

THE MISSIONARY KNOCKER

By JAMES RYRIE

ALL persons interested in Christian work are confronted, from time to time, with the problem of reconciling the favourable reports of the missionaries, regarding the foreign work, with the unfavourable reports of many of those who have lived in the same fields and who are supposed to have had exceptional opportunities of judging the work.



A Native of Siam. One of those who ought to be civilised.

Speaking personally, whilst I have had unbounded confidence in the integrity of these missionaries, I must confess to having had, at times, a subconscious impression that possibly they were not entirely impartial in their opinions, and that the success of the work accomplished loomed up larger in their view than the facts really justified.

A recent visit to the mission fields of India, China and Japan, has afforded an exceptional opportunity of enquiring into the facts at first hand, and, has not only impressed me with the absolute truth of these reports made by the workers, but has also enabled me to classify, once for all, the average missionary "knocker" as unreliable and unjust.

Genuine, honest criticism is entitled to the highest regard, even though one may not agree with the results arrived at; but, for the "knocker" who maliciously or ignorantly, goes out of his way to "knock" such work and workers, deserves nothing but sorry contempt.

There is one thing to which angels, men and devils are alike entitled, and that is Anglo-Saxon fair play; but unfortunately, this is the very quality which is too often either entirely withheld from the much-maligned missionary or doled out to him

in mean and beggarly homeopathic doses by "Globe Trotter" and permanent resident alike.

A few instances which came to my personal knowledge, will illustrate the case:

Upon the steamship *Coronia*, on our way to the East, by way of the Mediterranean, there sat at an adjoining table a gentleman from America, who, in the course of conversation said:

"It has been found that it costs \$20,000 for each heathen converted. The beggars are not worth it; I have no use for foreign missions."

This surely is commercialism gone mad. Apart entirely from the deplorable ignorance as to the financial aspect of the question, and the utter disregard of the query, "What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul" no cognisance whatever is taken by him and his kind of the gradual improvement in the physical and moral conditions of these people through evangelical and educational work, nor yet of the alleviation of their sufferings through medical and philanthropic agencies.

The work done by our representatives upon these mission fields in this direction alone, even though there were no future life, is worth all, and more than all, that has been expended since missions were first established.

Whilst sitting on the hotel balcony in Benares, supposedly the holiest, and certainly, one of the most dirty cities in India, I dropped into conversation with an Englishman, who also held mission work in the same poor esteem.

In the course of the conversation he said that he had exceptional opportunities of forming a correct opinion, "inasmuch as my business takes me up and down the country for six or seven months every year. When I come to a town or village," he said, "and see a very fine house with ample verandahs and heavy pillars, set among a lot of thatched mud huts, I know a missionary lives there, and when I see a spanking team coming along the road raising a cloud of dust, I know 'you bet,' that a missionary sits behind it. These horses do not last over six or seven months in this climate anyhow, but that does not make any difference. As soon as they are played out, they are tossed aside and another pair ordered up. Now," he added, "I am a churchman myself, and believe in religion all right, but these fellows have a religion that is better suited to their climate than the one you are bringing them. Why don't you look after the people at home instead of bothering about these?"

As this opinion was emphasised by the ordering of a "Whiskey Peg," whatever that stands for, this opinion was intended to carry conviction.

Upon being asked if he had ever visited one of these mission fields, he admitted that he had not. He insisted, "I am doing business constantly with people who live among them and are much better able to form an opinion as to their worth than those who are simply spending a few days among them."

He was surprised to hear that Baptist missionaries, and presumably those of other denominations also, entered the service at \$800 a year and, under the most favourable circumstances, never received more than \$1,300. He had to admit that, after providing for a family, importing, in some instances, many of their necessities from America or Europe, providing requisite servants, sending some of their children home to be educated, there certainly could not be very much left for the purchase of "spanking" teams, of which we had not seen even one in all our wanderings.

Again: Upon the steamer from Tien Tsin to Kobe, we made the acquaintance of a most estimable medical missionary and his family, who were returning to America on furlough. Upon this steamer there travelled a military officer who was also going home. In the course of conversation we found that although coming from the same city, having lived side by side for at least three years, there was not even a speaking acquaintance between them. Upon expressing surprise at this, naturally supposing that two native-born Americans would be glad of each other's acquaintance in such a far-away place, we were told, "Oh, that is not to be wondered at, because he is in the military service, whilst we are in mission work." No special emphasis whatever was laid upon the fact that their respective wives were not even upon calling terms.

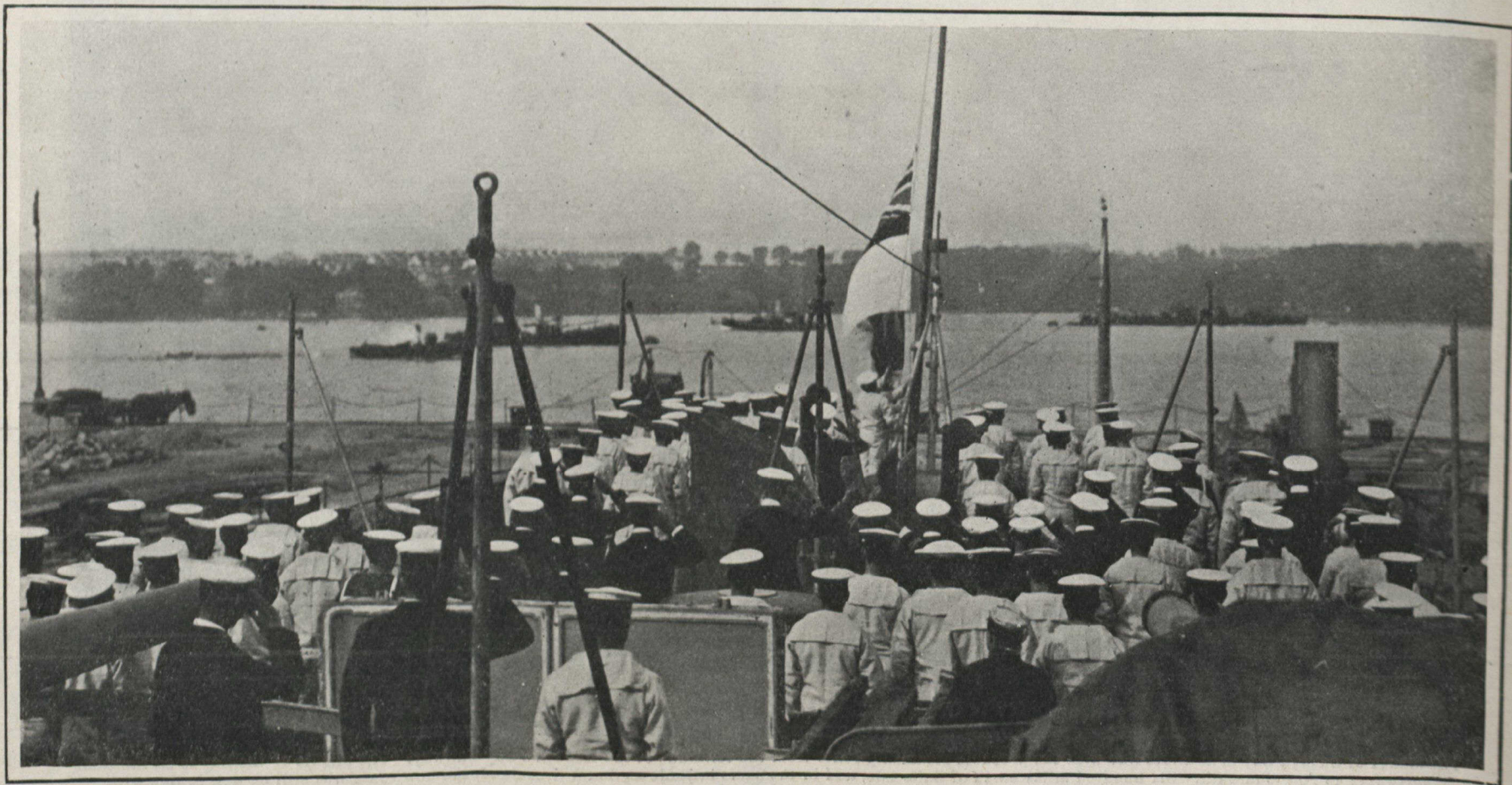
Upon the steamer from Shanghai to San Francisco there travelled with us a native Indian magnate and his wife and daughter. Upon the same steamer also, travelled a very wealthy American lady who had been touring India in an automobile, and who was overheard offering the following advice to this young native woman:

"Now, when you go to Europe, they will be sure to try and make you change your religion. I would not do it if I were you, for your religion is just as good for you as mine is for me."

We have no doubt as to the truth of this latter statement, as it certainly would be a very poor religion which would not rise to such a low standard.

This same woman was overheard denouncing foreign mission work, of which, she said, she had been making a study for some twenty years, but admitted that although she had been touring through India, she had not so much as called upon any one of the workers to see for herself the true condition of affairs.

FIRST RAISING OF THE COLOURS ON THE CANADIAN SHIP "NIOBE"



When the Canadian Flag was first hoisted at Devonport the officers and men saluted. The ship's band played "God Save the King," and "The Maple Leaf."