

'Did you hear him too?' replied Quentin. 'I wondered at the time why he let himself go so openly, especially in front of all those tappers. Some one is sure to report it!'

'But three hundred trees, Sandy,' he continued. 'It seems like a bad dream.'

Quentin thought of the fifteen years that had gone into the making of those particular trees, and he felt sick. It was always regarded as a most heinous crime to damage a rubber-tree. Even the toddlers on the estate knew that! The terrorists knew it too, for many of them had been tappers before they went into the jungle. But they trampled knowledge underfoot, that they might taste the sweetness of revenge!

After Sandy had departed, Quentin gulped down his coffee, which was, by then, quite cool. He felt downcast at all the bad news. Somehow this terrible day must pass, and surely nothing more would be forthcoming at present. These things usually came in waves, and then a spell of peace.

At half-past three that afternoon, he was in the estate office fixing up some records, when he looked up to see a European going in to see the manager. Quentin looked, and looked again. Surely his eyes were not deceiving him! No! It *was* Michael Jones his shipboard acquaintance.

After about ten minutes he came out again, accompanied by the manager. They were coming in his direction. Quentin jumped up and advanced with a smile and out-stretched hand,

'Well, well, Michael, this is a pleasant surprise!' he said. 'How ever did you get here?'

'Quentin Ross!' exclaimed Michael 'I've been hoping to see you ever since we discovered that this was "Golden Eagle Estate".' 'You and Ross seem to have met before,' said the manager throwing away the end of a cigarette. Michael turned to him with a smile. 'Yes,' he said. 'We came out from England on the same ship a month or two back.'

The manager turned to Quentin, 'Mr Jones would like to take a Bible lesson in the Chinese School each week. As far as I am concerned there is no difficulty. Take him round to make arrangements with Mr Wong, will you?' Then turning to Michael, he said: 'There's one thing, Mr Jones. You'd better

have a bodyguard. This place isn't exactly a Sunday School picnic just now. You know the risk I suppose?

'Oh, yes,' replied Michael. 'It's very good of you to suggest it, but if you don't mind, I would much rather not have a bodyguard. You see,' he continued, 'I'll only be a visitor to the school, and they'll soon come to recognize the van. I don't mean anything to the terrorists; small fry, you know!' He laughed.

'That's as may be,' replied the manager, 'but we are responsible while you're on the estate. If you are adamant about not having a bodyguard, we must have it in writing. In the event of anything happening, we would have to be absolved from blame.'

'Certainly,' said Michael politely, 'I will see to it.'

The night before, at the mission house Michael and Valerie had discussed at length this venture on to the estate. They had studied statistics, and knew that many of the New Villages now had some kind of a Christian witness. Though the response to the Christian message had so far been small, yet the light had been placed there, and any who wanted to know the Way could do so.

But on some of the larger estates there lived a thousand labourers, and many, many smaller ones had their quota of unreached people. Thousands and thousands of Chinese and Tamils who had never yet had a chance to hear the Word of life. Michael and Valerie had reached the conclusion that the estates constituted the greatest untouched mission-field in Malaya! And they resolved to do what they could in their own district. Hence Michael's visit to see the manager.

Michael and his wife had also discussed the vexed question of a bodyguard, and Valerie felt a little apprehensive of the dangers her husband might be called upon to face. But as Michael pointed out, he would much prefer to go completely unarmed. This would not provoke the terrorists, and besides, it would be a testimony to all and sundry that God does protect His children. It was not a rash and fool-hardy decision, and Valerie saw the wisdom of it. Nevertheless, she was always relieved to see Michael arrive home safely on 'estate days'.

The van which Michael had referred to when speaking to the manager, was one which had been given to them by Christian friends at home. Realizing that Malaya had excellent highways,

and that wide areas had to be covered in tropical heat, understanding friends had made the van their contribution to the Lord's service. Michael and Valerie had felt the van another reason why they should attempt the estate work.

Now, as the manager returned to his office, and Quentin put his books away, he said to Michael,

'Whoever would have thought of seeing you in these parts, Michael?'

'Yes, it is a coincidence all right,' replied Michael. 'We had no idea where we would be sent when we last saw you.'

'You are near here?' said Quentin.

'Yes, we're along the road a few miles, at Sungei Bahru,' replied Michael. Then he added cordially: 'You must come and see us. A tiny house you know, but a very warm welcome, Quentin.'

'Thanks, I'd like to,' said Quentin. 'How's Jocelyn?' He had become very fond of the lively little girl on board ship.

'Oh, she's fine,' replied Michael. 'Still drawing the crowds!' He laughed. 'By the way, Quentin, prepare to be mobbed and inspected inch by inch when you come amongst our villagers!'

'Horrors!' said Quentin with a mock shiver. 'But I'm coming all the same!' There was a note of determination in his voice which made Michael laugh. He struck an attitude, and said:

'The hero was cheered as he walked into the lion's den! What about evening meal on Friday? You can manage a curfew pass?'

'Oh, yes, that part of it is all right. I shall be glad to come on Friday,' he replied.

During this conversation, Michael and Quentin had started off in the jeep to go and visit the school-teacher. A few minutes later they pulled up at the Chinese school. Mr Wong, the teacher, conducted afternoon school only, as his pupils were employed round the estate in the mornings. Recognizing Quentin, he came out smiling. Introductions were made, and soon he and Michael were chatting away in Mandarin. He would be delighted to have a visit from Michael once a week, for about three-quarters of an hour. Thursday afternoon at half-past two was agreed upon, and in mutual goodwill the visitors drove off.

'You'll come up to the bungalow and have a cup of tea before you go?' asked Quentin.

Michael looked at his watch.

'Thanks very much, Quentin, but I'll be getting back,' he said. 'I have to dash up to the town to get a few things for Val.' He got out of the jeep. 'See you Friday!'

They shook hands, and Michael got into the van.

'By the way,' he said, 'when you get to the village, go in the gate, up the road, and turn right at the well. Anyone will direct you from there. Good-bye, for now!' Michael drove off.

As he went along the highway towards Sungei Bahru, he recalled his interview with the manager. The man had been quite friendly, and very willing for him to go on to the estate. He had even asked whether a similar lesson could be conducted in the Tamil school also. But Michael had been forced to refuse this at present, as he knew of no one who could come with him as interpreter. Later on, this difficulty was going to be overcome, too, but as yet Michael had no knowledge of this!

Chapter Six

SERVANTS TO ALL

WHEN Michael arrived home about five-thirty p.m. he found Valerie all agog to hear how he had fared at the estate. When he told her of the opportunity in the Chinese school, she rejoiced with him that another open door was before them.

Presently Michael said, 'You'll never guess who is on the estate, Val.'

She looked at him with a slight frown between her eyes.

'Whoever could be on the estate that we know, Michael?' she asked.

'Quentin Ross,' replied Michael. 'You know, from the ship!'

'Oh, is he really?' said Valerie, 'It must be "Golden Eagle Estate".' She meditated for a moment, and then burst out enthusiastically,

'Did you invite him to the English service?' Europeans were not very plentiful around the district, and Valerie regarded each new one encountered, as a potential attender at the English service! Alas, she had many disappointments, for comparatively few were even interested.

Michael decided to tease his wife a little.

'Patience, woman!' he said in mock severity. 'Hast never heard of Queen Esther?'

'Queen Esther?' asked Valerie in surprise. 'What has she got to do with Quentin Ross and the English service?'

'Quite a lot, Oh woman!' he replied. 'You would do well to study her methods! Did she not have a request to make? And did she not serve a banquet first? After that the request came much easier!'

Valerie was laughing at her husband's manner.

'Really, Michael, whatever are you talking about?' she asked in some bewilderment.

'Just this, my dear. We want to ask Ross to the English service, so you are serving him with a choice meal beforehand. When he is replete with your toothsome dainties, we will give the invitation! He will not be able to refuse!'

'Oh, go on with you and your nonsense,' said Valerie jumping up from her chair. 'I take it you've invited him to a meal here. When is he coming?'

'On Friday evening, my dear. Then I thought we can sit and talk, and I'd ask him about the service when the opportunity occurs.'

'I'm so glad he's coming,' said Valerie. 'It will be nice for you to have another man to talk to for a change!' But as she went off, she was already planning the menu for Friday night!

Jocelyn had come running to meet her father on his arrival home, and now she was clambering all over him, demanding that he make a noise like a train. This performed, he next imitated a rooster, a duck, a donkey, and a sheep, greatly to Jocelyn's delight! There was no knowing how long this entertainment would have gone on, if they had not been interrupted by the arrival of a patient, and Valerie called Jocelyn to her tea.

A-Lan, the patient, was a young woman of about twenty years of age, and she lived a few doors from the mission house. She was buxom for a Chinese, who were mostly slim, and quite attractive-looking in a rather bold sort of way. Unfortunately her marriage had been a failure, and she had come back to Sungei Bahru to live in her mother's house. With two nasty, repulsive tropical ulcers on her shins, she had come seeking medical help soon after the missionaries' arrival. Now she came for daily dressings and seemed to appreciate the relief given. At first Michael had wondered why she was so inconsiderate in that she always came so late in the day, when it was almost dark, and difficult for him to see. But both he and Valerie felt more sympathetic when they learned that the village children made her a subject of mockery. And poor A-Lan could scarcely appear on the street without some child or other calling out insulting remarks about her ulcers! After Michael and Valerie realized her

dilemma, they welcomed her in the evenings, and many times talked to her about Jesus.

On this day, A-Lan had come while it was still light. She was just leaving when a commotion was heard coming from another direction. Michael went to the front door to see what was the trouble, and a strange scene met his eyes. Coming towards him was a crowd of young children and older boys, led by a lad of about twelve years. The boy was crying and putting up a good show, in the manner of the Far East, and his mates appeared to be righteously indignant on his behalf.

As they stopped in front of Michael, and all began to explain at the same time, he had a little difficulty in getting the story straight. But he saw blood trickling from the boy's head, just behind the left ear, and quite a few grains of cooked rice sticking to the hair!

It appeared that A-Saam's brother had got angry with him, and smashed a bowl of food over his head. Michael already knew A-Saam, and had witnessed him playing more than one prank of doubtful nature! He knew that in all probability, A-Saam had asked for the trouble. Admittedly, the older brother was easily roused, but A-Saam was also a provocative young imp! Michael seized the opportunity as he rendered first-aid, to tell of One who would come into the heart and give peace to individuals and homes. He spoke of the dangers of uncontrolled anger, and what it could lead to, stressing the fact that the Lord Jesus Christ could give boys control over their tempers and passions.

When the lads had gone, and Michael was just thinking about having his evening meal, a young girl came running.

'Would you give me some medicine for my mother?' she panted breathlessly. Now Michael and his wife had a rule never to give medicine unless they had seen the patient. The real cause and symptoms of illness could so easily be covered up with a plausible story, and they needed to know facts in order to give the right treatment.

'What is the matter with your mother?' asked Michael.

'She was having her bath, when bees stung her! She is all swollen in many part of her body, and in terrible pain,' said the girl panting. Michael knew how this calamity could happen

so easily in some of the exposed bath-houses. He called his wife: 'Val, you'd better go along and see this woman. Stung with bees, and seems pretty bad.'

'Where do you live?' Valerie asked the girl. When she had found out which house the woman lived in, Valerie hurried in to get the blue-bag and the aspirin! As she departed with the girl she called to Michael,

'Michael, Jocelyn's all ready for bed! Just pop her in and hear her say her prayers, will you?'

She and the girl hurried on their way, and soon found the mother who was in a serious condition, being only semi-conscious with pain and poison. Valerie realised at once that it was a case for a doctor, as she did not have the required injections. Giving the woman some aspirins, she went quickly back to Michael.

'You'll have to take her to the hospital, I'm afraid. She's in a bad way. It's no use risking going to the town first. The clinic will be closed, and the dresser goes away at nights.'

Michael got the van out, and went down to the patient's home. She was lifted into the van, and accompanied by her husband, they set off for the hospital some twenty miles away! As it was now a quarter-to-seven p.m. and the road curfew came into force at seven p.m. Michael went first to the police to get a curfew pass for himself and his passengers. This allowed him to be on the roads till eleven p.m.

After a little delay due to these security reasons, they eventually got away. Each town and village en route had high steel-mesh gates at either end of the village, and at night, these were closed for the protection of the people inside. Each of these gates had to be opened by the police, and closed after the van had passed through. In all, the return journey had some sixteen gates that had to be opened and shut. Michael always found it trying. Through one gate, along the strip of road bordering on, or going through the village, and out a gate on the further side. Every time his pass was examined, and his passengers carefully scrutinized. The police also, had phoned through ahead of the van, from village to village, to give warning of its approach.

Finally the patient was delivered safely to hospital, where the

doctor advised her to stay a day or two. Michael and the husband set out on the obstacle race home, as Michael always referred to these night rides. He did not particularly enjoy the eeriness of these journeys. As the van moved swiftly along the silent, lonely road, hemmed in by dark forbidding jungle or miles of rubber trees, Michael had sometimes felt the hair bristling on the back of his neck. There were nights when he felt certain he was under observation from unseen eyes, and the knowledge did not make him feel particularly comfortable! It was worse when he was alone, but to-night he had a companion, and as they chatted, the journey, as well as the time, passed more quickly.

It was already after nine-thirty, and he was more than ready for the hot meal that Valerie had waiting for him.

The woman's husband was very fluent in his thanks to Michael, but his gratitude did not extend to any offer to reimburse him for the forty-mile van-ride! Michael had many such calls on his time and van, and sometimes Valerie felt a trifle indignant at the way people took it all for granted, and took advantage of Michael's good nature. They had plenty of money for cigarettes and wine; idolatrous incense and candles. Even little boys of seven and eight years old went about the village smoking!

One day, when Michael saw that his wife was a little 'ruffled' by what she felt was people's unfair treatment of her husband, he put a funny look on his face and said: 'It's the poor wot 'elps the poor, you know!'

'But they aren't poor, Michael!' protested Valerie. 'Many of them have got lots more than we have.'

'That's not our business, dear,' countered Michael. 'Our job is to be servants to all. Even Christ said, "I am among you as he that serveth." What we are, and do, in this small village, Val, is far more important than what we say. You agree, don't you?'

'Of course I do, Michael. But I hate to see you wearing yourself out, doing things for people that they could so easily do for themselves. At night it's different of course, but in the day-time there are plenty of cheap taxis and public buses.'

'Forget it!' said Michael quickly. 'Surely in this way we're earning the right to speak to these people about their eternal

salvation. It's one thing for itinerant preachers to go from place to place preaching all the time. It's quite another thing for us to come into a small village like this, and *live* among the people. This is their village, and if we want to be accepted as part of it, and have any influence here at all, we must as far as possible identify ourselves with the people. What better way than in helping them in their sicknesses and sorrows? Sometimes I've been tempted to think as you've been feeling, but after all a little petrol is a small price to pay to win the friendship of people!

Having delivered his views in no uncertain tones, Michael lapsed into silence. Valerie agreed entirely, of course, and the subject was never again seriously discussed between them.

The little back-yard of the mission house was now a blaze of flowers. What had been a heap of untidy rubbish and ashes a few months before, was now trim beds of golden cosmos, white and mauve petunias, as well as bleeding heart and other flowers. Right round the inside of the fence, pink lilies were flowering, and several clumps of Michaelmas daisies and chrysanthemums adorned the centre of the garden. Some of these plants had been given by Meg on one of her Monday visits, but the majority of them were the gift of a Chinese Christian friend from another State. Calling on the missionaries one day, she who was a great lover of beauty, took note of the little barren back-yard!

A week later she was back with a great collection of shrubs and cuttings—four different colours of hibiscus, crocuses and portulaca. This latter had spread rapidly over the small mud bank which led to the garden, and now it was a daily joy to Valerie. Every morning about nine o'clock, hundreds of the wine-coloured flowers opened to the sun. For four hours their glory reflected right into the house, and then, as if exhausted by the effort, the petals closed up and died away. The next morning it happened all over again, with fresh blooms taking the place of those that had died. The village children would stop at the fence and ask for cuttings of this plant. Soon it was blooming in other parts of the village. How all this was a parable to Michael and Valerie. They longed in a spiritual sense to see beauty replace ashes, to witness the joy of Christ on faces where now only the sour misery of Satan could be seen. And then to see the light

spreading from one to another, as the Good News was passed on. Would the vision ever materialize? It was so slow to begin!

Valerie had been keen to grow some of the pretty Honolulu creeper in both the pink and white varieties, and had planted the seeds hopefully. But, alas, the ants had eaten them in the ground before they had even had time to germinate!

A kindly neighbour had given Michael three small banana palms which he planted at the foot of the garden. There were many different varieties of banana being grown in the village, but the ones Michael planted were a small golden banana, known as Pisang Mas. It was most interesting for Michael and Valerie to watch bananas actually growing in their native habitat. They saw the new suckers growing up around the base of the original plant. It took ten or eleven months for the first bunch of fruit to appear, and then it was one bunch to one plant. The fruiting stem pushed its way up the centre of the crown of leaves, and then the heavy purple pendent curved over to one side. Gradually it opened into whorls of small bananas. When the bananas ripened and had been cut down, the fruiting stem was cut down to the ground with the trunk, and the whole thing chopped up to feed the pigs. The next sucker would then almost be at the fruiting stage. And so it went on, and they learned that after five years the whole was uprooted and a fresh start made.

Michael had also planted several papaya trees when they were very small. He had not realized that there were male and female papaya trees, and it was quite a relief later to discover that he had planted the fruit-bearing variety, quite accidentally! Both the bananas and papaya were welcome fruits on the menu.

Some of the Sunday School children had given Valerie a cutting of the Fuh-Yong Tree. This could grow into a fairly tall shady tree, but in the poor soil of the backyard, it was rather stunted. Nevertheless it was a most interesting tree, and a great favourite amongst the villagers. Early in the day it bloomed white and spotless, without a flaw to mar it. By afternoon it had gradually changed to deep rose. The next morning it was still hanging on its stem, and it was quite common to see pink and white flowers on the one tree at the same time. Valerie had heard that some 'mems' (European women) picked the white

flowers in the early dew of morning, and put them in the refrigerator all day, where they stayed white. Just before the dinner-party, the flowers were put in vases on the table, where they slowly changed colour before the eyes of the guests.

There was an interesting legend in the school-books about this tree, which was known as 'The Husband and Wife Tree'. One morning, a man presented his wife with a bouquet of the beautiful white blooms. He was away all day, and when he came home at night, he saw to his consternation a vase of pink blooms in his wife's boudoir. He immediately accused her of having a lover, and a great quarrel ensued. It was only later that the tangle was sorted out!

On the morning of the day of Quentin's projected visit, Michael decided to spend half-an-hour (for exercise) in the garden before the teacher arrived. Jocelyn had an old spoon, to 'help' with the digging. The first ten minutes were quiet and uninterrupted. Then young Liu, carrying his baby son, sauntered into view. Michael was surprised to see him at this hour of the day. They exchanged greetings.

'Not working, to-day?' asked Michael, with a smile as he straightened from his digging.

'No,' said Liu. Pause. Liu had watched Michael for weeks before he opened his mouth at all. Even now the words seemed to be drawn from him with a corkscrew.

'Nice to be some people, having a holiday!' teased Michael.

'No holiday,' replied Liu. 'Grandmother has come from China. To-day we go to meet her. We're taking a load of rubber to market at the same time!'

'Grandmother, eh?' said Michael. 'That's nice! What age is she?'

'Seventy-two,' answered Liu. 'She has wanted for years to come. So now she'll be happy to be with us altogether!'

Jocelyn was holding up her spoon to baby Liu who stared back stolidly, and ignored the advances.

The missionaries admired the Liu family in many ways. In their small house, there were fourteen mouths to feed. They were industrious and did not quarrel with their neighbours. While the men-folk and young girls went off to care for their rubber trees,

the mother cooked up the pigs' food, and carried it down the village to the piggery. She also cared for four children who were too young to work. One of these children was mentally handicapped, but was very shrewd in many ways. Valerie decided that if she was clever enough to plan naughty acts, she had enough intelligence to learn about the Saviour. So she urged the child to come to Sunday school. Soon she became a regular attender. On many a week day too, Valerie would come on her silently standing at the front window, gazing at the Gospel posters.

The Liu family came home from their work about noon, and the afternoon saw them hard at work again, busily manuring their vegetable patches, and weeding. They grew quantities of tall tapioca, taro, and water convolvulus, which was much valued as a green vegetable. They were also the landlords of the small house next door to the mission house.

It was young Liu who told Michael one day, how fed up all the family was at having to live in a village.

'We were quite happy in our place over there in the jungle,' he pointed far across beyond the perimeter fences where Michael could discern the ruins of a house among the trees.

'Did you get any warning that you would be moving?' asked Michael.

'None at all,' snapped young Liu. Even after the years, his voice sounded resentful. 'The soldiers just came suddenly, and told us to get our stuff on to the truck they had brought. We weren't even allowed to go and call our pigs out of the jungle!'

'But surely you received payment for them?'

'Oh, yes! And for the crops we had to leave too. But that didn't make it right somehow.' He paused a minute and then added: 'It's awful to be forced to live like we are now, suspiciously watched by the police, and hardly any freedom of movement.'

Michael felt really sympathetic, knowing how much people everywhere value their freedom.

'But your father has been elected to the Village Council,' he said.

'Yes, but it's all unreal,' said Liu. 'We Chinese just aren't wanted, and Authority all the time looks on us as a menace in the

country. We don't want to go back to China, so what can we do?

'It doesn't make you feel very contented?' queried Michael.

'Contented?' sneered Liu. 'Subdued maybe, but never contented.'

'But you have the benefit of a school for your children now, and other helps that you didn't have before,' encouraged Michael. Then he added with a smile, 'And best of all, you are having the chance to hear of One who really loves you, and who can give you contentment wherever you live!'

Young Liu grunted acquiescence, and the conversation had ended. Michael felt for these displaced ones who could reasonably be compared with D.Ps. in Korea and Vietnam. Michael also knew that many of the villagers were falling between two fires. On one side were the Security Forces, and on the other the terrorists. Their position was unenviable . . . for while the communists threatened them with death if they did not bring food to them, authority threatened them with the same if they did!

The Chinese were in a difficult position in Malaya. Michael knew that they had always remained aliens in the land, their allegiance previously being to China. Their wives, customs, religions, and secret societies, all came from China. It was the endeavour to win the Chinese over to regarding Malaya as their country now, and making them willing to take responsibility not only against the terrorists, but also actively in civil affairs, and the police force, that was a major task of authority at present.

If the Chinese in Malaya felt that the Chinese communists were going to come to the aid of the Malayan communists, was it likely that they would join whole-heartedly against the terrorists? With the strengthening in recent years of the forces of law and order, many more have been gaining confidence, and are becoming willing to assist the government in not helping the terrorists. Could the missionary, coming with the Word of life into this atmosphere, claim the attention of the people for eternal things, when the things of time were occupying so much of their thoughts?

The Lius were typical of a number of very decent people in

Sungei Bahru, who were becoming increasingly friendly with Michael and Valerie.

But while all this was nice and pleasant, the Lord's servants never for a moment mistook friendliness for salvation! Whenever the opportunity was given them, they pressed home the need for folk to turn to the Lord. Before too long, Michael and Valerie were to witness the cruelty of these men who were so friendly and smiling to them. And all because they were blinded and bound by the Evil One!

Young Liu strolled back to his home with his little son still sitting mutely on his arm. Michael continued digging and for another five minutes was left in peace. Jocelyn was busy watching a stray goat that had come along and was pulling at the mimosa growing outside the fence. The sensitive leaves had curled up the moment the goat had touched them, and now the plant looked like a dead thing in its efforts of self-preservation.

'Michael!' called Valerie. 'There is an Indian visitor at the front door to see you!' Michael dug his spade into the ground and went to wash his hands.

At the door he found a Tamil, whom he recognized slightly, having seen him visiting in the Indian home next door.

'Good-morning friend,' said Michael pleasantly in English.

'Good-morning, sir,' the visitor replied, also in English. He came inside and sat down. It appeared that he was known as 'Anthony'. ('Though *why*,' said Michael later, 'he should have been named after a saint, I don't know!') Anthony was a Roman Catholic. He claimed to be, also, a Diesel expert, and had been an engine-driver some years before. Now he wanted a job with Malayan Railways. Would kind European write him a testimonial as to his worthy character, and fitness for such a position? Judging by the strong odour of liquor which had filled the room since Anthony's arrival, Michael felt that he personally, would rather walk than travel in a train driven by Anthony! Moreover, he had rather a shrewd suspicion as to why the pseudo-saint had lost his previous position!

'Sorry, old chap, I can't oblige,' said Michael. 'I don't know you well enough to do that!'

'But the manager will take notice of the words of a European,'

urged Anthony. 'You have a typewriter here; you could easily do it!' Michael, however, was adamant, and after some further discussion, Anthony went away in high dudgeon.

Almost immediately the Cantonese teacher, Mr T'ang, pedalled up on his bicycle. A few minutes later, he and Michael were hard at reading.

Valerie made the teacher and her husband a cup of coffee, and then set off with Jocelyn to pay a short visit to Mrs Yap. There was a new baby in the home, and this was a chance to show friendliness and interest. Mrs Yap spoke good Mandarin, and she and Valerie had already had several good talks. The woman said that her husband would not let her believe. There was no doubt about his antagonism. He had come and called his wife and children out of the Sunday night meeting, and carried on in a loud voice.

This morning Valerie took a gift for the new baby, and a fresh Gospel booklet for the mother to read as she had opportunity. Mrs Yap had a number of small children under school age, and was one of the few women in the village who did not go out to work. She was a gracious woman and a good mother. Valerie longed for her to be saved and to make an open confession of her faith in Christ.

After a little time in the home, she and Jocelyn strolled home the long way round. This was to let Jocelyn see the monkey, and was the highlight of any outing! In the corner house, past the fierce dog, there lived the pet monkey that the missionaries had seen on their first tour of the village. He was chained to a tree and was a cute little fellow. Dashing up and down the tree, jumping on the branches, he loved nothing better than an audience. Jocelyn never tired of watching him, and Valerie, incidentally was getting quite friendly with the lady of the house! To-day someone gave Jocelyn a piece of water-melon skin to give to the monkey, but she was too timid to go near enough to hand it over. So Valerie passed it to the monkey who snatched it and raced up the tree to enjoy a meal.

The final treat of the morning was to go home past A-Chiu's place. She loved Jocelyn, and invariably cut down a slender stick of sugar-cane, and sliced off the hard peel. Using a heavy

Chinese chopper, she cut the cane into eight-inch lengths and gave Jocelyn one in each hand.

The journey home was finished in silence, save for the sucking of sugar-cane! This was something that could never be done sedately, sitting on a chair in the house! It had to be done exactly as the Chinese children did it. A strip was pulled off with the teeth. This was sucked and chewed till the last vestige of sweetness was extracted. The rough, tasteless, lump of fibre was then spat on the ground. A fresh strip was peeled off and the process repeated. Delicious! Jocelyn wore a positively seraphic expression whenever she ate sugar-cane!

They arrived home in time for Valerie to read with the teacher. Jocelyn played in the yard, while Michael finished the quarterly station accounts to be sent to mission headquarters.

Chapter Seven

'I WILL BE EXALTED'

WELL, here we are!' said Michael, as Quentin drove up to the mission house that same evening. 'I'm glad you found the place!'

'Oh, it wasn't at all difficult,' replied Quentin. 'The police at the gate told me how to get here.'

'Too bad to be known to the police, isn't it?' smiled Valerie as she shook hands with Quentin. The villagers were beginning to crowd around to have a good look at the visitor.

'Come inside,' she continued, 'You're just in time to say "Goodnight" to Jocelyn.'

'Uncle' Quentin somehow discovered a small bar of chocolate in his pocket, and his status was immediately secured with that young lady! A few minutes later she was taken off to bed, and the three friends were sitting together having their meal. Quentin looked around with interest.

'Well, I must congratulate you on making this look so home-like, but it's even smaller than I had imagined,' he said. Actually he had never been in a New Village before, and had only seen them from the outside.

'Maybe small,' laughed Michael, 'but at least we've got electric light now!'

'Didn't you always have it?' Quentin asked.

'No, we've only had it about a month,' replied Michael, 'and what a difference it makes. They decided we were near enough to the town to be connected up with the generator there, so. . . .'

'We're awfully thrilled,' broke in Valerie, 'for now Michael can use his projector, and show slides to the people. They seem to learn much more quickly through pictures.' She knew how her husband was always seeking fresh ways in which to present the Old, Old Story. . . .

Michael asked Quentin all sorts of questions about his work with rubber, and judging by Quentin's wide knowledge and enthusiasm, it was plain to see where his heart lay.

'You must come round the estate with me one day, and see how things really go,' he said to Michael. 'Perhaps you all could come to breakfast, and then we could have a look round.'

Seeing Valerie's surprised look he added, 'Oh, it's all right, Mrs Jones, I don't eat breakfast till ten o'clock. We get quite a lot of work done beforehand while it is cooler.'

'We would like very much to come sometime,' said Valerie. 'Next week we go up to Kuala Lumpur for a few days, but maybe the week after it could be arranged.'

It was the rule of the mission that its village workers take a week's change every three months. It had been found to be beneficial to the workers in every way; it was a case of the investment of a few days' rest periodically, paying a sound dividend in months of good health. Sungei Bahru, like most of the other villages was noisy, children squabbling or being beaten, shouting matches between angry women, radios and gramophones blaring far into the night, and itinerant vendors ringing bells or hitting gongs throughout the live-long day! Now to add to the aggravation, the lads of the village, who mostly dashed around on bicycles, had a fresh craze! An empty condensed-milk tin was fixed in an upright position on the carrier of the bicycle by a cord which passed through a hole in the top of the tin, and continued on down and around the hub of the wheel. The string was taut, and when the lads sped along a most dreadful wailing-siren noise was produced. For a day and a half, dozens of boys rode around the village, and along the lane beside the mission house, revelling in the shocking noise they were making. It was quite impossible for Michael and Valerie to converse with each other while the bicycles were passing. Finally orders must have come from the powers-that-be, for quite suddenly the craze ended.

'Well,' said Valerie, 'I'm glad that's over. My head is quite sore!'

Then some of the mischievous boys decided to tease Jocelyn. The little one would be playing happily in the yard, and several

of them would call her to the fence. This under the pretext of giving her something! When she got close, they would give a piercing blow on a whistle, and Jocelyn would rush crying and terrified to Valerie. She had to be kept indoors for several days till that craze was past. Altogether after their first three months, and the subsequent periods, Michael and Valerie and baby Jocelyn, were quite ready for a little break away from the village.

After supper, Michael asked Quentin if he would like to see some Kodachromes that he had taken on furlough. And so a happy evening was spent.

When Quentin again mentioned that his father was a retired vicar, Michael broached the subject of church.

'Where do you go to church out here?' he asked.

'Well, I'm afraid I don't go very often,' replied Quentin. 'You see, I'm on duty some Sundays. Of course I always try to get to Malacca to church at Christmas and Easter.' (Malacca was at least three hours' drive away.)

'Is there nothing nearer?' asked Michael.

'I don't know of any,' replied Quentin. 'When I was here before, an old vicar used to come down to the club at Lang-Lang and hold a service sometimes. Very nice chap, but I hear he has left Malaya.'

'Well,' said Michael. 'We've recently started an English service in the town. Quite small you know, but it's going!'

'You mean in the town quite close here?' asked Quentin indicating with his hand the direction of town. On receiving a reply in the affirmative, he laughed and said, 'Well, there won't be any excuse for me now, will there?'

'We do hope you'll come along,' said Valerie cordially. 'It's at half-past five, every Sunday evening in the school.'

'You remember where the school is?' said Michael: 'just as you come into the town, up on the hill. By the way Quentin, there's nothing elaborate you know. We sit at the classroom tables on small chairs, and Val plays the little school organ. The headmaster used to go to a church school as a boy, and has been most glad to help us in any way he could.'

'Do you have many coming to the service?' asked Quentin.

'Fourteen is the largest number so far,' said Valerie enthusiastically, 'but it will be fifteen when you come, Mr Ross!' she added brightly.

'We'd like to invite anyone from the estate who would care to come,' said Michael. 'Do you think we could have a small invitation written, and put up on the club notice board?'

'That could be done quite easily, I should think,' said Quentin, 'but I don't imagine that many of the fellows would be interested in church.'

'Well, it won't hurt to invite them,' said Valerie.

As Quentin rose to leave a few minutes later, Michael said, 'Well, we'll hope you can get along on Sunday. The congregation is mostly Asian, and they are a very nice group of people. I think you will feel at home.'

'I'll certainly come some Sunday,' answered Quentin, 'but often I have to work, so I won't make any promises.' After a glass of iced orangeade all round, Quentin thanked his friends for a most enjoyable evening, and took his departure.

The next Sunday, just before five o'clock, the missionaries, after giving Jocelyn an early tea, drove off to the town. They found that the headmaster had already opened the large classroom, and it was nicely aired. While Valerie arranged a flannelgraph background for the children's talk, Michael distributed the pile of Bibles and text-books he had brought along.

Presently the few worshippers began to assemble. Several Tamil families, a Chinese man and his two sons, and four Europeans. While the first hymn was being sung, Meg arrived. Valerie from the organ could see the jeep racing along, in an effort to get there in time. This Sunday she had brought a couple of Indian nurses who spoke Malayalam as well as English. Jocelyn wriggled about a little, so Michael let her sit on a chair beside him, while Valerie spoke to the children on the story of 'The Flood' and illustrated it with the flannelgraph.

After the singing of another favourite hymn, Michael offered a simple prayer, and gave his message slowly and as lucidly as possible. He had already pointed out that this service was not run by any particular denomination. It had seemed a shame to him that there was no Protestant church of any kind in the

town, and he had felt it would be a good thing if Christians in the district could meet once a week for a simple service of worship of their Lord. Some of those who gathered were officially members of denominations that had no meeting in the town, and they had obligations to their church which they did not get an opportunity to fulfil more than once in two or three months. Michael also urged those who came to invite any English-speaking friends to come along with them.

As the months passed, this service grew to over twenty in number, and was a very friendly group. It was a comfort to know that God was not without a witness in that large district.

For two weeks after his visit to the mission house, Quentin did not go to the English service. But on the third Sunday he arrived.

As usual the service was very simple and reverent, and completely without pretence. Quentin felt stirred by the singing of the old hymns, and during the whole time the message was being given he did not take his eyes from Michael's face. That particular Sunday, Michael was speaking on 'Life more abundant', and pointed out that eternal life was not only a quantity of life, but also a quality of life. Eternal life could begin in the heart now, the moment anyone put his or her faith in Christ. It commenced here in life, and went on after death, forever!

Valerie was sorry that Meg had missed this message, and resolved to tell her about it in their next chat. Valerie and Meg had become very good friends, and had had a number of talks about personal salvation. But Meg, though deeply exercised about her spiritual condition, did not yet have this full life, about which Michael had been speaking.

Michael and Valerie had to hurry away from the English service as it was nearly seven o'clock, and the open-air started at seven p.m. On Sunday evenings when the van returned to the village, the children came running from all directions calling, 'Here comes Jesus! Here comes Jesus!', meaning the missionaries. At first Michael and his wife felt rather dreadful when they heard themselves called by the Lord's name, but only gradually could they teach the people to call them by their right name. It was a rather sobering thought that they represented their Master in

Sungei Bahru, and they were reminded of the words, 'As He is, so are we in this world.'

On arrival back at the mission house the bedlam began! Michael put a small table outside the front door, and put the gramophone on it. A large number of people were soon listening to the Gospel in various dialects, that Michael played to them. This was mainly for the older folk who did not speak Mandarin. So far he did not feel fluent enough to take a message in Cantonese, and it was a case of using what he had!

While the people were assembling, Valerie gave Jocelyn a further snack to eat, and a glass of milk, and put her to bed. It was an amazing thing that Jocelyn could go to sleep at once, and sleep soundly through the greatest noise right outside her window. Valerie then came out, and going among the crowd, tried to make friends with any who did not move away at her approach!

It was on Sunday nights that Michael missed more than ever his loved Chinese fellow-workers of China days. How some of them would have held a crowd like this! How much more valuable if his hearers could be reached by one of their own! But it was the new policy of his mission not to pay any Asian workers to preach the Gospel. This decision had only been reached after long and prayerful discussion, and was felt to be not only in the interests of the work, but of the Asian Christians themselves. For when a little church grew up in a place, they must be truly indigenous, and not robbed of their privilege and duty of assuming the responsibility to evangelize! When the little group of believers were considered to be mature enough, the missionaries could move on once more to break fresh ground. While this policy was excellent for the infant church, it was, of course, very hard on the missionaries!

Valerie and Michael continually prayed that God would use their stumbling words to bring light to dark hearts. So often one or the other of them had said, 'I wonder who will be the first one to believe in this place? And when it will be?'

To-night the crowd was large, and the children sang the choruses lustily. It was amazing how those simple Gospel choruses had taken on in the village. At any time of the day and

evening, children could be heard singing one and another of them. Beyond the crowd, Michael could discern the figures of people in unlit doorways. Some sat on benches hidden by shrubs in the front of their houses, and others seeking to be unseen and yet within hearing distance, edged alongside a clump of banana palms not far away. Michael never knew how large his audience really was, but he guessed that many more than were visible were listening to the message. He feared that many could not hear what he said, because of the unwillingness of the children to sit quietly and stop talking.

He had the carpenter make half-a-dozen small benches on which the children sat at the front of the crowd. But for the most part, everyone else stood. When he had finished speaking, Michael always gave a cordial invitation to anyone who wanted to talk about the Gospel, to come into the house afterwards and do so. But so far, not one had availed themselves of this invitation!

Some nights the noise and clamour were very great and were a very wearing business for the Lord's servants. In order to avoid a wild stampede at the close of the meeting, Michael had taught the children a farewell chorus. 'Our meeting is over and we are going home.' As this was being sung, the crowd began slowly to disperse, and the children vied with each other to get into the house first with the form they were carrying! Soon all was over except for one or two men who stood at a distance carefully watching the doorway of the mission house. Judging by the hard, malevolent looks that Michael encountered sometimes, it would go hardly with any enquirers after the truth. Let anyone even dare to go into the mission house and show an interest in the Gospel, and he would be a marked man.

Michael and Valerie were usually quite exhausted physically after the open-air was over. They were far too tired to eat at once, and just sat quietly, sipping cups of hot refreshing tea. Michael on one occasion had laughingly said to a friend, 'If I had a patron saint, it would be Sir Thomas Lipton!' And never was tea more welcome, than on these Sunday nights! A little later, Valerie got a light meal, which they ate mainly in silence. Then a short Bible reading and prayer together and so the day ended.

On this particular night, they had only just got to bed, when there was a light knock on the front door. Whoever could it be at this hour? There was a house curfew at eleven p.m. and everyone should have been getting home.

'Be careful, Michael!' whispered Valerie, as Michael dragged himself up to go to the door. 'Find out who it is first!'

'It's all right. It's only me,' said a quiet English voice through the crack of the door. Michael recognized the voice of the police-lieutenant with whom he had chatted once or twice.

'Sorry to disturb you at this hour of the night!' he said as Michael opened the door and let him in. 'We were making a round of the perimeter, so thought I'd just drop in!' It was the first time he had actually been to the house. Valerie was in her housecoat by this time, and all three sat at the table, the Joneses being completely mystified and wondering what was coming.

The police-lieutenant took off his hat, and wiped his forehead. 'I won't beat about the bush,' he said, 'and I don't want to scare you. But we've had word that a large band of C.Ts. is headed in this direction. Guards are being reinforced, and the air is likely to be a bit tense for a few days. What I really came to warn you of, is this. . . . Some time soon we will be putting a barrage of fire across the jungle just alongside here.' He waved his hand in the direction of the side of the village where the jungle was not far from the mission house. 'Don't be alarmed if you hear the firing. That's all it will be!' He rose to go.

'Thanks very much for letting us know,' said Michael. 'Very thoughtful of you.' And he escorted the harassed officer to the door. After he had gone, Valerie said:

'I'm glad he came when no one was around aren't you?'

'Rather,' said Michael. 'There are still some of the people who are suspicious enough about us, without them imagining that we hob-nob with the police. Very kind of him all the same!'

They had not been long asleep, when they were suddenly 'almost blown out of bed' as Valerie put it next day! An ear-splitting burst of fire from automatic weapons, was interspersed with rifle fire. Valerie's first thought was for Jocelyn, but the baby daughter slept peacefully through it all!

The firing continued for about fifteen minutes, and then all

was still. Not a sound! Not the cracking of a twig! Even the village curs seemed muzzled! Valerie now wide awake, lay looking up through the little wire window. The stars were brilliant in the velvety darkness. Somehow Valerie felt they twinkled back at her so understandingly. 'He made the stars also' she murmured, and as she drifted off to sleep her thoughts were of Him.

Next day, soldiers searched the jungle nearby, and only thirty yards inside, discovered a large C.T. camp, which apparently had very recently been abandoned!

Chapter Eight

FELLOW-WORKERS

ONE day, some time later, Valerie came inside waving two letters she had just received from the postman.

'Guess who's written to us Michael,' she said.

'Haven't the foggiest notion,' said Michael looking up from his books. 'Who?'

'Betty and Philippa,' answered Valerie. 'Fancy getting them both in the same mail!' she said beginning to open the letters with a knife. 'I wonder how they are getting on in their new stations.'

She read Betty's letter first, and discovered that most of the young worker's day was still occupied with language study. The Red Cross Society was withdrawing its workers from the area where Betty was living, and she was now required to help in the clinic (for which the mission was now responsible) a couple of hours a day. Being a nurse, this was a good outlet in service for her, as well as giving her splendid opportunities of hearing Hokkien spoken all round her continually.

'Oh dear,' said Valerie as she read on, 'I do hope she is going to stand up to the climate.' It appeared that Betty was taking longer than some to acclimatize. She had expected to settle down quite quickly, but had now developed an ear infection which was extremely painful. The letter went on to say that the doctor had told her that while penicillin would give immediate relief in the attacks, yet the condition was likely to remain with her until she got into a dry climate once again. Knowing what a serious, conscientious girl Betty was, Valerie knew that she would be facing this trial bravely, and going steadily on with her work.

'What a business this acclimatizing is,' said Michael when Valerie had finished reading. 'You remember how Dr Wilson

told us that some people take eighteen months to get used to Malaya's climate.'

'I suppose it's due to the evenly high temperatures, and continuous humidity,' Valerie replied.

'Yes, and all this heavy rain we have must affect things,' said Michael. 'I hope Philippa is getting on all right. What has she got to say?' he asked as Valerie opened the second letter.

Philippa had not written to Valerie since she arrived at her new station in Pahang, so there was quite a lot of description of her first impressions. The long winding drive to her station over roads that were cut out of the jungle, had been quite an experience. She had become firm friends with her senior missionary, who was of a different nationality, and had been on the mission-field in China. Now she wrote of her, 'She is deeply spiritual, and also loves a joke! You can imagine we have some good laughs together.' Further on in the letter she wrote,

'There was not a great deal I could do at first, but the piano-accordion seems to be appreciated, so I play the hymns at the meetings. We go visiting together on our bicycles in the afternoons, and have an open door into half-a-dozen villages not far apart. Up here we have not attempted any estate work, as we have no car, and the work seems to call more for a man. You will be glad to know that my senior has been given permission to hold a weekly Bible class in the Chinese school here.'

'It's nice to know that so many of our folk are getting opportunities in the Chinese schools,' interrupted Michael.

'Yes,' Valerie answered, 'I only wish some of the other schools would open their doors too, and give the pupils a chance to hear the message.' She was thinking of the chain of government English schools throughout the country, where the tuition was in English, regardless of the race to which the pupil belonged, and which were not, on the whole, open to missionaries. There were exceptions, of course, but they were rare.

Philippa's letter was a lengthy one as she did not write very often, and made up for it when she did. Letter writing in the heat, where her damp hand stuck to the paper, was something of a trial to Philippa. She apologized for this apparent lethargy, but told Valerie that after the necessary home letters were written,

she did not have much time or inclination for 'extras'. She closed this letter with a piece of very good news.

'Just listen to this, Michael,' said Valerie, and read on. . . .

'Several young British servicemen stationed near here, have called at the mission house on various occasions. They are mostly between the ages of eighteen and twenty years, and are out here doing their period of national service. A few of them are Christians, and it is good to see their zeal in bringing along their unsaved mates. I must tell you about one of them named John. He is a quiet lad, with a rather abrupt manner of speech. He has been here several times with a couple of his mates who are Christians. One day after visiting here, he said to them, "I always thought before that missionaries lived in posh houses with plenty of servants! And that they generally had a pretty easy time of it. But goodness me, after seeing this house, and the surroundings . . ." He stopped, and then turning to his mates said, "I say, have either of you chaps got a Bible?"

'John was supplied with one, and before many weeks had passed, he publicly proclaimed his faith in Christ. Soon afterwards, his company was transferred to another area.'

'So much missionary work seems to be like that, doesn't it?' wrote Philippa. 'People cross our path for such a short time, and then the chance is gone. It makes me feel how very responsible it is to be Christ's representative . . . in any place; and especially out here where there is such a mixture of races and ideologies.'

'I quite agree with her about Malaya being a "mixed" place,' Michael said. 'The races are mixed, the ways of life and religions are mixed, and as for the languages . . . well, as you know, Val, they are legion.'

'Yes,' laughed Valerie. 'Sometimes when everyone is talking at top speed and there seems such a babel of tongues, I find it difficult to know just which language is being spoken! And as for the plants, Michael, why, a lot of them are variegated too!'

Michael sat awhile thinking of the Chinese work in Malaya. He reflected on the three million people who were divided into so many different groups, viz., Hokkien, Cantonese, Hakka, Teochiu, Hailam, Kwongsai, Hockchiu, Henghua, and others. He knew that many of them understood more than their own

dialect, and that the majority spoke some Malay as well; but when it came to doing spiritual work, he felt that the only possible solution was to do it in a person's native tongue. It was somewhat different maybe, where people were fluent in English, but in the village, it really was necessary to know some dialects to get near the people at all.

But as the Chinese in one village are not usually all of one group (in fact, Michael had counted six or seven languages being spoken in Sungei Bahru), this was a further problem for the messenger of the Cross. First of all, he must decide which dialect he will learn. He knows before he starts that whichever one he eventually speaks in will only reach some of the people. So whatever he has will not be enough. Apart from anything else, Michael and many of his fellow-missionaries had found this in itself rather frustrating. They had set themselves to find out which dialect was spoken by the greatest number of people in their particular village, and commenced studying that.

Chatting over some of these thoughts with Valerie, Michael said:

'It means, of course Val, that the church which will be formed in a village, will be composed of people who speak the dialect that is spoken by the missionary.'

'Yes, I suppose so . . . mostly. But it hasn't always proved that way in actual practice. You know up there in Pahang where they have just had the baptisms, there were Cantonese baptized as well as Hokkien.'

'That's true,' said Michael. 'We must never forget that the Holy Spirit is sovereign, and transcends all language barriers when He will. I wonder how they will manage in the meetings . . . in which dialect will the preaching be done? Will they have to have an interpreter?'

'They're real problems all right,' said Valerie. 'I suppose in large cities like Singapore there are enough Christians of any one group to have their own church and pastor.'

'I'll never forget that meeting we went to in the Hokkien church while we were there. Do you remember the interpreting?'

'It certainly was marvellous when the Mandarin speaker stood alongside the Hokkien pastor, and followed him, short

sentences at a time. Why, the words scarcely had time to leave the old man's lips before the interpreter carried them on in Mandarin. Even his gestures were the same!

'It certainly was a marvellously efficient performance, and didn't seem to detract from the message at all.'

'Of course, we can manage fairly well in Mandarin as far as the young people of the village are concerned,' Valerie said, coming back to the present. 'But even Cantonese won't be enough when some Hokkien come to believe. I guess we can only wait and see. A step at a time.' After which philosophic remark, she went off to prepare dinner!

'It's no use crossing our bridges before they are reached,' said Michael to himself. 'Time enough to worry when the situation really crops up. I guess it's something we'll all have to talk out together.'

None of the missionaries who had learned Mandarin in China, were required by the mission to attend the language school in Singapore. Theirs was the more difficult way of running a station, and trying to learn a dialect at the same time. Michael felt that the months at language school were an excellent start for new workers, and in the current year, workers had arrived from the homelands for all the S.E. Asian countries where the mission was working. Betty and Philippa were the only ones for Malaya in their session at the language school. They had both been delighted with their designations.

The Directors of the mission, in conjunction with the Field Superintendents of the work, had temporarily decided on designations for each of the new workers. This was done after consideration of the most needy parts of the Field, the qualifications of the young people themselves, and their suitability to meet the requirements of a particular need. This necessitated much thought and prayer, seeking to know the will of God for each life.

After several personal interviews between Directors and candidates, during which the latter were completely free to speak of their own particular leading in the matter of their future field and service, the designations were decided and made public.

In previous years in China, where all studied Mandarin, the designations were made after six months' language study, and in some ways the task of the Directors was easier. For after six months, they had had better opportunities to know the people concerned. But at the language school in Singapore, where a variety of languages were taught, it was necessary to designate the new workers almost on arrival, so that they could commence their particular language study without waste of time.

And so it came about that Betty was to study Hokkien, while Philippa concentrated on Hakka. They each had a teacher who read with them daily, and tape-recorders were available, as well as gramophone records, to help them in the mastery of the new tongues. But it was a constantly heavy task, accentuated by the fact that they were acclimatizing to a tropical climate.

After having passed their first language examinations, the two girls went up to the Federation to join their new fellow-workers in Selangor and Pahang respectively. The mission was working in Perak, Pahang, Selangor, Johore, and recently the first station had been opened in Malacca.

Michael often remarked to his wife, how glad he was that God had given them fellow-workers, not too far away. There were opportunities sometimes to get together and talk over problems. A large percentage of the work in the villages was being done by courageous single women. Once a month the workers in each state met for a day of prayer and Bible study. The Field Superintendent came round periodically to visit every station, bringing encouragement and news from other places. A little typed sheet of local items for praise and prayer was sent to all workers every month; and the workers provided the material for this leaflet. This was a very practical way of bearing one another's burdens! So often it seemed that another's problems were identical with one's own!

The Field conference once a year, which all were obliged to attend, was a great time of fellowship and refreshment. For then views were aired and problems thrashed out. Usually a Director of the mission came from Singapore, and daily gave helpful, devotional messages, as well as advice on practical details of the work. He, on his part, returned to headquarters

with an up-to-date knowledge of Field problems and personnel; and so the close fabric of the whole fellowship was woven more tightly together.

There were varying gifts among the missionaries. One who was good at children's meetings went about helping at the various stations. Others who were nurses were taking full responsibility for clinics in some villages. Those with gifts of preaching or Bible teaching were ever ready to go to a neighbouring village to help a fellow-worker in a combined witness. Sometimes several speaking different dialects combined for an effort in a certain place.

In the few villages where there was already a little church, the main work was to build up the Christians. Some workers felt that after they had given of their best over a length of time, it was in the best interest of the church for them to move on, and let others with differing gifts come to make their contribution to the little group. In this way, a fully-rounded, well-balanced church would be established.

As a gardener aims his chief efforts of cultivation at the roots of a plant, so likewise does the spiritual gardener. For the very essential of life in the church, is that its roots should be deep and healthy, obtaining continually all the nourishment needed. The gardener and the spiritual gardener both have the same difficulty, in that they cannot see those very roots they are seeking to cultivate! And so a great deal of faith must be mixed with the work. The final evidence that the effort has not been in vain, is seen when the flowers and fruit appear!

Betty's letter to Valerie had reminded the Joneses of the toll village life was taking of workers. It was almost inevitable with the concentrated way of life, and the exacting climate. Some had found it too great a strain nervously and mentally, while others had been ill. The fact that so few had had to leave the Field was due to the goodness of God.

Being surrounded continually with hard, cold materialism, intense idolatry, and active communism could be very deadening for missionaries . . . especially for the younger ones who had come fresh from active Christian work at home.

When Valerie answered Philippa's letter later, she reminded

her of an illustration from 'Pilgrim's Progress' . . . how Christian in the House of Interpreter saw a fire burning by a wall; and a man pouring on water to extinguish it. But the fire burned higher and hotter, and Christian could not understand it, until Interpreter took him behind the wall. There he saw a man pouring oil (secretly) on to the fire.

'So,' wrote Valerie, 'will the Lord keep our devotion to Himself burning as a flame. And not ours only, but also that of the young Asian Christians in their difficult surroundings.'

How truly they were to see this fulfilled in days to come!

Chapter Nine

LIGHT AND SHADOW

MICHAEL was greatly enjoying his classes at the estate school. The children were more unsophisticated than those in Sungei Bahru village. Every week when they heard the van coming, they ran to the school gate with smiles of welcome. They, too, learned the Scripture choruses readily, and were quiet and attentive during the Bible lesson. Michael did not know how much the good behaviour was due to the presence in the room of the teacher, but whatever the cause, he accepted the attentive silence gratefully, remembering the fearful clamour of the village!

One day when chatting with the teacher, Michael broached the subject of a Lantern Lecture for the older people. The teacher was quite enthusiastic.

'But we have no electric light,' he said. 'How will you manage a projector?'

'I can run it off the van battery,' said Michael. And so it was arranged that he would come in a fortnight's time and show pictures of the Life of Christ. While not interested in the Gospel, the people of the *kongsi* welcomed any kind of diversion! Their lives were monotonous enough. Even a Gospel lantern lecture would be a change!

On his way home from the school, Michael caught a glimpse of Quentin near the offices, but Quentin did not see him, so he drove on. He reflected vaguely that Quentin looked a trifle worried. He was probably tired by that time of day.

The real truth was that Quentin's thoughts had been disturbing him a good deal lately. Ever since that first Sunday when he had attended the English service, and heard the talk on eternal life, questionings had arisen in his mind. Unpeaceful questions. Disquieting thoughts as to whether he himself was a possessor of

this eternal life or not. In his subsequent, irregular attendances at the services, he had realised more definitely than ever that Michael had something that he himself did not possess. It was so obvious in the fellow's face and speech. A quiet glow of adoration in his manner when he spoke of the Saviour; a simple trusting acceptance that the Bible meant what it said, and a positive ring of assurance when he told of the power of Christ in his life. It was all so vital to the preacher, and Quentin had to admit that he was looking on from the outside!

He had become very friendly with the missionaries, and since that first visit had often dropped in for a cup of tea when passing. He and Valerie had soon dropped the 'Mr' and 'Mrs' as Europeans mostly do in Malaya. Somehow he felt that he could trust his new friends; the three of them had long, interesting discussions on all manner of things. Very often, however, Valerie slipped away with Jocelyn feeling that the two men would be freer alone, as they discussed the state-of-things-in-general. Only sometimes did the conversation turn to spiritual things, and Michael would never force the talk into those channels. Quentin did not suspect how earnestly his friends were praying for his entrance into eternal life.

On Monday afternoon as Quentin was just leaving the mission house, Meg drove up. For the first time he had the opportunity to meet her. It had so happened that they had never yet both been at the English service at the same time. After a few words of greeting, he drove away.

On a certain beautiful Tuesday morning some weeks later, Michael and Valerie at last found time to accept Quentin's invitation to have breakfast on the estate. Tammy was in his element. He allowed Jocelyn to run into the kitchen, and secretly fed her on delicious Indian sweetmeats. She immediately discovered a large, sleepy cat in the kitchen doorway and proceeded to carry him protestingly into the yard. His sleepiness soon disappeared when he discovered that Jocelyn was planning to bath him in a butt of rain-water nearby. Puss departed hurriedly, and Jocelyn, empty-armed, wept! Tammy soon repaired the damage with further sweetmeats!

While the men were doing a tour of the estate, Valerie

strolled on to the patio and sat for awhile watching a couple of courting bul-buls. The gallant lover was strutting about importantly, making gurgling notes of endearment. Now and then he stopped and pulled up a worm from the lawn, offering it to his little lady love. More subdued gurgles between them. Just then, the terrier rushed out at them barking. Dinah was not at all sentimental where birds were concerned! The bul-buls flew up into a hibiscus tree, displaying a flash of bright yellow under their bodies as they went.

One of Quentin's hobbies was butterfly-collecting. He had brought out an expensive outfit from England, to assist him in this. But it had been a little disappointing to find that there were not a great many butterflies on the estate. Actually he had been told that there were some nine hundred species of butterflies, many of them being magnificent insects. It was not until he had taken a trip up-river into the jungle, that he really saw and caught some of these. He had so far only mounted a few of these in the boxes for the purpose, but even that had been difficult. He found that cockroaches and ants nibbled at the specimens, and they had to be extremely well-covered to avoid this. He had, however, left the cases out for Valerie to examine, and she had a happy half-hour examining one beautiful specimen after another.

Then she settled down with one of Quentin's recent books from home. It concerned the Conquest of Mt Everest, and stirred her greatly. This little unusual break from the station work was most welcome, and they would go back refreshed for their task. Michael would be getting some useful photographs about rubber, and these would be invaluable for deputation work in schools on their furlough. Michael had quite a flair for photography. Pictures of all sorts of people and things, that could be, and were, used to further his work. Everything was grist for the mill with Michael. In the village one day, he had persuaded several of the young women at the well to allow him to take a picture. How delighted the villagers were at the next lantern lecture, when he first of all put this picture on the screen. After that, there was quite a desire on the part of the village maidens to be photographed! One such was an attractive young policewoman. She was on duty one day at the gate with a young policeman, when Michael

took a picture of them. In due time this picture appeared on the screen, and the result was terrific! The crowd howled with laughter. They shouted, stamped, and whistled. For some reason or other the young people were absolutely hilarious, and Michael had quite a time restoring order. He discovered the reason later. The young policeman had been married the previous week to a girl in the village. And it was not the girl in the picture! Valerie still chuckled when she thought of this, and also remembered that after the outburst, the lantern lecture that followed was one of the quietest and most orderly that they had witnessed so far.

When Quentin and Michael returned in a couple of hours' time, they were ready for the coffee that Tammy served. Valerie was enthusiastic about the lovely quiet time she had enjoyed in the bungalow.

'And the butterflies, Quentin. . . . They're lovely!' she said. 'That big black and green one, wherever did you get it?'

'Yes, I'm rather proud of him,' said Quentin. 'He was sitting on a patch of wet sand on the river-bank with a whole crowd of others, and I just managed to net him. He's supposed to belong to the finest species in the whole country.'

'I don't suppose you have much time for your hobby,' said Michael.

'Practically none these days,' replied Quentin. 'With a Tamil exam hanging over my head.'

'How's it going?' inquired Michael.

'Oh, slowly . . . too slowly,' said Quentin shaking his head, and looking glum. But Valerie had overheard him in the kitchen giving the meal orders to Tammy, and she thought he was very fluent for the few months he had been studying.

As time was passing, the Joneses decided that they must return to Sungei Bahru. After thanking Quentin warmly for the lovely visit, they got in the van and drove away. Tammy had given Jocelyn a large orange (from Quentin's refrigerator no doubt) as a parting gift.

When his friends had gone, Quentin settled down to study till tiffin was announced.

About four o'clock that afternoon, he was driving along the somewhat secluded estate road that led to the *kongs* when,

suddenly rounding a bend, he came on a stationary Land Rover. The Malay driver had lifted the bonnet of the car, and was tinkering with the engine. It was the Red Cross car, and Meg walked out from behind it as Quentin drove up.

'Good afternoon, lady,' he said jumping out. 'Can I help?' Meg was annoyed with herself for flushing.

'I'm afraid cars are beyond me,' she said. 'If you'd be good enough to look at the engine.'

The outcome was nothing more nor less than the discovery of an empty tank! Abu had forgotten to fill up. As it happened Quentin had a jeep can of petrol on board, and the trouble was soon righted. Meg thanked him, and was about to turn away.

'You mentioned that you came here to the estate, but this is the first time I've caught you red-handed!' laughed Quentin.

'Yes! We didn't have many patients to-day, and I've finished a little earlier than usual,' replied Meg.

'Do you go to the Tamil *kongsi* as well?' asked Quentin, suddenly becoming interested in the work of the Red Cross.

'Oh, yes,' replied Meg. 'We went there first to-day. There is a little boy there very ill with pneumonia.'

'Oh, which one is he?' asked Quentin at once. He was very fond of the estate children, and knew many of them by name.

'They called him "Suppiah" I think,' said Meg. 'He lives in the second doorway in the first block of houses. He's just a little fellow about eight years old.'

'Yes, I know who you mean,' said Quentin, 'a happy youngster most times. How long has he been ill?'

'They said he first had a cold, and that for three days he has been burning hot,' said Meg. 'He's a very sick little boy. As a matter of fact, I was just going off to the hospital to see if they had a spare bed.'

'And if they do have one, how's he going to get there?' asked Quentin.

'Oh, I'll come back and get him this evening,' Meg answered briskly.

'You'll kill yourself if you rush around like that,' said Quentin, looking more solicitously at the nurse than he realized. Meg found herself flushing again, and turned to go.

'Why not come up to the office, and ring the hospital from there?' said Quentin.

'Oh, may I?' said Meg eagerly. As a matter of fact, the previous fortnight had been an extremely busy one, and she was feeling a little weary. A fact which Quentin had already noted.

So it came to pass that a few minutes later Meg had arranged for Suppiah to go to hospital. Quentin drove down to the *kongsi* behind the Land Rover. There he lifted poor little Suppiah into the back seat of the Red Cross car beside his mother. Meg got into the front seat beside the driver, and just for a minute Quentin stood looking at her.

'Do you always come to the estate on Tuesdays?' he asked.

'Yes, usually,' she replied, looking somewhere past him into the distance. 'Why?'—innocently.

'I just wanted to be sure which day to cut my finger,' he replied with a quizzical smile. Meg blushed furiously, and before she could reply, the *syce* drove off.

All this had taken place outside the lad's home, and Sandy, coming into the *kongsi* on a matter of business, had been at a distance, an unobserved witness of this last scene. Seeing Quentin's earnest look, and the nurse's vivid blush, he murmured to himself,

'Dear, dear, so that's the way the wind blows! Quentin of all people. Wait till I tell Tony!' And he disappeared into one of the houses.

Quentin meanwhile drove off to finish up odds and ends of work for the day. It never occurred to him to wonder why he was whistling so merrily all the while.

The next morning, a terrible tragedy happened on the estate!

Shortly before noon, a number of tappers were gathered deep in the estate, at one of the latex-collecting depots. In the comparatively cool, shadowy surroundings, they were chatting with one another, and relaxing as they handed up their pails of latex to be weighed. This was the reward of a long morning's work. Out amongst the trees they had each one been isolated while working, and many had gone about their work in real fear at the loneliness. But now they were together, and enjoying the security

of numbers! There was quite a lot of loud talking which was a natural reaction to a morning of solitude. One or two of the young girls laughed at some trifling joke; and most of the tappers were keen to get home for their long-delayed meal. The *kepala* was there with his little son of about ten years, who was learning to tap.

Suddenly the bushes behind the depot parted, and out walked four armed terrorists! They were wearing jungle green uniforms with a red star on their hats. The tappers froze on the spot, and there was an awful quiet. Not a sound anywhere! The terrorists stepped forward in a business-like manner, and lining the tappers up, harangued them at some length on the dire consequences of opposing the communists. Woe betide anyone who refused to co-operate with them in the struggle! There was one on the estate who was doing just that. Now his day of retribution had come!

Calling the *kepala* to step forward, the terrorists proceeded to tie his hands behind his back. They were prolonging the agony, to be sure that the people had a good object lesson that would act as a deterrent to resistance! Then they deliberately took aim, and shot the *kepala* dead! The poor little son was almost fainting, but no one dared to show sympathy towards him by going to his assistance.

Just as mysteriously as they had come, the terrorists went again. The whole incident was over so quickly, it seemed impossible that it could have happened. And yet, there was the dead man . . . murdered before their eyes. He who a few weeks ago had openly cursed the terrorists, and who had so steadfastly refused to supply them with food.

When the police arrived soon afterwards, they found the tappers so thoroughly intimidated, that they at first refused to talk at all. Some of the young girls were shaking with horror at what they had witnessed. Other tappers who were known to be friends of the *kepala*, were almost petrified lest the terrorists should return and treat them likewise.

Gradually details of the incident were forthcoming, and the police immediately set off in hot pursuit; but no trace was even seen of the terrorists. They appeared to have just evaporated into

space. Other police guarded the depot, till all the day's latex was delivered. But some of the tappers had lost their nerve for awhile, and the next day quite a few of those who usually came from neighbouring villages, failed to put in an appearance at work. In a few days all was working normally again . . . at least on the surface. They had been having these 'incidents' on and off for some years now. The wise took notice, and kept up the supply of contraband food to the jungle. The unwise and unco-operative must be prepared to be black-listed, and meet their fate sometime. Risks must be taken of course, but they knew what to do about that!

There was the fateful morning when the police at Sungei Bahru gate had searched one woman after another, and found a small match-box full of rice strapped high up on the inside of each person's leg. Several hundred tappers were thus prevented from transporting a large supply of rice to the jungle. Another day in one of the villages, all the tappers refused to go to work. The first woman to be searched was found with two biscuits in an inside pocket; and was removed to the police station. The other tappers turned round and went home before they reached the searching station!

When the news of the *kepala's* death was brought to Quentin, he felt shocked and sick. Cold-blooded killing was always abhorrent to him. The *kepala* was a very experienced person with the interests of the estate at heart. Quentin thought of the shy little wife in her green and gold sari, as he had seen her at a recent Indian Festival on the estate. He also thought of the five little children now left fatherless. And he felt outraged by the horror of it all. It would not be so easy for the manager to replace the *kepala* who had been on the estate many years. Of course provision would be made for the wife and children, but that did not give them back a husband and father.

Later in the day, Quentin went down to offer his condolences to the family, and met grievous sorrow and weeping. But even this was subdued and behind closed doors. The terrorists must not know that public sympathy was against them. To their way of thinking, they had destroyed an enemy of the people!

About five o'clock, Quentin decided to run down to the

hospital, about ten miles away, and see how Suppiah was faring. He stopped at a shop near the hospital and bought a red balloon for the invalid. A few minutes later he was sitting talking to him. The lad was breathing somewhat more easily, but was still very sick. His mother was most appreciative of the visit. Quentin did not stay long for fear of tiring Suppiah, but giving him a cheerful smile and a 'Get well soon, old chap!' he made his way out to the car.

Driving home alone in the cool of the day, he found some of the old perturbing thoughts coming back. As he thought of the sudden death that had come to the *kepala*, he wished that he could be sure about eternal life . . . just what it was, and how one went about really experiencing it.

'I must go along to the English service next Sunday,' he said to himself.

A big monitor lizard ran on to the road, and the sudden swerve he automatically gave the car, recalled him to the present. A large military convoy of trucks was coming down the highway. How vexing it all seemed . . . internal war and senseless killing. Month after month, year after year, it went on. . . . He knew it was a vital and essential struggle to preserve freedom, but if only there could be peace, Malaya would be a paradise.

Quentin wished he had known Malaya before the Japanese war. Of course it still was one of the loveliest countries in South-east Asia, being always green. He reflected that jungle still covered nearly three-quarters of the country which was a little bigger than England without Wales. That same jungle simply abounded in wild life . . . elephant, tiger, deer, bison, rhinoceros and ferocious wild pig. He thought of the one hundred and thirty varieties of snakes, besides several thousand species of moths and butterflies.

He felt disappointed that he had not collected more specimens. But everything was depressing to-day. He hoped things would soon be back to normal, and that to-morrow they would look more rosy.

Chapter Ten

'LIGHTEN THEIR DARKNESS'

ON a Monday night some weeks later, Meg was at the mission house for supper. Straight after the meal, Michael departed for the village of Sungei Siput a few miles away. There he conducted a weekly open-air meeting.

The Assistant Resettlement Officer of the village was a professing Christian, and always came to the meeting to help Michael by keeping order amongst the children. Gradually he gained confidence in speaking of spiritual things, and would give the address in Cantonese after Michael had finished in Mandarin. With the meeting and travelling, Michael was away from home for about two hours. So Valerie and Meg settled down for a chat.

After the English service on the previous Sunday, Meg had asked Valerie if she could come to see her the next evening. For a long time she had been in conflict over this matter of personal salvation, and sometimes felt desperate about it. Previously she had told Valerie a great deal about her home and life in hospital, and Valerie was able to understand some of the difficulties that were hedging Meg about.

'Meg,' said Valerie after they had talked for awhile. 'At the end of the day when you are tired, you go into your room, and flop down on the bed to rest. Do you ever wonder if the bed is able to take your weight or not?'

'Why, no, Valerie,' replied Meg earnestly. 'It never occurs to me.'

'Well, it's just like that in spiritual things . . . "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee." Your burden of sin, Meg. All the sins of your life, all the confusions and conflicts, all the uncertainty, cast them on the Lord. He is able to take the weight of them all.'

And while Meg sat quietly listening, Valerie once again led her to Calvary. It was on the Cross that the Lord Jesus had forever dealt with the question of sin. The weight and blackness of man's sin had been so awful that a Holy God could not look upon it. It had caused the Father to turn away from His Son, who cried out in anguish, 'My God, My God, why hast *Thou* forsaken Me?'

'It was your sin and mine Meg, that caused it,' said Valerie in a low voice.

'Yes, Valerie, I know,' replied Meg much moved. 'And I have asked Him to forgive my sins.' She clasped her hands nervously. 'Valerie, I do believe, too, that He did it for me personally. And yet . . . and yet I do not have peace and rest of heart.' The tears were in her eyes.

Finally it was a simple, often-used illustration that brought the longed-for assurance to Meg.

'Meg, listen to this little story,' said Valerie leaning forward. 'You remember at the time of the Passover in Egypt long ago, the children of Israel were told by God to kill a little unblemished lamb, and put its blood on the door-posts and lintel of the house. Then at midnight, the destroying angel flew over the land, and in every house where there was no blood on the door, the eldest son was slain by the angel. Those who were under the blood were safe.'

'Yes, I remember,' said Meg slowly.

'Try to imagine two of those houses side by side in the same street,' said Valerie. 'In one, the eldest son went out, and seeing the blood on the doorposts, went off to bed, and slept peacefully all night. God had promised he would be safe. It would be all right. In the next house, the eldest son also went out and looked at the blood on the doorposts of his house. But he was anxious. Several times he went out and looked at the blood. "Are you sure it's all right, father?" he asked. "Yes, my son, quite sure. God has said it, you are safe." The lad went to bed, but could not sleep. He tossed and worried and got very agitated as midnight drew near. In the morning he woke safe and sound as the boy next door.'

Valerie paused a minute, and then said to her companion:

'Did his anxiety and lack of trust make any difference to his safety, Meg?'

'Valerie, of course it didn't,' said Meg opening her eyes wide. A beautiful light was dawning in her face. 'What a stupid I've been all these years. My fretting and worry have all been wasted. I've been saved ever since that day in hospital! Oh, Valerie, I really am saved after all. It's a fact, and whatever I've felt about it hasn't made the slightest difference. Oh, isn't it wonderful!' and the tears of joy fell.

Valerie herself was deeply moved. It was always a most humbling experience to sit by and see God working a miracle of grace! Presently both women bowed their heads in prayer, and there was a solemn hush in the little room as they opened their hearts in praise and thanksgiving to God for His wonderful salvation!

Then Valerie opened the Bible and read one verse out loud, 'For I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day.'

'Never forget, dear Meg,' said Valerie. 'He is able to keep you now, and always.' And with a few words of counsel about the necessity for daily Bible reading and prayer, Valerie rose to open the door for Michael who had just returned.

As soon as Michael came into the room, he sensed something special had been happening. He looked questioningly at his wife, and then at Meg.

'It's all right, Michael,' said Meg with a radiant smile, 'I'm sure at last.'

'Thank God, Meg,' said Michael quietly and reverently. They shook hands as if sealing a contract.

A few minutes later Meg was speeding away home. After seeing her off, Michael and Valerie remained standing out in the cool night air. Their feelings lay too deep for speech, so they stood in silence in the darkness. A wild elephant was trumpeting outside the perimeter. The banana palms rippled as a little breeze played in the leaves. The Indian family sat murmuring in the night. The last embers of a small fire reflected their faces faintly.

Valerie looked up at the magnificent starry dome above her. 'If the wrong side of heaven is so beautiful,' she said softly to Michael, 'What must it be like on the other side?'

'There will be joy in the presence of the angels to-night, Val,' he replied. And together they went inside and shut the door.

The next morning, Valerie was just settling down to write the weekly home letter to the older children in the homeland, when she heard the familiar shouting of the vegetable-woman. A-Moi was a Hakka, and quite a humorist with her witty repartee. She cared for a vegetable patch on the outside of the village, and helped to support her family by the sale of climbing spinach, spring onions, brinjals, and long beans. Long before she arrived at the mission house, Valerie could hear her calling out. It was quite easy to follow her progress up the street, even though she was as yet out of sight! Her raucous voice yelled various sallies at one and another of the villagers who refused to buy.

Judging by the last burst of shouting, Valerie gathered that someone had said something uncomplimentary about the spinach! She chuckled and went to get her purse. Better vegetables could be bought on the street, but Valerie usually bought a little from A-Moi just to keep up the contact with her.

They were really quite good friends, and carried on long noisy conversations, in which neither understood what the other was saying. But as Valerie explained to Michael laughing, 'You don't always need words to get a person's meaning.' To-day A-Moi came up to the front door, and put down her carrying-pole and baskets. She looked pale and strained, and she and Valerie had not been long in each other's company before she began on a tale of woe. Valerie gathered that her husband had been taken off to prison (this latter explained by a demonstration of handcuffs!). She sympathized with A-Moi in her dilemma, but it was not until later in the morning that the Joneses learned all the details.

A-Moi's two daughters, aged eleven and thirteen years, came past on a bicycle about lunch-time. Valerie waved and smiled and they dismounted and came inside. They watched her

preparing a simple meal, chatting the while about this and that. Finally they got on to the trouble at home. Their father had publicly slandered the village chairman (whom they also proceeded to abuse!) and the latter had taken him to law. Now he had been sentenced to three months' imprisonment. And how were they going to eat for that time, with father earning no money?

For some time to come these girls came round selling vegetables, while A-Moi went off to the town to see if she could earn more money. In order to help the family, Valerie bought more vegetables than she and Michael really needed. 'But,' she explained piling green vegetables on to his plate, 'just think of the vitamins!'

A-Moi was not in evidence again until her husband was out of prison. This time she needed first-aid in a hurry. A centipede had bitten her! Valerie had always hoped that she would never meet a centipede at close quarters. These horrifying reddish-brown creatures had twenty-one pairs of walking legs. Folded under the head were a pair of claws that could inflict a severe poisoned bite. One of the missionaries in another station had disturbed a centipede in a wet floor-mop. The creature had resented her and fought back. There had been quite a tussle to finally kill it. And now A-Moi was bitten by one of them. A cut had to be made between the two claw marks which were over a quarter-of-an-inch apart, and Condy's crystals rubbed in. After some time she obtained relief from this treatment, and sat down to listen while Valerie talked to her.

Poor A-Moi. Valerie had often showed her the Gospel posters and she would sit and look at them. But so far there was no real interest. She was, however, always glad of an aspirin or two for the almost perpetual headache she seemed to suffer from. One day Valerie was visiting in her home and discovered that her son had arrived home with a head injury sustained at basket-ball. She invited him to come round and get some medicine from Michael.

Later he came, and returned for several dressings. Some of his mates always accompanied him on these visits, and Michael spoke to them straightly of their need of a Saviour from sin. They

listened quietly, and took away the booklets he gave them, but when the head was better, the visits ceased, and the young men showed no further interest. It took faith to see a harvest, when as yet the rough ground was still being ploughed! So much of the daily work was like that—ships that pass in the night! Others coming across one's pathway and disappearing again. The Lord's servant knew that he was God's link in many a chain, and he prayed to be a vital link.

The village idolatry continued. About ten days after Meg's visit, a heathen festival was celebrated in the village. It specially concerned the Hokkien-speaking Chinese, who had originally come from Amoy in South China. There were many of them in the village, and on the day of the celebration, no one went to work.

The night before, Valerie had seen A-Lan's mother struggling home with a large basket full of red candles, joss-sticks, and stamped yellow paper. The young brother staggered along behind with several bottles of wine and two or three packets of fancy, sweet biscuits. A sister who was a little older than the boy, tried to keep up with him. She was carrying a rebellious quacking duck in one hand, and a fluttering apprehensive chicken in the other. Both were being held upside down by the feet! A little unloved and forlorn puppy was following as close as he dared, but taking care to keep out of kicking distance of the boy. While her family was out shopping, A-Lan had her bath and went to the mission house early, to have the dressings changed. She was sitting there when the others returned from shopping and passed by at the open door. She shouted at the young brother who was helping himself furtively to a biscuit and had no idea he was being seen. He looked round venomously, and yelled something vulgar to his sister. Whereupon her anger rose, and she muttered about what she would do to him when she got hands on him!

Michael spoke to her of the love of God, but she only grunted in agreement with what he said, repeating phrases emptily after him. As soon as the dressing was finished, she hurried home. The next moment, a small naked boy, with a clean shirt in his hand

came roaring out of the bath-house! His ablutions seemed to have been interrupted. When he was a safe distance from the doorway, he stood on the road, shouting insulting and provocative remarks at his elder sister. There was no immediate response from within the house, so he proceeded to struggle into his shirt before the public gaze. This done, he continued to call out loud and long. A few seconds later, A-Lan, charging like an enraged bull, came rushing out of the doorway. In her hand was a long, bamboo pole, used for propping up the clothes-line. But brother was too quick for her, and fleeing to a more distant vantage point, he continued to be vociferously offensive. A-Lan had the worst of it, and after shrieking some very personal remarks at him, she had to give up and go inside. At dusk, when her anger had cooled, and she was busy about other things, the young rascal returned home almost unnoticed.

In the morning early, the family was busy plucking the duck and chicken, washing the rice, and making various dainties. About nine a.m. a table was brought outside the front door directly opposite the ancestor shrine. The ancestor was notified that the feast was about to start, by the lighting of incense sticks. On the table were set bowls, spoons, chopsticks, and a selection of choice foodstuffs. Two candles were burning. The ancestor was invited to come and partake of the feast. After a couple of hours, during which time the spirits were considered to have had ample time to eat, the food thus offered was taken inside again, and re-cooked and flavoured for the family's meal.

Before the feast was cleared away, however, the mother took some of the yellow paper, and lighting it from the candles, flung it on the ground. Then she piled a lot more of the paper on top making a large blaze; at the same time putting her hands together and making obeisance to the spirits. Her lips moved rapidly all the while. The family, dressed in its best clothes, meanwhile stood and looked on. No doubt it seemed a long wait till they could partake of the goodly steaming rice and dainties. A-Lan looked sulky, and while the offerings were being cleared away, evidently trod on her young sister's toe. The youngster hit A-Lan and lashed out in a torrent of words. A-Lan retaliated, and before long a pitched battle was once again in progress.

'Clearly,' thought Michael, who was watching all this from his window, 'the religion of these people has no good effect on their conduct.'

A fresh outburst of screaming, somewhere over behind the mission house, told Michael that A-Dong was getting another beating!

'Michael, do come!' called Valerie rather breathlessly. She never could bear the sound of children being beaten by a parent in a flaming temper; even though she knew that the screaming was largely put on for show, and that often only about one blow in four reached its mark! Chinese children were adept at dodging, but not all were successful in escaping punishment.

Michael went out with Valerie, and they stood watching from the back-yard. Quite a crowd had gathered on the road to watch A-Dong suffer shame. The young imp had taken ten cents (3*d.*) from the house next door while the occupants were not looking. The money had been found in his pocket! Very well, the honour of the house was at stake, and justice would be done in the presence of all the neighbours. A good beating from father first, while mother went to fetch a piece of rope. Shouting remarks at him all the time, the parents fastened the rope round their son's neck, and then drove him like a young colt up the street and back again. This was felt by the crowd to be a most suitable punishment, and appreciative comments were forth-coming. A supposedly irate father and mother, with grim determination flicked their son once more round the legs with a thin stick, and led him indoors. There he was no doubt restored to the bosom of the family, for some time later Valerie saw him issue forth serenely, chewing a piece of sugar-cane.

'Rough justice!' laughed Michael to Valerie who was still feeling indignant. 'It's more important that the family's "face" should be saved, than that the child should be properly corrected! Oh, here's Mr T'ang,' and he went forward to open the gate for the teacher.

'Good morning, Mr T'ang! We didn't expect you to come and read with us on a holiday.'

'It's nothing—nothing at all,' murmured Mr T'ang. Michael

did not know whether he referred to his coming to read, or to the heathen festival.

Michael and his wife were praying for Mr T'ang—that the light of Holy Scripture would penetrate his heart. He was reading portions of it every day with them, and recently had asked Michael if he could take the New Testament home—on the pretext of course of preparing the next day's lesson. But Michael felt that Mr T'ang was getting more than ordinarily interested in the Gospel. Several times he had paused in the middle of reading a verse to ask a pertinent question.

When to-day's lesson was over, Michael took Jocelyn, and walked up the road a little way with the teacher. About twenty yards ahead people were gathering, and there seemed to be some excitement...

A-Moi's daughter came running towards them, 'A snake! A snake!' she called excitedly. Then she screwed her face up and shuddered. 'Ugh! It's a big one!' she said.

As the missionaries came on the scene of activity, there, sure enough, was a large writhing python. It was dead though still contorting its fifteen feet of body into coils and twists! A thin rope had been tied to its head, and the villagers were keen to hear all about the details of its killing. Apparently, the python under cover of darkness, had come to search for ducks, or maybe cats and dogs. It had alas, delayed its departure too long. And now had been discovered and duly despatched.

Michael parted from Mr T'ang, and hurried back to call his wife to come and see the snake. In a few minutes they were back, looking at the handsome markings on the skin. A pattern of black lines with yellow edges formed a kind of network on the brown background. A friend at home had told them of this great reticulated python of Malaya; that it was the largest living snake, being bigger than even the American anaconda. And here they were, actually seeing one with their own eyes!

They knew that these pythons sometimes grew to a length of thirty feet, and that one so long would weigh well over two hundred pounds.

'They don't attack human beings do they?' asked Valerie, unconsciously holding Jocelyn more tightly.

'I don't think so,' replied Michael. 'They just coil themselves round an animal and squeeze till it can't breathe any more. Nice thought!'

Valerie felt that she could perhaps get used to other wild creatures, but never a snake. Nasty slithering, deceptive things, so silent and wily. She shuddered. What a perfect picture of that Old Serpent the Devil, who had deceived Eve in the Garden, and was even now deceiving the people of Sungei Bahru.

A loud laughing screech rang out overhead, and Valerie was just in time to point out the pretty kingfisher to Jocelyn. A flash of bright blue, and the bird was gone. He sounded as though he, too, were gloating over the snake's death.

Chapter Eleven

FLOODS

MICHAEL and Valerie had been almost a year in the Federation when the rainy season set in. They had not realized what might happen, and so the danger took them unawares. For months the Malays had been prophesying that it was going to be an exceptionally wet season. But no one took much notice. Actually there was not a great deal anyone could do about it.

On Wednesday after lunch, Tom Phillips arrived. He was a fellow-worker from a station further north, going to take some special meetings in the south of the province. He had agreed to stay and speak at the evening open-air, and go on the next morning.

It was Tom's first real visit to Sungei Bahru. He had stopped in once before for a quick cup of tea, but he did not know the district. So in the late afternoon, Michael suggested that they all take a run in the van, see the town, and also the school where the English service was held. After doing this, they drove along the road and had a look at a Malay *kampong* (village).

The houses with high and colourful tiled steps, were built up on beams, some feet above the ground. The Malays had planted little bushy Cayenne Cherry trees, with their bright red fruits. There were hog plums that they liked so much for pickles, and several kinds of flowering shrubs. Valerie caught sight of a water-apple tree. She had been ever so pleased one day when a child brought her a spray of this, with its bright pink glistening fruit. The crisp, juicy flesh was very pleasantly flavoured, and Jocelyn had wanted more!

The whole *kampong* was dotted with coconut palms and trees. Michael slowed the van down to a walking-pace, so that they could enjoy it all. Easy-going Malay women in their bright

kebaya and sarongs, loafed on the verandahs of their homes, while merry babies crawled about in the dirt. The older children ran here and there calling and playing. Goats roamed at will. Back of the *kampong*, and standing alone, was the mosque. To-day it was silent and deserted but on Friday it would be filled with Malays at worship. The sight of the friendly likeable Malays always filled the missionaries with more than a tinge of sadness. How were they going to be reached with the Gospel?

This little *kampong* was only one of hundreds inhabited by some three and a half million Malays. As Michael was just about to accelerate and drive on, Tom caught sight of a Malay boy with a monkey chained on the front of his bicycle. The monkey wore a collar to which a long rope was attached. He was rather a fierce pet, and one of many trained to climb the coconut trees and pick the fruit for their masters. Jocelyn clapped her hands with glee at the sight of the monkey.

But now the sky was clouding over quickly, and the first large drops of rain were splashing on to the windscreen. By the time the party arrived home, it was raining heavily.

'No open-air meeting to-night, if this keeps up, Tom,' said Michael, looking out at the torrential downpour. Little did he know that there would be no more open-air meetings for some weeks! For the rain did not stop. It seemed to just fall down in great heavy sheets, and the noise on the tin roof was almost deafening. Conversation was impossible.

'How useful it would be to know the deaf and dumb language,' sighed Valerie to herself.

The next morning there was still no cessation of the rain when after breakfast Tom decided to get on his way. But in about an hour he was back again. The main highway was flooded and there was no way through! Immediately the men went into a consultation, while Valerie began preparations for an early lunch. How were they going to buy any food if this kept up? It was obvious that things were getting serious. The rivers were rising rapidly, and already flood warnings were being broadcast from Radio Malaya.

Tom's wife was in Kuala Lumpur doing a language examination, so he decided to make straight there. After a hurried lunch,

he left for the North. Michael went along behind to make sure that he really got away this time. But alas! it was too late! By early afternoon the highway north was also under water for about a mile, and still rising. So Tom had to return to Sungei Bahru, and wait for the rain to stop.

A bed of planks had been made for him the previous night, and Valerie tried to make it as comfortable as possible. But missionaries in the villages had only the minimum of things required for their own use, and it was always difficult to entertain in such cramped quarters. Tom had had to sleep in the tiny front room that was in full view of the public gaze, as it opened on to the street.

The first warning that the village was in danger came when Michael saw Mr Liu in his bare feet, pants rolled up over his knees, and carrying a long wicker-basket in the direction of the piggery. His two sons, each with long poles which they carried upright in their hands, followed him. Before too long, they were coming back again, carrying the pig in the basket. It was swinging from one of the poles, and Mr Liu and his sons were at either end, bearing the weight. It seemed to be taking all their strength, for the pig was a large one and very heavy, and the ground was slippery. After depositing him in a small enclosure behind the mission house, they went back and in a similar manner returned with a second and third pig. Other people were now hurriedly doing likewise, all attired in large pointed straw rain hats and the minimum of clothing which was soon wet through and sticking to them. They were hurrying as night was descending rapidly, and the rain poured steadily down.

The piggery was in the lowest-lying part of the village, and by the time it was dark, was three feet under water. The water was already entering a number of houses, and the great trek to higher ground began. A few Malay and Indian families were the first to have to leave their homes. A crowd of them came with various bundles to the house next door to the mission, where kindly Indians billeted as many as they could. One of the Malays was sick. He was an old man, and it must have been an ordeal for him to have been carried on someone's back through the village in the rain. But it was either that or drowning;

for by morning, there was ten feet of water in his house!

As the waters slowly and remorselessly rose and the rain did not stop, a general evacuation was commenced by about two-thirds of the village. All through the night, the villagers tramped back and forth to the homes of willing friends, or to the school which had been placed at the disposal of the refugees. Some pushed bundles of clothing and household utensils on the carriers of their bicycles. The family bag of rice was being jealously guarded! Others carried small frightened children, with older ones clinging to their wet clothes. Every now and again someone would slip over in the mud. Others laughed at them nervously, but not unkindly.

Some had managed to bring their few fowls. The old folks leaned heavily on long sticks, proceeding slowly and carefully, testing the ground for pot-holes before they dared to take the next step. There were no street lights, and the odd torch or two seemed to give a pathetically small gleam in the heavy rain.

Early in the evening Michael took the van, and drove back and forth with people helping to move furniture and valuables. After some hours of this, he and Tom had to park their vans on higher ground. They were afraid of losing them in the flood waters! Valerie gathered a few things together in preparation for flight. Some essential foodstuffs, matches (for it would mean camping and cooking on an open fire perhaps), changes of clothing, two thermos flasks of hot drinks, and a big can of drinking water. This latter had always to be boiled in the village, and now it was terrible even to imagine what the state of the wells would be like after the flood waters had receded. The most valuable things, like typewriter, literature, Bibles, medicine, etc. were stacked up on the rafters of the house.

It was agreed that the household would evacuate when the floor of the house was actually under water. The idea was to go up the track to the slightly higher ground where the cars were parked, and sleep in them. Finally they went to bed to listen to the unusual sound of pigs grunting at close quarters! Michael was up every hour or so watching the rising tide; and Jocelyn slept peacefully through it all. The side of the road on which the mission house stood, was somewhat higher than that of the

opposite side, where the houses were built a foot or two below road-level.

The family were more than thankful that it had not been necessary for them to evacuate during the hours of darkness. In the first glimmer of daylight, Michael and Tom went to explore. The heavy rain had eased, and a grey misty drizzle hung over the village. The waters were still rising. It was an uncanny, helpless feeling. Two-thirds of the village was inundated to various depths of water. The old people's home opposite, had almost two feet of water inside, but the old folks were loath to leave the only comfort they knew. The police arrived, and gave orders for the aged to move at once, so Tom and Michael got busy, helping to carry all sorts of odds and ends into the mission house for protection!

The little front room where Tom had slept, was now chock-a-block with refugee belongings. His and Michael's wet shoes, socks, and clothing were draped all through the house in a depressing array. The damp had seeped through the concrete floor, and as Valerie thought, 'tried to pretend it wasn't there, till you trod on it and pressed it into the open!' The single layer of outer wall boards was soaked through, and all the banana palms and tapioca plants dripped in a melancholy chorus. When Valerie ventured into the backyard, she came back with great lumps of yellow clay sticking to her shoes. Michael and Tom were long since in their bare feet.

Only the village ducks were completely happy! They were, in fact, in Paradise! After a chequered existence of being pursued by dogs and cats, turkeys and small boys, they floated about in great peace. This was how life should be! They swam singly or in groups, quacking cheerily; some leisurely plunging their heads beneath the surface of the water, others with a gleam in their eyes triumphed over the bedraggled appearance of their erstwhile enemies in the distance.

Jocelyn was joyfully standing up at a window watching the ducks and their antics. It was far too exciting to sit quietly and eat breakfast, so Valerie had given her a large crust of bread and butter to munch as she stood at the window. Little rivulets of water ran down from the higher ground, cutting trenches in the

clay. A-Lan's home was hidden under water up to the window-sills, and Valerie wondered how long it would be, before some of these homes would start to give way at the foundations and lean over precariously, and even collapse. The red paper signs of good luck lay limp and streaked against the doorways. They were no protection against this calamity!

Meanwhile Michael and Tom had discovered that Sungei Bahru was now cut off from the rest of Malaya except by telephone. The police were talking about having a rubber dinghy and supplies dropped by helicopter if necessary. The *padang* was five feet under water, and made a luxurious swimming-pool for the village youngsters. These were gleefully splashing about naked and happy. Let it rain! Who cared? In the main street too, children were swimming and chasing one another in gay abandon. Some of the police, naked to the waist, were wading through the waters still trying to rescue anything of value from the houses.

The refugees camped at the school, busily prepared a somewhat dismal morning meal, and wisps of smoke here and there indicated a damp little fire, being coaxed to give of its best. The thing that impressed the missionaries perhaps most of all, was the quiet cheerfulness of the Chinese in adversity. Not once did they hear complaining of any kind, but rather, a fatalistic acceptance of their circumstances. Friends opened their doors unhesitatingly to friends, taking in far more people than the buildings could comfortably house.

When Michael and Valerie were sitting enjoying a hot cup of coffee with Tom a little later, they were discussing this.

'The Chinese are a wonderful race, Tom,' said Michael. 'I don't suppose any other people have suffered so much during the centuries.'

'I doubt it,' replied Tom. 'They've lived always on the edge of starvation, just fighting for existence as it were.'

'Yes, and millions have died of famine and epidemics, not to mention floods, rebellions and civil wars,' continued Michael.

'It's really no wonder they are such patient people,' said Tom.

'And it must give them quite a different mentality from ours of the West. We are poles apart that way,' Michael went on.

'The question is where to find a point of contact,' mused Tom. 'I think we need to remember all this when we bring the message of Christ to them.'

'Yes! But Tom,' Michael went on enthusiastically, 'how beautifully His message fits the picture. What could be more fitting than our Lord's invitation, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."'

'That's quite true,' answered Tom. 'No race, or set of circumstances is outside the scope of the Gospel.'

'How can they be,' replied Michael, 'when we are told that on the great Day, some shall be there from "every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation"?''

It seemed that the rain had stopped, in the meantime anyway. The women and girls of the village were coming out and starting to call their ducks. They seemed to recognize the particular cry of owners, and came waddling or swimming along in answer to it. After a few hours, Tom decided to go for a run and find out about the state of the road. He had just gone when the police came with a telephone message for Michael. He went along to ring the Kuala Lumpur number. The friends at the central station were wondering how they were faring, and were relieved to hear that the waters had stopped just a few feet in front of the house, and they had not needed to evacuate. Apparently, Jean Robson, a young lady missionary was marooned in her station fifteen miles away. Would Michael try to get down and see if he could help? He promised to go as soon as the police gave permission.

Tom had been able to proceed only a very short distance, and came back to say that the north road was still impassable, but if there was no more rain, it was expected to resume through traffic in twenty-four hours. Meanwhile Michael learned from the police that the south road was heavily under water. Two soldiers had been washed off the road and drowned while trying to take their truck through waters which were pouring across the highway. No one could attempt a journey till the next day at the earliest. The main railway line was washed away for quite a distance, and no south trains could run for at least two weeks. Michael heard about the seriousness of the floods in other parts

of Malaya. There had been a surprisingly small loss of life, considering the rapidity with which the waters had risen.

That evening the three friends were standing outside the front of the house in the night air. The clouds had cleared, and a brilliant moon was shining. The trees and deserted houses were silhouetted clearly against the sky, and reflected eerily in the silent flood waters that lay at their feet. It seemed as though thousands of bull-frogs were chanting monotonously on the outskirts, and in the village itself. A stray owl hooted mournfully over the desolate scene. Usually at full moon, scores of little votive lamps and candles were burning in the doorways, but to-night the moon looked in vain for his devotees.

The sick Malay next door was evidently worse, for they were softly beating a drum and someone was intoning in a muffled voice. But not softly enough to prevent the sound reaching Mr Liu, as he stood at his back door. Now Mr Liu was the landlord of the house where the sick man lay, and he was instantly stirred to action. Gathering his sons about him, he stalked in majestic anger down to the house where the poor dying man lay.

'Get this man out of here!' he stormed. 'At once! No one is going to die in a house of mine!' He spat on the floor. The missionaries overheard it all in the dark. They could see the Liu sons, pale and stiffened with righteous anger, standing in the lighted doorway. Their eyes were blazing! No one moved. Evidently the Indian tenant was reasoning softly with Mr Liu. Presently the landlord shouted again,

'Get him out, I say! He can die anywhere he likes but not here! How are we ever going to live in this house again, if you defile it this way?'

Valerie felt the tears hot in her eyes, and a choking constriction in her throat.

'Behold, the tender mercies of the heathen!' muttered Michael to Tom.

Eventually after much loud talking, Liu Senior, and his sons departed importantly. The Indian must have persuaded them that his Malay friend was not going to die immediately, for the patient remained there and seemed somewhat better in the morning.

Prayer was made for him frequently in the mission house. It was all they could do. Valerie felt very distressed to think that they were not allowed to speak to him of Christ. Perhaps God would reach him through other means. He was almighty and had wonderful ways of answering prayer.

The next day fair conditions still prevailed, and Tom was able to get on his way north, this time without having to come back. It had been a cheer for Michael and Valerie to have him there during the days of stress. Too bad that he could not go south for the special meetings; but mission work everywhere, in common with most other things, was temporarily disrupted.

Michael said 'Good-bye' to his wife and baby daughter, and set out to try and rescue Jean Robson from her dilemma. The police were not too keen on his making the attempt, but finally gave their permission. After motoring several miles, he parked the car, and hired one of several *praus* (skiffs) that were opportunely ferrying people the couple or so miles to the next village. It was a rare experience to float over a bridge, several feet beneath him, and to be paddled through narrow waterways between the tops of trees to which clung rather desperate snakes and lizards.

Michael eventually found the mission station submerged in four feet of muddy water! Jean had been given kind hospitality by one of the Christian families. After two years of missionaries living and preaching in this village, there was a small group of believers. Michael persuaded Jean to come up to Sungei Bahru for a few days, and the return journey was accomplished without accident.

After some days she set out to return. The Joneses went with her, armed with buckets, brooms, and scrubbing-brushes. There would be quite a mess of dirt and silt to clean away now that the waters had receded. But to their amazement, they found on arrival, that some of the Christians had been at work. The house was swept and clean, and all ready for habitation. The missionaries were touched by this loving and unexpected act of thoughtfulness. What a contrast with the heathen! When people became Christians, they began to think of helping others, and did not live for themselves alone.

On the following Monday, Meg was able to recommence her

visits to Sungei Bahru. She had some merry tales to tell of flood experiences. Her friends, moreover were more than glad to see the joy of the Lord reflected in her face.

'They say malaria will be bad after all this flooding,' she said. 'So I've brought along a supply of anti-malarial medicine for the village.'

'Yes,' said Michael. 'I suppose the mosquitoes will breed fast in all this moisture. The smells on all sides are anything but pleasant these days too. There could be an outbreak of typhoid or anything.'

The friends were sitting together chatting when there was the sound of an engine stopping, and a car door shutting. Michael put his cup and saucer on the table, and was just going forward to the door, when a cheery voice called out, 'Hullo there! Anyone at home on this desert island?'

'It's Quentin!' said Valerie jumping up.

'Yes, me,' he replied coming into the room. 'I haven't seen you folk for ages, so I thought I'd better see how you were. And you too, lady,' he said turning to Meg.

Meg of course, felt her colour rising, and was very pleased when Michael began to tell of the flood in the village, and all that had been happening. She was sitting quietly listening as she looked out of the open door into the sunshine.

'And what about you, Quentin?' asked Michael.

'Oh, we were all right,' he replied. 'Most of the estate is higher than the main road. There was only a small portion flooded. The trouble was we were cut off. Just couldn't go along the road either way for very far without having to turn back.'

'It was a good thing you got home from Kuala Lumpur in time. How did the exam go?' asked Valerie.

'Oh, I passed, thanks, Valerie,' he said simply. 'Tammy has now departed and A-Kim is back. Things go on much the same as usual.' By now Jocelyn had found her 'uncle' and sitting on his knee was asking to be bounced up and down. This was a great game, but rather strenuous in the climate! As the chatting continued, Quentin had several opportunities to glance at the suddenly-silent young woman by the door. What a sweet face she had! There was a kind of inner light about her expression.

Valerie suddenly stood up.

'Listen,' she said. 'If I make a quick meal, you'll have time to share it with us won't you?' As no satisfactory refusal was forthcoming, Valerie hastened to prepare a simple meal. Michael gave an imposing sweep of his arm towards the tiny back-yard,

'Just make yourselves at home around the ranch!' he said grandly. 'I have to take some letters to the mail-box, and will be back in a few minutes. Coming for a walk with Daddy, Jocelyn?' and he led off a joyful little daughter.

Presently Valerie looked out the window to see Quentin deep in talk with Meg. The last rays of the sun were making an edging of light on her hair, which was brown beside his fair head above her. He was asking her something in a half-laughing, half-serious manner. She was evidently needing some persuasion. Valerie caught the word 'Malacca' and wondered what was afoot!

At the mealtime, Quentin informed his friends that he had asked the lady to allow him the privilege of showing her round Malacca.

'Oh, you'll love it, Meg!' said Valerie enthusiastically. 'It's a pretty place. When are you going?'

'Probably one Friday when we both have a day free,' replied Quentin.

The meal was a happy one, and soon afterward Quentin and Meg drove off in their respective conveyances! When they had gone Valerie turned to Michael with a mischievous chuckle.

'Hush, woman!' he said sternly, but his eyes twinkled!

Chapter Twelve

OTHER RELIGIONS

AMONGST the fellow-missionaries who had come to help Michael and Valerie from time to time, were two young men on the Gospel Van. They went from place to place all the time as invited, holding special meetings and seeking to bring men to a decision for the Lord Jesus Christ.

The first visit of the van to Sungei Bahru was memorable. In the afternoons of the week-long visit, Michael and the two men went to neighbouring places to preach. But at nights, the crowd, some five hundred strong, assembled in front of the mission house. The young men spoke in a dialect, and with the amplifier, were heard by a great number of people. One of the men was gifted at sketching, and delighted the crowd with his efforts as a lightning artist! The charcoal sketches on the large white sheets of paper, spoke to them much more forcibly than mere words would have done. But though the crowds were somewhat quieter than usual, and some literature was sold, yet there were no open confessions for Christ. A different kind of result was to follow from the meetings.

A number of small children enthused with the idea of sketching, had obtained charcoal from somewhere or other, and had gone ahead with much determination, to sketch various objects on the whitewashed walls of the village! Chief among these were the walls of the old people's home.

When the missionaries had first arrived in Sungei Bahru, they received a visit from one of the inmates of this home, a toothless, albeit garrulous, old granny of eighty years of age. They called her A-P'o, which means 'granny'. She brought them a welcoming drink of cocoa and some biscuits, and implied that she was a Christian. Hers was a very interesting story, but it was difficult to piece together, as she knew no Mandarin, and Valerie

did not speak her dialect. But gradually it was forthcoming that she had been baptized in China as a young woman. Her mother had died, and she had earned her living as a tailoress. She had a Bible which she read out loud, and any number of Gospel tracts and leaflets. But Valerie felt very dubious about the way her hair was coiled up on the top of her head! This was usually covered with a gathered black cap, and one day she was seen with a rosary round her neck.

While the Gospel Van workers were in Sungei Bahru, one of the men, who spoke A-P'o's dialect, went to have a long talk with her. He kept to the simple essential truths of the Faith, but where she stood and what she believed was still very doubtful. Usually she did not come to the meetings at the mission house. Gradually after months, the missionaries came to the conclusion that she was more a Taoist than anything else. This was indicated by the hair-do! She was also one of those who worshipped the Written Page—any kind of writing. How they prayed that the true light would shine in her heart. So near to the next world, and yet all befuddled and unsure. She had days when she seemed to be in the clutches of the Evil One, and Valerie would see her outside the door, casting various spells and curses on people who had displeased her. The sinister mutterings often had a monotonous sound, and whenever Michael or Valerie appeared, A-P'o seemed to realize that her efforts were not appreciated, and slunk away indoors.

A-P'o was a great hoarder. In her tiny room she had all manner of pieces of this and that. She always kept her supply of firewood up. Rather it was kept up by Michael, who periodically took the van to an adjacent saw-mill, and brought home a load for her, as well as for several others in the old people's home. The first time he sought to be helpful in this way, his efforts nearly ended in disaster! He made the mistake of putting all the wood into one pile, instead of apportioning it to the various individuals!

He brought the load in the morning, and at evening the timber was still where he had thrown it. Several times during the day, Valerie had noticed the old women come out and look at the pile of wood. They seemed a little embarrassed, and she wondered if it were not the right kind of wood. Finally next morning,

one plucked up courage to come and make a petition. Would Michael please come and divide the wood amongst the various recipients? None of them would dare to presume to do the dividing, lest their fellows accuse them of unfairness. And as for A-P'o, she was regarded as being the worst of all! None of the other old people liked her.

Occasionally she took her old wooden bowl, and went begging in the shops of the nearby town. She would explain this no doubt, as being an opportunity, not only to help herself, but to give other people a chance to earn a little merit, by giving to her! Poor old A-P'o! Whenever a passing missionary called at the mission house, she made her way thither to be introduced. Maybe she felt that there was merit in doing so. It was a constant sorrow to the missionaries, that while A-P'o liked to pose as a Christian, she was really unwilling to take the step which would cut her off from many other beliefs and superstitions. From a Christian point of view, her witness in the village amounted to nothing at all.

A-P'o was only one of many who were mixed up in the matter of religion. In Malaya are found the three great Chinese religions—Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism.

These two latter have become somewhat mixed in the minds of the Chinese—the deities of the one being found in the temples of the other, and so on. The result is that the people worship many different deities. Buddhist and Taoist priests are both active in the land, performing the funeral rites which are a part of ancestor worship. The Taoist priests are very similar to the ones that used to be seen itinerating in China. Those in Malaya eat meat, marry, live amongst the people, and generally lead a secular life. Besides performing funeral rites they also earn a living by designing paper charms and images which are in demand everywhere.

Buddhist teaching holds that death is merely a stage on the way to the sublime state of Nirvana. The Taoist also is philosophical about death and faces it with stoical calm. One common belief is that after death a person's soul survives in three different places. One goes to enjoy the delights of Paradise, one remains in the grave to receive the sacrifices made in its honour, and

one reposes in the spirit tablet in the ancestral shrine. There are various occasions throughout the year, when the traditional rites of ancestor worship are observed.

The missionaries had not been long settled in Sungei Bahru, before they discovered how desperately the people feared death. Not only was there a fear of the unknown for themselves, but an even greater fear of dying without progeny to carry on the rites of ancestor worship. It was ever the aim to have a son, who would carry on the male line, and who would offer sacrifices and prayers for the departed ancestors. At her little home-made shrine in the garden, many a Chinese woman had implored the spirits to give her a son.

A great many and varied ideas prevailed concerning the ultimate fate of man after death, but there was never any doubt that his spirit went on living! The whole of Chinese civilisation has been based on this question of worshipping the spirits of ancestors, and the beginnings of this belief go away back before Confucius.

What a formidable task for the messengers of the Cross, to present a new message that would eradicate all this! Was their Gospel powerful enough to break the beliefs and traditions of centuries? Michael and Valerie knew without the shadow of a doubt, it was the only one that could give peace of heart and everlasting life to the seeker after truth. They had seen Chinese elsewhere transformed by the power of Christ.

And they knew that He could do the same for the other races in Malaya too . . . each with its differing customs and religions. There were over half a million Indians, divided mainly into Hindus, Sikhs, and 'Christians'. It was sad that the wonderful historical truth of God in Christ reconciling the world to Himself at Calvary, was an offence to the philosophic Hindu, who claimed that eternal truth cannot be based on historical fact. And yet, the sharp two-edged sword of the Spirit has cut through many a barrier of Hindu belief, and brought light and life to the one who was lost. He who has seen the radiant face of a real Indian Christian, can never again disbelieve in the power of Christ to transform.

The Sikhs had their own temples and religious rites. These

men were always conspicuous by their black beards, and white or coloured turbans, covering long hair wound underneath them.

The 'Christians' were divided roughly into Roman Catholics, Ma Thoma, and other Protestant denominations. The Ma Thoma church originated in South India, and legend dates it back to the days of the Apostle Thomas. While there are no doubt many sincere Christians amongst their number, yet the services are weighted down with a heavy ritualism. Malayalam is the language spoken by this group.

The Tamil-speaking Indians are largely Hindu; yet numbers of them are also members of Protestant and Roman Catholic churches.

It had been a shock to Michael to learn that it is an offence to preach the Gospel to Malays (who are solidly Muslim) in the Federation of Malaya. He knew that an occasional one had been converted, but these few had been ostracized by their own, and went in some danger.

He had studied the question in some detail, and discovered that by law, the spiritual and cultural habits of the Malays are not permitted to be changed. This includes religion. And as the adjudication of spiritual matters is in the hands of the Ruler of the State, himself an ardent Muslim, Michael felt that it was not likely that any Christian caught preaching to Malays would receive lenient treatment. He could in fact be asked to leave the country at once! In the not far-distant past Michael knew that there had been cases of this having been put into effect.

One day he had chatted over this problem with Tom.

'When you realise how Islam tears the very heart out of the central message of the Atonement,' he said slowly, 'it gives you a sad feeling about the Malays, doesn't it?'

'Yes, to think they are not allowed to have the opportunity to hear the truth,' replied Tom.

'It's awful! Does this restriction apply only to Malaya, Tom?'

'Yes! In South Thailand and Indonesia where there are millions of Malays, it is not forbidden to attempt Christian work amongst them.'

'Would it be too much to pray for the conversion of some of

these? Then they themselves could bring the Gospel to their own brothers in Malaya?

'Or that some of the Malayan Malays who go back and forth to these other countries all the time, might hear and believe while they are there?'

'Not at all impossible, but Muslim work is "tough" the world over!'

'The mission has thought of the possibility of contacting some of these . . .' Tom went on, 'and is planning to open a station on the Thailand side of the Malaya-Thailand border.'

'It's a good move,' said Michael. Then he wrinkled up his forehead as he often did when concentrating deeply, and continued. . . . 'But what about literature Tom? Isn't it possible to get some Christian literature into the hands of Malays?'

'Now there you've got something! If a Malay is attracted to a Christian book-stall, and buys literature of his own free will . . . that's not breaking the law!'

'It seems a small point Tom, but of course it is a most important one. And while we're on the subject of "do's" and "don't's" . . . what about the Sakai (aborigines of Malaya)? Is any Gospel work being done amongst them?'

'I don't think so . . . not now. The law also forbids it. Jean Robson contacted a settlement of them when she first came out here, and several wanted to believe. But it was all stopped, and she was not allowed even to visit amongst them any more!'

'What was the hindrance?' asked Michael.

'Apparently unscrupulous men were going amongst them for reasons of their own . . . generally exploiting these children of nature! You know the kind of thing, immorality and so on.'

'I suppose from the government point of view it was a reasonable "taboo" . . . to protect the people,' said Michael musingly.

'Yes, but now that no one is allowed amongst them, it also means that they are cut off from hearing the Gospel, which is the vital thing!' Tom answered.

'It seems we face a few closed doors. The idea seems to be to enter the ones that are open, and pray about the others!'

'We can thank God for an open door amongst the Chinese at present; we certainly have a full-time job in the villages!'

Michael and Valerie agreed. Their hands were increasingly full. The simple medical work was daily helping the task of evangelism. Sickness was always a grave cause for concern in a home, for might it not be the precursor of death? So whenever anyone became ill, more often than not, the relatives rushed to the mission house for medicine. Especially was this true when it concerned the son of the house. Michael came to look upon his small medical work as a very potent weapon in breaking down resistance and opposition to the Gospel. For when a life was saved, friends were made, and people listened to the message of life.

One such opportunity came late at night. Whispers outside the front door indicated that someone was wanting something.

'Who's there?' called Michael from his bed.

An old man replied that his son was ill, and in very great pain. So Michael hurried to open the door, and discovered that the patient was a young man of about twenty-three years of age. He was helped inside by his father and mother and all three sat on a form which Michael pushed forward. He was obviously in agony, being bent over and holding his stomach. His face was ashen, and for a few minutes Michael wondered if he would recover.

His first thought was that the young man had appendicitis, and rather frantically he wondered where he could rush the patient at that hour of night. It was ten p.m. Then he wondered if the young man had been poisoned, but that was not likely, as he had eaten no food for twenty-four hours. Gradually as he questioned the parents, Michael came to the conclusion that their son was suffering from a duodenal ulcer. And so it later proved to be!

Michael himself, during several years of intense strain in China, had been afflicted with the same complaint; and ever since that time he had carried round medicine to give relief, should he ever have an attack of the cruel pain. So he promptly produced some of this, and made the young man swallow it. Later he gave him some special bismuth mixture to take home in a bottle. Next day, when the attack had passed, Michael persuaded the young

man to go to hospital where he remained for some weeks.

The young man's healing meant that Michael was welcome in this home. When later the son married, and in time a little daughter was born, the missionaries were called in to help in a difficulty. It was an impossible situation from the first, and made more so by the villagers crowding about, keeping up a running flow of comment. The poor, weak little baby died some days later, and no one but the sad, grieving, young mother seemed to care about it at all. The baby had been a girl!

Michael and Valerie admired this family because they tried to make their house tidy and home-like, and had cultivated a number of pretty shrubs in the front garden. Recently they had put a new corrugated iron roof on their small house, and had painted the iron a nice green colour. As the missionaries walked past the home, they felt that here was one family, at least, which was losing their resentment at being compelled to live in a village!

Near the mission house there lived a woman who gave the appearances of being religiously devout. She was always burning candles and joss-sticks, but some regarded this as a cloak for other possible activities. Her eldest son was in the jungle, and the father worked as a lumber-man somewhere in the same district. The two younger sons were cheeky, naughty boys, and the whole family had a very bad reputation in the village.

The woman was always on hand to help at funerals and weddings, and seemed to have a finger in many different village pies. The mah-jongg counters could be heard click-clicking constantly when the family was at home, and many quarrels and loud shouts came from the house.

When the father returned on periodical visits, he soon repaired to the street to sit in the coffee shop with his cronies. Here the gossip of the village, and probably a lot of other things, were retailed. When it is remembered that an estimated half-million or more people act as food suppliers to the terrorists, there must be occasions when discussion of plans is necessary!

Michael felt that the father regarded him somewhat malevolently, treating him with a certain amount of scornful disdain and disguised animosity. So he pondered a good deal on how he

could make friends with his neighbour. The opportunity came rather unexpectedly.

One day when Michael and Valerie returned from a visit to town, they heard groans and sighings coming from their neighbour's house. At first they thought he was drunk, as he usually was on these visits home. But gradually they realized that he was in pain, and Michael went along to investigate, and to see if he could be of any assistance.

Whether the facts of the case were true or not, Michael did not know, but the man groaned that he had broken his arm in a fall. Apparently while outside the perimeter, he had trodden unwittingly on to a rotten wooden platform, built over a pit for the purpose of trapping wild boars. The wood had given way, and he had fallen! It seemed rather improbable, and Michael thought it more likely that the man had fallen when drunk, or been in a fight somewhere.

Whatever the cause, Michael welcomed the opportunity to make friends, and took the man off to hospital for X-ray and treatment for shock.

For many months afterwards, the man and his wife brought along a form to the meetings, and sat on the outskirts of the crowd at the weekly open-air. One night the father came to Michael and said he wanted to believe. But there was no evidence that he wanted to take the step for any other reason than that he regarded the Gospel as a kind of insurance policy! A kind of charm against adversity! Tacked on to his idolatrous beliefs, it could not do any harm! Half an hour after his brief visit with Michael, he was engaged in a rather serious affair with the police!

The police were busy that particular night. A stranger had turned up at the old people's home seeking a bed. But as he had no identity card, he was rightly suspect. While the old folks gave him a drink, and chatted with him, someone had slipped away secretly to inform the police. Before long, Michael and Valerie saw the visitor being led off protestingly to enjoy the hospitality of the police station for the night.

Every adult in Malaya is required to carry an identity card with his or her photograph and thumb-print. A person can be

called on at any time to produce this. It was a measure introduced earlier on in the Emergency to differentiate between the law-abiding citizens and the terrorists. The latter were extremely annoyed by this measure, seizing and burning many such cards. In more recent times, they have robbed some people of their means of identification, probably it is thought, so that they themselves can go here and there in comparative safety, masquerading as the original holders of the cards.

Chapter Thirteen

SORROW WITHOUT HOPE

SOME weeks had passed away since the floods. The open-air meetings in both villages were in full swing again, the estate school work was going on as usual, and there was of course the English service in the town. The school children at Golden Eagle Estate were a real joy to Michael. When he first went there, they had never even heard of the name of Jesus, and now they were singing His praises. Besides all this work, there was a steady flow of patients at the mission house. Some of them had been coming for daily dressings over a long period, but so far no one seemed to be getting specially interested in the Gospel.

One day a young girl in great distress, came to ask Michael if he would give her some medicine for her father, who was extremely ill. Michael called at the home and found Mr Li in the last stages of T.B. After that he called several times every week, and sat chatting with Mr Li. Sometimes Valerie sent along an egg beaten in milk or some other nourishment; and once or twice it seemed that Mr Li was showing a slight improvement. He listened closely while Michael urged him to trust in Christ for his salvation.

Next time Meg was in the village, he told her about the infectious disease in the Li home, and the crowded conditions there. She called to see the family, and then went ahead making arrangements for the father to be admitted to the T.B. hospital some twenty miles away. But when the arrangements were finalised, Mr Li would not consent to them, preferring as he said, to die with his loved ones around him, rather than amongst strangers. Gradually he got weaker, and all the response Michael got to his earnest words were a sad shake of the head, and the chilling words, 'I don't know! . . . If I fall . . . I fall . . .'

And so he died. Immediately there was set in motion all the intricate and conventional preparations for the burial. These of course were irrevocably governed by the dictates of Chinese civilization which is based upon the belief in ancestor worship. The code of etiquette for such occasions had been written one thousand years before Christ came to the world! And here in a little village, far from the motherland, the rules were being strictly adhered to. One of the things that had impressed the missionaries, was the way in which the Chinese in Malaya zealously carried out the old customs. This was true throughout the *Nan Yang*, the name the Chinese give to Southeast Asia.

The poor widow, left with five young children, was already worn out with the care of her sick husband. There had been very little sleep for weeks with the constant coughing and restlessness. Being poor, she had to set about borrowing money for the funeral expenses. Michael was told later that these had amounted to eight hundred dollars, almost £100 sterling.

It was amazing how many friends and relatives now appeared at the Li home. During all the weeks of illness they had been noticeably absent, but now there were plenty of people to give a hand. Even before the dead man was prepared for burial, someone had to go and purchase a coffin.

In past days many Chinese went to a lot of trouble and expense to send to China for the wood for their coffins. But since trade between the mainland of China and Malaya had to all intents and purposes ceased, they had to be content with Malayan timbers. An expensive kind called *keledang*, was quite beyond the means of the Li family, so they purchased instead *meranti*, a light hardwood, which the carpenter made into a rather ornate coffin. Owing to the Emergency in Malaya, the police had been forced to close many of the logging areas in order to break up communications between the terrorists and the timber workers. In addition, the increasing population causing a keen demand for building materials, had all contributed to the rising costs of timber.

As it was an unwritten law amongst the Chinese never to bargain over the price of a coffin, the Li family were at the

mercy of the coffin-maker! In the larger cities of Malaya, so-called 'death-houses' existed for the purpose, mainly economic but sometimes superstitious, of providing a place where a mortally sick person could die in solitude, away from the overcrowding in his home! But more and more the dying were being permitted to die in their own homes.

In Malaya when a Chinese attained to his sixtieth birthday, it was regarded as time to begin making preparation for the next world. Mr Li was only forty-five, though he had looked very much older than that. He had not followed the prevalent custom of buying and storing his coffin years in advance, so the family had this added burden and responsibility.

The Chinese from earliest times have worn white as the colour of mourning. In China, white shoes were the sign, long after a death, that there had been a bereavement in the family. But in Malaya, where white shoes are frequently worn by the population at large, this is no longer regarded as a special sign of mourning. Instead, a curious mixture of old and new prevails! White or black arm-bands are worn, and even more often, just a two or three-inch square of material, either black or white, is pinned on the sleeve with a safety-pin.

Mr Li's eldest boy of thirteen years was the chief mourner, and throughout the celebrations before and after the funeral, went about carrying a long thin bamboo pole over his shoulder. On this hung a long paper lantern with streamers attached.

Michael went, with a heavy heart, to pay his respects, and was sickened by the incessant wailing. Although Mrs Li and the older children had shed tears of real sorrow, yet most of the others gathered were waiting dry-eyed! They pretended to be wiping away tears when Michael looked in their direction, but in reality they were hiding their dry eyes behind their handkerchiefs. A group of professional mourners was on hand to start wailing when any awkward silences occurred and one of the little boys was hitting a gong at intervals.

Buddhist priests had been hired, and chanted spasmodically, and this combined with the wailing and the gong being beaten, continued for two long days and nights. Weird, unfeeling, hopeless! Michael and Valerie not far away, heard the dreary

sounds, and were more than sad at the futility of it all. And the poor family with such a mill-stone of debt about its neck for years to come! All to give themselves 'face' in the eyes of the village, and also suitably to farewell the spirit of the dead. Filial piety was of course considered by all the villagers to be chief of the virtues. The death of Mr Li was to his children the greatest calamity of any that could come into their lives. They must borrow lavishly and spend equally freely, or it would not look good in the eyes of others. Also they were likely to suffer some kind of retribution if unfilial!

Michael was always impressed by the fact that this great race of people in common with other races, yearned for long life and immortality. If only they could be made to understand that Jesus was the Way, the Truth, and the Life. What needless suffering could be saved here and in Eternity! Sometimes the sheer black darkness of all the heathenism around, pressed very heavily upon his spirit.

It so happened that he and Valerie were on the main street when the funeral procession came into view. They made themselves as inconspicuous as possible, and went home by a back way. But they were asking their Heavenly Father to use this sorrow in some way, to bring the Li family to Himself.

When the casket reached the graveside just beyond the village, preparations were quickly made, and it was lowered into the grave. Immediately those standing by, drew back, in case their shadows should be shut up in the earth! A cock with its feet tied together, was thrown across the grave by the priest to the eldest son. This act was to symbolise the continuation of the male line of the family, because the dead man's spirit was supposed to be now in the cock. The cock has an interesting place in Chinese life. Because it crows early to welcome the sun, it is regarded as a symbol of the sun. It is also an emblem of courage, and is supposed by its presence to ward off evil. Also the Chinese word for 'cock' is pronounced similarly to the word for 'good luck'.

As the pit was being filled in, the priests recited prayers for the dead man's soul. Incense and paper money were burnt and the graveside ceremony was at an end. The mourners and their

friends returned to Mrs Li's home to partake of further refreshment. This provision had been made for three days now, and was quite a drain on the family's resources.

Since the Emergency, no fire-crackers were allowed to be used at funerals. The sound could so easily be mistaken for the firing of shots, and the populace was naturally nervous of any such sounds.

Soon after the funeral was over, the memorial service was held. This was combined with putting up the spirit tablet in the ancestral shrine. On a table, acting as an altar for the occasion, was a framed picture of Mr Li. Several paper images, and some paper money was placed alongside. A few dishes of appetizing food were also set out for the spirits, and the spirit tablet was on the table. Chairs and tables were placed around the room where the service was to be held. It was quite unlike a solemn memorial service in the West, being very noisy. Everyone seemed out to have as jolly a time as possible, with of course plenty of suitable refreshment.

The spirit tablet was made of wood, about a foot long, four inches wide and a foot thick. The details of Mr Li's name were painted on it. The priest then called the eldest son to him, and took a drop of blood from the third finger of his right hand. With this he 'dotted the tablet' by putting a touch of blood on some of the characters. The most important of these was the character for 'owner'. This was formed by putting a dot on top of the 'king' character. The character thus formed meant 'Lord' and the whole idea of the ceremony was really to bestow this title on the deceased. Then the tablet was solemnly raised into its position in the family shrine, while chanting and music burst forth afresh.

The final part of the service was a bonfire. A lavish paper model of a two-storeyed house, some paper books and paper money, were all taken outside and burnt as a sacrificial offering to the dead man. This practice, too, originated in ancient days in China. It was the custom to bury alive in the graves human sacrifices, so that the dead man could enjoy all the things he had been used to enjoying. His books, personal belongings, and even his horse would be buried with him. As the years passed,

the human sacrifices were replaced by pottery figures, and later still, paper effigies were burnt. It was believed that through fire, the effigies would arrive safely at the next world to be of use to the deceased.

Michael and Valerie at the mission house longed to use the occasion of all this sorrow and excitement in a way that would further the spread of the Gospel. As they had opportunity to chat with one and another, they pressed home to people the need of coming to Jesus Christ before it was too late.

But only one seemed in any way to be moved at all. She was the mother of several children, and herself the daughter of the old woman who had come the first day to ask for the mission house scraps for the pig! The whole family lived together and worked hard, being both poor and industrious. The mother listened to Valerie speaking of the uncertainty of life, and the tears came into her eyes. She said she would like to believe in the Lord, but Valerie knew that she did not fully understand and invited her back for another talk. But whether she took fright, or whether the softened emotions once again crystallized into cold indifference, Valerie never found out; for the mother did not come back, and for a long time went out of her way to avoid the mission house. However, it seemed the Lord was following her, for often on a Sunday night she could be seen with her family standing at the back of the crowd listening to the Gospel message.

There were other 'regulars' like her, but they would not stay and talk. Michael and Valerie could only pray and wait with long patience for the first fruits in Sungei Bahru.

Chapter Fourteen

OUT OF THE DEPTHS

ON the Sunday evening following Mr Li's funeral, a large crowd gathered as usual to listen to the preaching, and scattered afterwards, also as usual, with no evidence of any interest or response.

Michael went inside and shut the door. He felt tired and discouraged. Sinking on to a chair he said to his wife:

'Valerie, what's the use? Here we've done all we can to help these people and preached to them twice a week for over a whole year; and it doesn't seem that any of them are going to do anything about it!'

'Yes, I know dear,' she said quickly, going over and sitting down beside her husband. She knew only too well what was meant.

Years ago Valerie and Michael had set out to serve the Lord in China. And when that service had been prematurely curtailed, they returned to the West to make a home for their family. Such a jolly home with laughter and fun, and plenty of singing. What more could they want after years of separation from their children. Life seemed so sunshiny and comfortable. Michael was away a good deal doing deputation work for his mission, while Valerie was busy with the children, as well as a weekly Bible Class for teenagers, and other meetings from time to time. Life was good and full and so much easier than the hard years abroad. In fact, Valerie found herself amazed at the love of ease in the homeland. With high wages and comfortable homes, people seemed to be spending so much on themselves and giving so little to God. There seemed a general carelessness about engaging in prayer for the Lord's work, and the slightest inclemency in the weather was a quite sufficient excuse for not attending church or the prayer-meetings. Unconsciously,

Valerie was criticizing Christians in the homeland en masse.

Then one never-to-be-forgotten Sunday morning, Michael being away, Valerie went as usual with the family to church. The minister immediately claimed everyone's attention by announcing that he was about to preach on a text that he had never before preached from in all his long ministry. When he announced his text from Amos chapter six and verse one, 'Woe to them that are at ease *in Zion!*' Valerie was pierced right to the heart. Before the service was over she realized that it was she who had begun to take things easy. She, Valerie Jones, who was settling down in ease at home, at least in her thinking, if not outwardly. She was responding well to comfort, and secretly glad that the hard days were behind. In raising her hand to point the finger of criticism at others, she was clearly shown that the other three fingers of the hand were pointing back at herself. What a heart-breaking revelation! But even more solemnizing, was the fact that the Lord made it plain to Valerie that she was still required for front-line service. Before the preacher had finished his message, her heart was crying out in agony, 'Stop it! You're sending me back—and to Malaya!'

And she did not want to go! How could she? The thing was ridiculous! Since returning home she and Michael had both needed medical attention, and the doctor would never pass them. And besides, they couldn't just walk off to the mission-field and leave a family behind. The whole idea was absurd. Preposterous! What would people say? At that time neither she nor Michael knew of the excellent hostels which were being provided for the children of the mission.

Yet Valerie could not deceive herself. God had spoken, and to her. In the midst of all this conflict of spirit, how tenderly and graciously a loving Father dealt with His child. He reminded her of His Love through all the past years—years of many and varied experiences. A good deal of Valerie's missionary life had been lived in isolated places. Because of family ties she had not attended, even on furlough, a large Christian Convention for many years, and consequently had been deprived of many spiritual helps. But one thing was certain: she had come to know and to love the One who had saved and called her to serve Him,

the One who had saved her soul from death, her eyes from tears, and her feet from falling. And because it was He Himself who was asking her to go back to the mission-field, Valerie knew that she could not say 'No.' So lovingly her Lord inquired, 'Is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with Mine own?' And Valerie knew He had a perfect right.

When she at last told Michael how God had been speaking, he rejoiced and gave thanks, for he had known for some time that God wanted him back on the Field. But the children! How could they ever leave them again? How to break the news to those trusting youngsters who so loved having their parents with them? And besides how could they be left when there was no one with whom to leave them?

But the Lord who loved the children and had given them to their parents, was planning for them too. Quite unexpectedly there came a letter from the splendid couple who had cared for the children previously. When the parents had perforce been delayed over a year in leaving China, these Christian friends had opened their home to receive the children, and had loved and cared for them for a whole year as parents. Now they wrote to make a fresh offer to do the same thing again, should the parents ever feel that the Lord wanted them overseas again!

Still hesitating to make a final decision, the parents decided to see a doctor, and ask what was his opinion regarding their starting in the tropics. After lengthy and careful examinations by a medical man who was not known for his pro-missionary sympathies, the verdict was an unequivocal 'All Clear!' In fact he rather dispassionately remarked that as far as he was concerned medically, they could go to Timbuctoo! There was no hindrance medically. So feeling that they were without excuse, Michael and Valerie sent in a letter to the mission with a fresh offer of service. And as they did so, the beautiful Easter message came with fresh comfort to their hearts, 'Jesus Himself drew near and went with them.' What more could anyone wish?

And what of the children? The Lord was preparing them also for what was coming. Quite suddenly one day, one of the older children said, 'Mother, I think you and Daddy ought to go back!'

'Why, whatever for,' said Valerie in great surprise, touched with a little resentment; for the remark was made to her when the great conflict was raging inwardly.

'Well there are so many who haven't heard,' the child replied. 'And there are *so* few to tell them! You and Daddy do have the language (meaning Mandarin)!'

What could Valerie say? She hedged and the incident passed. But gradually each of the children was prepared for the parting, and the parents prayed that this separation would be for blessing in every life. They were brought to see that any disobedience in their own lives, could only be a hindrance in the lives of their children. By refusing to return to the mission-field when God so clearly wanted them there, and had planned every detail, they could definitely hold up blessing in the lives of their children. Life on the mission-field had taught the parents one great truth—that it was not what they did for God that was so important, but what He had done for them!

Michael and Valerie had heard a lot about conditions in the New Villages of Malaya, and they had counted the cost. Physically there was no attraction in such a hard and unresponsive field. Some of the other fields in which the mission was working in Southeast Asia seemed more attractive in many ways, but the Lord had called to Malaya.

All Michael's pent-up discouragement burst out now as he said to his wife, 'You know Val, I really wonder, quite seriously, if anyone in this village will ever come out openly for Christ.'

'I'm afraid I've felt the same way sometimes, Michael,' she replied. (Discouragement is very contagious!) 'Everything's against it. In the first place, it's a small village, and anyone daring to believe would be so "marked"! In a bigger place they'd be more hidden.' She paused a minute and then continued wearily:

'So many of the people are bound by idolatry and evil spirits. I never saw such idolatry, even in China itself. Take Mrs Yang, the one who has a Christian relative elsewhere, and whom I hoped was getting interested in the Gospel: she tells me now that she *must* bow down and worship before the pictures of her father and mother.'

'Yes! but they're worshipping *something*,' said Michael rather fiercely for him. 'I've more hope of such folk coming to the Lord than the blatant materialists. They care for nothing and nobody but themselves. Seems to be something inhuman about people who only live to make money and eat. And the majority aren't scraping along. They have plenty to come and go on. Just look at every girl and young woman with a "perm", and more clothes than you've got, Val. Why, young Mu-Lan, what age is she? Ten? She told me her "perm" cost five dollars!'

'You mean the people are sophisticated and smug, and don't have a sense of need,' inquired Valerie.

'Just that,' answered Michael, 'and then the kind of Western life that's sometimes portrayed out here, doesn't make it any easier for a European to preach the Gospel.'

'Yes, but they do distinguish between people,' said Valerie trying to cheer. 'You know the Chinese nurse at the government clinic told me that the people call you "the Christian European".'

Michael sighed. 'Honestly, it seems a hopeless business,' he said, 'and besides, remember what they told us about the Wong family who used to live here for a short while and were believers. Soon after it became known that they were Christians, the terrorists killed their daughter while she was out tapping. Some said she was an informer, but everyone knows the real reason is that she was a Christian. It's enough to deter the stoutest heart.'

'I've noticed quite a few of the teenagers who were so friendly at first have cooled off and keep away,' said Valerie. 'Even that nice little A-K'ai who so shyly confessed that she had started to pray, now avoids us.'

'And that fine group of older schoolboys who were so keen on the projector and slides,' went on Michael, 'so full of interest and questions, and so friendly. Now they all seem to have gone into the Deep Freeze! Scarcely speak to me on the street!'

'It's intimidation of course,' said Valerie. 'You know the terrorists are making a special target of the school-children in their indoctrination.'

'Oh, yes, I know all that sort of stuff,' replied Michael a little impatiently, 'but it's not *all* that! Half of it is just plain perverseness and apathy. And did you hear that woman to-night?

She just stood there all through the message ringing her bicycle bell.

He sounded so exasperated and tired that Valerie wished she could say or do the right thing to comfort him. Not being a specially eloquent man, he had never found preaching easy. The difficulty was accentuated when it came to using a foreign tongue. For years he had plodded and perspired to master Mandarin; and since coming to Malaya he had 'got' enough of a dialect to preach a simple Gospel message in it. So often he had likened himself to Moses of old, who also shrank from public-speaking. 'But even Moses had an Aaron to speak for him,' he was wont to remark when he felt the burden great. All the careful preparation was wasted when the words could not be heard above the din.

So when the long-looked-for Public Address system with its shiny microphone arrived from overseas, Michael and Valerie were delighted, and Valerie promptly named it 'Aaron'. Because as she explained, it would be a help to Moses and her! What a boon 'Aaron' had been, amplifying the precious message, so that all could hear clearly. But, alas, earlier this evening, a would-be helper, carrying a bench past the microphone, had knocked it off the table and smashed it beyond repair. Michael who had spent hours preparing a message to deliver, and had prayed so much that God would use it, then found he had to try and speak above the racket to a more than usually restless audience. His words sounded to his own ears as tinkling brass, and seemed to bounce back at him from the front row of children. It seemed to him that the Devil was trying to thwart every sentence, strangle, suffocate him. He had tried to make himself heard, till his voice gave out, and he was wet through with perspiration. Then the happy-go-lucky, irresponsible crowd dispersed more quickly than it had gathered, scuttling off under cover of darkness, loath to stay behind and chat; fearful of being seen showing interest in the Gospel. Michael wondered why they came night after night, month after month, if they were not prepared to do something about it. He felt stripped, useless, frustrated. Valerie knowing all this only too well, felt a tremendous surge of pity, and before she could stop them, the tears overflowed.

Valerie's tears arrested Michael in his despondency, and he pulled his chair sharply nearer the table. Reaching along the table, he laid his hand on top of hers.

'Well, after all, we didn't come to Malaya because the people were all Christians,' he said with a weak attempt to smile. Valerie opened her eyes wide and looked at him as this truth went home.

'Why, no more we did, Michael,' she said. 'What cowards we are to be letting it get on top of us!'

And like Pilgrim, they once more grasped the Sword of the Spirit (which is the Word of God) and dealt a mortal blow to Apollyon. For Michael took down the Bible and read some verses that were well underlined.

'Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.'

'I will work, saith the Lord, and who shall hinder it?'

'Have not I commanded thee? Be strong, and of a good courage.'

'I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.'

And the Evil One fled before the Word of the Lord.

As Michael and Valerie bowed their heads in silence before their Master, and re-dedicated themselves to Him, and to His chosen service, a sweet peace and encouragement stole into their hearts. Again, their experience was like that of another's when 'there came to him an hand, with some of the leaves of the Tree of Life, the which Christian took, and applied to the wounds that he had received in the battle, and was healed immediately.'

Chapter Fifteen

TRIP TO MALACCA

IT was a beautiful day, clear shining after rain, when Quentin drove Meg down to Malacca. The drive took about three hours and was very pleasant before the day got too warm.

At first they did not converse much, each one enjoying the freshness of the day and the sense of freedom in being away from their regular work.

'You really do have to be one of the world's workers to enjoy a day off like this,' laughed Quentin.

'Yes, indeed,' said Meg. 'Even the sight of a medicine bottle would be too much this morning!'

'You ought to have a break more often, Meg,' said Quentin. 'It must get very wearing to see hundreds of sick people every week.'

'Oh, I enjoy it very much thanks, Quentin,' said Meg. 'It's a very satisfying job you know!'

At first Meg had felt somewhat shy to be going on a trip like this with a young man she did not know very well. But as she talked of her work, her embarrassment disappeared, and before long they were chatting gaily. Quentin was so friendly and natural that she was completely at her ease, and soon felt she had known him for a long time.

He talked to her about rubber, and now it was his turn to be enthusiastic. She stole a side-long glance at him and saw how intent he looked, how keen on his subject. As he told her of different aspects of the work, she found herself getting very interested, and asked him many questions.

They were driving along roads, on either side of which were endless rows of rubber trees. Quentin was able to point out various details of interest. At one place, for no apparent reason, a number of trees were blown over.

'Strange thing that,' he said. 'It often happens. It looks as though a little whirlwind has hit in one spot. The real reason is that some of the trees are weakened by a root disease, and when the gales blow, over they come!'

They flashed past a small Indian shrine, its idols garlanded with fresh flowers, and flanked with burning incense newly lit. Soon they were in definite Malay country. The typical oiled wood houses with their high pointed roofs, coconut palms which thrived so well on the *kampong* smoke, and neatly swept yards with their gaily-coloured flowers. The most beautiful part of each house was its high front stairway made of coloured tiles, some intricately patterned. Every few miles there was a mosque. Some small and unpretentious, while others were imposing with elaborate domes and towers. Malay men-folk dressed in their best, each with a thin towel in his hand, or around the neck, walked leisurely or cycled towards the nearest place of worship. For this was Friday, the day to bathe in the large pool at the mosque, before going barefoot into worship. Meg noticed hundreds of pairs of shoes and slippers left outside the mosque doors.

Occasionally there was a large clearing, in which paddy-fields were flourishing. Malay women were taking young rice plants from the crowded seedling bed, and transplanting them to the square paddy-field. All being done in about a foot of water!

It was Meg's first trip to the west coast, and it seemed like a different Malaya altogether. Only very occasionally did they see a Chinese village. In a fairly large river, they watched a herd of water-buffalo. These, except for head and rump, were well-submerged in the cooling flow. They rolled their expressive eyes, showing the whites. A Malay girl was standing deep in the water washing the animals one by one with her hand.

Quentin pointed out one or two rather unusual birds sitting on the telegraph wires here and there. They were bee-eaters, with long beaks, their plumage brown with pretty blue throats and more than a splash of green. Their tails did not finish abruptly like many birds, but continued on in two thread-like ends, that gave them a swift, arrow-like appearance.

Patches of jungle got fewer as they approached the coast, and before long they entered the so-called 'white area' of Malacca. This was announced by a large notice-board on the side of the road. The 'white areas' were districts in which the authorities felt it was safe to lift the Emergency regulations from the population. It did not necessarily imply that there were no terrorists in the district, but that the few who possibly remained, were not a serious enough reason for penalizing thousands of civilians. A 'white area' was one in which the people had co-operated with the authorities in their determination not to help the terrorists, either with surreptitious supplies of food, or in other ways.

Presently Malacca was reached, and the massive General Hospital building, stood strongly against the sky-line.

'What narrow streets!' exclaimed Meg a few minutes later as they drove along the old part of the town. Many of the side streets looked little wider than alleys and still bore their old Portuguese names. Cars, taxis, trishaws, bicycles, dogs, and playing children, as well as strolling pedestrians, all vied with one another for a place on the thoroughfare. Cars were not allowed to use their horns, so just patiently waited till smaller vehicles and people moved out of the way. Quentin and Meg were amused at some of the topees worn by the trishaw-riders. One was painted all over with aluminium paint, and flashed in the bright sunlight. Others were freshly coated with scarlet or emerald enamel paint, while some were just drab and weather beaten.

Soon Quentin had parked the car outside a restaurant, and after a light meal and drinks of iced orangeade, he and Meg went to look at the shops for a few minutes. When they had made a small purchase or two they went back to the car and set off on an expedition of sight-seeing.

Driving slowly they soon crossed the bridge and came to the old Anglican church—a building that was as old as the history of Malacca itself. All the buildings in the vicinity of the church were covered with a brick-red wash on the outside. In the mid-day glow, they seemed heavy and stagnant, quite exotic in this present busy and stream-lined age. Meg had the sense of

being transported back centuries earlier, when this area was the far-flung colony of a western sea-faring nation.

Quentin was keen to show Meg the view from the hill-top behind the town, and drove up the road to the Residency as far as cars were permitted. Parking the car, he escorted her on foot, up the old stone steps, and on to the grassy climb skirting the unfenced Residency. They walked slowly, and soon reached a clumsy modern statue of St Francis Xavier, behind which stood the ruins of an old church. The roof had mostly disintegrated, but the front upper part of the building was in good repair. It had been converted into a lighthouse, whose beams must have been clearly visible far away at sea.

Before entering to explore the ruins, Quentin and Meg stood for a few minutes to gaze around them. On the edge of the wide expanse of cleanly-mown grass, there were a couple of magnificent flame-of-the-forest trees just bursting with *joie de vivre*. Beyond them stretched the tropical-blue sea, interrupted only near the shore with some small islands, before it rolled placidly right on to Sumatra. To the right could be seen the town lying lazily at their feet, and sprawling away into the countryside beyond. Ragged: a strange mixture of sentiment and commerce, history and modernity.

They stood under one of the shady trees letting the deliciously cool breeze fan them.

'If it were not for the wretched ants,' said Quentin, 'we could sit down on the grass here for awhile.'

'Oh, let's go and explore the ruins,' said Meg quickly. 'What does it say on this plaque?' She was leading the way over to the doorway.

The old church had been built by the Portuguese centuries before. They were Roman Catholics and had sent out missionaries to Malacca. One such was Francis Xavier. Quentin turned and pointed out a little tree-topped island near the shore. From that island St Francis was supposed to have cursed Malacca for not accepting Christianity. He departed to Goa, on the coast of India. Later, en route to China, he had died in Malacca, and been buried in the deep tomb beneath the church building. More recently his body had been exhumed and removed to Goa.

Various relics of it had been sent round the world by the Roman Catholic church for veneration and worship.

Years after the Portuguese had built the church, it had been taken over by the Protestant Dutch. Quentin amusedly showed Meg how the frugal Dutch had even used the same tombstones, for some carried Latin and also Dutch inscriptions! Some of these made very interesting reading!

Deep inside the ruins were sconces on the walls where candles had once burned. The place was dirty and shadowy. On the wide stone window-frames at the rear of the church, several Chinese students were busy, evidently quietly reading for examinations. They seemed incongruous in the surroundings, bringing one harshly back from a dreamy past to a practical present.

Everywhere it was silent, and only an occasional car passing at the foot of the hill, reminded Quentin and Meg that they were so near to the present. Each was busy with private thoughts, and neither of them felt much like talking while in the ruins. As Meg looked into the ancient empty tomb, she was thinking of another empty tomb. But the One who had been buried there, was now gloriously alive, and she was enjoying the new life that He had given her. She instinctively wondered about her companion. She knew that he was a very upright young man and that he came to the service when he could, but was that as far as it went?

They strolled outside. A number of mynahs were running over the lawn, and some sunbirds were sucking the honey from the canna flowers further down the hillside.

'Very dead sort of place, isn't it?' said Quentin referring to the ruins.

'It is that,' replied Meg. 'One wonders if it was ever really alive! Even in the old days.' Quentin looked at her quizzically.

'That's a strange thing to say, Meg,' he said slowly. 'What do you mean?'

'Oh, there's such a lot of lifeless formality that passes for Christianity. People are lulled into a false sense of security and miss the real thing!' she answered.

'The real thing?' asked Quentin.

'Eternal life, Quentin,' said Meg simply. She did not find it easy to speak about spiritual things; yet this was something that

must be shared. They walked round the hill to the statue of St Francis, and a pathetic sight met their eyes.

An Indian woman worshipper in a plain white sari, was standing before the statue. She lit two candles, and placed them before the image. Then, with her rosary in her hands, she knelt, and bowed low in obeisance. After a minute or two she looked up with great beseeching eyes to the face of stone above her. Her lips murmured continually. She lingered a long time in great earnestness—kneeling, standing up, kneeling again, imploring and offering. There was something almost agonized in her expression. Quentin and Meg stood at some distance watching, but she was completely oblivious to all onlookers. What was the burden of her heart? Was her request a matter of life and death? It all seemed so futile, for the carved image was completely unresponsive as he looked coldly down.

It was almost sacrilegious to be watching such a scene, and, before the devotee had finished, Quentin and Meg went on down the hill. Meg, especially, was deeply touched by what they had witnessed. 'The heathen in his blindness bows down to wood and stone,' but this thing was being done in the name of Christianity. Neither of them spoke till they had driven down into the noisy streets once more.

'Would you like to drive along the water-front?' asked Quentin. 'There'll just be time for a look-see, and then a cup of tea before we start back again.'

'Yes, I'd like it very much thanks,' replied Meg. 'It's wonderful to be by the sea again. We lived by it for years when I was a child.'

They drove along leisurely in the afternoon sunshine, both revelling in the outing and freedom from routine. When they arrived back at the restaurant it was already two-thirty p.m. and they would need to leave in an hour's time. As they got out of the car, they noticed an Indian fortune-teller sitting on the pavement near the doorway. Beside him was a small bird-cage, divided into three tiny compartments. In each was a little Java sparrow.

'What pretty little birds!' exclaimed Meg. They were conspicuously coloured, pale grey on top and pinkish white below. The heads were black and white, the tails black, while the legs

and beaks were pink. They were very tame, and while the visitors watched, the fortune-teller opened each little door and fed something to the birds.

Presently an Indian customer approached. He paid a few cents and squatted down to have his fortune told. The teller opened the door of the first compartment of the bird-cage, and gave a command to the little bird. It immediately hopped out on to the pavement, and from a ring of cards picked up one at random with its beak, and turned it over. The customer picked it up and read his fortune, while the little bird hopped back to its cage. Apparently quite satisfied, the man stood up and went on his way.

'Quite simple,' laughed Quentin as he opened the door for Meg, and followed her inside. After tea, they were soon on the way out of Malacca, and heading back to Johore.

When they had gone some miles, Quentin suddenly said to his companion,

'Meg, would you mind if we continued what you were speaking of earlier?'

'What was that?' asked Meg.

'Oh, up on the hill, you remember? Er—the subject of—er, eternal life,' he said a little awkwardly. Then he added rather hurriedly, 'Michael preached on it one Sunday, and I've thought about it quite a lot since then.'

'Oh, dear, I can't explain things as clearly as Michael does,' laughed Meg.

'Have a try, will you Meg? You see, I never thought it concerned me much till I started going to the English service. I don't think I'm a very great sinner, you know.'

'Oh,' replied Meg quickly, 'it's not the amount of sins we've committed, but the fact of sin that's involved in salvation.'

'Fire away, lady, I'm listening,' he said very seriously.

So Meg quietly, and at first rather nervously, told him the story of how Christ had saved her. She finished by saying that now she knew she had eternal life. There was such a ring of earnestness in her voice, that Quentin glanced at her face. He saw there a very beautiful expression. As she turned towards him, her look was completely truthful and sincere. He was deeply stirred

by her simple testimony, and for a long time they drove on in silence.

When they later drove up to the gate of the Red Cross house, Quentin took a small packet from the pocket of the car, and reaching over, placed it in Meg's hands on her lap.

'Thank you for a very happy day, Meg. I just wanted to give you this tiny gift as a memento of your first visit to Malacca!'

Meg was taken aback and flushed deeply.

'It's me to thank you, Quentin. It's been a lovely day, and I've enjoyed every minute of it,' she said. 'Thank you so much for this,' she continued with a smile, as she held up the little parcel.

Quentin escorted her to the gate, and a few seconds later was driving fast in the direction of the estate.

When Meg went inside the house, and calmed down enough to open her parcel, she discovered a small cardboard box. Lying side by side on the white satin, were a silver jam spoon and butterknife. On the handle of each, in coloured enamel, was the coat-of-arms of the Settlement of Malacca.

Chapter Sixteen

GOD'S MIRACLE

WHEN Quentin arrived home, he had a cold shower and changed into a fresh set of clothes as usual for the evening meal. He enjoyed these quiet hours of the day. With no more examinations looming ahead, he had more time for reading and listening to the radio. Usually it was the time of day he relaxed, but to-night he was restless. When A-Kim had cleared up and said 'Good night', Quentin went out on to the patio to listen to the night. So many insects seemed to come to life after dark. Little green fire-flies were darting gaily towards him!

It felt like ages since he had seen Sandy or Tony, but in reality he had seen them both going off round the estate only that morning. He supposed they were down at the club now. He came inside and picked up a letter from his parents; it must be answered, but not to-night.

Sitting down in an easy chair he picked up the day's paper and glanced at the front page. But he was not reading! He was seeing again Meg's face as she spoke of spiritual things. If only he could know about things with the quiet assurance that she had. Up till now he had felt that following his career in rubber was the finest thing, but it seemed small after all in the light of bigger questions.

How long he sat and mused he did not know. Finally with a sigh, he reached out his hand and turned on the radio. He was looking at it with unseeing eyes, when suddenly a resonant male voice was filling the room with song. It was such a beautiful voice that he paused to listen; the words came clearly—

'I'd rather have Jesus, than anything
This world affords to-day.'

The words came to him like an electric shock. He sat bolt upright in his chair, and leaned forward to turn the volume down a little, and listened for more of the song. There were two more verses, and every time the chorus ended with the same two lines he had heard at first.

Then a pleasing, modulated voice announced a text from I John v.12, which the preacher read clearly—'He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.' Quentin was leaning forward absolutely motionless. He was trembling and a little breathless. It seemed that every word was being directed to him.

As the preacher proceeded, one thing about himself became clear to Quentin, and that was that he did not have eternal life. And why not? Because he had not received the Son of God. Why not? The reason was that his sins had never been dealt with, and the Son of God could not dwell where there was unconfessed sin. As the message went on, he experienced increasing conviction about his sins, and his lost condition in the sight of God. It was very humiliating and a dreadful revelation to himself. As the speaker came to a close, and asked all his listeners to bow in prayer, Quentin did just that. In the silence he asked the Son of God to cleanse away his sins and come and dwell in his heart. And the mighty transaction was done. The miracle of regeneration, so simple and yet so profound, was complete. When he raised his head at last, Quentin Ross was a new creature in Christ Jesus. The singer was repeating a verse of his song, and once again came the words:

'I'd rather have Jesus, than anything
This world affords to-day.'

'So would I,' murmured Quentin as he switched off the radio and stood up. A great joy flooded his heart and his first impulse was to tell the Joneses and Meg. As the next days were going to be busy ones, and he was on duty this coming Sunday, he wondered when it would be possible to see them. But first of all, he had to do something far more difficult, closer at hand. It happened the very next morning.

Sandy breezed in at breakfast time to borrow a book. He sat

down, and noticing the elated look on Quentin's face he asked teasingly:

'What's the matter with you, Quent? You look like a million dollars! Has your rich uncle died overnight?'

'No, Sandy, it's something better than that,' he said quietly. Always having been reserved about spiritual matters, he was not very fluent in speaking of his experience of the previous night. But how could he act the coward now with Sandy gazing at him in such questioning surprise. So he put down the piece of toast he was just going to butter and, in a few simple words, told Sandy what had happened.

Sandy listened in silence. His only response was to clear his throat and say:

'It's all Greek to me of course, but you're the last person I should have thought wanted saving!' Then choosing a book, he went off back to Tony.

'Quent seems to be getting religious—in a serious way, I mean,' he said.

'Not surprised,' replied Tony lighting another cigarette. 'He always was a bit of a queer duck!' Neither of them said any more, for they both respected the 'queer duck', and many times he had relieved for them so that they could have time off from the estate.

In the days that followed, Quentin was even more zealous in doing his work well. For now it was not his own reputation so much as his Master's that was at stake.

It was a couple of weeks later that Quentin called in at the mission house. He had managed a quick trip in the other direction to see Meg a few days earlier. When she heard of the change that had come to him, and saw the light in his face, her heart was overjoyed. She was also humbly grateful to know that her faltering testimony had been a very real link in the chain of events that had led to his conversion.

And now he told Michael and Valerie. They also gave thanks to God, and gave Quentin books that would be a help to him in studying the Bible.

'Do you know what station that could have been on the radio?' asked Quentin. 'The next morning when I went

to check up, A-Kim had altered the dials while dusting.'

Michael asked him about metre-bands, and felt it must have been the Christian Broadcasting Station in Manila.

'They are doing a great job,' he said. 'Why don't you write and tell them of your experience? It will be an encouragement to them.'

'Maybe I will,' said Quentin. 'Do they have broadcasts on Bible Study, too?'

'Oh, yes, plenty,' said Michael. 'When you write, you could ask them for a list of station programmes. As a matter of fact, I'm wanting some myself for distribution round the village and town. So many of the people have radios now.'

Quentin could not stay, and had to leave before supper.

After he had gone, Jocelyn came inside with a half-chewed stick of sugar-cane. Some unselfish child, having chewed it first, now handed it over the fence to her to continue the good work. Valerie gently removed the offending item and substituted a sweet!

That same evening the village blacksmith strolled in for a chat. Michael was busy doing a little carpentry, and the man was quite interested, asking plenty of questions. Michael welcomed this as another opportunity to make friends. The blacksmith however, had come for a purpose. But it took half-an-hour's chatting before he touched on the reason for his visit.

As he had never been in the mission house before, and showed no interest whatever in the Gospel, Michael wondered what the man had in mind. Long experience of the East had taught Michael that there was undoubtedly a reason, and in the man's time it would be forthcoming. Gradually it came! The blacksmith's wife had given birth to a baby daughter, and they were too poor to provide for this extra child. Would the missionaries take her or not? If not, they were going to sell her to a Malay family for one hundred dollars.

Michael remembered the China days when most missionaries could have started an orphanage with the unwanted children that were offered to them. He recalled the time a little baby had been wrapped up in a parcel, and left at the front door! But this

was the first time he had been confronted with the problem in Malaya. He had a shrewd idea that there would have been no problem in this case, if the baby had been a boy. The blacksmith was not an object of pity. He was well-fed and neatly dressed, so Michael proceeded to give him a heavy lecture on his responsibilities to God and to his family. It was quite impossible for missionaries to take the child; and besides, had he no love at all for the little daughter that he could so carelessly turn her over to strangers! The appeal quite failed to touch the man's heart. To him the whole matter was one of economy, and Michael heard later that he had indeed sold the child, and she would now be brought up a Muslim!

There were many unloved children in the village. Such an one was A-Yin, an intelligent, under-nourished girl of eleven years. Authority had sent her parents back to China, it would seem for political reasons, and A-Yin was left to be brought up by Granny. No one knew whether she was a real blood-relation or not, but one thing was certain, A-Yin had to work hard. She went out tapping every morning. If it had rained during the night and the grass was too wet for her to go out tapping, she went a couple of miles to the saw-mill, and laboured home with a heavy load of reject timber. It was a constant chore, this keeping up the pile of wood for the kitchen fire.

A-Yin was a thin, pale girl with rather untidy hair falling down on to her neck. She was hollow-chested, and her face was really old and careworn. She had early learned the art of protecting herself with her tongue, and her cheeky repartee was frequently heard floating into the mission house from the street. But, in many ways she was a lovable and pathetic figure, and always on Sunday and Wednesdays at the meetings A-Yin pushed her way through the human *mêlée*, and sat on the front row of forms. Her loud clear voice could be heard singing the choruses.

Valerie had made friends with her early after arrival in the village, and had often spoken to her about the Lord Jesus and His love. She had a little Gospel reader, and was teaching A-Yin to read Mandarin. But their reading hours were not very regular, for Granny saw to it that A-Yin had little leisure during the

hours of daylight. It seemed to enrage the old lady if A-Yin went to play with the other children, even for a few minutes. Work was what girls were for; and plenty of it, too.

One afternoon when A-Yin had arrived home from tapping, and had eaten her bowl of cold food, and had a bath, the air was pierced with her shrieking. Granny was giving her a beating. Usually this was administered indoors, but to-day Granny had caught her outside the front door. Valerie went to see what all the noise was about. There was poor A-Yin crouching on the ground, while Granny pulled her by the hair. She had a firm grasp on this, and was twisting it and pulling at the same time. A-Yin was trying to protect her face from the blows of a heavy stick. Valerie felt ill, and hurried away. There was nothing she could do; she dared not interfere.

Apparently the child had done some trifling thing wrong in the matter of the food. Granny who also went tapping, had come home hungry and bad-tempered. Valerie knew that most of the beatings were given in anger, and she feared that some day A-Yin would be really injured. There was a hard streak of resistance in the little girl's heart when it came to believing in the Lord. The resentment and suspicion that had been engendered in her nature, had not yet allowed her to fall in love with the Lord Jesus. Until she did that, how would she be willing to trust in Him. Valerie felt it was her task to make Him especially beautiful to this child, for it was a long slow task to win her.

Very early in the morning of the day after the blacksmith's visit, Michael was out sweeping the front yard, 'assisted' by Jocelyn. A-Yin, who was not at work, came running over to him. Whatever it was she had been about to say, was never known, for she pulled back suddenly, and pulled back in horror, pointing on the ground at the front door.

Michael stopped sweeping, and came to see what it was. There, basking in the sunshine, was a young, black snake! It must have appeared since he came outside a few minutes before. The snake was so small, that Michael thought it must be harmless; but A-Yin thought otherwise. She was really afraid, and partly to reassure her, Michael picked up a stick, and touched the snake. Immediately it tried to wriggle away at a very fast zig-zagging

speed. Michael went after it, and it reared up its head, and fought back! Such a small snake looked rather funny opening its mouth in anger, but it was not at all humorous when Michael realised that he was dealing with a baby cobra! And that as such it was fully lethal as soon as it could wriggle. No wonder A-Yin had been afraid; she had had more experience of snakes than Michael had, and realized at once that it was a harmful one.

Valerie, hearing A-Yin's excited cries, came out in time to view the coup de grâce being administered.

'A nice little cobra for breakfast, Val,' laughed Michael.

'Don't tell me,' said Valerie going closer to have a better look. 'Oh, Michael, there must be a nest of them nearby . . . it's so small. There must be others. Where did it come from?'

'A-Yin first saw it by the front door.'

'Ugh!' shuddered Valerie. 'You will have a good look round the outside of the house won't you, Michael?' She watched Michael pick up the snake and carry it away. 'This just reminds me, it's about time we had another Pest Morning. It's almost a month since the last! What about this morning, Michael?'

'No time like the present, I suppose,' he replied. But secretly he was wishing she had chosen another day, as he had wanted to have a long morning's study. It would mean leaving his desk for awhile when Valerie came along to 'do' the room.

He knew it was necessary to have what his wife called a 'Pest Morning' every few weeks, if books, clothing, and food were to be protected against the ravages of tropical life. A little later he heard Valerie emptying out the small amounts of flour, raisins, etc. and carrying them outside to sun for awhile. The salt needed sunning, even more frequently, to keep it from liquifying altogether.

'Keep your eyes open for any scorpions Val, won't you?' called Michael teasingly. Ever since Michael had been stung by one of these vicious creatures in China, Valerie had looked in and around the bed at night before stepping in! This procedure always amused Michael, and he teased her often about it. Valerie had seen the brown house scorpion in Malaya, and had no wish to make any closer acquaintance!

She proceeded with the task of picking weevils out of the rice,

and spread that on a tray to sun also. Fortunately there was never a great deal of food kept in the house because of Emergency conditions. While the foodstuffs were airing, Valerie went out periodically to see that the ants had not reached it.

Presently, armed with a D.D.T. spray, duster, ant powder, and cockroach hives, she started to clean out the few cupboards. The legs of the wire food cupboard had to be sprayed thoroughly, and each of the four legs stood in tins of water. Some people used moth-balls for this purpose, but it was useless with Jocelyn at hand ready to eat them on sight! The portable wooden bench that was used for preparing the food, and on which the washing-up was done, required the same treatment.

Then Valerie looked around the various cracks and crannies in the bare walls. A wasp had started to build a mud nest in one of the small cotton window curtains in the bedroom. It was almost hopeless trying to keep up with them; they always seemed to be a step ahead. In the small cupboard which held their personal clothing as well as served for a linen-press, she discovered two large cockroaches. Filthy creatures with filthy habits!

The few woollen garments belonging to Michael and herself, were kept in a couple of zippered plastic bags. Valerie undid the zips and sniffed in the bags. Phew! Musty again already! She took the clothing out into the sunshine, and left it hanging on the line. They looked rather a jaded lot she thought! That pink cardigan had been very pretty and had scarcely been worn. What was it about the tropics that so quickly ruined one's clothes, and made them look so completely uninteresting. Michael's one light wool suit needed to be specially watched. Last time there was a tiny spot of mildew on the lapel of the coat, and it had taken careful rubbing to remove it without leaving a trace.

After putting fresh paper in the cupboards and spraying the walls, Valerie put a cockroach hive here and there. These were very effective in killing the pests, but, as they were poisonous, had to be put where Jocelyn could not reach them. She put a few leather bags and purses beside the shoes for Michael to clean later with boot-polish. The leather covers of the Bibles also

needed doing. All these regular chores took quite a lot of time. Then there were all the books to take down and wipe, one by one, lest the mildew rot them. Several more cockroaches were hiding among the books, and a huge spider jumped out from somewhere, giving Valerie a fright.

A day or two before, she had mounted one of the more-frequently used posters on to a strong paper backing. This had dried very slowly, and now she was dismayed to see several holes had been eaten in it! She could hear a wood-boring beetle in the heavy pillar that was holding up a cross-beam of the house. There was nothing much one could do about them. Often in the stillness of the night, their incessant boring could be heard, ruthlessly cutting, sawing into the vital woodwork of the house!

Jocelyn slept in a small curtained-off end of Michael's study. Valerie sprayed it all very thoroughly, disturbing a cloud of mosquitoes behind the cot in the not-too-light room.

Michael meanwhile, had been up to the post office in town on business and had just returned. He was in time to see Jocelyn throwing a small stone at a Chinese boy over the fence, from whence he had provoked her beyond endurance. When she had been punished and put in her cot to cool off, Valerie said to Michael,

'It's getting quite a problem, Michael. She sees that kind of thing and much worse happening round her all the time. We can't blame her for what she sees the other children doing!'

'Yes, it is difficult. They've had so much heathenism and hardship to draw out the worst in them! But she's got to learn, and the sooner the better,' said Michael firmly.

'Quite apart from the child's own training,' he went on in a lighter tone, 'you know Val, we can't have an international situation on our hands!'

Valerie sighed. They both knew that their baby daughter had been the greatest factor in their making friends with the villagers. Her winning ways and ready laughter, simply attracted people whenever they appeared on the street, and in the yard where she played. So many opportunities had come to speak of Jesus Christ as a result of Jocelyn's making friends with people. And yet, as

she grew older, there were very grave dangers in village life for her.

'Dear me!' said Valerie suddenly. 'Look at the time! Mr T'ang will be here any minute to read, and I haven't washed all the D.D.T. off my hands yet!'

Mr T'ang was getting more and more interested in the Gospel, and Michael longed for the day when he would make an open confession for Christ. But the great enemy of souls was not going to let Mr T'ang go easily. Thinking of becoming a Christian was he? That could be dealt with quite effectively! The Devil knew where to put his finger on the spot in Mr T'ang's life that would cripple him!

Chapter Seventeen

A CHURCH IS BORN

SHORTLY after this, Michael had to go away from the station for two or three days at a time to help with the preaching in some of the other stations. It was agreed that Mr T'ang would not come to read for a fortnight. Valerie was glad to have the usual reading time for studying some of the other book-work required for the next Cantonese examination. In addition to the patients to be cared for during her husband's absence, there was the news-letter to be written for the prayer-partners at home, and a host of smaller jobs crying out to be done.

Michael had been gone only a couple of days, when one morning there was the sound of a bicycle being hurriedly ridden up to the front door. Mr T'ang, for it was he, somewhat agitatedly asked Valerie if Michael had yet gone. Receiving an affirmative reply, he jumped unceremoniously on his bicycle and dashed off. This was such unusual behaviour on the part of the normally sedate teacher, that Valerie wondered what was the matter. However, it was not till nearly two weeks later that she found out what had caused the hurried visit.

She was sitting one evening at the little kitchen table, trying to compose her thoughts before commencing a letter. Little geckos were running on the wooden rafters over her head. She could hear the sharp 'ping' on the metal, as one suddenly darted out and snatched an unwary mosquito from the tin roof. While she was musing, one of the geckos decided to shed its tail, and it dropped on to the writing-pad, still wriggling as a live thing. This characteristic of the geckos was probably a provision of Nature for their protection. When seized from the rear by an enemy, the little lizard could cheerily run away, leaving most of its tail in the enemy's mouth! Of course it grew more tail later.

Valerie jumped back and brushed the offending appendage on to the floor, almost stepping on a friendly toad that had come in to rest under her chair.

Just then she heard soft girlish voices, and a rattling of the bolt on the back gate.

'I wonder who the Nicodemus is,' said Valerie, using the name she and Michael usually applied to their many visitors who called after dark! She opened the back door widely, and the beam of light revealed two young women coming through the gate towards the house. The taller of the two was a good-looking young relative of Mr T'ang's. She was one of the village maidens who had been so keen for Michael to photograph her, with a view to having her face displayed on the screen some night! The other girl was also quite well known to Valerie, and lived with her mother and sisters nearby.

Now as they came in and sat down with a purposeful air, Valerie wondered if they had come to talk about the Gospel. After a few minutes light chat, the tall girl turned to Valerie, and said,

'You've heard about your teacher's wife?' she said.

'Teacher's wife?' repeated Valerie, looking at her in surprise. 'No, what about her?'

Mrs T'ang was only twenty-seven years of age, and her husband was nearly twice that age. She was an attractive, pleasant person always neatly dressed. At New Year time, she had been on a visit to Singapore, and while there wore new leather shoes! These had rubbed a very sore blister on her heel, and it had turned septic. She had been coming to the mission house for treatment, and quite often brought along one or more of their four children with her.

'Well,' answered the girl. 'She drank caustic soda, and died two days ago in hospital!'

Valerie was horrified. This could not be true! She asked one question after another, and was so appalled by it all, that she felt dazed. It seemed that since her return from Singapore, Mrs T'ang had refused to go out rubber-tapping, and had got overfond of playing mah-jongg. This inevitably involved gambling, and was one of the great curses of the village. People often

played far into the night. Poor Mrs T'ang used to play at a coffee shop, and night after night did not go home till house curfew time at eleven p.m.

Her husband who was very fond of her and his family, naturally objected to this behaviour, and one evening reprimanded his wife for her conduct. She strongly resented it, and the next morning about half-past seven, drank nearly a bowlful of dreadful caustic soda. This was as Valerie knew, a common practice amongst the disgruntled wives of Malaya. It was then that Mr T'ang had rushed to Michael for help, to drive her to hospital. Valerie felt ill. If only he had said what was the matter, she might have been able to have given some relief! Mrs T'ang was taken to hospital where she could neither speak, nor eat, and died ten days later in unspeakable agony. The girls told Valerie that her mouth, oesophagus, and stomach were burned to a dreadful state.

'Her husband loved her very much. He can't stop weeping,' said the girl. Valerie thought of the peace-loving Mr T'ang and the four dear little children, and she too, felt the tears in her eyes. To think that they had not been able to help in the time of such trouble.

'She was buried yesterday,' continued the other girl. 'They were both from China, you know, and business hasn't been very good for him here lately.' Valerie remembered how glad Mr T'ang had been to have the extra money for teaching them.

'The funeral,' asked Valerie, 'was it here?'

'Yes, she was buried as quietly as possible.' Valerie knew the patch outside the village. The relative spoke up:

'The villagers were very kind to him. They collected two hundred dollars to help with all the expenses,' she said.

'Who is caring for the children?' inquired Valerie sadly.

'Oh, their father is. He bathes them and dresses them. He's very fond of his children.'

'He probably won't have time to come and read with us now,' said Valerie.

The two girls having accomplished the purpose of their visit, departed into the night.

Valerie was left alone with her thoughts. She wondered if

she had missed any opportunity of witnessing to Mrs T'ang. Would she have believed in the Lord if Valerie had been more urgent in her speaking? She felt subdued and saddened by what had happened, and prayed that God would use this bitter tragedy to speak to Mr T'ang's heart.

When Michael came home, Valerie told him the news, and he immediately went to see the teacher. It was always a difficult task to try and comfort the heathen, who sorrowed as those who have no hope. But he spoke to him of Christ, and His tender loving heart that was reaching out to him, and to the children in their sorrow. Mr T'ang said he would be willing to keep up the reading lessons. Was he already feeling that the reading of the Scriptures was filling a need in his life? The missionaries prayed it might be so.

Life in the village went on much as usual. Young Liu occasionally came in with his baby for a chat. He rather laughed at some of the heathen practices still carried on by his family, but Michael noticed that he was bound by them just the same!

The Liu family were polite but distant to other villagers . . . they gave and received few confidences. The whole village was the same in this respect. Nobody trusted anyone else very far . . . the next-door neighbour might easily be the communist eye seeing all they did! Who was to know?

'Poor folks!' Michael often said to himself. 'So many decent, simple folk penalized because of the few. No wonder they turn to idolatry as something they know, and from which they try to derive comfort.'

He and Valerie had both been touched by little gifts of vegetables, eggs, and fruit from their neighbours. Some most unlikely family would send a child along with a small marrow, or some cakes at Festival time. There had been the specially appealing act of the little Indian girl recently. After the Sunday night meeting she had waited behind, and with a shy, gentle smile had pressed one of her sweets into Valerie's hand and then gone off into the darkness. They had no medium of a common language, but a deep message had been given and received.

By these simple things, the Lord's servants knew that the opposing forces had not completely deadened all natural kindness

and gratitude. Many times Michael found himself thinking of the words of the hymn:

'Down in the human heart, Crushed by the Tempter,
Feelings lie buried that Grace can restore.'

And he prayed that he and Valerie would have love at all times for those who as yet did not know the Lord Jesus. He wondered what he himself would be like in similar circumstances . . . unwanted, always watched with suspicion, fearful of death, and having no hope of eternal life . . . and he longed with great intensity that the people of Sungei Bahru would know Christ, and have the light, joy, peace, and satisfaction He could give.

One day, several months after his bereavement, Mr T'ang came as usual to read with Michael. The passage they had been reading for two or three days was a very solemn one, dealing as it did with the Crucifixion. Michael noticed that Mr T'ang's voice trembled a little over some of the phrases. This was unusual for the teacher, who customarily did not display emotion during the lessons. Since the death of his wife, he had been even more quiet and apparently impassive. But how deceptive appearances had been!

Presently the reading was finished, and the teacher deliberately closed the Bible. Taking off his large spectacles, he looked straight at Michael. . . .

'Mr Chao,' he said quietly, using Michael's Chinese name. 'This is a terrible account of the sufferings of an innocent Man. Tell me, why did they do it?'

Michael turned quickly to Isaiah chapter fifty-three, and asked Mr T'ang to read the chapter with him, verse about. There so clearly was the 'why' of His death explained. . . . 'He was wounded for *our* transgressions. . . .' Mr T'ang was greatly moved, and soon afterwards went quietly home.

The next day, during the lesson, there was a pause, and Michael looked up to see Mr T'ang fumbling rather nervously with his spectacles. Suddenly he looked up at Michael with a smile. . . .

'Mr Chao,' he said. 'I do believe in your Lord Jesus. It was for me He suffered all this. I want to be His follower.'

It was impossible to describe the effect of this declaration on

Michael. He felt suffocated with joy. At last the break had come! The first one had really turned to Christ in Sungei Bahru! The Devil had been robbed of his first captive there. Almost two years had passed without any visible results in the village, and now. . . .

Michael replied joyfully, 'Why, that's wonderful news, Mr T'ang. When did you make up your mind?'

'I have read the New Testament many times,' he said. 'In fact I cannot stop reading it. This Word of God has captured my heart. There is no doubt it is the truth. But I wondered *why* Jesus had to die, and now it is all clear!' His face was literally alight with the new joy.

A little later Michael warned him of the opposition he might meet. He did not want anyone to think that life was going to be easy and rosy on the Christian path. Satisfying? Yes! But never easy. He urged Mr T'ang to make a clear-cut profession of his new faith, knowing that it would be good for him to nail his flag to the mast at once. Mr T'ang had decided all this. His calm deliberation was most impressive. He was not a young man, and he had just been through great sorrow. But Jesus Christ had won his heart. He was not going to be ashamed of it.

He and Michael bowed in prayer, and it was a very sacred few minutes. After he had gone, Michael went to tell Valerie.

'Oh, Michael, how wonderful,' she exclaimed softly. 'The very first to come. We must pray that he will be strong and fearless. Nobody admires a coward, and it's so important for the first one to be strong.'

'In a way, the whole of the future church here depends on him,' said Michael slowly.

'I'm so glad a man has come out openly,' said Valerie. 'It will mean a lot in the way of leadership. After all, you can't expect the men to come to the meetings if only women are there!'

'I'm afraid there will be quite a lot of opposition,' said Michael.

'It would be strange if it were otherwise,' said Valerie.

In the days that followed, much prayer was offered up for Mr T'ang. Friends in the homeland became interested in him, and he was remembered in several prayer-circles. It was a joy to Michael and Valerie to see him grow in grace, and seek to

measure his life by the standards laid down in God's Word.

Of course there were those who ridiculed him openly, and behind his back. Mr T'ang heeded them not. He had early removed the traces of idolatry from his home, and the wall was swept clean where the ancestral shrine had been. His parents' photographs still hung in a place of honour, but not to be worshipped. On a wall of his front room was a large brightly-coloured poster explaining the way of Salvation. The children came regularly to the children's meeting, and their father read the Bible to them at home, and prayed with them daily. His faithful testimony bore fruit on the street.

Before many months had gone by, a married couple by name of Lim had signified their intention of becoming Christians. God was working! A little living church was being gathered out from among the heathen. And the Devil, of course was hitting back.

Mr and Mrs Lim also had a shop on the street right next door to Mr T'ang. They had attended the open-air preaching right from the first, and had accepted Gospel literature from Michael. Now they saw the Christian life acted out before them in Mr T'ang—one of their own Cantonese. The light dawned for them, too, and so it became three who gathered with Michael and Valerie for a hymn and Bible study on Sunday afternoons, and during the week.

Mrs Lim looked after the shop, while her husband drove a taxi. One day, soon after it became public news that they, too, were now Christians, their little baby boy became seriously ill. He had to be taken to hospital, and for a while it was feared he might not recover. But prayer was answered, and the little one was healed. In cases of sickness before, the Lims had always spent a lot of money on idolatrous worship, beseeching the spirits to help them. Would they stand firm against it all this time? Mr T'ang went to their home daily for prayer, and in their desperation they clung to him. At the mission house too, prayer was being made that they would stand firm and bring glory to the name of the Lord Jesus.

That was the paramount concern of the missionaries. That Christ should be magnified—made big—in the eyes of the

villagers! So often they had seen the Lord robbed of His glory.

There was A-Lan. For more than a year they had dressed her ulcers and prayed for her. Now there was quite a little improvement. But a Roman Catholic uncle had appeared 'out of the blue', and told her mother that A-Lan should go to Malacca, and offer before a shrine of the Virgin Mary there. The morning of the journey, A-Lan came early so that her dressings would be clean and fresh for the occasion! Then away she and her mother had gone, spending a lot of unnecessary money and tiring themselves out. Michael knew how futile it all was. But worse still, he knew that as the healing continued, it would be the Virgin Mary, and not his almighty Lord, who would get the glory! The Roman Catholics were active in the town nearby, and on many of the estates. Especially amongst the Tamil labourers were they making converts. Their ritual appealed to the Indian mind.

Most Catholics and many other Asians who had been in some way connected with Christianity, wore a gold cross on a slim chain round their necks. This was a sign that they were not heathen, but beyond that gave no indication at all of the spiritual standing of the wearer. In fact, Michael felt that this class of person was harder to reach than the raw heathen. They took it for granted that they were Christians without ever having entered in at the strait gate on to the narrow way. For them there seemed to be some efficacy in the symbol of the Cross, while of its true meaning they knew practically nothing.

Michael knew too, that there was a large and growing number of English-speaking Asians in Malaya, many of whom were not being reached with the Gospel. This was one of the problems that had occupied the thoughts and discussions at a conference of missionaries earlier in the year. Would it be possible to have some missionaries set aside for this special work? One Chinese pastor speaking to Michael, had told him that he could place some fifty such missionaries throughout Malaya immediately. Michael was doing the little he could at the English service, but his time was very full, and there were physical limits to what could be attempted by one person in the hot humid climate. He and Valerie had started a branch of the

Scripture Union—for daily Bible reading—and distributed the notes for the same. But some preferred Bible reading notes in their own vernacular. It was a noteworthy thing that people used their mother-tongue in private prayer! Long ago, the missionaries had decided that for the villages, in order to get near the people spiritually, they must learn one or more dialects. But there was also this vast company of Asians, whose mother-tongue was English!

In Sungei Bahru there was no such problem. To their great joy and thanksgiving, the Lims stood firm, and had not implored the spirits for healing.

During the next few months one or two more were added to the little group of believers. Some made clear-cut decisions, others were held down by 'weights'. One or two villagers were holding back from the point of decision because of intimidation from the jungle.

Michael now had a very great responsibility in teaching these babes in Christ. He wanted them to be healthy and robust spiritually, with a love for the Lord and His Word, and a great hatred of sin and evil. He knew that God the Holy Spirit could alone accomplish this work in hearts. But he also knew that the Holy Spirit works through the Scriptures, and so he fed the young believers on the Word of God. They were urged to memorize it, and meditate upon it.

Always Michael taught them with a view to leaving them to carry on alone as soon as they could do so. Were there not many other places to be given a chance of hearing the Word of Life?

It was comforting to know that after two or three years' work, there were now a number of young churches dotted here and there in the New Villages. There were those who had been sceptical of this method of working, but it was having definite results. It was an Asian church that was being born. A living organism, with the Word of Life in its heart and hands. Upon such groups depended the evangelization of Malaya. Michael and Valerie knew, as did their fellow-countrymen, that the white man's day in Southeast Asia might not be long. And so a great sense of urgency was upon them to spread the message still

further and further. They continually worked and planned with the phrase, 'When we leave Sungei Bahru. . .'

Now with a newly-born church to help, they found themselves back in the days of St Paul. All manner of questions kept coming up, and they found themselves studying the New Testament epistles in a very practical way. Mr T'ang and some of the others had asked for baptism. Should they go ahead and take this step, or should there be a longer period of probation? And who was to judge whether and when they were ready for such a step? One of the new believers was discovered to be still smoking opium secretly. Should he be allowed to be baptized? Another was selling idolatrous material in his shop, and most were keeping their shops open as was the custom for Sunday trade. A rubber-tapper said he had to go to work on Sunday or he would lose his job.

With a completely Eastern background and special Asian problems, Michael felt it would be wrong to foist Western formulas on to the young church. The missionaries were rejoicing over news from one of the villages where the Christians who were mostly tappers, had decided to hold a Sunday morning service, and forego a day's pay at work. The first thing was to win the hearts of the people to Jesus Christ, and he would lead them on and show them what to do and what not to do, as they grew in knowledge of Him and His Word.

Michael knew that Mr T'ang was learning to know the Lord's will for himself, and in all the discussions about the little church, he looked to him for a lead. It became gradually apparent that five were ready for baptism, and were showing by their lives and conduct that they were truly Christ's. So Michael asked a Chinese Christian from Kuala Lumpur if he would come on a certain Sunday to perform the ceremony. In a very solemn service, these young believers, straight out of heathenism, witnessed openly to their faith in Jesus Christ and their determination to follow Him.

The Sunday afternoon meetings were being held in the T'ang home and Lim home alternately. There was as yet, no question of erecting a little church building, though in one village this had already been done. Slowly, as various problems

came to light, some painfully, the little church grew and was strengthened. It was all so new to them, as none of them had walked this way before. There were severe testings too, and the little group was being taught always to look to the Word of God for the answer. It was a joy to see them absorbing new truth and acting upon it. Some stumbled in matters of conduct and had to be disciplined by the others; but, on the whole, there was real encouragement and much cause for praise.

Suddenly, however, a new danger threatened the infant church!

Chapter Eighteen

STRENGTHENING THE STAKES

QUENTIN ROSS being a very honest young man, did not disguise the fact to himself that he had fallen in love with Meg Duncan. On several occasions he had been obliged to endure some teasing from Sandy and Tony on the subject. It was, of course, obvious to them how things were going! But Quentin, now that he was a follower of Jesus Christ, wanted to be sure that Meg was God's choice for him.

Being a very young Christian, he decided to ask God for a definite 'sign'. If his love for Meg was the right thing, would his Heavenly Father arrange things so that Meg would come to the estate on a different day next week? Previously, she had only come on a Tuesday afternoon. Quentin had not seen Meg for two or three weeks, and he had no knowledge of her having any possible reason for changing the visiting day. He was going to make the test really difficult, and asked further that Meg would not only come on Monday, but that she would drive up to the door of his bungalow for some reason or other.

She had never been to his house, but had seen it in the distance. She had been very particular about not visiting him alone, and while he thought her attitude a little old-fashioned, yet he respected her for it. There were so many eyes watching, so many tongues ready to steal a reputation!

Now that Quentin had metaphorically 'hung out his fleece' he went on with his work, and waited in varying degrees of impatience to see what would happen on Monday. He had asked God so earnestly that there would be no mistake. Later as he more and more discovered God's will for his life, he did not ask for these unusual signs. Rather he learned to trust that God was ordering all his circumstances, and that 'all things work together for good to them that love God'. Also he learned to hear the

voice of the Lord speaking to him through the Scriptures. But these were still early days, and he felt 'signs' were necessary.

On Monday after tiffin he put on a clean shirt, and sat down to read the paper! If he sat very still listening, and if he glanced at his watch more frequently than was necessary, who was to blame him?

Dinah was the first to hear the Land Rover. At once her ears stood up alertly, and then she jumped forward with several sharp yaps! Quentin's heart was hammering loudly, and his mouth felt rather dry. The Land Rover drove up to the door, and he sprang forward to greet Meg as she got out of the front seat.

'Well, how marvellous to see you Meg!' he said to the nurse who little realized that she had sealed her fate!

'I'm sorry to have disturbed you, Quentin,' said Meg. Then she added a little mischievously. 'Have you been to siesta?'

'I don't want to see Esther,' replied Quentin doggedly, 'I want to see. . .'

'Valerie asked me to deliver these,' interrupted Meg, holding up some Scripture Union Notes. 'You weren't at service yesterday when she was giving them out!'

As he took the Notes from Meg, who is to blame him for holding her hand at the same time? The *syce* had gone round to A-Kim for a drink of water, and the young couple were unobserved for a few minutes.

'Meg, how comes it you are here on a Monday?' asked Quentin in a slightly husky voice.

'Oh, to-morrow's a holiday,' she replied. He had completely forgotten it was Mohammed's birthday and a State holiday. 'And I came to-day as there are one or two dressings to be changed.' Pause. 'Talking of holidays' continued Meg, suddenly becoming conscious that her right hand was in captivity and pulling it away, 'I'm having a week off from next Friday!'

'Very glad to hear it,' said Quentin who knew that Meg very often worked long hours. 'Are you going anywhere?'

'Yes, I thought it would be nice to see Fraser's Hill. I've only three more months out here you know, before my contract finishes,' replied Meg.

'I knew you would be finishing,' he said, 'but hadn't realized

that it would be so soon.' He was looking very intently at Meg. Seeing his expression, she began to look hurriedly around for Abu.

'Where is he? I must dash, Quentin.'

'But about Fraser's Hill, Meg. Are you going alone? Will you be all right up there?' he asked quickly.

'Oh, yes,' she laughed. 'I might even find you a butterfly or two!' Just then Abu appeared, and Meg hurried off, leaving a somewhat bewildered young man looking after the disappearing Land Rover.

Now Quentin really got busy. He remembered that there was a week-end's leave owing to him, when he had stayed on duty at the estate some months ago. He met Sandy and fixed with him about duties, and later arranged with the manager to be absent from Friday till Monday night. Six o'clock that night saw him speeding away to the Red Cross house on urgent business! The outcome was that he would drive Meg up to Fraser's Hill on Friday. The accommodation at this lovely mountainous resort was heavily booked, but Quentin put through a long-distance phone call, and was able to get a room in a government bungalow in the same road as Meg's bungalow!

He was quite determined what he was going to do. Somewhere, sometime over the week-end, he was going to ask Meg to be his wife. He felt quite sure that his love for her was God-given, and he dared to hope that it might be returned. As for Meg herself, this sudden turn of affairs had left her feelings in a state best not described!

During the previous week, the manager had made an astounding proposition to Quentin. A suggestion that filled him with delight; but as it would radically alter the future, he would have to talk it all out with Meg.

On Friday as these two sped away on their own affairs, their friends Michael and Valerie took Jocelyn and went out visiting. The aim of the visit was to call on a Chinese couple Mr and Mrs Ting, who lived in the town, and were passing through a time of distress. Mr Ting held a responsible position, and one day in the course of his work, had occasion to call at the mission house.

He and Michael got talking, and he later attended the English

service. Although he earned a fairly good salary, yet there were seven children, all very young, to be provided for, and an eighth one was expected. They could not afford help, and the poor weary mother, overwrought with too much to do, was threatening to destroy her unborn child. She was desperate, and her husband did not know how to comfort her. Would Michael get his wife to go and talk with her?

So while Valerie reasoned with the mother, and sought to bring moral and spiritual comfort to her, Michael was entertained by the father in another room. Mrs Ting had attended church as a young girl in another part of Malaya. Her relations were still attenders there. But she had married a Buddhist, and had lived out the long years far away from the means of grace. Valerie realizing that she had never had a vital experience of Christ, spoke to her very urgently about the need for personal salvation.

In a subsequent visit, Mrs Ting told Valerie that she was quite willing to be a Christian, but would wait for her husband, so that they could start on the Way together. But although Mr Ting who was a very likeable man, had several long talks with Michael, he was unprepared to take the step that would distinguish him from his fellows, and forever cut him off from the old way of life.

The same afternoon Michael drove to the homes of a couple of Tamil families, to have a short visit there too. The old granny in one home could not understand English, and so had not been coming to the services. But she had a Tamil Bible, and when the family came home from church, one of them was required to tell her all about the address in Tamil, and she would find the Scripture reading in her Bible! There was no regular Protestant church service for Tamils anywhere in the district, and this was another branch of missionary work that pressed heavily on the hearts of Michael and Valerie.

While there were Tamil services in some of the larger towns, yet very little was being done to evangelize the thousands of labourers who lived on the estates, or worked on the railway. The most active workers amongst them were the emissaries of Rome. The mission to which the Joneses belonged was primarily in

Malaya for the purpose of evangelizing the Chinese in the villages. But the Directors of the mission could not close their eyes to the great need of the other races so near at hand. Recently they had set apart a young man to study Tamil, with a view to his being a full-time worker in this field.

Everyone knew that Asian peoples were best reached by Asians. But until such workers in sufficient numbers, and with a burning love for their Lord and a vision of the need of their own races, were forthcoming, was this generation to miss the chance of hearing the Good News?

No! God was still calling some of His children from the West to come quickly with the message of life. And in spite of the great difficulties, the rising tide of nationalism, the high cost of living, and the constant threat of communist-domination, they were courageously setting out to fulfil their ministry. But ever and anon the burden of their prayer was, 'Lord, raise up Asian workers for this task of reaching the millions of Southeast Asia!'

Meanwhile the young believers of the little church in Sungei Bahru were facing a very grave problem.

Chapter Nineteen

'GRIEVOUS WOLVES'

ABOUT ten days after their visit to Fraser's Hill, Quentin and Meg called at the mission house to announce their engagement! They were both very happy and sure that this was the right step for them. It had been a joy to their friends to see the steady growth in grace in both of their lives; and they rejoiced to think of one more Christian home being established. They were an ideally suited couple, and Valerie had visions of them doing Sunday School work on the estate where it was so badly needed. They would have to keep busy about the Lord's work, for otherwise they could be lonely in a life that provided so little Christian outlet.

But Quentin had a piece of news for them that was a great surprise!

"Golden Eagle" has decided to open up new land in Nigeria,' he said. 'They'll be planting rubber over a wide area, and have asked me to be one of those to go out there after leave!'

'So you'll be leaving Malaya?' said Valerie looking at him and then at Meg.

'Yes, I'm afraid so,' answered Quentin, while Meg nodded agreement. 'Meg goes home in just over two months. I get leave a few months later, and we plan to be married in England then.' He looked so pleased with himself, that Michael, perforce, had to tease him a little. Then he continued in a more serious tone,

'So this time next year, you'll both be in Africa! It's amazing the things that happen! Everyone was silent for a few seconds. Then Michael said quietly,

'Well, God bless you both in your new life. May I give you a text that is a working principle for life? It's just this—"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."'

Quentin and Meg thanked him, and then the four friends bowed together in prayer, as Michael asked God's blessing on those who were soon to go far away.

After they had driven off, Valerie decided to go to the street and do a little shopping. As she went out of the back gate with Jocelyn, she noticed that their bananas were ripening. She must get Michael to cut the bunch before some of the village bad boys got it first! It was too bad those big white grubs were spreading all over the palms and rolling the leaves up like that!

There seemed to be an air of hustle about the village. Everyone was carrying ducks and fowls. A few had eluded their captors, and were fluttering here and there in an attempt to escape. It appeared that the Fowl Man was paying another visit to the village. He was a tall Indian who came from the government to give preventive injections to the village poultry. In this way they were kept free from disease. Jocelyn stood for a long while watching the man at work with his big syringe. It did not seem to hurt the birds, and it was certainly satisfying to their owners to have all this done free of charge!

Valerie went on to see Mr T'ang's family. As she entered the shop, she saw that Mr T'ang was busily engrossed reading some literature. When he finally looked up and saw her, he greeted her in his usual courteous manner.

'These seem to be very fine books,' he said.

'Oh,' replied Valerie with an interested smile, 'what are they?'

The teacher handed one over to Valerie and said:

'They were sent to me by one of my late wife's relatives from Singapore.' He paused to take off his spectacles, and then continued quietly: 'He knows I am a Christian now and thought I'd be interested. They are attractively printed, aren't they?'

Valerie's heart sank as she quickly glanced at the back page to discover who had published the colourful booklet. It was marked 'Watchtower Press'. So Jehovah's Witnesses were after these babes in Christ, were they? Why did they always avoid the heathen, and go to mislead those who had been so hardly won?

'Oh Mr T'ang,' she said in rather a choked voice. 'These are *not* the same as you believe. I haven't time to stop now and explain; but will you bring the booklets round to the mission

house this evening, and my husband will tell you all about it?

Mr T'ang saw that she was distressed, and wondered what was so serious about it. He said, however, that he would go around to see Michael later. Valerie sped home as fast as Jocelyn could go. Breathlessly she went in to Michael at his desk and sat down hastily on the other chair.

'Whatever is the matter, Val?' he said, looking up in some amazement.

'What do you think Michael? Someone in Singapore has sent some Jehovah's Witness books to Mr T'ang. He was studying them so intently when I went into the shop, and seemed very impressed by them, too.'

'Never!' exclaimed Michael, now thoroughly roused.

'He's coming round to see you this evening. Mr T'ang, I mean,' she said hastily.

'Oh, dear,' said Michael. 'Whatever next! The Catholics tried hard enough to get him!' He said to his wife, 'I must go over this subject before to-night Val.' Then he reached up and pulled off the book-shelf a volume that dealt with Ancient Heresies.

'The Devil's not dead,' said Valerie. 'To think of this happening here! What a good thing you brought that book along at the last moment Michael!'

'Yes, isn't it? And I nearly didn't—it seemed such a remote chance that we'd ever need it.' As he turned over the pages slowly, he said to his wife,

'You know Val, where there are lambs, there'll be wolves! We can't avoid it. We must teach the young in the faith to know the difference between the truth and error. I'm rather glad that this is happening while we are still here.'

'Yes,' agreed Valerie. 'It would be dreadful to hear about it while we were on furlough. We'd be full of remorse for not having warned the folk.'

That evening Mr T'ang came to see Michael, and they had a long chat. Michael showed him from God's Word, the error in the books that looked so attractive on the outside. They discovered that this particular creed left hardly a tenet of the faith intact. Michael warned the teacher of the futility of argument

with such people. Certainly give his own testimony of what the Lord Jesus had done for him if he had an opportunity of doing so. But refuse their literature and not waste time in profitless wrangling.

Michael pointed out to Mr T'ang that we could all take a lesson from their zeal in propagating their beliefs. When they had finished chatting, the two brethren joined in prayer. They asked God to make them fervent in spirit, giving them a continued sense of urgency in proclaiming the truth of the Gospel. And they also interceded for any of the Christians who were in danger of being deceived by this erroneous teaching.

It was not very long before the Lims and Mr T'ang had another caller who claimed to be a believer as they were. This was a young woman representing the Seventh Day Adventists. The literature she was distributing was also very well printed with some splendid pictures. She chatted for some time and left with a smile, promising to call again.

Mr T'ang, after the previous experience, was more on his guard this time, but he did not find anything wrong with the leaflets that had been left, till he came to a diet-disturbing sentence!

'What? Eat no meat?' he exclaimed out loud. 'Rubbish! They are no better than the Buddhist vegetarians!' A little later the same day, Michael was once more called on to explain where and how the S.D.A. doctrine differed from the teaching in God's Word. He pointed out to Mr T'ang and the other Christians that in this creed, the atonement of the Lord Jesus was regarded as being incomplete, and that salvation was not by faith alone, but by obedience to the Law. Sunday observance, of course was regarded as being the Mark of the Beast, and great emphasis was placed on keeping the sabbath, the seventh day of the week.

Michael gave thanks to God for the liberty of the Gospel. Mr T'ang prayed for Christians everywhere, that they would never allow the Adventist yoke of bondage to be put on them.

Most of the false cults were being propagated in the larger centres, and Michael was surprised that they had come to Sungei Bahru. Probably being so near to the town, it was an easy target.

'You wouldn't find them trying to win the heathen,' said Valerie somewhat strongly. 'They go after Christians and those who have been associated with Christianity!'

'I wonder how they got hold of Mr T'ang's name,' said Michael. 'He said that the young Chinese woman who called on him to-day was most cordial!'

'Oh, well,' said Valerie, 'the Devil will use any means at all to knock people out of the race—even an attractive personality!'

It seemed a shame that the young church should be so early harassed with these subtle teachings. But perhaps it was better that way! Children who grew up surrounded by germs, very soon built up an immunity to disease. Michael and Valerie prayed that the little church would be well-taught, and able at all times to recognize truth from error when it was presented to them.

And then the English service came under fire! During the following months there were evidences that those who attended the service were being visited by members of a sect called 'Cooneyites' or 'Jesus Way' people. A married couple, accompanied by a Chinese and Tamil fellow-worker, had come to the town, and started to hold a service on Sunday mornings. Permission had been given to use the same school building, and it was somewhat confusing to Mr and Mrs Ting, and others like them, to realize that there was any difference between the morning and afternoon services. Some people attended both, just to make sure!

This sect of Cooneyism had become very active of late in some of the towns of the Federation. Its workers insisted that no one was a Christian unless they had been led to the Lord by one of their workers. Once again the atonement itself was regarded as not being the essential of salvation, but rather an emphasis was placed on His life. Their ministry was a very divisive one, as one other that was harassing a number of the Federation churches.

This man suddenly appeared, going from place to place causing disruption and upset. It was a matter of baptism. Christians were being urged to disregard all previous baptism they had known, of whatever sort, and be baptized by him to become real Christians! Nothing they had experienced previously was

correct! His was the one true and only possible faith! How easy for some emissary like this to go about causing disunity and discord in the name of the Lord. It was so easy to pull down and so very difficult to build. And what a travesty was made of Christianity in the eyes of outsiders.

No wonder the Roman Catholics pointed with scorn at the weak and divided Christian church. No wonder that large numbers of Asians were being attracted by its dignity and voice of authority.

In Sungei Bahru, there were now seven church members, and a number of adherents who were getting very regular in attendance at the meetings. Mr T'ang and Mr Lim were learning to lead the little meetings very well, and sometimes they passed on to the others some thought from God's Word that had been especially helpful to them. Michael held two Bible study classes a week, and previous to the time of study, there was a time for prayer. It was a great joy to hear the various ones learning to take part in public prayer.

Sometimes visiting Christian Chinese speakers would come for the Sunday meeting, but most of the actual preaching was still Michael's responsibility. It was not to be too long before Mr T'ang could give a good message himself, and on the occasions when he spoke Michael sat amongst the others with a deep thanksgiving in his heart! Here was a fellow-believer who, a year or two before, was in heathen darkness and bondage to sin.

The little group had started earlier to give regularly of their money to the Lord's work. From the sums contributed, donations had been sent to various branches of Christian work, such as the Bible Societies in Malaya. But ever since Mr T'ang had been almost beguiled by the literature of the false cults, he had felt a strong desire for the church to have plenty of good literature for distribution.

Before long the believers agreed to purchase a selection of tracts, posters, and various booklets published by the Christian Witness Press. Mr T'ang openly displayed some of this in his shop. The Lims did likewise, and other members took some to give away as they had opportunity.

One day, an invitation came from the church in a village

further south, for the Sungei Bahru group to attend the church anniversary celebrations. It was their first anniversary of the establishing of the church, and the Sungei Bahru Christians were overjoyed to meet with other Christians, and feel that they were a part of a much larger body. What happy times of fellowship there were, and what hearty singing! A Chinese pastor from Kuala Lumpur and a European missionary were the invited speakers, and the visiting churches returned home greatly enthused for their task of evangelism.

Michael and Valerie continued to be busy with medical work, and the Bible teaching ministry, but they were able to leave some of the visiting now to the church folk. They themselves were freer to go visiting at more of the estate *kongsi*. Also, two other estates were glad for them to take Bible lessons in the schools. A Tamil Christian teacher from the town, where he had his classes in the mornings, offered to go in the afternoons to the estates with Michael, to interpret. And so the circle of influence was spreading!

Then one day the little church gathered to say 'Good-bye' to Michael and Valerie. Two lady missionaries were coming to Sungei Bahru to give further much-needed help in Bible teaching. There were so few men available for this ministry, all being fully occupied elsewhere. The young Christians knew from their study of God's Word what was required of them as good witnesses of Jesus Christ. They were also proving experimentally in their own trials and troubles, just how God answers prayer, and works for those who put their trust in Him.

The night before Michael and Valerie were due to leave the mission house, a number of people called to say 'Good-bye' and wish them a good journey. A little later there was a lull in callers, and they sat talking over the past three years, and recalling many things that had happened.

'Well, Michael, our first period in Malaya is almost over!'

'Yes Val, but for the young church it goes on. . . . The menace of the jungle is still very real for them, and the continual opposition from idolatrous neighbours.'

'They truly are a group of lambs surrounded by wolves.'

'But they have the Great Shepherd with them, and He has

promised never to leave them nor forsake. Why, Val, He's never left us, and He'll never leave them!

'I know He won't, Michael, but think of all the years of spiritual helping we needed before we became established Christians. I only hope we will be able to convey to the Church in the West, some idea of the courage of these Asian Christians.'

'There's no doubt that they have a hard road, and an uncertain future in many ways.'

'Yes, but with eternal life in their hearts, and the Word of God in their hands, there is no telling how far the blessing will extend.'

'We must ask Christians everywhere to pray for them continually . . . that Southeast Asia may hear the Gospel speedily.'

Michael and Valerie bowed in prayer for those whom they were leaving behind, and then Michael reached for the Bible and read the words that had so often been in his heart:

'I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then, neither is he that planteth anything, neither he that watereth, but God that giveth the increase.'

'Christ loved the church, and gave Himself for it.'