

A HELPING HAND TO CHINA

BY GILBERT REID

THE above was the title in English selected for an editorial published in St. Petersburg in 1899, in expressing approval of the plan of the newly-initiated International Institute of China. This sentence expresses about as well as any other the main purpose for which this institute was started and which has directed its policy through these years.

In outlining the chief features of the "International Institute of China, I will first answer the question, "What are its chief objects?" The first object expressed in the Regulations as drawn up at the very outset in 1894, was expressed in these words: "Primarily to seek the welfare of China and the good of the Chinese people." Another form of expressing the same idea is that which is found in the above title which was used by a Russian editor. It was this feature of the new educational enterprise which especially won the favor of conservative Chinese Mandarin over two decades ago. It is on the word "primarily" that emphasis should be placed. The significance of this enterprise as started by an American and as countenanced and supported by persons of different nationalities can only be seen when there is a clash between what are regarded as Chinese interests and the interests of some other country or group of countries. For instance, when the Great War arose in Europe and when its calamities and complications spread far and wide, it was my desire that the war should not reach the shores of China and that China should not concern herself in the war in Europe as it related to strife between two groups of western nations. This desire of mine was actuated by a consideration of the best interests of the Chinese. I put forth efforts to carry out this desire. It will be easily seen that this position which I took in support of Chinese interests would bring me into conflict, not only with the position taken by the Wilson Administration, but also the position which was

held by seven Associated Powers. I might be regarded as loyal to China and I could easily be regarded as disloyal to the flag of my own country. Anyway, this is a fundamental principle which has directed the affairs of this International Institute.

A second object, indicated by the word "International," is that of cultivating friendliness between China and all other countries and to a minor degree among the peoples of these countries themselves. This means more than an American-Chinese friendship society, or an Anglo-Chinese friendship society. It means not only that the Chinese should be taught to regard Americans as friends, but also the Japanese as friends. And it also means that in the task of promoting the spirit of Internationalism Japanese and Americans or British and Germans or Russians and Japanese should attain to the high state of civilization where they will all be friends the one with the other, and all alike seeking the welfare of China. To use another word, the "Cosmopolitan" spirit is the aim of the Institute.

Closely linked with this word Inter-national is the other word Inter-religious. This is for one living in China something much more than what is expressed in the word inter-denominational. The object of the Institute has been to cultivate the spirit of friendliness between Christian adherents and those of all other faiths. This means that not only Confucianists and Buddhists should be taught to tolerate the Christian propaganda, but that Christians, both missionaries and their converts should look with respect upon those who are devoted to the teachings of the other founders of the great religions.

Another object of the Institute has been to utilize the influence of those who possess the most influence for the general good of all. It is to use the power of those who happen to be on top for the uplift of those who are beneath. It is to use the power and authority of officials for the protection and care of the people. It is to use the greater scholarship of educated men for the education and improvement of those who are illiterate and unlearned. It is to use the persuasive powers of those who are under the control of moral and religious ideas for the reformation of those who have gone astray or who spurn the laws of man and God. Hence, in starting this work in 1894, before the name, the International Institute of China, was given to it, the name used was that of The Mission Among the Higher Classes in China. This represents a new method of missionary enterprise. It has meant all along that special attention should be given to the official and educated classes in China. Latterly, it has also meant that those Chinese who are interested

in new religious movements or who are devotees of the great religions of the past should also be encouraged to unite with others in all schemes for advancing righteousness, truth and reform.

One more object has been of a very general character, namely, to engage in any form of work that would help on the cause of truth, sound learning, righteousness, peace and good will. The object is broad enough in its application to include right-minded persons of any nationality or of any religion. There is full scope for doing almost any kind of work that would be of service to one's fellowmen. With such an object the Institute can be affiliated with other Missions, with schools and universities, with social, literary and educational associations, and with the reform movements in the government of China or even among all the governments of the world.

No one can very well complain of these objects which the Institute has had in mind and to accomplish this it has undertaken a large variety of work. If there is any criticism to be passed it would be that the aims of the Institute are too general, too indefinite, or too idealistic.

I now answer the second question: "How have these aims of the International Institute been carried out?" In answer, I will follow the chronological rather than always the logical order.

When the work was inaugurated in the Autumn of 1894, during the war between China and Japan, one great feature was that of cultivating personal social acquaintance and intercourse with the Chinese of high standing. Many hours were spent in going around the city of Peking in a springless Chinese cart in order to visit the homes of the Chinese, and the higher the rank of the Chinese, the more important and also the more difficult was it to secure this acquaintance and to be admitted into the home. There are always very few who are willing to take the time or who have the inclination to make use of the method of conversation and to have the spirit of sociability in pushing forward one's ideas or even in propagating one's religion. Most missionaries prefer to remain in their study, or teach in a school, or preach in a church rather than spend hours in going around a busy city and talking on things in general. Naturally, this kind of social work is regarded as very useless. Still friends in China cannot be made otherwise. To use an American word, one needs to be a good "mixer."

When the work was initiated, coming at a critical time in the history of China, political questions had to be considered. Political activities rather than so-called religious activities were of first im-

portance. I thus drew up memorials and official documents concerning the reforms which are needed in China. Political science was not only a study but became a practical means for winning the attention and favor of those who are in the Chinese Government. One thus appeared more as a political and social reformer than as a missionary or an educationist.

Another form of work, as seen in what has just been mentioned above, has been the literary. All through these years I have not only drawn up short papers to be presented to the government, but have prepared books for the information of the educated. I have generally had the assistance of Chinese who had a good literary style so that the books would be acceptable. Latterly, I have undertaken a weekly newspaper, called the International Journal. In this we have the countenance of seven distinguished foreigners of seven nationalities who serve on the Honorary Editorial Board. The Journal aims to be constructive rather than destructive, mutually conciliatory rather than mutually antagonistic. We aim to print the news of the good things that are going on in this world, however few they seem to be as seen in the average newspaper. We are aiming through the Journal to carry out the objects of the Institute. This literary kind of work is most important, and at present the effort to issue from week to week the International Journal is something that ought to receive the countenance and still more the financial backing of friends in the home country.

For a number of years, we have carried on conferences of all religions, in which the representatives of the different religions should be invited to give addresses. We have conducted these conferences without ever quarreling with one another. The reason has been that we have had only one general rule, namely, that while each one could expound the tenets and defend the practices of his own particular religion, he should not denounce, criticize or ridicule the tenets and practices of others. These conferences have been held in many different cities. They bring together the best men in every community in the spirit of co-operation. The adherents of all religions are urged to work together for the peace and prosperity of the whole country.

Closely allied with this latter method has been the use that has been made of what may be called lecture system. When invited by the Chinese officials or by school or by any kind of association, I have always been glad to give an address on any topic that has been selected or may be deemed appropriate. For instance, during the last year I visited the Provincial capitals of seven different

Provinces at the invitation of the military or civil governor. I was entertained and full arrangements were made for a series of lectures to be given to four different groups, one the educational group, another the commercial group, a third the official group, and the fourth a group of those representing the different religions.

Something of the same character as the above has been that of giving addresses or more properly of preaching sermons to Christian churches. This may not come within the direct scope of the Institute ideas but it is a form of work which is of great service. The emphasis is laid on the most important teachings in Christianity or as found in universal truth, so as to strengthen and encourage those who have been brought into the Christian church. In this matter I never ask any questions as to what the denomination is. In fact, I have been invited by the pastors of every church in Peking except that of the Anglicans, and even in their case the bishop expressed the hope that the canons of the church would before long allow him to extend to me an invitation to preach in his cathedral.

One more form of work has been that of having a Chinese exhibit consisting of objects of interest in different parts of China. We have not dared to speak of it as a Museum, for the collection of things to be exhibited has been too insignificant. Just before the war, through a committee of twelve persons from twelve countries, a plan was drawn up for an International Exhibit. This secured the approval of the President of China, who made a promise of \$30,000.00. Owing to the havoc of war the committee has never since met, and the plan, at least for the present, has been abandoned. Still in some form or other this kind of work ought to be maintained.

One other way to reach the Chinese has been through that of a library and reading room. I trust that in the future, this may become a more important feature of our work than it has in the past.

Another question remains: "How far has the International Institute of China secured visibility or a local habitation?" During the years 1894 to 1902 the Institute, insofar as it had any habitation at all, was only in my own rented house, and even this was burned to the ground with all my property looted or destroyed during the Boxer Uprising of 1900. From 1902 to 1907 the Institute was also in rented buildings in the city of Shanghai. From 1907 down to the present the Institute has had a most valuable and central site in the French Concession of Shanghai and different buildings have been

erected thereon. The ground was purchased by the Chinese and most of the buildings have been erected by Americans and others. The property today is worth about \$150,000.00.

On my return to China in 1921, I decided that it was opportune and advisable to re-establish the Institute in Peking. The Institute, however, is again only in my own rented house. But there are plans for securing a site here and for erecting buildings to carry on the work of the Institute and especially that of the International Journal.

Outside of these two cities of Shanghai and Peking, we have no intention to have any local habitation. It is our desire that the ideas of the Institute will be taken up by the Chinese or by different Chinese organizations and carried out by them according to the fitness of local conditions.

One more question is this: "How has the Institute been supported?" In general, the support has come from voluntary contributions. In a business sense there have been those who have become members of the Institute, which is an incorporation, and so have paid their membership dues. In my own case, it has seldom happened that I have been guaranteed any annual salary. There have been times when friends in America have contributed large sums and some of these sums have been set apart for my own salary, for the salary for other members of the staff. It has seldom happened that any who contributed one year would promise to renew the contribution the next year. This method of carrying on work is generally regarded these days as hazardous, as not being practical or as being bad business. I know at different times men like Andrew Carnegie or John D. Rockefeller have asked the question, "What is the guarantee that the International Institute would be permanent?" Others have said, "When Reid has disappeared, the Institute will disappear." These all may be drawbacks. I acknowledge them. I also claim that there is a certain advantage in the way of permanent vitality by not having any endowment, although I am inclined to think that if a big endowment was offered me I would accept it. I do not know that others will care to carry on the work under these requirements of faith such as I have been ready to follow in the past.

We have a strong American committee; the Reverend Joseph Fort Newton, of New York City, being the chairman. The treasurer is Mr. George T. Pearsons, 70 Fifth Avenue, New York City, to whom any generous-minded individual who feels inclined to help may send checks. Any other information our readers may desire will be gladly given them if they write me in Peking. In any case, I trust that the work that has been here described will lead others to see that it is most important to extend to China the helping hand.