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"I AM NOT AFRAID!"

The Story of
JOHN W. VINSON
Christian Martyr in China

by E. H. HAMILTON



"I AM NOT AFRAID!"

What would you do if you were held captive by a gang of ruthless bandits, and one of them came up to you—while your hands were bound—and pointing a pistol at your head, said, "I'm going to kill you. Aren't you afraid?"

That was not a hypothetical question to Jack Vinson. It was grim reality, in North Kiangsu, China, November 2nd, 1931. What he did, and the reply he made, have both thrilled and strengthened the people of God in many lands. And by his answer he has earned a place alongside:

Queen Esther—"If I perish, I perish."

Nehemiah—"Should such a one as I flee?"

Paul—"What are you doing weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be imprisoned, but even to die at Jerusalem for the Name of the Lord Jesus." (Acts 21:13. RSV)

Martin Luther—"Though every tile on every roof in Worms be a demon, yet will I go there."

And David Livingstone—"Who am I that I should fear? Nay, verily, I will take my bearings tonight, though they be my last."

For Jack Vinson looked his tormenter in the eye, and calmly answered, "No, I am not afraid. If you kill me, I will go right to heaven."

Who was this Jack Vinson? He was a man small of stature, one who had known sickness and suffering for many years; and one who had known sorrow too: but one who knew God in such a way that he could say with Paul, "Nay, in all these things, we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us!" (Rom. 8:37)

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John Walker Vinson was born in Winnsboro, South Carolina, December 28, 1880, but when he was yet a small boy his parents moved to Sherman, Texas, and built a home near the campus of Austin College.

John's parents both were godly, active members of the Presbyterian Church. For years, his father, an honored elder, conducted a mission Sunday School and son John assisted him in that work.

As the Vinson home was near the campus of Austin College, the boy early came under the influence of outstanding religious leaders among the students, men who later became distinguished missionaries: Will Junkin and Adam Rice, to China; Alva Hardie, to Brazil; and Motte Martin, to Africa. No wonder young Vinson became a Student Volunteer while a student in Austin College, and worked in a mission of the First Presbyterian Church in Sherman. He also was active in one of the literary societies, and was president of the Y.M.C.A. in his senior year.

John was graduated second in his class in 1903, and that fall he entered Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary. Shortly after he entered Austin Seminary, that student body was deeply stirred by news of the sinking of the mission steamer Lapsley in the Belgian Congo, in November, 1903, the drowning of Henry Slaymaker, a good swimmer, and the miraculous survival of Motte Martin, who couldn't swim! John immediately volunteered to go as a missionary to Africa, but three years later, at the time of his graduation from the seminary, there was an urgent need in China, and the Executive Committee of Foreign Missions persuaded him to accept that call. And so he sailed for China, arriving there February 4, 1907, and was assigned to labor in Sutsein, North Kiangsu.

The weather was bitter cold going by the Grand Canal in miserable Chinese boats from Chinkiang to Sutsien; but he arrived safely and buckled down to studying the language. Now it happened that a lovely young woman, also fresh from the States, was living there in Sutsien, Miss Jeanie de Forest Junkin, younger sister of Dr. Will Junkin. John soon was enamored but shy. Evening after evening he would go to Dr. Bradley's home to visit Miss Junkin, and then return to his own house and write her love letters! Finally shy John, brave enough in every other way, screwed up courage, and asked the momentous question . . . John and Jeanie were married in April, 1908, and the next year the bride and groom moved from Sutsien to Haichow.

Not long after their marriage John Vinson developed a chronic illness which troubled him to the end of his life. Jeanie also suffered from one illness after another. In fact, sickness, suffering and sorrow

beset their lives for many years, until Jeanie's glad release in 1923, and John's glorious exodus in 1931.

When we read the story, gleaned largely from Mrs. Vinson's letters over a period of years, we think of Paul, and of how God said to Ananias in Damascus, "Go, for he is a chosen instrument of Mine to carry My Name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel; for I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of My Name." (Acts 9:15-16 RSV)

Beginning early in January, 1917, Mr. Vinson was confined to his room for two and a half months. His condition became alarmingly worse in the middle of March and he was taken to Shanghai for treatment and possible operation. It sounds rather casual to say "He was taken from Haichow to Shanghai for treatment," and only those who have taken a sick loved one over that terrain can realize what such a trip involved.

Mrs. Vinson wrote in detail about that journey. Since her husband was sick and weak, he was carried on a cot from Haichow to Hsinpu, the port four miles away, where a small Japanese steamer was waiting to sail for Tsingtao. But though it was carefully explained to him that Mr. Vinson's sickness was not at all communicable, the Japanese captain refused to allow the sick man to be put on his ship, lest it be subjected to quarantine in Tsingtao.

Mrs. Vinson and Dr. Morgan therefore could only take him by slow boat, via the Salt Canal, and the so-called Grand Canal. They secured a small boat with a junk-sail, and slowly travelled the Salt Canal until nightfall when they reached a crude lock. The next morning, beyond the lock they had to change to two little boats, which Mrs. Vinson described as "very small, crowded, dirty things." This was her euphemistic way of describing the filth and voracious insects hidden in every crevice of the boats. They endured those boats all day, reaching Tsingkiangpu by evening, where a night's rest was awaiting them in a missionary home.

The next morning they found that the launch they had planned to take for Chinkiang could not run because the water in the canal was too low; again they were obliged to travel by small sail boat taking three days instead of one to reach Chinkiang. Arriving there, they hurried to the railway station just in time to see the express train pulling out for Shanghai! And so they had another four hour wait. On the train they rode first class, hoping there would be room

for the sick man to lie down, but instead he had to make the six hour journey sitting upright. They reached Shanghai in the night and it was not until the next day, one week after beginning the journey at Haichow, that they were able to leave their patient at the Red Cross Hospital.

Serious recurrences of his illness filled the next two years with suffering and anxiety, and finally made an emergency furlough necessary in the fall of 1919. But there was never a word of complaint or whining on the part of either Mrs. Vinson or her husband. In a letter written aboard the S.S. EMPRESS OF ASIA in October, 1919, she said, "Mr. Vinson suffers constantly, and gets little good out of his food, as he loses two out of three meals. But one would never know from him anything about it, for he grits his teeth, and goes about as usual, ready for a joke with anyone!"

Neither would anyone know that even then she, too, was ill. She only wrote, "I had been feeling so no account all summer, I had not touched the children's clothes." She had received a telegram to join her husband in Shanghai for the emergency trip to America, and had only two days to do all the packing. Yet she casually explains, "I packed in two days. One was Sunday, and I went to three Chinese services, teaching at the Sunday School."

The return to "Dear Old China," as they called it, was a joyful one. Friends welcomed them in Shanghai; and because the Grand Canal was too low for travel, they stayed twelve days with other friends in Soochow until the Canal could open. Even the trip on the Salt Canal was a good one. "We were fortunate to get the most roomy and comfortable boats we have ever had on the Salt Canal,—for the boats on this little canal usually leak on six sides, and do not allow standing erect. . . . We got home Saturday morning, so thankful and happy. The entire trip of 350 miles from Soochow here took thirteen days—pretty fair considering head winds!" And of course there was a wonderful welcome awaiting them from missionaries and Chinese alike, at Haichow.

Don't think that because of their recurrent illnesses, the Vinsons did not carry a full load of work in the station. When he was physically able to itinerate, Jack would go to the country on long trips, visiting the little churches, preaching and training new enquirers for Church membership. And when he was too weak to travel, he carried a full complement of work in the station; doing

evangelistic work in the city and hospital, keeping the books, and in other ways assisting overburdened Dr. Morgan. At one time he was also principal of the Boys' School.

Mrs. Vinson was just as busy. In the mornings, from 8:15 A.M. to 1:00 P.M., she was teaching the missionary children (four pupils, three grades!). She rested only half an hour after lunch, and then from 3:00 to 6:00 P.M., or later, she would be working among Chinese women in the city. "I've about twenty girls and women whom I try to teach once a week. Some are gathered in groups, but in all there are at least ten separate visits made each week, besides the Christian women's class of twenty or more on Wednesday. Then there are always two or three services on Sunday." She also helped direct the half-trained Bible women who were working in the country.

Once, when Mrs. Rice was away, Mrs. Vinson took her place as evangelistic worker among women in the hospital. "I am perfectly fascinated with this work," she wrote. "You cannot imagine the sweetness of telling of Christ to people who have never heard even once—to whom it is such a beautiful, wonderful story. Some of them seem to accept it so simply,—and all of them are so pitiful."

At night she gave herself to her children, telling them Bible stories before tucking them into bed. And then she sat down to a burden of correspondence. It was no easy schedule for one who herself was fighting a losing battle against sickness.

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Jack and Jeanie Vinson both were called not only to a ministry of suffering, but also to endure sorrow, and they bore it nobly. Of their six children, only three survived to adulthood. Two baby boys, William and Dickie, died in infancy.

"We can only be quiet before our Maker," wrote their mother, "And trust Him to do with us and ours what He will, knowing that He cannot make any mistake, and loves us and the precious little ones better than we can conceive. . . . I pray that this may in some way be used to make us more fruitful here in this place full of those who sorrow—especially for their babies—with no hope whatever."

A few years later, their eldest son Eben, suffered for many months from a strange malady and died while yet in high school.

But the hardest thing that Jack Vinson suffered was to see his beloved wife, after the birth of their longed-for little daughter, Jeanie, slowly sink away, week after week becoming thinner and weaker, till finally in desperation he took her the long journey to Peking. There, in the Peking Rockefeller Hospital, she passed into the presence of her Lord, on March 25, 1923.

Jack wrote of her to his brothers and sisters: "On April 7th, just fifteen years to the day after she left Sutsien for Soochow to get ready for our wedding, we laid her away in the little cemetery here on our compound. She sleeps almost between our two little boys, William and Dick. We had a beautiful service in English and Chinese, conducted by Mr. Grafton, and Mr. Feng . . . Many of the Christian women gathered at the grave had heard the Gospel for the first time from her lips, and gave their hearts to Jesus because of her message. Some few whom she brought to Christ had gone before her, and were waiting to welcome her in the glory land. One young girl whom she loved dearly died just two days after we left here for Peking.

"We are trying not to take a gloomy view of her death. I have talked it over with the boys, and they understand so well. We speak of Mother as though she had but just slipped into the next room. Indeed I think that she is near us, for I cannot think that heaven is a far away place. The way though is lonely. I miss her at every turn. Miss her love, her counsel. Most of all just now I miss waiting on her. I have been her nurse for several months. I love to think that she is happy in the Homeland, free from pain and suffering. The children will miss her love and tender care. She was a sweet, gentle mother to her boys. Her heart's desire was for a little daughter. She was given one of the dearest and most precious of little girls, but her baby is never to know her love and care. I shall carry on with the children as best I may.

"You knew her value as a sister, how dear and precious she was. She was dearer and more precious as a wife and mother. I need your prayers, and much of God's sustaining grace, and the gentle comfort of His love. I hope that I can bear the cross He has laid upon me with a brave heart and an undismayed spirit. I have my children to love and to train for His service. Write me when you can. I need your messages of love and comfort."

About three weeks after the simple funeral service, Chinese friends of Mrs. Vinson prepared a memorial service to do honor to

her memory. More than a thousand people were present. Representatives of the military and civil officials attended the service, bringing tributes to the memory of this worthy woman. One of the most prominent citizens of Haichow, who was not a Christian himself, but who had been studying English for over a year with Mr. Vinson, made a beautiful address. He spoke of her unselfish life, her love for the Chinese girls and women, and pointed out most clearly that Christianity was the only religion that could put such a spirit into one's heart. He urged everyone there to imitate her in living for others, and to remember that hers was a life of service and devotion to Jesus Christ. Then followed many more speeches by Christians and others.

Mr. Vinson, in telling of this service, added: "The beautiful text in Hebrews, 'She being dead, yet speaketh', was running through my mind all during the service. Her death was gloriously used of God to give more people a chance to hear the Gospel than have ever heard it here in Haichow at any one time."

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No one who met Jack Vinson, and saw the twinkle in his eye, or heard his cheery laugh as he exchanged a joke with a fellow missionary or with a Chinese friend, would ever have dreamed that for years he had lived intimately with sickness, suffering, and sorrow.

I well remember a meeting of the North Kiangsu Mission held in Haichow in the fall of 1925. "Uncle Jack," as he was affectionately called by the younger missionaries, was in charge of the kitchen. With great gusto he would produce one wonderful dish after another, with the assistance of his Chinese cook, Chu-si-fu, for the enjoyment of some fifty missionary guests. And when we gave a cheer for Head Chef Vinson, his face beamed with delight.

Jack enjoyed the close friendship of General Pei Pao-shan, the highest military official in the Haichow area. During the Chinese revolution in 1911, he had come to Vinson and asked him to cut off his queue. General Pei was very fond of American food. When he became hungry for a good dinner a la Vinson, he would get the postmaster, Mr. Shao, to suggest to Mr. Vinson that it would be very nice to invite the General to a foreign dinner. In the course of the conversation Mr. Shao would say, "General Pei likes catsup,"—a saying still a by-word in older missionary households. Because of his friendship for Mr. Vinson, the General once entertained the entire personnel of the North Kiangsu Mission at a big Chinese feast.

In March, 1927, when Red soldiers of China who had infiltrated General Chiang-Kai-shek's army first broke loose, they wrought havoc with mission homes and installations. They killed several missionaries in Nanking, and all the missionaries of North Kiangsu had to flee. When those soldiers reached Haichow, they not only looted, but utterly destroyed most of the missionary residences.

Two years later, Mr. Vinson returned to Haichow from America, alone, having left his three children, Jack and Chal and little Jean, with their aunt in Lexington, Virginia. Bereft of all his loved ones, as he returned to the ruins of his beloved mission station he wrote:

"Yesterday morning, before Sunday School, I went to the riverside to look at the havoc wrought upon our mission property, two years ago, by the soldiers. As I stood looking at the wreck and ruin of what once were our beautiful, comfortable homes, I was thinking of Nehemiah. I could easily imagine the feelings that surged through his breast, as he rode around the desolate city of Jerusalem by night, and 'viewed the walls, which were broken down, and the gates thereof burned with fire.' But as I was recalling the pleasant memories and happy associations of the past, I saw something else which set me to dreaming of the future. I noted that all of the fruit trees which we had cherished, and many of the shade trees, such objects of beauty in this treeless land, had been cut down, carried away and burned as fuel. But what impressed me most was that several of the old stumps have budded and are sending up new shoots. How prophetic and full of promise of fruit and shade in the days to come!

"From the desolate compound there by the riverside, I turned my steps toward our West Gate Chapel, for it was time for Sunday School and the morning service. How I wish that each one of you could have shared with me the experiences of the next two hours! I would love to make real and vivid to you, the warm, hearty, cordial, loving greeting of my Christian Chinese friends when I entered the chapel. There were tears in many eyes, but shining through the tears there were tender, loving, friendly smiles.

"I wonder if you can imagine the emotions that filled my heart as I sat and listened to the concert reading, in Chinese, of the Sunday School lesson. Was it just a coincidence that on this, my first Sunday morning back in Haichow, with the picture of what I had just seen at the riverside fresh in my mind, the Sunday School lesson should have been Isaiah 40:1-11? **Comfort ye, comfort ye, My people, saith**

your God. Well, it may have been only a coincidence, but it was one of the Lord's amazingly loving coincidences which had for me a special message. The third verse sounded like His direct command ringing in my ears, **Prepare ye in the wilderness—here at Haichow where your home has been destroyed—the way of Jehovah: make level in the desert—the darkened, ignorant hearts of men and women about you—a highway for our God.**

“Can you wonder that the picture of our ruined homes again flashed through my thoughts, as they continued reading. ‘All flesh is grass, and the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field . . . The grass withereth, the flower fadeth, but **THE WORD OF OUR GOD SHALL STAND FOREVER.**’ Immediately this thought came to me, and has been lingering in my heart, like a sweet melody ever since: the **THINGS** which have been lost or destroyed were material, fleeting, temporal. It's only our earthly homes and earthly possessions that are gone. But the invisible, the spiritual, the eternal,—the things of priceless value,—the love, devotion, and loyalty of our true Chinese Christian friends have only been enhanced and deepened because of the very losses which we have suffered. So, the service ended, I came away. There were tears in my eyes, but behind the tears there was a smile. In my heart there was the prayer that, in the rebuilding of things both temporal and spiritual, there may be given to us the vision, the courage, the patience, the determination of Nehemiah: that we may labor with a faith and trust and a hopeful spirit like unto his.”

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Jack Vinson was intensely interested in everything about the station, and especially in people. He was just as much interested in the hospital as a medical doctor could be. While he was keeping the hospital accounts, and helping Dr. Morgan in various ways, he was observant of the patients, their diseases and treatment. He wrote:

“So varied are the cases in our daily clinic, that only a partial report of each would furnish material for a rather bulky copy of the **Medical Journal**. I was in the clinic today. These are some of the cases: Here is a man with a tubercular back. That one is infected with hook-worm. This young man, with blood streaming down his face, has just had a quarrel with his brother, and his head has come into violent contact with the business edge of a butcher's cleaver. That old gray-beard, with the look of misery in his eyes, has a car-

buncle between his shoulders, none of the modest, tiny carbuncles such as one sees at home, but a full grown-up one covering some twenty-five or thirty square inches. Here is a mite of a baby with a huge abscess on one side of his head. These two men by the door have badly infected hands. Their white corpuscles have been waging war with streptococci, and pus is abundant. This man has leprosy. The one next to him, cancer of the face. Those two soldiers have syphilis. That boy has scabby-head. Several have malaria; five have kala-azar. That middle-aged man has trachoma, and is almost blind. That man going out has dropsy, the nurse has just taken about a gallon of fluid from his abdomen. This boy has a large stone in the bladder.

“There were seventy-two patients in the clinic today. The above are only illustrative cases. Several will go to the operating room tomorrow afternoon. Three or four operations in the afternoon, after a busy morning in the clinic, make rather a full day for our one doctor-surgeon. But his day’s work is not finished until after he has inspected his average of seventy-five inpatients after supper. It’s a lucky night for him, too, when he is not called up in the middle of the night to usher a child into the world, or to make life more bearable for some one of his acutely suffering patients. . . .

“Dr. Morgan’s name would be written high on the list of the medically famous in any land. Out here his name is enshrined in the hearts of one and three-quarter millions of Chinese. All men instinctively trust him; women and children adore him. He is something more than just a fine doctor; he is a MAN, always gentle, considerate, patient, kind, on the job day and night. I have never known him to turn down a call, either because of weariness or unpropitious weather.”

Mr. Vinson continues in his praise of this “beloved physician”:

“One loves to look into our Doctor’s face. Those lines and tiny seams are not the markings of old age. They were etched there by a loving heart, burdened with anxious thought and care over the physical wellbeing of the rest of here on this station. I know, for his concern for me and mine has written some of the deepest ones. He has brought our children into the world, reverently and tenderly closed the eyes of our beloved dead. Each has left a story written on his face. To us who know him, those lines spell LOVE.”

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Jack Vinson's happiest and most fruitful work was that of an itinerating country evangelist. Let this pastor, prophet, and poet, tell in his own inimitable way of his country trips. (Remember Yang-Djia-Gee was the little town where he later was taken by bandits; and Mr. Liu I-sheng was the evangelist who was with him when he was captured and led away to his death).

He begins, "June 5, 1929.—In addition to looking after the hospital accounts, I have been privileged to take over Mr. Grafton's evangelistic work during his absence on furlough. I have just returned from a two weeks visit to six of the outstations in his field . . .

"The cordial, hearty welcome, the friendliness, kindness, hospitality shown me by the Christians and inquirers at Yang-Djia-Gee will always be filed away among the sweet memories of my life. Several came in to call soon after I arrived, one bringing a chicken, another eggs, others vegetables of various kinds for my physical needs. I spent six days there in the closest, most intimate fellowship with our evangelist, Mr. Liu I-sheng. Mr. Liu has all the love of Paul for his brethren, and much of the same sort of zeal for the Lord. He has been in Yang-Djia-Gee for only three years, but I was deeply impressed by the love and the respect that people of all classes have for him.

"As the fruits of his loving labor there, seventy-one persons came up for examination, eight of whom were received on profession of faith in Jesus Christ. These came from all conditions of society in the community—merchants, well-to-do farmers, students and teachers—from the most ignorant to the most noted scholar in the town, Mr. Chow Shih-chin. Few knew much of theological argument, but their simple faith and trust in Jesus as the Saviour of men was beautiful to see.

"I asked Mr. Chow, the Confucian scholar, why he wanted to become a Christian. He replied, 'I am seeking the Way to virtue and to righteousness. Unless I can obtain these, I am lost. This Gospel is the only salvation for my country'.

"On this visit 128 inquirers were examined, 28 of whom were received into the church."

But it was not all food, faith, and fellowship. Alas, he also had intimate encounters with fleas. In one letter Jack devotes an entire paragraph to those "critters" with which he lived intimately:

“May also has its handicaps, for May is the month when insects flourish. Fleas especially are abundant in every country village, and exceedingly active. Some are just stragglers and prowlers—A.W.O.L. so to speak—but mostly they are forced to migrate because of hard economic conditions. Their tenements on water-buffaloes, pigs, dogs, and cats, are very much over-crowded. I used to think that a flea had only six legs, and that he moved about from place to place in long graceful leaps and bounds, like the kangaroo. I have had a close, intimate association with fleas for four weeks. I am now convinced that a flea has at least sixteen legs, with a couple of fine hairy tickling feet on each. They are specially busy at night. They drag all sixteen feet up and down one’s spine in a slothful, sluggish, slovenly way, until sleep flees away, and slumber deserts one’s eyelids. Turning one’s pajamas wrong side out is not an effective remedy. There are usually more fleas on the outside than there were on the inside, and ‘the last state of that man is worse than the first.’”

In one letter, December 4, 1929, when telling of four weeks in the country as winter was coming on, he spoke of “cold, comfortless days out in the country”, but they didn’t get him down, for he begins that very letter with these words:

“My heart is bubbling over today, so why not pour it out to you who love me and are praying for my work? If there is ‘joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth,’ why shouldn’t we rejoice together over the forty-and-six I have just baptized on the autumn rounds of the eight outstations in this great mission field?”

That trip included Yang-Djia-Gee again. He wrote from there:

“What a wonderful day this has been: sixty-seven examined during the past three days; baptism administered to eighteen. What a joy to break to them the bread, and to share with them the cup of their first Lord’s Supper!

“I have been witnessing here, during the past few weeks and months, souls in the process of being born again, Christ’s image being so clearly wrought out in the hearts of men that it shines forth in their faces, and reveals itself in the fruitfulness of changed lives. . . .

“I baptized Old Man Wang today. His face is full of a radiant joy since the love of Jesus came into his heart. He was in darkness,

but the Lord brought him into the light glorious. He came to his baptism, not only bringing his soul as an offering of first fruits to the Saviour who bought him, but bearing other sheaves of his own ingathering. His younger brother, his wife, and six of his neighbors whom he has been teaching, were brought to Christ by him, and received baptism at the same time. He is a 'living epistle known and read of all men' in the village where he lives."

In another letter, after telling of the many old ignorant women in Hsiang-Shwei-Kou, who were coming out of gross idolatry, and were now groping after the true God, he adds:

"They have lost the faith they had in the ability of their fathers' gods, to make them well, to calm their fears, to give them peace. They are coming to Jesus, seeking, seeking. Their knowledge is as yet imperfect; their faith just in the twilight of dawn. In their ignorance, with a faith blindly groping in the twilight, some have touched 'but the hem of His garment' and lo! they have been made whole and found the 'peace that passeth knowledge'. The story of their experience has been related, in simple words to others, and the WOMEN, with their heartaches, their griefs, their sorrows, distresses of body and soul, are turning from the faith of their fathers—coming to the Saviour of men.

"You in the blessed homeland, thank God that you know Him. Lift a prayer to Him for these benighted ones, that they too may find Jesus the Way to Life."

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Came that fateful Hallowe'en, 1931, ill-fated from the view of man, propitious in the loving plan of "God within the shadow keeping watch above His own."

Vinson some days before had gone to the country town he loved so well, Yang-Djia-Gee. During that past summer his old ailment had flared up again, and in Shanghai he had undergone hospitalization, and another operation. After a time of recuperation, he announced that he was going again to the country.

The younger missionaries were disturbed. "Uncle Jack," they said, "You are not well enough yet to go to the country." Another offered to go in his place. There was a peaceful determination upon his face, as he answered, "I must go. I don't know how much longer I shall have to witness; and I must go while I can." Even his beloved

physician failed to hold him back from going to the country where he felt he was so sorely needed. There was in his heart something of the spirit of his Master who said, "I must work the works of him that sent me while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work."

And so that Hallowe'en found him staying in a little room at the Christian Chapel in Yang-Djia-Gee. Evangelist Liu and Mr. Hou, his beloved co-workers, who had been assisting him in evangelistic services, were with him. The little group of Christian leaders had talked together about the services on the morrow (Sunday), and then they all had gone to bed. Although there were bandits throughout that whole countryside, there was no fear in the little town, for it was well protected by a hundred militiamen with rifles within its walls.

There was overconfidence, too, on the part of those militiamen because very recently, when bandits had attacked a nearby village, these Yang-Djia-Gee militiamen had gone out and soundly repulsed them, killing some and wounding others. They did not know that those bandits had harbored revenge, and bided their time, as they secretly joined with other bandit gangs until they were now an army six or seven hundred strong, plotting a surprise attack to wreak vengeance upon Yang-Djia-Gee, with the help of a traitor or two joined to the bandit underground within the town.

This bandit army swooped down upon the sleeping little town, and before most of the local militia were awake the bandits were already in the streets, looting, killing, burning. This orgy of rapine, murder, and arson continued through the night, and throughout the next day.

Several bandits broke into the chapel yard, looted the few possessions of Evangelist Liu and the other Chinese, and rifled Mr. Vinson's suitcase. One bandit seized his overcoat. Then they departed. Shortly afterward, another wave of bandits came, and when one of them saw the American missionary, "Lai bah," "come," he said. When Mr. Vinson protested, several armed bandits seized him and binding his hands with a rope, they led him away in his pajamas, not even giving him time to dress.

He was taken to a dirty little inn and held prisoner. The innkeeper took pity upon the frail man standing there barefooted, his teeth chattering from the cold; and taking his only change of

raiment—a long padded robe and Chinese cloth shoes and socks—he gave them to Mr. Vinson. Truly God was “in the shadow keeping watch above His own.”

All day long he was in that little inn, and many Chinese prisoners also were herded there. One of them later on told of the terrifying threats the bandits made toward the American pastor, “Let’s kill him!” “Let’s cut out his tongue!”

Just before dark the bandit horde left Yang-Djia-Gee, taking with them about a hundred and fifty men, women, and children—captives to be held for ransom—and their prize captive of all, the American missionary.

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When word reached Haichow that Yang-Djia-Gee had been captured and that Jack Vinson was in the hands of the bandits, E. S. Currie and W. C. McLauchlin, the other two men assigned to the station, were both a hundred miles away at a meeting in Tsing-kiangpu. Mrs. McLauchlin sent telegrams to them, and to the American Consul-General in Nanking. She and Mrs. Currie went to the military headquarters at Haichow, and begged that something be done.

Before long an army of government soldiers was in hot pursuit of the bandits, and overtook them on Tuesday. The bandits retreated into the walled village of Long Wang Dang, and there entrenched themselves. The government troops soon besieged the village.

The bandit chief, realizing the perilous situation, came to Mr. Vinson, and asked him, “Do you want to go free?”

“Certainly,” came the reply.

“All right. If you will write a letter to the general of that army, and get him to withdraw his troops, I will let you go free,” said the bandit chief.

“Will you also release all these Chinese captives you are holding?” the missionary asked.

“Certainly not,” answered the bandit chief.

“Then neither will I go free,” said Mr. Vinson; and although the bandit chief was livid with rage, and vehement in his threats, the frail man before him was adamant.

In the afternoon the bandits tried to break out, but were repulsed with heavy losses, and driven back behind the walls of the village. That night under cover of darkness they made another wild break to escape. Many did escape, while many others were killed. Of their hundred and fifty prisoners the vast majority escaped. Only a few, including Jack Vinson, were taken with them. When, because of physical weakness, he couldn't keep up, he was shot in the back, and then beheaded.

His body was found by a former student, Mr. Wu Ke-djao, who having heard that his one time schoolmaster had been taken by bandits, was bravely hunting through the country hoping to find him. He placed the body tenderly in an abandoned shed, and was on the way to buy a coffin when he met Mr. Currie and a Chinese evangelist who were also hunting for their beloved colleague.

In his death Jack Vinson preached to more people than he ever had at one time in his life. The funeral was held inside the wrecked compound where he had lived, because the little cemetery was there. Before the service, which was conducted in English by Mr. Currie and in Chinese by Mr. McLauchlin, some Chinese asked Mrs. McLauchlin if the gates were to be closed "to keep out the rabble". "Indeed, no," she replied, "Open them wide, that all may come in and see what has happened and hear the Word and message, along with our songs of victory around the open grave."

The non-Christian officials who were present were most impressed by the fact that here was a man who could have saved himself, but refused to do so. Mr. McLauchlin explained to them that Vinson had simply followed his Master, who "saved others, himself he could not save." And Mrs. McLauchlin adds, "A hushed stillness fell over the hundreds of Chinese gathered there, not as rabble, but those who stood in wonder and awe."

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The news of the tragic death of their father came as a great shock to the three children back in Lexington, Virginia. Little Jean, nine years old, felt very bitter, and first prayed the Lord to "kill the old bandits that killed my Daddy." But later her Aunt Lila heard the child praying the Lord to forgive the bandits who had killed her father.

Jack and Chal, in high school, felt in this the call of God for them to take their father's place. Chal decided to be a medical

doctor, and Jack to be an evangelistic missionary, both praying for the privilege of bringing Christ, and through Him forgiveness and eternal life, to the very bandits that had killed their Father.

They both became missionaries to China, but World War II came, and they and their wives nearly starved to death in a Japanese concentration camp. Again they went back to China, but were forced to return to the States because of illness in their families. "Little Jean," together with her husband, the Rev. Bob Urquahart, is now a Presbyterian (USA) missionary in Korea.

* * * * *

A little girl, the daughter of a Chinese evangelist, was one of the captives of the bandits. The child afterward told how she had seen and heard a bandit trying to intimidate Mr. Vinson. She said the bandit pointed a gun at Mr. Vinson's head, and said, "Aren't you afraid?"

"No, I am not afraid," came the answer.

And again, "I'm going to kill you. Aren't you afraid?"

Once more the man of God replied, "NO, I AM NOT AFRAID. If you kill me, I will go right to Heaven."

Afraid? Of what?

To feel the spirit's glad release?

To pass from pain to perfect peace,

The strife and strain of life to cease?

Afraid—of that?

Afraid? Of what?

Afraid to see the Saviour's face,

To hear His welcome, and to trace

The glory gleam from wounds of grace?

Afraid—of that?

Afraid? Of what?

A flash—a crash—a pierced heart;

Darkness—light—Oh, Heaven's art!

A wound of His a counterpart!

Afraid—of that?

Afraid? Of what?
To enter into Heaven's rest,
And yet to serve the Master blest,
From service good to service best?
Afraid—of that?

Afraid? Of what?
To do by death what life could not:
Baptize with blood a stony plot,
Till souls shall blossom from the spot?
Afraid—of that?*

* This poem, written by E. H. Hamilton, a colleague of Jack Vinson, came into the hands of John and Betty Stam. When they, too, faced martyrdom at the hands of Red soldiers in Anhwei Province, China, John Stam wrote to his father just before he and Betty were captured, "We're now in dangerous territory, but we're not afraid. The enclosed poem exactly expresses our feelings." The poem enclosed was *Afraid? Of What?*

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