WITH THE RED CROSS IN CHINA

[*The following is the substance of a letter from Dr. Bob McClure of the Friends' Ambulance Corps in China. It was written from Kutsing, Yunnan, in May, 1943, to friends in Canada by whose kind permission it is reproduced. Dr. McClure will be remembered by his many friends, particularly in Toronto and Montreal. He has probably seen more of the fighting in China in the last eight years than any other Canadian.*—EDITOR.]

I have now charge of the medical work in the new program which is big enough for me and which is more in my line. From now on I shall be mostly in the field near the Burma front. We have asked for six more doctors from England and the United States and we hear that in United States alone there are fifteen wanting to come. These cannot get out here for some months and "in the meantime" is our greatest worry.

Our new system is that, instead of being a foreign unit working where we feel the pressure is greatest, from now on we come in under an enlarged Chinese Red Cross scheme getting ready to make a better job of the Burma campaign than has yet been made of any campaign in China. We in the F.A.U. are putting two mobile surgical teams in the field and for a third are borrowing the doctors and one nurse from the British Red Cross, and all three teams will be under my direct control. We shall be located at the headquarters of each army with three divisions in front of us to feed us with their cases. At the back of us there is getting set up an elaborate base hospital system better than China has yet seen. China is throwing in all her supplies that she has on hand and new supplies will, when needed, be brought in from India by air. Once in position, we have to get the medical men in the divisions and battalions into shape and train them to know what to send back and what to keep. I am moving in with our first team next week. All teams will be west of Kunming but we cannot let it out where. I shall move in with the second team three weeks later and it has to go twelve days by pack mule into the China-India border country about the middle of the "hump" over which planes now fly. The third team will be far west, but near the motor road. The second team has the most thrilling position if they will let us keep it. It is surrounded on three sides by enemy formations and is in some of the highest mountain country in the place. Mountains there are 18,000 feet and up and passes are 14,000. Units on the ground are not issued with oxygen but if you fly at this level you sit still and get it fed to you by tube!

I got back one week ago from a most interesting trip into Honan. I went to Chengchow, the Southern Baptist Mission station just south of the Yellow River and the nearest to our old field of work. I saw the city walls of Wen Hzien quite clearly, for the Yellow River flows towards the north there and is just outside the south gate of the city. I went over on the sand

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flats to within a mile or so of that city. That was sixteen miles from Hwaiking. What I would have given to go on over!

The purpose of my trip was twofold: (*a*) to see what could be done by our unit in relief work and (*b*) to get away from the Baptist Mission Hospital in Chengchow their big x-ray machine. I helped to put in that machine in 1937 before the war and now it appeared that I was the only one in China who could safely take it out. It was quite a job. The machine weighed a total of three tons and we had to take it pretty well to pieces, too, for it finally had to come to the railway 95 miles on rickshaws. I never knew before that you could take a machine down to such small bits.

The famine conditions are beyond description. It has worn down the missionaries terribly. It does wear you down too to see folk whose faces you recognize daily getting thinner and more anxious and then see their bodies dead on the roadway some morning. The Canadian Anglican mission in George Andrews, the Free Methodist Mission in Mr. Ashcroft and the Southern Baptist in Misses Murray and Stribling carry most of the weight in relief work. Miss Clark, of course, is doing fine work among the children. Young Bill Simpson of the C.A.M. is my new friend and is the hope of their mission. Bill is quick on the uptake. He is getting a bit hard-boiled, which is badly needed and, even though he is rather lonely in passing through these experiences, yet he is learning from them. There is a very vigorous and bright young Italian Catholic padre in charge of their side of the work. He is a friend of mine of five years' standing and he and Bill are the hope of Chengchow.

Famine relief, in order to be really efficient, has to be a little hard-boiled. They were too soft in Chengchow at the start and so started denominational soup kitchens though they did have a good committee to link up the work. The soup kitchen is rather antiquated, however, as a large-scale method of meeting a famine. It is not the fault of the people there, but they had no one who knew anything at all about rural credits, seed loans, well-digging loans and such things. Herbert Boyd could have saved the price of an aeroplane and its fuel to fly out if he had been on the spot. They are getting moving on that now. The people up here are all keenly aware that the soup kitchen is not the best method and they are keen to learn of another way to do it. Personally, I think that all the older members will be so run down after this show that they will all have to go home for a long furlough. Chengchow is the centre of the famine, Huschang is not quite as bad and from what we could find out things north of the river in occupied areas were distinctly worse than anything on the south. It was a pity that we did not have such a team as the Mitchell, Copland, Matheison, Roulston, Boyd group, to put in there. In round numbers such a team would have actually been able to save several thousand lives I feel sure.

The x-ray was a better show. I got it to Loyang where we put up with our good friend Bishop Tom Megan formerly of Hwaiking and then of Sinsiang. He is now Bishop of Loyang and is putting American pep and fire into a sleepy Italian Catholic Mission. Megan is now the leading personality along the northern front. He has also taken over personally the business managership of the Loyang Catholic Hospital and has turned it into one of the best run hospitals in free China with entirely Chinese staff. He fired all hired nurses and has his pupil nuns doing all the nursing with a devotion and enthusiasm that cannot be equalled in any hospital. No talk of hours, no talk of pay, no talk of strikes and holidays. He has over 200 girls on the waiting list trying to get into the order! They certainly have something there. In the rest of China the pampered position has passed from truck drivers to nurses who now ordinarily ask NC$3,000 per month, and board and the right to make any money they can on the side! An x-ray plant I had obtained for their hospital in 1938 had been broken for two years. I got them a small one to take its place, salvaged from Chengchow and broken, but between the two we got one to work well. I also borrowed a microscope that was buried in the country outside Chengchow and there is now a Union Co-operative Laboratory in Chengchow for both Lutheran and Catholic Hospitals and for the private practitioners as well.

The main x-ray I got by train to the end of the railway at Paochi about 150 miles beyond Sian. Here we put it up in a thoroughly bomb-proof cave. We know it is bomb-proof because it has been hit three times. The x-ray had not been in use for three years since the city power plant was blown up, the last doctor to use it had left no notes as to whether it was working or not, so you can well imagine the thrill when we had it set up in the cave, checked it all over, then pressed the switch to find it was in perfect working order. It is doing good service. It is the largest x-ray machine in free China.

Just a word on the recent conference of the Chinese Medical Association near Chungking. I was able to take a small part in it and had two days at its meetings. The most striking thing is that these medical conferences now are no longer dominated by foreigners. In fact foreigners do not any longer play a very important part in them. They are up to the best standards at home in the papers delivered and in the quality of leadership that they command. A morning of military medicine was particularly well attended. The total attendance at the conference was a surprise. In war-time with transport at its most difficult stage they expected some 200 doctors. They had just under

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400 registrations. Our U.C.C. people did take a prominent part, Stewart Allen, of Chungking, Wally Crawford, of Chengtu, and E. B. Struthers, of Cheeloo, are all leaders in their lines. Struthers has done marvelous work in reviving the English edition of the *China Medical Journal* in a war-time edition that is very timely. The material is not only local but is obtained also in the form of abstracts from micro films of medical journals from all over the world which are now coming in very limited numbers to China.

The particularly interesting thing was in the Council on Medical Missions. This up to a few years ago was run and dominated by the medical missionary from abroad. Today there is as much enthusiasm as ever in that Council but it is all from outstanding Christian Chinese doctors who are not only interested in Christian medicine, but who in many cases now hold the sole responsibility for some of the most go-ahead mission hospitals. This to me was extremely encouraging and is a sign of a marvellous harvest as the result of the century and more of foreign medical missions in China. One feels that this tree at least is sufficiently firmly planted now within the country that we need never be in doubt as to its viability in the future.

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