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Missionary Work

Hannah Davies and Isabella Bird

Excerpt

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## AMONG HILLS AND VALLEYS IN WESTERN CHINA.

### CHAPTER I.

#### THE JOURNEY TO CHINA.

“For His Name’s Sake they went forth.”—3 JOHN 7.

*S.S. OCEANA.*  
*October 18th, 1893.*

It seems months since we parted from you all at the Albert Docks, and yet only five days ago we bid each other good-bye, with the prayer “God be with you till we meet again.” We were wonderfully lifted above all the pain and sorrow of parting! At one time I seemed to feel the breaking heart, but it was only for a moment. I heard Christ’s words all the clearer: “For *My* Sake and the Gospel’s”; and for nothing else in the wide world would we leave you all—but for Him, for His Sake? Our hearts cry out a joyous “*Yes,*

Love so amazing, so Divine,  
Demands my life, my love, my all.”

When the ship slowly moved away and the distance between us grew greater and greater, and you joined with us in singing:—

“All hail the power of Jesu’s name,”

fresh courage and strength came as the words rang out upon the waters:

“Crown Him, crown Him, crown Him Lord of all.”  
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Excerpt

[More information](#)16 *AMONG HILLS AND VALLEYS IN WESTERN CHINA.*

Yesterday we reached Gibraltar. We had two hours ashore, and visited the market-place and Soldiers' Rest. From the roof of the latter we had an extensive view of the bay; and the superintendent of the Institute gave us an interesting account of Gibraltar and the life there. He told us also how God has blessed the work being done among the soldiers.

Now we are steaming quietly along the beautiful Mediterranean Sea. I have heard that the colour blue in the Old Testament typifies love. To-day we seem enveloped in blue—the deep blue of God's unspeakable love. The broad expanse of unclouded sky above is perfectly blue, speaking to us of the length and breadth and height of His great love. "As the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us."—(Ps. ciii. 11, 12.)

The sky reflects its glorious blue upon the broad waters beneath, until "the depths speak forth Thy praise." And looking across the waters of the sea, away and away to where they wash the shores of dark, heathen Africa, I can see the blue grows deeper, intenser, and these words have begun ringing in my heart: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us." "His great love, wherewith He loved us." "While we were yet sinners, Christ died for the ungodly." "God so loved the *world*, that He gave His only begotten Son." We long to know more and more of the breadth and length and depth and height of the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, so that when we come into the depths of heathenism, and are face to face with dark Chinese souls, Christ's love and compassion may be reflected through us, by His Spirit, upon the sin-bound men and women of China.

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We arrived at Malta, October 20th. Soon after we anchored we went on shore with the Rev. A. Polhill-Turner (C.I.M.) and Mr. R. Porter, of Ceylon, who very kindly took us for a drive through the island. We visited many places of interest, and from the brow of a hill saw the place where

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[More information](#)*THE JOURNEY TO CHINA.*

17

St. Paul was wrecked—"the place where two seas met." There was something inspiring in seeing a place where the great apostle had been. Mr. W., one of the Protestant missionaries in Malta, begged us to make known the spiritual needs of the island, and to pray that more workers might be sent there.

\* \* \* \* \*

Early on Sunday morning, October 22nd., we anchored at Brindisi. Soon after breakfast the English mail arrived, and you can imagine with what joy we each hurried away to a quiet corner to be alone for awhile with letters from loved ones far away. Is it to be wondered at that many an eye was full of tears as we read the last loving messages from those left behind? Every letter breathed forth the prayer that we might realise the presence of God with us. This we do indeed, and it keeps us above all the loneliness that otherwise might come. "Alone, yet not alone; for the Father is with me."

*S.S. OCEANA. SUEZ CANAL.**October 26th, 1893.*

ON deck last night, about 8 p.m., we watched the lights of Port Said growing clearer and clearer. Gradually we drew nearer, passing many large steamers, until at length we anchored exactly opposite the town.

As soon as we were still the coaling began. Port Said is said to be the largest coaling-station in the world—millions of tons of coal being shipped here annually. The coal-boats were alive with little black-faced Arabs, screaming and hooting and hopping about, performing all kinds of antics. Fairly alarmed at their howls and screams, we inquired the reason of a sailor standing by. "Oh, it is all right," he answered; "they are always like this. But they are right-down quick workers all the same." And so indeed they proved themselves. We made a very short stay at Port Said, and about midnight entered the Suez Canal. What a strange sight met our view on coming on deck this morning! On either side nothing but the desert, dry and barren. Moving very slowly we have plenty of time to examine our surroundings; but very soon they become monotonous, for

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Excerpt

[More information](#)18 *AMONG HILLS AND VALLEYS IN WESTERN CHINA.*

everywhere there is sand—sand, almost nothing but sand. What a picture of our human heart—without God, a desert ; with God, “a watered garden !”

The canal is eighty-seven miles from Port Said to Suez, and we were about eighteen hours passing through it. Slow motion is necessary, as in some parts the canal is too narrow, and the volume of water too small to allow vessels to pass each other. There are stations situated at certain distances down the whole length of the canal, forming sidings ; and at each of these every vessel must stop until notice is received from the next station that the little run between the two sidings is clear.

Soon after entering the canal we passed the Kantara Siding, which is on the old road to Syria—the very route taken by the Patriarchs when they went down to Egypt. About 10 a.m. we reached Ismailia. This forms the central office of the Canal Company, and we made a slightly longer stay here, and a few passengers left us.

\* \* \* \* \*

*S.S. OCEANA. ADEN.**October 30th.*

“The shadow of a great rock in a weary land.”—Is. xxxii. 2.

“That Rock was Christ.”—1 COR. x. 4.

For the last three days we have been steaming down the Red Sea. The heat has been great and has wearied us much.

Early this morning we watched the rocky coast of Arabia getting clearer and clearer as we neared Aden. It was all rock, with no sign of vegetation anywhere—all dry, barren rock. At 9.30 a.m. we anchored opposite Aden, which is situated at the base of a high, rugged rock. Our kind friend, Mr. Porter of Ceylon, again took some of us on shore ; the time was too short to allow of our going to the far-famed tanks which most visitors to Aden like to visit ; but we enjoyed seeing all we could of that part known as “Port Aden.” We stood awhile in the centre of the town and watched the crowd around us. There were old, rugged-looking men with bright-coloured cloth wound round their limbs, and white or scarlet turbans tied on their heads.

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Excerpt

[More information](#)

## THE JOURNEY TO CHINA.

19

Some of them, too, had their hair powdered with lime—this being considered a mark of distinction and honour. It gives the hair an unnatural whiteness which contrasts strikingly with the generally jet-black hair of the Africans. There were young, intelligent-looking men in the crowd too, and laughing, happy-faced boys who were rubbing their teeth with some strange plant. One was selling sandals, and, seeing we noticed them, at once became eager to dispose of them, assuring us that “de English put dem on dree hundred years ago when they were savage!” Even this, however, did not induce us to invest in a pair.

We saw very few women, only about half a dozen, crouching down by a wall, all hidden away in their black shawls. We heard they were from Zanzibar, indeed, nearly all the inhabitants of that part of the town are Africans.

An hour or two later the *Oceana* was again on her way eastward; and for awhile we could at the same time see the coastline of Africa on the one side and that of Arabia on the other. We prayed that the day may quickly come when “Ethiopia shall stretch forth her hands unto God,” and that many more such men as Ion Keith Falconer might be sent forth to carry on God’s work in Arabia. There is a great need there of men, “strong (Gr., endynamited) in the Lord”; for if the rocks around are hard and barren, the hearts of the people seem so too. But “it is not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord.” Who will go with the Lord there? Surely there are His “other sheep” to be gathered in from Arabia’s sandy desert:

“A cry as of pain,  
Again and again,  
Is borne o’er the deserts and wide-spreading main;  
A cry from the lands that in darkness are lying;  
A cry from the hearts that in sorrow are sighing;  
It comes unto me,  
It comes unto thee,  
Oh, what!—oh, what shall the answer be?”

It was with much regret that we heard on Saturday that we were due to arrive at Colombo on Sunday. We thought of all the extra work it would entail—transhipping

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[More information](#)20 *AMONG HILLS AND VALLEYS IN WESTERN CHINA.*

and coaling, and the many temptations that always attend Sunday landing.

We arrived soon after breakfast, and as we could not go ashore without hiring boatmen, we remained on board.

Ere leaving the *Oceana* in the afternoon, an opportunity was given for a little work among the native traders who came swarming on board, an opportunity which, under other circumstances, we should probably have missed. As usual, on anchoring, innumerable small boats came alongside our vessel, and, in less time than it takes to write, the deck was crowded with Singalese traders trying to persuade us to buy their wares. Presently one of them came up to Miss Tolley and me, and asked us to buy. Deeply interested in our reply, he squatted down in front of us, saying: "You Christian, you no buy Sunday—me know Jesus Christ." We found he was a Mohammedan, and had been to a Mission School. We had a long talk with him and others who gathered round.

Later in the afternoon, when we had transhipped to the *Rosetta*, they came again, seven or eight of them, to hear more, and Miss Tolley taught them to repeat part of John iii. 16. In the evening, when they had left us and we stood by the ship's side, watching the setting sun light up the broad waters with a golden radiance, we prayed together that we might see those dark Mohammedan faces again, irradiate with glory in the presence of the King.

PENANG.

*Friday, November 10th, 1893.*

Since last Sunday we have been journeying due East across the Indian Ocean. This morning we came within sight of land. It was Prince of Wales' Island, and as we drew near Penang we were struck with the dazzling beauty of the place. It is set in a wondrous setting, with the mountains behind and the blue sea at its feet.

We anchored at 9.30, and found the landing-stage thronged with Chinese (who number about one-third of the population of Penang)—real Chinamen, with their dark, copper-coloured skin, shaven heads, and pigtails arranged

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Excerpt

[More information](#)*THE JOURNEY TO CHINA.*

21

round their heads in strange style, black shining eyes, and flat, but kind, faces. How unattractive they are! And yet, in spite of it, through God's grace our hearts went out to them.

From Mr. and Mrs. McD., English missionaries in Penang, we received much kindness. They took us for a long drive of six miles through beautiful country, to see the waterfall for which Penang is famed. On either side were groves of cocoanut-trees, oleanders, fig, orange and lemon-trees, fine lace-like acacias with their long black pods just bursting to scatter their seeds, tall banana-trees laden with heavy clusters of fruit, and everywhere there was a rich undergrowth indescribably luxuriant.

On the roadside were gorgeous masses of brilliantly coloured flowers; and very soon we had gathered beautiful bunches of ageratum, lobelia, ipecacuanha, white Passion flowers, rich yellow gloxinias, and the deep crimson "Glory of the Forest," and mixed with them sprays of beautiful ferns, creepers, and grasses.

Penang itself seems to be quite a Chinese town, with narrow, irregular streets, the shops on either side having long Chinese signboards hanging outside, covered with the unknown hieroglyphics that we long so much to understand.

Funny little Chinese children swarmed everywhere, with their small round faces crowned by a small tuft of black hair sticking up on end at the back. What queer little mites they were, running hither and thither, their brown bodies covered only by a tiny garment tied round their waists! The Malay children are very pretty, with abundance of curly, black hair and bright, intelligent faces. If dressed at all, it was in gaily coloured silk scarves, their small ankles being decked with bangles, and their waists and necks with silver chains, their noses and ears being also sometimes adorned with rings. And the Chinese women? Yes, we saw them, too; some were sitting in the sun making shoes, others were carrying water from the river, and one we saw was busy washing clothes at a pump, the clothes on the stone ground, the woman rubbing them with her feet.

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[More information](#)22 *AMONG HILLS AND VALLEYS IN WESTERN CHINA.*

As we thought of the awful darkness of their hearts,  
we felt drawn to these poor women in pity and longing.  
For Jesus' sake we long to become Chinese unto the  
Chinese, that through us He may, by His Grace, save some.  
"The love of Christ constraineth me."

"And with a rush the intolerable craving  
Shivered throughout me, like a trumpet call ;  
Oh, to save these! or perish for their saving!  
Die for their life! be offered for them all!"

\* \* \* \* \*

Passing through the beautiful gardens of Penang, which  
are laid out with brightly coloured flowers, we hastened on  
to the waterfall and the tropical woods beyond. On either  
side of us were shady groves of feathery palms, with here  
and there a tall cocoanut-tree stretching up towards the  
blue sky. Suddenly we came in sight of the great waterfall  
we had come to see. For a few moments we watched the  
clear waters dashing and splashing down from one rock  
to another. The sun's glory was reflected in rainbow tints  
on the water, and the fine crystal spray rose in clouds to  
fall again on the lovely graceful trees and ferns that seemed  
to vie with each other in nestling closest to the waters.

In the woods and along our path, flowers and ferns, which  
we treasure with such care in England, were growing in their  
rich, native beauty.

"The earth is one vast temple,  
Made for worship everywhere ;  
And flowers are the bells in glen and shade  
That ring the heart to prayer."

They rang our hearts to thanksgiving and praise as we  
reluctantly turned away from the waterfall and slowly wandered  
back through the palm-woods to the gardens and our *gharries*.  
We then drove back to Penang, and after tea with Mr. and  
Mrs. McD. we returned to the vessel.

"Heaven above is softer blue,  
Earth beneath is sweeter green,  
Something lives in every hue  
Christless eyes have never seen.



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[More information](#)*THE JOURNEY TO CHINA.*

23

Birds with gladder songs o'erflow,  
 Flowers with deeper beauties shine,  
 Since I know as now I know,  
 I am His and He is mine."

\* \* \* \* \*

*S.S. ROSETTA. INDIAN OCEAN.*

One evening lately we stood looking over the sea, talking of you and of the land to which we are going. Every few moments the great dark billows would rise higher and higher, until at length they burst into a sea of phosphorescent light. It was exquisitely lovely, and seemed as if millions of stars had fallen round one spot, lighting up the surface of the dark waters with dazzling beauty.

I thought of the promise of God, that "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea."

That time *will* come, and the darkness of heathenism will burst into a sea of heavenly light; and when "the day breaks and the shadows flee away," and God's children shall have "gotten the victory" and shall stand upon "the sea clear as crystal," there will then be millions of precious souls from China, and India, and Africa, and all heathen lands to shine as the stars for ever in the presence of God.

*CHINA SEA.**November 15th, 1893.*

Since leaving Singapore last Sunday evening, we have had very rough weather. The captain had warned us of heavy seas ahead, but we were hardly prepared for all we have passed through. On Monday and Tuesday the wind was very boisterous, and most of us were on the sick list again. The "Daily Light" texts on Tuesday evening seemed specially meant for us. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore." "I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me."

About midnight the storm broke upon us in all its fury, and for three or four hours it raged louder and louder. For some time Miss R. and I, who share a cabin, lay clutching the rails of our berths and feeling every instant in imminent

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Hannah Davies and Isabella Bird

Excerpt

[More information](#)24 *AMONG HILLS AND VALLEYS IN WESTERN CHINA.*

danger of being tossed out. One thing I remember of those hours of peril was the clear view I had of the little storm-tossed boat on the Sea of Galilee, and of Jesus coming to the frightened disciples, in the fourth watch of the night, walking on the sea. I could almost see the rough, stormy waves fall down to quiet, still *rest* as His feet touched them. What a calm behind, where His feet have trod! What a storm ahead, where as yet He has not been!

About 4 a.m. there came a huge, roaring billow bursting with a tremendous dash against the vessel. It was followed by a noisy dash of broken glass and china, and many shouts and screams from all parts of the ship. We were nearly thrown out, and could lie still no longer. Turning up the light, we found our cabin a perfect wreck. Everything piled in confusion on the floor, our cabin boxes hurled forward, the water-bottle and washing-basin smashed in pieces. Wrapping ourselves up, we went into the adjoining cabin to our friends, Miss Walker and Miss Williams, also missionaries to China. Outside, the tempest raged, the wind roared like thunder, the waves tossed high; but inside that little cabin as we read together the precious promises of the 91st Psalm, and in prayer committed ourselves and all of you afresh into God's keeping, "a great calm" and "the peace which passeth understanding" flooded our souls.

With you in England it was about 9 or 10 p.m., and we felt many of you would be praying for us then.

About 5 a.m. there was a slight lull, and we heard that the ship had been turned round. Having gone back some distance she was steered forward again, keeping clear of the storm.

A good deal of damage had been done, and part of the Hong-kong mail destroyed; a large amount of china and glass was smashed, and iron bars on deck were wrenched by the force of the tempest.

We are tossing about still on a rough sea, and having a sorry time *physically* speaking, but our hearts are full of praise to God for His wonderful deliverance. We have proved that He is indeed able to make "the depths of the sea a way for the redeemed to pass over."—(Is. li. 10. R.V.)