GRIFFITH JOHN

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THE APOSTLE OF CENTRAL CHINA

BY

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TO MY

MISSIONARY COLLEAGUES

IN CHINA

PREFACE

THE mission field is the modern nursery of heroes. The victories which have been inscribed upon the banner of Christ through the service and sacrifice of His missionary followers are the most inspiring and far-reaching of those which history records. "Peace hath her victories no less renowned than War." The high qualities which have gone to the establishment of Christ's kingdom in the world make of missionary history a moral force in education without parallel. The Christian campaign has no inherent vices to apologise for or to suppress in the telling. Its whole story is that of the conquest of the world by love and the uplift of men through sacrifice.

The life-story of Griffith John is here recorded that the remembrance of one of Christ's modern heroes and his work may serve to encourage faith and to nerve endeavour.

N. B.

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CHAPTER I

BOYHOOD'S PREPARATION

"The child is father of the man."—WORDSWORTH.

IN the thriving town of Swansea, where night by night the sky is lit up with the glare of the furnaces in which metal is being extracted from ore, on a peaceful Sunday morning in the year 1839, when the great furnaces were damped down for the day of rest, a father and his two children, a boy and a girl, might have been seen walking with the throng of churchgoers.

The father was a strong-looking, serious man, evidently fond of his children. The little girl, aged twelve years, was in a serious mood, as her face showed. It was a great day for her. She had decided to be a Christian and to follow Jesus Christ years ago, but to-day she was to join the Church. The little boy, a slight figure, with a head proportionately bigger than his body, and with deep, dark eyes, looked with sympathy and affection at

his sister. This group was composed of Mr. John, his daughter Mary, and his son Griffith—*little* Griffith or Gito—on their way to Ebenezer Chapel, Swansea.

After the preaching service, Griffith went up into the gallery of the chapel, and there, with keen eyes and kindling heart, watched the proceedings below. He saw his sister go forward with her father from the body of the chapel, to be shaken by the hand by the minister and to be welcomed as a Church member, and then to receive her first Communion with the grown-up Christian believers.

Little Griffith John asked himself, Why should not I, also, be a member of the Church? He told himself that he loved the Lord Jesus Christ, and vowed in his mind that he would serve his Master, Jesus, as a faithful and true soldier. And the resolve was formed that, if possible, he would join the Church as he had seen his sister Mary do.

When he spoke to some of the older Christians about it, they were not of one mind in their advice. Some thought it good, others considered that the lad was far too young and had better wait awhile. Soon, however, the matter came before the deacons of the old chapel, and the two leading men amongst them discussed it together.

One, named David Rees, was a man of loving heart, who cared deeply for little Griffith John, and whose sympathy was always to be relied upon.

The other, whose name was Daniel, was of a different nature. He was more cautious, and feared that the boy was much too young to know what the Christian life really was. So he advised delay, and little Griffith had to wait.

In a few months, however, Daniel came to the conclusion, to which Rees had already come, that the lad of eight years old was a true Christian, and in dead earnest, and they both agreed that he might become a Church member. It is most probable that at that time there was no other lad or girl of that age admitted into Church membership throughout all Wales. But the case was unique. The lad Griffith John of Swansea was as singular in his personal devotion to Jesus Christ, and in his interest in the questions of religion, as the man Griffith John of Hankow was to become remarkable in his service of Jesus Christ, and in the extension of Christianity in China in later years.

How had it happened that this boy was so wonderfully developed for his years, and why was it that that development showed itself mainly in matters of religion ?

Several facts have to be considered in reply. First, he was left motherless in the year 1832, when only a year old, and from babyhood came therefore into the constant companionship of his father, a man of deeply religious life. There can hardly be any doubt that this fact caused the little

Griffith to leave early behind him the years and mind of infancy. He was constantly in the society of people older than himself, people of fair education and acute understanding, who were interested above everything else in the cause of Christianity, and who would be discussing, day by day, matters connected with the chapel to which they were attached, and with the state of religion in Wales, questions very near and dear to their hearts. Little wonder then that Griffith John grew up a serious youth, with a habit of looking upon life from the standpoint of its problems and its needs. From his earliest years he was described as *thoughtful.*

Next, he was from earliest childhood connected with the life of the Sunday School at Ebenezer Chapel. Only those who know from experience are said to have any adequate idea of what a Welsh Sunday School meant in past years to those who attended it. And nearly all Welsh men and women, who were in any sense Christian, and practically all boys and girls throughout Wales, did attend them.

It is worth while, therefore, to attempt a description of the kind of Sunday School in which Griffith John grew up, and where many of those sacred influences, which never left him throughout his career, were so early exercised.

We of this generation are used to regard the

Sunday School as a place which, because it is a school, is devoted almost entirely to the teaching of the young. Perhaps there are a few seniors, young men and women, but never more than a quarter or even a fifth of all the school. Then we are accustomed to a regular Sunday-school lesson, set forth as simply and picturesquely as possible, in order to retain the attention of scholars whose minds are bent, often enough, upon other things than a Scripture lesson.

The Welsh Sunday Schools of Griffith John's day, and in many places still to-day, were quite different. The whole Church became a Sunday School, with children more to the forefront certainly, but composed of adults as much as children, For the Sunday Schools of Wales had their rise in the adult Christian schools founded two hundred years or more ago in order to teach the unlettered Welsh to read the Welsh Bible. What they had learned to read, the Christians of Wales also wished to discuss, and so the Welsh Sunday School became an institution for the teaching and discussion of religious matters, as well as for the training of the young.

We may picture, therefore, the little Griffith, older than his years, quicker in mind, and probably better educated than many of his companions, seated with scholars much older than himself, settling down week by week to the discussion of

points of scripture history or exposition, and even of theological dispute. Religious controversy was keen and widespread, and the doctrinal differences of the churches and chapels of Wales found voice in the Sunday Schools as well as in the pulpits of Wales Stories are told of labouring men who discussed, as they worked in the quarries and mines of Wales, not racing or football, but predestination and grace.

It was in such an atmosphere that the coming missionary lived the years of his early life; no wonder, then, that life was serious and marked by almost abnormal development. Dr. John himself says: "In those days the Sunday School in Wales was a grand institution for imbuing the child's mind with Biblical knowledge and Christian principles. I seem to have been born and brought up in the House of God, and among God's people. It may truly be said of me, as it was said of Timothy, 'From a babe thou hast known the Holy Scriptures.'"

It is to a Sunday-school teacher, next to his father, that Dr. John ascribes his first attempts to think out things for himself. Mr. William Rees deserves remembrance by all who hold the work of the veteran missionary to China in honour, for the influence he exerted upon the Sunday-school lad. He urged little Griffith to commit portions of the Scriptures to memory, and the

mind of the boy became stored with the precious treasure of Bible literature and sentiment

Nor was this exercise without its immediate usefulness. The minister of Ebenezer Chapel found in Griffith John's memory and elocution a means of adding to the attraction and usefulness of the public services. At the evening worship he would be called upon to repeat chapters of Scripture from his place over the clock in the gallery opposite the pulpit. How remarkable and affecting the sight must often have been of the dark-eyed, serious boy of ten or eleven years of age, reciting with tense dramatic feeling moving chapters from the Prophets and the Psalms. Surely the natural eloquence of youth has seldom found a nobler field of effort.

Childhood and youth passed apace, and the boy, who was a Church member at eight years, at twelve years faced the problem of work. He entered a general store at Onllwyn, a mining and smelting centre, and here he spent four years of his life. The motherly wife of the owner of the store interested herself deeply, as did her husband, in the remarkable lad from Swansea, and made the place a home indeed for him.

It was at a private house in Onllwyn, in which services were conducted, that the " boy preacher of Wales " first delivered a sermon when he was but fourteen years of age. His text was, " I am not

ashamed of the gospel of Christ." The mature thought and striking eloquence of this Welsh lad attracted great audiences, but he himself tells us that he felt he was too young and inexperienced for the work of preaching, and he therefore withdrew from the pulpit service and devoted his spare hours to study.

At the age of sixteen years he once more began preaching, and his services became in great demand. One who knew him most intimately said of him when he was eighteen years old: "His preaching talents are, in my opinion, of an extraordinary character. . . Judging from the present he will, in five or six years, be the most popular minister in Wales. I have heard him talk like an orator for a whole hour, and in a few moments arouse the whole congregation to a state of astonishing excitement, not by unmeaning declamation, but by sound sense and real eloquence."

That the young preacher did not fail to meet with trying experiences on account of his youth will appear from the following incident, told by Dr. John himself:[1]—"A lay preacher at Alltwen used to supply the Onllwyn pulpit one Sunday in every month. He and I became great friends, and he pressed me hard to go and preach at Alltwen. I, after a good deal of persuasion, consented, and the Sunday was fixed upon. I arrived at Alltwen

[1] Cf. Dr. Wardlaw Thompson's *Griffith John.*

about half an hour before the time, and found the elders and deacons all assembled in the caretaker's house in the immediate vicinity of the chapel. When I announced myself as Griffith John, they looked amazed, and did not attempt to conceal their disappointment. When they beheld that short, slender figure before them, and looked at his skull-cap, unconventional jacket, and unclerical cravat, they must have felt that a practical joke had been perpetrated upon them. They soon made up their minds that they could not ask me to preach, and that some other arrangements must be made for the evening service. But what was to be done? It was almost time to begin, and too late to send for another to occupy the pulpit. They gave me a seat in the corner of the room, and left me severely alone.

"Fortunately for them and myself, a well-known preacher made his appearance, and brought instant relief. He had been occupying one of the neighbouring pulpits, and was now on his way home. He thought he would turn in and enjoy the evening service at Alltwen. It was interesting to notice the instant change which the advent of my friend brought with it. They assured him that he was a perfect godsend to them, and that he must preach. He replied that he did not come there to preach, but to hear Griffith John, and that Griffith John must preach.

" 'That will never do,' said the deacons. 'You must preach; let Griffith John, if you wish it, open the service for you.'

" After some further wrangling, I got up and said that I had resolved not to preach, but that I was quite willing to take the preliminary part of the service, as was suggested by the deacons. My friend was sincerely sorry, but felt he must comply.

" I ascended the pulpit, feeling sore at heart, and cried to God for strength. I read Romans viii., gave out a hymn, and prayed. Long before the close of prayer, all hearts were greatly moved, and the place had become a veritable Bethel. At the close, some of the deacons rushed up the stairs and begged me to go on. I refused, and said that I had done the work which they had given me to do. Then my friend the lay preacher came to meet me as I was walking down the stair, and besought me to go on, as he could not face the congregation if I declined to preach.

" I felt I must comply with the wishes of one who had shown so much kindness to me, so I turned back, gave out another hymn, and preached from Romans viii. 18. My soul was deeply moved, the vast audience caught the fire, and before the close of the sermon the whole congregation was on its feet shouting 'glory' and 'amen.' My friend the lay preacher followed, but the *hwyl* had spent

itself, and he brought his sermon to a speedy close.

"After this the deacons were all delightfully polite and cordial. They put an extra piece of silver in my hands for my sermon, and made me promise that I would allow my name to be put down on the list of their regular supplies. That scene is still very vivid in my mind. But it is only one of many. I had some strange experiences as a boy preacher."

When Griffith John was eighteen years old he suffered the loss of his father, that godly man who had meant so much to his son both in precept and in example. As a trusted foreman of considerable ability at the works of Messrs. Vivian in Swansea, he had been able to keep his family in a fair measure of comfort, and by his devotion to the Christian activities of Ebenezer Chapel, and by his exemplary life of faith, he had ministered to the spiritual needs of his children. The blow fell heavily on the young man Griffith, and yet in the midst of it he found a friendship which was to exercise a tremendous influence on his future life.

The sight of the lad as he stood by the graveside of his father, bowed with grief, so touched the heart of his pastor, the Rev. E. Jacob, that that man of good heart and godly character vowed that Griffith should never lack an earthly father so long as he lived. That vow was nobly kept. "To me," said

Dr. John in later years, "he was father, brother, friend; and the relationship between us to the day of his death was close, tender, and sacred." Already Mr. Jacob had been engaged in giving some tuition to Griffith John in view of his pulpit studies, and when the young man decided to enter college with a view to the work of the ministry, it was Mr. Jacob who opened the way and prepared the ministerial candidate.

Mr. Williams, the owner of the store at Onllwyn, when he was informed of his young assistant's decision, expressed deep regret at losing so faithful a servant. He said it had been his intention to offer Griffith the management of the business, but the offer held no allurement for the young man. He had been "faithful in business," but the fervour of his spirit called him to the work of preaching the gospel, and into the ranks of the ministry he needs must go. It was true that his father's death left him without adequate provision for future need. But his aunt offered him a room, his sisters provided food, his beloved pastor gave tuition, and so the way was opened before him.

Griffith John entered Brecon College in September 1850, with the expectations of many for him running very high. There were not wanting some who expected that College would serve to spoil the young Welsh orator. "Let the dry sticks go to College, not you," said one. But Griffith had no

small ideas of the work of the Christian ministry, and was well assured that a well-stored mind, as well as a fervent heart and a gifted tongue, was part of the ministerial equipment. Mr. Jacob counselled him in a parting word: "Remember, whatever you are at College, so to a very great extent you will be through life."

Thus endowed with gifts of a high order, already famed as an orator in a land where oratorical standards are very exacting, mentally well equipped, and fired with a great resolve to become a leading preacher of the gospel in Welsh, the "boy preacher" began his student career.

He had yet no vision of the great fields beyond, and the land which was to make his name and work famous had not so much as appeared on the horizon of his vision. God had a task for Griffith John bigger than he or any of his many friends and admirers yet dreamed of. Beyond Brecon College lay not Wales and its few millions of people, but the uncounted millions of the Chinese in the valley of the river Yangtse.

CHAPTER II

COLLEGE AND THE MISSIONARY CALL

"Lord! what wilt Thou have me to do?"

IT was at Brecon College that Griffith John came into close touch with another of those men whose character impressed itself upon his life. Mention has been made of a Sunday-school teacher to whom he owed much in his very youthful days; his minister at Ebenezer Chapel, who was guide, teacher, and friend came next in order, and now appeared the College professor, the Rev. Henry Griffiths.

"He stirred my ambition," says Dr. John, "as no other man had ever done; and during the three years I sat at his feet he managed to create within my breast a great thirst for knowledge. If Mr. Rees was the first to teach me to think, Mr. Griffiths was the first to open up the great fields of knowledge to my vision, and to inspire me with a longing to enter in and possess. It was a great privilege to come under the influence of such a man at such a time of my life." [1]

[1] Dr. Wardlaw Thompson's *Griffith John.*

The man who stirred the thirst for knowledge in the mind of Griffith John had a full reward in the great mental accomplishments of his pupil in later years. Who may measure the joy which comes to faithful teachers, preachers, and college tutors, indeed to all who strive to train the heart and mind of youth, as they see the fruit of their labours appearing in lives of Christian and social service? Such men and women truly live and serve in lives of others.

The serious cast of Griffith John's mind saved him from many of the temptations to which student life is specially liable. A natural bent for study, together with the discipline of his youthful years, had prepared him for a successful student life. He would not be led easily into habits of indolence or scenes of rowdyism. Neither the roving characteristics of Livingstone, nor the boisterous spirits of James Chalmers of New Guinea, found expression in his years of study. It is quite natural to read, therefore, that "among Mr. John's chief characteristics as a student, showing that all his life there has been a uniform continuity in his character, the following may be mentioned :—diligence, perseverance, and efficiency."

But if the student was saved by nature and training from one set of temptations, he was particularly liable on that very account to another equally dangerous and more subtle kind of tempta-

tion. Many eyes were on him, expecting to see in him as the years went by one of the great preachers of the Welsh language. And the hopes and ambitions of his friends were not hidden from Griffith John himself, nor were those ambitions absent from his own heart. The eloquence of the great Welsh preachers "used to stir my soul to its deepest depths, and I longed to take my place side by side with them."

It is not good for any man to be in his youthful days a successful "boy preacher." The vanity which has marked the early years of even some great men, and which is in a large measure due to the unwise, though sincere, praise of friends and relatives, and to which ministers and clergymen are specially subject, might have menaced the spiritual life and power of this young man had not the voice of God spoken clearly to his heart, calling him to a great sacrifice for the cause of Christ's Kingdom. Earthly ambition could find no place in the missionary career to which he devoted his life. For in those early years the work of the missionary had received neither recognition nor praise from the great ones of the earth. In the eyes of the world it was a despised and useless service, and no one who esteemed greatly the praise of men, or the approval of the multitude, was likely to volunteer for the mission field.

It was in March 1853 that Griffith John wrote

to the Directors of the London Missionary Society offering himself for missionary service. Many of his ministerial friends were at first opposed to this action on his part. They knew what Wales was likely to lose, and they feared a wasted life and talents thrown away. At first Professor Griffiths was slow to express approval, for he had hoped to see his admired pupil winning academic distinctions in an English University, and he therefore requested him to give a few weeks' further consideration to the subject before making a definite committal of his life. When he found the mind of the young student fixed, he then encouraged his resolution. In the end "when I left Wales for China, I did so richly laden with the heartiest goodwill and best benedictions of all."

The letter of commendation which accompanied Griffith John's application to the London Missionary Society, written by Professor Griffiths, says of him: "He is beyond comparison the most popular preacher in Welsh we ever heard. . . He speaks English well, always has his wits about him, is full of sound common sense, singularly rich in inventiveness, very persevering, and altogether just the kind of person I should like to see sent to a place like Madagascar. In intellectual power he is far, very far, above the average of young men, and I believe still more so in the fervour and steadiness of his piety."

The reference to "a place like Madagascar" is one full of significance. A visit to Brecon College from the Rev. David Griffiths, who, with David Jones, had been a pioneer missionary to Madagascar, had served to turn the thoughts of the student to that wonderful mission field. Moreover, that was a field of labour very near to the hearts of Welsh Congregationalists as the one in which the zeal of their people as missionaries had been specially displayed. This interest has been consistently maintained, and is to-day as keen as it ever was. Much as Welshmen have done for other lands, as missionary workers in Madagascar they have had a field peculiarly their own. Conspicuous triumphs had been won there for faith, and there, also, converts had been persecuted, and martyrs had laid down their lives.

Brought thus into direct contact with David Griffiths, our hero formed later an attachment for the distinguished missionary's daughter. This attachment was returned by her, and ripened into an engagement. Interest, desire, and love seemed therefore to combine to point the way to Madagascar.

From Brecon College Griffith John was sent for the further pursuit of missionary preparation to the L.M.S. Missionary Institution at Bedford. Here he was a fellow-student of James Duthie, who was destined to a distinguished life of more than fifty years' missionary service in Travancore, and W. K.

Lea, who became a missionary in China, at Amoy. "How glad I would be," wrote Dr. John from Bedford, "if the doors were opened for Madagascar . . My heart is there now. I know it will be difficult to part with dear friends, more so than I can anticipate at present. But then I go to be the honoured instrument in the hands of God, to enlighten some hundreds of those that lie in darkness. . . . Oh, what a glorious idea! it overpowers everything. When I think what I may be, it fills me with the strongest desires to see the day when I shall behold the shores of Madagascar, plant my footsteps in its soil, and proclaim the glad tidings of salvation to its thousands."

In 1854, after nine months at Bedford, he was invited to volunteer for China. After consultation with his Welsh advisers, Principal Griffiths and Mr. Jacob, he consented, and the boy preacher of Wales, who had offered himself as a missionary to Madagascar, became the missionary-designate for China.

He was ordained at the home of his childhood, and in the chapel which had been even more than home to him, the place in which his spiritual life had been nurtured and fashioned, Ebenezer Chapel, Swansea, on the 6th of April 1855. His marriage to Margaret Griffiths took place during the succeeding week, he preached a farewell sermon a few days before leaving, and said good-bye to the land

of his heart's love, and turned his face to the unknown land of China.

How youthful in appearance the missionary recruit still was at the age of twenty-four years will appear from the following incident. Mr. Alexander Williamson, a Scottish missionary student, with whom Griffith John was to sail for China, and who was a man of commanding presence, was, with Mr. John, invited to a luncheon at the Mission House in London a few days before sailing. Mr. Williamson passed the doorkeeper safely, but Mr. John was grabbed by that worthy and called upon to stop. Mr. Williamson explained that his companion was a missionary colleague and not a boyish intruder. Thereupon the doorkeeper released him and let him pass in. Just as he escaped, Griffith John heard the indignant official remark, "So it has come to this, sending children to convert the Chinese!" Dr. John says that from this doorkeeper, and from the deacons at Alltwen, he learned a lesson which proved of lifelong service to him.

Mr. Alexander Williamson, who was appointed to the same station as Griffith John, was distinguished in later years as the founder of the Christian Literature Society for China. He was a man of big heart and brain, as well as of great stature. Of the impression his giant figure made upon the Chinese the following instance amongst others is given. Upon one occasion a group of L.M.S.

missionaries from Shanghai were desirous of entering a Chinese city about twenty miles away from that port. They were refused admission at the city gates by a large and hostile crowd of Chinese. Neither side was willing to give way. The missionaries were determined to enter if possible, the Chinese determined that they should not. Here Dr. Williamson all unwittingly intervened. Holding out his hands in token of peace, he walked towards the city gates. Such hands as these for magnitude no Chinese had hitherto looked upon, and, as the missionary stalked towards them with extended arms, the crowd fled in fear, and the missionaries passed safely through to their preaching and book distribution.

But however great the disparity between their bodily equipment, no disparity marked the intellectual and moral force of these companion missionaries to China. In the realm where "mind is the measure of the man" Griffith John never failed to hold his own, and no one who ever heard him speaking gave a second thought to his bodily stature.

On the voyage out to Shanghai, which took the *Hamilla Mitchell*, on which Griffith John travelled, a hundred and twenty days to accomplish—a journey now made by railway *via* Siberia in eighteen days—we are told that he read "nearly the whole series of the Congregational Lectures . . . Henry

Rogers' *Essays* in three volumes, Macaulay's *Essays* in two volumes, Barnes' *Notes on the Revelation*, Herschel on *Astronomy*," a large volume on *The Steam Engine*, Carpenters' *Physiology*, books on Chemistry, Electricity, Magnetism, Mechanics, and other branches of science. He also read some books of a lighter nature, besides studying the Hebrew and Greek Testaments, and some mathematics.

From this it will appear that those disparaging critics who believe missionaries, those of even fifty years ago, to be men of little reading and narrow minds, who become missionaries because other means of livelihood have failed them, are somewhat astray from fact. Dr. Griffith John throughout his life set high store by all-round intellectual equipment, and regarded the missionary career as one calling for the exercise of the highest gifts of mind and body, as well as of heart and soul. He took out with him a chemical apparatus, an electrical machine, a microscope, and a stereoscope. "A missionary need not forget the civilisation of the people among whom he labours."

During such a voyage as these travellers had to make in 1855, they would not lack time for reading, and without some such recreation, monotonous indeed must the four months' stay on board a small vessel have proved to them. For at that time the Suez Canal was not opened, and vessels bound for the Far East had to sail *via* the Cape

of Good Hope. There were not the frequent calls at ports *en route* which make the voyage eastward so attractive in our day.

Although Mr. and Mrs. John encountered hurricanes and typhoons, and had to traverse seas where pirates lurked for defenceless or unwary prey, no harmful incident, other than the discomfort of being thrown from the bed to the floor of their cabin by the rolling of the vessel, occurred to mar their journey. They enjoyed, as every one who has retained a sense of the sublime and beautiful in nature could not fail to enjoy, the glory of the southern skies, the wonder of the brilliant stars in the heavens by night, the radiance of the moonlight upon the wide expanse of moving waters, and the gorgeous splendour of the sunsets over the southern seas. These things "made the voyage very pleasant to me."

On the 24th of September 1855 the vessel landed them at Woosung, the small port at the entrance to the river Hwangpoo, twelve miles from Shanghai. It is a dreary, uninviting spot at the edge of the mud banks which have been made by the silt of the river Yangtse, between Shanghai and the entrance to that mighty stream.

Dreary as it appeared to the travellers, it was the goal of the journey on which they had set out; it was home for the time being; it was *China*, the land to which they had given their lives—and no

sense of dreariness could serve to hide from Griffith John the great and inspiring fact that he was now at close quarters with his life-work.

At last he had set foot upon the soil of China, the land upon whose Christian history he was to inscribe his name in imperishable letters. He was now "*Griffith John of China*."

CHAPTER III

MISSIONARY APPRENTICESHIP

"Plod, and keep the passion fresh."—GEORGE MEREDITH.

THE group of missionaries connected with the London Missionary Society which Griffith John joined on his arrival at Shanghai, in 1855, was perhaps the most remarkable in respect of devotion and learning which has ever been found gathered together in one missionary circle. Each one of this band seems to have had the seal of greatness upon him, and in his sphere each became eminent for missionary distinction.

There was the senior, Dr. W. H. MEDHURST, to whom Griffith John gave at once a regard and affection which that great pioneer missionary seems to have inspired in every one who served with him. He was an old St. Paul's School boy who had gone to China, in the year 1815, to join Drs. Morrison and Milne. He was therefore connected with the very beginnings of the Protestant missionary enterprise in China. His gifts were of a specially high order; he had a remarkable knowledge of the languages and literature of China, being able to

preach in four of the Chinese dialects, and he was the author of a Chinese dictionary.

When, as the result of what is called the "Opium War" with China, a war of which Great Britain is not now very proud, five places on the coast of China, called Treaty Ports, were opened to trade and intercourse between Chinese and foreigners, a conference of missionaries was held in Hong Kong. It was then decided that Dr. Medhurst, who had already made an adventurous voyage up the coast to the north of China, should go with Dr. Lockhart to begin work in Shanghai.

In this place Dr. Medhurst was therefore the pioneer missionary evangelist, and he had been the chief worker in the task of preparing a new translation of the Bible into Chinese. The work done by him and his colleagues in preparing a Bible for the use of Chinese scholars was one of the finest pieces of work ever done by foreigners in the Chinese language. That Bible, which is called the "Delegates' Version," is very highly esteemed and widely circulated to-day. It will be seen, therefore, that Dr. Medhurst was both a fearless and faithful pioneer and a distinguished scholar. There is no doubt that so fine an example deeply impressed itself upon the life and aims of Griffith John.

Dr. WILLIAM LOCKHART, a pioneer doctor missionary, who devoted his great talents to the helping and saving of the Chinese, was still in Shanghai

having established there the first missionary hospital in Central China. Already possessing a great reputation for skill and kindness, he was honoured and beloved both by Chinese and foreigners for his good works and his uprightness of character.

Then there was JAMES WYLIE, who was in charge of the printing press of the London Mission in Shanghai. It is said of him that no finer scholar and no truer Christian ever went to the mission field of China. His researches into the literature of the Chinese provoked the wonder and admiration of students all over the world, and the leading scholars of Europe sought his opinion upon Chinese subjects. With Mr. Wylie, Griffith John was to make a remarkable journey into the far west of China in later years. Mr. Wylie, who became the first agent of the British and Foreign Bible Society in China, was amongst the first Englishmen to make the overland journey from St. Petersburg to Peking, along the line of route now covered by the Trans-Siberian Railway.

WILLIAM MUIRHEAD and JOSEPH EDKINS were also in Shanghai. The first-named of these two men was an ideal pioneer evangelist. He had the boldness of a lion, and a heart that was on fire to preach the message of Christ to every one. Morning, noon, and night found him preaching and teaching in houses and chapels, and in the streets of Shanghai, and the cities around. He lived to see fifty-two

years of such service in China, winning the admiration of all who knew him for his faithfulness as an evangelistic missionary and for his zeal in all good works. Shanghai, which is not given up to the admiration of missionaries in a general way, delighted to honour its grand old missionary, Muirhead, who became in his later years the most outstanding figure in this important port. His portrait is hung in the council chamber of the municipality, beside that of Queen Victoria.

Mr. Edkins was a quieter, more bookish man. Even in 1855, when he had been but a few years in China, he was laying the foundation of those studies in the religions and history of China for which he became famous. He came to know more about Chinese Buddhism than any man living. Edkins was destined to open missionary work in North China, and to give to the Chinese people a life-service of fifty-six years.

Between Joseph Edkins and Griffith John there arose an affection that was most brotherly. They were to each other, in their years together in Shanghai, as were David and Jonathan; studying together, and touring the country around, preaching and distributing Christian books and tracts, until the call came to each of them to go forward into the wider fields of North and Central China.

This distinguished company had its headquarters in the London Mission compound, called Ma Ka

choen (the Medhurst family enclosure), which still is to be seen in Shanghai, though but a fourth of its original size. This was the first Protestant missionary settlement in the Central China region.

At first Messrs. Medhurst and Lockhart had gone into the Chinese city, and there had rented premises for work. The modern Shanghai, which is now one of the great cities of the world, and by far the most important port in China, did not then exist. Its site was covered by mudflats and "paddy fields," that is, fields half covered with water, in which the rice upon which so many millions in China depend for food is grown. Later a chapel, a hospital, a printing-press, and some dwelling-houses were erected half a mile outside the native city, and the whole surrounded by a wall for safety and quiet, and thus the "compound" was formed. Here Mr. and Mrs. John made their first home in China.

In this company of remarkable men Griffith John was able to hold his own, both in regard to his spiritual and intellectual equipment. He was immediately put to the test. The first great barrier the young missionary had to overcome was that of the Chinese language.

Probably there is no language spoken among men which provides so great a trial of the patience and ability of would-be learners as Chinese; neither

dullards nor idlers may hope to overcome it successfully. Any man who has become a master of the Chinese tongue carries in that fact an open certificate of mental and moral grit. It was Dr. Milne, the second missionary to China, who said of the Chinese language that it required for its acquisition bodies of brass, hearts of oak, lungs of steel, eyes of eagles, memories of angels, and lives of Methuselah.

Griffith John made early acquaintance with the difficulties of this task, but he speedily vanquished them. He already spoke fluently two languages, Welsh and English, and within six months of his arrival in Shanghai he was able to converse in Chinese also.

The opening stages in the learning of Chinese are almost heartbreakingly formidable. A Chinese scholar, who knows no English, is set down to teach an Englishman who knows no Chinese. A pantomime performance, in which the learner asks of the teacher the name for various articles, actions, and so on, marks the beginning of the enterprise, which becomes easier as it proceeds on its course. Nowadays there are helps provided for the learner which the early missionaries knew nothing of.

The language has no alphabet, every word in the language is denoted by a separate and different sign, so that it becomes possible to learn to read the Chinese language without understanding a word of its speech, just as Oriental scholars are able to read

the inscriptions on the buried monuments of ancient Babylonia and Egypt, although they have no knowledge of the spoken language these inscriptions represent.

Moreover, between the written language and that of speech a great gulf is fixed. The written language is modelled on the classical writings of China, and is thus a dead language. Learning to speak and learning to read are almost separate accomplishments. Many there are who learn to converse fluently in Chinese who are almost unable to read anything like a Chinese document.

Having acquired a sufficient facility in Chinese to make himself understood, Griffith John lost no time in undertaking work in the native city of Shanghai, and later in extending operations over the districts around. Mrs. John was his companion in many of these expeditions ; in others he journeyed with senior members of the L.M.S. in Shanghai or with other missionaries. On several occasions he had as companion Mr. Hudson Taylor, of the Chinese Evangelisation Society, later to be known as the China Inland Mission.

Most of this journeying was done by means of the waterways, which intersect the whole of this region of China. There is no town or city in the whole of the great and densely populated district between Shanghai and Hangchow which may not be reached by boat. To many of the villages and hamlets it

is needful to journey by means of wheelbarrows, but boat travel is the chief means of itineration. These boats are moderately comfortable, although not always clean, and they give little chance of privacy.

Generally the guest boats, which are hired by the day or for the journey, contain three chambers, the middle one being the largest, about eight feet long by six feet wide, and this is the bed-dining-sitting-room of the establishment. Here the passengers will eat, sleep, and receive their guests. The gospel of Jesus Christ has been explained to very many thousands of inquiring Chinese by missionaries who have sat on the edge of their beds with the Chinese hearers sitting beside them, or on the other bed of such a chamber. The crew of the boat, consisting often of a man and his whole family, occupy the stern of the boat. Here may often be seen a small child who has a rope tied round him, to the end of which is attached a piece of bamboo, so placed that in the likely event of his falling into the water his parents may be able to locate his position in the water by means of the floating bamboo, and so rescue him.

These boats are rowed by means of great oar-sweeps working from the stern; a very effective though cumbrous-looking means of progress. Many thousands of these boats ply their trade over all the remarkable waterways which cover the region

between Chingkiang, in the north, and Hangchow, in the south.

A city, called Sung-Kong, about twenty-five miles from Shanghai, the chief official city of the district, was the first to be visited by Mr. John. Here he made a stay, and became acquainted with some residents, distributing suitable tracts to numerous students gathered in the city, and disarming opposition by a friendly and courteous demeanour, thus paving the way for further work.

In the next year, in company with Mr. Edkins, a visit was paid to Soochow, the most important centre in the region between Shanghai and the river Yangtse. Soochow invariably calls up to mind the other great city of the neighbourhood, Hangchow, for the Chinese have a rhyming proverb to express their high appreciation of these famous cities—

> "Above, there's Heaven's blue.
> Below, there's Hang and Soo."

It is natural, therefore, to find Griffith John meditating a visit to Hangchow. Soochow at first refused to open its gates to let in the " barbarian " preachers, but the dauntless missionaries found their way in through one of the water-gates in a boat, and distributed literature and talked with the people.

A year or two earlier missionaries visiting Soochow had been violently attacked in the city, and

one of them severely injured by the anti-foreign populace. Dr. Muirhead thus described the incident: "We determined to assume the Chinese dress, with the long tail in addition. The change was effected over night, and we proceeded to our boat. We kept as closely to it as possible, desiring to arrive at the end of our journey without suffering any reverse. The country was beautiful, and the limpid streams formed a great attraction to the eye. We passed the city of Soochow . . . resolved to visit this terrestrial paradise on our return, and pushed on to Wusih. We went ashore and were recognised by a number of persons . . . who no doubt observed the awkwardness of our manners in spite of our disguise. However, we suffered no ill-treatment at their hands, although there were the usual epithets of barbarian and white devil applied to us on every side. . . .

"Ere long we left the place to return home, and on arriving at Soochow we landed. Books were distributed, and the Word was preached. We were returning to our boat when one of us was laid hold of. . . . We were seized by our tails and driven back to the city. The crowd increased until a vast array of human heads was seen in all directions. Many were now laying hold of our caudal appendages, and they tugged mine so furiously that I thought it would come off altogether. My companion was in better circumstances

than I was, from having less hair of his own, or from his tail not being so securely attached to it, and so the two happily parted company after a short time. I wished with all my heart that mine would do so too, but in spite of the numbers that were dragging at it the tail remained. On the way a man came out of a coffin shop and gave me a heavy blow on the head with a lump of wood, when I began to abandon all hope, resigning myself into the hands of Him whose I was and whom I served.

"We were taken to a police station at the side of the road, and questioned on all hands as to whom we were. Our replies were explicit enough, that we were foreigners from Shanghai, and were religious teachers, exhorting people to be good. They insisted upon our being rebels, and asked if we were not aware that a price was offered for our heads. We sought permission to go into a neighbouring tea-shop, which was granted, and while there a body of officers came from the magistracy and took us through the immense crowd now filling the streets. . . . In the end it was agreed by the magistrates that we were no doubt what we professed to be. They came to us and said, 'We believe you to be foreigners, very good men indeed, but you know you had no right to come into this city. . . . Remember, you are never to be seen in Soochow again.'"

This incident had a humorous sequel in Shanghai a few days afterwards. When preaching in the Mission chapel Dr. Muirhead found in his audience a man from Soochow. On inquiry, he stated that he had been informed that two rebels had been caught in that city a few days before, and that they were taken to the magistrate's office and privately beheaded. *A declaration posted up outside the office said so.* Great was the surprise of the Soochow visitor at finding that one of the beheaded rebels was the preacher before him.

A little later, Mr. John made his headquarters for some months together at a busy city about midway between Shanghai and Hangchow. This city is Bing-wu, the "lake of peace." Here Mrs. John and her little son lived also, and good work was done amongst the people of that city. The foundations of a Chinese church were laid. At the same time, Mr. Alexander Williamson took up his residence in the city of Sung-kong, where converts had been gathered.

These two instances are said to be the first on record of Protestant missionaries establishing themselves at inland cities. "Had Mr. Williamson and myself felt inclined to set up for ourselves, we might have called our Mission *The China Inland Mission*, thus anticipating by some years the magnificent mission which now goes by that name."

The entrance to the city of Bing-wu is exceedingly picturesque. Approaching the city by water from Shanghai one passes under a fine three-arched bridge, by the side of which stands, on a small island, an extremely fine pagoda, five storeys high. Passing under the bridge the boat enters the "Lake of Peace," from which the city takes its name. Behind is the pagoda; on the shore to the right are fine stone monuments erected to some virtuous widows, who earned merit because they refused to marry again; the shore around the pagoda and the monuments is covered with mulberry trees; and in front, as one proceeds, are the walls of the city, with the impressive curved roofs of the Confucian temple showing above them. Inside the city all sense of beauty is lost. The streets are narrow, dirty, and crowded, more so even than most of the cities in the district.

The London Missionary Society still has work in the city of Bing-wu, and although the church formed in those early days was broken up for many years by the outbreak of rebellion, a church is flourishing to-day in the city then first occupied by Griffith John.

In 1858 news was brought to Shanghai that the Yellow River (China's Peril) had burst its banks. Messrs. Muirhead and John determined upon an itinerating journey to the banks of the river to preach the gospel, and to learn for themselves

what had happened. They passed along the streams between Shanghai and the river Yangtse, teaching and distributing literature as they went, crossing the river at Kiang-nan, where are now great forts set to guard the entrance to the Yangtse. They then proceeded along the course of the Grand Canal, the myriad-mile river, as the Chinese term it, observing this most wonderful engineering feat of ancient China, and getting into touch with the towns along its banks.

The Grand Canal, which stretches down through the Eastern Provinces of China, connects Peking with the Yangtse River at a spot opposite Ching-kiang, and also the Yangtse with Hangchow. It is an inland means of communication between north and south, which in the days before steamships was an invaluable means of transport. All the rice which was sent from the rich regions of the Yangtse and the south, to the north, was taken in special grain boats along the Grand Canal. Officials travelling to and from Peking were able to journey on this route in some measure of state and comfort. Now that steamships and railways are at work in China, the Grand Canal is unfortunately being allowed to fall into disrepair, and this great monument of industry and skill may possibly lose all its former use and glory.

At Tsing-kiang-pu, an important city on the Canal, an endeavour was made by the officials to

prevent the missionaries from landing, care for the bodily safety of the foreigners in a district where foreigners were unknown being made the official excuse. The officials called upon the missionaries and professed friendship, but endeavoured to impede their further progress. Not to be defeated, however, the two foreigners stepped ashore, passed through the crowds which lined the banks, and walked the few miles which separated them from the old bed of the Yellow River.

Here they found the old watercourse silted up and dry as dust, and from the centre where, a few years before, the waters of the great Hwang-ho had rolled on their way to the sea, they preached the gospel of God to the multitude which had followed them from the city. Further progress northward being impossible, the travellers returned to Shanghai.

It was in the autumn of 1858 that Griffith John, accompanied by his former fellow-student at Bedford, Mr. W. K. Lea, journeyed along the Grand Canal, making a circular journey, embracing Hang-chow in its route.

On this journey Dr. John relates that, as he passed along the street of one of the towns, he heard a woman say to her companion, "Behold, there is a little devil." "Yes," said the other, "and he is a real devil," meaning that he was not a Tai-ping, or long-haired rebel, but a true foreigner.

Four thousand copies of the Chinese New Testament were taken to Hangchow at this time for distribution. Hangchow is a city "beautiful for situation," and a very popular place of pilgrimage for Buddhist believers from all parts of Eastern China. In the springtime still tens of thousands of Chinese, chiefly elderly women, journey by boat to Hangchow to pray and worship at the great idol temples on the hills outside the city. In the hall of the largest of the temples are to be found five hundred gilded, life-size figures of Buddha and his disciples. The missionaries were not a little pleased to find that they were permitted to move about in this city, one of the very fortresses of heathendom, without hindrance.

All this time, however, the eyes of the missionaries in Shanghai had been fixed on the great territories of China to the north and west, as yet unoccupied by missionary workers. Dr. Medhurst made the following petition a regular portion of his daily prayers for China: "Lord, open China, and scatter Thy servants." Griffith John thus wrote home to the Directors of the L.M.S. in those early days: "I hope to be able to make one or two trips into the northern and western provinces for the purpose of fixing on one or two points for missionary stations. *It is the desire of my heart to labour in the regions beyond.* It remains to be seen whether it is practicable or not. May the great

Head of the Church guide us all, and lead us where we may be most useful in promoting His glory in the salvation of men."

Meanwhile war was disturbing the country. The British troops with their allies, the French, were advancing to the north upon Peking, and rebellion was laying waste all the central provinces of China. Work was made difficult, and the hopes of a speedy opening of the country to missionary effort were destroyed. Still the ardent missionary was bent upon the spreading abroad of the gospel.

We read of a repeated visit to Bing-wu, of a journey made in company with Mr. Wylie to Sung-kong and to Hangchow. This city had suffered terribly at the hands of a body of rebels; tens of thousands of the inhabitants had been slain or had committed suicide, and many of the finest portions of the city had been wrecked or destroyed by fire in the sack of the city. The fear of attack had driven the priests from the temples, and the neighbourhood was a desert. The populace had acted on the Chinese proverb, "For a little disturbance flee in to the city; for a big trouble disperse to the country." They had dispersed.

Wondering what sort of reception awaited them, the two missionaries attempted their entrance with some trepidation. But no difficulties were set in their way, and they continued their work and their

journey by another route homeward again to Shanghai.

Between Griffith John and the forward march there lay deep and threatening the heavy shadow of the Tai-ping Rebellion.

CHAPTER IV

THE REGIONS BEYOND

"On, to the bound of the waste,
On, to the City of God."

MATTHEW ARNOLD.

THE Tai-ping Rebellion of China is as romantic as any recorded in history. Its leader, Hung Sui-tsuen, was a man of the people, whose appeal was to the populace against the rulers of the nation, and who led untrained masses of men with enormous success against Imperialist troops, until he had overrun the fairest and wealthiest provinces of the Empire.

In the first blush of enthusiasm the Tai-ping (Great Peace) movement was irresistible, and it appeared at times as if a force had arisen which must thrust the Manchus from the throne. Many foreigners were anticipating a new régime in China, one favourable to Christianity and to the cause of progress, and had the early ideals of the Tai-ping leaders been maintained this might well have occurred. For this movement, which in the end degenerated into mob law and uncurbed licence,

had its origin in religious zeal and a passion for righteousness.

Hung Sui-tsuen, when in Canton as a student up from the country for examination, received, probably from Liang Ah-fa, the first Christian Chinese pastor and a convert of Drs. Morrison and Milne, a tract, entitled " Good Words to admonish the Age." It is more than possible that Dr. Morrison himself was with Liang Ah-fa, as Hung Sui-tsuen once said that a foreigner was with the Chinese who gave him the Christian book. This tract was a selection of passages of Scripture exhorting to goodness, with explanatory notes. Hung took it home, and some time afterwards, having repeated visions at night and hearing messages given to him by spiritual beings, he turned to a perusal of it, when he found that its message coincided with the heavenly exhortations given him in his dreams.

He set about the formation of a " true God " club in his native town ; tore down the idols from his house, and persuaded his fellow-members to do the same. Hung was never a Church member, although he placed himself in Canton under the instruction of a foreign missionary. Owing to the fearless attacks made on idolatry by Hung Sui-tsuen and his associates, they soon became involved in trouble, and as they defended themselves with vigour, the result was an organised revolt against the ruling powers. They defeated all the local

forces sent against them and became aggressive themselves.

The struggle extended northward, spreading over all the southern provinces, and only stayed its victorious course when the river Yangtse was reached. Later, the rebel forces crossed the river and marched forward, hoping to attack and capture Peking itself. In this attempt they failed.

The fanatical element, always strongly evident in the character of Hung Sui-tsuen, was developed by success, and he began to term himself the Heavenly King (Tien Wang), and the younger brother of Jesus Christ, from whom he professed to receive supernatural authority and guidance. The Tai-ping soldiers were always idol breakers, and no temples were spared in their path. But they gathered to themselves all the disreputable and disaffected throughout China, and as a result the decay of their cause was certain and complete.

The missionaries in Shanghai came into close touch with the rebels through the cousin of the Tien Wang, a man named Hung-jin, who had been a preacher of the London Mission in Hong Kong under Drs. Legge and Chalmers, and had been working at one time with Dr. Medhurst in Shanghai.

Hung-jin bore a high reputation for zeal and courage, and appears to have been a very sincere

Christian. The reports of Dr. Legge speak with high approval of Hung's character and virtues. When he at last joined forces with his cousin in the hope of influencing the rebels for good, he was named the Shield King (Kan Wang), and wielded considerable authority. Hung-jin was attached to the Tai-ping troops who had taken the city of Soochow, and who were therefore within seventy miles of Shanghai.

The district around Soochow is the place where General Gordon led the "ever-victorious army" of Chinese Imperial troops in their campaign against the rebels. It was this army under Gordon, who had been lent by the British Government to the Chinese authorities to lead their forces, that eventually defeated and broke up the rebel movement. A wonderful bridge of forty arches, just outside Soochow, is said to be the spot on which Gordon stood, armed only with a walking cane, and watched the progress of the great battle which took place in the neighbourhood between the two armies.

Nanking had become, since its capture, the headquarters of the rebel kingdom, and here the Tien Wang kept regal state. In July 1860, Griffith John, together with Mr. Edkins and another, made an eventful journey to Soochow in order to get into touch with the Shield King and his co-revolutionaries. This they successfully accomplished. Dr.

John said that the week which he spent in the insurgent's territory was by far the most eventful in his history. The party ran tremendous risks in attempting to reach Soochow, being in danger of attack from both Imperialists and rebels. Nearing Soochow they found the rivers so choked in one place with dead bodies that it was with difficulty their boat was safely piloted through.

Eventually the missionaries were permitted an audience with the Faithful King (Chung Wang), who was the great military commander of the rebel forces, and an exceedingly able general. This ruler professed a belief in Christianity, and also a desire to maintain friendship with the "*brethren of the western ocean.*" The rebel leaders accepted, as the standard of their faith, the books of the Old and New Testament, special editions of which they had printed for the use of their troops. The interview made a most favourable impression on those taking part in it.

Later, the missionaries made another visit to Soochow, where they met the Shield King, the ex-preacher of the London Mission, with whom they held full and frank communication. He was pleased at the news of the progress of the Christian Church which the missionaries brought to him, and said, "The Kingdom of Christ must spread and overcome every opposition; whatever may become of the

celestial dynasty, there can be no doubt concerning this matter."

A service was held in which the Shield King took part, himself singing a hymn composed by Dr. Medhurst. He told the missionaries that his one object in leaving Christian work in Hong Kong to join the rebel forces in Nanking was to spread Christian truth amongst them, but that his cousin forced him into the position of chieftain. He acknowledged that, though devoted to the new movement, he was happier when a preacher in Hong Kong.

On the day following this interview the missionaries again met the Shield King, and before parting he prayed with them most fervently, beseeching God that "all the idols might perish; that the temples should be converted into chapels; and that pure Christianity might become the religion of China."

Later, the Tai-ping forces were led towards Shanghai, and after defeating the Imperialist troops endeavoured to enter the native city, but were driven off by combined British and French soldiers, who had been set to defend the gates against them. It is said that the rebels were bitterly disappointed at meeting with this opposition, having regarded foreigners as the friends of their cause.

Griffith John's next intimate communication

with the rebel leaders was due to his unceasing desire to find a way opened to the interior of China for the preaching of the gospel. He was away for a month from Shanghai, travelling to Nanking and getting into touch with the Tien Wang and his immediate followers. Nanking had been one of the finest of all the cities of China. It is the place where the first emperors of the great "Ming" dynasty of China had lived, and where their tombs remain to this day. Many Chinese hope that the day will come when Nanking will again become the capital of the Empire. A wonderful porcelain pagoda, for which the city was famous, was destroyed by the rebels, and in the stress of war tremendous damage was done to this great city.

Griffith John's chief object of attainment was to secure from the Tien Wang an edict of religious toleration. By this he hoped to gain permission to travel freely over the territory held by the rebels, and to carry on Christian work. This edict was not secured without some difficulty, but was quite satisfactory when it was obtained.

The edict ran thus :[1] "I learn that the foreign teacher Griffith John and his friends, esteeming the Kingdom of Heaven, and reverencing and believing in my Father and my adopted Father . . . have come for the express purpose of requesting per-

[1] *Griffith John*, by William Robson.

mission to spread abroad the true doctrine . . . I truly perceive that these are faithful and sincere men, and that they count it nothing to suffer with Christ, and because of this I esteem them very highly." Then followed an injunction to all the Tai-ping officers to act harmoniously with the missionaries, and to treat them well.

It was the intention of Mr. John to make use of this edict for the purpose of establishing himself in the royal city of Nanking for missionary work. He was urged, however, to forgo that intention for the time being, and, as events proved, very wisely agreed. Had English missionaries been looked upon by the Chinese Government as supporters of the Tai-ping rebellion, it is likely that many additional difficulties would in after days have been placed in the way of Christian work. Even as it was, many Chinese officials believed that foreign Christians were largely the cause of the rebellion, and suspected them accordingly.

Hearing that the British Government intended to send a political mission up the Yangtse River to Kui-Kiang and Hankow, he remarks : "*Hankow should by all means be occupied by our Society. A more important or inviting sphere of missionary labour China does not present.*" It may be said that Dr. John's whole life was spent in attesting his belief in this latter statement. Hankow

became to him *the* place of all places in China for Christian effort.

At this period Mr. and Mrs. John had to face the hardship of being separated from their eldest boy, then a child of five years old, whom it was found needful to send to England. He was placed in the care of Mr. Wylie, who was going home for a furlough.

Thereafter the missionary journeyed northward to meet Mr. Edkins at Chefoo, a port on the coast of Shantung. This was his first (and only) journey into the provinces of North China. He found great pleasure in both the scenery and people of this region. The men of Shantung are bigger, hardier, and more independent than the inhabitants of the central regions of China. Griffith John saw in them fine material for Christian discipleship, a view which later events fully confirmed, and which the Boxer martyrdoms forty years later emphatically demonstrated to the world, as the storm of persecution swept over the Christian churches of North China.

The missionaries travelled long distances inland from Chefoo, endeavouring successfully to open up Christian work in the interior regions of the province. They were the first Protestant missionaries to visit some of the important cities of North China. Leaving Mr. Edkins in that district, there to continue his pioneer work until he eventually

established, with Dr. Lockhart, the headquarters of the North China Mission within the walls of the imperial city of Peking, Griffith John returned to Shanghai with the intention of accompanying the British expedition up the Yangtse River, but he arrived just too late. Mr. Muirhead had gone with the party, and was to be the first Protestant missionary to preach in the place where his esteemed colleague, John, was to accomplish his life-work.

The British expedition, however, settled, humanly speaking, the plans of the missionary. Mr. Muirhead returned full of enthusiasm for the possibilities of the Yangtse Valley as a place for missionary enterprise. Now that Hankow had been opened, thither Griffith John must go. The regions beyond had been calling him insistently during the six years of his work around Shanghai, and he had never felt that Shanghai was his sphere of life-service. He wanted a wider horizon. He looked beyond, not as one who was restless and roving, but as one who was commissioned by the call of God to the bigger fields of labour and to the uncared for and unenlightened in the vast territories where no foreign preacher of the Christian gospel had yet gone.

Accompanied by a like-minded, congenial fellow-worker, the Rev. R. Wilson, the dauntless evangelist left Shanghai for the scene of his future labours, not knowing what might befall him, but

determined to do his duty as a faithful servant of God. It was nearing midnight, on a clear moonlight night of June, in the year 1861, when these apostolic workers set foot upon the soil of Hankow in the name of their Lord and Master.

CHAPTER V

FOUNDING THE HANKOW MISSION

"The little one shall become a thousand."

HANKOW in itself is not a city of note. Apart from commerce and its enormous population, it has neither history nor importance. It is the town at the mouth of the river Han (Han mouth), and is the commercial part of the two important adjoining cities of Wuchang — to the south of the Yangtse — and Han-yang, to the north. These three important places rank as one for practical purposes, Hankow being the link which joins the other two centres.

Commerce alone has made it great. The mighty Yangtse brings down from the regions of the Far West all the products of that wealthy territory and deposits them at Hankow, and the Han River, running its course, though but a tributary stream, of nearly 1000 miles into the far North-West, bears its burden of traffic and commerce to the same spot. Hankow thus becomes, as it were, the combined Newcastle and Manchester of Central

China, with Shanghai, far away at the mouth of the Yangtse, to represent the Liverpool of the Far East.

Though Hankow is 600 miles from the China Sea, yet ocean-going steamers are able to steam up the river and take in their cargoes by the river-side. Year by year great vessels sail right up to Hankow and bring away their cargoes of tea, which they proceed with direct from "the heart of China" to the ports of Europe and America. All the roads of West and Central China converge upon Hankow.

It is no wonder, then, that the position of the new missionary centre and its prospects struck the missionaries very forcibly. "I have not seen," wrote Dr. John, "a place that I like better in every respect than this. . . . From here the missionary can penetrate in every direction." It is in *men* rather than in *places* that the Christian missionary finds his interest fixed, and the claims of fields of work are judged by the opportunities they offer for reaching men and women with the Word of Life.

The immediate needs of the situation on that memorable day of landing in June, however, were a place of abode and a suitable location for work. It is not easy to realise the feelings of men set down at night in a strange place amongst a people, indifferent or even hostile, unless one has had a similar experience. If ever faith is called upon

to inspire hope and courage, it is at such a time. Our heroes lacked neither faith, nor courage, nor hope. Their hearts were set upon their task, and their vision, even in those dim, early days, saw its accomplishment, for they believed in the promises and in the presence of God. They went steadily forward, preparing to spend the trying, almost unbearable, months of the summer in Hankow.

Premises were found which satisfied the immediate wants of the missionaries, although they were altogether inadequate to their personal needs or to the claims of the work. Mr. John was thankful enough, however, to have rented them without difficulty. One who visited these same premises in after years has remarked: "They found their first home in a small native house in a narrow lane, in one of the most densely populated quarters of the Chinese city. In those dark and evil-smelling surroundings, it is a marvel that they ever survived a Hankow summer. Two little children did fall a prey to the insanitary surroundings, but, in spite of all, the mission party kept cheery hearts." When it is remembered that for eight or nine weeks the thermometer stands in the daytime between 90° and 100°, and even at night seldom drops below 85°, some idea of what life in stuffy rooms in unclean surroundings meant may be gained.

At the end of the summer, Mr. John brought up his family from Shanghai, and the autumn of 1861 saw the two missionaries and their families settled in their uncomfortable quarters in Hankow, eager for work and ready for any enterprise of a Christian character to which God might call them. Nine months after their arrival, the pioneers had the joy of baptizing and receiving into Church membership *the first Protestant mission convert in Central China*, the first-fruits of a marvellous harvest.

At the end of the year after their arrival, the Church in Hankow numbered seven members—five men and two women. The work for which they laboured was already forming in their hands under the guidance of God. All missionary activities lead up to the Church of Jesus Christ, and no missionary was ever clearer, or more single-hearted in his loyalty to the ideal of church life as the goal of missionary effort, than Griffith John. No narrow-minded worker, always ready to labour where the providence of God seemed to call, and willing in the New Testament sense to become "all things to all men" that he might save some, his service was always of the deep, intense, and purposeful kind. The Kingdom of God was always in his view, and all successes judged in relation to it. So the claims of the Chinese Christian Church were ever placed in the forefront of work.

The missionary, it must be remembered, was not the only foreign resident in Hankow. Already foreign hongs, or warehouses, were established, and commercial representatives of British and other foreign firms were on the spot, trading with the Chinese, buying Chinese goods for export and selling Western goods, such as cotton, cloth, woollen material, and so on. Here then was another claim which the missionary must meet, the claims of his own countrymen. Services in English were instituted, and Griffith John, the eloquent preacher of Wales, began his ministry to his own nationals in far-away Hankow, seeking to establish them in the faith of their fathers, and to encourage them in the Christian life. Such a work is deeply necessary in the parts of the Far East, where the temptations to carelessness and vice are very great, and where many fall away from faith.

His services were not unrecognised, for he gained the interest and goodwill of many of his fellow-countrymen in response to his appeals to their spiritual life. Many of them came forward with offers of financial support for his work, and he was urged frequently, though always in vain, to allow himself to be appointed as chaplain of the Hankow foreign community. There are many Englishmen, whose lot has cast them at some time in Hankow, who are glad to acknowledge their religious

indebtedness to the ministry and friendship of Dr. John.

A sad blow fell upon the little missionary group in 1863 when illness attacked the Rev. R. Wilson, ending in his death on the 12th of August. The mission party had just removed into new commodious premises, which had been built for them under Mr. Wilson's supervision. Dr. Griffith John averred later that the intellectual qualities of Mr. Wilson would have gained for him a leading place in missionary work in China had he lived, and a true friendship and mutual esteem had marked the united labours of the two men. To-day Mr. Wilson's life is commemorated in the memorial chapel which has been built in connection with the Griffith-John Anglo-Chinese College of Hankow.

Men might be taken, spirits might be depressed, health might fail, but the work must go on whilst life remained. There across the mile-wide river lay the great city of Wuchang, one of the two most important cities in the long valley of the Yangtse. To the missionary it was of the utmost strategical importance. In that place influences might be set up which would spread over the whole of the two great provinces of Hupeh and Hunan. Wuchang was the seat of government for these provinces. Here officials from every one of their towns and cities were constantly coming and going.

Christian teaching given in this place would be carried over all that great area. Griffith John could not rest until Wuchang was occupied. But how to do it ?

He had already, in pursuance of the suave and conciliatory personal methods which become the effective Christian missionary, and which he always exemplified, opened up friendly relations with the governor (Tao-tai) and other officials of Hankow. Now it seemed needful to approach the Viceroy, the highest official of the whole region and the direct representative of the Emperor himself. For Griffith John had found that the people of the city of Wuchang feared to allow their premises to be rented for missionary use, lest they should incur the ill-will of the all-powerful officials whose anti-missionary sentiments were well known. Just when negotiations seemed on the point of completion, excuses would be forthcoming, and the agreement would be withdrawn. A present of books, always a suitable gift in China between scholars, such as the officials invariably are, opened the way of approach, and the missionary and the Viceroy came face to face.

The Viceroy explained his desire that the missionary should not attempt work in the city, on the ground of his personal consideration for the comfort and safety of the foreigner. The danger to which the missionaries exposed themselves in

view of the ignorance of the populace moved the great man's heart to deep concern. Finding that this fine talk did not alter the determination of the foreign pastor, he further said that in view of the friendly relations now existing between China and Britain, he had no objection to the renting of a house, if the missionary could find a suitable one ! So the interview ended. Nothing more satisfactory could be secured from the Viceroy, who gave private instructions to his subordinates to see that no houses were left available.

This has been the history of almost every city into which Christian missionaries have entered. Officials have expressed regret at hearing of the inability of the missionary to secure premises for work, and at the same time have secretly threatened with punishment any Chinese who should attempt to sell or rent premises to them. To sit on both sides of the fence at once is an art which the Chinese official has acquired to perfection.

This struggle between the officials and the missionary went on for some months, neither ground nor premises being either purchasable or rentable for missionary work. The plan was therefore formed of entrusting a sum of money to the Chinese evangelist with which to purchase a suitable site in his own name. This scheme succeeded, greatly to

the chagrin of the Chinese officials, and the result was that buildings were erected in Wuchang by means of the contributions of the friendly foreign community in Hankow, who had been watching the struggle with interest and amusement, feeling quite assured that Griffith John would win ; and a resident Chinese preacher was then installed. It was into these premises that the Rev. T. Bryson, later the well-known missionary of Tientsin, came when he joined Dr. John in his work in Central China two years later.

Thus Wuchang was entered, and the work of missionary extension which has gone steadily forward through fifty years of work was begun. In the end, the officials of the district had to publish a proclamation informing the people that the missionary had come legally into possession of the land, and had the right to build mission premises there.

In the year following this, Griffith John, who had now been for ten years in China, had the pleasure of a visit from the secretary of the London Missionary Society, Dr. Mullens.

Dr. Mullens was a man who, as a missionary of experience in India, had reliable knowledge of the Orient, and knew what density of population in an Eastern land can be. He was well acquainted with the big cities of India, but when Mr. John led him to the top of the hill in Wuchang City,

and he looked out over the three cities at his feet, observing mile after mile of roofs of houses crowded together as far as the eye could see, he confessed that "neither in India nor in China have I ever before looked upon such a noble sphere for missionary labours."

The new houses for missionary residence which had been erected in Hankow, the chapels in Hankow and Wuchang, all met with his approval, and he reported that "in our brother, Mr. John, I have been glad to find a man in thorough accord with the highest aims of the Society, caring for its interests in every way, and executing the work entrusted to him, as founder of the Hankow mission, with singular judgment and discretion."

In the year 1866 the Rev. Evan Bryant, a fellow townsman of Griffith John's, and a student of Brecon College, joined the pioneer missionary. Never was colleague more sorely needed. At this time the membership of the Church stood at fifty-seven, as the result of five years of patient labour. It was not an abounding harvest, and yet very many missionaries have been obliged to toil for a much longer period of years in many fields for smaller results. It was greater than had followed the first generation of Protestant missionary work in China.

The year after saw an addition of fifty-one

members and another foreign missionary; the seed faithfully sown was bearing fruit. Above all, one or two Chinese converts had proved their true devotion to the gospel of Christ by faithfulness under persecution, and were living examples of Christian grace. Mr. Pau, the preacher-deacon at Wuchang, was an outstanding instance of Chinese Christian discipleship.

Having had experience in Shanghai of the great influence created by a Christian hospital upon the minds of the Chinese, Griffith John had urged the appointment of a missionary doctor to Hankow. The medical man who was appointed set sail from England in July 1864, but died at sea. The keenest disappointment was felt at this blow by the missionary, who was then entirely alone in his missionary service in Hankow, Mrs. John and the children having left for home owing to sickness and the educational needs of their second son. But the persistent spirit of the missionary failed him not, nor did his faith forsake him. The medical idea was still in his mind, and when a suggestion was made by some of the foreign friends of the mission in the community that a dispensary as well as a chapel should be erected in the mission premises for the use of the Chinese, he leapt at the proposal.

The plans enlarged themselves in scope until a hospital was included in the scheme, and the

English medical officer of the community, a faithful Christian man, Dr. A. G. Reid, offered his services as physician. Here then was the way out. Money was collected from residents in Hankow, and this happy co-operation between foreign merchants and foreign missionaries began a work of Christian love, which in its history has been the means of salvation to the bodies of thousands of Chinese and to the souls of not a few.

In the early stages of missionary work in China it has been found that Christian medical work has won its way into the hearts of the Chinese when all other means have failed. A hospital is a *practical* way of showing Christian love and care for men, and in China practice counts for more than almost anywhere else in the world. Mere speech counts for very little ; the Chinese are only too accustomed to "good talk." When good talk and good deeds are observed hand in hand, then it is allowed that there is something worthy of attention. Of a missionary in China when it is said, as it was said of his Master on earth, that he "went about *doing* good," then it is certain that his words have special worth and influence. The Christian doctor in China has opened the door for the gospel in many places where other attempts have been unsuccessful.

With this hospital work in Hankow the name of Dr. Kenneth Mackenzie—a man who won the

confidence and the esteem of the Chinese as it is given to few men to do—as well as that of the present senior physician of the L.M.S. medical work there, Dr. Gillison, must be associated as long as the history of its service shall remain.

Dispensary work was also begun by Dr. Reid and Mr. John in Wuchang, to which place they regularly journeyed once or twice each week, and this in its turn proved to be the foundation of a flourishing medical work in that city. Indeed, it is scarcely possible to turn to any of the great branches of missionary service in the heart of Central China without finding the name of Griffith John inscribed upon the foundation stones.

Mention has already been made of Mr. James Wylie, the eminent Chinese scholar and traveller, who had been Griffith John's colleague and frequent fellow-traveller in the regions about Shanghai. These great names were again associated in a pioneer missionary enterprise of much moment in the year 1868. Messrs. Wylie and John, the former having become the agent in China of the British and Foreign Bible Society, arranged to travel through the upper Yangtse beyond Chungking to Cheng-tu, to the bounds of the greatest of the provinces of China, that of Szechuen, and back to Hankow *via* Hsi-Anfu, the capital of Shensi.

Roman Catholic missionaries had already penetrated to the Far West of China, and had settled there in furtherance of their missionary enterprise, but no other Europeans had been permitted to penetrate so far into Chinese territory. It was not as a traveller that Griffith John gathered fame, yet the records of his journeyings show how great a traveller he might have been had not the call of Christian duty cast his lot into one definite field of service. The members of the Church in Hankow were intensely interested in this journey of their pastor, and they gave to him and his companion the best "send-off" it was in their power to provide.

No travellers have ever made the journey of the upper Yangtse, through the world-famed gorges and over the phenomenal rapids between Ichang and Chungking, without expressing themselves as lost in wonder and admiration at the grandeur of the scenes unfolded before them. The journey is exceedingly hazardous, and many are the Chinese lives lost every year in the foaming torrents of this tremendous river.

It took our travellers two months to accomplish the journey upstream of 720 miles. The return journey is often accomplished in two weeks, so great a difference does the racing stream of the mighty river make. Confined within narrow bounds by rocks that rise precipitously from the

river hundreds of feet high, the mass of water forms into thundering whirlpools, like a mammoth millstream, as it passes through gorge after gorge. Yet the Chinese boats, specially built for the journey, carrying enormous oar-sweeps from both bow and stern, in order that the crew may be enabled to control the boat in the turmoil of waters, are continually voyaging between Ichang and Chungking. By the river-side gangs of trackers are hired, who fasten themselves on to long bamboo ropes, and, clambering and slipping along narrow footpaths on the slopes of the precipices by the riverside, they tow the boats slowly, and with much danger to themselves, through the rapids. Sometimes a rope breaks, and the boat falls back with the current in an hour a distance which it has taken a day to accomplish. One voyager over this trying journey remarked when it was over that he knew well the Lord would take care of him, but whether it was to be in this world or the next he did not know.

The missionaries accomplished the journey without hurt. "No harm has been permitted to come nigh either of us," wrote Griffith John. "I have greatly enjoyed the trip so far; and I shall always feel thankful that I have gone through this experience."

About the year 1912 a railway between Ichang

and Cheng-tu was projected, so that travellers might avoid the risk of the gorges; but nothing came of the plan, and up to the present (1928) all the old dangerous conditions remain.

It was on 7th June 1868 that the fellow-travellers landed safely at Chungking, and prepared themselves for the further journey to the famed city of Cheng-tu.

CHAPTER VI

ONWARD AND OUTWARD

"Lengthen thy cords and strengthen thy stakes; for thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left."

IN the great province of Szechuen when Griffith John visited it in 1868, there was not one Protestant missionary convert. For many years there had been numbers of Roman Catholic converts and churches there, and not a few valiant and devoted priests of the Roman Church had made their way overland from the south of China to the Far West, and had settled quietly amongst the people.

Great importance has always been placed by the Chinese upon Szechuen because of its wealth (for it contains many valuable minerals), its size, and its big population. Between the cities of Chung-king and Cheng-tu lies a great fertile plain, by which the missionaries passed. Already at this time the opium crop, which a few years before was unknown in West China, was beginning to appear, and before long this great province was to become notorious for the amount of opium it would pro-

duce. For fifty years opium would lay its evil trail over the fertile soil, until the Anti-Opium Movement began and the crop was abolished.

The travellers journeyed on, up the river Min, until they reached Cheng-tu, one of the most noted cities in China, which was for a time, some hundreds of years ago, a royal city. The kings, who were called the " Later Hans," held their court in Cheng-tu. In this great city Griffith John was consumed by a deep longing to do something for the west of China. " We must not neglect Szechuen," he wrote. " I hope that we may be the first Protestant mission, and *I the first Protestant missionary* that will take possession of Chungking in the name of Christ." He considered that Chungking was only second to Hankow with regard to population and commerce, and he desired that Protestant missions might attempt there such a work as he saw the Roman Catholics were doing.

Twenty years later, as a result of his persistent appeals, representatives of the London Missionary Society went from Hankow to Chungking, taking with them one of the best of the Chinese preachers from Hankow, and to-day that city is one of the great centres of successful missionary work. Missionaries there have had to suffer in riot after riot, but have still worked on in faith.

Although Griffith John was not himself allowed to go as a pioneer missionary to Szechuen, he was

the means of drawing the attention of the Christian Churches of Britain and America to the needs of that mighty province.

On the way to Cheng-tu he had had forebodings of personal peril of some kind, for, on his return to Hankow, he confessed in writing to a friend that he hardly expected to come back. "My brightest hope was that God would permit me to see Cheng-tu, where I thought I could die in peace, knowing that my grave at that great and distant city would stimulate others to come and occupy it in the name of the Lord." He did better than die for Cheng-tu, he lived to urge its claims; and it is interesting to remember that this capital city of the West, into which Messrs. John and Wylie were the first Protestant missionaries to enter in 1868, is to-day one of the most progressive and well-governed of the big cities of China; that it has led the way in many matters of civic reform and municipal government; that it contains thousands of Christian converts; and that it is the head-quarters of a Union Christian University, which is doing a great work for the whole of West China.

Such is the harvest which has ripened from the seed first sown in that pioneer missionary journey. "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand." God's harvest does not fail, even though it tarries long.

The two missionaries returned to Hankow by the Han River, and on reviewing the events of the five months' journey, during which the travellers had covered 3000 miles of almost unknown Chinese territory, Griffith John said: "I feel, in a way I have never felt before, that the valleys of the Yangtse and the Han have been taken possession of in the name of Christ, and that it is for me to live and die for the millions of precious souls that line these two magnificent streams."

Whilst the life of Griffith John was spent in the Hankow district, and his chief energies expended on its behalf, his Christian sympathy and zeal always made him ready for work in other spheres. He volunteered to lead a mission to West China, and when there was brought forward a plan for establishing a mission of the L.M.S. in Japan, he volunteered to lead that. He implored the Directors of the L.M.S. to begin work in Korea, and it was his deep desire to be allowed to lead a band of missionaries into the hostile province of Hunan. To the end of his long life the pioneer instinct was strong in him; he was always responsive to the call of new fields of labour, and a forlorn hope rang in his ears with a trumpet blast. He loved to venture all for Christ; onward and forward were his marching orders; he was the ideal Christian adventurer.

One of the first tasks laid upon him after his

return from the western journey was to do battle in defence of the work in Wuchang.

Instructions had arrived from London in 1869, ordering the withdrawal of foreign missionaries from the Wuchang centre. These instructions were not caused by a desire to retreat, but were the result of the very strong anti-missionary bias which prevailed in governmental quarters in those days. It is almost impossible to realise to-day the hostility with which missionary efforts were regarded then by diplomats and statesmen.

An attempt on the part of some missionaries of the China Inland Mission to enter into residence in the city of Yangchow, a place on the Grand Canal, about twenty miles from the Yangtse, where that mission has now a large missionary training home, had enraged the officials and people, and had provoked a riot. Strong opinions were expressed by the leaders of the House of Lords concerning what was then considered the folly of missionary enterprise in China, and a storm of indignation against missionaries, as disturbers of the peace, was raised. Bishop Magee had entered a spirited protest against the attitude of the politicians, but, for the time being, it was considered prudent to restrict missionary residence so far as possible to the Treaty Ports, and the missionaries in Hankow were therefore instructed to remove the missionary from Wuchang.

With Dr. John, however, it was no mere question of prudence, but one of right, and of Christian obedience. "We ought to serve God rather than men." He refused to accept the first instructions received from London, urging that since the property in Wuchang had been purchased with money given for that purpose by his personal friends in Hankow, it ought neither to be withdrawn from nor sold. In the end his views prevailed, and he had the satisfaction of seeing the right to carry on work in the Viceregal city still preserved.

It was becoming clear that the missionary could not much longer avoid a return to England. He had been fifteen years away from his own country and people, living a life of hard labour and much trial and danger; he had children there whom he had not seen now for many years—it was nine years since the eldest boy had left for England; his own health was beginning to suffer, whilst that of Mrs. John demanded an immediate change. A medical missionary had now arrived to take charge of the Hankow Hospital, and there were two efficient colleagues in residence. Hence it was decided that the missionary should go home for his first furlough.

He arrived in London on 30th September 1870, and made his way to Machynlleth, in Wales, where the widow of David Griffiths, his wife's mother, was still living.

Was Griffith John, the now famous missionary, the "boy preacher" of Wales twenty years before, still a Welsh orator? There were many who knew of the successes of his youthful years who wondered, while some feared that fifteen years of China and work in the Chinese language might have robbed him of the divine gift.

All doubts were soon set at rest. Dr. John was the preacher at the Cymanfa in Machynlleth that year, and had an open-air congregation of five thousand people, whom he held spellbound whilst he delivered to them a missionary sermon dealing with the mission field in China. At the meetings of the Congregational Union in Swansea he captivated an enormous audience with an address which was described as "the most marvellous and thrilling missionary speech which had ever been heard." "He carried his audience with him to a height of sanctified enthusiasm which is seldom reached."

A Welsh lad, who heard him preach during this period, and in whose heart were sown the seeds of missionary enthusiasm which later took him in his turn to China, the Rev. W. Hopkyn Rees, says of the effect of his preaching: "The large audience was carried away by the rush of his eloquence . . . the impression was deep and lasting, and to this day some remember that address."

In England, at the annual meetings of the L.M.S. in Exeter Hall, the missionary from China was called upon to speak at the close of the meeting. This was no easy task, but again he vindicated his reputation as an enthralling speaker. A year later he preached the Annual Missionary Sermon for the Society at the old Surrey Chapel. That sermon, which made a great impression on its hearers, was published under the title, "Hope for China." The text was characteristic of the optimism which was so marked a feature of Griffith John's life: "Be not weary in well-doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."

At the outset of this sermon he made the following declaration: "During a missionary career of fifteen years I have been compelled to examine and re-examine the grounds of my conviction on this subject, and I am glad to be able to tell you that my faith in the reality and ultimate success of the missionary enterprise was never stronger than it is now. I firmly believe that 'in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.'" Then followed a warning against impatience: "It is not the work of a day to build up afresh the ruins of nations that have been going to decay for ages, or to overthrow ancient, subtle, and consolidated systems which are deeply rooted in the minds of the people and interwoven in the very fabric of their society."

The " heads " of the sermon were as follows :

1. The bright future revealed in God's Word induces us to believe that " we shall reap, if we faint not."
2. The present aspect of the work induces me to believe that " we shall reap, if we faint not."
3. In the supernatural origin of the gospel, and the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit, we have a pledge and proof that " we shall reap, if we faint not."
4. The relation of Christ to the world makes it absolutely certain that " we shall reap, if we faint not."

After all, deputation speeches and sermons are not the essential service which a missionary has to render, and none knew this better than Griffith John. The work was calling him unceasingly and imperatively. His health at home had been indifferent, and Mrs. John was almost an invalid. A good deal of pressure was brought to bear upon the missionary orator to stay on at home. Moreover, there were the needs of his children. But there was a greater claim. " For me," he said, " there can be no alternative. Still, it is hard."

Early in 1873, therefore, their faces were once more turned towards China. Mrs. John was in ill-health from the very beginning of the voyage, and

she never rallied. Hers was a noble spirit. She had been her husband's true helpmeet through the many vicissitudes of his missionary life, and it is fitting to record the saying of her mother when she had bidden her daughter farewell: "I am proud that I have a daughter who can do what she is doing."

Her death took place on board ship in the harbour of Singapore, at which place she was buried. Born in Madagascar, she served and suffered in Christ's name with joy in China, living and dying worthily, as became the daughter of one noted missionary pioneer and the wife of another. "No missionary's wife," said Mr. T. Bryson in speaking of her, "ever deserved to be held in remembrance as 'faithful unto death' more than Margaret John."

The tablet erected to Mrs. John in the China Church in Hankow bears these words, "She hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also." The "Margaret" Hospital for women in Hankow perpetuates her memory.

It was a lonely man who landed in Hankow to resume his labours for China. Like many another man in similar circumstances, he found in hard work for the good of others the sovereign balm for the sorrow in himself. And he wrought mightily. A scheme of night-preaching in the chapels and halls by volunteer workers was inaugurated, and with splendid results. In 1873 the Church numbered

two hundred members, and the knowledge of the message of Christ was permeating the cities and the district.

Other missions were entering the field, notably the Wesleyan Methodist Mission, to whose agents Griffith John had been glad to extend the hand of fellowship, and to aid them in many ways. The saintly David Hill, whose name and memory are still fragrant throughout Central China, had been in Hankow since 1865, and was in 1873 at the threshold of that career of Christlike care for the Chinese poor and afflicted which has served to impress China so favourably on behalf of Christian work. The American Episcopal Church Mission had been represented since 1868. The period of steady and deliberate expansion, which looked towards the occupation of the whole region for Jesus Christ, had begun.

CHAPTER VII

MISSIONARY STRATEGIST AND CHURCH-BUILDER

"The utmost for the Highest."

THE period between 1873 and 1881 is as crowded with incident as perhaps any period of Dr. John's long career, and it is also marked by the beginnings of developments which were to be more fruitful in result than anything the past had seen.

The time had come to take a wider view and to plan on a bigger scale. It was a testing time of missionary statesmanship, a period when a policy and a plan were called for, and when men equally sincere, equally brave and zealous, might well have been found wanting. Griffith John never feared a task because it was a big one; with an intensive passion and a deep conviction he had also the gift of the wide and comprehensive mind.

It was not enough to establish a centre of missionary effort in a port or a city, and expect it to expand without further effort. This he saw clearly, and in his mind plans were forming for the

opening up of stations in the country districts by the gathering together of groups of converts who might form the nucleus of communities in the districts away from the port.

There was no sufficient staff of missionaries, however, for such a work. But there were other means than foreign missionaries. Books, portions of the New and Old Testaments, and simple tracts could circulate everywhere. And if the Chinese were mostly illiterate, they could always find those who were ready and able to read to them. If a tract or a gospel could be got into a tea-shop, where the Chinese gather for their social recreation, it would most certainly be discussed and criticised. Anyhow, interest would be awakened. Griffith John sought the aid of the pen, and brought the Hankow Tract Society into being.

In 1875 Dr. Kenneth Mackenzie, a soul on fire with love for men, a man after Griffith John's own heart, joined the Hankow Mission for hospital work. He accompanied the senior in visits to some of the country towns which are now specially memorable because seeds were then sown in tribulation which have sprung up to an abundant harvest.

Hsiao-kan, about forty miles from Hankow, which is now the great centre of mission hospital work for lepers, is such a place. In 1874 a Mr.

Wei, from this district, was converted in Hankow. This man became a notable servant of Christ. He gathered a few of his friends together in order to teach them the good tidings he himself had learned and rejoiced in, and in 1876 he invited the missionaries to visit his village and to preach to his fellow-inquirers.

Mr. Wei's business carried him constantly over the whole Hsiao-kan district, and as he journeyed he had interested many in the new teaching, so that there was much discussion about it. Before the visit of the foreigners took place, some disturbance had occurred, but it was not taken seriously, and Messrs. John and Mackenzie left for Hsiao-kan at the time of the China New Year holidays, looking forward eagerly to special opportunities for new work.

They traversed a country where no European had heretofore been seen, and were soon joined by a large crowd of curious people. These people were at first quite friendly. As they drew near to the city, however, the aspect of things changed, and the missionaries were made the object of a violent attack.

Recounting their experiences, Dr. John wrote: "Remonstrance only intensified their rage. They commenced with hooting and yelling, but they soon proceeded to pelt us with lumps of hard clay. Fortunately for us there were no stones lying about.

Dr. Mackenzie, though not wounded, was struck scores of times. I received two cuts, one on the face and one on the head. The general cries were, 'Beat the foreigners—Kill the foreigners—Back with them to Hankow—Let them go and preach in Hankow—We won't have them here to preach.' One man had a large club in his hand, another had a rapier, and many looked like very fiends.

"About a mile on this side of the Wei 'village' there is a creek which had to be crossed ere we could reach our destination. When we came to this spot there must have been a thousand people, at least, gathered on its banks. The villagers on this side wanted to drive us over the creek, and those on the other side threatened to kill us if we came within their reach. We ventured to attempt it; but the moment I set foot on the bridge I was saluted with a perfect shower of hard lumps of mud. We made our way back from this dangerous position as soon as possible, and though an attempt was made to force us on, we succeeded in regaining the bank.

"From what I have heard since, as well as what I saw at the time, I feel convinced that if we had not retreated we should have been murdered. Seeing that to proceed was impossible, I asked the permission of the mob to return to Hankow, and, to my astonishment, obtained it."

The conduct of the few converts under these circumstances of trial gave the missionary great satisfaction. For theirs was the most trying case; they had to *live* in the midst of the persecutors. When Mr. John asked them how they felt, their reply was, "Never better. Our hearts are full of peace and joy." The next visit paid to this place, very soon after, was quiet and peaceful, and a great work was begun in Hsiao-kan.

Another account[1] says that one of the brethren, an old man, was distressed over the occurrence, and uttered deep sighs as he sat at the table that night with the rest. "Alas," he said, "the enemy has triumphed. It looks very dark. The kingdom of God is driven out of Hsiao-kan." Mr. Wei looked at the old man, brought his fist down on the table with a heavy thud, and said, "Brother, do you think that this sort of thing can knock the kingdom of God into nothing? *No*, ten thousand times *no*!"

Here, it is plain, was a man who had learned his faith in the school of Griffith John.

It may be that there are some who are inclined to question the real value of work which produces in its beginnings so much ill-will and anger. Let them bear this in mind. This riot happened little more than thirty years ago. In Hsiao-kan district to-day there are more than 2500 converts, seven-

[1] *In the Valley of the Yangtse.* Mrs. Arnold Foster.

teen preachers are at work ; there are fine hospitals for men and women, and there is also the unique leper home, where a hundred or more of these pitiful outcasts are cared for by the London Missionary Society doctor. If any of these were asked, Was it all worth while ? can there be any doubt as to the answer they would give ? " By their fruits ye shall know them." There are none in all China who have more cause for thanksgiving for the pioneer labours of Dr. John than have the lepers of Hsiao-kan.

In 1911 more than a hundred opium sots were treated at this hospital. Hsiao-kan was the centre of much fighting between the Revolutionary and Imperial troops during the same year, and more than a thousand wounded soldiers were received and treated by the doctor and his assistants. The following letter will tell how welcome was this service to the Chinese officers and men. The writer, Dr. Ho, was surgeon-general to the Northern Forces of the Republican Army :

" DEAR DR. FOWLER,—We must thank you for your valuable aid and benevolent work done to our poor refugees and wounded soldiers from the outbreak of the Revolution in Hankow till the end.

" Over one-third of our total wounded Northern troops were admitted to your hospital and treated

under your care. Many lives were saved, and about 90 per cent. left with complete recovery.

"The necessity and value of prompt and efficient first-aid in injuries needs no comment, as the fate of an injured person depends upon the acts of the person into whose hand he first falls. By the prompt application of first-aid dressings and proper treatment, the loss of life and limbs has been reduced to *the lowest ratio in the whole history of warfare.*

"I shall never forget the great pains and trouble you have taken in dealing with our patients.

"With warmest regards, and hearty thanks,

"I remain, yours sincerely,

(*Signed*) "S. Y. Ho."

Doing good, even in the face of persecution, is always worth while.

In the year 1881, in the village of Wei-kya-wan, a chapel was built by the converts of the district themselves, the first inland Christian chapel of Central China. This chapel is a glorious memorial of the life of Mr. Wei, the first evangelist of Hsiao-kan.

Mr. John Archibald tells the story of a trip undertaken in the interests of the National Bible Society of Scotland by Dr. John and himself southward to the provinces of Hunan and Kiangsi. In

the north of this latter province, at a place called King-teh-tsin, are the great kilns where the finest of the porcelain of China is made and baked. The population of this place is vast, as immense numbers of men are employed in the great potteries. It was extremely difficult for any visitor, still more so for any foreigner, to get into the works unless provided with an official permit. But the missionaries were determined to make the attempt, for it was their desire to sell tracts and Scriptures to the army of employees. They therefore determined to take the direct course, and so, without turning their heads to right or left, they walked straight in at the central gates.

Their entrance caused a tremendous sensation; the workmen came pouring out from all sides, and a vast crowd soon surrounded the visitors. They stood upon a slight eminence so that all could see them, and then Griffith John started to talk this excited crowd into a good humour. Had he failed to do so the result would have been serious indeed, but he did not fail. That ringing voice, with its wonderful eloquence, once more did its marvellous work, and when the preacher ceased the crowd was in the friendliest mood, and the sale of Christian books began.

"Once started," says Mr. Archibald, "it had to be carried on. No stopping was possible, for the news, spreading from street to street, brought ever fresh

crowds on the scene. It was just as if, in some densely populated manufacturing city at home, the word were to go round that a couple of strange beings dropped from the moon were on exhibition in the principal square. To control a crowd like this is extremely exhausting. The eye and voice, mind and body, are strained to the utmost; a moment's inattention, and they get out of hand. As there is no stopping, so there is no getting away; to attempt a retreat means bringing the whole crowd on in pursuit, whooping and yelling like mad. On this occasion night brought release, when, tired out but happy and grateful, we found that some five thousand books had been disposed of."

Other spheres of service were also entered upon, less striking but no less effective. The first Missionary Conference held in China took place in Shanghai in 1877. It was a small gathering when compared with the great Centenary Conference of 1907. Twenty missionary Societies sent representatives, and in all one hundred and twenty-six missionaries were present. It was very needful for the Christian workers of China to understand each others' labours, to work in harmony, to plan for united effort, and to agree upon methods of service. Griffith John was present, and took a very active part in the proceedings of this Conference. He contributed to the discussions which were held upon topics concerned with the three religions of China,

literature, translation, the Chinese Church, the training of native agents, and co-operation between missionary agencies.

His chief part in the Assembly, however, was the address he gave upon "The Holy Spirit in connection with mission work." The text of this address was the words, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him." The address made a very great impression upon the Conference, and emphasised the outstanding position which the speaker held in the ranks of the missionary body in China.

In 1874 Griffith John married again. The lady was the widow of an American missionary, and was an old friend, well known in Shanghai for her zeal in good works. At the beginning of her widowhood it is related of this lady, then Mrs. Jenkins, that on her way to the English service at the Union Chapel, Shanghai, she met a company of blue-jackets proceeding riotously through the streets, carrying bottles of liquor under their arms. Moved by a Christian impulse, the lady stopped to speak with the men, and, in response to her invitation, a number of them threw away the gin they were carrying and entered the church with her. After the service they accompanied her to her home for singing and family worship. This was the begin-

ning of a work for sailors in Shanghai which was greatly blessed. As many as forty and fifty men would gather at Mrs. Jenkins' home for her family services, and many a wanderer was led into the fold of Christ at these gatherings.

When she became Mrs. John the earnest Christian worker proceeded to do in Hankow the work begun in Shanghai. A small hall, known as "The Rest," was built in the corner of the L.M.S. compound in Hankow, and the work for men from the ships continued in that place. The influence that Mrs. Jeanette John exercised wherever she went was wonderful, and her success in leading wanderers back into Christian faith was quite unique. Griffith John was truly blessed in the companionship of this saintly woman.

The strain of long residence in China, however, had told severely upon her constitution. She had been twenty-six years in China, and in 1880 a change was imperative. Mrs. John therefore went to New York, leaving Dr. John still in Hankow, where he felt, in view of the claims of the fast-growing work, it was needful for him to remain. But a few months later a cablegram announcing the serious illness of his wife altered his plans and led him to leave for America. The staff of the mission in Hankow now consisted of Dr. Mawley, in charge of the Hospital, and Messrs. Bryson, W. Owen, and Arnold Foster.

Mr. and Mrs. John, after the recovery of the latter, were persuaded to pay a short visit to England in 1881. The most notable of the addresses delivered by Griffith John during this visit, which was to prove the last he was to make to England until the close of his life, was that spoken to the Congregational Union at its meetings in Manchester in October 1881. This address was a tremendous appeal for China, in which the speaker outlined the past successes and the present possibilities of missionary work, and then reviewed them from the standpoint of the theology of both the old orthodoxy and the liberal position. He pleaded for men of "grace, gumption, and grit." To those who hold the old view of the fate of the heathen, and believed them doomed to endless misery, he said, "Do you believe that these millions upon millions of adults are sinking into hopeless misery as they depart this life? If you do, then I ask, in the name of God, why don't you send missionaries out to save them? If you do, why is it that you do not go out yourself to try and save them from such a terrible calamity?" Then, turning to those who believed in universal redemption, and held that in the end the eternal love of God must bring all souls into eternal blessedness, he asked, "If I believed this, what would be the effect of it upon my mind? To paralyse my hand? . . . No, on the contrary. . . . If this be true—if it be true that all souls

are to be redeemed—then I go for the missionary life, not only for this æon, but for the æon of æons, until the Christ of whom we have heard so much these days has put all enemies under His feet, and presented the kingdom to God the Father."

In this same address Griffith John indulged in a prophecy. In pleading for men for China, not narrow-minded or insular, or men who would put nationalism before Christianity, but "many-sided men, full-orbed men, full of solar light, full of humanity, and full of the Holy Ghost," he declared that if such men were given, not by the tens but by the hundreds, he could promise "*that within twenty years a great revolution will take place in that Empire.*"

That was in 1881. The Reform Movement, which was the force which brought about the Revolution now accomplished, came into public view in the year 1898, and that movement owed much of its original force to the body of Christian literature, translated by missionaries, and circulated by them and their agents, in connection with their work. The faith of the Christian optimist is never misplaced. In less than twenty years the foretold revolution was in progress, and as a reform movement, as distinct from its political bearings, was accomplished within thirty years. Griffith John lived to see the fulfilment of his prophecy.

Mr. and Mrs. John were bidden farewell at a valedictory service held in the King's Weigh-House Chapel on 12th January 1882, and a few months later saw the honoured missionary once again at his post of responsibility in Central China.

CHAPTER VIII

COUNTRY WORK: INCIDENTS AND RESULTS

"And what adventure shall fall to me, be it life or death, I will take the adventure that shall come to me."—MALORY.

REFERENCE has been made to the means by which travellers in China move from place to place in many districts by using Chinese passenger boats. In the Hupeh and Hunan provinces a good deal of journeying is done by boat, but frequently other means of progress have to be employed.

In the very hot weather, or when rain has made the paths impassable save for the bare feet of the coolie, a sedan chair, borne on the shoulders of men, with two bearers for a short journey and three or four if the journey is long or the passenger very heavy, may be used. Sometimes a donkey, mule, or a shaggy little pony, generally very bad-tempered, is employed. Cheapest of all the means of conveyance by land, however, is the Chinese wheelbarrow. This has its large wheel in the centre, and on either side has a framework of wood. The passenger takes his seat on one side, puts his

bedding, clothes, and basket of food on the other, the wheelbarrow-man settles his straps around his shoulders, and lifts the wheelbarrow, carefully keeping the balance, and away the expedition goes, sometimes on a journey of many days. It is in this way that many of the villages of Hupeh are reached.

Dr. Griffith John voyaged tens of thousands of miles over China on passenger boats over the rivers and streams of Central China, and thousands of miles on wheelbarrows over the narrow, rough foot-paths of the region. It is always with a sense of expectation that the traveller sets out upon these expeditions, for the experiences of one journey are never exactly repeated on another, so different are they from the monotonous train journeys of our land; and there is always something new to attract the attention and to add to one's knowledge of the customs and people of China.

Then there is the question of sleeping accommodation. On a boat that accommodation is secured already, or if at nightfall the missionary arrives at a preaching-house or chapel, or at the house of a convert, then quarters may be secured. Otherwise it is needful to find a *Chinese inn!* There is not much to be said in favour of the country inns of China, and a great deal might be said against them. For they are dirty, and they are generally

crowded. Scarcely ever can a *room* be secured; often a dozen men will be found sleeping in one small apartment.

Griffith John tells of one experience with an inn of this kind. "We had no difficulty in finding an inn in Whitesand Town. But oh! what wretched holes these inns are. In these parts they are specially dark, dingy, and in every way filthy. The floor and walls are mud, the tiled ceiling is black with the soot of ages, and the rooms are richly festooned with immense ropes of broken cobwebs. The lodger has the choice between a 'lofty bed' and a 'floor bed.' The 'lofty bed' consists of a low wooden framework covered with a thick layer of straw. The 'floor bed' consists of a straw mattress laid on the bare mud floor. The foreigner who wishes to sleep in peace must avoid both beds; for the pulex (ay, and companions more objectionable than pulex) abounds in these inns. The native beds are places where the *aphaniptera*, the *anoplura*, the *heteroptera*, and all kinds of unclean animals delight to hold their nocturnal revelries." This is true of the average inn throughout China. Foreigners avoid them whenever possible.

Dr. John's custom in travelling was to secure some benches and a door (doors in China lift off their hinges very readily, and are easily obtained), or else to get two of the square tables used for dining, and to put his own bedding on top of these.

In this way it is possible to avoid many of the insect pests. But there are other companions, not easily avoided. "In these inns the lodger is almost sure to have two or more pigs for chums." In one place, just as the missionaries were getting into bed, the pigs were brought in, and "one by one they made their beds in front of our bedroom door."

On one occasion, when Griffith John was sixty years old, he was walking to a village in the country when a rainstorm came on, and the missionaries sheltered in a neighbouring hut. The old woman of the hut inquired the age of the missionary, and was surprised to find him as old as herself, and yet able to walk twenty miles a day. "Have you not a sedan chair?" she asked. "Nor a horse? Nor even an ass?" "My reply in the negative evidently puzzled her, and led her to conclude that I was doing all in order to 'accumulate merit' (earn the favour of the gods), and that a large heap of it must be laid up by this time." She was told that it was for the love of God, an idea quite new to her; and then the missionary was able to tell of the hope of heaven through Christ.

Another old woman, of seventy-three years of age, was also present listening, and the Chinese preacher asked her "if she was prepared for death?" She said "Yes," with a smile that quite delighted Griffith John. But on further inquiry it proved

that she meant she had got her grave-clothes and coffin ready. They were in an adjoining room, and were pointed out with evident pride. It is a usual custom for dutiful sons to present their parents with good coffins and with "longevity" robes—robes with the character for long life stamped or worked on them; and this assurance of decent burial is a great comfort to the old people all over China.

A visit paid to Ying-shan in the Hsiao-kan district greatly cheered the missionary. Here he found a delightful Christian family. "I have never known in China a family like the Lo family. It is not easy to find a Chinese that you can love, but I can truly say that I love Mr. Lo, his father, his mother, and his aunt. The old man is a fine specimen of paterfamilias. Lo is a perfect son, and both are strong Christians. My impression is that we shall soon see a good work springing up in Ying-shan." Discomfort and blessing are not far apart in the experience of the Christian worker, even in China.

From Ying-shan also came another of the outstanding Christian workers of the mission, named Lin Tsai. He and Lo Chan-lung were old friends, and became companions in faith. In a time of great drought, when the officials, according to immemorial custom, were praying to the idols for rain, but in vain, these two men went to the top

of a celebrated mountain, about seventy-five miles from Ying-shan, called Tsi-kien-fung, and there continued in prayer until the answer came. On their return from their pilgrimage "all the inhabitants, both people and gentry, turned out to receive and thank them." On one occasion Lin Tsai, in a time of drought, went to a hilltop near to his home and there prayed, determined not to leave off praying until his request was granted. For four days and nights he remained there, and his friends, fearing starvation for him, sent him up food. At the end of that time the rain came in abundance.

A reference is due to the first work which was opened up in a country district in Central China, soon after the starting of the work in Wuchang. It was at a place called Tsai-tien, and about twenty miles up the river Han. Here one of the early Chinese workers of the mission had settled down for evangelistic labour. The inhabitants of the town were extremely annoyed at the presence of a Christian preacher in their midst, and they began to make things as hard for him as possible. The preacher here was a Chinese graduate named Lo, a very energetic and able man. False charges were brought against the preacher by natives of the place, which, on inquiry, completely broke down.

From Tsai-tien an advance was made to a place

known as King-kow on the banks of the Yangtse. At the opening of the station mainly as the result of Mr. Lo's labours, Griffith John was very rejoiced. "I trust the day is not very far distant when the banks of the Yangtse and the Han shall be lined with temples reared to the Lord of hosts. The difficulties are many and formidable. I see them and feel them. . . . Still I believe that those obstacles shall be removed, and that righteousness and peace shall flow through these regions like a stream some day."

It was a constant sorrow to the missionary that centres of country work which had become part of his life, in that he had been the human means of planting the gospel first in their midst, had to be left at the best but partially supervised and cared for, owing to the lack of funds and workers.

In 1896 he uttered a plea to the directors of the L.M.S. in which he urged the claims of the country districts upon them. "I am getting to be an old man; the men on whom I have been building my hopes for the future are being taken away, and the work is spreading in every direction around us. There are hundreds in the counties of Tien-men and King-shan asking for baptism; the next time I go there I shall baptize, in all probability, from two to three hundred persons—the interest in the truth is widespread, over all that region; and yet,

I am told, you can do nothing to help on the work there. . . . I do not find fault, but I do feel sad and sorrowful. . . . God is marching on, and we are bound to follow. Can you do nothing to help us ? "

In reply to this moving plea appointments were made which rendered the occupation of Tsao-shih by clerical and medical staffs possible. Another centre of Christian influence was thus added to the region. Tsao-shih has to-day more than one thousand two hundred Church members in the city and district.

Firmly believing, as he did, in the power of the gospel, when preached with intelligence and conviction, to move the hearts of men, whether Chinese or foreign, it is not wonderful to hear of him arranging a great open-air preaching convention, on the lines of the Cymanfa of Wales. This kind of evangelistic work has since been carried on with considerable effect at the fairs of North China ; it seems first to have been instituted by Griffith John in the Hsiao-kan district. Here, in 1899, on a large piece of waste land, great preaching services were held, from six to seven hundred people being present at each.

Early in the history of his work some of the friends of Dr. John, who were engaged in commerce in Hankow, presented the missionary with a boat in which he might travel in moderate comfort into

the country districts by the riverside. The first year in which this was available found the three missionaries, Messrs. John, Bryson, and Bryant in Hankow, and a great deal of work was accomplished.

Griffith John's report on the work says: "Some walled cities, and many unwalled towns and villages, have been visited by us on these tours. Copies of the Word of God have been extensively sold. Our work was carried on sometimes on the road, sometimes in the streets, and sometimes in the temples. Many of these places had never been visited before by any foreigner, and at none of them, so far as we could learn, had the gospel been preached. At some places the excitement was considerable, but nowhere unmanageable. Now and then an ill-disposed scholar would take it into his head to insult us, and attempt to excite the ire of the populace against us, but generally one or two well-directed classical quotations (from the works of Confucius or Mencius, that is) sufficed to silence all such, and so turn the laugh upon them as to compel them to retire in confusion. . . . A certain amount of itineration ought to be done yearly in connection with every station. Its reflex influence on both the missionary and the mission is most healthful and stimulating. It tends to enlarge the ideas, deepen the longings, intensify the ardour and brace up the nerves of both pastor and people.

One often feels at the end of a hundred or two hundred miles' tour, having spent a fortnight or three weeks in preaching from town to town and village to village, *that he could dare anything and endure anything.*"

One of the striking facts about the work of Christian missions in the country districts, true elsewhere as in Hankow, is the number of faithful preachers of the gospel who are first brought into touch with the truth in small towns and villages. The test through which converts have to pass in small places, where they cannot possibly hide their attachment to the new teaching, possibly has its influence in this result; moreover in China, as elsewhere, city life tends to produce deterioration of character. Simple virtues are at their best in country life in China. Griffith John was signally successful in attaching to himself and his work some noble Chinese workers. Mr. Pan, of Wuchang, has been mentioned. Another such was Mr. Shen, who came up from Shanghai with the missionary in 1861. Until 1887 he helped in the preparation of every book which was composed or translated by Dr. John. He saw the mission founded, and it is said of him: "Its prosperity is greatly to be ascribed to the interest he felt in it, and the efficient help he rendered to it." He was a Nanking man. Griffith John said of him: "He believed in Jesus with all his heart and soul, and it was his delight

for years to stand up in the chapels, and in the streets (a great test for a Chinese scholar), and in the temples, and preach Christ and Him crucified."

When the Wesleyan Mission first entered Hankow they sought the help of Mr. John in order to secure helpers. From the London Mission they obtained Mr. Chu, a man who laboured with faithfulness and distinction for twenty-four years. He is described as one who "as a preacher has no peer in the ranks of the Chinese Church in Central China." When the L.M.S. opened work in Chungking in 1889, Griffith John spared to them Mr. Wang, a leading member of the Chinese staff of the mission, and one who proved himself able and devoted in a remarkable degree.

These are the things, after all, by which the success of a Christian mission is to be judged. The one work of the Christian gospel is to make Christian men, wheresoever it is preached. The Christianity of professing Christians is the ultimate test. And, in spite of some failures, and in despite of certain critics, the gospel in China has made great Christians—men who have nobly lived and patiently suffered for the cause of Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER IX

HEROISM IN HUNAN

"He always wins who sides with God."

HUNAN was the last of the Chinese provinces to open her doors to the foreign missionary and his gospel. Her people had boasted that foreigners were afraid of the Hunan men, and that the Hunanese had but to growl and the foreigner would run.

These men of Hunan are famed throughout China as providing the boldest soldiers for the army and the strongest officials for the Empire. They are independent and yet conservative; bold and bigoted. Griffith John had come into touch with some of the men of Hunan in Hankow, and had formed a high estimate of their character. He saw that the very instinct which made them hostile to everything foreign would become in them the finest Christian character if the gospel could once touch their hearts. When all other provinces of China had received missionaries, Hunan still held out; the thought was more than Griffith John could bear! Had not his Master commanded,

Go ye into *all the world*? Then he must enter Hunan.

A long and trying struggle, in which his life was to be more than once in danger, lay before him. But Hunan had to be opened, and faith must see it done. In 1879, with Mr. John Archibald as companion, on the way back from that memorable visit to the potteries of China, the first attempt was made. The travellers journeyed overland into the province, and, on reaching the Siang River, they engaged a boat and set out for Siang-tan, one of the busiest of its cities. Mr. Archibald relates that having been to Siang-tan once before, and having left rather hurriedly while the chief magistrate was having his head bound up, that official having been wounded in the riot which the foreigner's visit had occasioned, he was a little diffident about venturing on shore. But Dr. John was all eagerness for the city, and directly the boat touched the bank by the city wall he leapt ashore.

As usual in Chinese cities where a foreigner is an unusual sight, a crowd was soon gathered, and Griffith John began his preaching. Eloquence was not to prevail here, however—this was Hunan, not Kiang-si. The foreigners were speedily hustled on board their boat. The officials sent an escort to move the foreigners and their boat down to where a fleet of Chinese war-junks were moored. A crowd of the enraged Hunanese followed them,

however, and with well-directed stones compelled a further retreat. The boat was moved again, this time out of stone's-throw, when a clamour in the distance drew their attention to the oncoming of a number of filth-laden boats, crowded with men waving long-handled buckets. "Their intention was plain enough. Had it been a case of any of the orthodox forms of martyrdom—the sword or the stake—I believe we might have faced it, but to be smothered in filth of such a kind . . . was too much." Foreign passengers and Chinese crew sprang together to cast off the moorings, and the enemy was left in full possession of the field.

An attempt was made to enter Changsha, the capital of the province, as the missionaries went by it on the way back to Hankow, but in vain. So ended chapter one in the history of the missionary attack upon Hunan. It was but the beginning.

On his return from England in 1882, Griffith John began his preparations for another journey Hunanwards, and again the indomitable Mr. Archibald was his companion. They crossed the great Tung-ting lake, which lies between Hupeh and Hunan, and entered the first of the cities they came to, a place called Lung-yang. Although the missionaries did not then know of it, a Roman Catholic priest had been some days living on a

boat outside the city waiting for a chance to enter it in order to purchase a site for mission work. The gentry and officials were determined that it should not be, and were ready to repulse intruders with force, if needs be, when Messrs. John and Archibald came along. It was supposed by the populace that they were members of the same party, not that that fact made any difference to the men of Hunan, for all were alike foreigners, and the honour of the province demanded their expulsion.

Dr. John entered the city and began to preach and sell books. In a little time he noticed men distributing red placards, and, on inquiry, found that these were messages calling on the inhabitants to rise and drive out the foreigners. One of these was thrown in the face of the missionary, and he was contemptuously advised to quit the place at once, or suffer. Far from doing this, however, he asked to be directed to the office of the magistrate (the Yamen), in order that he might assert his rights. No one was willing to direct the foreigners. One or two rushes were made at them, but the Yamen was reached at length.

It was known to the missionaries that the officials had received intimation of their impending visit, and that they were under no misapprehension as to their identity, however mistaken the populace might be. But this knowledge the Chinese magistrate

denied with characteristic effrontery. At last, however, it was made clear to him that the visitors had no ulterior design in their visit other than preaching and book distribution, and he began to consider how he might get them safely back to their boat.

In the meantime a hostile and excited crowd had gathered outside the Yamen doors, and an escort of soldiers had to be sent for to conduct the missionaries out of the city. Dr. John boldly charged the magistrate with responsibility for the attack, and that official admitted it, but thought that the Protestants ought not to be offended, as it was not intended for them. He seemed to find considerable amusement in the mistake! On the way back to the boat a violent attempt was made by some of the mob to break the ranks of the military and to get at the foreigners, but it was frustrated. Again the attempt to enter Hunan had to be temporarily abandoned.

Attempts were being made by other missions to enter the province, notably by the China Inland Mission, some of whose members had succeeded in gaining admission for a little while. But a great battle had to be fought with the officials of the province ere the right of entry could be secured in peace, and it was Griffith John who was to bear the brunt of this battle, one which called for intellectual ability as well as devoted personal courage.

Towards 1890 there were signs throughout all Central China of threatened trouble against foreigners. Riots, obviously arranged, broke out in Ichang, aimed at the foreign residents. At Wusueh, the Wesleyan Mission premises were attacked, and two men—Mr. Argent, of the Joyful News Mission, and Mr. Green, of the Chinese Customs Service—lost their lives in attempting to relieve the missionaries.

At Wuhu there were riots, and the Roman Catholics suffered severely. Griffith John set himself to the task of discovering the originator of these disturbances. Some tracts of a very scurrilous nature, charging foreigners and Chinese Christians with forms of infamy and vice of the worst kind, and quoting passages from the Bible to show how immoral Christian teaching was, had been circulated all over the Yangtse valley. Their origin was traced to Changsha in Hunan, and it was not long before Dr. John succeeded in finding the author, a Chinese official of great scholarly renown, named Chou-Han. When the evidence was complete it was laid before the British Consul, who forwarded it to Peking, with the result that Chou-Han was removed from his official place, and punished for his offence. The effect of this on Hunan was great.

By 1893 ten men from Hunan had joined the Chinese Church in Hankow, one of them having

been formerly in the service of Chou-Han. Some of these men were from Changsha, and they found it possible to commence a regular service in the house of one of their number. Christian books were sold in the streets. Still there was much opposition. Quietly and persistently a few faithful Chinese carried forward the message of the gospel, the foremost of these workers being a strong Hunanese convert who a few years previously had been bitterly hostile to Christianity, but who had been led to faith by the evangelist Wei.

This man was Mr. Peng Lan-seng, who was destined to do a great work in the opening up of the province to Christian effort. In 1896 Mr. Peng, who had been touring in Hunan, selling Christian books, returned to Hankow with the news of a group of Christians who were meeting together in a large city to the south of the province, called Heng-chow. These believers sent an invitation to Dr. John to visit them.

This little community had been gathered together by the efforts of a young man who had been baptized in Hankow a few years before. He had been obliged to give up his occupation on account of his faith, and had returned to his ancestral home in Heng-chow. Here he manifested his zeal in teaching the gospel to some of his friends, and thus the Church in that city was established.

In the spring of 1897 Griffith John started again for Hunan. With him, on this occasion, was the Rev. C. G. Sparham, who had become Dr. John's son-in-law, a keen, able missionary. As they drew near to Heng-chow, it seemed as if the old story was to be repeated once more, for there, on the bank before them, was the usual crowd of hostile Hunanese, ready armed with stones and mud, awaiting their arrival. The boat had to move away from the city, and moor under the shelter of some Chinese gunboats, two miles outside. The converts were able to visit the missionaries there, and on the Chinese boat, which became that night, in Dr. John's words, "a veritable Bethel," they received baptism, the first Protestant converts to be baptized in anti-Christian Hunan, and then the little company sat down together at the Communion of our Lord.

Two years later, Dr. Griffith John, with Mr. Sparham and Mr. Greig, a recruit to the mission, whose sphere of service was to be the province of Hunan, made his fourth visit, the first peaceful one he had been permitted to make, for the purpose of arranging for the purchase of property for the opening of residential mission stations at Chang-sha, at Yo-chow, and Siang-tan. By the courtesy of the Viceroy, Chang Chih-tung, he was provided with an official escort, stringent instructions were sent to the officials to offer him every courtesy, and

a steam launch was placed at his disposal. So great a change had twenty years of faithful and persistent labour brought about.

Thereafter, with the exception of the troubles due to the Boxer rising of 1900, no organised opposition to the entrance of Christian missions was met with in Hunan. Society after Society entered the province, and missionaries are now scattered over its cities, and churches are arising in every important place.

A large and influential educational mission, representing Yale University, is located at Changsha, and several of the large missionary societies—the Wesleyan Mission, the C.M.S., the C.I.M., the American Presbyterian Mission, and others—are now working in Hunan. Griffith John laboured, others reap the fruit of his labours. They will none of them forget what they owe to the pioneer, nor will history fail to write the name of this missionary hero at the head of the page which sets forth the Christian conquest of this once anti-Christian province.

No record of what Griffith John offered of his life for Hunan would be complete which failed to tell of the self-denial that the "Hunan period" marked. When the burden of its need lay very heavy upon his heart, he met a deep sorrow in the death of his wife, Mrs. Jeanette John. Her spiritual influence had been very much to him, and she had made

his home an abode of joy and rich service. The loss did not turn him aside by a hairbreadth from the path of missionary duty; he became the more devoted to the commandment of his Master.

In the year 1888 the Congregational Union of England and Wales paid him the signal honour of electing him as its chairman. It was a great temptation, not simply in the honour it bestowed, but more in that it offered a unique field of service for the missionary cause among the Congregational Churches of Great Britain. Great was the temptation, but the claims of work in Central China were greater, and the honour was declined. It was a signal and worthy sacrifice, proving the royal soul of the man who made it.

CHAPTER X

THE PREACHER TO THE CHINESE

"Then with a rush, intolerable craving
Shivers throughout me, like a trumpet call.
Oh, to save these or perish for their saving,
Die for their life, be offered for them all."

F. W. H. MYERS.

THE propagation of religion by means of preaching has been, in China, almost confined to Protestant missionary work. It may have been done occasionally by messengers of other faiths, but it has not been an essential part of their method. Services for worship were, of course, instituted by the Nestorians, who erected many chapels for their services, and the same thing is true of the Roman Catholics. But preaching as the chief means of gaining the attention and the conviction of the populace is peculiarly the gift of Protestantism.

Since the early years of the Manchu dynasty, it has been customary for a certain form of exhortation to uprightness, to filial behaviour, and to devotion to the teachings of China's sage, Confucius, to be read at definite periods in temple courts and in

public places. This form of exhortation, which was prepared by the great Manchu Emperor, Kang Hsi, is known as the Sacred Edict. The value of addresses delivered to the populace in a public way is therefore recognised and used by the Chinese, although until recently it has seldom been employed.

Professional story-tellers are often to be found in the courts of popular temples on feast days, and in busy thoroughfares, often crude but gifted speakers of very nimble wit, who earn a living by retailing tales of Chinese history, humorous stories, and romances to the public. But the priests, whether Buddhist or Taoist, make no attempt to influence the people by means of public preaching, although the Buddhists have always made a considerable use of the pen, and distribute to-day a great deal of religious literature.

It was left to the early Protestant missionaries to lead the way in showing what might be accomplished by a systematic campaign of public speaking. They aimed from the very first to reach the mind and heart of the common people, and they gathered around them a body of Chinese who also took the same means of telling to all who cared to hear the story of Christ's gospel. They were sneered at by the scholars of China, but they were sure of their ground. It soon became apparent that in the average Chinese there dwelt considerable

gifts of oratory. They carried with them on to the platform the same graphic style of utterance, and the same wealth of telling illustration, which marks their ordinary speech. There has arisen within the Church of Christ in China a body of eloquent preachers, worthy to rank with their preaching brethren in any land.

As a result of its public method of propaganda, it may be said that Protestant missionary work has taught the Chinese very effectively the tremendous importance of public addresses as a means of conveying information and influencing the Chinese public. The enormous public meetings of a political and social kind which are held for one purpose or another in almost every city of the Empire in these days, may be traced almost directly to the example set by Christian preachers, both foreign and Chinese, in the past half-century, and many of the most informing and effective of the speakers at these mass meetings, which have become so marked a feature of the new public life of China, have been trained under Christian influences.

The foreigner who ventures to address a Chinese audience has a severe task set him. He needs to be a master of the Chinese language, if he is to make the people understand the message which he wishes to deliver, and he should possess few nerves. For in the preaching which is carried on in the

preaching halls, where the non-Christians are invited to listen to Christian teaching, orderliness is not a conspicuous feature. Members of the audience will sit for a little, and if they are not interested, or fail to understand, will audibly say so, and prepare noisily to depart. Or they will ask their neighbour what it is all about, during all of which time the preacher is striving to catch the attention and touch the intelligence of the hearers.

It will be readily understood that the man who had dreamed in youth of becoming one of the orators of the Welsh pulpit was to the forefront in the work of preaching. With all his soul, Griffith John believed in the power of the spoken gospel. He believed, and proved his faith, in the ability of the Christian message to move the Chinese heart. Throughout his missionary life he preached once or twice a day to Chinese audiences. Hundreds of thousands of Chinese must have heard him every year, and he taught the Chinese believers to pass on the message to their fellows in the same manner in which they had first heard it from him.

Tremendously effective as was this work of preaching the good news to the millions who had never heard it, possibly Dr. John did an even more effective and far-reaching work in his pulpit ministry to Chinese Christians. Through them he multiplied

his service of the gospel many hundredfold. Week by week since the early days of his work in Hankow he taught to the members of the mission community the way of truth and life, showing them how to draw spiritual sustenance from the teaching of the Bible. This was a work in which he delighted, and in which he found happiness and fame.

The following picturesque description of one of the services in the Hankow Mission Church by the Rev. Joseph Adams, of the American Baptist Mission,[1] one who was himself the pioneer of his Missionary Society to Central China, will serve to show the effectiveness of Griffith John's preaching and ministry among the Christians of Central China.

"The visitor to the London Mission, Hankow, picks his way gingerly along the 'Pig Street,' avoiding rushing coolies, busy tradespeople, sedan chairs, and the puddles *en route*. Turning aside into a wide gateway, he sees a large and handsome brick building, enclosed in a compound with high protecting fire-walls. A pleasant-looking gate-keeper smiles welcome. You notice the characters, 'Fuh ying huei tang,' 'Gospel Meeting Hall,' over the doors, and entering the building you are surprised to hear a low hum of voices, and to see that you have entered by the platform end of the church. You are the cynosure of all eyes. The other end

[1] From Dr. Wardlaw Thompson's *Griffith John*.

of the building opens on to the wide clean streets of the foreign settlement of Hankow. You are before a congregation of six or seven hundred men and women, who are waiting for the service to begin. The women sit on the right side looking towards the platform, men in the centre and on the left. Your entrance excites some attention; but every service sees visitors, either a young missionary, notebook under his hat, waiting to pick up phrases or illustrations for future use, or a stranger looking for the first time upon a large and devout congregation of Chinese.

"As we seat ourselves, we notice that the other end of the church is so far away that features cannot be distinguished, and we can hardly tell if the people in the great gallery at the end are men or women. The windows give abundant light, coloured as it passed through them, and just where the sun falls the Chinese are painted red, yellow, or blue in patches. There is a distinct smell of Chinaman or Chinaman's clothes, although Boyle's ventilators are groaning in the roof, and many windows are open.

"We have time to study the congregation to which Dr. John is going to preach. Many are aged men and women, old pilgrims to Zion who soon will see the King in His beauty. There are bright boys with hymn-books and Bibles tied up in their handkerchiefs, looking very important; girls with gay

attire, hair tightly braided, and all expectant. The inevitable babies with their devoted mothers, who have several ways of keeping them quiet when the service proceeds, such as pinching their legs, compressing the windpipe, etc., all of which are Chinese, and quite orthodox, although sufficiently horrifying to the lady missionaries who are keeping the female crowd in order. The men's side does not require any such attention.

"There is a hush as a short man, with healthy, bright face, keen eyes, white beard, and black hair, comes on the platform. He wears an Inverness cloak, which he throws back as he bends his head in prayer. The silence of communion with God is broken a few moments after, as he stands forth with a look on his face which reveals that he has been on the Mount with God. The hymn is announced, and a rustle of leaves follows. The singing! At first an indistinct roar, it gradually shapes itself into some well-known tune, and all sing with the voice of many waters; not very musically, but all in time, swaying to and fro, mouths well open, heads thrown back.

"Said Mrs. John, long years ago, 'Griffith, those Christians will never learn to sing properly.' Never mind, my dear; they do their best. They will sing better in heaven.' 'I hope so,' was the quick reply; 'if they do not, they may get expelled for disturbing the harmony.'

" When the sermon comes it is easy to see the audience intend to listen. There is no settling down in easy corners behind convenient pillars. The converts sit, Testaments open, ready to find the text or the references, showing by the facility with which they read, that they know whether ' Timothy ' comes before or after ' Hebrews.' Dr. John keeps his Bible in one hand, with a sheet of notepaper containing an outline of his sermon, and with the forefinger of the other hand he enforces his points. Sometimes he forgets his book and notes, and in the fire of his earnestness he speaks with vehemence, pacing to and fro on the platform, yet always carefully repeating and illustrating and applying his lessons in every possible way. It is a grand and impressive sight to see his power over these people. Here is a nursing mother, her child fractious and troublesome, but she has forgotten the babe in keen attention to the preacher.

" As one listens to the impassioned words, we notice several things—Dr. John's intense sympathy with the brothers and sisters to whom he speaks. They are beloved of his soul, and they know it. We notice, too, his knowledge of their trials, their persecutions, their stumbling-blocks, and a starting tear here and there shows that his beautiful and resonant voice has carried a comforting and softening message right to the heart.

" Then comes a change. The speaker is dwelling

on sin and its character in the sight of a pure and holy God. How keen is the analysis of a Chinaman's self-deception; how scathing the exposure of duplicity, falsehood, and cunning; how terrible the picture of the wreck and ruin which are the wages of sin. We forget we are listening in Chinese. We feel the speaker is as grandly eloquent as ever he could be in his native Welsh, or his adopted English tongue. The scholars, merchants, working men and women of his audience, listen breathlessly, often giving little expressions of amusement, of distress, of pity, of sorrow, as their feelings are touched in one way or another.

"What a royal preacher is Griffith John, and how magnificently he has for fifty years revelled in the joy of preaching One who is mighty to save! To God be the glory! How faithfully God, the Holy Spirit, has owned and blessed the plain preaching of the gospel. There are 'signs following' on every hand.

"The fine church we have been visiting is only one of several buildings used by Dr. John and his colleagues in Hankow. There is another a mile and a half away in the native city, where Dr. John preaches regularly, open every day in the week, every week in the year.

"The work at this place is different, the method adopted is not the same.

"In the courtyard is a well-stocked depôt for

the sale of Bibles and tracts. The chapel is a long and rather narrow building with a central aisle, seats in rows on either side. Notices, exhorting visitors not to expectorate, smoke, or talk, adorn the walls. The audience is largely heathen, and they do not always assemble readily to be preached to.

" Dr. John takes a chair, and sits in the doorway, immediately attracting the attention of the passers-by.

" ' Aih yah ! Cheli yui ih-ko lao yang Keui tsi.'

" ' Hullo, here have we one old foreign devil.'

" ' Ta Tso shen mo si,' says one.

" ' He does what thing ? '

" ' Kiang tao-li.'

" ' Preach doctrine,' says his friend laconically.

" He has evidently been there before.

" ' Ting, ting.'

" ' Listen, listen,' is the answer, and they come to have a look at the said ' old foreign devil,' who receives them with a bow, and asks their honourable names.

" ' Not dare ! my unworthy name is Wong.'

" ' May I ask your honourable title ? '

" ' My name is Yang Keh-fei ' (Dr. John's Chinese name).

" ' Where is your palatial residence ? '

" ' My grass hut is in Hankow.'

" (A small crowd has gathered at the door, as the Chinese bump of inquisitiveness is large and hungry. Dr. John moves his chair back a few paces. Two seats fill up. Conversation resumed.)

" ' Mr. Wong, I think you said you reside in Hankow ? '

" Mr. Wong replies in the affirmative.

" ' I presume you have a knowledge of characters ? '

" ' Your younger brother recognises a few.'

" ' Have you read the Christian classics ? '

" (Retreat to the platform end continued, four seats fill up. Mr. Wong and his friend follow up closer. Newcomers fill up behind. Conversation resumed.)

" ' I have not read the Christian classics. What are they about ? '

" Working man, interrupting: ' I know. The classics tell about Jesus, and our classics tell about Confucius. The foreigners worship Jesus, and we Chinese worship Confucius. It's all the same.'

" Dr. John: ' Allow me to instruct you in the difference between the Christian classics and the Confucian books.' Interest increasing, Dr. John stands up and begins to preach, gradually retreating up the chapel, followed by the crowd, which by this time is well into the scores, and grows into hundreds. Finally the doctor lands on the platform and keeps up the address and conversation

for an hour. Then a Chinese evangelist takes his place, and holds the attention of the audience, which often changes, but always is renewed from the unending stream of human life ever passing by the doors."

This scene, which is just *one* taken from the normal work of the great missionary, must be multiplied by the *thousand* before we may realise to how great an extent Griffith John served the Church of Jesus Christ in China as a teacher and an evangelist. He told us how for many years of his life he used to accomplish work of this kind "whistling," and we know how, as the years went by and age crept on, when he felt the burden of the service, love of it would not let him leave it.

Sixty-five years of age passed him, when he might have retired from active service with honour; but no! the finest years of service and the most fruitful spheres of effort lay still before him.

Seventy years! and he was now beginning to show physically the marks of his hard calling and his years of unwearied toil. Still, no! Home was attractive; how he would love to see again Ebenezer Chapel in Swansea, and renew again the scenes of his youth. But he was consecrated to China. When he offered his life to God for the mission field he offered *all* his life. His heart was

in China; the land of his adoption called for his whole love; his deepest wish was that he might die at his post.

Little wonder is it then that the work spread, and that the knowledge of the message covered at last the whole area of the vast region around Hankow. By the time his preaching days were over the great evangelist must have spoken the gospel of Christ to a number equal to the inhabitants of a China province, and behind these stand the millions upon millions whom he has reached with the same story of heavenly love by means of the pen.

The guidance of God which turned the young Welshman from the service of his fellow-countrymen in the land of his birth to the myriads of his fellow-beings in China made no mistake. Griffith John found, through the spirit of sacrifice which made him choose the missionary career, a field of service for the eloquence with which God had endowed him greater than anything Wales, or even Britain, could have offered him. And, in the end, he set the seal of his own evangelistic devotion upon the Church of Jesus Christ in Central China.

CHAPTER XI

THE UNPREMEDITATED SERVICE

"Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might."

IT was as a preacher that Griffith John always excelled. One who frequently heard him preaching to the English-speaking community in Hankow tells how he delivered sermons to barely a round dozen of Europeans which would have crowded the largest church in London. His eloquence in Chinese has probably rarely been equalled.

And yet, in the China of the immediate future, it is likely to be as a writer and not as a preacher that Dr. John's memory will be kept green and esteemed precious. He will live most truly in the work that he did not set out to do. There was a time in Griffith John's life when preaching was "all in all"; no other form of service was comparable to it. In 1890 he wrote: "I have always felt that God has called me to preach and to teach." To the end something of this spirit, which is the hall-mark of the born evangelist, was with

him, but the pressure of need drove him to the pen.

He did not turn, as some might have done, grudgingly to the new service. Having made up his mind that it had to be done, he did it with characteristic thoroughness. The growing Church in Hankow felt the need of books and tracts; preachers and teachers desired literature for distribution; inquirers into Christian doctrine demanded something which they could take away and read, and the supply of literature from the nearest centre, Shanghai, was limited. A Christian catechism for the use of inquirers was prepared. A hymn-book and other works followed.

Eventually the Religious Tract Society of London was appealed to for help, and a grant of £50 from that body became the means of forming the Hankow Tract Society in 1876. The first Secretary of that Society has said that for some weeks the whole of the stock-in-trade was stored in a bedroom in his house. Not for long could this be done. The advance of the Society was very rapid, and its publications met with so wide a demand that in 1884 the Hankow Tract Society enlarged its sphere of labour and its title, becoming the Central China Religious Tract Society. To-day it is one of the largest, most influential, and active of the Christian literary agencies in China.

Griffith John became its first President, and occupied that position without a break for many years. He was the chief worker; at the outset most of its publications were from his pen, and to-day the tracts which have the widest circulation of any on its list are those which he prepared.

One of these tracts, "The Gate of Wisdom and Virtue," bids fair to become a classic. The Chinese delight in it, not only for the good teaching it contains, but also on account of its easy, polished Chinese style. It possesses what the Chinese call "flavour," and without that "flavour" no book may hope to become popular and obtain length of days. Dr. John never made use of his literary gifts for partisan purposes; all his writings, tracts, and books deal with the fundamental truths of the Christian faith, and are, therefore, popular throughout the whole of the missionary ranks.

It is not to be supposed that the tracts here referred to were written in Chinese by Griffith John's own hand. A foreigner scarcely ever attempts to do his own Chinese writing, however accomplished a scholar he may be; the task is too heavy. He dictates, in general language, to a Chinese scholar, who acts as writer, and the writer composes the matter in his own way. Then what he has written is criticised or amended by the foreign

author, and so the tract, or essay, or translation is made ready.

Much depends upon the clearness and adequate scholarship of the foreign missionary who dictates; a great deal, however, depends also upon the scholarship of the Chinese writer. Without a full understanding on his part of the meaning which is to be conveyed, and the command of a suitable style for the expression of it, no literary work in China can expect to prosper. For "style" is an essential part of the written language of China, not merely an addition to it. It will appear from this how doubly hard is the task of literary production in the Chinese language.

It was because Dr. John so conspicuously hit the happy medium between the "high" style of the accomplished scholars of China and the speech of the people, so that his productions were not without a strong literary flavour whilst still being understandable by the common man, that he was urged by the National Bible Society of Scotland to attempt a translation of the Gospel of Mark.

The Bible, which was circulated chiefly by the British and Foreign Bible Society at that time, was the version prepared by Medhurst and his colleagues in Shanghai in 1854. This was known as the "Delegates' Version." It is popular amongst

scholarly Chinese, being the one outstanding piece of work done by missionaries which is in line with the purely classical style of the Chinese.

But that fact serves to make it almost useless to the "man in the street" who is not a scholar, but who comprises seven-tenths of the nation. Other versions, colloquial, being written in the language of the street, were despised because the language used was too common. Dr. John was to endeavour to produce a gospel in Chinese which struck the mean between these extremes.

He succeeded perfectly, and his success meant the carrying of a burden for many future years which he had never anticipated, still less wished for. When St. Mark's Gospel was finished, the cry was for more. So the missionary had to proceed with the task of translating the whole of the New Testament.

He has told us the rules by which he was guided in carrying out this work. He aimed at making the version an exact image of the original, and to express the original meaning in as few words as possible. Where, however, as is bound to be the case in the translation of such a book as the Bible, it was impossible or useless to translate the exact wording of the text, then the attempt to be literal must give place to the translation of the idea.

For to translate, said Dr. John, "is to carry *ideas* and *thoughts* from one language into another." Literal translations may be very exact, and easily accomplished, but lack intelligent meaning, especially in a language like the Chinese.

The New Testament was completed by the year 1885 in the simple classical style, and by the year 1890 the Books of Psalms and Proverbs, as well as the whole New Testament, were completed, both in the simple classical and in the Mandarin versions. It was not generally felt, however, that a version which was the work of one man, even though that man were as gifted as Griffith John, could be completely satisfactory. What was allowed by almost all critics was that the work of Dr. John met a very distinct need, and also was a big step in advance of anything which had been hitherto published.

In the year 1890 the second China Missionary Conference met in Shanghai. Here the question of undertaking a full revision of the various versions of the Scriptures in Chinese was discussed, and it was unanimously agreed to appoint committees of skilled missionary translators to bring the Chinese versions of the Bible to completion.

Dr. Griffith John was, unfortunately, not present at this conference, and although he was pressed to

become a member of these committees, he felt that it was so unlikely that the members of them would ever be brought into the harmony their task demanded, that he reluctantly refused to serve. He offered, however, to suspend his own translation of the Old Testament until the result of the joint project was seen.

It is but fair to state that the event proved Dr. John to have unduly magnified the difficulties and underestimated the spirit of co-operation which marked the labours of his fellow-translators, and although the "union" versions were long in coming, their work was, at last, satisfactorily accomplished. For Griffith John to err on the side of pessimism is the exception which proves the rule.

In the year 1899 the Senate of the University of Edinburgh recognised the remarkable labours of this Chinese scholar and his contribution to the progress of the world, by conferring upon him the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity.

The successful work which Griffith John began and carried on *outside* the sphere of service to which he felt himself specially called, is one of the most striking of the features of his life. Had he been a man niggard in his service and holding a narrow view of his calling, or one who had feared the pressure of extra responsibility, how much smaller his life would have been. The enthusiasm

with which he turned to meet the call of unpremeditated service is a signal proof of the whole-souled greatness of the man.

It was not as chaplain to a foreign community that he went into Hankow; the Chinese were his field of service; and yet, when the claim came, he gave of the best that he had to the religious needs of his fellow-Europeans in Hankow, and established a flourishing Church work amongst the foreign residents of that port.

Again, although he urged strongly the need for hospital work, it was not until the occasion arose that he found the burden of beginning this work was to be laid on his shoulders, and that the collection of funds and the management of a hospital, apart from its medical supervision, must be borne by him. Yet he made the task his own with enthusiasm, and planned and gathered money from local sources, until the Chinese hospital could be handed over to medical missionary control.

Work amongst sailors was a duty brought into his life by Mrs. Jeanette John. It is not one of the obvious tasks of a missionary to the Chinese, but, when laid upon him, he flung himself into it heart and soul, and there are many bluejackets and ships' officers who have lived to thank God for his earnest ministry on their behalf in far-away Hankow. When he pleaded in England for "full-orbed

men, full of solar light, full of humanity," he was speaking out of a deep personal experience. His own life proved him a conspicuously all-round Christian man, truly catholic in sympathy and in service.

CHAPTER XII

THE CROWN OF SERVICE; THE NEW CHINA

"We shall reap, if we faint not."

THE year 1900 was a tremendous turning-point for Christian missions in China. When the fiery persecution of the Boxer Rebellion fell upon the Chinese Church there were many amongst the missionaries who feared that the Chinese Christians would not stand firm. Griffith John had always said that the average Christianity of the Chinese convert was as high as that of England or America, and when the testing-time came events proved that he was right. Every one knows how nobly the Chinese Christians stood the trial of persecution, though martyrdom overtook thousands of them; and that they died, side by side with the foreign pastors, or alone before their murderers, boldly confessing their faith in Jesus Christ.

It was an anxious time for the veteran leader in Hankow. Not only were there the members in Hankow and Wuchang to be thought of; there were the many groups of Chinese converts all over the countryside; at Hsiao-kan, where also were

the lepers; at Tsao-shih, a place which had long resisted the entrance of the missionary and had frequently mobbed those who visited it, where there was a hospital and mission headquarters; and in Hunan, where work was just being built up. In this very troubled period the care of the churches pressed heavily upon Dr. John. A riot did occur in Tsao-shih, and the missionaries had to flee into Hankow. Many urged Griffith John to go down the river for safety; he felt his presence was helpful to the converts in Hankow, and he stayed.

Well it was for Central China that he did so. The Viceroy of Hupeh, one of the two chief officials in the whole Yangtse Valley, was at this time the enlightened scholar, Chang Chih-tung. He and Dr. John were on very friendly terms, and the missionary was able to encourage and support the Viceroy in his task of keeping order in the provinces of Hupeh and Hunan.

Through that long and unspeakably hot summer Dr. John, with a few of his colleagues, stayed at his post, winning the admiration anew of those who watched him. In the end, although very much damage was done to property in places, no member of the London Missionary Society in Central China lost his life by the violence of the mob. It was a splendid example of fearless faith.

The activities of the last few years of service in Hankow had been remarkable. Griffith John always showed himself ready to embark upon new forms of missionary work as the demand for them appealed to his reason, and he flung himself with heartiness into the new work which the Reform movement in China called for. He recognised that conditions had changed, and that an increasingly broad missionary policy was demanded. In the years gone by higher education for the Chinese Christians had given place to the claims of evangelisation and philanthropy; the supreme need then was to open up the great field of work.

As the demand for Western education grew in force, Dr. John saw in it a new means of Christian service, and he put forward schemes for a big educational venture in Hankow. So the Anglo-Chinese College of the L.M.S., which began in a quiet way under the leadership of Mr. A. J. M'Farlane, came into existence. Not many years passed before that College found itself located in magnificent premises, with a full list of scholars, on a fine site a few miles out of Hankow. It became the "Griffith John College," a splendid memorial of the spirit of progress which marked its founder's life. Here are Chinese students, who play football and cricket, who are good at games and keen for work, and who come into daily contact with the best of Christian influences.

Deeper than his care for the education of the young was Dr. John's desire to see the Chinese preachers trained to do their work efficiently. He knew from experience how much depended upon the character and training of the Christian minister. But how to meet the need ?

In a small way, with the help of his colleagues, Messrs. Arthur Bonsey and C. G. Sparham, he had tried to give instruction to the men who went out to preach; but an institute was wanted, where intelligent young Christian men might be properly trained for the work of the ministry.

Dr. John came forward with a gift of his own. Never a man of wealth, this self-denying worker devoted all his private means, as well as every hour of his life, to missionary service. He built and gave to the mission a theological hall. In the years to come it is expected that from this hall will develop a great college for ministers from which numbers of men will go out to preach Christ's message, following in the footsteps of their great leader, Griffith John, all over Central China.

It was in the same spirit of giving his all for China that Griffith John provided the means for the building of the Margaret Hospital for Chinese women. How the mind of the great missionary was open to a reconsideration of opinions is strikingly shown in the work for women by women which has

been undertaken in Central China. In earlier years Dr. John found the proposal to send unmarried women into the mission field of China one which did not commend itself to his mind. He saw so clearly the many dangers attending such a plan. All the work that such workers might do, he considered, could be better done by the wives of missionaries. He thought it no discredit, however, to change his mind upon this matter, and he became a champion of the woman missionary worker, when he saw what a useful sphere of labour she could make for herself when cautious and restrained as well as devoted.

In the same way, the man who had at first doubted the wisdom of the idea of missionary holidays at regular intervals, away from the scene of ordinary work, when he saw the saving in health that such holidays, taken in reason, might effect, became a strong advocate for the opening of the Central China Sanatorium at Kuling.

By the year 1905, when Dr. John celebrated his jubilee of service in China, and had received the chorus of congratulations which poured in on him from all sides, he could look around upon a work which had grown up in his single lifetime, and largely under his inspiration, which few men, however great, have been permitted to view.

At the close of the memorable day when the Chinese and the foreign community and his own missionary colleagues had united to express their thankfulness for the life and labours of their honoured leader, the veteran remarked: "I love my work, I love my colleagues; and as I have begun so I follow on as long as life shall last." Behind him lay fifty years of service, but in his heart there was still the "forward view."

He was the champion of hope based on faith, against all who took the shorter, darker view of life. "Some seem to imagine I am an optimist because life has been easy and I have never known trial or sorrow. But I tell you I am an optimist because of what I see—the changes which have taken place these fifty years. Sorrow! Loss! I have known the bitterest: wife—children—I have gone through it all. Disappointments, dangers—many! But I am an optimist in spite of it all."

Is it any wonder that he provoked the admiration of all who came into touch with his life? A born leader of men, with all the high martial qualities which go to make generalship; all the ardour which marks the volunteer for outpost service, and the steady patience which endures the long campaign. Here are the qualities of the ideal Christian soldier.

And like the ideal Christian soldier, his deep desire was to die at his post. Early in 1906 the veteran had the first intimation of a coming breakdown, and it was thought needful for him to take a change from Hankow.

He journeyed, therefore, to America for a rest at the home of his sons in New York. Here his whole thought was concentrated upon the return to China. His old colleagues, Muirhead and Edkins, had both died in Shanghai after considerably more than fifty years of service, and Mr. Hudson Taylor of the China Inland Mission, the companion of some of his early missionary journeys, was returning to China to spend his declining years in the land for which he had lived. Should not Griffith John do the same ?

The day in 1907 on which he was permitted to land again in Shanghai was one of the most joyful of his long life. *He was back again in China.* All the pressing invitations which he had received to go on from America to England moved him not a bit; China filled his mind and heart.

Again he set himself to the old work. In his study, still labouring to translate, meeting with Chinese workers who sought his counsel, or in the Theological Hall lecturing to students, his life was full to the brim.

Nor could he be restrained from renewing his

visits to the country. The writer of this "life" was in Hankow in 1908 at the period of China New Year, and was invited to accompany Griffith John and his daughter, Mrs. Sparham, on what was to prove the last missionary journey of his travel-filled life. The trip was to Hsiao-kan, the scene of many an early disappointment and triumph. Now the line of railway from Hankow to Peking passes within a few miles of Hsiao-kan City, and the trip was a very different one from the old uncomfortable journeys. On the way we passed the "Wei Village" and the chapel, which was the first built by Chinese subscriptions in "inland" China. Arrived at Hsiao-kan the veteran worker could scarcely rest until he had seen the lepers and admired the chapel which had just been erected for their Christian worship. In the afternoon a visit was paid to the house which had first sheltered the missionary in Hsiao-kan, and where he had met with the few believers who had been gathered into the Church by the earnest efforts of Mr. Wei.

The contrast was striking and complete, and it was crowned on the day following, Sunday, when the honoured pastor arose to address a crowded congregation of Christian Chinese, his own people, the children whom God had given him!

But, alas! he had overestimated his strength;

the service had not long proceeded ere the tongue failed, and the worn body sank back into the seat. The end of active service had come and found him in his throne of service, the Chinese pulpit. He was magnificently faithful to the end.

The great brain and the determined will of the Christian apostle made more than one effort to recover and to lay hold of work again, but in vain. Cared for with unceasing and deep tenderness by those who loved him dearly, he spent more than two years quietly at the house of his son-in-law and daughter, and left Hankow as the victorious revolutionists of China were waging their successful campaign around Hanyang.

The triumph of militant reform in China was first accomplished by the revolutionaries *in Central China*, whilst Griffith John, the first Protestant missionary to that region, and the man whose influence and teaching had done more than any other to sow the seeds of real progress there, was *still in Hankow*.

The triumph of reform was an accomplished thing as the princely man who had preached the message of truth over the whole of that region went down the great river to Shanghai, on his way to the land of his birth. He left Hankow on the fiftieth anniversary of his arrival at that port.

And had he not high honour? The guns that

reverberated across the Yangtse as his vessel steamed away might well have been according a salvo of recognition to the Christian hero for the sacrifice and service of a lifetime.

The call to eternal rest came to Griffith John on the 25th of July 1912, and he was buried four days later in the cemetery at his old home at Swansea. Not China, after all, but Wales, the land of his fathers, which saw his life nurtured in faith and consecrated to missionary service, claimed the keeping of his mortal remains in death.

Of that innumerable company who shine as stars in the kingdom of heaven, having turned many into the way of righteousness, not the least worthy is Griffith John, the apostle of Central China, who baptized the first Protestant convert in that vast region; who founded its first Protestant Christian Church; and who lived to know that sounds of Christian praise were arising week by week from Chinese voices worshipping God, in every city and almost every township of the two great provinces of Hupeh and Hunan.

He was *not weary* in well-doing, and in due season he reaped, for he fainted not.

THE END

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