Flashlights on Chinese life : Yellow Dragon Street and other stories.

YELLOW DRAGON STREET

FLASHLIGHTS ON CHINESE LIFE

MABEL PANTIN. L.M.S.S.A.

collated

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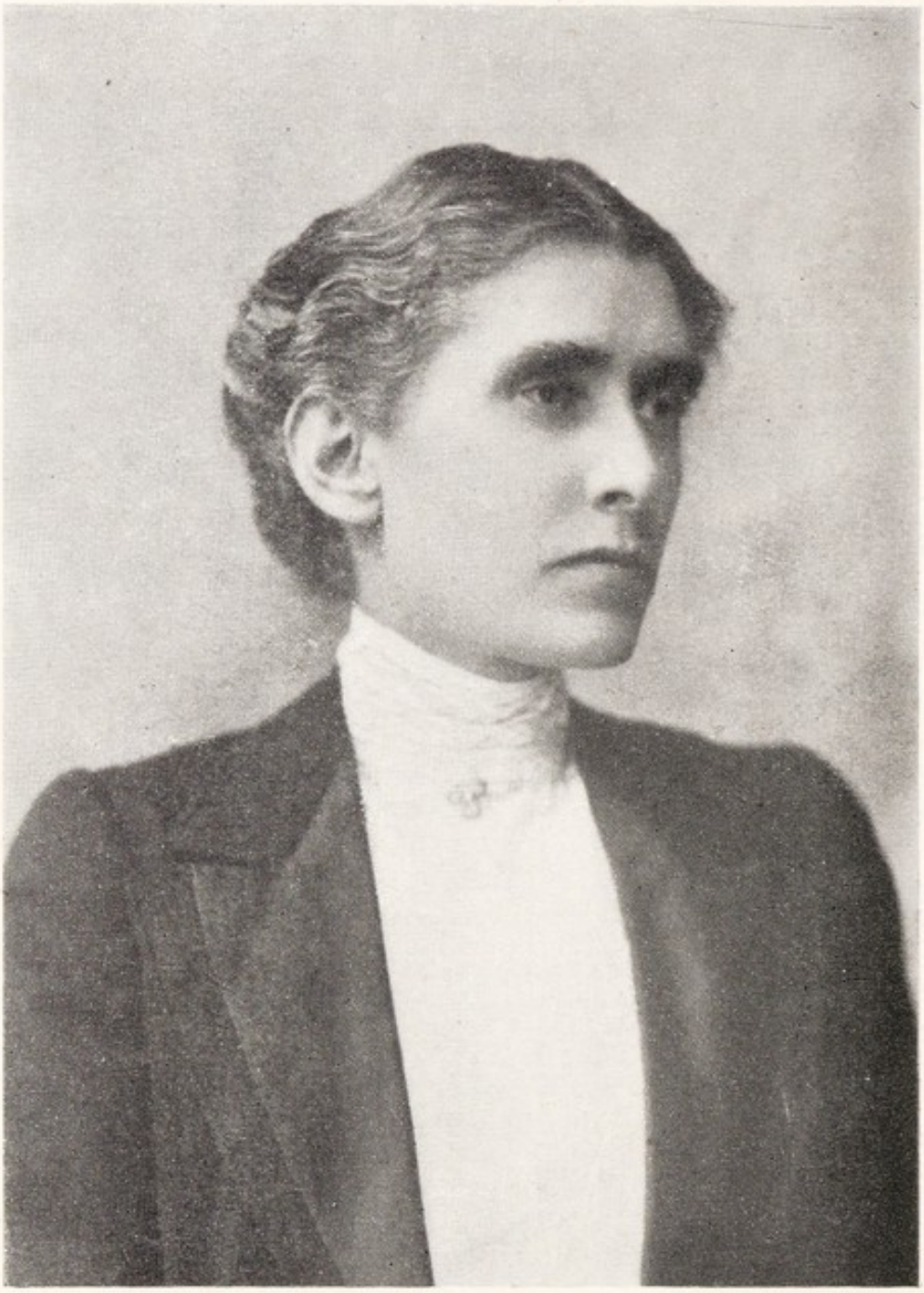
PANTIN

FLASHLIGHTS ON CHINESE LIFE



MABEL PANTIN, L.M.S.S.A.

FLASHLIGHTS ON CHINESE LIFE

Yellow Dragon Street and other Stories

BY

MABEL PANTIN, L.M.S.S.A.

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Dr. MABEL PANTIN.

AN APPRECIATION

Dr. Mabel Pantin, the author of "Flashlights on Chinese Life," received her Home-call shortly after finally preparing the MS. for publication.

Born at Upper Holloway in 1867, *she was educated at Blackheath High School and received her call to the Mission Field at St. John's, Blackheath, through the instrumentality of the Rev. R. W. Stewart, martyred at Hwa Sang in* 1895.

After training at the Royal Free Hospital she obtained her Diploma as L.M.S.S.A. and was appointed by the C.E.Z.M.S. to Fukien Mission, where she laboured with much acceptance and blessing in the Society's Hospital at Dongkau. Pictures of the "old" and "new" Hospitals will be found in this volume, the splendidly appointed new Hospital, together with the Mission House, being almost entirely due to Dr. Pantin's personal efforts, for she raised the money and supervised the building plans and operations.

Ill-health forced her to return to England in 1919, *but after a visit to South Africa she returned to China to work in the Kwangsi-Hunan Mission in* 1922. *Unhappily her ill-health returned, and she was only able to remain one year.*

Her most out-standing characteristic through all her service, and perhaps especially during the twelve weary years of illness, was her wonderful vitality—her "unusual enjoyment of life as a whole."

The mainspring of all her work was love—love for Chinese women and children, especially the poorest and lowest.

The sketches in this book show her intense desire to bring the knowledge of the love of Christ into these unhappy lives, and almost her last evangelistic visit was to the hair-net factory described in the last chapter.

After her resignation in 1924 *she still helped the C.E.Z.M.S. in every possible way, and took the keenest interest in writing "Flashlights," and on her death in January,* 1926, *the Committee realised that they had lost a whole-hearted and devoted worker.*

▼

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Illustrations.

THE OLD HAUNTED TEA FACTORY [*The original Dongkau Hospital*]

PART I

FUKIEN.

I

BY THE WAYSIDE

I HAD gone two days' journey up from Kucheng to Dongkau, to see the repairs and alterations being made in the old Tea Factory that was to be our future home and the first Dongkau Hospital. My heart was restless, thinking of the villages passed through, and the people not preached to. A young Christian schoolmaster was holding his little school in the big Dongkau house. It was a delight to see him, so clean and self-respecting and wholesome, with his small handful of scholars. I asked him to help me (for my heart was restless) to prepare something to use on my return journey. I outlined a heart—three hearts on three sheets of paper—and he inked in a black heart with black ink, and a red heart with red ink. The third we left white. Then he wrote the texts in Chinese character: "All have sinned . . ." "The Blood of Jesus,

God's Son, cleanseth from *all* sin." And we were careful to make the red amply big enough to cover all the black. And lastly, "The pure in heart shall see God."

Starting off, so provided, the next day to return to Kucheng, I found plenty of audience along the road, at inns and in the streets. It was the second day, and we stopped at a lonely inn for dinner. So lonely and poor it was, that there was even doubt whether we should find rice for the coolies there. Rice there was, and while they ate and smoked, I climbed the ladder to the loft to eat from my food-basket.

There was but one woman in the house—a weary-looking, elderly woman. She came up too, and my opportunity was come. She listened and looked. So quiet it was! It is rare to find a woman alone. She pored over the diagrams and uttered big sighs (one hears the great sighs of the Chinese women as one recalls many such occasions!) "Yes, I have eaten sorrow. Yes, all hearts are black." I asked whether hers was too. Yes, the red heart completely covered all the black—"the blood of Jesus, God's Son"—(another great sigh, almost a groan)—"the pure in heart shall see God." As we looked out from that loft over the open rolling country spread far below us, to range on range of hills, a quiet fell

on us, and the longing of my own heart was somewhat stilled.

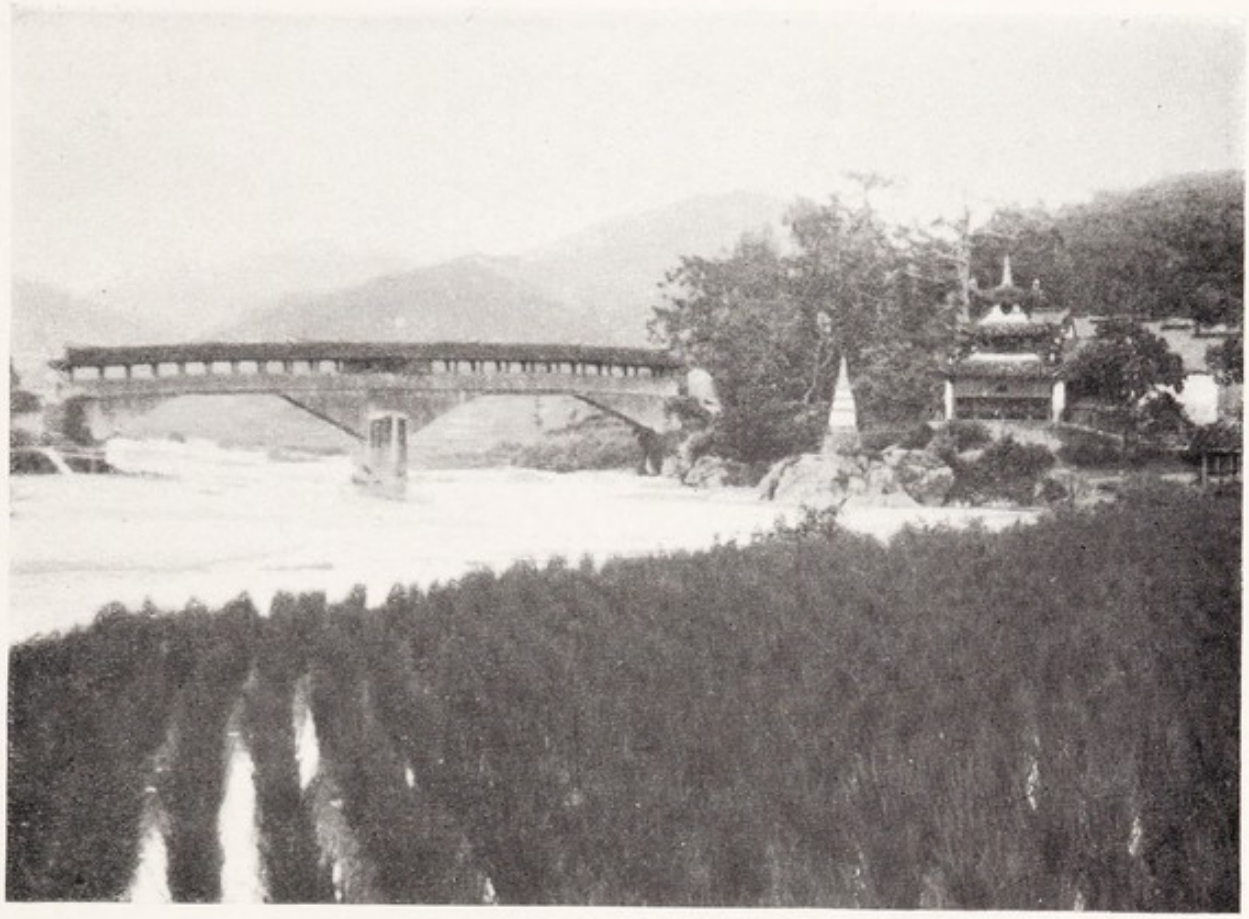
The coolies were ready, and on we went. It was months later that I heard any more of that lonely woman. The inn had ceased to have rice. No one came to greet passers-by. But as our chairs (we were going now to take up our residence in Dongkau) halted in the village about half a mile beyond the lonely inn, a girl came to speak to us. Yes, she knew the Doctrine. Her mother, up there in the inn—she believed it. "She told me about the Hearts, and she told me to go to worship. I do go"—and she named a little worship-place in a village not very far off. "She believed it—she died believing it. She told us not to do any heathen things at her funeral." So, for one weary soul, "sorrow and sighing had fled away."

II

A WAY-SIDE SHRINE

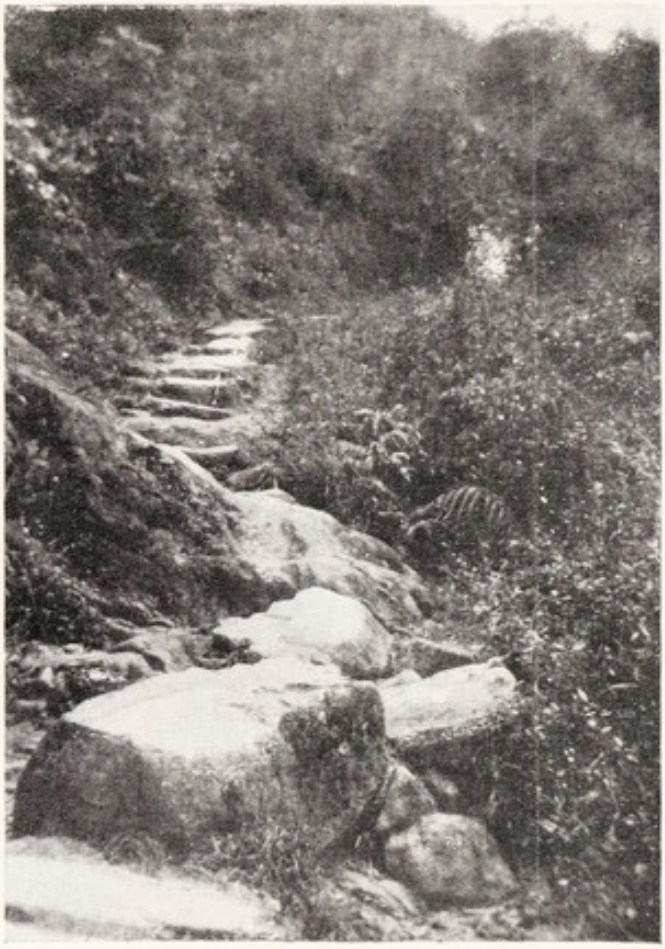
It was the late afternoon of a day in early summer, and after the hot day's work we missionaries were strolling among the hills outside Dongkau. The river rushed below us in the valley, frothing over its grey boulders. The whole sky was red with the sunset glow. We watched a man cautiously ford the shallows to get to his farm away across the river—to his supper. As we turned to retrace our road, another "field man" was quitting his day's toil on the rice-terraces in the narrow valley. All the paddy-fields were vivid green, such lush luminous green, unequalled, I firmly believe, anywhere outside those fields of early summer rice not yet touched gold by the fierce sun!

The farmer was working alone, evidently on ridges of his own possession. For, as he shouldered his tools and picked his way carefully along the mud embankments of the ridges, he was making for a little shrine built on the path above the fields. It was little more than a granite slab set up on a narrow altar of granite whereon stood a



GROWING RICE IN BLADE

TERRACED RICE FIELDS



UP INTO THE HILLS

(*See page* 16).

A WAYSIDE SHRINE

A LONELY FARM

tiny pot of burnt-out incense sticks. Our farmer unloaded his tools and very deliberately and solemnly stood up straight before the shrine. He placed his hands, palms together, raised them in an attitude of worship and bowed several times, reverently, deeply, before the tablet. He then took from his wallet and lighted an incense-stick, stuck it in the little pot, repeated his obeisance, so made an end—took up his tools and went home. We also must pass the shrine on our way home, and we stopped to read the Chinese characters cut on the slab. As nearly as possible, translated, they read: "To the Eternal Fire That was here before these hills."

We hoped he had some nice children in the home for which he toiled so devoutly. We hoped he might be one of those who "out of all nations fear God and work righteousness," still waiting for the Light That has come into the world.

III

THE MAN OF STRAW

It was about noon when we two missionaries on our journey came to Liang-â, the village of the "Old Leg Lady." She got her name from the fact that one of her legs had been amputated in Dongkau Hospital after a bad accident. Some one brought word to her that foreigners in their sedan-chairs were passing through Liang-â, and she came wonderfully quickly on her peg-leg, beseeching us to stop and come to her house. But my companion was embarked on a three-days' journey, returning to the north-west from Dongkau, and every bit of the time and strength of the coolies was needed to accomplish the stages. She had, moreover, a sprained ankle herself, and must not walk a step to help the chair-bearers. So we could only greet each other that day, not even waiting for the inevitable gifts sure to be pressed upon us, far less for the meal, which would have taken long to cook.

Meanwhile, my eye was caught and held by a strange new sight—new to me—amid the monotony and squalor of the mud-built walls. Against

the low eaves of one cottage hung the model of a man's figure, made of straw. It was roughly fashioned of the straw from the paddy-fields—legs, arms, body, head, all there. But round the neck was a cord by which it appeared hanged. Through the heart was a tiny dagger by which the body was pierced. Other chains hung from the ankles. Every sort of indignity, insult and death seemed to have met on the body of the unfortunate straw man, hanging there over the door of a dwelling-house. It was the first time I had heard of or seen one of these figures " made a curse." Later, I saw another in far-off Soochow, so, evidently, the custom is fairly universal in China. The history of the second figure we learned by inquiry. The house over which it hung was a silk spinner's house. One day a quantity of the big reels of raw silk were stolen from the house. The thief was suspected but the theft was not proved. So his image was made in straw, execrated, hanged, pierced, cursed through and through, and exposed on the door. Not only so, a woman of the house (some Chinese women learn how to curse horribly) every day, and often twice a day, came out and cursed the thief—cursed for the whole street to hear, cursed till the neighbourhood well-nigh shuddered with horror! They believe the curse goes home at

"THE STRAW MAN.

last. I have heard a woman's voice cursing, long and bitterly, and I think it must go home.

Nevertheless, the imagery of that accursed straw man stuck in my mind, coupled with words of healing. I could not but see another Figure, pierced and bleeding, and hear the words of healing—" made a curse for us."

Poor China has learned much through her long centuries of civilisation. She has learned to support the densest population in some sort of peace and ordered life. She has produced many philosophers, and many of her common people possess a very wise philosophy of life. Multitudes of them have accepted the limitations of life as inevitable, and make the best they can of things as they are. That justice is not for the poor as a common right they know. Yet here broke out the protest, deep as the human heart, against oppression and wrong. Here the sin was cursed with a vehemence of hatred that brought some measure of satisfaction to the wronged ones. I seem to feel only pity and sympathy for that cursing woman whose life's philosophy stopped short of the mark because she has not yet heard the voice of the great Philosopher of Life, cutting across her impotent fury like a cool hand laid on a fevered brow; " but, *I* say unto you, forgive your enemies."

IV

AN EMERGENCY CALL

It was late afternoon when the call came—a stabbing affray in a village among the hills; would I go at once?

A hasty selection of surgical instruments and dressings; some hurried directions to the hospital matron, who was to put them up for me, and as to patients in hospital; precipitous packing of bedding and some food; and we were fixed up. Mr. Tiang must come too. The applicants themselves must secure chair-coolies, and in a wonderfully short time (as things go in China) we were off! Off and up into the clinging mist of the hills that late November afternoon. As we left the last village before the steep ascent began there passed us, going in the opposite direction, a woman with two children. She was walking in haste (no chair), and she clung to the pole of my chair and stopped me, half kneeling down and begging me to help. It was the wife of the injured man I was going to see. She had left him and was flying to the Mandarin in the city to cry for vengeance on her enemies. Strange perversion of wifely devotion!

OVER THE HILLS AND THE BRIDGES

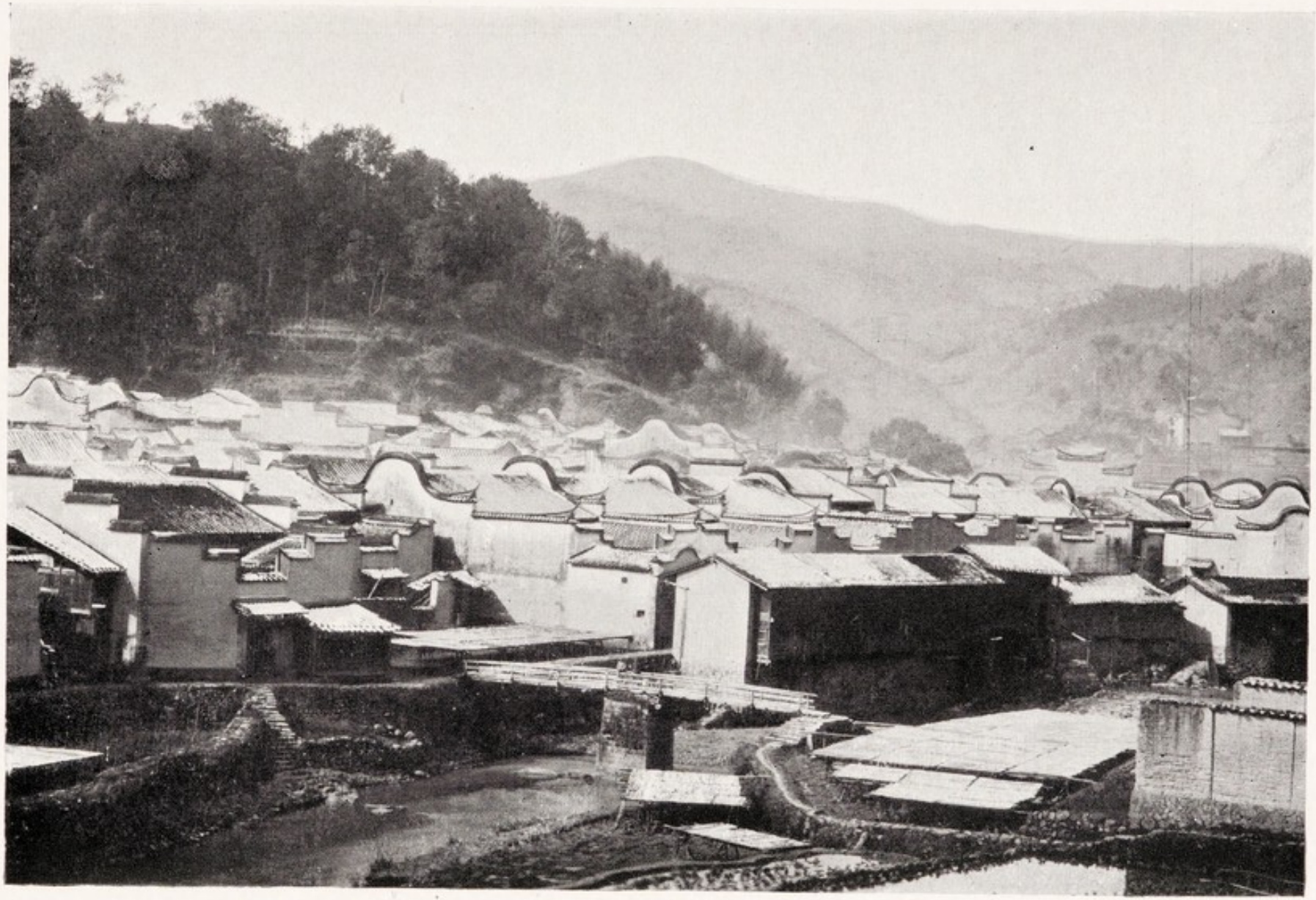
It grew quite dark as we still wound up and up, and over and over, the scrub-covered downs, a few feet only visible around us in the reeking, damp fog. Mr. Tiang's chair was ahead, but I had lost it in the gloom. The coolies thought they knew the way—a mere footpath among many through the scrub. We reached the crest of the long neck of high ground, and began the descent on the further side. And now it was not mine to ask whether we were lost; nor mine to complain of the bumping and jolting; but mine it was to hold myself in, one hand clutching each side-pole, and my feet firmly planted against the front bar. They lighted my lantern, and one of the coolies went a few paces ahead with it, while two only carried the chair. We seemed to leap from rock to rock on the mountain-side, and though I knew I was not descending the wall of a house, the sensation, I am sure, was not far off it!

At last—long last—far off below us—a light! a tiny speck! The coolies snorted and congratulated themselves. "What is it?" "They've sent someone to meet us—the light is to guide us." And still we made for the light that seemed deep down below.

It was somewhere about 9 p.m. when we struck the road—the street of the village. There was a sound of rushing water, and evidently a

stream ran by the road. My chair was put down, and I was helped out, and led by the light of moving torches along the village street. A rough mat-shelter obstructed the road. I thought it was a man sleeping by his rice-store, not yet garnered, perhaps. No!—it was the wounded man. But why here? His friends had placed him near the door of his enemies, to die at their door. His enemies were mounted guard over him, seeking to keep him alive through the night —their only hope of getting light punishment depending on the length of time he lived after the wounding. A big, strong, powerful man he was—the bully of the village. He and his brother, both opium-eaters, had kept the village in terror. This had been an opium brawl.

I was pressed into the house to eat some supper. The house seemed full of people, men in groups, talking and gesticulating; women in subdued knots apart, whispering darkly and gloomily together; children everywhere. The whole clan had been called in to the defence. A small room was apportioned to me, and I hurried to get my baskets unpacked and look out my instruments. The dressings were there, and lotions and chloroform, but—where was my packet of instruments which the hospital matron had taken to sterilize? Nowhere!



A VILLAGE ON A STREAM

Twice this sort of thing has happened to me in China—each time, as the sequel proved, by the mercy of God.

I was in dismay—Mr. Tiang also. "Have supper," he urged, "and we will send back a messenger at once." They brought red rice in coarse bowls—a poor supper, such as they ate themselves. I got boiling water and made tea. I had not much appetite till I should have seen this thing through.

Once there had been a little Christian day school in the village. That meant that the people themselves had asked for it, and made a certain contribution to the salary of the man or woman sent to teach. It had not lasted long. The women told me about it, and said sadly that, had they learned the lessons of the doctrine taught, they would not have come to this terrible quarrel.

Mr. Tiang came up from his supper with the men, plainly anxious. "Is there a lock for Dr. Pantin's door?" We looked. None at all! "Be sure you put your load baskets against the door at night." I charged him, on his part, to call me as soon as ever the instruments arrived, but paid a visit to the sick man before turning in. The wound was in the abdomen. They said he had continued to fight after receiving the wound, determined to kill someone before he fell. Thereby

he had probably sacrificed his one chance of life. A knuckle of intestine had escaped through the wound. Over this his attendants had placed a pad of dirty wadding. I was able to apply clean dressings, and to give something to help him sleep.

The clan went on gathering all night, as it seemed, tramping up to the loft overhead and settling down in the unhulled rice to sleep. I could see the lights of the watchers as they changed the watch around the wounded man from time to time. I had left my lantern burning, and lain down by it to rest. But I could not help picturing those sleepers upstairs, and the naked little lights they carried around and stuck into the wooden partition walls. To my imagination, fire became a more imminent danger than other things—for instance, a fresh outbreak of fighting. I got up, resumed my shoes, and lay down.

Meanwhile, my poor matron had discovered her oversight, and a messenger from Dongkau was already stumbling over the hills carrying my instruments. He arrived about 2 a.m., but I was asleep, and Mr. Tiang did *not* wake me. He was deeply distressed, and anxious to do the right thing. He had heard the clan talking, and whispering. He knew how grave was the prognosis for the wounded man.

When, at early dawn, I woke and called him, he said gravely aside to me, "Dr. Pantin, if you cannot be *sure* of curing him, do not touch him. This is a law case. If you touch him, and he dies, they mean to bring it in that you killed him."

I said I must judge for myself, I had a doctor's conscience to satisfy—several consciences to satisfy! Yes, he had also a conscience, he said, but—

We went to see the patient. Standing there as the sun rose I longed to do a miracle! Such a setting! Such a sunrise! But——by now the damage was greater, and great indeed. Impossible—not to be done! The dying man, grey and sunken, was attempting to eat the rice which his enemies held to his lips. I packed my things, and walked along the village street to where the chair waited.

A bevy of little girls, scholars from that former school, had donned their best clothes, washed their faces and done their hair, and, gay and chattering, led me by the hands along the street. And we started back, up into the brilliant autumn sunshine, up over the great hill, till the village lay far below in the narrow valley—the village with its two angry factions, its dying man, and its gaily dressed chattering little girls.

I was asked to appear in court, but my refusal was accepted. Mr. Tiang had given me wise advice.

V

CAKES TO THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN

It was the time of the autumn festival. The air was heavy with the rank smoke of burning straw rising from heaps of rice-stalks smouldering in the corners of recently reaped fields. The harvest was all in, the drying of the rice-grains on mats in the sun was also over. The grain (still in husk) was garnered.

It was a small, dilapidated village that we two missionaries visited that afternoon, beyond "Plant-the-Fields," on the road to "Branch-head," a mere hamlet, called the "House of the Wongs." We found ourselves unwelcome, for the people were all very busy. That day, in the shop-fronts of town and villages, cakes to the "Queen of Heaven" were for sale. Had not friends brought some to us, begging us to eat? On each round, flat cake was pasted a picture of the goddess.

Here, in the little Wong hamlet, the women were cooking too, and cakes were being offered to the "Queen of Heaven." One lad showed us,

very excited and pleased. "Does the Queen of Heaven eat the cakes?" I asked.

"Oh, no; she eats the smell"—(they *did* smell good!)—"*we* eat the cakes."

There was not much hearing that day for our Gospel.

I have been reproached (not in China) for not knowing the Chinese Classics. That day I wished I had a more working knowledge of my own Classic! *Where* was the chapter about "cakes to the Queen of Heaven"? I found it later—Jer. vii. 18 and xliv. 19: "The children gather wood"—yes, brush-wood; the Chinese boys and girls fetch it home for fuel. "The women knead the dough, to make cakes to the Queen of Heaven . . ."

They eat them—*she* "eats the smell," and winter, hard winter, settles down once more over the dreary land!

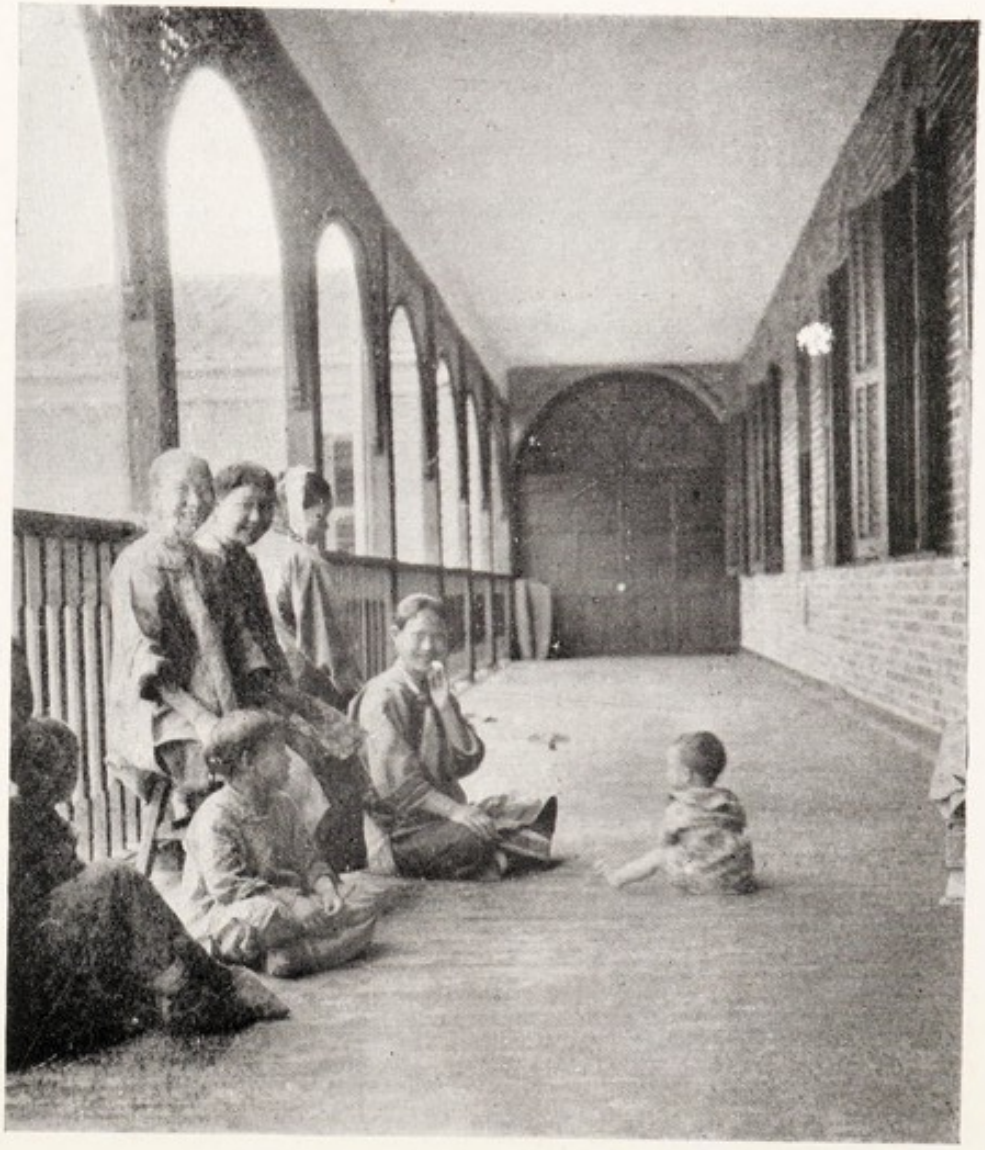
VI

"WILD ROSE"

ROSE's mother was far gone in consumption when she came to us. A very poor widow, with two big sons, she kept the home together for the lads till she could stand and cook rice no longer. Then she came into hospital with her one wee girlie. How it came to pass that the baby was "picked up" at birth (so many baby girls are *not* picked up) we marvelled! But certain it was that the little creature was loved, and loved her mother. She was not a year old and she did not talk. But she grew familiar and friendly with us, and soon developed very winsome ways. She would stand at the door of her mother's room and call after us as we passed. Then, if we stopped and turned, she would scream and run in and bang the door. Or she would run down the passages tempting us to chase her. Or she would play bo-peep with us under the bed-clothes.

Then Rose's mother died—not with us, for they will never die away from home if this can be avoided. She died at home, and the big brothers came to us, one of them carrying Rose on his

A WARD IN THE OLD HOSPITAL, DONGKAU



GAMES ON THE HOSPITAL VERANDAH

back. Rose looked at me, and that baby-thing remembered the times of play and her mother, and she just burst out wailing—not like a baby—like an older person, such heart-broken crying it was.

The brothers wanted us to take the baby. I had always done my best *not* to adopt babies, and I urged the boys to put her out to nurse by day with a neighbour, and to keep her with them at night. They took her away, and a few weeks later some passing patient told me, " That baby-girl you had in here is dying." " Dying ? Why ? " Then they told me. The brothers had not kept her. They gave her away to a woman in a near-by village, who had a tiny boy of her own and was willing to rear a baby-girl along with him to be his future wife. This horrid custom prevails very generally among the poorer Chinese, and is supposed to be an economy, the price of a full-grown girl being beyond their means very often. I went as soon as possible to see the woman who had taken little Rose, and found it only too true that the child was dying. The foster-mother, diseased herself, had nursed the child, and the poor little mouth was a mass of sores, the body covered with horrible boils and sores. " You can have her—she's dying," said the woman. She would not even send the child in to hospital, but told me to take her. I sent for her that evening.

The greatest problem was to find any one willing to nurse and tend so dangerous and unpleasant and fretful a baby. A young woman suffering from eye trouble, who was (according to Chinese idiom) " eating the hospital " instead of " eating herself," according to our rule, consented to look after Rose. It was months before that fractious, miserable baby began to rally, but she *did*. Not only so, but she became in time fat and bonny, and recovered her former sauciness. She became a joy in the hospital. Before we sent her to the Kucheng " Birds' Nest " to be taught and to grow up along with many other foundlings, we had her baptised " Wild Rose," after the big milk-white blossoms (larger than my palm often) that filled our hedges in the early summer. Rose developed into a " maker of the mischief and a leader in the fun " among the nestlings.

She is now still, I believe, a Kucheng schoolgirl. She did not remain quite an orphan, for a lady in England wrote to me: " Let me adopt your little Rose to be a twin to my little girl," and she did so adopt her.

VII

SHOOTING WILD BOARS

Two friends went out to hunt wild boars. But instead, and quite by mistake, Chung shot Wang in the back! It was not as serious a wound as might be feared, the gun being antiquated, and the shot just any bit of scrap iron that would go into the gun.

Chung did not at once come to the dispensary, but a message came, describing the injury and asking for "medicine." In vain we urged the futility of sending medicine, and after protest and argument we prepared a packet containing antiseptic for cleansing, a little iodoform dusting powder, antiseptic gauze, and lastly a pad of wool and a bandage. Full and detailed instructions were added, and the messenger departed.

Meanwhile, Wang had been busy exploring the hole in Chung's back with various available "probes." A few days later, they both arrived at the dispensary. The bandage was on, more or less. Next to it came our neat little packet of iodoform powder, folded as we had sent it, then the antiseptic gauze—then, next to the wound, the pad of wool! These removed we found that

there were by this time quite a choice of tracks leading, some upwards, some downwards, into the muscles of Chung's back. Chung felt no better for our medicine! A little very cautious probing proved fruitless, and we started in with expectant and simply antiseptic fomentations. The unexpected was what happened. The back did nothing exciting, but an abscess formed over the liver, and several others followed in distant places. These received appropriate treatment.

The back healed, and Chung came one day to thank us, kneeling and bumping his forehead on the ground, and then departed to hunt again. A few weeks later he brought us a joint of wild-cat as a thank-offering. The shot was never found!

VIII

SMALL-POX

O DEAR! O dear! They might have taken a brad-awl and punched out clear-cut holes in the child! Neat, clean, gaping round holes all over the poor little body! But it was small-pox!

Miles they had trudged, that father and mother, bearing their sole surviving child. Small-pox had taken all the others. The home was desolate. The last, the wee one, was wrapped up and carried, inert, utterly exhausted, but still alive, to seek the foreign doctor. They knew that they must not come inside, they must not infect the other patients in the hospital. They sat humbly on a big boulder on the waste land outside, and asked the doctor to see their sick child, their little dying child.

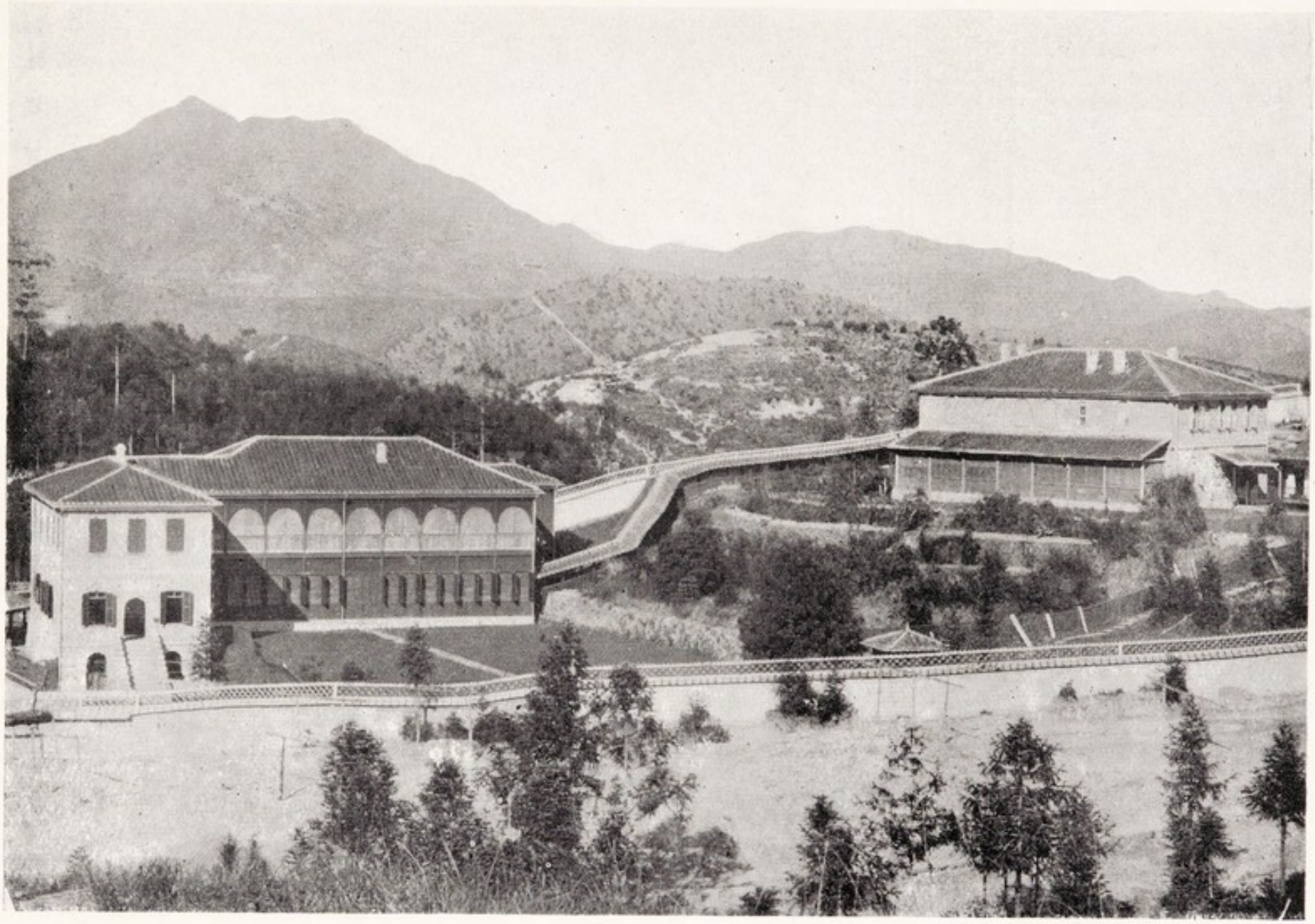
How had they managed at the inns along the road? How had they passed the nights? China is over-populated. Yes, and many long roads and streets of China are well-nigh paved with broken hearts. Two were to start back desolate that day, to what had been a home alive with children's laughter.

IX

A CHINESE RECIPE FOR EXORCISING DEVILS

It was about midnight that the fervent friend who had been exorcising a devil from the bosom of this chum was led, bleeding profusely, to our hospital. He had faithfully followed out the generally accredited instructions. His friend had been tormented by a devil for some long time. Our hero borrowed a gun, and procured some shot. He waited till the afflicted man slept at night. Then, suddenly and unexpectedly, he discharged a volley close to his ear. This procedure is calculated to dislodge the demon. But, in case it should cleave to its abode, or immediately re-enter, with wild whoops and yells it is chased round the room, down the stairs, out into the street. All was done as prescribed. Doubtless the patient would now be left in peace. But some shot remained. It was a pity to waste it. Our hero would just fire it off outside for fun. He did —and shot his hand to pieces.

Friends can be very kind in China. Three of his led him the mile or so that brought them to



THE NEW DONGKAU HOSPITAL

Dongkau Hospital. It was war-time, and as we unwrapped the gory mass we felt very much "in the trenches." There was not much to save—a thumb hung by a tendon, half a palm and a few stumps remained, and the bleeding was still profuse.

"Better have it clear off at the wrist," said surgeon's opinion. The patient, who had vehemently refused to take chloroform, and who instead of anæsthesia had invited his best friend to sit on his chest and head, now struggled out from under his best friend to say, "No! No! Don't cut off my hand! I want it! I want it to *use*!" Having warned him that it was difficult to stop all the hemorrhage and that so great loss was dangerous, seeing that he must go to an inn to lodge, we yielded, and spent an hour or two making the best job we could of it, and then, weary and gory ourselves, despatched a still undiscouraged patient to the village inn, nursing his apology for a hand.

Nor did he take long to recover, and he told us that he could steady his rice-bowl with that bit of a stump, while he plied his chop-sticks with the whole hand. Even British Tommies might find multitudes of poor "Chinks" to compete with them in pluck—not in marksmanship, perhaps!

PART II

HUNAN

I

ON THE YANG-TSE-KIANG

THE big river steamer had travelled up the yellow Yang-tse river, up into the mighty heart of China. It was evening, and she lay off Kiu-Kiang. It was a summer evening and the air was soft and warm after a burning day. The glorious red of sunset had given place to a sky of clear blueness and a wondrous harvest moon. This was the date of the autumn festival, and as we watched the lights on shore and river-craft, and listened to weird, discordant heathen music and to sounds of revelry from all directions—suddenly, lights, little lights, appeared, lying on the water, bobbing up and down on the lazily swelling tide. From a distant boat, low on the river, they appeared to be coming, in twos and threes, in dozens, in corps and battalions—a long ribbon of light, and as they left the boat, they took the way of the current, setting towards the far, far-off sea. Nearer to us, and nearer, as we leaned over the side of the big river ship, each little light an oil wick floating in a tiny lantern.

And some shone red from the encircling paper, others yellow, or clear and bright. They ran together into groups, then separated again, and some wandered off alone, like lonely souls walking apart. Now and again a light went out, but the great mass of them passed on, on—on as far as we could see, taking the tide for the open sea. Little lamps launched in a blind faith—little lamps lost even as we looked. What did they mean ?

One told us, " They are for souls, each one lighted for a friend or relation who has passed on. As the light seeks the open sea and perishes in its bosom, it has efficacy to loose from purgatory the soul of one lately dead." Another said, " These lamps are offerings of propitiation for the souls of those drowned at sea during the past year."

Beautiful, even in the dim light of heathenism, was the Feast of the Little Lamps. And shall we not carry the Light to such a nation as this ? Are they not worthy of a greater Light to rule their day ? " He made the stars also."

II

TO SIANGTAN*

FROM our large river steamer we trans-shipped at Hankow into a smaller steamer which plied up and down the Siang, a tributary of the Yang-tse, to Siangtan. Siangtan was our destination. We passed through Chang-sha, the turbulent capital of Hunan, the city Hudson Taylor coveted to enter, entered last of all the provincial capitals, and died there, well content, I believe.

Half a day further, Siangtan came in sight, long and low, lying five miles along the river bank. Nothing remarkable about Siangtan except, perhaps, the one Pagoda on the low headland opposite, and the splendid river flowing past, and the general air of busy-ness in her streets. Siangtan is a commercial centre. Here much merchandise is shipped and unshipped and transshipped. Steamers can rarely proceed further and native boats are used for up-river traffic. Crowds of boats line the shore. A slight bank hides most of the city from the river and also cuts off the outflow of drainage water, placing the city in a sort of saucer. Hence the mud and unhealthiness of the wet season.

** This station has since been taken over by the American Church Mission.*

But it was dry weather when we first landed, and we followed the Archdeacon and Mrs. Holden through the streets to the C.M.S. Compound, anxious only to " get to our job " as speedily as possible. Mrs. E., the Biblewoman, Mr. Sung, the Pastor, Mrs. Sung, and all the little Sungs, a few Christian women, the Bishop's cook, who was to be ours—we were soon introduced.

Mrs. E. met us more than half-way, so to speak. She took us under her wing. She led me literally by the hand from house to house to visit the Christians. Our mornings were spent with a Chinese teacher (the change from a southern dialect to Hunan Mandarin, and to a very debased form of that, was a severe mental discipline). Our afternoons were spent abroad, in school, or meeting, or house to house visiting.

The first afternoon's visiting stands out in memory. Primed with polite greetings, learned from teacher and text-book in the forenoon, fetched by a genial Mrs. E. in the early afternoon, led by the hand to the first Christian home on her programme, welcomed, fed on Chinese sponge-cakes of a boggy consistency and milkless tea, caressed, made much of—I sat among a group of nice friendly women. Out came the polite phrase so carefully prepared. The group of women cried joyfully, " She *does* understand! She *can* speak! "

—and then, in voluble chorus, they uttered such a flood of response and question, of sympathy and friendliness as left me sitting blank and inarticulate among them. And the light of contact faded and died down. Still, they did their best to maintain it, as I did mine.

And Mrs. E. did her best to span the gulf. She would apologise for us in those early days, saying, "You must excuse them—they are *old* ladies." I felt this to be an unfair explanation to give for our deficiencies, and as soon as ever I could summon words enough to inquire Mrs. E's age, and ascertained that she was only two years my junior, I met her excuse "They are old ladies" with the *tu quoque*, "So are you, Mrs. E.!" This cured her—she dropped the excuse. Also, by degrees, we began to understand the language and the brogue, and to give thanks for a "door of utterance" partly opened to us.

III

THE MISSIONARY MEETING

"AND *who* will take the Women's Missionary League?" It was Mrs. Archdeacon who spoke, for she and the Archdeacon were settling us two new missionaries into our new station. "New" we were—not to China, but to that province of China—and the language was a new one to us who for years had talked a southern Chinese dialect. Mrs. Archdeacon was settling us into our new work. The Girls' School had been apportioned to Miss Graham, and to me the women's meetings and visiting, and now—last item—"Who will take the Women's Missionary League?" Not I; but Miss Graham undertook it. I wondered at her. "It's only just to be President, and they have a monthly meeting, and the subject is sent to you from Headquarters of the Women's Missionary League of the Christian Church of China. You only have to get it up, and it's generally the Life of a great missionary. And the women have their missionary boxes; and twice a year you open them. The money helps to support a Catechist and a Biblewoman in

Shensi Province. It's all done by Chinese Christians!"

So simple!—and the next meeting was two weeks off, and the language new to us! The paper duly appeared: "The Life of Bishop Pattison"—"Pah-ti-song," that was evident. It was in Wen-li,—yet another tongue for us, and it was for us to translate it into the vernacular. A few mornings spent with the Chinese teacher over the Life of Bishop Pattison reduced us to despair, and the teacher too, and the day drew on. The desperation of despair seemed to have settled on Miss Graham. I wondered at her again. The day arrived, but not Bishop Pattison. Miss Graham had decided not to add to the great Bishop's fame, and had fallen back on—whom do you think? Anyone will guess—on "the Man of Macedonia."

When we began the new tongue, Miss Graham had asked the teacher whether the acquisition of one Chinese language was likely to prove a help or a hindrance in acquiring a second. After a doubtful pause, he had said, "A help—oh, yes, a real help—you will know which way up to hold your Bible!" Miss Graham had done better than that, for she knew how to find the chapter and verse, and to ask Mrs. E., the Biblewoman, to read it for her.

So that handful of Chinese women listened to the story of the Man of Macedonia and of the listening ear of Paul, who heard his cry. And then—for had she not undertaken the task?—Miss Graham spoke on the theme. She spoke!—and if I failed to understand her the women were thrilled. Whether they followed her words or not, they were greatly impressed. There was the picture too—a large picture, of the Man upon the sea-shore, arms outstretched across the sea. And then the box went round—a nice clean "Milkmaid Brand" preserved milk tin, with a slit in the top and a red label on. And Mrs. E. led with the first copper, and saw to it that each woman had the chance to follow her. And we closed with prayers, many prayers of Chinese women to whom prayer was no glib and easy performance, in fact almost as stumbling and unintelligible to others as Miss Graham's first missionary address in Hunan was.

Let those who are weary of missionary meetings, speakers or hearers, go to China and enjoy the real thing!

THE YELLOW DRAGON

There are many kinds of dragons. According to Mayers (Chinese "Reader's Manual," No. 451), the Yellow Dragon is the most honoured of the tribe. This is the kind which emerged from the Lo River and presented the elements of writing to the eyes of Fu Hsi.

He occurs in Han Sculptures, and appears among the Marvellous Objects of Good Luck on one of the bas-reliefs of the Wu-liang tombs. As reconstructed by the brothers Feng in "Chin-shih-so," this inscription is beside the animal: "When ponds are not drained to catch the fish, the Yellow Dragon walks in the ponds."

Thus it is evident that the Yellow Dragon is an ancient tradition.

IV

YELLOW DRAGON STREET

YELLOW DRAGON STREET is merely one of millions such streets of China. How well we know them! China epitomised—China *is* her streets. Can we deny it?

It is paved with uneven, worn, often rocking or tilting as stepped on, paving stones, alternating with the sharp cobbles. And for at least half the year it is slippery with evil-smelling mud, oozing and splashing. At its widest parts, Yellow Dragon Street is but some fifteen feet wide, and the street doors and shop fronts open straight on to it.

The Yellow Dragon must not be mentioned before breakfast. This fact complicates matters for the dwellers in Yellow Dragon Street. Our Chinese teacher reached us one morning in great excitement. As he came up Yellow Dragon Street to reach the English Mission Compound, a fight was in progress. A man was being violently ejected from a shop, amid much strife of tongues. What had he done? He had thoughtlessly entered the shop, and asked "Is this Yellow

Dragon Street ? "—thereby bringing peril of dire ill-luck on the shop people who had not breakfasted! The street had to have an alternative name ; it was called *p'o tzu shang*, " up the bank " or " hill "—not that the " hill " was evident, but the name was a safe one before or after breakfast.

Our Girls' Day School, glorying in the name of St. Paul's Girls' School, is situated in Yellow Dragon Street. A wooden cross surmounts the doorway. Some eighty girls (of whom, by the way, some of the little ones are boys) receive daily education here. The parents say they prefer this school because it teaches good manners.

The beggars love Yellow Dragon Street. It is less busy and crowded than the main street of Siangtan, into which it leads down (so we *are* on a rise after all!) A little crowd gathered one day around a beggar youth. He had no feet—whether by accident or disease or from birth, I don't know. He rolled in the mud, mud to the eyelids, reaching out his hands for alms. We felt almost literally sick at the sight. But later, as we returned from the weekly women's meeting across the river, we saw the youth being lifted off a ferry-boat. He was washed, and on a tray a companion carried the mud-caked professional outfit. He had apparently had a good day's

LITTLE SCHOLARS

AN OLD BEGGAR WOMAN
WHO GAVE US A GIFT OF RICE

CHINESE URCHINS

A HAPPY GIRLIE

luck, for the group of three were cheerful, and the footless one was borne joyously to his lair on the back of another. We also felt comforted somewhat.

Other days it was a beggar woman, carried in a long basket cradle, in shape like a cattle-trough, and laid along the side of the street to beg. Impromptu meals seemed to be enjoyed by the family of children around the basket, according as the inhabitants proved generous or not. Mendicancy is not the disgrace in China that it is in modern England. It was a cheerful and withal self-respecting woman who was carried daily to beg beside the street called Yellow Dragon Street. She probably kept the family by this profession of hers.

Another thing I have seen twice in Yellow Dragon Street is this—a man cast out from a house into the street to die. An old man it was once, his thin white hair spattered with the horrid mud, his face ghastly, his eyes dim. Was he a stranger lodging in the house, whom death was overtaking, and the host refused to be responsible for him? Or was he, possibly, a man who bore a grudge to the household and had come in revenge to die on their doorstep? I could not tell. The bystanders did not answer questions. The people in the shop feigned busy-ness and talked to each other in low asides.

Twice Yellow Dragon Street showed me this manifestation of a heathen civilisation, in which the art of keeping out of troubles that can be evaded figures large. For this same reason wounded and sick persons are very commonly avoided and left unassisted. He who touches such incurs responsibility, and may not be able to escape the heaviest responsibility of all—the accusation of having caused the injury.

Mrs. E., our Biblewoman, was the first who led me down Yellow Dragon Street—quite literally, by the hand—and as we went she pointed to the shops and told me their Chinese names—"pork shop" (very much in evidence these!), locksmith, cloth shop, etc. Then, to my astonishment, Mrs. E. broke off, turned in fury, and rushed at an urchin who had cried after her! This was some unforgiveable insult, and must be avenged instanter. I saw her belabour him with her ancient umbrella, till she exacted some sort of apology. She released him and returned to me, muttering what must, I think, have been "Little Varmint!" Such an interlude in nowise interfered with the serenity of our further progress. "A Christian house round this corner!" she cried, and we plunged into a smellier side-alley to visit it.

And thus the sordidness of Yellow Dragon Street came to be the familiar setting of our daily

round, and through it we returned at evening to the quiet and greenness of the Mission Compound. Familiarity with the Chinese street of city or village breeds—not contempt, but an unquenchable fascination and longing—fascination wrought by the concentration of lives and living; longing for the widening and freshness and beauty that are so awfully remote from these crowded lives. And the lure of the street draws us—draws us even after we have escaped to England's pleasant lanes.

V

THE HAIR FACTORY

THERE was one kind of shop which Mrs. E. never took me to visit in—a sort of place like an open shop, in which groups of women and girls sat working with hair. These places were always squalid, and the women and girls were of the least womanly-looking, the least girlish-looking, I had seen in any of the shop-fronts of those fetid streets. They were in ragged clothes, dirty, without any attempt at toilet, half starved, in wretched health. One felt rebuked if one attempted to smile into those places, or to catch the eye of some girl as one passed, by the scowl or the dumb apathy returned on one. Is this, then, the waste product of Chinese commercial life? Are these unreachable?

We had been nine months in Siangtan, and Mrs. E. had come to fetch me for the usual afternoon's visiting, when at last I said one day, "Let us visit a Hair Factory." "Oh, no! Don't go there! They're not respectable!" "Well, I'm going!" I said, and sought out a near one in a quiet street. A long, bony woman stood in

the door—the forewoman. She withdrew to the back of the room, and I saw the circle of women and girls, such poor bits of humanity! I got the impression that most of them were imperfect. One had but one eye, one squinted horribly, another's face was distorted. There was the hectic flush of phthisis, and the cough of chronic bronchitis. There was a starved dulness, and a bitter brutishness.

What do these women do? They were holding over their knees great tails of hair, the dark brown or black of the country, men's discarded pig-tails, hair sold by women in sore straits. One remembered the great Temple in Japan, rebuilt after fire, when the poorest women, unable to give money, cut off their long hair to make ropes to bind the scaffoldings. And the rope lies in great coils still in the court of the Temple, as a witness to their devotion. But this hair? It was being cleaned and sorted, and was, I think, intended for hair nets, the sort that China exports in great quantity, and which I could buy in Shanghai for a very few cents. These women were receiving a daily wage barely sufficient to provide them with two frugal meals. Where they lived or lodged I don't know. Had they families, had they belongings?

The forewoman looked as hard as nails, but she

let me come in. Mrs. E. stood in the street and held her skirts around her. " What is the matter, Mrs. E. ? Are there ' creatures,' perhaps ? " " Oh, yes, lots! " I was not unmoved. I stood, and near the door. I had brought a small picture, sent by a women's Bible Class in London. The woman who lost the one piece of silver is seen with lighted lamp, sweeping her house and seeking diligently. I tried to tell the story. The nearest woman (such a gaunt, pale woman!) put out a skinny hand and took the picture, and seemed to look at it, holding it close to her dim eyes. She passed it on to the next, but no one spoke. I was glad they cared to look at it, and I started again to repeat the story ; and then, over and over told them that the Heavenly Father was as anxious to find each one of them as the woman was to find her lost piece. Almost I expected in such a place as that a scornful gesture, and repudiation of the Name " Father " —" Heavenly Father." But still no word came from any of them, and I almost wondered whether the language I was speaking was theirs at all— whether they could understand even what the little handful of Christians accepted as intelligible speech for foreigners.

" He can't spare one of you, not one—He loves you, each one. Do you understand ? May I

come again ?" I thought their eyes said "Yes" —their lips did not. And I left, pondering, "what man has made of man"—what China's busy commercial instinct has made of some of the women. What, after all, you and I have not found for our King. Shall we go and seek them ?

(*The writer left Siangtan, ill, shortly after that visit to the Hair Factory*).

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