The Martyrs' Memorial.

By W. J. Hunnex.

On August 15th, 1902, Messrs. J. R. Bruce and R. H. Lowis, of the China Inland Mission, were killed in a riot at Chênhouch, in the province of Hunan, Central China. A clerk of the Chinese Imperial Post Office was also severely injured at the same time. The China Inland Mission station at Chênhouch, the scene of the tragedy, was opened about five years ago and the two missionaries had been in the country some time; Mr. Bruce, an Australian, aged 30, having been nearly six years in China, and Mr. Lowis, from England, aged 32, nearly three years. The riot was attributed to the prevalence of cholera in the city, for which the ignorant populace considered foreigners were to blame, it being alleged that they had "poisoned the wells," an accusation not infrequently brought against foreigners living in the interior of China.

A few days after the news of the tragedy had become known, the British authorities began to move in the matter, and on August 10th, Mr. L. Giles, of the Consular Service, was sent with British war vessels to investigate the murders and to take the necessary steps to bring the guilty parties to justice.

On September 4th an Imperial Decree was issued cashiering the Prefect, the District Magistrate, and the Military Officials of Chênhouch, for having failed to protect the murdered missionaries. A week later Yü Lien-san, Governor of Hunan, reported the execution of two men who had been concerned in the crime. He also, at the same time, denounced the former District Magistrate of Yuanlinhsien, and Yen Wu-lin, Major-General of the Yi Regiment, as responsible. A Decree was subsequently issued ordering these officials to be cashiered, arrested, and punished according to law. On September 12th, eight more men were executed for complicity in the tragedy. They were beheaded on the river front. The culprits' knees, with bodies erect, while the executioner with his heavy knife struck each across the back of the neck. The blow caused the bodies to fall forward but was not sufficient to sever the head from the trunk. A second man, with a short knife, completed the punishment by a semi-sawing process. This, however, did not fully meet the claims for justice put forth by the British authorities, who demanded that certain high officials concerned in the murders should also be executed. This demand, however, was one that the Chinese Government did not feel disposed to grant and, during the middle of October, they made known their unwillingness to do what was required of them.
On October 19th, the Diplomatic Body was received in audience by the Emperor at Peking. As a protest against the miscarriage of justice, Sir Ernest Satow, the Minister of Great Britain, was not present at the reception.
Four days later further action was taken by the British authorities, Mr. E. H. Fraser, British Consul-General at Hankow, demanding the execution of the military officials responsible for the murders of the two missionaries, together with the adequate punishment of the other guilty officials. This energetic action soon bore fruit, for on November 2nd an Imperial Decree was issued in compliance with the British demands, ordering the decapitation of two military officials, and the punishment of four other officials for complicity in the crime. "We have again and again," said the Decree, "commanded our military and civil officials to give every protection to foreigners and missions, yet our orders have not been observed." About two weeks afterwards Liu, the captain of the Chênchou garrison, was executed.

Among other demands, by way of reparation, made by Consul-General Fraser, was that a fine of £10,000 be inflicted on the officials and gentry of Chênchou, the money to be used in behalf of some philanthropic or benevolent enterprise for the benefit of the people of Hunan.

It was also demanded that a Memorial Tablet be erected in Chênchou, setting forth the crime and the punishment, to the eternal disgrace of the place. Our illustrations give two views of this Memorial Tablet. It is built of Hunan marble and stands 11 feet high, being 3½ feet broad and 1½ feet thick. The base is 5½ feet by 1½ feet and is sunk some 3½ feet in the ground. The letters are 1¼ inches high. In the Edict they are painted gilt and in the Memorial vermilion. The whole is surmounted by a pavilion in the usual Chinese style, the woodwork being painted red. The Tablet is erected just within the first gateway of the Prefect’s Yamen, and this official is, of course, responsible for its upkeep.

The burial took place on Sunday morning, August 31st, 1902, at 10 o’clock. The coffins rested upon the "t’ai-p’ing ch’uang," i.e., the "framework of great peace," and they were covered with handsome red pall. All the Chinese officials of the city were present. Mr. H. B. Stewart, an English missionary who was at the funeral obsequies was presented with a couple of documents, written on white silk (one for each family) expressing the sorrow of the officials for what had occurred, and their admiration for the high qualities of the deceased.

After an appropriate reply had been given, the procession moved off. "A long string of soldiers," says Mr. Stewart, "from the various camps lead the way, next came all the officials of Chênchou on foot. The church members and enquirers walked in front of Mr. Bruce’s coffin, holding on to long strips of white cloth, attached to either side of what I shall call the hearse. All were dressed in gowns of coarse white cloth. Next came Mr. Lewis’ coffin, led in the same way by the scholars—the little lads he loved so much to teach. I followed immediately behind, and was followed, in turn, by Mrs. Liu, a church member, and two little girls who attended the mission school. A number of neighbours and friends also attended, and at the rear there was another long line of troops. I had asked that there should be as little noise or talking as possible and was delighted with the way in which my wishes were met. The streets were specially cleared for the occasion. Numbers of people, of course, lined the route of the procession, and there were many on the city wall.
"On reaching the place of burial, we passed between two lines of soldiers, standing in open order, with fixed bayonets. I had previously prepared a form of service, so when the coffins had been lowered into the graves I first went through the service in English, and then Mr. Chang repeated the same form in Chinese. After the ceremony the officials made three bows towards the grave. I also spoke a few words to the people assembled, explaining to them the nature of what we had been doing and the reason for it."