

15102

379

Pam
Biog

Rev. John Leighton Stuart, D.D.

S. H. Chester.

The subject of this sketch was born in Shelbyville, Ky., December 2, 1840. His name indicates his Scotch descent, and some of his relatives in Virginia claimed to be the lineal descendants of the royal family of England and Scotland of that name. He himself claimed a nobler lineage as the son of a Presbyterian minister. He received his college training for two years at Washington and Jefferson College, Pennsylvania, and for one year at Centre College, Danville, Ky., from which he was graduated in 1861.

He taught school at Henderson, Ky., for four years, and then entered Princeton Theological Seminary, from which he was graduated in 1868. While he was at Princeton the famous China missionary, Dr. John L. Nevius, visited that institution and delivered a missionary address which so impressed Mr. Stuart that he offered his services to the Executive Committee of Foreign Missions for missionary work in China.

He was sent out in the autumn of 1868 in company with Matthew Hale Houston, of Virginia, and Ben Helm, of Kentucky. These were the first missionaries sent out by our Southern Presbyterian Church to any foreign field. They joined the China Mission, which one year previously had been founded by Rev. E. B. Inslee, who had been sent out before the division of the Church at the beginning of the civil war, and was transferred to the care of the Southern Church soon after the close of the war.

The journey of these missionaries was by way of New York, the Isthmus of Panama and San Francisco, and thence across the Pacific to Shanghai, and occupied two months.

Mr. Stuart began his work at Hangchow, and with the exception of a few months spent in opening Soochow Station, and of about a year and a half spent in exploring the field and residing temporarily at several points where it was not found practicable to open stations, he spent his entire missionary life of forty-six years in the city of Hangchow.

In 1873, after five years of incessant toil and hardship, his health failed and he was sent home for rest and recuperation. He soon recovered his health, but more than this, he secured what proved to be the best possible insurance against ill health in future, in the person of Miss Mary Horton, of Mobile, who returned to China with him as Mrs. Stuart in the summer of 1874. For forty years they lived together, setting, in the midst of surrounding heathenism, the example of an ideal Christian home, whose very existence was a continuous argument for Christianity, and from which have gone forth gifted missionary sons, through whom "he being dead yet speaketh."

Remarkable changes occurred in the period compassed by his residence in Hangchow. At the time of his arrival there were only a few scattered native Christians in that part of China. He lived to see and to share in the development of a strong, aggressive and united church, carrying on a broad and effective work throughout the whole province of Chekiang.

The site on which he established the mission compound was only a stone's throw from the old Provincial Examination Halls. He lived to

Stuart

see built upon that foundation a modern Normal College with an enrollment of almost a thousand students.

When he reached Hangchow he found a city, desolated by the recent ravages of the Taiping rebellion, and under the rule of the degenerate Manchu dynasty, against which the Taiping rebellion was a mad protest. One of his last public services was to extend to the representatives of the new Chinese Republic at the American Recognition Dinner the congratulations of the American residents of Hangchow.

The most conspicuous trait of Dr. Stuart's character was that of simple, unpretending goodness. He was a man of rich experience, accurate information, and remarkably clear judgment. He was not a profound scholar nor an eloquent orator, but his life was a perpetual sermon. He was modest, quiet and unassuming, and singularly free from every form of self-seeking. To him more than to any other member of the China Mission perhaps his fellow missionaries resorted for counsel, because they knew by experience that his advice would be both intelligent and disinterested. The Chinese resorted to him with every conceivable trouble, because they had become convinced that they could trust him absolutely.

A few days after his death the following tribute to his character was published in the China Press, a weekly paper printed in English in the city of Shanghai:

"The life of Dr. Stuart strikingly illustrated the power of personal character. To the casual acquaintance his most marked trait was modesty. He was never aggressive in pressing his views on others. Although of strong, clear-cut convictions, he never lost patience with those who differed from him, while he always held himself open to new light.

"Chinese and foreigners of all the missions paid to him a homage which combined confidence and respect with genuine love. In the little amenities of ordinary intercourse as well as in the larger issues of mission work and policy he showed an unfailing considerateness. It is significant that the accepted leader in all missionary enterprises in Hangchow was generally spoken to and of as 'Father Stuart.' Men sought his counsel and leadership because they respected him, trusted him, loved him, and because they recognized in him a man of God."

Dr. Stuart had the happy experience of being able to work to the very end. Two weeks before he died he took part in the installation of the native pastor over the self-supporting church at Hangchow, which is his monument, a nobler one than any marble column could ever be, or even than the beautiful chapel which loving friends have erected as his memorial since his death. On November 24, 1913, having served his own generation by the will of God, he fell on sleep, and awakened in the presence of the Savior whom he had so long loved and served.

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF FOREIGN MISSIONS
POST OFFICE BOX NUMBER 153
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE
EDUCATIONAL DEPARTMENT