

Appendix B

Short Life of Dr. G. E. Morrison

(*Catalogue of the Asiatic Library of Dr. G. E. Morrison, 1924, pp. 6-8*)

Dr. George Earnest Morrison was born at Geelong, Victoria, in 1862. His father was a Scotsman, Principal of the Geelong College. He came of an athletic family, and young Morrison himself was also good at games. But as soon as he left school his energies took a more practical turn, and, in his own words, he became a wanderer from his 18th year. He began his wanderings, in fact when he was keeping his terms at Melbourne University. One vacation he spent in walking all round the southern coast of Victoria and South Australia. Another he passed in a canoe, covering 1,500 miles in 65 days. After going down from the university a roving life claimed him altogether. He began with an enterprise that was half philanthropic. In 1882 the Kanaka labour question was beginning to attract attention, and Morrison shipped as an ordinary seaman for a voyage from Port Mackay to the South Sea Islands, in order to study the traffic in natives of these islands, who were wanted as labourers on Queensland's sugar plantations. He found that the evils of the traffic were great. His articles on the subject in the Melbourne *Age* provoked the most violent attacks upon him, but his writings had their effect upon the authorities. Morrison's next voyage was to New Guinea, whence he returned to Australia in a Chinese junk, making his earliest close acquaintance with the Celestial.

Already he was more or less familiar with Chinese ways, for close to his home at Geelong there was a Chinese colony on the bank of the river. At the end of 1882 he made his famous crossing of Australia on foot from the Gulf of Carpentaria to Melbourne. His record for the journey was 2,043 miles in 123 days. He walked alone, and carried no arms. When he was overtaken by floods, he waded and swam. When he could find no habitation to take him in, he did his own cooking with utensils and provisions carried in a "swag" upon his back. Upon his return to Melbourne he took charge of a small pioneer expedition to New Guinea, where he was wounded and left for dead with two-spear-heads in his body. The removal of these was performed by Professor Cheyne, of Edinburgh, under whom he continued his medical studies, and in 1887 he took his M.D. and C.M. degrees. Thereafter he ranged again from the United States and the West Indies to Spain and Morocco, where for a season he was Court physician to the Shereef of Wazan. After studying in Paris under Dr. Charcot, he went out, in 1890, to Ballarat, where for two years he was in charge of the hospital.

It was in 1893 that he first set out for the Far East, and in 1894 he undertook yet another of the great cross-country journeys that were the passion of his life. On this occasion he crossed by land from Shanghai to Rangoon. His experiences he described in his well-known book, "An Australian in China." It is enough to say here that Dr. Morrison went alone, unarmed, and speaking very little Chinese; that the authorities gave him every assistance; that his 3,000-mile trip, half by water and half by land, took him 100 days and cost him £18, his native dress included. He used to remark, with a characteristic twinkle in his eye, that, if he had been economical, he could have done it for less!

It was on his return to England after this remarkable journey that Dr. Morrison's services were first enlisted for *The Times*. In November, 1895, he proceeded to Siam, where the attitude of France and the Anglo-French dispute with regard to certain regions in the valley of the Mekong were giving rise to some anxiety. The agreement signed on January 15, 1896, between the British and French Government removed any immediate danger of international complications, but in the course of nearly 12 months' adventurous travel in the interior of Siam, up the valley of the Mekong, and across the borders of China into Yun-nan, Dr. Morrison found ample materials for a series of graphic and instructive letters, which attracted even more attention, perhaps, in Paris than in London. At Yun-nan-fu he fell dangerously ill with what he believed to be a form of bubonic plague. He had been plundered a few days before by brigands and had lost his travelling pharmacy with the rest of his kit, and neither medicine nor medical advice was procurable. The only treatment he could think of was to try to drive out the sickness by

profuse perspiration. So he had a big fire lighted in the long, flat brick stove common to all Chinese houses, and laid himself down on the heated surface until his very skin was scorched and blistered by the burning bricks. "It was something like the old compurgation by fire," as he once described it, "but I came out of the ordeal" triumphantly, and it is probably the most original cure I ever effected.

In February, 1897, *The Times* having decided to appoint a resident Correspondent in the Chinese capital, Dr. Morrison was selected for the post, and at once left Bangkok for Peking, which he henceforth made his headquarters. Profoundly interested as he was in his work there, his wandering propensities were still strong upon him, and he never missed any opportunity offered by a temporary lull in the diplomatic turmoil of the capital to snatch a few weeks' travel in the interior or in the neighbouring countries of the Far East. In the autumn of 1897 the occupation of Kiao-chao by the Germans gave the signal for the long and acute struggle for political preponderancy in the North of China, of which Dr. Morrison's telegrams recorded from day to day the momentous vicissitudes with the prescience of a statesman and the accuracy of an historian. In 1900 he took an active part in the defence of the Peking Legations during the Boxer rising. For a time during July of that year it was feared that he had perished in the siege, but, although severely wounded, he lived to tell of the heroism of the garrison. Sir Claude Macdonald, British Minister at Peking, mentioned Dr. Morrison in dispatches in the following words:—

Dr. Morrison, *The Times* Correspondent, acted as lieutenant to Captain Strouts, and rendered most valuable assistance. Active, energetic, and cool, he volunteered for every service of danger and was a pillar of strength when matters were going badly. He was severely wounded on the 16th July by the same volley which killed Captain Strouts, and his valuable services were lost to the defence for the rest of the siege.

Dr. Morrison remained beside Captain Strouts, giving him medical attention, until the senior officer died, although Dr. Morrison was wounded himself and under a galling fire. In January, 1905, he was present at the triumphal entry into Port Arthur, and later in the year he represented *The Times* at the Portsmouth Peace Conference. In 1907 he crossed China from Peking, to the French border of Tonquin, and in 1910 again he rode from Honan City across Asia to Andijan, in Russian Turkestan, a journey of 3,750 miles, in 175 days. He had visited every province of China except Tibet. Two years later he resigned his post as Peking Correspondent of *The Times*, in order to accept the invitation of the first President of the new Chinese Republic to become his Political Adviser. When the World War was over, he came to Paris with the Chinese delegates to give advice to them at the Peace conference.

Morrison of Peking was known and liked the world over. He was always thorough and, although no sentimentalist, he had a large heart. His "intelligent anticipation of events" became proverbial. His work was invariably authoritative. The most striking feature of his residence at Peking was the long, low building that housed his library, which formed one of the most comprehensive collections of books on China. This library was sold to Baron H. Iwasaki of Japan, and was transferred to Tokyo in September 1917. He married in 1912, and left a widow and three sons.

Dr. Morrison's death which took place on May 30, 1920, was the end of a slow but necessarily fatal illness which descended upon him without warning. As a medical man, he had known his fate for months, and quietly warned his friends of what must be expected. But even in the months which daily sapped his physical strength, his enthusiasm for China was undiminished, and even grew. It was a strange experience to see the wasted, ascetic figure propped in a chair or in bed, and to hear the dying man planning for the future of China with a skill of analysis, a breadth of vision in constructive statesmanship, and altogether a mental vigour such as one associates with only a few men in the world, and these in the enjoyment of bodily health. It was then one realized how inadequate to the breadth of the man was even the proud title "Morrison of Peking."

Adopted, with some additions, from "The Times," 31, May, 1920. For the more detailed career of Dr. Morrison see "The Lone Hand," October 1910 and "The London Magazine," February 1911.