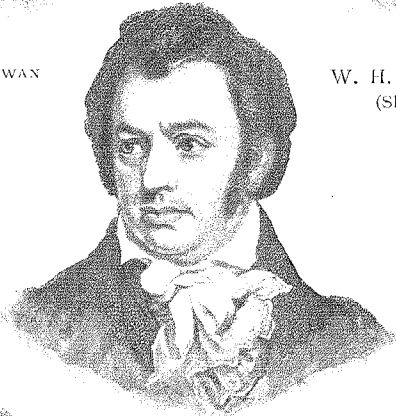




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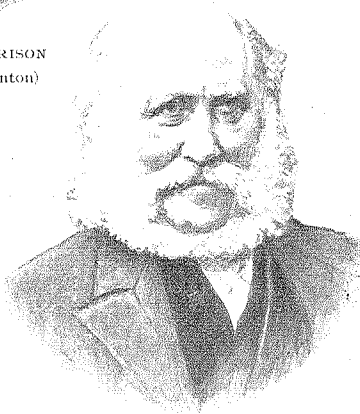
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CHAPTER XXII

SOUTHERN CHINA: HONG KONG, CANTON AND AMOY: 1845-1895

THE work done in the vast empire of China, in connection with the London Missionary Society, falls naturally under three great geographical divisions: Southern, Central, and Northern China. So enormous is the area covered by each of these divisions, so diverse are the provincial characteristics, and even languages, that there can be little co-operation and inter-communication between the workers in these three divisions. To present that bird's-eye view of what has been accomplished, and is being carried on at the end of the century, which is all that is possible here, it may be well to consider them in the order of their missionary occupation. And from this point of view, Southern China first claims our attention.

South China, as defined by the Chinese, comprises four of the eighteen provinces into which the empire is divided. These are Kwong Tung, Broad East; Kwong Sai, Broad West; Wan Nam, Cloudy South, i.e. south of the Cloud Mountains; and Kwai Chau, Noble Region. The extent of territory known by this name may for purposes of comparison be stated thus: Kwong Tung and Kwong Sai together are about twice the size of England, Wan Nam is twice the size of England, and Kwai Chau twice the size of Scotland¹.

If the native census on which European authorities have based estimates of population be accepted, South

¹ These names are given in Cantonese.

China is inhabited by some thirty-six million people, or, in round numbers, one-tenth of the inhabitants of the empire belong to these four provinces. Of this number, more than one-half are found within the Kwong Tung border line. The magnificent water-way of the great West river is destined ere long to become a "highway of the nations." It connects Kwong Tung with Kwong Sai, and Kwong Sai with Wan Nam, being navigable for large native house-boats as far as Pak Shek, on the Wan Nam border, 800 miles from Canton. In addition to the advantages offered by the West river, excellent facilities for travelling inland in an easterly direction for more than 200 miles from Canton are afforded by the East river, and northward by the two branches of the North river, to the limits of the province, 300 miles from the capital. Kwong Tung and Kwong Sai are further intersected in many directions by navigable streams, and in what is known as the rice delta of Kwong Tung there is little short of a network of such channels. This is a circumstance favourable to the purpose which the Christian preacher or teacher has in view, seeing that it gives him ready and convenient access to the largest centres of population. To the whole of South China the point of entrance for missions is Canton. At this point the main rivers converge, and the commanding position of this great emporium of commerce, as respects not Kwong Tung only, but also the neighbouring provinces, makes it a chief centre for most of the Protestant missionary societies having agencies in this part of the empire.

'The Southern, as distinguished from the Northern Chinese, exhibit superior energy, enterprise, and business capacity. These qualities account for the presence in large numbers at the coast ports of Cantonese traders, and for the tide of emigration which has hitherto flowed steadily from the country round about Canton, in spite of restrictive legislation in Australia and America. The Southern Chinese have long been notorious for hatred to foreigners and opposition to Christianity. This last remark is not,

however, true of the Hakkas, who inhabit Poklo and the districts bordering on the upper reaches of the East river. These latter people exhibit marked peculiarities which distinguish them from the Puntis or Cantonese.

'The Kwong Tung and Kwong Sai provinces have been for missionary purposes well explored. On the banks of the river population is concentrated; there are comparatively few places of importance not accessible by water. Missionaries and their associates avail themselves of the unrivalled facilities offered by the river boats. These craft are something more than the mere "houseboats," they are made to serve as travelling book depositories, as reception rooms for visitors, and as inquiry rooms for converts and adherents. Foreigners and their native assistants have lived in these boats for weeks, and even months, preaching regularly in the chief towns, and circulating widely portions of the Bible and Christian books. As a consequence the missionary and colporteur are now well known, and not unfrequently well received; multitudes have been made acquainted with the leading facts of Christianity. An urgent need of this field is to maintain and further develop this admirable system of itinerancy. When visits are oft repeated friendly relations are established; when Christian books and tracts are disposed of judiciously real interest in the Gospel is awakened¹.'

We will now glance at the history of the three great mission centres of Southern China occupied by the Society.

1. HONG KONG. Hong Kong is unlike every other place in which the Society is carrying on missionary operations in China. The other stations are situated in the midst of vast districts of indefinite size and with dense populations around them on every hand. They are under Chinese rule, and are affected by all the influences for good or for

¹ From a paper by W. T. Pearce, of Hong Kong, on 'The Work in South China,' *Founders' Week Convention Report*, p. 261.

evil which are operating in the Chinese Empire. Hong Kong has the advantage of being a British colony, and the population feels the presence of a large European element. The life of the natives under these circumstances is more free, and, owing to European influence, their ideas are liberalized; and British rule affords a security for life and work which is of very great value. The settlement is on an island not a mile from the Chinese coast. The native population amounts to about 250,000, but the number seems to be constantly increasing. The sphere of mission operations is practically limited by the size of the island, although the Basel Missionary Society is extending its work to a district on the mainland. The importance of the mission at Hong Kong is, however, not by any means to be estimated by the circumscribed area of its operations, nor by the comparatively limited number of people amongst whom the work is being carried on. Hong Kong is probably the most important centre of Western life in the Eastern seas. It is the first port of call, and the place through which all passengers from the West to all parts of China and Japan usually pass. It is also a centre from which Chinamen start on their emigration to foreign ports. The opportunities of usefulness, therefore, among a liberalized and constantly active native community are exceptionally great and valuable.

The mission here was firmly established in working order by 1850. The staff in that year consisted of Dr. Legge, B. Kay, T. Gilfillan, and Mr. H. J. Hirschberg as medical missionary. Mr. W. Gillespie reached Hong Kong in 1844. With Dr. Hobson in 1845 he made the unsuccessful attempt to establish a station at Canton. He visited England in 1847, and returned to Hong Kong in 1849, but ceased to be connected with the Society in 1850. Mr. J. F. Cleland also reached Hong Kong in 1846, and there superintended the press, and preached in the English chapel; but he also in 1850 left the mission. Dr. Hobson had charge of the hospital work at Hong Kong in 1843; but in 1848 removed to Canton, the station for which from the first he had been

destined. There in the western suburbs he carried on medical missionary work, but no European was at that time allowed to enter the native city. He was succeeded in Hong Kong by Mr. H. J. Hirschberg, who took charge of the hospital from 1847 to 1853. Neither Mr. Kay nor Mr. Gilfillan was enabled to render any lengthy service; the former retired to Sydney in 1849, and the latter returned to England in 1851. John Chalmers reached Hong Kong in 1852, and laboured there until 1859, superintending the press, and in Dr. Legge's absence carrying on the mission. In 1859 he removed to Canton.

Mission work at each of the important stations in China presents similar features. Preaching to and evangelistic work among the Chinese, a chapel for English services, a hospital, educational work, and printing—these have been sustained at all. To set forth minutely the buildings opened, the sometimes rapid changes of staff, the manifold incidents of the fifty years' labour at these stations, would only weary the reader, even if it were practicable. So here, as elsewhere, we concentrate our attention upon main features of the work, and the leading personalities, whether generally known or unknown.

It must be borne in mind that work in the British Colony of Hong Kong has been carried on under more favourable conditions in some respects than in Canton and Amoy. But as the mission has always devoted its energies to the highest interests of the Chinese, what is true of it, is in the main, true of all.

The Chinese School for Boys, and the Seminary connected with it, were in the early years of the mission a main part of Dr. Legge's work. He continued the senior missionary in charge of Hong Kong until 1873. In 1861 he issued the first volume of his great work—the Chinese Classics, ultimately issued in seven volumes by Messrs. Trübner and Co. In 1870 the University of Aberdeen conferred upon him the degree of LL.D. From 1870 to 1873 he was pastor of Union Chapel, and he finally returned to England in 1873. He had ceased to