

A LETTER FROM CHINA

DEAR SISTERS:—

NOTHING tends to draw Christians, of whatever name, together more than Foreign Missionary work. This, with the fact that your Editor is my very dear friend, encourages me to tell you how the money and the site for the two splendid new hospitals now being built in Swatow, in connection with the English Presbyterian Mission, have been secured. This I do in the hope that your faith may be strengthened, and that prayer for medical missionary work may be increased.

Nine years ago I noticed an account of a Christian man in Toronto who was carrying heavy responsibilities in connection with the China Inland Mission, who depended almost wholly upon prayer. As I read of his praying for definite sums and receiving just what he asked, I resolved to do likewise. My husband, who was then, as now, in charge of the Swatow Mission Hospital, had long been feeling the need of a hospital for women. Some years previous to this, a noble and prosperous Chinese merchant, then an idolater, had placed in the Bank on interest a generous donation towards a Women's Hospital, on the condition that some provision be made for better class Chinese women. One of the ladies of the Mission who had gone home on furlough, had been asked by my husband to see if she could raise sufficient funds with the sum already promised, to build such a hospital. Months passed bringing no response. On the occasion referred to, encouraged by what I had just read, naming the sum that seemed sufficient, I pleaded that if it seemed good and for God's glory, this sum might be given. The very next mail proved the truth of the promise, "Before they call I will answer." The money began to come in, and within a year the whole amount at that time thought sufficient, had been secured, followed by an urgent request from the Society to "arise and build."

But now we had to face a new difficulty. No suitable site was available. This was a "lion in the way," more formidable than we had dreamed of, which was in the form of a very anti-foreign mandarin, who again and again refused my husband's urgent appeals for a bit of foreshore adjoining the general hospital, as the only suitable situation. Years passed with our desire still unfulfilled, till two and a half years ago a medical lady was sent out for the Women's Hospital. The situation had become acute—something must be done—but what? Very earnestly we prayed, assured now that the burden of prayer for this matter had fallen upon many others. Presently the news came that Li-Hung-Chang was coming to this Province as Viceroy. Li had for years been a warm friend of medical missions from the medical side. A daring idea suggested itself to my husband. The coveted bit of foreshore was Government property. He would

appeal to Li for it! When Li opened his Yamen just after the Chinese New Year one of the first petitions laid before him was this request. We cannot here give the whole story with our varying alternations of hope and fear, at one time settling to seeming utter hopelessness. Still we prayed, feeling assured that our prayers were to be answered—and they were! One of Li's last acts before leaving Canton for the North, that terrible summer of 1900, was to stamp the deeds for the long coveted site! We had received more than we had asked, or had even dared to hope for, but prices had gone up and the original sum was far from sufficient for the building of the Women's Hospital. In the meantime, however, profits were realized from teaching Chinese women a new industry, not only enough to furnish the Women's Hospital and a new hospital for the men, but to help in the building fund of each. Already the General Society at home had made a grant for rebuilding the men's hospital, and a titled friend of the mission had supplemented it by a generous donation. A few weeks ago, a merchant friend of the foreign community, on retiring from business, donated \$1000 to the building fund of each hospital (in all about £200), saying that he and his wife wished to help the poor of this district, and they knew no better way than through the hospitals. To-day our Chinese friend has crowned his liberality of over twenty years by giving us another \$1000, that the Women's Hospital, to which he had already given \$5000, may lack nothing in efficiency.

Now, instead of the old buildings, nearly finished are two fine hospitals, sufficient for all present needs, with ample accommodation for 300 in-patients, and at a cost when done of little less than £4000. As we review the past, we feel that God has indeed answered our prayers, and we believe He will use these hospitals not only for the physical benefit of multitudes, but for the bringing of many into the Kingdom. But best of all, we count the conversion of our Chinese friend. Six years ago he declared that though he believed our teaching was true, yet because of his business connections and his domestic entanglements, it was an utter impossibility for him to become a Christian. About that time the hospital Bible-woman, a friend of the hospital, and one who had shared in his benevolence, speaking of his helpfulness to all in distress, said, "he lacks but one thing to be perfect, and that is to become a follower of Christ." Devout friends at home became interested in him, and prayer began and continued to be offered for his conversion, until two months ago he was baptized and received into the Church. The story of how he was won to Christ is a very wonderful one, and is closely connected with the hospital work. And now will not you who read this pray with us that our friend, Houteng Tai, may have the joy of seeing his whole family won for Christ.

SOPHIA L. LYALL,
Swatow, China.