

PREFACE

THE following pages are the attempt to tell the story of Christian missions in China and to do so in the light of the various factors, political, economic, intellectual, and religious, which have helped to shape the enterprise. The date chosen for the suspension of the narrative, the close of the year 1926, has been fixed arbitrarily as being the latest for which anything like complete material is available. The story of the last ten or twelve years, indeed, probably suffers from the fact that we are as yet too near the events to view them in true proportion.

It is impossible for any writer of history entirely to free his account from the influence of his own interests and convictions. In the following pages the effort has been made to view events objectively—to recount them as they actually occurred (if that can ever be done). It may seem, indeed, to some who have given their lives to carrying the Christian Gospel to China, that the author has at times forgotten that he himself has been a missionary. The author wishes to state frankly at the very outset, however, that he is thoroughly committed to the enterprise of Christian missions, and that his bias, therefore, is to interpret missionary activities in China more favorably than some who are not so committed believe that the facts warrant. He is, moreover, a Protestant, and while he has striven to narrate fairly the story of the efforts of Nestorian, Russian Orthodox, and Roman Catholic Christians, he has not been able to escape the uneasy feeling that he has not understood fully the convictions, the hopes, and the desires of the representatives of these communions. At times, on the other hand, the author has wondered whether the consciousness of his bias and the desire not to be influenced by it has not led him to be more restrained in his favorable estimate and more pronounced in his criticism of missions, and especially of Protestant missions, than accuracy warrants.

The writer, too, is a Westerner, and he has probably not given

as much attention to the part of the Chinese in the life of the Church as would one of their own number. Nor has he been able to enter with complete understanding into the religious experience of the Chinese. For that reason the book has been purposely named "A History of Christian Missions in China," so stressing the part of the foreigner, rather than "A History of the Christian Church in China." It is to be hoped that a Chinese will sometime prepare a narrative from this latter angle.

The larger part of the material upon which the book is based consists of what historians choose to call primary sources—books and letters and reports of missionaries and of other eye-witnesses or participants. Much, however, is of a secondary character.

In the footnotes more than one reference is often given. This is usually for the purpose of facilitating the researches of those who may wish to use the book as a guide to further and more detailed study of the topics treated. Some of the accounts referred to, especially where more than one is given in a footnote, are of questionable authority. When, however, a statement in the text is based upon a dubious reference, that is usually indicated by some such qualifying word as "probably," "seems," "possibly," or "appears."

In the romanization of Chinese words the Wade system has been followed, except in the case of most geographical names and a few names of individuals. Here current usage has as a rule been adhered to. In quotations, naturally, the romanization of the writer has been reproduced. In those few instances where a word is used whose corresponding character is unknown, the romanization is irregular.

For their courtesy in facilitating his search for material, the author wishes gratefully to acknowledge his obligation to the Yale University, the Day Missions, the Cornell University, the Morrison, and the Missionary Research Libraries, to the North China Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society, to the late Professor F. Wells Williams, in whose excellent private collection the author has spent many happy hours, to Mrs. Charles W. Wason, who graciously made available the library of the late Mr. Wason while it was still in her home, to Mgr. Freri of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith, to the fathers of the Society of the Divine Word at Techny, Illinois, to Mr. J. H. Oldham for the use of a rare and valuable book, to Professor L. C. Good-

rich for the privilege of examining and making use of the material in his manuscript, *American Catholic Missions in China*, and to the many others whose names there is no space to record, but whose kindly aid and interest have made pleasant the long days of research.

The author especially wishes to record his gratitude to Professor David Edward Owen and to Mr. Chauncey P. Williams, Jr., who by their assistance hastened the collection of material, especially that on Protestant missions before 1918, and to Mrs. C. T. Lincoln for her competent typing of the manuscript and her assistance in reading proof and in compiling the index.

The author also desires to acknowledge himself the grateful debtor of Dr. A. L. Warnshuis, and of Professors F. W. Schwager, H. P. Beach, E. D. Harvey, Lewis Hodous, Paul Pelliot, and the late F. Wells Williams, all of whom read extensive portions of the manuscript and made valuable suggestions. For any mistakes, however, the author alone is responsible.

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New Haven, Connecticut
May, 1928.

