

Selections from Letters

of

MRS. DW. COLYPHANT.

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of

MR. D. W. C. O L Y P H A N T

MR. D. W. C. OLYPHANT: a merchant for many years in Canton, China, and founder of the Olyphant commercial house in Canton and New York. The first letter is said to have been largely responsible for the bringing out to China of the first American missionaries.

Copied from a copy which was typewritten from a handwritten copy made by Mr. Olyphant's son Robert Morrison Olyphant. Copied by H. B. Graybill to whom Mr. R. M. Olyphant lent the typewritten copies.

1914.

Copied by Chinese typist under supervision of D. W. Lyon, Shanghai, 1916.

BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE.

Robert Olyphant, son of Robert Morrison Olyphant, son of D.W.C.O.

J. Kensett Olyphant

R. M. Olyphant, Jr., " " " " " " "

F. Murray Olyphant, " " Talbot Olyphant, " " "

Talbot Olyphant, " " " " " " "

Miss A. S. Olyphant, ?

Canton, August 6, 1827.

My dear friend,- (The first part of the letter is personal. This begins after a page or so). Oh if she could see the condition of her sex here she would have a livelier appreciation of what he hath done for her in having her lot cast where husbands are commanded to love their wives as Christ loved the Church. Oh what a love was that - a love of sincerity, not cold but ardent - He gave Himself for it - a love of benevolence ensuring to it the greatest blessings - a love of forbearance, generously overlooking failings - a love of tenderness, compassionating infirmities - a love of wisdom, with no misplaced excess of kindness seeking its true welfare - a love of constancy and faithfulness, hating puttings away, and only correcting to purify - loving it with a love of purification ----- Oh if we loved as Christ loved us - - - - How much evil would be overcome - - Let us think on these things. Love is the fulfilling of the Law. - - - - I wish I could give you some good news from this far country respecting our Redeemer's Kingdom - but I do not see that I can even say there are signs of a change except we regard the operations of his hands whom we know will not suffer any labors of His servants to be finally lost - But the seed that is sowing is of a kind that cannot, according to human calculations fructify for a long season, and it scarcely seems possible to sow any other - If those who come here from Christian lands were of a different character, it might be hoped that an impression would be made upon the minds of these Heathen. - If they would but exhibit Christ to them they might be won to Christ - a door of entrance to them might be hoped for - there might be a little leaven to leaven the mighty lump. - But Alas! Alas! they that profess to know the living and true God and visit these shores, seek not the Glory of God, nor care that the love of Christ should animate the hearts of their benighted fellow creatures - Oh can nothing be done to awaken them? Will they never feel their responsibilities? Will they always think their only business here is to amass a little wealth? and that in the judgement hour there will be no enquiry What didst thou here for Me? Will they always act as though it was not a fact that we must give accounts for every step of our progress thro' this wilderness, and that an unmoved sight of the wretchedness of those that are without God will bring upon us the sentence, "I was hungry and ye gave me no meat" - Oh if the men who come here could but once be touched with the sentiment that where there are beings who have not the "Bread of Life", their Christ their dying risen Lord is hungry, surely they would ask themselves, How can they be fed? My Brother, Christ is hungry - He that is touched with a fellow-feeling of the infirmities of the infirmities of Man - feels the wants of the hundred millions of China - should he in that hour, say to me concerning them I was hungry and ye gave me no meat, I was thirsty

and ye gave me no drink, Lord forbid. But what can I do? the feeblest of the flock. If I can do no more I would make the stronger ones hear my bleating cry. Christ is hungry, and if nothing else is done it may induce some stronger one to come and see how he may be fed.- Surely if it is believed that Christ hungers in these millions of souls, they that love Him have not done enough in permitting for more than 20 years one solitary member to be the only messenger of His Relief. That messenger has told the Churches that he is not sufficient for the work - he has cried to them for help but cried in vain. He has asked that an effort might be made by those who, with Christian lips, quaff China's refreshing beverage to prevent the bringers of it from blaspheming, in the presence of the Heathen, the name of the Lord. - Oh, that those who, with prayerful hearts, drink tea in Christian lands would never again put it to their mouths without praying that Blasphemy may not be in the cup - that they who bring it to them may be Christ's friends among the heathen, and wishing to do what they can that their refreshment is not procured at the expense of starving Christ - dreadful thought that the procurement of their refreshment should be the sealing of heathenish darkness. Long has it been so, how long shall it continue? But do you ask what they can do? They can send two faithful intelligent men, whose efforts shall be directed to awaken Christians by name to a sense of their guilt and danger in not being Christians by practice - One of them should be calculated to address himself with influence to merchants that abide or itinerate here, and the other to Seamen that visit the port. This measure is incumbent upon the churches. When the Christian missionaries can point to the traffickers in Opium as reflecting the image of Christ, then it may be hoped that the Heathen, beholding it may be changed into the same image, and seeing that God, in His inscrutable Providence has seemingly shut up this nation from an approach to the light in any other way, it behooves his people, in the use of the proper means, to give Him no rest 'till He grant the desired Blessing. - You know, my Christian Brother, the circumstances in which I am located here and how my hands are tied, but I hope and believe I shall be unbound - and if any of the Churches are willing to put their hands to the work I hope I can assure that mine shall not be slack with them. How long I remain here is uncertain. I feel sometimes as though my connection with China must never again cease.- as tho' the call of Christ was imperative that what I do for Him, (Oh what a mite will it be) I must do in China - i.e. that I must render my talent, whatever it is, subservient to His interests there. I feel as though I would be willing (could I serve Him here) to devise no other plan. But in what capacity I may remain is equally uncertain. After the changes of the past year and the turn which has been given to Mr. S's affairs, I do not feel the same confidence

in conducting his concerns here. - I would you could see your way clear to charter a vessel with moderate funds, and those two men I have before mentioned, I would willingly do the business for nothing, or devote a reasonable commission, or a portion of profits towards their support while they remained to see and report what could be done for Christ. The only difficulty with me would be Mr. S's objections lest his interests would be interfered with. - - - - When I speak of a lasting connection with China you must not think I contemplate a continued stay in it, or an entire severance from my native land. - - - - I wish to form an establishment which may it for the future period of my life the center of my mercantile labors, and if my heart deceive me not hoping to connect with these the planting of the church in China. I hate the thought of making a "snug independence" in China, and then of leaving it and resting at home - It seems incredible that the Providence of God should bring a Christian man in contact with such a vast concourse of Human beings, destitute of all human knowledge of Him and that he should amass a little money among them, and then leave them and find rest in a total forgetfulness of them - I love my country and value her privileges and Oh, in early anticipation, how have I idolized the quiet delight of domestic felicity - but I would learn to say not these in preference to Christ in the hearts of my fellow creatures - I do not, need not, think of an entire severance from them, but I no longer think, as I once did, of a rest in it with them as an End of my labors. I desire to labor to the End, finding no Rest whether present with or absent from them if by any labors of mine the Blessings of the Gospel may be extended in China. If the circumstances of the country warranted, I could have no hesitation what to do, nor be long without my family with me. - - - - Who knows but the communications of my wishes may stir up some other to do what I have only the strength to wish. I add, however, that I do think that it is a very feasible thing for the American Church to set on foot some plans for the Evangelization of China. How easy a thing it would be if there was only a willing mind for a few Christian men to charter a ship and devote the profit of a voyage to begin a fund for this glorious end. I have said I would do the business for nothing - methinks wherever there are Christian Hearts that tea would sell well and taste well. The idea I have here suggested may be a novel one - but not chimerical. - It strikes me as being so simple that where there is but a small portion of the love of Christ it will excite a wonder that Christians have not before acted upon it. If so much is to be done as we hear of and read of in Bible and missionary reports and addresses, new methods must be adopted to supply the means - I cast my bread upon the waters - The Lord own and bless and to His Name be the Glory.

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Canton, September 23, 1850. - - - - - It is not for me to divine how God will move with this reb^d.^{*} One thing I feel assured of, the present order of things must be subverted before good can come here and I believe God is going to overturn the present system and that speedily - but how - whether by the severity of His judgement or by such outbreaks, as are now impending, settling into a new order of things, and so making a free course for His Word, I cannot say - but His Word must have free course. We may hear a voice saying to us, "Enter into thy closet and shut the door about thee, till these calamities be overpast" - - and so retirement be duty. It behooves us to watch and to follow the leadings of Providence. At present I see no cause to flee - but rather to stand by and if it may be, lend a helping hand that this people in the midst of calamity and at their wit's end for safety, may be directed to Jesus, and to unite with his servants stationed here who cease not to cry "Come Lord Jesus - Even so come quickly". "Overturn and overturn and overturn till Thou, whose only right it is, reignest".

Sabbath Evening, Shanghai, September 29, 1850.
- - - - - At the evening service an instructive sermon was read by one of the missionaries on "Despising the day of small things". It seemed a day of this kind, for a few to be assembled in that room having in view the conversion of China's host - but I could not but feel and say, "What hath not God wrought?" What a contrast is now exhibited to the scene when Dr. Morrison, and two or three others at a room in my factory met to plead for only one missionary from the American Church, he being the only one yet sent from Protestant Christendom - and now look at Shanghai and its foreign commerce and Palaces, and at its many missionary establishments and Churches and a wide door opened to go in and out among the people, and the prospect of the field enlarging much faster than the church will wake up to her duty. Does she say it is a day of small things, and other fields are more propitious? Let her look and see the Church's origin and look forward to the blessings promised; that so the "hope of the inheritance may be an animating principle in her heart influencing her proceedings" and keep her from despising the day of small things. Between the services I called to see Mr. White, the only missionary here from our own Board, he has but lately arrived and wants advice as to fixing an establishment here. May our Gracious Savior help me to help him, I was sorry to find Mrs. White in delicate health. It is my impression that if more care was taken of our missionaries, there would less infirmity and mortality among them. They should be enabled to live more generously, and with more choice as to localities and comfort of domestic arrangements.

* Taiping Rebellion

I fear the Church has much to answer for in this respect. She not only declines to send the laborers that are wanted, but those she does send are so few in number and so poorly cared for that they are worked and starved to death. I am not prepared to establish this as a fact, but I have such an impression, if it be so, let I and mine consider what share of the obloquy belongs to us and let us repent and do our first works. "Behold I come quickly." - "Be faithful unto Death and I will give thee a crown of Life". Thus endeth my first Sabbath in Shanghai. Good night my dear wife and children. The Lord watch over you all and lead you in the way He would have you walk. - - - - -

Shanghai, October 7, 1850. (He mentions in this and a former letter Dr. Hobson who came up with him to Shanghai, and mentions meeting in Shanghai Dr. and Mrs. Bridgman, Dr. Medhurst, Dr. Lockart, and Dr. Boone).

- - - - I rejoice in the acquisition of California. - The missionaries will be so much nearer Christian land, and being so will have so much more of its sympathy and more of its sustaining care. Oh that was a great bound of Providence that drew to the shore opposite this a nation of men possessed of the knowledge of Christ, and that shall count among its numbers very many whose hearts shall be filled with the love of Christ, and who not able to look further west except their eyes rest upon this land, and seeing its darkness, the eye cannot but affect the heart, and they will be moved to pray as they have never prayed before.

"Light of them that sit in error,
Rise and shine - Thy blessing bring,
Light to lighten all the Gentiles,
Rise with healing in Thy Wings."

and to enquire as they have never enquired before,

"Shall we whose souls are lighted
With wisdom from on high,
Shall we to men benighted,
The lamp of light deny?"

and to sing as they have never sung before,

"Salvation! O Salvation!
The joyful sound proclaim
Till earth's remotest nation
Has learned Messiah's name".

and that I and mine may thus fervently pray, and honestly enquire and heartily sing unto faithful acting is the desire of your x x.

Shanghai, November 23, 1850. - - - - - Oh that God would place upon these shores a seed to serve Him, and take out of the way the barrier that a seed of opium dealers now presents to the entrance of Life and Light, but in this perhaps I show more of the impatience of man than submission to the purposes of God. China is

her own worst enemy. Her Pride must be humbled and the opium dealers will do it, they are feeding of her to the Death. It is righteousness in God. It is unrighteousness in man. - - - Would that the men who bear the name of Christian were another kind of Instrument in the Hands of the Lord. - - - (He says the Bishop of V. exhorted) the missionaries to love one another and to study the things that make for peace with reference to their unhappy disagreements about the Translation.

Canton, March 27, 1851. - - - - - (About the separation of the L. M. S. and the Amer. Bible Society in translation work). I am not yet fully persuaded that they had better go on as they are - two rival committees in one place translating the Scriptures, and full of bitterness and strife is a poor introduction to its Light. Does the Lord require this at His servants' hands? May there yet be found a way to still the strife and bring Peace to the troubled waters, - but it is sad to look upon China, dark as Egypt, and the Light that might shine darkened.

March 28, 1851. - - - - - It may be that - - it is time for me to retire. - - - - - May those that follow me more disinterested - more discerning of China's good commercially and spiritually and more earnest in seeking them. I would not, however, turn my face from "Sinim" - She has the promise of being an ornament wherewith to clothe the Redeemer. I can yet pray for her - and it is believing prayer that she most needs - May I have a heart to offer it and what little yet remains may it have more of this occupancy.

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