy, while a few vigorous flourishes in the air acted as a deterrent

to further mischief. The incongruity of chastising his offspring in a public meeting did not seem to occur to him or to the audience.

I wonder how American children would like their fathers to "love" them in this *tangible* fashion? Yet Annamese parents dearly love their children, perhaps partly from selfish motives, because it is *here* considered to be the religious duty of the children to support their parents when old and feeble, this being one of the tenets of the Confucian worship.

Often as we pass through the streets they greet us—sometimes kindly, sometimes teasingly—but always to their young minds we are inseparably connected with one "Jesus," and many a time they call after us, "*Ya Do, Ya Do!*" (the Annamese pronunciation for the name of Jesus). It at first seems rather shocking, but after all they are only repeating the mental process by which, some twenty centuries ago, "The disciples were called *Christians* first in Antioch."

It certainly reminds us missionaries that we are "living epistles, known and read of all men," and that they judge of Jesus according to the Jesus people they know. How humbled we feel as we realize the discrepancy between our lives and the perfect pattern-life of Jesus.

Away across the still waters of the bay the beacon light is shining out into the night, telling the wanderers on the wide ocean of the safe harbor, where rest and shelter may be found. So do we hope to be the "light" of Annam, guiding them to Jesus, who alone can give rest and safety. As I write, I hear the distant beating of drums, which usually accompanies their worship; sadly it breaks on the warm summer stillness; sorrowfully it tells of their vain seeking after God—our God, whom we and our fathers have known for centuries. But alas! how shall they know Him of whom they have not heard?

And God depends on Christians to carry out the great commission. Are we, you and I, obeying to the best of our ability? God grant that we may be found faithful, and not be ashamed at His appearing.

Night in Annam! Dark night in the hearts of the people, kneeling, bowing, praying—they know not to what or whom, hopeless of the future. But in our hearts, in your heart also, I trust, light and love and hope, for we know:

"There's no night in the homeland,  
But aye the fadeless morn."

"At evening time it shall be light." God grant that *now*, in the late eventide of this old world's history, the light of salvation may dawn for Annam. Will you help us to change their night into light and life?