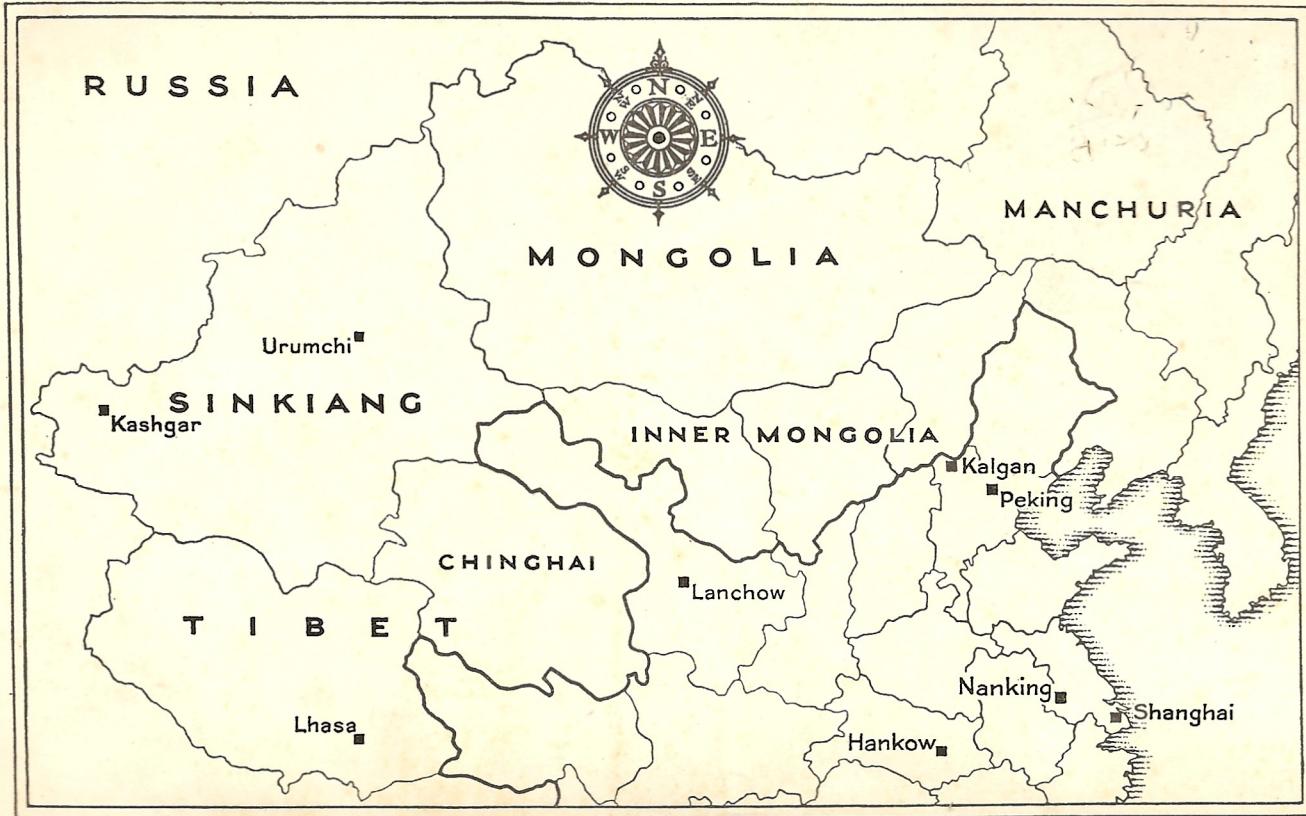


TO WHAT PURPOSE?







EMIL FISCHBACHER, L.R.C.P., L.R.C.S., Glasgow and Edinburgh

Born in Glasgow, August 9, 1903
Sailed for China, December 31, 1931
Died in Chinese Turkestan, May 27, 1933

Frontispiece

‘To What Purpose?’

by

MARSHALL BROOMHALL

‘To what purpose hath this
waste of the ointment been
made?’—St. Mark xiv. 4

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As long as Christianity lasts, the heroic ideal must be the standard of all human life. Christianity can accept no other; whatever it may tolerate, its standard is irremovable. The *De Imitatione Christi* can be written only in one way. . . .

There is plenty of temptation to give up the heroic standard. It often fails. It is easily counterfeited. Its failure is scandalous. And not only our self-indulgence, but our suspicion and hatred of insincere pretence, our moderation and common sense, bid us content ourselves with something short of it, and take our aim by what we call our nature. But the New Testament will not meet us here. The heroic standard is the only one it will countenance for its own, as proportionate to the greatness of its disclosures.

R. W. CHURCH

Foreword

WE are sometimes stabbed into thought by tragic and unexpected events. This happened when the news of Dr. Emil Fischbacher's early death reached us within sixteen months of his arrival in China. The question: To What Purpose? involuntarily rose to mind, and out of that question this little book has had birth.

Some may ask: What is there in such a short life to justify another publication? Our answer is that around this brief career, apart from its own value, there are grouped a number of stirring events, events not only of interest, but of stimulating importance. There was the bombardment of Shanghai which constituted his rude welcome to China; there was the unique and perilous journey across the Gobi Desert, a journey which impressively illustrates one difficulty connected with the evangelization of Chinese Turkestan; and there was the rebellion in that distant territory, a sample of the stern work which may fall to the lot of the pioneer. All these and more are focused within this brief record.

It is said of Dante that 'he felt that there were wonderful histories latent in the inconspicuous paths of life, in the fugitive incidents of the hour, among the persons whose faces we have seen'. This was why he refused to limit his great work, the *Divina Commedia*, to characters of fame. 'Not the great and famous only: this is too narrow, too conventional a sphere; it is not real enough.' He even chose his title because he spoke in the language of the people, and not in Latin, and because he wrote about the common everyday life of man. In like manner the brief career of this young doctor has its own peculiar value. Its very brevity awakens awe and commands attention.

The late Dr. Eugene Stock has helpfully commented on
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the influence and inspiration of certain brief missionary lives. David Brainerd laboured among the Indians for less than three years, and died when he was twenty-nine. Henry Martyn gave six years only to the Mission field, and died at thirty-one. And Bishop Hannington served in Africa for some three years only, and was murdered before he reached his post. These are but three names out of a great company. Lives cannot be measured by years. Of David Brainerd Dr. Stock has said: 'He did less in his lifetime than his biography did after he was gone'. The harvests of many seasons may spring from seed sown in a moment of time. Who estimates the life of our Lord by its earthly duration? 'We can but spell a surface history, love only understands the mystery.'

If this little book shall do something to impress the reader with the magnitude of the issues involved in evangelizing so vast and so remote a territory as Chinese Turkestan, the land for which Emil Fischbacher gave his life, its publication will be more than justified.

MARSHALL BROOMHALL

October 31, 1933

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An Introduction to China

'WE have just had news, through a wireless message from England, that China has declared war on Japan. We haven't been able to get into touch with Shanghai for over forty-eight hours. The Captain doesn't know whether we shall be able to land or not. There is keen excitement on board.'

Thus wrote Emil Fischbacher to his 'dear folk' at home, as the s.s. *Naldera* steamed up the China Sea. They were then just eighty miles from the mouth of the Yangtse. Though no official declaration of war had been made, fighting had begun.

In another letter, written not long after, he continued:

'The pilot came on board three or four hours ago, and apparently he doesn't know what to do. So here we are and will no doubt stay till daylight. We haven't been able to get into wireless communication with Shanghai for almost three days. All our news is coming from England. The Government wireless station in Shanghai has apparently been destroyed. The Commander says he is loath to proceed direct to Japan, as he hasn't at present accommodation for the Japanese cargo which he expects to take aboard. This morning at 7 o'clock H.M.S. *Suffolk* went scudding past us at thirty knots an hour—all out—for Shanghai. She was in Hongkong when we left. She is a huge cruiser. Out in these seas our Navy ships are only allowed, under normal circumstances, a maximum of thirteen to fourteen knots per hour, so the *Suffolk* must have meant business.'

Emil Fischbacher, the writer, was one of a party of six young men, on board that P. & O. liner, who were new volunteers for the great work of evangelizing China. Three of

them were medicals, young Fischbacher being one of these. They were the last of the ‘Two Hundred’, and had actually left London on the last day of 1931. Their vessel had sailed on Christmas Day, but because of all the blessed associations of that festal season, it had been arranged that this party should travel overland and join their boat at Marseilles. And, as it happened, that was the last family Christmas gathering Emil Fischbacher was to know here below, and to few families has Christmas been such a joyous occasion. To them it was a great time, filled with the happiest elements of surprise.

But we must return to that company of anxious passengers, with their vessel lying some miles beyond the Woosung forts. Though the steamer could not proceed to her accustomed wharf, the passengers were sent up river by means of a tender, and the party of young men, with Mr. and Mrs. Rowe their escort, safely reached the welcome shelter of the new compound of the China Inland Mission. The old headquarters of the Mission, vacated only some seven months before, were now occupied by the Japanese, for they were within the zone of the actual fighting. It was a striking illustration to the new arrivals, as they landed, of the way in which God had been mindful of His own, and made provision for the carrying on of His work.

But it was a rude welcome to a strange land. Yet it was not out of keeping with the chaotic conditions of the great country they had come to evangelize. For miles and miles they found the shops all closed, the General Post Office shut, for it was in an unhealthy situation, the Chinese Banks not doing business, while the Customs House reflected the abnormal conditions of a great commercial port. The letters sent home at this time—and to get them out of Shanghai needed strategy—were full of graphic details of those stirring days. One or two more extracts from young Fischbacher’s letters must suffice.

‘It *was* pretty bad [he wrote] but to-day, since daybreak, we have had continuous firing. This has all been real big stuff. The Japanese obviously mean business to-day. The constant booming of guns, and the vibration from the explosions, have been with us all day. From to-night’s papers it would appear that the Japanese have blown the Woosung forts to bits. This has all been done from gunboats on the river. . . .

‘I have just been up on the roof. Really the sight makes one ill. Over an extent of, I should say, three miles, there is a continuous stretch of fire. The heavens are all lit up with the illumination. There can’t be much left in the way of property in the Chapei district now. It is tragic, for, as is always the case, it is the innocent that suffer. There are thousands and thousands of refugees all over the place. Every boat that can get out is packed with Chinese anxious to get away from the scene of trouble. How grateful everyone is here for this building. Had we been in the old premises, we should have had to evacuate almost a week ago. Here for the moment we are safe, though safety is a relative thing. Two shells landed in Sinza Road—only a matter of yards away.’

But it was one thing to get into Shanghai. It was another matter to get out and proceed up river to the Language School at Anking. But before we begin that story, and plunge into the records of Emil Fischbacher’s brief but stirring life in China, we must go back to see what it was that had made him face the trials of a missionary’s lot and its responsibilities.

‘My son,’ says the writer of Ecclesiasticus, ‘if thou comest to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation.’ Jesus, the son of Sirach, who wrote those words, doubtless wrote out of deep experience. It was goodly counsel, and Emil Fischbacher had not put his hand to the plough without having first fought a stiff fight in the valley of decision. It is to that valley of decision we must now return.

It Might Have Been

WHEN the spikenard very costly was poured forth upon the head and feet of our Lord, those who understood not had indignation among themselves and said: 'To what purpose hath this waste of the ointment been made? For this ointment might have been sold for above three hundred pence.' This false alternative will always prevail so long as our eyes are holden. To the young especially, this world makes a bid for life, which is their most precious possession. Things temporal put on their most winsome garments, and display all their varied enchantments. The tempter within, and the foes without, bring forth their most specious arguments against the breaking of life's cruse and the spilling of its costly contents. It was so with Emil Fischbacher. The world made him a big offer.

Emil was the child of Christian parents, the fourth son and sixth member of a family of ten. It says much for the home and its parental influence that Emil, and all his surviving brothers and sisters, early took their stand for Christ, and were all baptized by their Minister, the Rev. John MacBeath. We have before us a copy of the Covenant Card similar to the one that Emil signed when still a lad. He and his brother Ernest were two of a goodly company who, on one momentous Sunday in their youth, signed these cards and handed them to the Minister in the pulpit. There was nothing sanctimonious about it, but only what was healthy and true. Beneath the words of the Covenant, and the lad's signature, are these well-known lines:

Just as I am, young, strong and free,
To be the best that I can be
For Truth and Righteousness and Thee,
Lord of my life, I come.

And on the back of the card are other lines, some for the boys and some for the girls, which suggest, as Hudson Taylor used to say, that conversion should be called 'becoming joyful', not 'becoming serious', as it was named when he was a youth. Here are the lines for the boys.

God wants the Boys

God wants the boys, the merry boys,
The noisy boys, the funny boys,
The thoughtless boys:
God wants the boys with all their joys—
That He as gold may make them pure,
And teach them trials to endure.
His heroes brave He'd have them be,
Fighting for truth and purity;
God wants the boys.

At home the cause of foreign missions was kept well to the front, the father's great ambition being that at least five of his children would offer for that service, and that he might have the joy and fellowship of making them financially independent of any society. He had toiled hard, and built up a prosperous business, largely with this aim in view. The claims of China were specially emphasized, for the China Inland Mission had a warm place in his heart. But as Emil grew up there was a strong reaction against this field—although his eldest sister had gone there. China was the last place in the world in which he desired to labour. It was perhaps good and well that it should be so, for the decision, when it was made, was his own, and not another's, even subconsciously received. And here we are allowed to quote a personal letter to his younger brother, a letter which reveals something, but not all, of what passed between his soul and God. The letter is dated from the Capital of Chinese Turkestan, February 15, 1933.

‘One thing has been on my mind, and that is Foreign Missions and your relationship thereto. I knew of course that you didn’t want to say much—you always went so far and no further. But I was anxious to know and am glad you told me. . . . I have been thinking of you a lot recently and praying too that the Lord would open spheres of service for you. I am not impatient, but I am praying that the Lord will in His time and way show you what He wants you to do. I almost feel like making suggestions in my prayers as to a suitable sphere of service for you. But I only say that below my breath. . . .

‘I have often thought since 1926, when I qualified, that surely sometime soon I would get the Call. Even when I wasn’t keen I felt that some day I would find myself in the foreign field. I should never have allowed China to enter into my calculations.

‘As you may know, for three or four years Dr. W—— wanted me to come to him. That would have meant £1200 per annum for three years, and thereafter something over £3000 per annum. One can scrape along on an income like that! But I never felt justified in fixing up with him, as I always had in the back of my mind the possibility of the foreign field. It seems strange to me now. Dr. W—— was awfully good about it, though he couldn’t understand it altogether. And I seemed to knock about from pillar to post, here, there and everywhere. First General Practice, then House Surgeonship, then Tropical Medicine, then General Surgery and major operations, then Public Health work and Tuberculosis, then Diseases of the Throat, Nose and Ear, then General Practice of a varied sort, then Diseases of the Eye, etc. etc. etc. What a medley! Now I am general factotum here. I am my own Consultant and Adviser—no one to appeal to. How I value all that varied experience! It means more now than I can tell.’

This long extract was never intended for the public eye. It is one brother’s outpouring to another brother. But all the more it lets us into the heart of the man, and shows us something of what the lure of the world had been to him. And what the world offered was all in an honourable capacity. There was also the temptation of doing his duty by proxy, for at one time he wondered if he could not stay at home and support two or three workers in his stead, and thus do more than by going himself. ‘It might have been sold for three hundred pence, and the money given to the poor.’ But God wanted him, and not another in his place.

It was at this juncture, by a chance which God’s hand did guide, that he took up *China’s Millions* for June 1931. In this was an appeal addressed to young men, written by an anonymous worker in the field. The article opened with a reference to the Appeal for the Two Hundred, and then proceeded:

‘What does that appeal mean to you? Perhaps you have held objections to the way the appeal has been made. Will those objections stand when you have to answer to the Lord in a coming Day?’

It was an arrow drawn at a venture by a missionary thousands of miles away. But it went right home. Not knowing to whom to send in an application, he wrote to the writer of this booklet, for we had stayed in his home and had played many a game of golf together during that sojourn in Scotland. In this communication he wrote:

‘I was extremely keen to go to Africa, but frankly the thought of going out to China never entered my head. I never even could bring myself to like the possibility of service in China. But Saturday evening last I lifted the current issue of *China’s Millions* and read the appeal to young men. I have since felt irresistibly impelled to write this letter.’

This was in June, just prior to the C.I.M. Conference at Swanwick. The letter was immediately forwarded to the Rev. W. H. Aldis, Home Director of the work in Great Britain, and what follows is best told in Emil Fischbacher's own words. The letter which follows is addressed to his youngest sister, also a medical.

‘I got a note from Mr. Aldis and he asked me if I would slip over to Swanwick to the C.I.M. Conference and see him. Yesterday was my half day off, so I went over—a magnificent run through Derbyshire—61 miles. [He was then in practice near Manchester.] I immediately found myself in three lovely meetings and at 9.15 P.M., as per arrangement, I met Mr. Aldis and went for a walk. Then in his room we had prayer together, and now, though I feel funny—I don't quite grasp things!—I wish you were here and I'd talk at length. . . . I've been very depressed for months and months because I've felt I had lost my way completely. But God has been good.’

The letter then runs on, in that free and intimate way in which some brothers can write to a sister from whom no secrets are hid. He had not even broken the news to his parents, his hope being to do this in person when next able to run home for a day.

And now the whole tone of the correspondence changes. Streams have broken out in the desert, and depression of spirit has given place to overflowing joy. Through the medium of his private letters we are allowed to get a glimpse of his Beulah land. Here is part of what he writes to the same sister:

‘At Swanwick, though we were having a splendid time, I felt I wasn't just in the place of fullest blessing. I stuck out for my little bit of right, but I was miserable. Anyway I went to my room and there had half an hour of heaven. It [the little bit of right] just slipped away and I haven't wanted it back.

He has already given me compensations a hundred fold. Already I have got to the stage of longing to go to China—isn't it most awfully queer! It used to be anathema to think of China. . . .

‘The question of the filling of the Holy Spirit has been with me constantly during the last ten days or fortnight. I've spent much time in prayer over this, but somehow I feel God has something more for me yet. He has been so gracious. Last night I felt in great difficulties over something. I felt that unless one difficulty was removed I couldn't go forward. I have never liked putting God to the test, as some people do. It is so like seeking a sign and is too spectacular. But coming up the road last night, God put it into my heart to put Him to the test in this way. I prayed about it before going to bed and retired with a calm assurance that He who alone could do it for me—and you haven't any idea of the magnitude of the request—would answer my prayer. I was just putting out the light when I noticed my *Daily Light*. I read the portion, and the first paragraph was all I wanted. What a God we have, and to think that so few people know anything about Him! . . .

‘I know you will remember me because that anointing of the Spirit is what I so sorely need. I've been conscious of that for years, but never prayed right through about it. I remember reading that little book [by Andrew Murray] years and years ago—*The True Vine*—and that book brought home to me the absolute necessity of this filling. I [once] stayed up the bigger part of the night—then the next—and I think three or four nights just waiting on God. But ultimately I gave it up. I know now that had I, like Jacob, refused to let go till God had given me the blessing, it would have saved years of back-sliding and endless sorrow and trouble.’

There is much more that might be quoted from Emil's letters to this sister and to his youngest brother, but the fore-

going will suffice to show that a new day had dawned in his spiritual experience. To his own utter amazement he found himself talking to his patients about the things of the Spirit. His joy could not be hid, for out of the abundance of his heart his mouth began to speak. To some of his patients he wrote, and they too were brought into liberty and light. His soul was set free and he could sing:

Now have I found obedience that is joy,
Not pain, not conflict of the heart and mind,
But harmony of human soul with God.

He knew the meaning of the words: ‘I delight to do Thy will, O my God, yea, Thy law is within my heart’. He had let slip the cable of reserve and had floated into God’s great sea of bliss.

As already recorded in the first chapter, he had said farewell to the home country on the last day of 1931, as one of the last party of the Two Hundred. Of the rough welcome China offered, when he landed in Shanghai, we have also written, so we must now resume the story amid the Japanese bombardment of Chapei.

The Language School

UNDER normal conditions new workers proceed without delay, after their arrival in China, to one or other of the two language schools provided for men and women respectively. But the problem with Emil Fischbacher and his party was, having got into Shanghai, to get out again. The delay in their case, happily, was for not more than a fortnight, but some other workers were less fortunate.

After ten days amid the warlike conditions of Shanghai he wrote home as follows:

‘I have grown almost used to the firing now, though at nights it does shake one up a bit. Every now and again there is a terrible explosion which seems to be just outside the window. It shakes one almost out of bed sometimes and does become a trifle nerve-racking. I don’t know why they reserve their big offensives for night times!’

As a medical man he soon found work to do. The Chinese hospitals were filled with wounded soldiers, and it was not possible for any of the native servants to secure attention. These came to him, and he was also called to assist with one or two other cases of sickness. There were also necessary interviews with the heads of various Departments. In homely fashion he wrote to his ‘own dear folk’ in these terms:

‘I must say they are really a grand crowd, and can’t do enough to help us. One has really no idea of the immenseness of the C.I.M. till one comes to headquarters here in Shanghai.’

Some of the ‘grand crowd’ were doing their best to get these young ‘freshers’ away to the Language School, but it was not easy. After many efforts, however, berths were

booked, and all baggage put on board, hand luggage included. But the boat was not to sail till noon next day, so the passengers remained at the Mission House. Next day, after two or three hours of coaxing—for the boat was lying at the Japanese Wharf—the Chinese taxi-drivers consented to take the party to the ship. But lo and behold, the boat had sailed, baggage and all! There had been an unexpected lull in the fighting, and the captain thought the opportunity too good to lose, so, passengers or no passengers, away he went. It was a bit disconcerting, but the experience had its amusing side, and the young men set to to beg or borrow razors and night attire until the advance luggage should be found!

Five days later they set forth again, determined this time to sleep on board rather than be left behind. But, on this occasion, neither love nor money would persuade the taxi-drivers to brave the Japanese area. There was nothing for it but to charter a launch, and slip down the river as best they could.

'It was very eerie at night [wrote Emil to his home folk], for with all the delay it was getting late. Scarcely a soul stirred, as there is a 10 o'clock Curfew in Shanghai, and one dare not be seen abroad after that. We threaded our way past a dozen or twenty men-of-war, Japanese, U.S.A. and British, to the wharf. The Japanese Admiral's Flagship was within a few yards of us, but nothing happened. We got alongside our boat and after startling everybody we were allowed on board. What a sight met our gaze! We had literally to crawl, scramble or climb over a seething mob of humanity with all their worldly goods huddled around them. These were refugees trying to escape from Shanghai. This is only a small boat carrying twenty-five 2nd Class passengers, and about twenty 1st Class, but there were eight hundred and fifty refugees as well as all their worldly goods. A relief ship is coming on

behind with another fifteen hundred more!¹ The atmosphere as we steered our way to the 2nd Class accommodation was simply terrific.—Wheugh!!!—it is with me still! But we were on board at least. . . .

'Coming down river next morning we passed forty or fifty Torpedo-boat Destroyers, Cruisers, Battleships—mainly Japanese, though Britain was well represented. Our own boat has thick iron plates, along the sides of the decks, to prevent us being injured by stray bullets. The sight coming down the river was appalling. Villages we had seen, when we passed up a fortnight previously, are now a mass of charred ruins. Then, the river was crowded with junks and sampans; now, not a living creature to be seen.'

Such a record reminds us that the members of the Forward Movement, and all other workers in China, are able to sympathize with Nehemiah who built the walls of Jerusalem in troublous times. It may well be said to the young recruit who volunteers for the foreign field:

If thou elect to cast thy lot with ours,
Going where God shall send thee, day by day,
Be ready sometimes for the rougher road.

But with such warning this assurance may be added:

God is our Father, even there as here,
And sometimes closest in the wilderness.

Anking, nearly 400 miles up the Yangtse, has for more than forty years been the location of the men's language school. It was opened as such when The Hundred went out in 1887. That Forward Movement taxed its demands, but though the Two Hundred were spread over two years, extra

¹ These small coastal or river steamers are built with steerage accommodation for some two or three hundred Chinese passengers and with only a limited number of first and second class cabins.

accommodation was provided for this more prolonged movement. Here, amid no fewer than sixty-eight students, Emil Fischbacher was to spend the next two months—a much shorter period than is the fortunate lot of the majority.

Concerning the journey up river—so recently the scene of vast floodings and immeasurable distress—of the excitement of landing, where no pier or jetty made disembarkation easy, of the narrow streets through the city, and their overpowering perfumes, we must refrain from writing. His description of the Training Home must suffice:

'With regard to the Compound itself—some day I'll try and draw out a plan of the place. It is a Mission Station as well as a Training Home. However, the Church is largely independent, and Mr. Martin Shepherd spends most of the day with us. It takes Mr. Hayward and Mr. Shepherd all their time to keep the classes going. Just think of it! There are seventy-two foreigners in the Compound—sixty-eight of whom are here to learn the language. We have seven Germans, one Swiss, two Swedes, two from New Zealand, eight from Australia, also some from Texas, Arizona, Calgary, the prairies of Canada, and various other places at the back of beyond, four Scotsmen and the remainder English. They are without exception a great crowd. If people could see this place they would get some idea of what the Forward Movement of the C.I.M. means. It is simply great, mixing with all the various nationalities.'

Of the daily routine in such a Home, and of the hundred and one observations on men and things contained in the correspondence, we must not write. But there is one matter which as a revelation of the man must not be passed by.

It had been the lifelong dream of Emil Fischbacher's father that he should make his children who went to the Mission field independent of Mission funds. But Emil's mind was not

quite clear on this subject. It had its attractions, but to be one with his brethren he thought a higher way.

For the sake of some readers, it may be desirable to explain the Mission's attitude towards the subject of special support. It is a subject which was most carefully thrashed out by Hudson Taylor nearly forty years ago.

Adequately to state the pros and cons of this subject would demand a lengthy leaflet. In a word, special support was found to introduce many anomalies into the working of a Mission established on faith lines. From the General Funds provision is made for schools for the missionaries' children, for sanatoria for the workers' well-being, for passages to and from Shanghai, and for travelling expenses in China. The General Funds also meet the overhead expenses of administration, and of the Mission premises throughout the field, and at home. The actual personal expenses of a missionary are only a proportion of his share in the whole. And this is only one aspect of a big subject. Mr. Hudson Taylor, after most careful consideration, came to the conclusion that, apart from personal family arrangements, it was best that Churches and others who desire to support a special missionary should do so through the General Funds, on account of that worker. This is only a general statement of a complex problem.¹ In Emil Fischbacher's case he would have come under the family exception, concerning which the Mission felt it had no right to legislate.

But Emil Fischbacher had thrown himself so unreservedly into the faith principles of the Mission that he had no desire to be other than his brethren. His hesitation to accept his father's offer had led his father to write and say that it was only natural and fitting that the family should be his co-partners in finance as well as in prayer. To this Emil replied as follows:

¹ Fuller details will gladly be supplied to any interested reader, upon application to the office of the Mission.

‘Thank you ever so much for your promise to be my partner in the work, not only financially but prayerfully. I am just realizing something of what that is going to mean to me in the days to come. I have been praying that I might mean something to you at home. . . . Any delay there has been, in accepting your offer of financial support, was that I was not fully persuaded in my own mind whether it was better for the work that I should be entirely independent of the Mission, that is supported by you direct, or be supported indirectly by you through the Mission. As a matter of fact, in the Lord’s sight there can be no difference in the two methods. . . . I felt that being an independent missionary had many advantages, but being a full member of the Mission, and on exactly the same terms as the others, was perhaps better for me. My own inclination would very naturally have suggested entire independence—there is something superior about it, and I’m afraid I’ve too often taken it for granted. Now that I have entered a faith mission, I really am not entitled to have any views of my own as to how I should like to be supported, and I felt I had to make it a definite matter of prayer. I do trust you will see from this rather inadequate summary of the position that there was no slight on anyone, but only a matter of my relationship to God. . . .

‘You say you have often longed for a prayer-partner to stand by you in the business. I certainly can’t know much of the actual difficulties day by day, but I shall feel it a privilege to accept the office of Prayer-partner with you, and will make it a matter of very special daily prayer that God will make you a blessing in the business, and give you grace and strength as each day requires.’

While this question was being thrashed out between father and son, Emil Fischbacher passed through a time of testing not altogether unlike that experienced by Hudson

Taylor, when the Chinese Evangelization Society thought that his father was ministering to him financially, and, on the other hand, his father imagined that the Society was caring for his needs. More than once Emil Fischbacher had been approached by the Mission’s Treasurer in Shanghai, offering financial ministry, but pending word from his father he refrained from accepting what was offered. The result was a period of straitness which afforded him a peculiar opportunity of personal and direct dealings with God. The situation had its humorous as well as its serious aspects, but the whole story cannot be told adequately in a few words. Writing to his youngest sister he said:

‘Have you grasped the situation? Really sometimes I laugh and laugh. . . . By the way, please keep absolutely quiet on the subject. The folk will just think the letters have been delayed in the post. It isn’t deceiving them. I just can’t have them know the true state of affairs. But don’t go away with the idea I am depressed, or anything like that. I am as fit as I could possibly be. This time in China has been the most precious time I think I can remember. I do thank and praise the Lord for all the way by which He has led me. I shouldn’t have chosen it for myself naturally, but what a blessed experience it has been! To have proved Him, and found Him faithful, is an experience I should never forgo for anything.’

It has seemed worth while to enter into this private concern, for it reveals the man, the whole-hearted and unreserved surrender of his life, and of his all, to God.

Within about six weeks of Emil Fischbacher’s arrival at Ganking, Mr. Hoste, the General Director, accompanied by Mr. A. B. Lewis, came up from Shanghai, to designate the students to their future spheres of service. It was necessary, in view of the approach of summer, that travelling in the great heat should be avoided as much as possible, so although

it was only early March, designations could not well be longer delayed. The letters at this stage give some graphic details as to what ‘designation fever’ meant to such a home. To interview more than sixty men, to discuss with them their future life’s work, and to come to a decision in each case, was a formidable undertaking for the Executive of the Mission, as it was also a vital concern to each man.

Even before Mr. Hoste’s arrival, Emil Fischbacher had written home: ‘I have a shrewd suspicion that I am going to get the biggest surprise of my life. I don’t know what to think.’ The fact was that at Shanghai he had sat next to Mr. Hunter at table—‘I was always put beside him at meals’, was what he wrote—and the possibility that there was some design in this arrangement had begun to dawn upon him. So the days of waiting, after Mr. Hoste’s arrival, were days of suspense. He realized that someone must be first, and somebody must be last, for the expected interview, to adapt his own words, but before his turn came to be summoned—and he was last of the sixty-eight—his ‘designation temperature’ was somewhat high! But though the dinner-bell rang before the final word had been said, and the conversation could not be renewed, he had little uncertainty, in his own mind, as to where he was going, and wrote home to his people all that he knew about Chinese Turkestan. Two things were evident: first, that he would be about two thousand miles away from his sister in North China; and second, that he could not hope for a hospital, in that remote region, for many years.

‘I had always thought of going to an established order of things [he wrote home]. It would be nice to go to a settled hospital, as Gray, Murray and Pearce, with a senior colleague to take the responsibility—but well, the work isn’t mine, but the Lord’s, so He has the disposal of those who would serve Him.’

This was the spirit in which he accepted all that came. ‘My little bit of right’ he had let go at Swanwick, it will be remembered, so he made no terms with God. But his description of the party proposed for Sinkiang is full of interest.

‘The Sinkiang party at the moment [he wrote] consists of five men and they are going up D.V. with Mr. Hunter. There is one man from Tasmania (Parsons), one from America (Schoerner—a German), one from Australia, but born in China (Raymond Joyce), one from England and brought up in Singapore (Holmes), also one thoroughbred Englishman (Drew). If I go it will add flavour to the mixture of nationalities. Schoerner was at Moody’s Bible Institute for two years with Theo [his youngest brother]. Isn’t it a coincidence?’

Just a week later, a letter from Shanghai, by air-mail, confirmed Emil Fischbacher’s designation to Sinkiang, and requested him to proceed to the coast without delay. His sister had been called from Shansi to meet him, for it was recognized that with half a continent between them the prospects of meeting were as remote as their stations. Prompt to respond to the Call, his alarm was set for 4 A.M. next morning, and after a journey which was, in his own words, ‘one long jostling match’, Shanghai was safely reached once more.

A School of Patience

To be summoned to Shanghai by air-mail looked like business, but China is a great school for patience, and the keenest men feel this most. The sudden call was that he might see his sister ere the long journey to the heart of Asia was undertaken. With nearly 2000 miles between them, brother and sister were not likely to meet for many a year. But no one thought that nearly four months were to elapse before advance was possible.

Before we proceed to discuss the problems of the arduous journey which confronted him and his companions, it will be illuminating to learn, from a semi-private letter we are permitted to quote, how he impressed his missionary sister, who had not seen him for some years. This is what she wrote:

'I was prepared to see a big change in my brother, but until we met I kept wondering how much of the change was just transfer of interest and energy, and how much real spiritual experience. However, even during the short drive from the wharf to the mission house, I saw enough to fill my heart with joy, and that joy increased and deepened with every further contact, till even my Scotch reserve, plus a very matter-of-fact disposition, were taxed to their limits to keep my feelings under control. I had to shake myself repeatedly to make sure that I was not just dreaming a delicious dream, and that the person by my side was really the same brother who had so carefully dodged me nearly all the time I was home.'

'During the days in Shanghai I could literally watch him grow, and it was one of the most beautiful things I have ever witnessed. He had awakened to the wonder of the spiritual world and he hastened along with mighty strides, lured by the love of the Lord. There were many persons and things to talk about, for we had been parted for a few years, but we had so

much to tell each other of the Lord's wonderful grace that the three full weeks in Shanghai scarcely left us leisure for anything else.

'At the very outset of our time together we made a compact that the desire for each other's company should not hinder our making any contacts God had for us, and He had quite a few. It was a joy to me to see how seriously my brother took them. On one occasion we were both invited to spend the evening with a little company of Christians, and we had hoped there might be opportunity for witness, but the evening seemed to be spent in vain. Our hearts were heavy as we returned home, so instead of retiring to rest, we spent some time in prayer together. It was long past bed-time when we parted, and when, elder-sisterly fashion, I exhorted him to tumble into bed quickly, he looked at me with a look that follows me still, and said, "I can't go to bed".

'In his last little note from Shanghai, written in a great rush, he spared a few lines to ask prayer for an assistant in a medical store with whom he had come in contact while buying some goods, and for a Russian in a chemist's shop with whom he had made contact under similar circumstances. "The Russian chemist I have not been able to get into touch with again", the note read, "there is always someone in the shop. But I have a small bill to pay, and I hope to have a chance to speak to him then." So purchases and the payment of bills were turned to account for the Kingdom.'

'From that day, a couple of years ago, when he yielded his life to God, God tested his willingness to the hilt. God could not have asked of all what He asked of him, and what God asked was given willingly. When I came to China God asked nothing of me, He only gave. My brother's coming cost terribly—cost at almost every point. But when we knelt together on the first day of our meeting in Shanghai (and it was the first day I ever heard him pray) he praised God from a full

heart for His gracious leading and these words I shall never forget: "Lord, it has not been hard at all, none of it; You've done magnificently".

'My brother had a real hunger to know the One whose love had captured him, so he was allowed to travel along the only road that leads to a deep knowledge of God—the road of testing. One of the last, but not the least of his tests, was the designation to Sinkiang. Unlike his eldest sister he was a very sociable person, and intensely affectionate, so for that and other reasons, at the first suggestion of Sinkiang his whole being shrank from it. Sinkiang had thrills for some, but none for him, except the thrill of yielding his will again to the will of God. As soon as he recognized the call as from above, it became to him, as he himself wrote, the "good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God"—acceptable to him, simply because it was the will of the One he loved. So with joy he responded to the call.'

The great problem was how to get to Sinkiang, conditions being what they were. Three routes, at that time, seemed possible. One was via Kansu, the great north-west province of China. It was slow, but had in the past been sure. But at that juncture it was closed by war. Another route was through India, and over the vast mountain range to the north. But this was a most formidable undertaking, and only possible for a short season each year. The third way was via Siberia. This was a long way round, but there was the Siberian railway to facilitate travelling over the major portion of the journey. This was the road desired, under the circumstances, and, as early as April, application had been made to the Russian authorities for permission, and for the visé of passports. But there were many wearying delays, references to Moscow, and other uncertainties. But at length the unhappy fact became clear; the Soviet officials were unwilling to assist any religious

operations. So that door was closed. What then was to be done?

As a definite Forward Movement into Chinese Turkestan had been determined upon, after much prayer and thought, it did not seem right to sit down and wait for the doors to open. As early as April Mr. G. Findlay Andrew, who had had altogether exceptional experiences of travel in China, even by air and motor, said privately to Dr. Fischbacher, 'Why not go by Mongolia?' To some this seemed like seeking for death in the desert. It was true that several expeditions had actually travelled by that route, but they had been large and expensively organized adventures. The Citroën Trans-Asiatic Expedition, for example, had as many as nine chosen mechanics, and seven tractor-type motor-cars. Dr. Sven Hedin had also crossed the Gobi Desert, but his undertaking was also most highly equipped and had scientific experts from five nations. Anything on this scale was, of course, out of the question and could not be considered. But without these elaborate and costly precautions, the risk seemed too great and therefore unjustified. Those who knew most about the desert, most realized the perils.

But Emil Fischbacher, though wholly ignorant of the route, possessed considerable technical knowledge of motors, and, as Mr. Andrew's suggestion appealed to him, he began privately to make enquiries and to work out a scheme. He sent home to his people drawings of the type of lorry he desired. In a letter dated June 14, which lies before us, he records his calculations as to petrol consumption, weight of such petrol and of necessary baggage, the type of car he favoured, the spare parts necessary, propeller shafts, back axles, crown wheels, differential mechanism, pistons, connecting rods, piston-ring valves, bolts, nuts, deditching gear, such as planks, spades, pick, chains and ropes, etc. etc. He states that three of the party can drive, that one was an engineer, another a

carpenter, and then he asks his youngest brother, to whom he wrote all this:

'Do you think we are a scattered-brained lot? Really we are anxious to get there as soon as possible, and somehow this long delay seems to suggest that we must, at least, think of other ways. There are objections to every route, but Mongolia, though it would involve an element of risk, seems otherwise the least troublesome.'

To cut a long story short, the scheme was at length officially approved, and Emil Fischbacher, because of his technical knowledge, was authorized to make the necessary arrangements *re* the purchase of cars and equipment. In some ways the venture was unique in the Mission's experience. Normally the raw recruits are entirely dependent upon their experienced missionary escorts. In this case, while Mr. George Hunter, who had been more than forty years in China, and was the only one who knew the languages necessary, was in command, he was wholly dependent upon his technical adviser, who had to take control of the transport. Mr. George Hunter had been buried in the heart of Asia for more than a generation, and had not been to the coast for twenty-five years. The young Westerners, on the other hand, knew nothing of the heart of Asia, or of what would be becoming there. The Doctor bought a football, for the health of the party in the Gobi Desert, after long hours of riding in the cars. But to anyone imbued with the spirit of old China this seemed outrageous. This one little incident is mentioned to illustrate what an adventure in grace, as well as in faith, such a forward movement was. Missionaries do not cease to be human because they have crossed the seas. If the clash of youth and old age is felt at home—a clash of two generations only—the jar of widely separated centuries is suffered between East and West.

On August 16 Emil Fischbacher was able to send home his

first letter from Peking (Peiping). He rejoiced that at length a definite move had been made. As we propose to allow him to tell his own story of the journey across the Gobi Desert, and on to the capital of Sinkiang, we shall only refer here to one or two personal and technical matters which are mentioned in his private correspondence, and not in his circular letter.

In his last letter from Shanghai he writes:

'I have long since broken all records for a long stay in Shanghai. No new worker has ever been held up so long. Fancy, I have been out over six months and slightly over four of these have been spent in this city. I can wander about Shanghai now almost with my eyes closed.'

During his stay he had been acting as Transport Manager and had got to know his way about.

Speaking of the condition of unrest which characterized China at that time, a condition which had to be reckoned with in taking the journey contemplated, he wrote:

'Three weeks ago a Mr. Simpson was shot dead, and just three days ago word came that Mr. Törnvall (one of our Associate missionaries) and three companions had been killed also. Things are very disturbed. There is also a fierce epidemic of Cholera raging, and we have just received word that three missionaries have died. They also were Associate workers.'

Then, when alluding to the fact that, for some time at least, he would have no hospital in Sinkiang, he writes—and this to his medical sister:

'I don't want a hospital now. I have had my mind completely renewed on that subject, and I am truly out for souls. Don't think I have gone batty! I really haven't. I have been given in some little sense a vision of the need of souls, and in a very small way the Lord has shown me something of the joy of

winning others to Himself. I love Medicine—I often long to get a scalpel in my hand again—but, oh! I don’t want it ever to monopolize my time. It’s a splendid weapon, and I’m sure a God-given one, but it is not an end in itself. Many of these things I should not have written to anyone but to you and Theo.’

The true place and function of medical missions has been long and anxiously debated. Since God made man both body and spirit, the healing of the body alone cannot be an end in itself. But we believe that Medicine is more than ‘a splendid weapon’. That definition would not cover the ministry of the Great Physician, nor would it cover the loving labours of a godly mother for her child’s bodily welfare. Such acts of love on a mother’s part are more than an instrument. Her mother’s heart needs must care for baby’s body. It is her life. But those loving deeds may be an instrument, reaching the soul of the child, and speaking of the love of God long before the child can understand a word. Love speaks, and always will speak, to the deafest ears and to the hardest heart. Love is of God, and it is not possible that God should be holden.

But these words of Emil Fischbacher reveal, and record, his healthy reaction against the great temptation of the medical missionary to allow the professional part of his duties to dominate his life and work. As he said, he did not want ‘it ever to monopolize his time’. It is always possible to go wrong in two ways in a work which concerns both body and soul. We must remember that we only maintain our balance in walking by a succession of acts, each of which throws us temporarily out of equilibrium. That is true in all departments of life, if we are advancing, and we were never intended to stand still.

In less than twelve months Emil Fischbacher had laid down his life by his labours more abundant for the bodies of men broken in war. With his God-given surgical skill he could not

have done otherwise than he did. Whether amid their agonies those wounded soldiers could give much heed to any spoken word, or whether the circumstances allowed much to be said, we need not enquire. Those sorely wounded men did learn something of the love of God which constrained the surgeon’s hands. Emil Fischbacher never spoke more eloquently of his Master than he did during those strenuous and terrible months. Of old, sick men sought that the shadow of Peter should overshadow them, and the wounded men in the Crimea blessed the shadow of Florence Nightingale, cast by her lamp as she passed them in the dead of night. It is the spirit that gives life; it is the touch that tells.

This crust is My body broken for thee,
This water His blood that died on the tree;
The Holy Supper is kept, indeed,
In whatso we share with another’s need;
Not what we give, but what we share,—
For the gift without the giver is bare;
Who gives himself with his alms feeds three,—
Himself, his hungering neighbour, and Me.

From this brief consideration of the spiritual aspects of medical work, we must pass to some, apparently, more mundane considerations. But we need not fear to do so. The poet Herbert has told us of the Elixir which ‘makes drudgery divine’, and of ‘that famous stone that turneth all to gold’:

For that which God doth touch and own
Cannot for less be told.

We come down to dealing with the sand of the desert—no small matter—and concerning this Emil sought God’s guidance. One expedition across the Gobi had had all their pistons and cylinders ruined because sand had got in and worn out pistons and cylinder walls in quick time. This meant the

buying of special springs, special air and oil filters. Happily he was favoured with some experienced counsellors.

'Mr. Findlay Andrew [he writes] suddenly turned up in Peking the other day, and I spent an hour or two discussing things with him. He, of course, has had great experience of such travel, though he has never crossed the Gobi. Söderbom [an old Chefoo schoolboy], Findlay Andrew and I had lunch together in one of the hotels here, and they were both able to tell endless experiences which will be of great use to me. Findlay Andrew, you may know, took a Ford truck up to Lanchow, and on the way he had completely to dismantle his engine three times. Söderbom [who had crossed the Gobi with Sven Hedin] told of an occasion when he was trying to cross the river at Etsin-gol; his car stuck in the mud and gradually sank until only the top of the wind-screen could be seen. Of course the river isn't very deep, so there was no difficulty in getting it out, but he had to wait till he could get a dozen or two camels to tug him out. Then of course his engine had to be dismantled. Well, we are going to have a proper picnic—aren't we? We are all young and we get on very well together.'

Then after warning his people at home that, owing to the strict censorship which existed in Sinkiang, he would not be able to write freely, he urges them not to be alarmed by a long silence.

Quite apart from the physical difficulties and the perils of such a route, there was considerable danger from the hands of violent men. Here is one paragraph from the Report of the Citroën Expedition, printed in the American *Geographic Magazine*. This expedition had only crossed the Gobi Desert six months before the Mission party started.

'Soon after midnight [the report states] we had passed into Inner Mongolia and stopped at an inn near the Ula Shan. The

next day a 1919 Dodge, laden with twenty-two men so deeply coated in dust that they looked like dummies, arrived, *en route* to Linghingchang. Before arriving there, three were killed, the rest stripped of everything.'

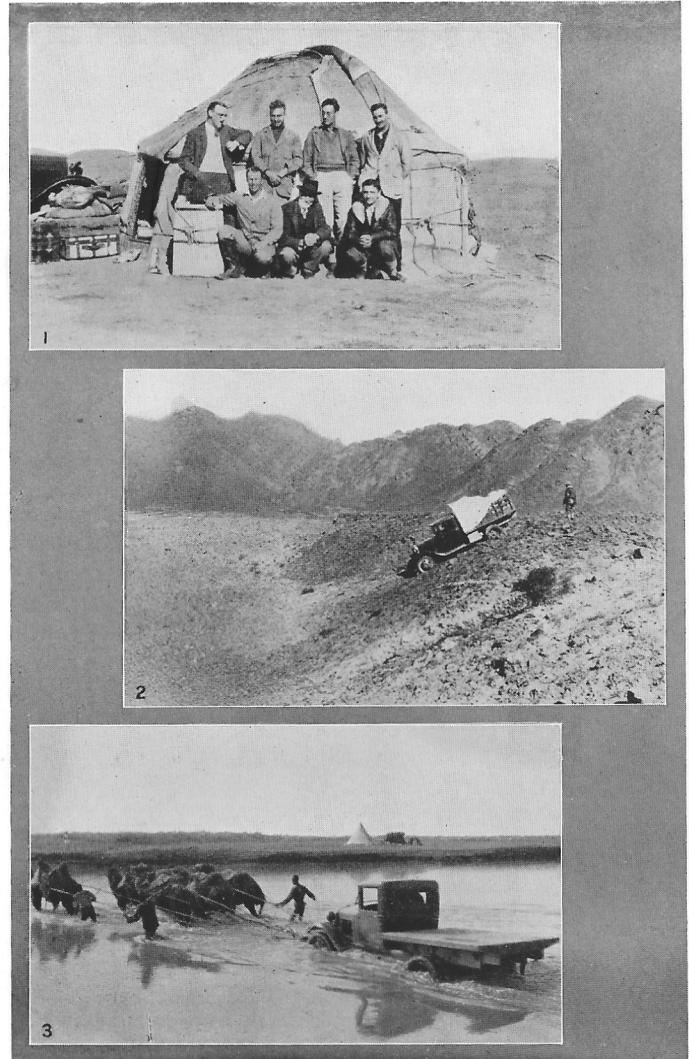
Such facts as these illustrate the dangers of the road, and they emphasize the merciful way in which the good Hand of God protected the missionary party.

Crossing the Gobi Desert¹

ON August 13, at the request of Mr. Hoste, I travelled with Mr. Hunter to Peiping [Peking], there to consult with Mr. Söderbom in making the necessary arrangements and purchases for the long journey through the desert. These 'arrangements and purchases' were many and various! Each time I thought of something which would be necessary, I put it down in a note-book. Soon the list became unmanageable, so when the other members of the party arrived we shared out the work. To Otto Schoerner was given the responsible task of looking after the Commissariat Department. Drew had charge of the Heating and Lighting Department, and Holmes was to be our Engineer-in-Chief. Parsons had complete charge of the Petrol-Oil-Water (radiator)-and-Air (tyres) Supply Department, while to Joyce fell the position as Head Packer. The latter gentleman was also our Journalist-in-Chief! Although these 'official titles' were given in a humorous vein, I can assure you that the division of labour made for very smooth running, and, I'm sure, saved us much time by the way.

Purchases for the journey included such things as a tent sufficiently large to hold seven people—ropes for packing purposes, and heavier ones for towing—picks, shovel and spade—Mongol equipment for making fires in the desert—sheep-skin sleeping-bags, etc. etc. For the cars we had very many spares—tyres, front and rear springs, rear-axle shaft and pinion, bearings of all kinds, and a miscellaneous assortment of electrical 'gadgets'. It was necessary for us, too, to carry all the petrol we would require for the journey of approximately 2000 miles. This, together with the necessary amount of oil, weighed in itself close on 4000 lb., while spare parts, food and other equipment weighed a further 1000 lb. Add to this the weight of eight hefty men, six of whom had with them all

¹ This whole chapter is taken from Dr. E. Fischbacher's circular letter.



1. The Members of the Party and Mongol Yurt
Top row—Fischbacher, Holmes, Drew, Parsons
Bottom row—Joyce, Hunter, Schoerner
2. With locked wheels sliding a slope
3. Camels towing car across the Oboingol

their worldly possessions. This will give you some idea why we chose to purchase two one-and-a-half ton trucks. There were many obstacles to be surmounted and difficulties to be overcome, but the Lord gave grace and wisdom. The chassis had to be shipped from Shanghai to Tientsin, while in the meantime the cabs and bodies were being constructed in Tientsin. On arrival of the chassis, the bodies were assembled, the engines tuned up and numerous extras fitted. Exactly fourteen days from date of order I travelled from Peiping to Tientsin and, together with Holmes, took delivery of the cars. Truly it was a remarkable performance, and reflects great credit on the American-Chinese Company.

We drove those 80-odd miles from Tientsin to Peiping and the cars ran excellently. It was my first introduction to Chinese roads and I was agreeably surprised. When I left home I thought my motoring days were done, but what a treat it was to get behind a wheel again! The cabs were most comfortable, and what with a four-speed gear-box and excellent springing, they felt little different from any light car. I assure you I just revelled in that trip. Of course much of that must be attributed to the fact that I had as companion on that journey Miss Deck (of Küwo, Shansi), who relieved me at the wheel for a time and drove as 'to the manner born'.

Really it is difficult to write this letter—there is so much I should like to tell you and just can't for lack of space. Please remember that if I indulge in something in the nature of verbiety, that between almost any two incidents recorded there are half a dozen other incidents worth mentioning. Some have to be included which, though in themselves of comparatively little interest, act as links in the chain of events.

On the evening of the 8th September the cars were loaded on railway trucks preparatory to our journey to Kalgan. What this involved will only be realized by those who, at a later date, are able to see our photos. The journey to Kalgan was unique

and most thrilling. The cars were loaded on flat trucks minus sides, and on these we travelled all the way. The scenery, especially as we travelled through the Nankow Pass, was beautiful, and as you can imagine we had an uninterrupted view of everything from our ‘carriage’. Picture us at lunch sitting on this open truck—one on the radiator of the car, one on the bumpers, one on the wing, one on the running-board, while two squatted on the floor, legs dangling over the side—unconventional—yes! but most enjoyable.

Little difficulty was experienced in getting the cars from the railway terminus to the Methodist Mission Compound. Here we were the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Söderbom and Mr. and Mrs. Williams. Of the kindness of these friends I cannot say enough—yet I must single out Mr. Söderbom Senr. for special thanks. During the three whole days we spent on the Methodist Compound, Mr. Söderbom worked almost ceaselessly and untiringly for us. His greatest task was in obtaining the necessary licences for the drivers and for the cars. He also helped us greatly in the final squaring-up with our Mongol guide, whose services we had obtained on the recommendation of Mr. George Söderbom. While in Tientsin I was informed that one of our greatest difficulties would be in getting through the Kalgan customs barrier, so I wrote to Mr. Broomhall in Shanghai requesting special prayer about this matter. Those of you who have been praying for us may notice in this letter many answers to your prayers. Unfortunately [because of the censorship] most of the things which meant so much to us I can’t even mention! Here, however, is one signal answer. It took us exactly ten minutes from the time we arrived at the customs barrier until we made our final handshakes and were on our way to this, the land of our adoption. And so, on the morning of September 13, we began our memorable journey.

The first day out gave us our introduction to Mongolian roads. At the time we were not at all favourably impressed, but

as we look at it now, I’m afraid we should almost have to call it ‘first class’. It had many windings, many bumps and many steep ascents which meant much low-gear work. The engines being new, and the bearings tight, we had on numerous occasions to halt on account of overheating. Water here was plentiful, so all that was required was a little patience: especially as we realized that the engines would right themselves ere long. Just as it was getting dark we sighted a little village (Hae-shui-ho) where we decided to halt for the night. I had heard many tales of Chinese inns, but this, the first one I had ever stayed in, was a most agreeable surprise. The cars were the source of much interest, as we unloaded our necessary articles and prepared for the evening meal. We performed our ablutions, cooked, ate and prepared for bed—all in front of an interested audience of Mongols. I was most interested to read in my Diary under date September 13, ‘Going over pass to Chang-peh-sien, the stiffest thing I’ve ever tackled—what a surface! One car went bang into a mud-hole and got stuck—first digging-out practice.’ Considering what we went through subsequently, I am afraid that first day’s travel would have to come under the heading ‘good going’. Yet when I tell you that we only did 54 miles that day, it will give you some idea of the nature of the surface. I also notice that my Diary makes mention of the fact that the inn for the night cost the total sum of \$1.60 (or about 3d. each), and that before we left we bought a sack of potatoes for 40 cents (or 5½d.). These potatoes lasted us all the way to Hami.

During the trip the cars were always designated Holmes’ or Fischbacher’s car, so, for purposes of description, I shall perpetuate the distinction and talk of Holmes’ car or my car. We always drove the same one and Parsons relieved us turn about. Actually all the younger members of the party had their turn at the wheel before we reached our destination.

The second day out we were up at daybreak, but ignition

trouble with Holmes' car held us up for a short time. During the afternoon we halted for a short time at Hattin Sumu, a small Mongol settlement. Here the Swedish Mongol Mission is doing a splendid work, and we had the pleasure of being entertained by the Mongol Pastor and a number of the school children. Towards evening we struck the camp of Mr. Larson—‘Duke of Mongolia’—a one-time member of the Sven Hedin Expedition. With him were Mr. Lattimore (author of *The Desert Road to Turkestan*) and his wife. Mr. Hunter had met Mr. Lattimore during the latter's travels in Sinkiang some years previously, so they were able to spend a pleasant evening talking over old experiences.

Next day our route led us through steppe country, undulating, but for the most part good. When I mention ‘good’ roads, you must not imagine anything in the nature of, say, the main road between Scotland and England. I notice from my Diary that I actually had the temerity to touch 24 m.p.h. during the day. This appeared such an unjustifiable speed that I very soon slowed down to our more usual 15-20 m.p.h. It was slow indeed, but the nature of the surface called for constant vigilance. An unguarded moment might very easily have spelt disaster, even on these so-called good roads. Coming over a rise, just as the sun was setting, we saw within a mile or two of us, what looked like a beautiful little city nestling in the hills. Our Guide informed us that this was Sharra Muren. The ‘little city’ turned out to be a huge Lamasery or Monastery. As we were informed that the Lamas were rather unfriendly, we pushed on across the river which lay beyond. Safely over we camped for the night, having put behind us, as the result of the day's efforts, a further 100 miles. I well remember the scene next morning when, coming out of the tent, I saw the rising sun gleaming on the perfectly white walls and ornate buildings of the Lamasery. It seemed strange to see such a place miles and miles from anywhere.

At this time the question of our petrol consumption was causing us some little concern. We had been using very much more than had been anticipated, and it was becoming increasingly clear that, at the present rate of consumption, we would have insufficient to take us to Urumtsi. So that at midday, when we arrived at Beili Miao—a very important caravan junction—I was happy to be able to obtain 50 gallons of petrol. Here let me mention that it was estimated that our requirements would be in the region of 360 gallons, but that for safety we took 450 gallons. As you will see later, even this 500 gallons was insufficient to take us to our journey's end.

Leaving Beili Miao by the camel route for Etsingol, we passed many travellers—mostly Mongols—on camels, horses or donkeys, in carts or on foot. After doing 110 miles we camped at a little place called Chindamun, where there were only two or three Mongol *yurts*.

Yang-chang-tsü Goh is the heading of our Diaries for Saturday, September 17. Our ‘official journalist’ briefly records ‘sandy, rocky, lumpy river-bed—24 miles of it’, but to all of us Yang-chang-tsü Goh is something in the nature of a nightmare. It was certainly the stiffest thing we had yet tackled. I don't at any time wish to suggest that we were excellent drivers, or in any way to magnify our achievements. I want you to see how wonderfully we were protected in the midst of surroundings where one false move might have meant immediate disaster. As evening approached we crossed a broad river-bed and entered a narrow gully the surface of which was loose sand. Both cars got well and truly stuck, and it was only after much digging, pushing and roaring of engines that we finally managed to get one car out and on to firm ground above. Then we had to resort to towing for the first time, in order to get the second car out.

Sunday was a quiet day spent in camp. We were visited occasionally by passing Mongols and from one of these were

able to buy a sheep for \$7 (or about 8s.). Cerat (our guide) cut the sheep up and cooked for us most excellent soup and mutton. I assure you we did enjoy that meal.

Let me quote from my Diary of Monday, September 19. ‘A day of disappointments—and yet how can we help praising the Lord for His goodness and protecting care over us. All the oiling, greasing and examination of accessible parts of the transmission of my car failed to reveal the cause of a rather ominous “knock” which has developed. Sometimes it appears to be in the back-axle, at other times in the Universal Joint. Off at 9.30 A.M. going slowly. What country!—never saw anything like it. Almost overturned several times. Time and time again the car was at dangerous angles. Was on ahead—got stuck in sand, but after a struggle managed to get out myself. Later Holmes’ car went deep into sand and only got away again after considerable digging and with the help of our long canvas strips. These were long strips of strong canvas, about a yard wide and with strands of rope in them—(“Worth their weight in gold” has been the consensus of opinion). After two hours again stuck, this time in mud. Holmes went round another way and towed me out. A few minutes later stuck in huge mud-hole. After half an hour’s exercise with pick and shovel got away again. The “knock” in my car became so bad that at 1.30 P.M. we decided to “quit”, after having covered only 16 miles in four hours.’

Next day we were awakened by a storm of wind and rain, and it was impossible to do anything with the car. The rain kept on in torrents till late in the afternoon, so we had to retire to bed without having got much further. In the morning, however, we rose early to find a glorious day awaiting us. After a short examination of the car we came to the conclusion that the only course open to us was to remove the back-axle and torque rod, and investigate. It was a big task, but everyone worked with a will so that by midday we had axle, etc.,

clear of the chassis. The Differential was found to be in perfect condition, but after considerable searching it was discovered that a bearing had become loose in the Universal Joint. The retaining spring was missing, which allowed the bearing to come adrift. How to repair it was rather a problem. One scarcely expected to find such an article in the wilds of Mongolia. Just that morning we had had a ‘tragedy’ in the shape of a broken Thermos Flask. Cerat suddenly pounced on the remains and removed the spring which such articles contain. By dint of a little heating and bending, etc., we were able to manufacture a small spring exactly suited to the purpose. To assemble the parts again required considerable care and involved a good deal of time, but many hands made light work and by nightfall the back-axle had been returned to its normal habitat.

May I again quote from my Diary of September 22? ‘Wish I could introduce my friends to a Mongolian dawn!—sunrise at 6.30—glorious. Some difficulty about odd jobs connected with the car, but finished at 11.30—off at 2 P.M. Good going for a bit but later few miles of “jungle”. While running along edge of dried-up river-bed, the bank suddenly gave way and rear end of car slipped over. The two boys on top made short work of getting off, but happily the car came to rest on the back-axle though at a very precarious angle. The doors were jammed, so Cerat, Joyce and I had to scramble through the near-side window. Have never seen a car so near to turning over. It all just demonstrated the Lord’s great goodness. Sometimes I almost “felt” the volume of prayer going up on our behalf. Thought it would take us 24 hours to get out, but after $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours we were able to build a road behind the car and run the latter on to it. Rather a wonderful performance engineered by Cerat. In camp after having done only 28 miles!’

Next day we were able to increase our mileage a little, but my Diary throws some light on our efforts. September 23—

‘Up at 4.15 A.M.—wheugh!—it is jolly cold, but glorious moon overhead. Later—7 P.M.—What a day!—seventy miles done in 11 hours, and of this *less than five* done in top gear! Used 16 gallons of petrol in each car. Making roads the order of the day. Surfaces defy description—never imagined a car could go through, but a truck loaded with two tons! On the 24th we were up again at 5 A.M. and off shortly after 7 o’clock. Rather mountainous country with many dried-up river-beds—later entered one of the latter which looked most inviting. Good going for several miles, and then, without warning, my car suddenly sank to the axles in mud. Jumped out only to find the other car similarly stuck. Every effort to jack the cars up failed hopelessly—jack only sank deeper as it took up the load, but the car refused to budge. To continue along river-bed impossible, so set to making a road out of the river. This involved removing a 3-feet bank and making a gentle slope up to firm ground. We cut out deep channels for the wheels and then filled these with stones and brushwood. Had visions of spending the week-end in this awful river, so it was a great moment when, after $5\frac{1}{2}$ hours of digging, shovelling, picking and carrying of stones, we finally saw the second car on terra firma. It was to the accompaniment of hats thrown in the air, and ‘Let’s go’ from our Mongol guide, that we set off again. Six miles of real cross-country stuff (all done in 2nd gear), then a further river-bed, and we were for the first time on the Gobi Desert proper. Just out of the river we made camp. Our speedometers only registered 30 miles for the day, but we were more than satisfied.

On the whole the Gobi surface was preferable to what we had had, but here the trouble was the soft nature of the ground in parts. Even when we walked on it we sank to the ankles, so you may imagine how far a two-ton truck was likely to sink. But often and often the cars, though sunk almost to the axles, still struggled on. They truly had a gruelling time and I am

more and more amazed at their magnificent performance. Patches of sand, too, gave us much trouble, and frequently we had to make long detours to avoid them. September 26 my Diary reads, ‘Utterly tired out—and it’s my turn to wash the dishes! Too tired to cook much. Wish Miss Anderson (Shanghai) had seen how much we enjoyed her tea! Had a lot of digging and pushing to-day. It is just amazing to see these huge cars sunk almost to the axles in that soft gypsum stuff (of which one finds so much in the Gobi), and yet struggling nobly on. Had one stretch of $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles “all out” in 1st gear, and this alone used something over 2 gallons of petrol.’ I mention this last fact to show you how much petrol we were using on some occasions. At this time we realized that we had *not even enough petrol to take us to Hami*. But the Lord reminded me of that text, John x. 4, ‘When He putteth forth His Own sheep He goeth before them. . . .’ Although there seemed little prospect of being able to procure petrol in this remote corner of the world, yet I felt perfectly at rest in leaving the matter to the Lord Who had so manifestly undertaken for us thus far.

The morning of the 27th saw us in difficulties right from the beginning. We were just getting off at 9 A.M. when, after moving less than five yards, I was sunk deep in soft ground. When we did finally get going we had to make a four-mile detour to avoid a nasty bit ahead of us. Later in the day we had a long stop to consider our way. Ahead of us we could see the broad tracks of the Citroën Expedition cars which passed through about three years previously. (They used cars fitted with ‘caterpillars’.) Drew remarked that it looked very much like Clapham Junction. It did! The ground was extremely soft but we managed safely across. If I tell you that immediately afterwards the bearing of my fan ‘seized’, and that on examination I discovered that the rubber of the fan-belt had almost all melted away, perhaps you will get some idea of what these cars had to stand. A note from my Diary of 28th would not per-

haps be out of place, as showing you a different side of things. 'This is the loveliest camp we've had, tucked right away in the hills. Probably not a living creature within miles and miles. Brought out the football and exercised our limbs *à la* Anking Training Home.' Of course we had plenty of exercise but this was a welcome change.

Although I have told you of many difficulties and of some hard work put in, I don't want you to think that we did not enjoy ourselves. I have often longed to be back on the road again, and many times I have heard various members of the party say 'Oh for the Gobi again'. I have not indulged much in description of the scenery—I think the others have done more in that line—but I could not possibly let this letter go without giving you one or two extracts from September 29. 'Up and away early—sorry to leave this lovely camp. Would love to stay here for a week! Went right through great mountain barrier climbing all day through gorgeous scenery. One tremendous climb up mountain-side to avoid sand—gradient about 1 in 4. My idea of the car being able to do the impossible is daily being corrected. I think the twin rear wheels which we have, have much to do with the excellent pulling power. Then we had a stretch which looked like a colossal highway—was absolutely smooth and we romped along for miles and miles. My speedometer actually touched 36 m.p.h. Can you imagine the thrill it gave us? After a fortnight of crawling, the speed appeared to us simply terrific! Later an uneven bit and a further stretch of our dreaded gypsum. But how shall I describe the next bit? It was, I think, one of the most beautiful and wonderful sights I have ever seen. We came over a rise and found ourselves in a huge "basin" surrounded by scores of little hills rising tier upon tier—one black, one green, one red, one brown, one yellow, etc. etc. Later we entered what looked like a mighty amphitheatre surrounded by little hillocks, but the "floor" of which was coloured in successive fan-shaped bands

—cobalt, pale blue, bottle green, light green, vermillion, brick red, buff, yellow, white—and I don't know what else. (Afraid I know absolutely nothing about colours—as we travelled through I sought help from Joyce, who was sitting beside me, but he was about as ignorant as I was!) But all this was no mere artifice. As one passed over the successive bands of colouring one noticed that the stones and soil beneath were actually coloured. Truly it was a most amazing sight and will long live in my memory. I have heard in the past of the "Painted Desert". Now I've seen it! We were at that time high up amongst the hills, but the road before us was magnificent. For the next sixteen miles or so the road descended rapidly, but the surface was all that one could desire. It resembled a great racing track. My Diary says, 'and then to see trees for the first time for many days, beautiful sand dunes, and a real river . . . but it is Etsingol'. It was a great moment for us as we realized that we had reached the half-way mark, and that the road beyond was a much easier proposition altogether.

We left the camel-path and made towards a group of four or five tents, which, our Guide informed us, was the headquarters of the Sino-Swedish Expedition. Our appearance caused a great stir in the camp, and we received a great welcome from Dr. Hörner (to whom we had a letter of introduction from a friend in Peiping). It was not long before we were seated on sheep-skin rugs round the 'table' in Dr. Hörner's tent, partaking of a royal feast. It was indeed a privilege to be able to share experiences with such a gentleman. During the conversation we learned that Dr. Hörner had not seen a foreigner during the previous six months. We also learned, to our dismay, that the rivers which we hoped to cross were quite impassable. At once Dr. Hörner put his twenty-five camels at our disposal and offered us every assistance possible. It became apparent, however, that we would have to remain there (Wayao Toroi) for some days, so our host put his Mongol *yurt* at our

disposal and insisted that we use it. A *yurt* may be described briefly, and rather crudely, as a movable Mongol dwelling made of felt and supported by a light wooden framework. It was very much warmer and more commodious than our tent. I don't mean by this to cast aspersions on our own tent. We have proved it in storms of wind, rain and sand, and it is proof against them all. It was to us, during the many days we used it, a real HOME. But here in Wayao Toroi we seemed to be living in the very lap of luxury. Dr. Hörner refused to allow us to cook our food separately, and insisted on us dining with him. Truly he was generosity personified. Our time spent in the Etsingol Delta was a real holiday, and I can assure you we appreciated it greatly. My Diary of October 1 is interesting. 'Sitting in my folding chair in real comfort. In front of me is a vast expanse of desert with rolling hills in the distance—multi-coloured. To my right, desert, with two small and two very large lakes in the distance. Both the latter are surrounded by tall trees. The whole merges into a great expanse of lovely rolling sand-dunes lying behind me. To my left is a great sea bordered by trees, big and little. Just a picture to delight the eyes. How cool the water makes one feel in this thirsty desert. But I'm glad I'm not dependent on that water for drinking purposes—for it is all a MIRAGE!'

But our days were not all spent in idleness. There was the question of our shortage of petrol to be considered, and also how we were best going to cross the five rivers of the Etsingol valley. We had, too, to look out for a new guide, as Cerat was anxious to return. Lying in the camp there were ten five-gallon tanks of petrol belonging to the Sven Hedin Expedition. Through the courtesy of Dr. Hörner we were allowed to appropriate these 50 gallons, and pay for them at headquarters in Peiping. That, we calculated, would be sufficient to take us to Hami at any rate. What this meant to us you can readily imagine. One thing this journey has taught me is that the Lord

has sources of supply, both temporal and spiritual, of which we little dream. Oh that we might trust the Lord more to implement His promises, and not live lives hampered by fears, and cares, and worries. With regard to the second problem there appeared to be two alternatives. One was that we should send our goods on by camel four or five days westward, while some of us with the empty cars should go round the two lakes—Sogo Nor and Gashun Nor. We would thus have avoided the rivers. We knew that the road round the latter lake was extremely bad, and that, together with the fact that it would have increased our journey by fully 100 miles, absolutely vetoed that proposal. Our petrol supply would not have allowed of such a scheme. The other plan was that we should round the first lake and thus avoid three rivers, while our goods went on a day's journey by Dr. Hörner's camels and await us at a place known as Nogandelli. The latter plan was finally adopted and it was decided that Schoerner and Joyce should go with the caravan. So on the morning of October 5, our goods were unloaded and reloaded on the camels. We said good-bye to our goods in the late afternoon and prepared to leave with the cars the following morning. We were sorry to leave the camp, but we cherish very many happy memories of our six days spent there, and especially of our generous friend and host, Dr. Hörner.

The first 10 miles of our trip round Sogo Nor were splendid going. Thereafter, for about 25 miles, we had extremely hard going through alternative belts of gypsum and sand. Although the surface was as smooth as we could have wished, yet the engines were kept more or less full out all the time. Our speed rarely exceeded 15 m.p.h. owing to the fact that our wheels were sinking so deeply in the soft ground. The day was warm and what wind there was, was a following one, so the engines boiled frequently. This necessitated numerous stops to cool off. During one of these halts we had leisure to view

Sogo Nor and to make an excursion down into the old bed of the lake. The ground in this district is almost all white—due to salt deposit—and gives the impression, from a distance, of newly fallen snow. The lake itself was a beautiful azure blue and was a sight calculated to delight the eye of any artist. It was more than strange to see a total absence of vegetation in the vicinity of the lake. This is explained by the fact that both this and Gashun Nor (Bitter Lake) are intensely salt. Animals will not drink the water and there is no life whatever in these lakes. During the first 35-40 miles we were running due north, but, having rounded the top of Sogo Nor, we turned south again. Our road took us through thick 'jungle', for in the region of the Etsingol Delta trees and shrubbery are in abundance. Sometimes we had just to push our way through. A few miles from Nogandelli, where we were to meet the others, we left the camel-path and made for the Turgot King's Palace, where we left our cards. At about 4 P.M. we reached our destination, to find Schoerner and Joyce already awaiting us. They enjoyed their first camel trip immensely, and we were glad to learn that they had had no difficulties whatever during the crossing of the three rivers. I notice from my Diary that during our trip round the lake we used about 30 gallons of petrol and 10 gallons of water, and the total distance was only something over 50 miles.

There now lay in front of us the largest of all the rivers—the Oboingol. We learned that it had gone down somewhat during the previous few days, but that it would be quite impossible for us to cross under our own 'steam'. After some discussion it was decided that we should remove our camp to the river-side and await a favourable opportunity to cross. We also arranged for the hire of camels (Dr. Hörner's having returned to Wayao Toroi) to transport our goods across the river and later to tow the cars through also.

Here we said a reluctant good-bye to Cerat, who, however,

later returned and rendered valuable assistance to us during the crossing of the river. He was a most efficient guide and a most willing worker at all times. I am afraid his successor suffered by comparison. He was an old Mongol with not too good a record and he was not over-fond of work. At first we nicknamed him Rastus, and later he was dubbed Ethelred-the-Unready. Drew thought these titles were not sufficiently dignified for him, so ultimately he became known as Sir Galahad.

During our stay at Nogandelli we were visited by many Mongols and a few Chinese. But most interesting of all was a visit paid to us by the Turgot Mongol Queen and her retainers. She examined the cars thoroughly and later came into our tent and ate a biscuit or two which I gave her. Drew produced his gramophone and played a record or two which greatly amused her. But when he put on Dame Clara Butt singing in that deep contralto of hers, she quite took hysterics. She and her retainers later posed for a photograph.

It will no doubt seem to you almost inconceivable, but we took six hours to do the three miles between Nogandelli and the Oboingol. About a mile from the former place we lost ourselves completely in the thick undergrowth, and it was quite dark before we reached the river-side. The following day—Sunday—we spent in camp. In the early evening we went up on to a near-by hill and had a time of praise and prayer. We couldn't help but sing and praise the Lord for all the way He had led us. I suppose that, if the hills could speak, they would have had to confess that they had never before heard the sound of a Gospel hymn.

But Monday, October 11, was the great day we had planned for the crossing of the Oboingol, so we were up early. My Diary reads: 'Cars completely unpacked and run to the spot ready for crossing. All possible electrical parts removed and other parts protected by waterproof sheeting. Body of first car removed *in toto*, to make it as light as possible. Goods

taken over in relays by camels—most expeditiously done! Seven camels harnessed to first car and off she goes. After three or four minutes of shouting, yelling, splashing, pushing and pulling, the car came to rest on the further bank. I thought the swiftly flowing river and the mud would have caused considerable trouble, but the next time the camels knew what was expected of them and the second car, with Parsons at the wheel, almost “flew” across. If you had visited our camp that morning you would have witnessed a scene of great activity. Mr. Hunter was baking scones, and Parsons, not far away, was attending to the killing and preparation of a sheep which we had bought for the sum of \$5. Holmes and I were busy with the dismantling of the cars. On the other side of the river Schoerner and Joyce were working like Trojans picking away the bank and making it passable for the cars, while Drew attended to the receiving of the luggage as it came over. Oh yes!—I must not forget Sir Galahad. He was sitting by the fire, entertaining some Mongol visitors, and smoking his pipe in his inimitable way!

Reassembling the cars began at once, and by midday next day we were loaded and ready for the road. We had been strongly advised to send our goods on by camel across the last of the five rivers—the Muringol—50 miles further west. The surface, we were informed, was very bad, and that it would be almost impossible for loaded cars to make the journey. After considerable discussion and prayer we decided against this plan. Can you imagine our delight when, by 6.30 P.M., we had crossed the last river, having had little or no trouble on the way. Had we taken the advice given by *everyone*, we should then have had to wait for three whole days until the camels appeared. Also we would have been involved in considerable further expense. Truly this was only one of the evidences that the Lord was indeed guiding in answer to prayer—yours and ours.

The following day, Wednesday, October 12, we broke all records, covering 120 miles. The last 15 miles were done in the darkness, our headlights being sufficient to enable us to follow the camel-path. That night we heard the howl of the wolves, but never at any time throughout the journey was our camp disturbed in any way. While in Peiping, Mr. Söderbom remarked to me that ‘The Gobi is the most peaceful spot in the world’. So it appeared to us. The quiet and stillness of a ‘Gobi Night’ is a thing which has to be experienced to be understood. We have since heard that we were preserved, especially through the latter part of our journey through the Gobi Desert, from very tangible dangers. It was only after our arrival in the province that we were made aware of the grave dangers which had threatened on every side. But the Lord’s purposes are never frustrated if we wait on Him in simple believing faith. Thus, on October 14, we actually entered the province of Sinkiang. It was for us a momentous occasion.

My Diary of October 14 reads: ‘Real wintry blasts—expect it is because we are at such a high altitude. Hard going all morning—had to be continually scouting out a suitable way—Sir Galahad not sure of himself. In the distance saw three camels and three horses—two men with them—the first living creatures seen for three days. When a few hundred yards distant, saw both men mounting their horses and making off towards the hills as fast as they could go, obviously terrified at the apparition of two huge “monsters” approaching them at such speed. As we came alongside saw three heavily laden camels and a horse patiently waiting for something to turn up—all blissfully unconscious of the plight of their masters.’ We had occasion to be within sight of these camels for almost an hour, but saw no further signs of the fugitives. Another extract reads: ‘Saw queer pyramid-like erections, ten or twelve in number. This the old customs barrier, now desolate and uninhabited, heralded our entrance into Sinkiang. Cold, bleak

and vegetationless. The only water we could procure was brackish and salty.' We halted for the night at Ming Shui. Next morning the thermometer registered 15 degrees of frost and there was a biting cold wind. It was with difficulty that we were able to turn the handles of the engines, and it was only after we had made a large fire and heated the radiator water that we were able to get them started.

Sunday, October 16: 'Glorious scene—the most magnificent camp we've had! In hollow, sheltered from north wind and within few yards of a gurgling mountain stream. On the north, the Karlik Mountains, snow-capped and towering 13,000 feet above us. To the south a vast expanse of Gobi plain looking for all the world like a mighty sea.' Could you imagine a lovelier spot in which to spend Sunday? But circumstances indicated the wisdom of moving, so reluctantly we packed up as quickly as possible and journeyed on.

Our entrance into Hami was unannounced and we were able to go straight to an inn where Mr. Hunter and the Misses French and Cable had stayed on previous occasions. We were detained there for a fortnight, during which time the landlord of the inn did everything he possibly could to make us comfortable. I was amazed at his generosity, he seemed not to be able to do enough for us. I was very glad to be able to help his wife medically, especially as he would take nothing whatever from us in the way of remuneration. On our arrival we had only about 10 gallons of petrol for each car, which at most would have taken us a further 60 miles. We did not know the exact distance between Kalgan and Tihwa, nor did we know how much petrol we would require. We took with us what we thought, in our ignorance, would be sufficient for the whole journey. But the Lord was not unaware of our requirements, and He in His love gave us what we required from stage to stage. There was no shortage. But what of the remainder of the journey? May I repeat what I said earlier in this

letter? 'The Lord has sources of supply of which we little dream.'

The journey to Kucheng was most interesting, though more or less uneventful. It was good to be on the road again, and to be allowed to take our own cars too. To those of you who are interested in the route, I would refer you to the book written by the Misses French and Cable—*Through Jade Gate*.¹ There at page 209, *et seq.*, you will find an account of the road between Hami and Tihwa. If, instead of thinking of carts, you think in terms of cars, you will have a clearer idea of what our journey was like. At Kucheng we remained for six days, after which we were able to move on again. What a pleasure that last 130 miles was! The road was excellent and our travelling time was only in the region of six hours. It was noon on the 9th November when we made our memorable entry into Urumchi, the capital city of Chinese Turkestan.

What a great welcome we received from Mr. Mather—we shall long remember it. Our arrival ended for him a long time of waiting. After our evening meal we gathered together for a time of praise and prayer. Especially did we praise God for all those, in many lands, who had so faithfully upheld us in prayer. This letter will tell you something of what the Lord did for us, but there is much that cannot be written. I can assure you all, however, that the Lord has indeed answered your prayers 'exceeding abundantly'. Mr. Mather read to us Psalm 118—how literally it expressed things as they had been with us!

And now, ere I finish this very lengthy epistle, I must draw your attention to one startling fact, revealed by this journey of ours. During the whole 1800 miles of country through which we travelled, we passed only one mission station—only one centre in which the Gospel of Jesus Christ is being pro-

¹ *Through Jade Gate and Central Asia*, by Mildred Cable and Francesca French. With Illustrations and Map. (Constable & Co., 3s. 6d.)

claimed. What of the inhabitants of the little villages through which we passed? What of the tribes inhabiting the vast Mongolian plains? What of the many Mongols gathered together in places like the Etsingol Delta? What of the larger cities of this province? 'How shall *they* believe in Him of Whom they have not heard?' 'And how shall *they* hear without a preacher?' Is not this a challenge to prayer? Does this not come as a challenge to some young people in the homelands who are seeking to know God's Will for their lives? 'Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth labourers into His harvest.' *will you, - will \$.*

Chinese Turkestan

CHINESE Turkestan, or Sinkiang to give it its modern name, is that vast portion of China which reaches right into the heart of Asia. Its area is approximately equal to Germany with France and Spain combined. Its mixed and diverse population runs to several millions. The province is remote, difficult of access, and for the greater part cut off on three sides by a wall of mountains rising from 20,000 to 25,000 feet. Towards the east is the great Mongolian desert, while to the south stand the Himalayan mountains and the Tibetan plateau. This secluded territory has been the cradle of ancient civilizations, and is associated with the great names of Jenghis Khan and Tamerlane. For two thousand years it has been held periodically by the Chinese, despite many terrible revolutions and wholesale massacres. Arid over wide tracts, it yet has numerous and fruitful oases. Like Egypt, it holds in its sands ancient treasures coveted by the archaeologist. Just about fifty years ago it was organized as a separate province under the name of Sinkiang, or the New Territory.

There are many evidences that Nestorian Christianity once flourished in these parts. Fragments of ancient liturgies and several Christian cemeteries, one with no fewer than 612 stones with Syriac inscriptions, testify to the zeal of that early Church. But Nestorianism fell before the portentous spread of Islam, as also did Buddhism in large measure, and for long centuries the name of Christ was not heard in these remote regions. Among the first to proclaim Christ in these central parts of Asia during recent times were Dr. Landsdell and Mr. George Parker, the latter one of the early pioneers of the China Inland Mission. This was in 1876. At that early period the Scriptures were circulated in six languages and distant Kuldja was reached. But it was not until 1905 that a central station was opened at Urumchi by Mr. George Hunter of the same

Mission. Some years later he was joined by Mr. Mather, and more recently by Mr. Ridley. Their centre has been Tihwa, the capital, the Mongolian name of which is Urumchi. Swedish missionaries have also laboured some 600 or 700 miles further west at Yarkand and Kashgar. The Roman Catholic Church is also busy in the province.

The population is a medley of many races, making the knowledge of several languages highly desirable. There are Chinese from every province; Tungans, who are tenacious Chinese-speaking Moslems; Turkis—known by the Chinese as 'Turbanned heads', who speak their own tongue; Mongols who are ardent Buddhists; Kalmucks, once an independent nation in Zungaria; Qazaq, Moslem nomads; Kirghiz, a separate people; Nogai, who are probably descended from Tatar fathers and European mothers taken captive when Europe was invaded by the Tatar hordes. There are also Manchus, descendants of the conquering armies settled there by the Emperor K'ien Lung nearly two hundred years ago; and numerous Russians, mostly refugees from the Soviet regime. With such a mixed audience the missionary has full scope for his linguistic gifts. But to tell the story of Sinkiang is beyond us, and we refer the interested reader to the book entitled *Through Jade* mentioned on a previous page.

For this vast and unevangelized region an advance was planned, as part of the China Inland Mission's Forward Movement. The band of men whose names have already been recorded were the first party for this purpose, while some ladies were designated to Kansu with a view to their entering Sinkiang later. And it must not be forgotten that the three women, Evangeline and Francesca French and Mildred Cable, had been the only women to undertake evangelistic work in Eastern Turkestan.

Sinkiang as a distant outpost of China has had a stormy history. Its racial and religious rivalries have found expression

in many a collision. The prolonged and bitter conflicts between the Chinese and the Moslems have, many a time, deluged the land with blood. And new elements have of late intensified the antagonisms. Widespread communistic propaganda has been a subversive factor, while tens of thousands of Russian refugees, fleeing from the tyrannous control exercised on the farming class by Soviet rule, are forming a growing and influential class of the community. Furthermore, following on recent political disturbances, formidable bands of armed brigands rove the country, terrorizing and plundering the people, and even daring to challenge the Government.

Since the establishment of the Republic the Governors of the province have been autocratic rulers, practising a policy of detachment or segregation from the world outside. There has been a strict censorship of mails, no Chinese newspapers being allowed to enter, and at times it has not been easy to enter or to leave the province.

The more recent Moslem risings appear to have been occasioned by the high-handed action of the late Governor. He had confiscated the land of the people, and defied ancient precedent. Hami is one of the three holy cities of Chinese Turkestan. It is divided into two citadels, one Chinese and one Moslem. The Turkis people have not ceased to be ruled by a succession of Khans from the days of Jenghis Khan. The mosque dates back to A.D. 1420. A year or two ago, when the Khan died, the Governor not only refused to recognize his son, the crown prince, but made him a prisoner and appointed a Chinese official in his stead. He also treacherously shot the Mongol head, a Living Buddha and his two chief men. Such injustice alienated both Turkis and Mongols and was more than enough to start a revolt. And the local rebels, if such they should be called, were strengthened by a Moslem brigand chief, Ma Chung-in, a mere youth, at the head of a well-

armed company of his co-religionists. Such, in brief, was the perilous situation when Emil Fischbacher and his fellow-travellers passed through Hami, and entered the capital of the province. Hami was then the centre of much military activity, and Ma Chung-in's men from Kansu were substantial reinforcements.

The aim of the rebels was the overthrow of the Governor, and the Governor, sorely in need of disciplined men to stiffen his irresolute Chinese troops, conscripted all the Russians upon whom he could lay his hands. He succeeded in mobilizing some two thousand men. Not to lengthen our story, it may briefly be said that the Russians raised the five-months siege of Hami, and Ma Chung-in and his company retired into Kansu. Such was the situation when the party passed through Hami, much to the astonishment of the people, and entered the capital in November 1932.

But on Sunday, January 29, during the morning service the congregation in Urumchi, the capital, were alarmed by a surprise attack upon the city by the Moslem forces. It should be stated that the local Moslems reside in the suburbs, and not within the city walls. For weeks the city was straitly shut up, but by January 17 the first contingent of the Russians arrived, others following, from Kuldja and elsewhere, until there were two thousand of them.

On Tuesday, February 21, the little company at the Mission House awoke to the sound of firing. Serious fighting had commenced between the rebels and the Russians, and after a time the rebels retired, leaving the local Moslems in the suburbs to bear the dire consequences. In Eastern fashion the suburbs were razed to the ground, and by the Governor's orders every man, woman and child was massacred. Dread days of looting followed.

By the middle of March more Russian troops arrived, indeed most of the troops of the whole province were concen-

trated around the city. These troops brought as many as 3000 camels, laden not with grain, but with loot. And to this massed assembly were added some thousands of Chinese troops who had fled, via Siberia, from the Japanese in Manchuria. These latter were well-trained men, far superior to the local Chinese forces.

Unfortunately for the Governor, he had exasperated the Russian conscripts by his treatment of them. On the other hand, the Moslems had promised the Russians to cease fighting if they were given the Governor's head. On April 12 the Russians attacked the *yamen*, made the Governor prisoner, and seized the Arsenal. The Governor, however, managed to escape, and fled over the border into Russian territory.

A new Government was now elected by a Reconstruction Committee, and, owing to Russian and other influences, the censorship was raised, and a more open and progressive regime established. But many problems remained, such as the pacification of the Moslems, the stabilizing of the currency, the opening up of communications, etc. Fighting, unhappily, was not limited to the area of the capital, but, as will have been seen in the public Press, Yarkand and Kashgar, and other centres, have been seriously involved in perilous disorders.

This brief and imperfect sketch may suffice as background for the letters that follow. Unfortunately, there is not very much from Dr. Fischbacher's pen during these troubled months, beyond the account of the journey printed in the preceding chapter. As the only medical man available, apart from a Chinese doctor trained by Dr. Cox, and an elderly Russian doctor, his hands were more than filled, labouring night and day for the relief of the sorely wounded and sadly neglected soldiers. And, naturally, most of his letters were written before the censorship was removed. There are probably only two of his letters written after the censorship had ceased which are

available, and these were written three weeks before his death, when he was overwhelmingly weary with the endless demands made upon his surgical skill. Such, then, were the conditions amidst which the following correspondence was written.

Last Letters

URUMCHI, the capital of Sinkiang, was reached on November 9, just eight weeks and one day from leaving Kalgan by motor. Of this time only three weeks and a day were spent in travelling, the other five weeks being occasioned by delays at various places. It was of course a great day when their destination was attained, and Emil Fischbacher's first letters home, after arrival, reveal his joy at finding a large budget of correspondence awaiting him. As there were from fifty to sixty letters in all, and these nearly all from his own people, it was a feast of fat things indeed.

News travels rapidly in the East, and much as he desired to remain unknown, it was not long before it was noised abroad that a foreign doctor was one of the new arrivals. His people at home had evidently been somewhat concerned lest he was thinking lightly of medical work, but within a fortnight of arrival he writes: 'You don't need to worry about the doctor business. Everybody knows now unfortunately.' There was truth in his remark, for it is always unfortunate when a medical missionary is besieged by patients before he has had time to learn the language. He found it not only difficult to secure time for study, but even to write letters.

Before he had been a month in his new quarters he wrote:

'Most of my interruptions are the result of medical work. I am doing as little as ever I can, but it is next to impossible to do nothing.'

Another of a doctor's problems is revealed by a later portion of the same letter:

'Everything in the nature of a solution [he writes] has had to be unpacked and removed to my room. Our average temperature during the past week has been from 20 to 25 degrees

of frost, and we are due to have it 20 to 30 degrees lower. Anything watery will freeze at that! Then, tragedy of tragedies, many of my surgical instruments are as rusty as could be. Shanghai is a dreadful place for rust. Even the plating in many cases is eaten right through. To get them all cleaned, greased and neatly put away took me a couple of days.’

It is evident that he had been asked why they had not travelled by aeroplane, instead of by motor, across the desert, for in his letter dated December 17, 1932, he writes:

‘An aeroplane was here a few days ago, and the cost of a passage to Shanghai was mentioned as \$1400 each, and this would only allow 30 lb. of luggage. My medical outfit alone weighed some 200 lb. To get any goods up by camel cannot be done under two years, and some goods for this place have been on the way over three years. And it is very expensive getting goods up that way. We might have considered coming via the desert by camel caravan, but that would have required at least forty camels and would have taken not less than four months. As it is, if it hadn’t been for certain circumstances we should have been here well under a month. Actually we took twenty-two travelling days. The expense, I anticipate, will come out at something like half the figure named.

‘While I am talking of aeroplanes, you will be glad to know that it is anticipated that ere long we may have a regular service between here and the coast. That will get any urgent letters to Shanghai in about four or five days. . . .

‘On Tuesday I hope to do a small operation, unfortunately under conditions far from ideal. There is no hospital here, of course. Some of the cases are in a pitiable plight. A man came in here two days ago totally blind. His left eye is completely gone. A local barber kindly scraped it for him to improve an ulcer! I needn’t say more.’

His next letter was written on Christmas Day, the first he had ever spent away from home. To few families has Christmas Day meant more, and he felt the contrast keenly. But a festive heart made up for many of the missing symbols of the feast, and in Mr. Mather he found a congenial spirit:

‘Mr. Mather [he writes] comes from Lancashire and is great sport. He is somewhere in the region of forty-six, but as young as any of us. He appears considerably younger than myself in fact. It is just amazing after twenty years in Sinkiang. Since we came, the years have just fallen off him like anything, and I know he enjoys having us here.’

As a new arrival it was natural that he should write about local conditions. Some few extracts will help the reader to picture what these were:

‘There are [he says] a good many foreigners here in the city who speak English. Mr. Kierkegaard is Danish and his wife Norwegian. He is Postal Commissioner for Sinkiang. He speaks as good English as I do. The remainder of the foreigners are for the most part German and Russian.’

On the last day of the year, the first anniversary of his leaving the old country, he writes somewhat freely to his youngest sister. The special value of this letter is that it was penned on the last occasion on which he had leisure to write about himself:

‘The date [December 31, 1932] [he writes] you will no doubt recognize. It is exactly a year ago to-day that I said good-bye to you at Victoria Station. . . . What a lot I have to praise God for to-day! Truly I feel almost overwhelmed at the thought of all the Lord has done for me during this year. I was saying to myself the other day how little I have given up for the Lord. And then the thought was borne in upon me

that it is just wonderful the Grace which the Lord gives. Had I known all this eighteen months ago, I would have thought the price too great no doubt. I would have felt the sacrifices too many. Now I have often got to stop and think: What have I given up for the Lord? Truly it is always like this. I am absolutely satisfied and truly happy. . . . I have learned something of what it is to look at difficulties through the Lord, and not at the Lord through difficulties. . . .

‘There is absolutely no limit to what the Lord will do for and through a life unconditionally surrendered to Him. I do believe fully that that is the secret—and it is fairly easy to say it—the accomplishment is another matter. It is certainly only by the Holy Spirit’s help that surrender can be brought about. Surrender, too, must be distinguished from resignation to God’s will. Surrender is not a passive thing—it is intensely active, and is based on a strong believing faith that God will accept the sacrifice and use it to His glory alone. It is one of the greatest things I am up against these days.’

The letter is quite a lengthy document, which need not be quoted here at greater length. It was just the breathings of his heart, intended only for his sister, but it unveils a soul desirous of going all lengths with God. There is revealed a certain measure of divine dissatisfaction with anything in his own life, or in the lives of others, which falls short of the highest. In argument he knew he failed, but this did not make him abate his lofty ambitions:

‘I am no theologian [he writes] and I *always* lose every argument, and am knocked out on every discussion.’

But like the hart that thirsted for the water-brooks, so was his soul thirsting after God. It was in this spirit he closed the last day of the last full year of his life.

On January 6 he takes up his pen again, and writes as follows:

‘Here goes for my first letter in 1933. I wonder how many letters this year will be headed with the above address. There is no saying.’

Just a week later, after noting how hard he finds it, after his active life as a medical practitioner at home, to settle down to the grind of study, he gives a picture of conditions and some account of what has been done. He refers to the great variety of nationalities represented in the city, and then proceeds:

‘With all these different nationalities we associate freely, and I have come into contact with every variety already. Although, as you know, I can’t speak German, I can understand practically everything that is said, and that has been a great asset. Otto [Schoerner], of course, speaks German, so we have the pleasure of entertaining quite a few people.

‘Cassaks, Turkis, Mongols, Chinese all come to the services regularly, though at present only Chinese services are held. There are also Manchus in this province. Mr. Hunter and Mr. Mather have done a good deal of translation work—dictionaries, *Pilgrim’s Progress*, portions of the Scriptures, in practically all the languages native to the province. There has never been any work done among the Manchus,¹ but it is hoped that someone will devote himself to them. As you can understand, it involves a special language, and to reach any proficiency that requires years of study and practice.

‘It is practically impossible for anyone to work in this province without having a knowledge of at least two languages. Mr. Mather speaks Chinese fluently, and also Kalmuk Mongol. He can preach in these languages, and is in fact specially interested in work among the Mongols. He speaks Turki too, though he has never studied it—just learning it by contact with the people. He also knows quite a little Russian. Mr. Hunter

¹ Manchu Scriptures have been distributed among them.

and Mr. Mather produced a Manchu Dictionary some years ago, and put *Pilgrim's Progress* into Turki. So you see a lot has been done—though if anyone feels like it, there is scope for many more at the same kind of work!

'The Church is full, Sunday by Sunday—it is just great to see it. But that isn't everything. What we want to see is a far greater accession to the number of those who fearlessly come out and take their stand for Jesus Christ. It is no easy thing here, especially among the Moslems.'

But much as Emil Fischbacher wanted to study the languages himself, he found that his medical knowledge was a real hindrance in that direction. There are a good many references to this in his letters:

'Will you excuse a letter with no news at all [he writes]. I am very, very busy, but study is *non est*. Yesterday I had a fairly nasty operation. I removed a bullet from a chest. It had passed through the right lung immediately above the heart. I fancied it had fractured a rib behind, and found it had. I found it embedded in a mass of fragments. Patient OK. These jobs are not easy without X-ray, but one is learning to do without these luxuries.'

On February 19, just three days before the rebels attacked the city—an attack which plunged him into heavy surgical work to the end—he bemoans the lack of a hospital. In a previous letter he had asked his people to imagine, if they could, a town of 70,000 inhabitants without any drainage system. He deplores the yearly toll in life from typhoid, typhus, dysentery, diphtheria, and scarlet fever, little realizing that ere many months were past he would himself be added to the number. Little too did he realize, when he penned the following lines, that within three days the need of a hospital for hundreds of sorely wounded soldiers would be acute:

'Can you imagine [he writes] a city of 70,000 inhabitants without a hospital? Try to imagine such a place and then you will have some idea, perhaps, why I am not left in peace to get on with my study. The nearest hospital is forty-five days' journey away. If I were to go there it would take over fifty days, presuming that I did not travel on Sundays. That hospital is in Kashgar, in the south-west of the province. My nearest C.I.M. neighbours are at the hospital in Lanchow, over sixty days' journey away. Half a million square miles is quite a fair-sized practice, don't you think?'

On February 20, less than twenty-four hours before the surprise attack was sprung upon the city, he writes:

'Another interruption—this is a great place! Mr. Mather has just come for me to go and see his tent. It has just arrived and is a great one. But listen to its story! Last April, perhaps earlier, I was telling you of some goods which left Shanghai over two years previously and had not yet arrived. Well, here they are at last, eight boxes in all. Most of the boxes contain tracts and Gospels in various languages, and were long ago given up as lost. They have been three and a half years on the way. They were coming up by camel through Mongolia, but were taken, by force, to Urga. They were then sent forth again, but were held up at various places owing to troubles of various kinds. Finally the caravan of many camels arrived at Tihwa yesterday; so Mr. Mather is rejoicing. That is how we do things here!'

From the letters which immediately follow, little can be gathered of what was really happening. Owing to the censorship, the fact that the city was besieged by Moslem rebels could not be mentioned. In a letter written on February 25, four days after the attack had been launched against the city, there is not one word about the actual situation. The same is true of the

letter written a week later. Its chief item was about his photographs of the Gobi Desert. He dared not send the films by post, lest they be lost, but he had no printing paper. Yet all the time he was strenuously labouring among wounded men!

Just a month later, on March 25, he writes:

'I am sorry there has been a blank of almost a month in my letters, but I can assure you it isn't on account of laziness. . . . I am very busy, morning, noon and night. I am operating as hard as I can every day. The other lads are doing the dressings, and are working like Trojans. They have been very good, splendid in fact. All the result of trauma; amputations; repairs of all kinds. I have done empyemas; put up fractures. I have six cases of fractured femur, three of fractured radius and ulna, three of fractured humerus, perforated bladder; perforated chests and abdomens. All the result of missiles.'

There was not a word as to what the trouble really was, though to anyone who could read between the lines the inferences were clear.

The strenuous life continued. The next letter is dated April 6:

'I have almost forgotten the art of letter-writing [he says]. It is over a month since I wrote any letters, except one [of one sheet only] on March 25. I suddenly received an opportunity of sending a letter by air-mail, so wrote a hurried scribble. . . . I am very, very busy—and it is not study. I am operating a great deal these days, almost as hard as I can go. The other lads are supervising the wards and call me in as occasion demands. There are now over three hundred patients. I can now understand the kind of work the surgeons had to do in France during 1914 and later. How glad I am of my experience previously. The others are working heroically and are doing dressings as big as any I ever did at home. They

have risen to the occasion in grand style. We have plenty of opportunity of getting hold of the spoken language now, though study is at a standstill. We have also splendid opportunities of reaching these people with the Gospel. After all, there is something much more important than bringing to them healing of the body. What we want is a radical change of soul; then work such as this will no longer exist.

'I have seen some stirring times since I came to China last February, but none so stirring— We are all well and happy, and all we long for is letters!'

As stated in the previous chapter, the local Government was overthrown on April 12, when the Russians seized the arsenal and took the Governor prisoner. The censorship was removed at the same time, so that subsequent correspondence was more open. Five days after the overthrow of the Governor, though hard pressed with work, he wrote to his youngest sister a somewhat detailed account. Of the letters that have come into our hands, this is the last but one from his pen, and in it he says, 'I want to talk medicine'.

'I should like to start at the beginning [he writes] and give you a long account of events, but it can't be done now. The censorship has gone meantime I think, so I long to tell you all. These have been stirring times, but the Lord has wonderfully brought us through. We have never been afraid though bullets were whizzing around. I have a large collection of bullets now, my own souvenirs of the recent troubles.

'At first I wasn't at all keen on taking any part in hospitals, because my language study was so far behind. Finally the other lads and Mr. Mather consented to help Dr. Ma, a Chinese doctor. Later, at the request of the late Governor, I consented to go and deal with any urgent or big cases. I arranged that the five lads and Mr. Mather should dress and generally care for the men upon whom I operated. All the wounds are the

result of bullets or swords. The wounded kept pouring in, and the work increased. I had a beautiful little theatre and Otto was my assistant there. I also had two Chinese boys. Any anaesthetics Dr. Ma and sometimes Mr. Mather gave. The Roman Catholic priest, who is quite capable medically, later took charge of about thirty patients and I did any operations he wanted me to do.’

He then enters into a somewhat detailed and rather gruesome account of the wounds that had to be treated. He was writing to his medical sister, but many readers will desire to be spared. The letter reveals what ghastly wounds can be inflicted by the slash of a sword, and what deadly work a bullet can execute.

‘When I went to the hospital at first [he writes] I found five compound fractures of femur—awful condition. Truly the filth and smell of the whole place defies description. Think of three hundred wounds, big and small, unattended by anyone for a fortnight, some more. It was a ghastly experience.’

The word ‘terrific’ occurs more than once in this letter, and it was a terrible and terrific experience. The letter closes with a postscript:

‘Am now in charge of a new hospital opened three weeks ago. Other lads each in charge of a ward, and I am working as hard as ever I can. No appliances, little or no medicine—one learns something in the way of ingenuity.’

The actual fighting had lasted for days, and as the city was attacked by some ten thousand rebels it was shut up for some six weeks. Thousands were said to have been killed, and the battlefield outside the city was a sight never to be forgotten.

And now we come to the last letter ever sent home from his pen. It is dated May 6, 1933, and begins:

‘These days, I am sorry to confess it, I’ve absolutely no ambition. Even the ambition to write to you all is *non est*. Fact is, I’ve been *hors de combat* for three days now, and I simply cannot summon up the energy to write.’

Though he did not know it, this was probably the beginning of his fatal illness. But to continue his letter:

‘I simply haven’t a moment to call my own. That is the real reason why I’ve been laid up. I had to go outside the city very late one night and had no time to put on suitable clothes. I was provided with a beautiful horse, and was accompanied by a Russian officer and two soldiers. Also one of the leaders of the white Russians was with us. The horse I had was a very spirited one, and he tried many times to upset his rider—he simply flew like the wind. The result was that on arrival at my destination I was perspiring freely. The evenings here are quite cold, though the day now is very hot indeed. Coming back we had to wait about half an hour to get the city gates open. There are sentries all the way, on all the roads inside and outside the city, and I would of course have been shot dead had I not had soldiers who knew the password. Getting into the city at night isn’t at all easy, but anyway during our wait I must have caught cold. Added to this was the fact that I was so busy that my sleep was quite insufficient. There are four hundred wounded in three hospitals. I was looking after 125 of the worst which I organized as a hospital myself.’

He states that many of these men had not been washed for ‘one, two or three months’ before they came into his hands, with the consequence that the condition of their wounds, and of their clothes and bedding, was better imagined than described. ‘Not one official of any kind has ever called to inspect our work or to see what we are doing.’ Worse than that, they failed to provide food for the patients, and pay for the Chinese

staff, with the result that the Chinese staff struck and left all on the hands of the overworked foreigners.

'It has let me into the inner secrets of Chinese life in three months. Apart from this opportunity it would have taken years.

'I have consultations [he continues] in English, Russian, German, Chinese, Mongol, Turki, Manchu and Cassack. To-day even two Poles came in to see me. Fortunately they knew a little Chinese. I can manage alone in Chinese for consultation purposes. I know quite a bit of Russian now, and can ask odd questions in that language, in Mongol and Cassack. In my hospital I have Mongols—Mr. Mather looks after them, as he speaks Mongol well—Chantos (Turki people) and Tungans—also, of course, Chinese.'

Overwhelmed, he writes:

'I simply cannot look after the whole population of Tihwa. [When he refused a case he was often cursed.] You might say: Why do it? But if you saw the condition of these men you couldn't but do something!'

This was the last letter, and that part of it which can be printed fails to convey to the reader what the whole story depicts. For many reasons all cannot be published. Though the censorship was removed, that does not mean that a missionary can publish all he sees and knows. His position is one of privilege. That Emil Fischbacher gave his life, by his labours more abundant, will be fully evident from what is written here.

Faithful Unto Death

THREE weeks to the day from the Saturday when Emil Fischbacher penned his last letter, he laid down his life for God and man in the land of his adoption. In the words of Christina Rossetti, if we may change a pronoun, it was

One step more, and the goal receives him;
One word more, and life's task is done;
One toil more, and the Cross is carried
And sets the sun.

Emil Fischbacher had been obedient to the heavenly vision, he had learned the blessedness of service, and the peace of full surrender. He was full of zeal for the cause of his Master and for the salvation of souls. He had been faithful unto death.

In spite of the serious indisposition to which he refers in his last letter, he had resumed his duties on behalf of the sick and dying, but five days later he collapsed and had to be put to bed. Two days prior to this, Mr. Mather had also been compelled to take to bed with fever. In that lonely outpost of Missions, Mr. Hunter, already more than seventy years of age, and the five new workers, gathered around those two sick-beds to lavish their love and their service without stint. Whether it was typhus or typhoid that had laid their brethren low was, at first, uncertain, both to the sick doctor and to his willing nurses. But all that human devotion could do failed to save the much-loved lives. Mr. Mather fell asleep in Jesus on May 24, and Emil Fischbacher three days later.

In a spot to the east of the city, in full view of the mountains, both were laid to rest, and the land for which they gave their lives will hold their dust till the great trump of God shall sound. Then shall their mortal put on immortality, and then

shall come to pass the saying that is written: Death is swallowed up in victory.

‘Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoving, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.’

‘To What Purpose?’

IT was on the last Saturday in May 1931 that Emil Fischbacher picked up *China's Millions* and read the Appeal to Young Men. It was on the last Saturday in May 1933, exactly two years later, that his service on earth ended, and he rendered up his spirit to God who gave it. The Call to leave home which came in the one case, and the summons to leave God's work in China which came in the other, with so brief a space between, can hardly fail to arrest the mind and to provoke certain questions. To what purpose was the first Call if the second one was to follow so soon? What are the true standards of life's values? Can we measure life in terms of years? Has duration small value in the light of eternity? What did Emil Fischbacher think about his service? What did his people feel about it? And what have we to say ourselves? Can we measure the things of the spirit by any human gauge? It is good sometimes to be arrested and compelled, so far as we are able, to formulate our thoughts. Was the poet right when she said:

Measure thy life by loss instead of gain;
Not by the wine drunk, but the wine poured forth?

It is interesting to-day to turn back and look again at that Appeal to Young Men which came as God's Call to young Fischbacher. Here is one paragraph which will suffice for our purpose.

‘If ease and comfort at home hold you in preference to suffering for Christ in China, then, doubtless, much of what you think to be accomplished at home will not abide the Judgment Seat of Christ. On the other hand, do the will of God, and if it means *China for you—your life will never go out. It will abide for ever in soul-saving work.*’

These are striking words, especially those we have placed

in *italics*. But is it true that if God chose China for Emil Fischbacher, that his life will never go out, but will abide for ever in soul-saving work? Is this mere rhetoric, or plain truth? Two words from the Scriptures shall answer that question. Our Lord Himself said: ‘Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father who is in Heaven’. And through His servant John He said: ‘The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever’. Do we believe this or not? One of the best-loved men in the Church to-day has recently said: ‘I believe the greatest weakness in every Church is the inability to take Jesus Christ seriously, and at His word’. Or as another writer, of a very different school, has said: ‘The truth is the Galilean has been too great for our small hearts’.

Emil Fischbacher had no misgivings about the wisdom and blessedness of obedience. Writing to his youngest brother, from the heart of Asia, and in full light of its conditions, he definitely asserted that he believed that God had guided in every detail. In regard to the delays at home, and the very varied medical experience he enjoyed, he wrote:

‘Yes, I had done a lot of shifting about, and I can’t help thinking that from that point of view the moment [of my offering] was opportune.’

Then again, in view of the journey across the Gobi Desert, he writes:

‘But there is something much more suggestive, rather *conclusive*. It is the fact of the journey up here.’

Then recalling, as one brother might to another, his knowledge and experience of motors, and the responsibility which had rested upon him, he adds:

‘Such expeditions are generally planned by men who have

had much experience of such journeys. Well, the history of our travel is sufficient to show the Lord’s wonderful leading. I don’t know of anything left behind. [To have found something missing in the Gobi might have been fatal.] Well, and I say this with some diffidence, and only to you, that I believe the Lord had delayed my Call for just such a time. It was a job I thoroughly enjoyed and I believe, humanly speaking, was in some measure suited for. Well, be that a stimulus to you! The Lord may appear to our feeble senses to be a trifle late, but even if the explanation is delayed, or even withheld, still I know that that truth will prove true.’

Such was his own testimony. His correspondence does not reveal one shadow of regret, but on the contrary much gladness to do his Father’s will. In Shanghai, in the freedom of prayer with his missionary sister, he had praised God for all His gracious leading, and had then broken forth with those artless words: ‘Lord, it has not been hard at all; none of it! You’ve done magnificently’.

But do the family regret it? Let us first turn to the letter from the sister in China, for that will not only reveal her mind, but also something of what her brother thought about second causes.

‘As I received the wire [she writes] telling that we should never meet again on earth, the Lord granted me a share in my brother’s joy, and a share in His own far bigger joy as He welcomed His loved one home; and my heart echoed the refrain: “You’ve done magnificently”. Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing.

‘While I was in Shanghai my brother and I discussed the question of second causes. They were no problem to him. In his letter received a few days ago—just after he went “Home”, though written as far back as February 5—he says: “Oh, I’m

so grateful that I have learned to take all from the Lord”. That same letter says: “You are always looking for a ‘New Thing’. I too have learned something of the blessing that a departure from the old regime of stagnation brings. . . . Isn’t it amazing, the inexhaustible store of ‘New Things’? Isn’t it just wonderful to realize that that text in Isaiah 43 is always a present and unfailing promise? Oh, how we impoverish ourselves by not laying hold of His promises? I’ve been finding many unclaimed promises in my reading lately.” Little did he dream what a wonderful “New Thing” God had waiting for him just a little further up the road!

‘From every point of view I am satisfied with God’s choice for him—thoroughly satisfied. I should not have dared to choose anything so good for him, but I am glad that the One Who loves him far better than I had the choosing. “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy Name.” “O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His Name together!” “Lord, it has not been hard at all, none of it. You’ve done magnificently.”

In that letter from my brother, received after his Home-call, he refers to the immensity of the task and the peculiar difficulties of the work in Sinkiang, and then recalls the promise of the “rivers of living water” and adds: “I haven’t been able to find any circumstances under which the supply is to be cut off. But I absolutely believe that ‘this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting’.”

‘Do you think God meant that the flow of those living waters should be lessened by the removal of two of His children from that thirsty land? I think their removal is part of His purpose for the increase of the flow; and I think it has a message for some of you. That is largely why I have shared so much with you. I make no appeal for Sinkiang, or for here—though one of my griefs is that I can only respond to one of the many calls that keep ringing in my ears; the need is so

great and the labourers so few, but I do make an appeal for my Lord, for the One Who gave His life, and is giving it now, for us. Will you give yourself wholly to Him? He will do “magnificently” for you—and “He is worthy”.

And the Father at home,¹ in a letter to the writer, said:

‘This news has indeed come to us as a great shock, but it was not long before we could look up again to the blue sky and listen to the song of the birds and hear the music of the Eternal in our souls. We are quite content to trust Him who has so graciously helped and blessed and sustained us hitherto. We have prayed much that the Lord would make Emil’s life and service fruitful to His praise and glory, and the way He has chosen to answer that petition we gladly leave to Him.’

And last, but not least, Emil Fischbacher’s youngest brother has accepted his brother’s death, and the needs of the field, as a challenge to himself, and he has offered himself to fill, so far as he can, his brother’s place. We almost hesitate to publish such personal and intimate details and only do so for the glory of Emil Fischbacher’s God. And, it should also be added, another doctor and his wife have volunteered for this remote region.

When the tidings of Dr. Fischbacher’s death reached England, less than seven months after his arrival in Sinkiang, we wondered ‘to what purpose’ this life had been poured forth. Here was a bright young life, full of promise and purpose, fitted by a long and costly education for medical service, almost the only medical man in a vast territory, and yet cut down, as it were, at the threshold of his life’s work. How easily we think of what ‘might have been’. But the word of Christ, spoken at Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, tells us that God’s estimates are not as ours, nor His thoughts as ours. And He alone is qualified to judge.

¹ The mother was seriously ill and has since died. See Dedication.

It is a striking fact that at the farewell meeting held in London for Emil Fischbacher and his companions, the last party of the Two Hundred to sail, the Rev. W. H. Aldis should have spoken on the alabaster box of precious ointment, and have emphasized the contrast between the disciple's view—'this waste'—and our Lord's estimate—'this beautiful thing that she hath done unto Me'. Liddle and Scott's Lexicon translates the word *kalos* as something fair and lovely, or morally right and beautiful. And this strong contrast between man's view and God's view still pertains, save as we see life in His light.

The fragrance of that ointment, poured forth from the broken casket, filled the house, and the gracious offering filled and satisfied our Lord's heart. But Judas, and others, indignant at such lavish devotion, said: 'To what purpose hath this waste been made?' With a terrible significance Jesus, on a subsequent occasion, spoke of Judas as 'that son of waste', for the original word used in the phrase 'that son of perdition' is the very one that Judas had employed against Mary. And what a son of waste Judas was! He incarnated the very fault he thought he saw in Mary. How had he wasted priceless opportunities! How had he prostituted unspeakable privileges! How had he profaned the highest favours! Exalted to heaven, he had cast himself down to hell by the wasting of unsearchable riches. Nowhere does Scripture provide a more solemn and startling contrast between God's and man's standards of value.

As we think of Emil Fischbacher's life poured forth we remember the lesson of the precious ointment, and recall the words of Christ, 'For whosoever shall save his life shall lose it; and whosoever shall lose his life for My sake and the Gospel's shall save it'.

It is surely a noteworthy fact that of all our Lord's sayings this is the only one recorded in all four Gospels. And this is not its only distinction. With significant variations it was enunciated by Christ on at least four different occasions—when

He commissioned the Twelve, when He rebuked Peter for tempting Him to evade the Cross, and twice as His earthly ministry drew to a close and He faced death in its most poignant form. Slow as we are to believe and understand, this is God's law of life. We ask:—To what purpose? Christ says:—It is a beautiful thing, and one that bringeth forth much fruit.

Epilogue

SORROW of saints is sorrow of a day,
Gladness of saints is gladness evermore:
Send on thy hope, send on thy will before
To chant God's praise along the narrow way.
Stir up His praises if the flesh would sway,
Exalt His praises if the world press sore,
Peal out His praises if black Satan roar
A hundred thousand lies to say them nay.
Devil and Death and Hades, threefold cord
Not quickly broken, front thee to thy face;
Front thou them with a face of tenfold flint:
Shout for the battle, David! never stint
Body or breath or blood, but proof in grace
Die for thy Lord, as once for thee thy Lord.

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI