

A Vacation Letter to Friends

TOURANE, ANNAM, August 14, 1920.

IRVING R. STEBBINS.

Today I think I will begin a two-weeks' vacation as I have been very busy all summer and think I will feel more fit for work if I will rest up a bit before the first of September. This has been a very hot summer, indeed, the natives say the hottest they have ever experienced. We who have been here praise God for the way He has kept us well in spite of climatic conditions.

We have continued our meetings this summer, that is, one meeting for the Christians at 6 p.m. every Sunday evening. The attendance has kept up very well and we do thank God that some of our Christians are not weather Christians as so many are at home. It is really remarkable how faithful these people are, when one considers the awful drawbacks which naturally surround. An ancestry that have worshipped idols for hundreds of years, minds that have been taught superstition since childhood, false teachings of many isms, such as Buddhism, Taoism, Confucianism, then sorcery and devil worship. We who have been brought up in Christian homes need to thank God we have had such a blessed opportunity to know the truth. Only last night, we could hear from our bamboo cottage the cries of worshipers, who, perhaps led by a Buddhist priest, were worshipping the devil and imploring him to send rain. The priest stands in front of the worshipers and at his command of "*xuong*," meaning "fall down," they worship. A Christian in these lands is much persecuted and probably more so than we know anything about. At present one of our strongest Christians is being persecuted by her Chinese husband, who is trying to make her recant and return to her old ways. He

threatens to build idols on the grave of her former husband as punishment. We all need to pray that God will do a real work in these natives' hearts, making them strong and earnest Christians. After a soul is won here, the next problem confronting us is to teach that soul the Bible, and with the help of God train and develop him or her into a strong, earnest Christian. We are much handicapped as yet, having no open Bible, outside of a large Catholic one and the three Gospels together with Acts. Pray much for this particular question, that is, translation work, that it might be pushed to a rapid completion.

Suffering and Sickness.

There is much suffering and sickness among these poor people, even though the French have done much to alleviate their sufferings. A real poor native with little or no money stands a poor chance of getting much help of any sort. We see many sorrowful sights often, and this land is full of beggars. It seems to me children of the poor are taught to beg from the time they are able to walk, for everywhere we are hailed as the rich foreigner and hear ringing in our ears "*choxu*," meaning give me a penny. Often we are able to help real needy cases and for this we are always glad, but sometimes it is difficult to know those who are worthy and those who are not.

God is blessing the work, for which we wish to offer our praise unto Him. We are brought face to face with one certain fact here continually and that is that "Christ our Lord must transform these lives." Bless God for the privilege we have of witnessing for Jesus, but we must depend upon Him to change these sin-bound people into saints of the living God. It is prayer that changes things. We are thankful for the assurance we have that "God works when we pray." We are looking to God to send down the power this fall when we shall return to Tourane, and that many souls may be saved. Many problems confront our work, but we feel inclined to take courage as we remember the words God said to Joshua, the leader of Israel, as they went into the land of promise "Every place that the soul of thy foot shall tread upon, that have I given unto thee, as I was with Moses, so will I be with thee." Praise God for His Word which ever lifts the drooping spirits of His servants. Our church has about one hundred members but some are being sorely tempted of the evil one to turn back. Pray that among these faltering and backsliding folks God's Spirit might stir and bring them into real fellowship with Himself. God willing, we want to open two new chapels in nearby villages which are part of Tourane Colony, each of which has about 1,000 population. These two places have been asking us to come to them with the message of life for a long time and we feel we should go. Another need we feel is for young men who are called to preach the Gospel, that is for native preachers and Bible women. For some time we have been asking God to call out a real native evangelist, one anointed by the special hand of God, not of our choosing, who would be a real apostle to the Annamese. Then we are earnestly believing God for a Bible School to train young men for His service. There are perhaps two or three here who want to train for service but we realize it is difficult because most of them are poor and have no means of self-support while studying. Ten dollars will pay a month's expense for a young man in training or \$120.00 a year. Will you not present this need to your friends and ask them to stand with us in prayers about this matter.

Pray for Indo-China.

The language question is still a difficult one with most of us as we are all new missionaries on the field at the present time. Pray for us that we might be able speakers in both French and Annamese. We wish to solicit people to pray for one special request, "*The opening of the Gospel in Indo-China.*" This has been on the hearts of many missionaries for years but God for some reason has not yet given the answer. We need to prevail with God for this needy people. I doubt not that you know that French Indo-China comprises five provinces, namely Cochin-China, Annam, Cambodia, Laos and Tonkin. Cochin-China and Laos are French possessions as are the cities of Haiphong and Hanoi in Tonkin and Tourane Colony in Annam. The rest of the country is a French protectorate, ruled by two kings, one in Hue, Annam, and the other Pnom Phen, Cambodia. Of the five, Cambodia has yet been untouched by a Gospel witness. This province is in reality a separate nation, with their own language, having a

population of one and a half million souls. The Bible has been translated, that is the four Gospels have been completed into the Cambodian language, and a new missionary can begin real work with these tools as soon as he can begin to talk. Pray with us that God may overrule all barriers that would hinder His message of salvation.

This is just to give you a little idea of our work and to solicit your earnest prayers in our behalf as we begin another year of work this fall. I appreciated your letter and I know you will forgive me if it hasn't in every sense a personal touch, for it is difficult to get all the letters written I should. Letters from our friends are always a source of much blessing and refreshment and we would be happy to hear from your direction again soon.

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