

MILDRED CABLE

THE FULFILMENT OF A
DREAM OF PASTOR HSI'S

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The Fulfilment of a Dream of Pastor Hsi's / The Story of the Work in Hwochow

INTRODUCTION

TWENTY-ONE years ago, on 19th February 1896, Pastor Hsi, to quote the words of his biographer, "was translated to higher service." Those who read the fascinating and wonderful story of his life by Mrs. Howard Taylor will at once be interested in *The Fulfilment of a Dream*, which is the story of the work in Hwochow, and gives the account of the carrying on of the spiritual labour of that remarkable man, and of the fulfilment of his dream. I think it is equally true that those who have not read Pastor Hsi's life will desire to do so after reading this book.

It is a commonplace observation, but none the less true, that the story commenced in the Acts of the Apostles could not be finished by Luke, because the great activity, the commencement of which he recorded, is still going forward. Every tale of missionary endeavour moving forward "toward the uttermost part of the earth" is an added chapter. It has been given to

Mildred Cable and her fellow workers, to labour in the apostolic succession; and then to Mildred Cable, to write this wonderful chapter.

From my own standpoint the book is full of charm. While by no means its supreme value, the first impression made upon the mind is that of the naturalness of the story. The reader is made the friend of the writer, and listens to an artless and charming account of places and of peoples. My first reading of the book at one sitting (as all such books should be read), left me with a sense of the atmosphere of the missionary's life and surroundings. I was admitted into the actuality of everyday things, and was made familiar with the pathos and tragedy and humour of life in a land and among a people largely unknown to me.

As I have said, this is by no means the supreme value of the book. That rather consists in something that grows upon you as you read. The writer does not state it in so many words, or very seldom, and certainly is not trying to persuade you to believe it, but there it is. I refer to the tender and yet strong revelation of the power of the Divine Grace, both in its sustenance of those who are called to missionary work, and its transforming power in the case of those who, often at cost, yield themselves to its call.

In Chapters I., V., VI., VII., and VIII., the reader will trace the story of the development of the work, and a wonderful story it is. Chapters XI. and XII., containing first the story of Ai Do, and then a record of demoniacal manifestations, show the reader how these quiet and earnest workers are brought up against the big,

naked, awful things of life; and also how being so confronted, they are unafraid and unconquered in the name of Jesus Christ the Lord. The fact that I draw special attention to these chapters is not intended to suggest for a moment that the others are either uninteresting or unimportant. They are neither the one nor the other. For all that it is intended to be, the book is a whole, and is supremely precious, because it is manifestly a part of the larger whole of Christ's great emprise.

With confidence and joy I commend the story to all those in whose heart burns the passion for the coming of the hour when our adorable Redeemer shall "see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied."

G. CAMPBELL MORGAN.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

I WISH to acknowledge that apart from my co-workers, Evangeline and Francesca French, this book would have been impossible. To Mr. Albert Lutley, Superintendent of the China Inland Mission Work in the Province of Shansi, I am indebted for help and kindnesses which I can acknowledge, but never repay. I am also indebted to my Chinese secretary, Miss Wang, for her able reporting of the many interviews which the compiling of this book has necessitated.

The Chinese themselves say: "One mile alters the speech, and ten miles change the customs."

In view of the fact that the Province of Shansi alone is larger than England and Wales, I wish it to be clearly understood that the usages and customs to which I refer throughout this book are local.

EDITOR'S NOTE

ALL personal names are spelt according to the system employed by the authoress, except where it has been necessary to modify this to retain the identity of someone mentioned in Mrs. Howard Taylor's *Pastor Hsi*. All place names are spelt according to the orthography of the Chinese Postal Guide, which system is now used in the standard maps of China and has been adopted by the larger missionary societies. Thus, Hoh-chau of *Pastor Hsi* becomes Hwochow, T'ai-yüan becomes Taiyüanfu, P'ing-yang becomes Pingyangfu, etc.

PROLOGUE

THE spirit of the Confucian scholar Hsi met with its Master Christ, and overwhelmed by the vision yielded all to His control. Constrained by His love the souls of men were sought and won; led by His Spirit, churches were established in the faith; sharing His sufferings, their failures became his burden.

In the darkest days the Hwochow Church has known, when many forsook their faith, he was strengthened by a dream, in which he saw a tree cut down to the ground, only to sprout again, and throw out branches stronger than before.

In his dream, Pastor Hsi knew this tree to be the Hwochow Church. He knew that though it were brought low, it would revive, and by faith obtained the promise, the fulfilment of which is recorded in these pages.

When Thou wouldst pour the Living Stream
Then I would be the earthen cup,
Filled to the brim and sparkling clear.
The Fountain Thou and Living Spring
Flow Thou through me, the vessel weak,
That thirsty souls may taste Thy grace.

When Thou wouldst warn the people, Lord,
Then I would be the golden bell
Swung high athwart the lofty tower

Morning and evening sounding loud;
That young and old may wake from sleep,
Yea, e'en the deaf hear that strong sound.

When Thou wouldst light the darkness, Lord,
Then I would be the silver lamp
Whose oil supply can never fail.
Placed high, to shed the beams afar,
That darkness may be turned to light,
And men and women see Thy face.

When Thou wouldst slay the wolves, O Lord!
Then I would be the keen-edged sword;
Clean, free from rust, sharpened and sure,
The handle grasped, my God, by Thee.
To kill the cruel, ravening foe,
And save the sheep for whom Christ died.

*Translated from Pastor Hsi
by F. L. F.*

MRS. HSI'S GIFT

"First love is the abandonment of all for the love which has abandoned all." – Dr. G. Campbell Morgan.

*"... such men
Carry the fire, all things grow warm to them.
Their drugget's worth my purple, they beat me."*

R. Browning.

CHAPTER I

MRS. HSI'S GIFT

Being an Account of the Opening of the Station of Hwochow

MRS. HSI was in great mental distress. The blow she feared had fallen, and her husband was a prey to the bewitching power of the "foreign devils." How cleverly the trap had been laid. Firstly, the offer of a monetary prize for a classical essay – which he had won; secondly, the insistence of the foreigner on a personal interview with the writer, on the occasion of which, certain as her husband had been that he had tasted neither food nor drink under his roof, some means had certainly been found to introduce into his system some of that subtle foreign drug which, as every one knew, must eventually compel the victim to embrace Christianity and follow the "foreign devil" to the world's end. Thirdly, he had been invited to become the teacher of this dreaded man (Rev. David Hill), and she had foolishly yielded her consent. She had taken every precaution and had, on three occasions, sent for him on plea of her own illness during the time he was an inmate in the

foreigner's household. His clothing had been carefully searched for traces of the magical compound, but in vain; nothing had come to light, and now here was her husband, one of the leading Confucianists of the district, declaring that, of his own free will and action, he had determined to follow – not the foreign devils – but this Jesus, around Whom all their preaching centred. He attributed this change of mind, evidently quite irrationally, to the reading of a book printed under the strange title of *Happy Sound*, – but perhaps even the sacred Chinese character might become a snare in their hands! Nothing but the influence of some powerful magic could have worked so complete a transformation. Even his intense craving for opium was gone, the Confucian writings which had been his constant companion were now neglected, and in spite of her entreaties and fears, the family gods were destroyed.

During his stay at home he spoke constantly, both to her and in her hearing to many visitors, of the teachings of this Jesus Who, he explained to all comers, was the Son of the only True God.

Time passed, and gradually her fears were somewhat allayed, so that she even consented to repeat certain sentences which, he told her, were to be used night and morning, kneeling, and with closed eyes. Her inclination to favourably regard what he told her grew, especially during his absences from home; for, strange to relate, she soon began to find herself under the influence of an unaccountable external power, which compelled her on each occasion of a visit from her husband to fly into an uncontrollable

rage at the sight of him, and this despite her most determined resolution to the contrary. To her husband it was most distressing to see so gentle a woman thus transformed. As his own spiritual experience increased, he recognised in this an onslaught of the devil, and betook himself to prayer and fasting in order to discover how they had laid themselves open to the attack. It was then that there was brought to his remembrance the fact that, in a room at the top of the house, there stood a small idol responsible for the health of the family, whose existence Mrs. Hsi had been careful not to bring to his remembrance, and which had been overlooked in the general destruction. The shrine was instantly destroyed, and Mrs. Hsi was free of the tormenting spirit, and shortly afterwards openly confessed Christ.

From that time their home in the Western Chang village was a centre of Christian activity. Through intense suffering Mr. Hsi had freed himself from the craving for opium, and he felt that, for the evangelisation of his native province, some means might be devised whereby the treatment of opium patients might be combined with widespread preaching of the Gospel.

The more he thought of this the stronger the conviction grew that it was of God, and when, through the agency of a dream, a system of treatment was revealed to him, he accepted it as a revelation and at once prepared the medicine which proved successful beyond his highest expectations. After a time, men who had been delivered from the opium vice and led to Christ through the Refuges, were gathered into his home (which he

called the Middle Eden) and trained for the work.

This community life for so large a number was only made possible by Mrs. Hsi's enthusiastic devotion. The extension of the opium refuge work was rapid and widespread, and necessitated frequent absences from home on the part of Mr. Hsi, during which time a heavy burden fell upon his wife.

Houses were rented in many towns and villages, and patients entering the "heavenly called refuges"¹ were numerous.

The burden of one city, however, lay heavily upon the heart of Mr. Hsi, and he and his household constantly prayed together that Hwochow might be opened to the sound of the Gospel; but funds which seemed essential for the initial expenses of the venture were not forthcoming. His itinerant journeys frequently took him through this important centre, which was situated sixty miles north of his home.

Day after day prayer was made, and Mrs. Hsi often heard her husband in the night watches, as he knelt alone in the court, plead with God that nothing might hinder what he strongly believed to be the Divine Purpose.

One Sunday night she was wakened by the familiar sound. She knew that her husband, like herself, had gone to bed tired out by a long day of preaching, during which large numbers had joined their household from more or less distant villages. According to their custom, they had spent the day fasting; it was Pastor Hsi's habit to refer to the Scriptures direct for guidance on matters of

¹ Heavenly Invitation Office ("Pastor Hsi's" translation).

daily conduct, and in the early days of his faith he feared to sin against the law of God by allowing fires to be lighted and meals to be prepared on Sunday. In accordance with his habit, he had arisen soon after midnight to give himself to prayer, and her ear caught the murmured sentences, "I beseech Thee, O Lord, open a way for Hwochow to hear the Gospel." As she listened, the sound of his voice brought conviction to her own mind that she was to be the human agency by which the Divine Will should now fulfil itself. In a flash, the path of duty was clear.

At the back of her cave were large painted cupboards which contained the whole of her worldly possessions: bundles of handsome silk, satin, and embroidered garments, and a box holding the heavy jade and silver ornaments, which had been her husband's marriage gift. Leaving her *kang*² Mrs. Hsi unlocked the cupboards and spent the rest of that night in sorting their contents. All except a few cotton gowns were put to one side, and as the voice in the courtyard still pleaded for Hwochow, even the earrings were taken from her ears, the rings from her fingers, and the ornaments from her hair.

He Who is worthy to receive accepted the offering, and her heart sang a song of thanksgiving as she murmured to herself, "Hwochow shall have the Gospel."

Morning prayers at Middle Eden was an hour of joyful worship, and on this day Mrs. Hsi's heart was so full of happiness that she could scarcely wait until the full congregation had

² The raised brick or mud platform, heated by a fire, used as a bed in North China.

assembled before she, laden with her bundles, entered the room and placed them on the table, saying, "I think God has answered our prayers; I can do without these, let Hwochow have the Gospel."

Every heart present must have been moved, for all could judge accurately what the sacrifice must be. She had offered her only worldly treasures, articles which her husband could not ask her to sacrifice, ready as he was to use in God's service all that pertained to their home.

Surely the angels joined their song to that of the little Christian community that morning, as the words of their own pastor's hymn ascended with the sacrifice of praise:

"I hung for thee on Calvary, what dost thou still withhold
from Me?

Thy strength, thy time, thy goods?

Oh say, what dost thou yet deny, My heart of love to satisfy?"

THE BIG ROAD

*"Allons! whoever you are, come travel with me!
Travelling with me you find what never tires.
Whoever you are, come forth! a man or a woman,
come forth!
You must not stay sleeping or dallying there in the
house,
though you built it, or though it has been built for you."*

Walt Whitman.

*"The Master said: With coarse rice to eat, with water
to drink, and my bended arm for a pillow; – I have still
joy in the midst of these things." —Confucian Analects.*

CHAPTER II

THE BIG ROAD

Indicating the Situation of Hwochow in The Province of Shansi

THE city of Hwochow is situated on the main road which connects Taiyüanfu with Sianfu, the direct route from Peking to the northwestern provinces. Along this road pass strings of camels, laden with the merchandise of Mongolia; thousands of donkeys, carrying bags of flour from the more luxuriant southern plains; cartloads of tobacco and paper from the large cities in the south of the province, and caravans of travellers; whole families packed into large carts moving to some new home; mat-covered litters swung between two mules and heavily curtained, in which the wives of an official are transported to their new abode; pedestrians, clad in sky-blue cotton, "yamen runners" yelling as they ride at furious speed to clear the way before them, and bearers of burdens combine to form a moving picture of interest and beauty upon the *Big Road*, as it is called.

Not least interesting among the wayfarers are the Lhamas

from distant Thibet nearing the end of their long pilgrimage to the famous holy mountain Wutai, where each one hopes to be granted the vision of the famous opening lotus. For many months, stretching into years, this hope has sustained them through the weary pilgrimage. From the threshold of their Lhama home they have walked every step of the thousand and more miles, some at every tenth, some at every fifth step, touching the ground with their forehead, and some measuring the whole length of the way with their outstretched body on the road.

As the traveller enters Hwochow from the north, he crosses a bridge, passing on his right a large metal cow. Beyond, flows the Fen River, and before him is the city gate. To this brazen image is committed the important function of guarding Hwochow from flood, and so successfully does it accomplish its task that dryness and drought are the normal condition of the countryside!

Turning to the east he faces the magnificent range of the Ho Mountains, in winter covered with snow, and in warmer seasons touched with the beauty of ever-changing colour. These mountains are part of the range which, farther north, is traversed by the famous Lingshih Pass.

Excepting in the early summer months when patches of vivid green indicate the fields of growing wheat, the landscape is of a uniform shade which is best described as *khaki*. Owing to the friable nature of the soil formation known as *loess*, the traveller, whether journeying from north or south, finds himself in a succession of deep gullies.

This wheat-growing land was formerly given over to the cultivation of the opium poppy, and for miles over the plain the wonderful iridescent bloom gave the appearance of a sea of changing light and shade as the wind passed over it.

In the year 1908 a proclamation was issued forbidding the growth of opium under penalty of death, and so vigorously has the law been enforced that the poppy has completely disappeared from view, and no man is bold enough to openly grow that which has been forbidden by the authorities.

For ten months in the year brilliant sunshine can be counted upon, and during that time, except for dust combined with heat or cold, the physical condition of a journey may be comparatively easy. Ease of mind, however, can only be attained by the philosopher who, putting away all thought of unseemly haste, shares the Easterner's pleasures of observation, contemplation, and wayside intercourse.

The journey from Taiyüanfu to Hwochow is accomplished in five stages, and nothing will induce the carter to shorten or change them, though hours may have been wasted in some narrow gully where, spite his warning yells, his cart met another at a point where advance or retreat on either side were alike impossible. After fierce recriminations the two men each produce a pipe, and it is good practice for the impatient Westerner to see them sit on their heels and talk the matter over. Time passes, but the carter is untrammelled by any artificial measure thereof, and after endless discussion, amid comforting

whiffs of tobacco, he proceeds to think of a plan whereby the deadlock may be overcome. How they manage to extricate themselves, one never knows! Some of the bank comes down, yells and shouts do their part, and at last the traffic, which may now amount to fifty waiting carts, slowly passes by. It is an everyday occurrence, and you ask, "Why do they not widen the road?" "Nobody's business," is the reply. "Who would spend the money?"

It is, however, the rainy season that reveals to the full the horrors of Chinese travelling. The *loess* is slippery beyond description, and the litter or cart in which you travel may be stuck for hours in a pit of greasy mud, black by reason of the coal dust so plentiful throughout the district, so deep that nothing but the mule's head is visible, the plunging body being hidden in the black mass. Your only hope at such a moment is to throw yourself with the grace of an expert gymnast on to the bank, thankful if you escape unhurt and only bespattered by mud. These pits are carefully kept in condition by a small group of men who appear, as by magic, to offer assistance at the suitable moment. No plight, however, excites their pity sufficiently to induce them to render help apart from a pecuniary reward of an exorbitant nature. Once within the city gates there is hope that you will soon find a shelter. You will have accomplished "the stage" which has been allotted from time immemorial. Marco Polo himself followed these stages in the year 1280 as we do to-day in the twentieth century.

The main road runs through the city of Hwochow from north to south, and many inns invite the traveller to rest, the red scrolls at the door assuring him that "From the four seas men all gather to this great hotel," and that the fame of its food is far-reaching.

Crossing this road from east to west is another important street where the official residence is situated. Here, most of the large shops are to be found and in the centre of the city is a fine tower, but all the smaller streets are alike, running between blank walls, from which access to as many as twelve courtyards may be through one small door. Numerous pigs walk unhindered up and down, acting as scavengers, and as such are not unneeded, for every one throws the refuse of the household out of the court door, caring nothing for the convenience of the public.

Parallel with the Yamen street is another important thoroughfare known as Prospect Hill. Here stands the largest and most important temple in the city, and almost next door to this, with the money given by his wife, Mr. Hsi secured small premises and announced that he was opening an opium refuge, and was willing to receive patients. Particulars as to rules and expenses were widely published, and in this place the first results of the love and self-sacrifice of Mrs. Hsi were seen.

A NEW VENTURE

*"Love has a hem to its garment
That touches the very dust:
It can reach the stains of the streets and the lanes,
And because it can it must.
It dares not rest on the mountain;
It is bound to come to the vale;
For it cannot find its fulness of mind
Till it kindles the lives that fail."*

George Matheson.

"The world had begun to stare, she half apprehended the fact, but she was in the presence of the irresistible. In the presence of the irresistible the conventional is a crazy structure, swept away with very little creaking of its timbers on the flood." – George Meredith.

CHAPTER III

A NEW VENTURE

In which is recorded the Appointment of the First Missionaries to Hwochow

THE first endeavour to bring the people of Hwochow within sound of the Gospel proved in every way encouraging. Numbers of men entered the Opium Refuge, and before long a nucleus of twenty were calling themselves Christians. The effort was, however, sterile so far as women were concerned, and Pastor Hsi knew the impossibility of establishing upon a solid basis a work which left untouched those who so largely controlled the home.

The power wielded by the woman in China is immense, for while she may be despised and, in her young days, even ill-treated, her day of power surely dawns, and woe betide the man who has to combat the determined will of mother or wife.

The question of providing women workers for Hwochow became a pressing one, and a visit from the Rev. Hudson Taylor was the occasion chosen by Pastor Hsi to bring before him the

urgency of this claim³. His suggestion was that single women missionaries should be appointed who could give their time unreservedly to the teaching of women, and preaching. Mr. Taylor pointed out the difficulties and the misunderstanding which would make their lot far from easy, but these difficulties, Pastor and Mrs. Hsi felt, might be overcome, and willingly promised to give all the help which lay within their power. In any case, the claim of the women constituted a call to make a forward movement, and Mr. Taylor promised to give the matter serious consideration. By the end of that year, 1886, two Norwegian ladies had offered for the post.

Miss Jacobsen, an idealist, strong, capable, and critical, gave herself whole-heartedly to the work for which she had come. Enthusiastic and independent in thought and action, she soon acquired the spoken language to a remarkable degree, and with a praiseworthy tenacity she studied the classical works of the Chinese, and at the same time could vie with most of the women in all branches of their domestic activities. Her extraordinary ability is a byword to this day amongst the people who knew her.

She was accompanied by Miss Reuter, a lady of education and refinement, whose grace of manner and goodness of heart speedily endeared her to all with whom she came in contact. Varied as were the gifts and circumstances of the friends, they were one in desire and purpose. Their home was one small room, and here they dwelt and received all who came to them. They

³ It was on the occasion of this visit that Mr. Hsi was ordained pastor.

wore the Chinese dress, ate the Chinese food, and whether in their own home or in the villages where they preached, ever kept before them the one object of the salvation of souls.

As pioneer workers, enthusiasm sometimes overstepped discretion, and the violation of Chinese custom in such matters as the public playing of stringed instruments and open-air preaching to mixed congregations, led to misunderstanding, and even to the gathering around them of some whose presence was far from helpful.

Desire on the part of Miss Jacobsen to encourage in every way possible those who were already faced with persecution as they left idolatry, led to the preparation, each Sunday, of a simple meal which might be shared with any who walked long distances to attend services in the City Church, and who arrived weary and tired. Others, however, apart from the Christian family heard of this, and if matters of business brought them to the city, Sunday was considered an appropriate day to transact them, as thereby dinner might be obtained free. This naturally led to criticism on the part of the heathen, and many of the more independent and self-respecting people refrained from intercourse with a community of whom it could be said: "They believe for their food's sake." Acting upon the advice of Pastor Hsi, this practice was discontinued, the missionaries themselves willingly taking no food from morning until evening, that all might fare alike. It could but be evident to all concerned that the mistakes were those of love and enthusiasm, and such qualities do much to counteract

any harm that might arise from unwise methods of expression. In every land, the world might well see more of the love that defies criticism, and forgets its own interests in whole-hearted devotion.

Miss Reuter felt the importance of at once reaching the children, and opened a small school for the daughters of Christians. Three little girls were committed to her care, and these she faithfully taught, not despising the day of small things.

She, with Miss Jacobsen, travelled from village to village with the evangelist Cheng Hsiu-chi, and preached the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Cheng was a native of Hwochow, and had, at Pastor Hsi's request, made ready the house for the missionaries when they came. As a young man he had wandered far in the paths of sin, and his mother, eager for his reformation, had spent no mean sum of money upon incense with which to seek the favour of the gods on his behalf. Seeing her devotion, his heart was touched, and he considered seeking refuge in a Buddhist monastery from the "fire of passion, hatred, and ignorance always burning in his heart." With this in view, he took counsel of a friend who had harboured similar ideals. This man had lately been a patient in the Refuge, where he had learnt of a stronger power to break the bonds of sin than fasting, penance, and self-discipline. With him Mr. Cheng attended a meeting of Christians where, meeting with Christ, he became a disciple. He returned home to face bitter persecution for refusing to pay the temple taxes; it was understood that no robbery of his crops, or ill-treatment of his person, would be punished by the village elders. He had finally no option but to

leave his home and seek refuge elsewhere, rejoicing that he was counted worthy to suffer "for the Name's sake."

He then helped Pastor Hsi in the Hwochow Refuge, and later took charge of the same work in new and hitherto untouched districts, returning from time to time to his own city.

A strong admiration for Miss Jacobsen and her whole-hearted devotion awoke a consciousness that this feeling was not entirely on his side, and gradually, but surely, the difference of race and outlook was obliterated in the love which revealed to each the other's secret.

Those to whom Miss Jacobsen in honour bound confided her purpose, did all in their power to prevent what it seemed might prove to be a catastrophe to the work. She was asked to leave Hwochow, and was sent to another province. Some years passed, but nothing could change the determination which saw in this union a possible wider sphere of usefulness and understanding of the people she had come to love; moreover, the mysterious something which caused her to know that "one man loved the pilgrim soul" in her, could not be ignored. To her trusted friend Pastor Hsi, however, she did turn for advice, and while many fellow-workers found it hard to express their indignation and regret, he, with a clearness of outlook only possible where there is absence of prejudice, told her that while he could not regard it as a sin for a Christian man and woman of different races to marry, he felt convinced that the time had not come for such unions to be desirable.

As is usual in such cases where inclination runs contrary to the advice given, the latter was ignored, and in the year 1898 Cheng Hsiu-chi and Anna Jacobsen became man and wife. Painful as must have been the attitude of Westerners to Mrs. Cheng, a greater trial awaited her when she came to realise that the Chinese, both Christian and heathen, regarded her action with disapproval, and adopted so unappreciative an attitude both towards her husband and herself, that she found only critical antagonism where she had looked for sympathetic understanding. Mr. Cheng proved himself worthy in all ways of the confidence she had placed in him, and by self-sacrificing toil he, both before and after his wife's death, faithfully served the Lord to Whom he had yielded his life. In the year 1915 he too passed to his reward.

Miss Reuter had some time previously married Mr. Stanley Smith; young workers who had joined Miss Jacobsen for short periods had been moved to other places, and when fresh appointments were made it was a time of great difficulty. It was not easy to replace those whose absolute devotion had won the love of the people amongst whom they lived; and while Miss Jacobsen's action necessitated her withdrawal from the staff of the China Inland Mission, and made further residence in Hwochow impossible for her, they could not forget that she was the first missionary who had come to them, and that they were losing with her the man who had been a help to so many of them in their early Christian life.

THE CONTINUATION OF THE STORY

*"Death is short, and life is long;
Satan is strong, and Christ more strong.
At His Word, Who hath led us hither,
The Red Sea must part hither and thither.
At His Word Who goes before us too,
Jordan must cleave to let us through."*

C. Rosseti.

*"On the other side of the River was also a meadow,
curiously beautified with lilies, and it was green all the
year round." —Pilgrim's Progress.*

CHAPTER IV

THE CONTINUATION OF THE STORY

Being a Record of some who were counted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake, and of Mrs. Hsi's Experiences in the Boxer Outbreak

CHANGES in the staff at Taiyüanfu released for the oversight of mission work in Hwochow, Jane Stevens and Mildred Clarke.

They might well shrink from the task facing them. Work in the provincial capital had been of so totally different an order, and life in a large community of foreigners had limited their sphere to the oversight of a small school for girls, and the instruction of women inquirers.

None had felt more strongly the seriousness of the step taken by Miss Jacobsen, and they came to Hwochow with the determination that all should early understand the impossibility of intercourse outside the most rigid observance of etiquette, Chinese and Western. Feeling strongly that such an attitude on their part would be the most helpful factor in the gathering

around them of better-class women, they faithfully carried it into practice. Men who were connected with the Church were received by them only under the most formal restrictions. Finding it impossible to eat Chinese food, a simple, but foreign *ménage*, took the place of the hitherto free-and-easy conditions.

It was a severe test for Chinese and foreigners alike; desire for renewal of the former conditions of intimacy met with no encouragement from those who could not but constantly bear the past in mind, and who felt that, for the highest interests of the work, a new relationship must be established. This attitude was naturally regarded as aloofness, and was galling to those whose love had been set on the young missionaries fresh from Norway, with all the enthusiasm of youth, to whom they themselves had taught the language and who belonged to them as others could not.

Miss Clarke gave her time to the Girls' School, the pupils of which now numbered nearly twenty, and those who followed her have reaped where she sowed. Often sad and weary she plodded on, but God in His time gave the increase. Miss Stevens, to the limit of her strength, and often beyond it, faithfully worked in the city and villages, suffering much which to her was intense hardship, and feeling keenly the isolation and lack of confidence amongst the people who misunderstood the course of action deliberately adopted. Thus, while bringing heartache to themselves, these missionaries were enabled to make easy the way to all who followed them.

The year 1900 dawned. In the month of June the ladies closed school and gladly accepted an invitation from friends in their old station to visit them. To Taiyüanfu they went, and after many anxious days spent with the missionaries gathered there they, in obedience to the Governor's command, helpless to disobey, even though they suspected his treacherous promises of protection, moved to a house near his *Yamen*.⁴

"Arrived at the house chosen for them, they made themselves as comfortable as possible for the night; and the next morning (Sunday, July 8) were able to examine their surroundings. They found that for their whole number (twenty-six, including children) there were only two comparatively small courts, the two inner courts being already occupied by the Roman Catholics... When the fateful day (Monday, July 9) dawned, the foreigners evidently had no inkling as to what was to happen. Just before noon the sub-prefect called and took a list of all who were in the house, both foreigners and Chinese, saying it was by order of the Governor... As was ascertained just a year later, when other Protestant missionaries returned to the province, the Governor had determined that on that day he would kill all the foreigners in Taiyüanfu. He evidently only took a few of the officials into his confidence, and one at least – the *Tao Tai*– strenuously opposed the course he was about to pursue, but unfortunately without result.

"It must have been about two o'clock in the afternoon when he

⁴ *Yamen*=law courts or Mansion House.

ordered a number of officers, with their soldiers, to accompany him, and mounting his own horse, led the way. He made as though he would go out of the city by the North Gate, but before reaching that point, he suddenly wheeled round and went to the house where the missionaries were confined. He there ordered their immediate arrest, and they appear to have made no resistance – as, indeed, it would have been useless. All who were found within the compound (Protestants and Roman Catholics) were seized; and it so happened there were several Chinese there on business... No excuse was listened to, and all were marched off to the Governor's *Yamen* between files of soldiers, where they were taken into the courtyard adjoining the street and surrounded by soldiers – not Boxers.

"As to what really occurred, the whole truth will probably never be known, but from inquiries made on the spot, it seems certain that the Governor did not assault any with his own hand; but, having asked the missionaries where they came from, and being answered, 'From England,' and 'From France,' just gave the order, 'Sha' (kill) to the soldiers, who answered with a shout and immediately fell upon their defenceless victims, killing them indiscriminately."⁵

The Church in Hwochow, Chaocheng, and Fensi had a marvellous escape. The Boxers, practising their mystic rites, overran the district. Whole families fled to the mountains, and no one was safe from robbery and violence. The mandarin of

⁵ From *Fire and Sword in Shansi*, by Dr. E. H. Edwards.

Chaocheng, fearful lest massacres should take place in the county under his jurisdiction and desiring at any cost to keep the peace, called together some of the leading gentry and asked for advice as to the problem facing them. "I know," said he, "that calling upon the Christians to recant will be useless, but can we not issue tickets to them upon which are the very words they use in entering the Church, 'I promise to repent?' There should be no difficulty in getting them to take these, for it will mean to them what they themselves preach, while to the anti-Christian fanatic it will be sufficiently satisfactory."

Orders were accordingly issued that all Christians were to receive this official paper whereby their safety would be ensured. Large numbers in the Church regarded the mandarin's action as the overruling of Providence on their behalf, and accepted tickets which involved no verbal recantation of their faith. Others, amongst whom was Mrs. Hsi (now a widow), with more sensitive spiritual perceptions, refused to take advantage of even the semblance of a subterfuge.

The Chaocheng mandarin, surrounded by his bodyguard, went outside the city gates to the place where the Boxers were practising their rites with the intention of burning incense in their presence, by which act he would acknowledge them as invulnerable and holy men. At the critical moment, however, one of them was said to have made a move as if to attack the official, who instantly called upon his bodyguard to seize the men, exclaiming: "These are insurgents, and no holy men; bind

them, they are prisoners." As such they entered the city, and Boxerism never spread in the district. Thus did the Hand of God protect the hundreds of men and women who in these three counties were called by His Name, and while in many places few escaped the sword, the numerically largest Church in the province of Shansi was spared.

Mrs. Hsi was in Chaocheng seeking to help the women in their troubles, when news reached her that her brother-in-law, Elder Si, was stabbed by one of the local Boxers. Rumours followed rapidly, and she heard that her mother-in-law was in serious danger. She hastened to her home, and found matters worse than she had feared. There was no place in which to live, the house was destroyed, her clothes were stolen, and had it not been for the thoughtfulness of one missionary who, in the midst of personal danger, found time to buy and send to her some garments and bedcovering, she would have been in a sad plight. Her old mother could not walk, so badly had she been beaten by the robbers, and terrified, the two women crept to the fields and hid themselves. When night fell they returned to shelter and to get a little food, crawling out to their hiding-place before the cock crew each morning. Terror was upon the whole populace. The official had not been successful here, as in Chaocheng, in dealing with the movement, and the party of missionaries who had for some time been gathered in Pingyangfu were openly attacked and robbed by Boxer bands as they left the city under official escort.

In loneliness and peril Mrs. Hsi and her aged mother cried

to God, as the anxious, weary days passed by. The missionaries were gone, very many killed, others in hiding, and some, after perils and sufferings unspeakable, had reached Hankow. After some months came the additional sorrow of the death of her brother-in-law, Elder Si, who had managed for her all matters in which she required help.

Gradually the storm blew over, but those who passed through that period can never forget it. For Christ's sake they had suffered, and they could not again be as before. The Church in Shansi "had a new and powerful weapon" in her hands, "the power of her sufferings."

A few months later, as soon as passports were available, the missionaries were back at their posts. There was much to tell and to hear, as old friends met and were able to recount all the wonderful deliverances of the past year. But how many vacant places there were! How could they be filled? Ripe experience and Christlike sympathy were needed to deal with the new situation.

Some had, under pressure, in a weak moment, recanted; others had resisted this temptation, but fallen over the more subtle question of indemnity for property destroyed. The situation, moreover, was changed; foreigner and Christian alike were now in the ascendancy. Compensation for life and property was granted, and though the members of the China Inland Mission declined to accept this, their action was made the occasion of a laudatory proclamation which called upon the people to note and imitate such an exemplification of self-

forgetting goodness.

In the providence of God the lives of a few missionaries had been spared to return, and with the benefit of their experience, to help new workers to an understanding of a situation which, mishandled, would inevitably lead to disastrous consequences.

Nothing could give Mrs. Hsi greater pleasure than to hear from her friend, Miss French, that Hwochow was to be her future centre. I, as a new worker, was to accompany her, and together we reached the city which was to be henceforth our home.

The reception given by the very few Christians who gathered to meet us, was both cordial and critical. Miss French was welcome as being one whose reputation had long ago reached them, who had already paid several visits to the station, and whose Chinese, they soon remarked, was "as good as Miss Jacobsen's!" Of me they knew nothing, and I had to meet the gaze of many eyes and listen to the remark, before I opened my mouth to speak, that it was impossible to understand my words. I had only one asset, and that was the fact that this being my first station I should belong to them, and when the day dawned that would release my stammering tongue, the honour of having taught and trained me would be theirs!

LIFE IN THE VILLAGES

*"Great things are done when men and mountains
meet;
These are not done by jostling in the street."*

William Blake.

*"Arrived there, the little house they fill,
No look for entertainment where none was;
Rest is their feast, and all things at their will;
The noblest mind the best contentment has."*

William Spenser.

CHAPTER V

LIFE IN THE VILLAGES

An Introduction to Chinese Home Life

THE house at Hwochow, which we were to inhabit, was still in the hands of workmen. We therefore decided to delay the unpacking of our boxes, and to spend several months in visiting the homes of the Christians throughout the four counties for which we were then responsible. Our travelling paraphernalia was simple, luggage being limited to the amount that a small donkey could carry in addition to a rider. Clothes and books were tied up in large square handkerchiefs and distributed as evenly as possible, along with a folded, wadded quilt in a long bed-bag which, thrown over the donkey's saddle, reached nearly to the ground on either side. On the early morning of the day decided on for our departure, two donkeys thus laden stood at our gate. On to one of them I was hoisted, and took my first lesson in how to sit happily, perched high on the voluminous luggage with neither reins for my hands nor stirrups for my feet, for sometimes as long as twelve hours' travelling with but a short break for

food and rest at midday. From village to village we wandered, received everywhere with cordial hospitality, pressed to extend our visit, and followed on our departure by the reiterated cry: "Come again, come again, come again soon!"

All was fresh and delightful to me and brimful of interest, from the hour when I rode through the city gate, passed the great tanks of lotus bloom to the edge of the swift, shallow river, where my servant stripped off his shoes and socks to lead my donkey knee-deep over the ford.

By narrow roads we travelled where the tall grain stood like a wall on either side, ripening in the fierce sunshine which bathed the landscape in a dazzling glare. Through occasional villages we rode, where the women called to each other to hurry and see the strange sight, and groups of naked and semi-naked children commented freely on the appearance of the "foreign devils."

A few miles farther and the first stage was reached – a deep courtyard backing the hillside, from which had been hollowed a row of caves according to the economical method of the country. Scarcely any bricks are required for such building, and the deep, lofty, arched room affords the warmest shelter in our bitter Shansi winter cold, as it does the coolest refuge from the burning summer heat.

"Come again, come again soon," and we were off again, refreshed by a delicious, beautifully cooked meal, and our hearts warmed by the evident pleasure which our visit had given and the cordial hospitality which had sought to let us know how welcome

we were. And now we left the fertile plain and well-watered land which lay all along the river-bed to climb steep, stony roads, and follow narrow footpaths, where the difficulty of its broad load made my donkey step gingerly as near to the chasm's edge as she could secure a foothold, and I dug my knees into the soft bed-bag and longed for something on which I could get a grip. How pleasant and easy such journeying became before the end of that autumn's wandering, and how familiar the life of the village homes. Almost day by day the confused sounds took form to my unaccustomed ears, and I was soon able to differentiate quite clearly between the two inevitable questions, "How old are you?" and "How many brothers and sisters have you?" I ceased to cover myself with confusion, by answering that my brothers and sisters numbered twenty-three, and that my age was six – though now that the days of helpless shame are passed, I would not *not* have made these mistakes, so keen is the enjoyment still felt when some one repeats the old joke, and all laugh merrily at the recollection.

Happy, irresponsible days, in which I learned to know and love the Chinese. I saw them now to best advantage, simple, patriarchal, industrious and thrifty, extraordinarily resourceful, and independent of all that their own fields and farm do not supply. I saw the women's activities, and how they picked the cotton in the fields, spun and carded it, then wove it into strong cloth on the loom made for them by their own husbands; how they dyed the cloth with indigo of their own growing,

and finally converted it into the garments, and even the shoes and socks, worn by the whole family. I saw how those same garments were wadded with a layer of cotton-wool as the cold season approached, and behold, the whole family was made proof against the severe onslaughts of the keenest frosts and bitterest winds. I saw how a measure of wheaten or maize flour, a vessel of water, and a few vegetables dug from the field were daily converted into the three meals on which young and old alike thrived, the men showing a muscular development and endurance and an agility unequalled by anything I had met in other countries. I learned to recognise their simple, unexpressed joys, and to realise the deep tragedies which lay beneath the surface of their laborious lives.

I was in the midst of the province which – in the very year when I was born – had been swept by the horrors of a famine and pestilence which left whole villages with no other survivor than perhaps two or three wailing children, feeding on garbage torn from the grasp of the dead hand.

My servant remembered the time well. His whole family had been wiped out, and he had escaped as by a miracle. "In those days, dogs ate dogs and men ate men," was the refrain of his tale, only too literally and absolutely true, for no man dared to venture on the lonely path leading from one village to another, knowing that the likelihood was that murderers lay in wait, and that a few picked bones alone would tell the tale even if, satiated with horrors to the point of indifference, any one cared to inquire

of it.

When I expressed surprise at the many rows of caves allowed to fall into utter ruin, and the traces of whole villages now returned to waste land: "Famine year," he would briefly answer, "dogs ate dogs and men ate men."

I learned, too, why it was that no merry groups of children wandered away from the village, even now when no evil-doers lay in wait, upon some game or exploring adventure. I first discovered the reason of this through meeting a woman whose face was scarred and mutilated so as to bear small likeness to the human, and on inquiry I was informed that, as a little girl, she had strayed away from home and been attacked by a wolf; men had rushed to her rescue, but her face, which is generally the part first attacked, was torn beyond recognition. I then learned what a common thing it is for wild beasts, wolves or leopards, to come down from the hills, and steal children even as they play around the courtyard grinding-stone. I could not be surprised at the intense anxiety of a woman whose son was half an hour late returning from an errand, when I heard that her eldest child had strayed off one day, and never been seen again. I was told of yet another woman who, nursing her baby in the cave, saw a leopard spring on her eldest child in the courtyard. Frantic, she left the baby to raise the alarm, and when she returned bearing the little mangled body in her arms, she found that the wild beast's mate had noted her absence and carried the baby off to its lair.

I also heard, and found myself compelled to believe, things

which I should have dismissed with an incredulous smile some few months earlier.

It was now that I found myself brought face to face with the strange phenomenon of demon possession. There is so much to be said on this interesting topic, that it will require a chapter under its own heading to note even a portion of what has come under my personal notice. For the first time I heard, often in the midnight stillness, the high-pitched voice, intoning the magic incantations whereby some young woman yielded herself to be the medium of communication between the spirit and the material, the wild chant sometimes dying away in the distance, as she led a group of inquirers over wild mountain paths in obedience to the directions of her control.

A few weeks were spent in the home of an elder of the Church, Giang by name, as from this centre it was easy to make daily itinerations in the neighbourhood. What a welcome we received there! The deep cave set apart for our use was decorated with flowers, everything was clean and comfortable, and we were made to feel "at home." Being guests in the house, our meals were always served separately, but we liked to take our bowls into the courtyard and enjoy the family life. We were able to consult with our host concerning many whom we had visited during the day, and discuss our plans for the morrow.

As the daylight faded we joined in prayer and praise, and listened to much that was of interest to us as the Elder told of early years spent in dissipation, opium smoking, and gambling;

of his conversion through Pastor Hsi, and of first efforts to preach the Gospel. Meanwhile, the shepherd folded his sheep, carefully counting them lest one should be missing, and the women prepared the millstones for grinding on the morrow. I saw much illustrated that had been familiar to me from childhood in the Gospel stories, even to the midnight cry announcing the arrival of the bridal party to a neighbour's house. A little oil was added to our long-extinguished lamp, as, being first to hear the clanging of the cymbals, we hastened to the bridegroom's home to help arouse the drowsy guests.

We returned in due course to Hwochow, urged by our kind hostess to come again at any time. Such homes are resting-places to those who have left home for the Kingdom of God's sake, and are part of the literal fulfilment of the promise: "An hundredfold now in this time."

Nowhere are we more sure of a welcome than in some of these Chinese courts, and for the Church of Christ in the home of Elder Giang, I for one shall ever be thankful.

OUR RECEPTION AT HWOCHOW

"The Master said: At first, my way with men was to hear their words, and give them credit for their conduct. Now, my way is to hear their words, and look at their conduct." —Confucian Analects.

"The Master said: A man should say, I am not concerned that I have no place, I am concerned how I may fit myself for one. I am not concerned that I am not known, I seek to be worthy to be known." —Confucian Analects.

CHAPTER VI

OUR RECEPTION AT HWOCHOW

Showing Things as they sometimes are

IN spite of the valuable help given by study-circles, training-colleges, and other means by which the candidate for the mission field is equipped for his work, I question if many are fully prepared, when they arrive at the station to which they have been appointed, to find themselves studied, summed up, and criticised by the people to whom they have come in the capacity of teachers, and from whom they unconsciously expected some measure of deference.

The Westerner, as such, has no prestige in the eyes of the Chinese, and though his wealth, education, and business capacity may command more or less respect, the deep-rooted feeling is a sense of the intrinsic superiority of the Middle Kingdom and its sons to the barbaric subjects of a vague territory known as the "Kingdom without" – that is, without the pale of the ancient civilisation. By grace, the Christian will welcome you as a fellow-subject of the Kingdom of God, but on this ground only, and

on no preconceived assumption of your superiority, will you be accepted.

The fact that you have come several thousands of miles in order to preach the Gospel, is not sufficient to place you unquestionably on a pedestal. By temperament you are either impetuous or slow, easy-going or exacting, courteous or brusque, and you will prove to be by nature more or less reasonable or unreasonable when the Chinaman seeks to make you understand *li*, an untranslatable word, which embodies the idea of the complete range of all that it is suitable that you should be and do, on every occasion.

Failure to readjust your mind to such conditions during the first years of your missionary life may prove an eventual fatal barrier to mutual sympathetic understanding, and the establishment of that barrier has been one of the difficulties which has not been much spoken of by those with whom you have conversed, though they have doubtless been keenly conscious of it themselves.

We returned to Hwochow. The house was ready for us, and so were the Church members. "New people," said some, "we are unaccustomed to each other; they do not understand our circumstances, and we do not know them."

"Why did they spend months in another district instead of coming at once to make themselves acquainted with us, our affairs, and our homes?"

"It is a case of clear neglect," said another. "I have been a

Church member for fifteen years, and all the notice they have taken of me is to spend one paltry day in my home, whereas they were three whole days in the village of Peace and Harmony, where there are only heathen and not a Christian to receive them." "I," complained another, "have been unable to attend Church service for two weeks, and neither of them has been near, as yet, to inquire the cause of my absence."

"Well," chimed in an old gentleman, who by reason of his seniority in the Church carried a good deal of weight, "had our beloved teacher of former days been here, our homes would have been visited, and I will take the first opportunity of telling them my mind on the subject."

The close of the following Sunday morning service found us sad enough. The congregation numbered thirty, and while some were loyally ready to help, there was a section of malcontents who since the early days had been a source of difficulty to Pastor Hsi and his friends, and from whom, in the light of past knowledge, Miss French knew that trouble would come.

The first indication of the brewing storm was the entrance to our guest-room of an aged Church member who, by reason of his rank as military mandarin, was one of the glories of the Hwochow Church. Vigorous and stalwart, his seventy years sat lightly on him, his bearing and the play of his facial muscles affording proof of the brilliancy with which he had passed the necessary examinations for the obtaining of his degree. Unlike the civil mandarin, whose examinations require such arduous

study of classical writings, the military honour was conferred as a reward for physical prowess. The competitor was required to exhibit great skill in archery, shooting at the target from the back of a galloping horse, and to lift stones of immense weight; meanwhile throwing the body into such postures as, coupled with a terrifying expression of the countenance and accompanied by blood-curdling yells, would strike such terror into the heart of the opponent that he would flee without striking a blow.

After such training he had little to fear, and felt, no doubt, that a few moments' interview would be sufficient to reduce two young women to reason, and place matters on a more satisfactory basis.

When the old gentleman entered, we invited him to the seat of honour, ourselves taking chairs at the lower side of the table. He asked for an explanation. Had he been informed correctly that we had been appointed to carry on the work in Hwochow? "Yes," we replied, "that is the case, and also to help the women in the counties of Chaocheng, Hungtung, and Fensi, until such time as lady workers shall be in residence there; moreover, our schools are to be for the women and girls of these counties as well as Hwochow."

This item of information fell as a severe blow. Hwochow is a curious district, its natives physically and mentally being of a totally different type to all around, in all relationships with whom there exists mutual distrust and suspicion. It was odious to men and women of this exclusive type to hear that the foreigner, in

coming, viewed the nurturing of a small band of discontents as of very secondary importance to the opportunity of spreading the news of the Gospel far and wide amongst the heathen. It was at this point of the conversation that the first traces of that terror-striking expression began to flit across his features, and his eyebrows gathered themselves into a most terrifying bunch. "Are you aware that I have been a Christian for twelve years, and that I am known far and wide by Chinese and foreigners alike?" "I am fully aware of it," said Miss French, and might have added, "known and dreaded of all men."

"Should not the missionaries' conduct be regulated in accordance with the command, 'Seek the lost until it be found'?" "It should," acquiesced Miss French. "Then are you aware that during the past three months we have been as sheep without a shepherd, left as prey to wolves, with no one to care for us, our homes have been unvisited, and members who have absented themselves from Church service have had no inquiries made as to the cause of their non-appearance?"

"Did you say *twelve* years a Church member?" inquired Miss French. "Nearly thirteen," he replied. "Then no longer a babe in Christ, but yourself able to seek the lost, and to come to our assistance as we take up the responsibilities of our new work. We have come here," she added, "for the people who need us, whether Chaocheng or Hwochow."

"Then go to Chaocheng and leave us alone; *our* missionaries must shepherd *our* Church." At this point wrath overcame him,

and throwing himself into the classical position of the Chinese brave, "A couple of youngsters," he yelled, "untaught in the wisdom of Confucius." With these words he flung himself out of the room. His spirit was too much perturbed to call to mind the wisdom of the sage, "In archery we have something like the way of the superior man. When the archer misses the centre of the target, he turns round and seeks for the cause of his failure in himself."

The loud clanging of a gong was shortly heard, and the tones of a well-known voice alternately carolling forth a familiar hymn with a recital of the wrongs needing redress.

"The Gospel way is the best of all, hark! I loud proclaim the same."

(Loud beating of the gong.) "Call that love! I vow to report them at headquarters!"

"Heaven's joy bestowed on earth, saves poor sinners and sets them free."

(Again the gong.) "Much they care for our souls! Let them go to Chaocheng!"

The sounds gradually ceased, as those who were truly grieved that we should be thus insulted pacified the old gentleman, begging him to have a care for his aged body, and refresh it with food and rest.

Miss French's mind was made up. "We shall soon make another tour of villages outside this district," she said, "and it shall be a long one. These old members have stood in the way long enough. New converts will join themselves to the Church; if they be welcomed, all the better, if not, the old ones must go, we can allow them to hinder no longer."

Miss French's method was fully justified, for when they saw new adherents keen with the flush of first love and enthusiasm they, with very few exceptions, awakened more fully to their responsibilities.

Time heals many wounds, and when we returned from England our old friend, the military mandarin, came in full official dress to welcome us.

"Good to have you back," he said; "we are accustomed to each other, and you know how to manage this place!"

A PORTRAIT GALLERY

"We must be as courteous to a man as we are to a picture, which we are willing to give the advantage of a good light." – Emerson.

"He asked them to come with Him, and they came; and Jesus did not begin by raising questions in their minds as to whether they were worthy to come. It was the purpose of Jesus to make them worthy to stay. Now the Church of Christ ought to be as hospitable as Christ was. I do not see for what other purpose she exists. And the Church ought to be as confident and believing as Christ was, that many a one whom it may be was unworthy to enter has at length become worthy to remain." – Dr. John Hutton.

CHAPTER VII

A PORTRAIT GALLERY

Wherein the Reader is introduced to some of our Fellow Workers

IN meeting the members of an infant and unsophisticated Church, it is delightful to observe the directness of their spiritual characteristics, unfettered by the artificiality which grows up with theological phraseology and the adoption of sectarian conventionalities.

So strongly individualistic a band of men met us at Hwochow, that Christian himself on his Heavenward journey encountered, I think, no more varied a company, nor more striking, in the various ways in which Christ had met them and called them to discipleship, and turned their strongly-marked characteristics into the way of His service.

Evangelist, Fu by name, keen and even fierce in his determination to compel men to hear the truth concerning the City of Destruction and the burden of sin which rests upon them, would go from place to place with a bundle of books, preaching

and warning sinners "to flee from the wrath to come." He asked no remuneration from the Church *or* foreigner for the time he gave, but realising that necessity was laid upon him, he pointed men to the Saviour. His best work was done alone for he was easily offended, but, true and straight, he ruled his house in the fear of the Lord.

His conversion was characteristic of the man. Having business to transact in the small city of Great Peace, he found that large crowds had gathered to listen to a man proclaiming strange doctrines. Every one knew why Pastor Hsi, for it was he, had come that day to the city. A family had professed their willingness to destroy idols, and asked him to be present on the occasion. When the Pastor arrived, however, the man had changed his mind, and fear of consequences had proved too much for him. Nothing could hinder the Pastor from preaching the Good News, and he made much of this opportunity. When he had finished speaking, Mr. Fu went to him and asked him what was this new doctrine, and Mr. Hsi told him the story of the Garden of Eden, and the Fall of man.

"In Adam all have sinned, and in Christ all can be forgiven." It was a strange story, and yet as Fu listened he felt it was true, and as he took the long, lonely walk over the mountains to his home, he meditated much upon it. He had not as yet seen the wicket-gate, but he had seen the direction in which it lay, and a subconscious desire was in his heart to know more.

Home affairs claimed his attention, and he had no time to

give to the further investigation of new religions; and yet the seed which had been sown was gradually germinating, so that when after a few months he found himself again near Great Peace, in a small place where was an opium refuge, Mr. Fu went in to see the man who was in charge. Although he had never smoked opium himself, Mr. Fu was on this occasion in possession of some of the crude drug, and was on his way to the hills to sell it, and hoped by the transaction to profit considerably. The Refuge-keeper, seeing he was interested, asked him to share his evening meal, and when he found out the errand on which his guest was bent, he told him to sell the opium he had and avoid any further dealings with so deadly a poison. Mr. Fu was deeply touched by the kindness of this man. "I have no claim upon him, and yet he treated me as a brother," was his reflection. From that day Mr. Fu never sold opium again.

He started on his homeward journey, and once more as he walked the lonely roads he was conscious of the constraining presence of One who has so often met with men as they travel, walking through the fields, and inviting them to leave all and follow Him. Thus untrammelled by the words and requirements of men, Mr. Fu met with his God; but still questioning, he reached home to find that his wife was dangerously ill. He went at once to a neighbouring village to fetch a doctor, and found him unwilling to come until he had taken a dose of opium which was then due. Finding that all persuasion was useless, Mr. Fu suddenly decided to go to Hwochow and see if the

foreign missionaries, or the Opium Refuge-keeper there, had any medicine. He walked the twelve miles, and was directed to the missionaries' house. The decision to go to Hwochow was made suddenly; not so the resolution to enter the open door of the house. Perhaps he had been wrong after all! It was serious to so openly come in contact with foreigners! It might be that the stories he had heard of their magical powers were correct! And yet his heart had borne him witness, in that lonely walk, that what he heard in Great Peace was true.

After walking up and down for some time, unconscious that Goodwill was watching him from within, he heard some one call and ask him to come in. The call came at the right moment and he entered, knowing as he did so that a definite step was being taken and life would never be for him the same again.

"My wife is ill, and I have come to ask for medicine," he said. After some talk he was taken to see Miss Jacobsen, who told him that God could, and would, heal sickness in answer to prayer. She and the evangelist prayed with him, gave him medicine, some books, and made him promise to come again. He left them, saying that he would do so. Again the long, lonely walk had to be faced, and Beelzebub gave orders that arrows should be shot at him, and all manner of doubts took possession of his soul. "I must go again, for I have given my word," he reflected. "What folly!" and then again the words which he could not doubt reasserted themselves, and he considered, yielded, and believed.

As he entered his courtyard, he saw his wife grinding corn!

"I am well," she said. "And I," he said, "have believed in Jesus." To his surprise, not one word of anger escaped her lips. "I am glad," was her only comment.

There was no time to be lost; if he delayed, others might hinder him, and before his evening meal he tore down the idols, and together husband and wife prayed to God.

Fu was the youngest of four brothers, and the three other families were not of the same mind; he was unceasing in his efforts to bring them to the Saviour, but at the Chinese New Year festival they, as custom required, burnt incense to the idols.

Serious illness seized upon various members of all three families, and their lives were in danger. Fu, seeing his opportunity, offered to go to the city and ask the evangelist to come and pray for them, and to this they consented. When Mr. Fu returned, he was accompanied by Mr. Cheng, and in response to his exhortations their idols were destroyed and the three brothers professed their willingness to become disciples. That place has been signally blessed of God. All have given liberally of their substance to the work of the Lord, and they have now their own church, a cave cut from the *loess* cliffs by their own hands, where Sunday by Sunday men and women gather from the neighbouring villages to hear the word of God, and many have been added to the Church as a result.

Mr. Ging, little of stature, so short-sighted as to be almost blind, had recently been a patient in the Opium Refuge. A scholar of note, holding a high degree, we first knew him when he was

about forty years of age, and the only Christian in his village. He was more than any Chinaman I have met impregnated with the teachings of Confucius; and filial piety was for him no mere doctrine of words, but a ruling factor in his life.

Shortly before the time of which I write, he had, one day, given some cause of offence to his aged mother, in consequence of which she commanded that, in recognition of his fault, he should kneel on the ground before her until such time as she should see fit to excuse him.

For half a day she kept him in that position, and he knelt quietly, giving to all an example and illustration of the sacred duty of son to parent as taught in the Chinese Classics, and as understood by those who earnestly follow their teachings.

By virtue of his learning and position, no matter of importance would be settled in the village without him, and he enjoyed great respect as a teacher of the young, notwithstanding the fact that he was handicapped in his work as school-master by reason of his defective eyesight, the boys taking full advantage of his disability and failing to appreciate as they should the virtue of the "Princely Man" of whom they read so much in their classical studies, and of whom they daily witnessed so striking an example.

For some of these pupils of his, examination-day dawned, and the results were disastrous. The consequences of much undetected mischief were now made clear in the light of day, and the indignant examining missionary called upon Mr. Ging to aid in devising a punishment adequate to the circumstances.

"Is it by extra imposed work, or by the public disgrace of the rod, that their misdeeds will be made most heinous in their own eyes?" he was asked, the remarks being accompanied by a look which could not fail to assure the trembling band of offenders that the method of Solomon met with unqualified approval. "I think," replied Mr. Ging, "that the case does not call so much for punishment as for exercise of greater patience on our side!!!" This answer was to the unbounded delight of the scholars, and discomfiture of the missionary.

It was in his own village and home that he shone. Before many years had passed, the people who were formerly unwilling to receive us had many of them become Christians. One of their number had lent his room, rent free for ten years, as a meeting-place for worship, and a good work had begun. If you spoke to them of the cause of this change, they would tell you of Mr. Ging and the force of his example, and how even his old mother had, before her death, renounced idolatry and asked for a Christian funeral.

What can I say of Mr. Lan? One is tempted to question, "How shall the superficial enter into the Kingdom of God?"

One of the aristocratic families, no longer enjoying the prosperity of former days, yet endeavouring to impress upon all its grandeur whilst inevitably sinking, gave us Mr. Lan.

Contact with Pastor Hsi had been the turning-point in his life, and from the early days he gave himself assiduously to the study of the Bible. Few have more accurate knowledge of the

Scripture than he, his addresses are well and carefully prepared, and he has been the means under God of leading many men to a knowledge of the Saviour. His kind disposition and good-nature have given him many friends, but love of money and appearances have crippled his usefulness. Any Christian work he now does is independent of the missionaries, and he will sometimes be invited to the official's residence to help some one to leave the opium habit, he and his father before him having been doctors of no small repute. He is constantly in debt, and will often remain away from his home during the Chinese New Year when debts are settled, but when he does return, he enters the house with such perfect manners, and is attired in such gorgeous silk, that few would venture to mention anything so unpleasant as the settlement of a debt.

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