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in
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THE
UPHEAVAL
IN
FAR CATHAY
(A NOVEL).

BY

NG HING SHANG.

WRITTEN IN THE CORONATION YEAR
OF
KING EDWARD VII.

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THE UPHEAVAL IN FAR CATHAY.

CHAPTER I.

THE BANQUET.



IT was a gloomy day for China in the year 1898. The dawn was overcast. It was that eventful day on which it was known throughout the civilized world that the Reform Edicts of the Progressive Emperor Kwang-Hsu had come to naught. Reuter through its unrivalled service had informed the teeming millions of the Earth from China to Peru that the long-looked-for reformation was merely an empty dream, and that China was to return to her old conservatism. Bows and arrows were still to hold their place in spite of the great precision of modern guns. Any why not? Was not China conquered by bows and arrows?

Would it not be the greatest disrespect and want of gratitude not to recognize the services of such allies, for had not bows and arrows brought to subjugation this large and ancient empire abounding with a population of about one fourth, if not one third, of the whole human race? Why should foreign learning of the present day, with no antiquity to boast of, supplant the learning of the great sages of China who have stood their ground for centuries? Have not Homer's works stood the test of ages? Milton with years of assiduity could not surpass the great Grecian. How could Confucius, the light of China, be despised? What are modern mechanics? What are machines? If you read "The Three Kingdoms", did not Chze Keh Liang invent wooden horses that could walk up a hill? Modern machinery has not been able to do that as yet. Similar to these and many others were the feelings which prevailed in the minds of the conservative party of China. The Empress Dowager found the conservative lever exert too great a pressure and had given way to ignorance. A few strokes of the vermilion pen from the

Emperor could not change thousands of temples in the Celestial Empire into schools of Western learning.

But what about the progressive party? Of what use were the Four Books of Classics? Did not they require a feat of memory to master them and years of assiduity to put them into practical use? And when that end was attained, what knowledge did they impart to their devotees? They were left in ignorance of the geography, if not of their own country, of the outside world. The simple rules of arithmetical proportion were puzzling to them, though of the simplest nature to a foreign youth of twelve or thirteen. Why could not we build steam ships of our own? Why should not we have railways instead of having to travel in mule carts? Why should not we have a voice in our governmental affairs instead of leaving the management in the hands of officials between whom and the people there was a wide gulf? Why should not we develop the resources of our country rather than buy the products of aliens? Why should not we have agencies of our own outside of China to sell our tea and silk

rather than have the foreigner at our door to bargain with us? Such, or similar to these, were the sentiments of the progressive party.

The news that the Emperor had to take his seat behind the political curtain was a death blow to the hopes of all enlightened Chinese, whether their enlightenment was liberal or selfish, whether they desired the whole world to share in the hidden wealth of their country or whether like a miser they wished to confine to their nationals alone riches untouched for centuries through superstition. The news was more than a death blow. The pioneers of reformation were unmercifully persecuted. Kiang Yu Wei, the moving spirit, had escaped by the skin of his teeth. Others had died as martyrs in the noble cause. There were hundreds on hundreds from one end of the empire to the other expecting the death penalty, not because they had conspired against the government. The Emperor by his edicts had given them unbounded encouragement. They had suggested a series of reforms for the improvement of the country. Their memorials were

now in the hands of Reactionaries. Life is sweet and who would not feel a dreadful sinking of the heart to think that he was about to lose it.

The dissensions in the palace had been going on for some time, but the outside world only knew of the real truth on this day. It was regarded as the funeral day of reformation in all parts of China by those who had espoused the cause of civilization. Many hearts were sore. No reformation meant partition of China. Kiau-chow, Port Arthur, Wei-Hai-Wei and Kwong-Chow-Wan had long before this been given away with less ado than a child parts with a toy. It was a day of mourning for every patriot. There was no glimmer of hope. The Empress Dowager appeared to many a mind like a Nero rejoicing on her burning China.

Overcast as was the day, still there were some—Chinese pure and simple—to whom it did not matter a pin whether China was to be dismembered; whether she was to be ruled by Russia, or by a more generous government like England, so long as their lives and property were secure. But this

was not all. There were millions of people in the interior of China who did not know what would probably be the destiny of their country. To approach them on the subject was the height of absurdity. The Son of Heaven was the anointed one of the Most High. How could his empire be a prey to any mortal? Who would dare to defy the decrees of Heaven? "Ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise," is all that can be said.

A number of people answering to the foregoing descriptions in one way or the other were assembled at a restaurant on this day in one of the principal streets of Shanghai, the Paris of China. Three characters representing the sound Zue Fung Yuen gave the name of the restaurant. A Chinese hong had engaged a large hall. Dinner was to be served to a large number of customers and friends in honour of a new partner who had joined the firm. The outward appearance of the hotel showed that nothing had been omitted to aggrandize the magnificence attending on such an event. Crossing the threshold, the doorway displayed its semi-circular hanging of rosy red. Silk had been used for simple cloth. A

crowd of idle spectators was assembled about the precincts. Mr. Chieh, the host of the evening, never did things by halves. He was clothed in his richest robes to do due justice to the occasion. He availed himself of the opportunity to mark the difference which exists between those of rank and the common people. He wore his crystal button. A Hanlin was the guest of the evening among six dozen friends who had been invited. He arrived rather early. He approached the counter inside the entrance and began to look at the board to find out for himself which of the rooms had been engaged, but one of the attendants on enquiry ushered him into the hall. On seeing the Hanlin enter, Mr. Chieh rose from his seat and with clasped outstretched hands performed the ceremony of a polite bow which was returned simultaneously.

Hours appear long and weary to a host who has to wait for his guests from 7 to 9 and then with interrupted intervals has to undergo the etiquette of receiving them one after the other as they make their appearance. But luckily for this evening, this irksome task was enlivened by theatrical performances;

and the early comers found amusement to beguile the tedium of their waiting. Who could forbear being amused? A number of innocent children, just on the verge of youth, embellished with many artificial decorations, personating characters of ancient history or mythology and with unfeigned enthusiasm imparting reality to incidents, would excite interest in any breast, however unsusceptible. But the performance gave no amusement to our Hanlin. He was in reverie. His mind was working out some problem. He was deep in thought and his features betrayed absence of mind.

"It is a long time since last we met," said a voice.

"Yes, about two weeks," answered the Hanlin.

The speaker was Wong Pau Pau, a man of means. There were strange stories told of his wealth. Some said that if he were to draw all his outstanding money, not only the Native Banks would suffer but even the Foreign Banks would have a trying time: others believed that he had not only heaps

of precious stones, but some priceless treasures in his house in the City, such as a pair of candlesticks on which a pair of candles would burn for ever without being consumed. He had an incense burner in which any quantity of sandal wood might be burnt before the Great Joss without its getting filled with ashes to the brim. These were said to be divine gifts. However, whatever said the gossips, Pau Pau possessed riches far beyond expectation. He had never known an unhappy day. His life had been a regular succession of enjoyment and luxury.

"And I understand," said Wong, adjusting his tortoise-shell spectacles, "that about a hundred people have been invited. It will be a grand banquet. I shall act Li Tai Pak over the wine goblets. I don't mean in metrical composition but in wit. We will leave poesy to you."

"Thank you," replied the Hanlin. "I am out of sorts. Poetry does not seem to agree with me to-day. But I know you will exercise your wit after your fashion if the singers are sent for."

"Oh! they must be; we cannot neglect such an essential," smiled Pau Pau. Amidst the din of cymbals and drums and the chatter of talk all over the hall conversation could not easily be carried on. As soon as the hour of nine drew nigh, "Take Seats" was announced. The seats of honour at every table were allotted to distinguished guests. Three quarters of an hour were wasted in making the guests take their prescribed seats. Every one humbly declined to occupy the principal seats with profuse excuses. One would say, "I am young and So-and-So is my elder in years. He should be the occupant." Another would say, "We are fellow-provincials and that Mr. So-and-So is a guest from a distant province; the honour of sitting there should be reserved for him." However, persuasions here and persuasions there accomplished the task. All were finally properly located.

We will note one table where were seated half a dozen guests. There were the Hanlin, a Koh, a Lau, a Tam and a Chun—a confusion of names to a non-Chinese ear. Mr. Wong graced the table with Chieh, the host. The latter then cheerfully proceeded with the

duty of pouring wine into the drinking cups according to the gradation of seats and received different responses. Some assuming to be humble said "Kotow" while others thought the word "Thanks" was sufficient.

Prominent in all such proceedings, without waiting for the host's initiative Mr. Wong commenced "Ching, Ching," and the first cup was drunk with an unanimous offering of thanks to Chieh for the banquet.

The feast was begun with the usual Eastern ceremony, but soon all were at their ease. Some listlessly performed the dexterous operation of splitting melon-seed-shells with no other assistance than that of the mouth for the mere luxury of the kernel. Some to mitigate the influence of the liquor laid their hands on the dishes of fruit. As a further etiquette Chieh held up the dish of almonds to each that all might share its contents. Cold meats were not much relished and the present party were waiting for the hot dishes. Sharks fins was the first that made its appearance in glory of green, the corriander shrubs having been placed on the top beforehand by some attendant. As soon as the fourth dish was removed, Koh challenged

the company to the merry "finger-game," and then commenced a carousal not unlike those in the days of King Arthur. Petty disputes arose as to the accuracy of the number of fingers held up and others found arbitrators as to the quantity of wine to be imposed as a penalty on the losers. In the meanwhile the singers were turning up one after the other, and at intervals giving the company occupation with discussion on the embroidery, colour, stuff and style of their dresses.

The Hanlin was, however, unusually silent and did not seem to participate in the fun. He was occupied in light conversation with some one sitting behind; the person was fair and young. When his turn came for the frolic of the fingers, our Hanlin purchased his excuse with a bowl of wine full to the brim. There was too much confusion for eaves-droppers to overhear the nature of the conversation. There was the medley of different airs in which the songs were sung by the different singers and a gabble of words from different lips. No one seemed to listen to the songs. They passed unheard and had better have been left unsung. When there was silence among the singing body, a voice rose from the

person behind the Hanlin in such a high strain and with such depth of tone that all eyes and ears were turned to the direction whence it came. Our Hanlin—man of learning—was aroused and was heart and soul absorbed by the song: the attitude and movement of his head seemed to keep time with the rise and fall of the tune. It was the pathetic song of the Refugee Wu Chze Swe and sung with such feeling as he himself must have felt at the time of his flight centuries before. When the lines of the fifth kang commenced, the literati, stroking his moustache, shook his head as if he realized the pains of the sufferer and as if he manifested his appreciation of the singing. At the conclusion Wong shouted praise at the top of his voice and Chieh turning round remarked, "She is a splendid singer."

She is a feminine pronoun, my reader, and is the right word to be used, for they were all songstresses and not singers, if the expression may be permitted.



CHAPTER II.

LI SIH JIN.



Foreigner, and a Reformer of China though he may be a pure Chinese, must have his own way of doing things in spite of the sacred Fung Shui. How many fires have taken place in the street of Shanghai called the fourth road? And why? A high foreign building of red bricks is the cause. Red from top to bottom, it looks crimson from a distance; it resembles a blaze of fire. The god of fire, red in person, chooses to habitate such abodes. The red reflection of the building causes all the fires in this and the neighbouring streets. Such is the belief of the ignorant. But whatever is the vulgar belief, a restaurant—Chinese concern, after the western model—reared in this locality had been a prey to the god of fire several times.

It was a Saturday afternoon. Half a dozen folks were gazing in admiration from the verandah of this house on to the scene below. There were multitudes of human beings going to and fro with no fixed purpose. There was a row of carriages bringing the fair sex of Chinese Shanghai from their pleasure drives. To one just from the plough, they appeared like so many fairies of the Arabian Tales. Our spectators on the verandah hailed from different provinces of China. There was the Cantonese from the south made of rough stuff, who is to be found not only in all parts of China, but in every nook and corner of the world. There was the Hunan man who with the Anhui man almost monopolizes the mandarindom of China. There was the Ningponese with his rough dialect. Did he not know the common proverb that it was better to be sworn at in the worst terms by a native of Soochow than have the most polite conversation with him? There was also the Soochow gentleman fully aware of the soft and melodious dialect of the land of his birth, more adapted for the mouth of those who do not belong to the sterner sex.

"We have waited long enough for this Hanlin," said Tam, "to-morrow I have to be at my office pretty early. My taipan has something on hand. I wish he realized his obligation as a host to be here in time rather than be keeping his guests waiting."

"He has invited a certain party this evening," said Wong, "and fearing that he will not come, he has probably gone to see some friends to find out whether it is possible to have him here to-night."

"Who is he," asked Koh, "that the Hanlin should be so anxious to have him here?"

"Li Kum Tong," replied Lau.

"Li Kum Tong," repeated Koh in surprise; "the revolutionist, full of so-called reforms. If he does not clear from Shanghai for lands unknown, he will find his head off his shoulders. What makes this foolish Hanlin invite him here to-night? If the authorities find out that he is a friend of this man, he will lose his Hanlinship as sure as I'm standing here."

"Nothing but reformation will save China," put in our friend Tam. "Our Hanlin is a very enlightened scholar and probably sympathises with this unfortunate man who has incurred the royal displeasure. Perhaps he wants to give him a piece of advice to save him from utter ruin."

"Don't talk about politics," interrupted Wong. "I want to get through this dinner as soon as possible. I have three other invitations to attend this evening and if he as a host does not turn up in another ten minutes I shall be gone."

"It would be very uncivil to go away like this," advised Chieh. "He is a Hanlin after all. As soon as he gets an official post, he can do us many a good turn. We commercial people have much ado in making our money. He is a Hanlin, mind you; if he makes a call on the Che-shien, he will receive him by opening the front gate of his yamen: even the evil spirits will clear the way for him if he passes a haunted place at midnight. There is a great difference between his Fung-shui and ours."

"How are these literary examinations conducted?" asked Tam. "I know more about foreign things than those of my own country."

"It is a long story" said Chieh. "However, I will tell you in as few words as I can. Every one of the candidates is placed by himself alone in a room as close as a prisoner's cell and all have to write an essay on a given subject. It depends on Fung-shui. A candidate may be very learned, but if no reparation may have been made for his own evil deeds or those inherited from ancestors, he finds himself stupefied. The devil works his failure. Have you not heard of an adventure of three literates who were on their way to the Metropolis for examination?"

"What was it?" enquired Tam curiously.

"Well," continued Chieh, "these three put up at an inn for the night. This inn was kept by an opium-smoker. It appears that there was a dilapidated depository of coffins close by. At about midnight when these three were fast asleep in a room and

the opium-smoker enjoying his pipe of opium in a room by himself, he heard the sounds of footsteps and, being a coward, he had not the courage to come out to see who it was. Meanwhile the footsteps became more and more distinct as if some one was approaching the rooms ; whereupon the opium-smoker began to shiver with fear and the only defensive step he could take was to blow out the opium lamp and see the intruder through one of the chinks in the wooden partition. He saw to his great terror a man with hairs all over the body and a pair of eyes glaring like those of a cat. He knew it was the 'devil-in-flesh.' I need not tell you how much he felt relieved when he saw the devil remove the curtain of one of the three beds outside instead of coming in to his own room. His fear and surprise were enhanced on seeing a tiger rush out of the bed and repulse the devil, who then made his way to the other bed whence a gust of wind drove him away. So lastly the devil removed the curtain of the third bed. This proved fatal. A puff of suffocating yellowish smoke hurled him down, dead. The opium-smoker leaped with joy and with a cry he awoke the sleepers.

There on the floor they found the body, cold and motionless in all its frightful horror. In the great examination, the occupant of the last bed won the degree of Chong Yun, that of the second bed Pong Ngan and that of the third carried off the honour of Tam Fa. It is entirely due to Fung Shui," concluded Chieh.

"But," said Tam, "however great may be the charms of literature, it can't do much good to a country. The study of sciences should be encouraged. Then we should have railways, telephones, etc., and our country flourish with miners, astronomers and mechanics. Of what use will all these Hanlins be in time of war with their literary essays?"

"Why," said Wong jokingly, "the pen is mightier than the sword."

Just then a servant entered with an open chit. From whom could it be? It was from the Hanlin addressed to Wong with the usual formalities of Asiatic etiquette. It was written in haste. It had the characters "to reach with flying wings." "Much against my will I cannot come," wrote the Hanlin. "I have learnt from friends that Li Kum

Tong does not care to make my acquaintance. He is bewitched with Li Sih Jin's learning. He is coming to see her. So please send for Miss Li Sih Jin, not with the usual call-card, but invite her as a guest. Watch the proceedings and inform me of the result. Ask Chieh to act the host for me."

Wong passed the chit over to Chieh.

"Let us sit down at table then," said Chieh, "and oblige the Hanlin by sending for Sih Jin. The invitation must be in his own name or else she will not come."

The card was written and in a short time Sih Jin appeared. She was attired in a simple black dress purposely designed as a contrast to her fair white complexion. She had no profusion of jewellery. The only ornament to attract attention was a red rose in her hair. When she entered the room, her first words were, "Is His Excellency here?" A Hanlin, though not holding an official post, is entitled to be called His Excellency.

Mr. Chieh, though in the awkward position of an acting host, tried to smooth matters over. He said, "The Hanlin will be here very soon. I believe he has received

a telegram from the capital about some governmental affairs and he has asked me to receive you on his behalf."

Sih Jin sat down disappointed. Wong, who was a lady's man, approached her and asked if she would like to join them in their dinner. To this he received a flat refusal. He praised her for the song she sung at Zue Fung Yuen and ended by saying if Wu Chze Swe had heard her he would have forgotten his sorrows.

After a short interval they proceeded with their dinner thinking that the revolutionary Kum Tong, wanted by the authorities, would never put in his appearance in a public restaurant. Here they were mistaken. A servant announced that a guest was coming. Kum Tong appeared. He accosted the company with the words, "Gentlemen, excuse me for intruding on you as a stranger. But I have been delighted to hear that a countrywoman of ours is deeply read in the literature of our country. I feel proud of it. In a degenerate country like ours, the women are debarred practically from receiving an education."⁷⁹ Unless our women are educated, there

will be no true reform, no lasting civilization. I have been busy all day in drawing up a fresh memorial to the throne and though it may cost me a hundred heads, I am determined to telegraph it to the Tsung-Li-Yamen. However, is this the lady that I have been invited to see to-night?"

"Mr. Li," said Chieh, "before you proceed any further, tell us what you would have for your meal. This is the lady here, but before you make her acquaintance, tell us what is to be your menu."

"Thank you," replied Kum Tong; "food is of no concern to me. I would fast for days to meet any one with a heart burning for the regeneration of my country."

"Listen," said Tam, "I fully endorse your views. I have had a foreign education and I think there is no man from one length of this empire to the other more desirous to see our country turn over a new leaf. There are signs here and there of a new China, but when one enters the capital, the very sight of the surroundings blasts his hopes."

Sih Jin was listening to all that was being said with feminine reserve, but she could hold her tongue no longer.

"Sir," said she, "I understand your honourable surname is Li and I am called Li Sih Jin. It appears as if we belong to the same family."

"Yes," answered Kum Tong, "we are both surnamed Li and possibly five hundred years ago we branched from the same stock."

"Right," interposed Wong. "And you both possess rare gifts—another curious coincidence."

"But," said Kum Tong, "it is a rare thing for a lady to excel in poetry. She could write heart-rending memorials and awaken dormant Peking to its duty as the seat of government."

"Excuse me," put in Koh, who had been a silent listener, "the less you say about your reforms, the better for us all in these dangerous times. If you are not afraid of your safety, we have much concern for ours. And if you come here to-day to find out

what taste this lady has for learning, you had better go on with your task, but give us a rest from your rigmarole of reformation."

"If you are afraid to die," said Kum Tong, "I am not, but not to displease you, give me the pen." He wrote five characters. "Here" said he, "is a line for you to make up a couplet. They must agree in tone as you know."

She took up the paper and read "At Autumn's fall, their fragrance pour the fruits of the apple kind." She thought for a few minutes and said, "'Tis easy to make up the other sentence." With delicate hand she wielded the pen and produced the correlative line, "Livelier hues to the almond flower, a shower leaves behind." Thus the two lines stood:—

At Autumn's fall, their fragrance pour, the fruits of the
apple kind;
Livelier hues to the almond flower, a shower leaves
behind.

"Good," cried Kum Tong. "Sih Jin I admire you, not for your beauty, not for your money, but for your learning. I never thought that I would find a woman so well educated."

"You are complimenting me," said she. "I am unworthy of your praise. I would like to cultivate your acquaintance. I would like to receive lessons from you to improve what I do know. Come to my house and impart your learning to me."

"Come to your house," he said in a hoarse voice. "Never, never; Heaven forbid."

"Why, and what for?"

"Why—by what name is your house called? and as to what for—what life are you leading?"

The words struck her dumb. Her pride was hurt. Her heart melted with melancholy, and she could not speak for some time for her throat was choked. Then suddenly assuming an unnatural calmness, she replied, "I am leading an innocent life. It is true I make my living by singing, but I have not sinned and never will."

"Whether you will sin or not," said Kum Tong, "does not concern me in any way. I came here with a noble object in my mind. To see one's countrywoman so learned was the height of my ambition. Which is your honourable prefecture?"

"Woochow."

"Woochow? Why I belong to the same place. I sympathize with you. Are not your eyes sick of the scenes of dissipation around you? Retire to Woochow for a fortnight and feast your eyes on the verdure of mulberry leaves there and try to give up the life you are leading."

"I cannot help it. Of what use are mulberry leaves to me now? I am in a cocoon and I have to hold my breath until I am able to play the part of the flying moth. Come to my house and let us talk in confidence. We cannot explain ourselves before strangers," she concluded.

"Come to your house? never, never," he exclaimed. "You say you do not want to sin, but on the face of things as they are what can you call yourself but——"

"What," said she in anger, "you offer me a public insult?"

"I cannot help it. It is the truth."

"Beware of the consequences."

"Let them be what they may. I do not care."

CHAPTER III.

THE WEDDING



ON all happy occasions our eyes see only dazzling and joyful scenes and the inhabitants of Far Cathay are not wrong in setting down marriages, births and birthdays under the category of "Happy Events." The house of our friend Lau displayed all that is expected on a marriage day—lanterns overhanging the door and flowers of balmy smell in the yard. The four walls of the hall were entirely covered with scrolls—presents from various friends—three fourths of the total number being allowed to remain in the comparative obscurity of other apartments so as to make room for those of the more distinguished persons. Besides being a delightful vision to the luxurious eye, with golden or embroidered characters on fields of red silk, some of them,

being quotations from eminent authors, filled the mind with a link of charming associations—just as when we find isolated a line or two from the work of some English Poet, say for instance Byron :—

Either

I saw two beings in the hues of youth,
Standing upon a hill, a gentle hill.

Or

As the sweet moon on the horizon's verge,
The maid was on the eve of womanhood.

We at once know that these are extracts from that exquisite poem "Dream." They not only recall to our mind the elegant descriptive poetry, the author's conception of early attachment, his unhappy life, but they also bring to our mind the first development of our own love—that great essence without which life becomes insipid. The marriage name of our bridegroom was chosen by the Hanlin; it was full of auspicious significance. This was the fourth name he had adopted. When a school boy, he was called "Tall and Long," which made him the butt of many a joke. It was said he would cause the heavenly vaults to collapse and fall to pieces with his enormous dimension as signified by his name.

By seven o'clock in the evening the house was full of people awaiting the arrival of the bride. Lau, the bridegroom, was fully equipped in official robes and appeared as a subprefect in rank. A Master of Ceremonies was present to expound his lore from the book of Marriage Rites and guide the bridegroom through the mazes of the nuptial ceremony.

It was rather late in the evening when the melodious strains of the flute, the shrill notes of the clarion, the clashing of cymbals and the beating of drums and gongs heralded the long-awaited-for arrival of the bride. Musicians, tablet and banner bearers, carriers of different articles of the dowry formed a long procession. The sedan chair, lit round with tiny hanging lanterns, alighted at the door amidst the deafening noise of fire crackers. The chair was allowed to remain undisturbed for some minutes to give time to the bride to compose her agitated mind. Then she was helped out of the chair by two maids and assisted into the house—yes, assisted into the house, for her face was covered with a heavy veil through which she could not perceive any object in front of her. First of all the happy pair worshipped Heaven and Earth, then came

the second ceremony of being sworn into the matrimonial bond. On both occasions prostration was made after which as sacrament of confirmation two tiny cups filled with wine were handed to the bridegroom and the bride, who after sipping the contents exchanged cups with each other for another sip. The maids gracefully acquitted themselves in the grand task of linking the lord and the lady with two slender pieces of red and green silk by tying them with a knot; apparently a childish ceremony, yet full of latent meaning; it is a sacred tie not to be severed until death. Thus linked the new pair entered the nuptial chamber. The indispensable ceremony of worshipping the ancestors was performed in due order.

"Why has the bride been so late in coming?" enquired Koh; "she was expected at three this afternoon."

"Oh, the Woosieh custom," replied Chun. "She has a poor brother who would not carry her into her chair from her house until he was well paid. Nobody else could carry her into the chair but he. The custom must be complied with."

Lau was quite ignorant that such a thing had to be done.

After the banquet was over, the time for the bride to appear with the tea-tray drew nigh according to the Cantonese custom of her husband. Mr. Chieh as chairman of the evening had been busy in receiving guests and making all necessary arrangements.

"Miss Sih Jin," said the Hanlin, "it is getting late and it would be better for you to go soon on this cold night."

"I am anxious to see the bride," she replied. "I have not seen her face. I won't go until I have seen her."

"Seen her! you women are frivolous. You have forgotten what you said to Kum Tong. He insulted you before so many people. Chieh and Wong gave me a full account of what happened on that day. You meant to have your revenge when you said, 'Beware of the consequences.' Instead of thinking of how to bring him into your net, you still seem to think of dinners, songs and a look at the beautiful face of the bride. He is wanted in Peking and I would have sent him there three weeks ago, had he not been residing in these Foreign Settlements."

"There is no hurry," she said calmly. "He would not come to my present house. I must remove. I must give up seeing people. I must give up attending people with my songs. You must assist me before I can give up my profession."

"Did not I promise all that? Do you not recollect the long conversation we had at Zue Fung Yuen when Chieh was the host? Was I not that day brooding over the matter like a maniac? Was I not absent-minded?"

"You are not in real earnest," she said with the same calmness. "You enjoyed every word of the song I sang. Absent-minded people do not do that."

"Whether you believe me or not," said the Hanlin disappointed, "you know the honours and fortune before you. You will be introduced to the Palace. I have influence to do that. A learned woman like you would be the idol of the Palace. Perhaps the Empress Dowager will confer on you the honour of drafting out the Imperial Edicts for her."

She smiled. Her eyes were full of sensitive light. Her oval face turned for a moment from the speaker and then she said, "I am planning but you should put a man on his track."

Here the bride entered with a tea-tray held by one of the two maids in her company. The maids did the work of asking the friends to have a cup of tea while the bride passed on one by one until she came to Chun.

"Now," said Chun, "I am not going to take this tea at the request of the maid. The bride should speak herself."

The bride was too much excited and coy to utter a word and persisted in silence.

"Well," continued he, "I shan't feel jolly until I hear her sweet voice."

"She feels ashamed," apologized the maid, "and I hope you will excuse her."

"No, no," insisted he. "I must have the honour of the bride's speech."

"Speak," said the maid to the bride, who after much persuasion, uttered with a faltering voice, "Ching cha" (please take tea).

"That's good," laughed Chun and took the cup of tea.

One awkward task was over, but another more awkward was in hand. Our young tea merchant (Koh) when his turn came, scrutinizing the bride, expatiated at length on her beauty, comparing her to a peach flower and concluded—

"I find in her perfection, but my curiosity would not be gratified, unless I measure her golden lily." So saying he took a paper-taper. The bride coloured. "Don't blush so much," said he. "Don't blush yourself into a full bloomed blossom. I will not perform the delicate task of measuring your golden lily myself." Handing the taper to the bridegroom, he continued, "You are the only man who is entitled to touch her precious person." The house resounded with laughter. A crimson glow spread over the bridegroom's face. It was really an awkward task to ask the bride to raise her feet a little to be measured. She stood like a mute creature for almost a quarter of an hour, but the request had to be complied with. She at last lifted her tiny foot and the bridegroom

tenderly bent forward. When done he broke the taper to the length of the foot and handed the measure to Chun.

"Quite small," went on Koh. "You are a happy man to have found the personification of beauty itself for a wife."

Tam had by this time disguised himself with a pair of false moustaches, and our friends, hardly finished with one joke, expected another from that quarter.

"Call me Papa," said he, "before I take the tea. I am an old man," stroking the false moustache, "and I think I quite deserve that title."

"Well," said Chieh, laughing, "if she calls you Papa, you will then stand in the relationship of a father-in-law to your friend the bridegroom."

"Yes, I covet that honour," replied Tam.

The bride, who had hitherto maintained a bashful reserve, smiled at this, and Tam, exulting in his victory, laughed saying: "That's the way to do it. She feels herself more at ease and more at home, as it were."

As usual in these circumstances, the word "Papa" came after much delay and hesitation, with soft accents only audible to those close to her.

Now the whole company have had their tea with the exception of Wong and the Hanlin. The bridegroom of the day anticipated a much greater ordeal for the bride with Wong who was well known for his unbounded skill in the invention of jokes and often displeased his friends by his extremes. It was therefore a surprise to our bridegroom when he saw Wong quietly accept the tea, and putting the folded red paper containing money on the tray, dispatch her to the last guest.

The Hanlin was patiently waiting in literary ecstasy struck with the recollection of some poetical passage appropriate to the occasion. As the bride drew near, he delivered his speech.

"There is nothing," said he, "greater in the world than learning and without education a man is little better or in fact nothing better than an animal of the lower order. It

is therefore when one takes his second degree that he is called "Che Ning," that is, he has come up to the standard of a real man."

He then made the bride recite a poetical passage quoted from the very best authors.

As soon as our literary champion had finished, the bride was too glad to retire to her room. The maids, as usual on such occasions, made a general survey of articles in the bed chamber, which are often pilfered to give occasion for a joke. The bride's silk handkerchief was missing. Who could have pilfered it? A glance at the different faces soon revealed.

"If I produce the handkerchief," said Wong, "what am I to get for my trouble?"

"What would you have?" asked the bridegroom.

"A present of ten thousand cakes."

"But you won't be able to eat all that yourself, say five hundred."

After much circumlocution, full of jest, the bargain was struck at a thousand.

CHAPTER IV.

SPREADING THE NET.

 HIS is the alleyway into which she has removed."

"Yes, Wong, I know that, but which house?" said Tam.

"Wait, look, there is a chair coming—a lady inside holding burning incense-sticks in her hands—a sure sign of removal—some one coming to a new house."

The chair came up and the occupant inside bowed to the two speakers and alighted.

"Why, this is Sih Jin, coming so late in the afternoon?"

"Yes, Mr. Wong," she said, "I looked up the calendar and this is the most auspicious time for removal. Come inside the

house; everything is topsy-turvy to-day. What makes you come? You appear to be looking for me."

"Our honoured friend the Hanlin," answered Wong, "has asked us to see if we can be of any service to you. We had much difficulty in finding the place. Look at your furniture. How carelessly these rose-wood chairs have been handled."

"Those coolies are a bad lot," she remarked. "If it were their own property they would take more care. By the way, where is the amah? She had better distribute some cakes to the neighbours, as becomes a new neighbour."

"You are a nice neighbour to have," said Wong jokingly. "I would make a call on you every day, if you were living in my neighbourhood. Let us sit down, however."

Sih Jin did not require their services and after some light conversation they left. As soon as she found herself at leisure in the evening, her thoughts turned towards writing a letter to Kum Tong. How was she to address him? She could not write to him

as one would write to a lover—that would shock his modesty, but she could write to him as a sister would write to a brother. Having decided upon this, she began:—

“Since our last meeting, my thoughts have been constantly occupied with you. I never met before such a paragon of morality and patriotism. If Confucius had lived, you would have been his favourite disciple. You are the Mencius of your age. Your conversation impressed me very deeply, so much so that I have removed from the house against which you were prejudiced. Come to my present address without fail. Perhaps you are busy with your memorials to the Throne. Remember you are a refugee in these Foreign Settlements. You must feel your present position. I will give you a song or two of the great Refugee Wu Chze Swe to dispel your sorrow. If you like, I will sing you a song of his escape or a song of his triumphal entry. Perhaps you do not know that I can sing. As a fact, I may inform you I amazed people at Zue Fong Yuen with my singing not long ago. I may be able to give you some advice also. You advised me to go to

Woochow to refresh my eyes on the verdure of mulberry leaves. I told you a fib when I said I was a native of Woochow. I belong to Soochow. However, I took your advice to a certain extent and have removed from that house. You had better take some advice from me now. I am not in a cocoon at present and can exert myself a little like the flying moth."

When she had finished the letter she gave a look at the clock. It was ten. It was just the time to go to one of the theatres to see the best plays which are always prescribed for the late hours of the evening. Rising from her seat like a lily, she looked in the mirror: there was no flaw either in her face or her hair for public gaze. Then she looked at her dress. The evening was rather chilly. She changed her dress, put on fox-furs of snowy white, took up her opera glasses, and called out to the chair-bearers from the window into the little yard below. She descended the stair and said,

"I want to hear Wong Kway Fun to-night. I suppose he is on the stage already."

"No, Madam," the chair-bearers replied, "he won't appear to-night until eleven."

She got into the chair and soon after found herself seated in one of the boxes of her chosen theatre. She took out the opera glasses, gave a look down on to the stalls below and at the different boxes. She observed a person known to her. It was Wong. He had just thrown a bundle of dollars on to the stage to mark his appreciation of some singing—she did not know whose. On seeing Sih Jin, he jumped up from his seat and made his way towards her.

"I saw you this afternoon and I see you again."

"I felt very lonely," she said, "and thought of coming here to hear Wong Kway Fun."

"He has just finished. I made him happy with some money."

"I saw the dollars thrown on to the stage, but did not know they came from you. Did he play the part of Wu Chze Swe well?"

"Perfectly."

"Very sorry I am late. I wanted to pick up his voice to-night. I am going to give Wu Chze Swe to Kum Tong to-morrow."

"Capital idea. Kum Tong is a refugee, surely he would appreciate the song. He is an incarnation of Wu Chze Swe himself. However, the next play is not a bad one."

She took up the programme and said smiling, "This is Sze Chow Zung."

"Yes, the city of Sze Chow. Here comes the water nymph. The cruel creature, she wants to flood the poor city and had it not been for the Goddess of Mercy, this elf would have consummated her evil design."

"The Goddess of Mercy," she said, "took compassion on the people, but it was a difficult task. The success was entirely due to the Simious Deity. The Simious Deity cornered the water nymph."

There was on the stage the water nymph with two buckets of water to flood the Sze Chow City. The people had invoked the aid of the Goddess of Mercy, who true to her believers had at once espoused their cause. Her faithful adherents—one after the other—were convoked from their various quarters. The battle was hard and victory seemed hopeless at one time, but the Simious Deity

soon cornered the elf. The Goddess of Mercy transformed herself and appeared as an old lady with some eatables.

"Mother," says the unwary nymph, "I am hungry. Give me something to eat."

"Here is a bowl of vermicelli, eat it."

Hunger was at its height. She devoured the contents. But alas! she felt sick. She must vomit. Unhappy nymph, she found her mistake. What did she throw out of her stomach? A long chain—a chain to imprison herself with. The city of Sze Chow was thus saved.

There were two more plays on the programme, but Sih Jin did not want to see them. The house was crammed, and she wished to leave in good time to avoid the subsequent rush for egress. Wong volunteered to escort her.

"No," she said. "I will go alone."

"No," he said. "I will see you home."

When Sih Jin arrived home, she was fatigued with the day's turmoil. She slept as soundly as a top. Morning dawned. She rose. Her toilette took her two hours. She

washed her face a quarter dozen time—first with pure lukewarm water, then again with soap, then with powder thickly set, and again with light powder after washing off the first coating. The rouge was not forgotten to give the cheeks a rosy hue. She looked into the mirror, her hair was glossy: she could not deck herself any better. Ransacking her wardrobe, she put on her finest dress. It was noon. Kum Tong came in. She sprang up with surprise. She had expected him but did not believe her letter would really bring him.

"Sit down on the opium couch," she said. "You are a guest and deserve to take the principal seat."

"Sit down on the opium couch? No, it is this cursed opium that is ruining China. In my memorial to the Throne I have embodied a clause that opium-smoking should be made punishable by death. That will be the only way to stop it. A man who smokes opium has no energy, no love of country, no love of relationship. He is a dead man among the living and a living man among the dead. Can you furnish me with any ideas on the opium question?"

"Oh! with many beautiful ones. But I asked you to come and hear me sing. Which part do you like? The flight of Wu Chze Swe or his subsequent triumphal entry."

"His flight by all means. I am in that predicament now. No; not his triumphal entry. He blundered there. A sovereign can do no wrong."

"A sovereign can do no wrong!—a sovereign who wanted his head. You are a curious Reformer."

"No, not a curious Reformer. Look at our Emperor Kwang-Hsu. He is in heart and soul possessed with the good of his country, but his subordinates upset his plans. Ping Wang the King was wrong, but he was dead when Wu Chze Swe returned. The faults of the dead should be forgiven. Wu Chze Swe had his dead body taken out of the grave and bambooded the corpse. That's why Wu Chze Swe has not been deified. There is no temple in China dedicated to his memory."

"I see you want a temple dedicated to you. You want to be deified."

"You did not send for me to have an argument with you. I was brought up in Australia and have acquired too wide a view to believe in superstition. There is no such thing for a human being as becoming a deity."

"Brought up in Australia! What took you there?"

"Why, I followed an uncle. My father died. I had no one else but a sister."

"A sister!"

"Yes, a sister. She was accomplished. She could read and write a little at the time I knew her. She had nice features—as nice as yours."

"As nice as mine!" Sih Jin sprang from her seat and looked into the big looking-glass in front of her as if to avoid the conversation. Taking a hairpin, she played with it and then as if a thought came to her, she said,

"Accompanied by what musical instrument would you like to hear the song? I can play the guitar, the drum and the violin. I will try the violin. Now let me see if the

violin is in good order. You say you were brought up in Australia. Australia is a large place. What part of Australia?"

"Port Darwin. I had a hard time there. Whenever the world made me sick, I thought of the tenderness of my sister. She was a good soul."

"The violin is not in proper order, the strings are slack. Let me make them tight. Listen, the sound is rough. You say you had a sister. Was she your real sister? She must have been or else her remembrance could not be so deep in your mind."

"No, not a real sister—a foster sister. She was as amiable and loving as you are. The more I hear you talk, the more I think of my sister."

"A foster sister and not a real one. She must have been very good to you."

"Certainly, she used to divide her sweets with me. We used to go to school together."

"Go to school together! Wait; the violin is giving a nasty sound, not good enough even to play the prelude: it would make a mockery of my singing."

"Give me a song, if you feel inclined. I cannot afford to wait. I have letters to answer from the Reform Societies in Canada, in San Francisco, in Australia and Singapore."

"I wish you had come a little later, I don't feel well now. Come to-morrow. Give me a look in. I told you before I wanted to cultivate your acquaintance. I wish to become your friend. I want to improve in essay-writing."

"Write some essays on reform and send them to me. I will publish them in the local papers. I will take the responsibility. Why are you putting away the violin? Why can't you sing?"

"I don't feel well. Somehow or other I feel as if I had forgotten music. Literature is intruding itself on me. I shall have an outline of the essay written by to-morrow. Give me a call. You will be gratified."

He left just as abruptly as he came, although Sih Jin rose from her seat. He was gone. Sih Jin fell back on her seat, took up a pen and wrote to the Hanlin.

"These two days since removing into my new abode have been full of eagerness to me—eagerness to execute the plan laid out by you. The first day I was so full of thought that I could not stay at home in the evening. I went to Tien Sein theatre to pick up Wong Kway Fun's tune. But to my disappointment I was late. I saw Sze Chow Zung played. I thought my letter would not bring Kum Tong. But he came. Your plan to induce him to go to Soochow will be gradually worked out. I have enamoured him. I am proud I have had a good education. I promised to draft an essay on reform for him to-night. He wants it. He will come to-morrow. I will make him come many a to-morrow. He is a learned fool. He has been in Australia. He is in correspondence with Reform Societies in Canada, San Francisco, Australia and Straits Settlements. This will give some clue to your private detective to work up the case if you get a good man on his track. Don't come near my house until I have snared the bird. Good-bye for the present. Remember me to Mrs. Lau."

Shortly after the evening meal a reply from the Hanlin reached her. She drew near to a light and read;—

“When your letter arrived, I was looking at your photo—your lovely photo. Darling, I have got so many of your pictures that I had better tell you which one it was. It was the one you had taken standing by the side of a looking-glass. There were two representations of you. Your reflection on the mirror produced the other one. I did not know which one to admire. One was just as much of your real self as the other one. It appeared to me rather strange that in one taking your likeness in the camera should be double. There cannot be two persons in one individual as there cannot be two hearts in one person. If a person had two hearts, that person would be false to his dearest one. A chain of thought crossed my mind and somehow or other a suspicion lurked in my mind and made me think whether or not you would act like the photo before me. An individual with two persons may act with two different hearts—I mean play double. When your letter arrived, I awoke as it were from a dream—yes, a dream of thoughts. I am pleased with

the tone of your letter. The devil has been trying to sow seeds of evil where sincerity lay. You say he has been in Australia. My man has found something more—the exact locality. Kum Tong has been in Port Darwin. Your information as to his being in communication with secret societies outside of China will be usefully employed. Go on with your enquiries. Your trouble will be handsomely rewarded. This maniac with his ideas of reform is like a spark that will set the whole prairie of China on fire. He will do more mischief than the water nymph in the play you saw intended to do. You should therefore exert yourself like the Simious Deity. We want very substantial evidence for his rendition from these Settlements. But if you could persuade him to go to Soochow, it will save a mountain of difficulties. I shall always be ready to see you in the Inner Garden of the City."

Sih Jin felt happy after reading the letter. She slept for the night with an easy heart, full of eagerness. She wanted to see the next morning's sun as soon as it rose so that she might be able to execute her design. Next day the "effulgent luminary of the day"

appeared as usual and the hours of the day passed—yes, passed—with wearisome longing to Miss Sih Jin. There was no sign of Kum Tong. It was late in the day; the clock had struck three, the Great Reformer or the Great Evil-doer, according to the light in which he was held by his countrymen, had not appeared. Had she insulted him? No! nothing of the kind. Where could he be? Her anxieties were soon relieved. A thick envelope full of papers was handed to her. What could it be? A long document. She opened and read with eyes full of curiosity. The first words were:—

“I am sorry, very sorry indeed, that I cannot come to-day. I like music. I like your lovely voice. But to work for my country is my very first consideration. Everything else must be sacrificed, even my life. I do not set any value on it. People may call me fool. My mind is my own—fully my own. I have so many letters to answer, so many things to discuss, so many things to refute that I cannot stir from my office. Perhaps you would not believe me. I am therefore sending you a long paper written by a great scholar in Burmah—by a Chinese gentlemen.

I have always advocated that if China wishes to become rich, her resources must be developed by borrowing foreign capital. But here I have in this long paper arguments against my proposal which I cannot very well refute. It is full of sensible reasonings. Read it and tell me if you can help me with any solid material. If I were to give you the article in full, I would be engrossing too much of your valuable time so I have got a short translation made from English for your precious eyes to go over."

She sat down with a sigh of relief and commenced with the long paper before her. Her eyes went as fast as they could. It read as under:—

"China, called the Far Cathay, is the most ancient empire on the face of the earth. Just direct your thoughts for a moment on this great country. It has an estimated area of 1,537,590 square miles and is covered with teeming millions. Her population has been estimated from 350 to 400 millions. Providence has favoured the country with a very good climate so as to conduce to the production of all the bounties of nature. The soil,

which has not as yet been profaned by the meddlesome hand of greedy and inquisitive man, is full of riches—riches that could make China the wealthiest country in the world. We have been convinced from time to time of the existence of numerous mines containing valuables of the highest order—gold, silver, lead, copper, zinc, and quick-silver. Coals have been found in abundance. China porcelain is famed throughout the world for being of the finest quality. She is in fact quite an El Dorado. Long civilization has accustomed the people to recognize the principles of humanity, law and order. Is it not a great pity that a country so large, so populous, so rich in minerals, should even to-day, when we are beginning to see the dawn of the twentieth century—should still be in want of all those modern improvements and inventions that have conferred unspeakable blessings on the human race? Would it not make any well-wisher of China heave a sigh to find that we have not got up to the present day those facilities of travelling which have made human beings little less than winged angels in the rapidity of travel. All of you, who have knowledge of foreign affairs, know with what

speed you find yourself transported from one place to another—journeys which would have taken years and months to our ancestors to perform. And it still takes months to travel in the interior of China. With regard to our present facilities of travelling, Doctor Martin in his recent book, 'A Cycle of Cathay,' has very happily referred to the skill mentioned in Yeu Shioh, which could make the earth shrink into small dimensions. Pondering over all that I have said in reference to China and buoyed up with feelings of patriotism, does it not make you feel like one who, while counting his store,

“‘Bends at his treasure, counts, recounts it o'er;
Hoards after hoards his rising raptures fill;
Yet still he sighs, for hoards are wanting still’?”

“The hoards that are wanting still for China I need not enumerate. We want all the modern improvements and inventions, and that can only be done by developing the resources of China; and whether that should be done by borrowing foreign capital I ask you to consider very carefully. Personally speaking I would not only like to see the resources of China developed by borrowing foreign

capital, but I thirst to see a closer and more congenial relation between Chinese and foreigners than is existing at the present day. As a well-wisher of China, I wish to see her old in all that is good in her at present, young in the promise of her great future. I wish to see her rival Belgium in population, France in Napoleonic vigour, England in wealth, learning and administration of justice. I wish to see her attain to a form of government as good as Sir Thomas More's Utopia—a fabulous island of his own creation represented as enjoying perfection in laws, politics etc.

“These are my private and personal views. Circumstances connected with our birth, education and daily surroundings foster regular and irregular notions in our minds. Some are sound in nature and others merely a prejudice. Such prejudice must be thrown aside. It is merely an incrustation upon the man. I shall for the present throw aside such incrustation and keep my private and personal opinions in the background.

“Pope said,

“‘A little learning is a dangerous thing,
Drink deep or taste not the Perian Spring.’

“With your permission I will paraphrase the lines—

“Shallow reasoning is a dangerous thing,
Think deep or taste not the logical spring.”

“The borrowing of foreign capital has to be considered in its different correlatives and to solve those different correlatives with their inherent meaning, I will have to occupy some of your time. The time for China to borrow foreign capital has not as yet come. It is premature to do so. You can't expect an infant to be able to talk who is not even able to lisp. You can't expect goslings from eggs that have not even been hatched. You cannot expect a student to go through complex fractions who does not know the simple rule of three. It is like sending a soldier to a battle who does not know the muzzle of his rifle from the trigger. It is like teaching the rules of syntax to a boy who is just commencing his A, B, C. China to-day is like a patient dangerously ill who has some hopes of recovery and you as doctors must not give her too strong a dose of medicine. You must not ask her to take out-door exercise when she is hardly able to move from her bed. If you do, a relapse will come from

which she will never be able to recover. You are anxious to cure China, but you have to study her maladies. Her maladies are so many that a book could be written upon them. A very good title to that book would be 'The Maladies of China.' I will endeavour to explain to you some of her diseases which require primary attention before the great cure can be effected.

"China is densely populated. She is said to have a population of 400 millions. I want to know to what stage of enlightenment they have reached. I want to know what idea they possess of the outer world. I want to know how much one province knows about the other. I want to know how much one village differs from the other. I want to know whether they have a recognized dialect throughout the empire or whether they are not still at the present day like the people in the Tower of Babel. Is it not a very common thing for you to see a northern Magistrate sitting on the Bench talking mandarin in his northern accent and twang hearing the statements of his Soochow prisoners and witnesses? Is it not a common thing to see the Magistrate trying to riddle

out the meaning of his witnesses and the witnesses trying to grasp by guess the meaning of his worship's solemn eloquence? I would like to see a Shanghai dialect speaker acting as Interpreter to a Mining Engineer in the interior of Fuhkien trying to pacify a mob enraged at the idea that the opening of the mines will interfere with Fung Shui. I would like to see this linguist telling them that he has come to develop the resources of China with the aid of foreigners. With blind ignorance existing among the people how are we to send our experts into the interior of China to develop the resources of the country by borrowing foreign capital? How many Chinese have studied the foreign sciences necessary to develop the resources of the country? If we want to do anything of the kind, we must send foreigners to do them. I should not like to see an ignorant mass of people in the interior following a foreigner as if he were a ghost. I should not like to see him exposed to the risk of his life. Not to speak about the mass of the people, how many of the literati possess the same essential knowledge of the world as an English boy who has only been about 4 or 5 years in

school? How many of them do know the simple rules of arithmetic? How many of them have been through the rudiments of geography? These matters are only of secondary consideration, but they form the primary factors of all that I am going to tell you later on.

“Do you believe for a moment that China will be able to borrow foreign capital without giving some substantial security? Decidedly not. She will have to give something and foreigners are not going to have anything shaky, and they are quite right too.

“Not to say anything about the gigantic work of developing the resources of China, even in small things we want reliable and conscientious men to take the management of affairs. Even to run a small shop we want a man who would run the thing as if it were his own personal property, who would look upon its loss as his own loss, who would look at its gains as his own gains. Do you expect to get such men with the present rules of Chinese service? Can you expect a man to be honest who gets a nominal salary which is not enough to cover his household expenses?

Do you expect a man to be conscientious in the execution of his duty who does not know when he will be removed from the management of affairs entrusted to him as a farce? Can you expect a man to sacrifice the best years of his life in public service to be thrown away in old age without a pension? I will ask you to turn your attention to many other maladies of the country which require to be attended to by the doctors first so as to pave the way for that great cure of developing the resources of the country by borrowing foreign capital. You can't make a railway train run without first having made the railroad. Have we got an efficient police throughout the country to protect life and property and especially to protect this great scheme of developing the resources of the country by borrowing foreign capital? All I am saying are the ingredients necessary to put China in a proper position to be able to borrow foreign capital so as to develop the resources of the country without running a great risk—an unavoidable risk—which might bring her into a worse position than she is at present. Where are your army and navy, not to speak about thwarting

foreign aggression, but even to put down internal disorder, which is almost a daily occurrence? Your army and navy disappeared at the appearance of the Japanese army and navy. And why was it? Because as I have already stated people won't be honest and conscientious if you don't pay them well. We expected people to sacrifice their lives in the service of their country without holding out to them proper remuneration, and this was the sole cause of bringing on our entire destruction. And in the same way we are talking about borrowing foreign capital to develop the resources of the country without considering for a moment whether or not we are in a position to do so, without considering the ingredients necessary for such an undertaking.

"I would not contract a debt without first knowing my ability to pay it off, without first calculating my income and my expenditure. Can you tell me what are the revenues of China? Can you tell me what is the annual expenditure of the country? We have not got a blue book. We really do not know how much comes into the Exchequer and how much of it is paid out.

With such a state of things existing in the country, you cannot deny that everything is in a topsy-turvy state, in a state of confusion. I am no prophet and I do not expect you to be one. But I cannot help picturing to myself without any inspiration the result that would likely ensue. China borrows millions of taels from foreign capitalists to develop the resources of her country. She puts honest and trustworthy men to look after the management. She does not pay them adequately to cover their expenses. One good man after another is elbowed out to make room for a favourite. Finding the precariousness of the situation, honest men turn dishonest, trustworthy men, finding faithfulness by no means a good policy, come to the conclusion to make hay while the sun shines. Sums after sums of money are invested, but no dividend is forthcoming, because say the managers no profit is realized. Want of enlightened education makes the ignorant mass of people not only to spread but believe in idle rumours—rumours of the most preposterous kind—that a thousand heads of innocent people are required to erect a heaven-reaching chimney of an iron-melting factory so as to

appease the wrath of the infuriated joss. The ignorant mass of people demolish, burn and plunder what took us years to complete and cost us millions of taels. They go on with their work of destruction and we have not got an efficient police to preserve law and order. A small neighbouring state, smaller than Japan, chooses to pick a quarrel with us and we are just as confident of our might and power as we were before the Japanese war. We think we are able to drive our enemy into the sea. Our army of rags and tags disappears at the sound of the first cannon. We have to pay another big indemnity, but we have already borrowed a large foreign capital to develop the resources of our country. We do not know where to get the money. We never knew our income and expenditure. We never had a blue book. We are on the verge of bankruptcy. We do not know which part of China to dismember."



CHAPTER V.

SIH JIN'S WILES.



SIH Jin was not in her usual happy mood. Kum Tong had promised to come, but fully ten days had elapsed since she saw him last. The long paper on "Developing the Resources of China" personally had no interest for her. She had read it only once and had laid it aside in one of her wardrobes. On this occasion she had been playing dominos all day with friends of her own sex to kill time and was tired of sitting on the hard ebony chair. As soon as the game was over, she betook herself to the other room, which was furnished after the foreign style, and sat down on a cosy sofa alone by herself.

The weather was fine. The day had not been so cold as on the previous days. She had not sung for many days and was on

the point of taking up one of her musical instruments when her amah appeared with a red card.

"Oh," she ejaculated with glee, "ask him to come in." Kum Tong stepped in. He was dressed much more simply this time. He had no silk on, but rough hand-made cloth which would not be dignified even for a waiter to wear.

"I intended coming days ago," he said, after taking his seat, "but I have been drowned in work. I have been sketching a new educational scheme—a set of books which will give a general knowledge of things to students. By the way, can you give me any points to refute the arguments in that paper? The English text has been very well translated into Chinese and I hope you understood the general drift."

"Oh, yes," she replied, "such a simple matter does not want much reasoning. I can demolish the whole of this work of art in a very few words. The main points at issue are that it would be dangerous for China on account of the ignorance existing among her people either to borrow money from

foreigners or to get their aid until her people receive modern enlightenment, which means education. But how is this education to be obtained? We have got very few men, if any, capable of teaching sciences. We are compelled to fall back on foreign aid for education, I mean employ foreigners as teachers and professors and send them into the interior of China. So you see the whole fabric of reasoning in that lengthy document falls to the ground."

"Good, very good," replied Kum Tong. "I was reasoning in the other way. The people in the interior are not such barbarians as represented; country people are simple and innocent. A strong hand on the part of the officials would quash any disorder. You are an exceptionally clever woman. Have you written anything to further the cause of the Reformers?"

"I cannot do that by myself alone," she answered thoughtfully. "If we were both to put our heads together, we could produce something original in a week's time. What do you say if we were both to go down to Soochow and put up in Liu Yuen

gardens for a week, free from the cares and turmoils of life? Why! there our minds might get inspired by the beauties of nature and we might manage to write something very convincing to the literati all over China as to your ideas of Reform."

"I am prepared to go anywhere so long as the mission on which I am bent can be consummated. I would even cross a Rubicon. Say we arrange to leave in a fortnight from to-day and make the necessary arrangements. I am afraid you have too much love for Shanghai, too much love for gay clothes and fashionable company. You would consider a day away from Shanghai as a year's separation from your dearest friends."

"You consider me as one entirely given up to pleasure, forgetful of the past and oblivious of the future. You make a mistake. I removed from the other house partly for your sake. I confessed to you that I made my living by singing and by nothing else. I am not in a cocoon now. I am free and can do what I like. Apropos of the singing, I have not given you the song of the noble Refugee Wu Chze Swe. He had a noble

object, but yours is a much nobler one by far. The violin did not suit me the other day. I will try the drum."

So saying she laid a small drum on a triangular bamboo-stand and taking the drum stick began:—

"Last time when I was trifling with the violin, I had some conversation with you on your family affairs. You said your father died and therefore you followed your uncle. Did your father die a natural death?"

"Natural death, not by any means. He was beheaded, poor soul."

"Beheaded!!!" her hand trembling, still holding the drum stick. "But, then, why was he beheaded?"

"I was too young to know, but they said because he or his father had something in common with the Taiping rebels."

"Something in common with the Taiping rebels." The drum stick dropped from her hand. To conceal her emotion and nervousness she said. "The drum stick is too heavy for my hand. I will try the guitar."

She called for the amah to bring her the guitar. The guitar came. She twisted the wooden screws to tighten the strings and then putting on the silver talons, like claws of birds, to some of her fingers she rung up with them the different chords.

"Now it is in good order at last," murmuring to herself, and then all of a sudden she said, "Your history interests me exceedingly. You say your father was decapitated. What did they do with the body? Did they allow the relations to take the corpse away so as to give the remains a decent burial? Fancy the ghost wandering in the world of spirits without a head. How could his offspring appease the restless and disconsolate spirit? 'Tis very sad to think of."

"Sad! why it makes one's heart bleed. My uncle told me that this was the punishment inflicted on the poor innocent man. He was a good father as my sister had been a good sister."

"We had better drop the conversation. It stirs one's filial piety," so saying she sipped a little tea from a tiny cup and then ran over the strings and commenced her song.

Her voice rose and fell as the nature of her song required. But there was one very noticeable feature in her song this time; she had sung hundreds of times in her life. She was famous for her voice. The stars of the Chinese stage envied her talent. But on this occasion there was something fervent, something full of glowing emotion, something heartfelt, something assimilating the singer with the sadness of her song. In a word the pathos was feverish, communicating itself to the hearer. "Arrows piercing the breast and the injustice of Ping Wang" were more than usually overwhelming. Like magnetism the emotions from the singer's heart had reached the quiet listener. He recollected his flight from Peking. It was only by a hair's breadth that he managed to escape. A little delay would have ruined him. He would have been either cut into halves or banished to Blagenvostock. To think of it was painful enough, but how much more painful it would have been to have gone through the actual process. To be cut in halves, how great must be the agony. It must be a lingering death. To be banished was not so bad, but to be harassed

on the road was also a death trap. These thoughts were passing through the mind of the listener when she concluded the song. She turned round to look. Tears were rising in the eyes of Kum Tong. She could not console him. Her own heart was afar. Some cell of the memory had given up its dead. Both hearts were big with recollections. It was better that they should part rather than proceed any further with the conversation or else there might be a scene—the man might play the part of woman and the woman relax in her determination. Both were in a confused state of mind, but one did not know the mind of the other. Kum Tong rose to depart. Sih Jin did not know whether to ask him to delay his departure or to let him go, but however she said—

“Our proposal to go to Soochow must be carried out. You say in two weeks you will be ready, but, for myself, I do not know. Perhaps a month or more. But go we must.”

The commotion in her mind went on for some time and took some hours to subside. When alone a presentiment came to her

as to what the Hanlin would be thinking of her. She had not seen him, neither had she written to him. She was supposed to inform him of the progress she had made in the intrigue planned by him. A letter must be written. She took up her pen and the words came of themselves.

“You have not heard from me for some days, but that was no fault of mine. This revolutionist has taste neither for music nor for love. He is ready to sacrifice all for his so-called reforms. However, I succeeded in seeing him to-day and you will be glad to know that I have persuaded him to go to Soochow. As to where and when I am unable to tell you at present. But it will be done within a month. You may dispense with your private detective. The only thing you should do is to post the authorities in Soochow of the fact. As soon as I have him there I will send you a telegram and you can telegraph to the authorities. This will be the best plan. How is Mrs. Lau? I should like to see her very much. I will see you in a day or two. I will come to see you in the ‘Inner Garden’ of the City. Don’t you come out. I understand foreigners have

come to know that you have been deputed from Peking for the purpose of entrapping the Reformers. If you are caught in the streets of these settlements it will be a bad day for you. Wishing you the happiness of the day."



CHAPTER VI.

THE LIU YUEN.



LIU Yuen is one of the most famous and well-known gardens in China. Liu is a surname and yuen means a garden. This garden formerly belonged to a Liu family, but is now said to be the property of His Excellency Sheng Kung Pao. For relaxation from the cares and turmoils of life, there can be no better resort. One may lose himself for a while in the zigzags winding here and there. Some of the rockery work is designed to represent certain emblems only known to the initiated: one of them is a finger-shaped rock and purports to be the pen of the god of literature. On summer afternoons it is pleasant to view the different natural and artificial beauties and at the same time enjoy the invigorating evening breeze.

At the time we see Sih Jin in this garden fully two months had elapsed since her last interview with Kum Tong. The sun was shining with an unusual warmth for a winter's day. She was sitting on a marble chair by the side of a large pond. Hundreds of gold fishes were swimming in the silver fluid and causing the water to flow in rings, solving as it were so many problems of geometry by forming circles and semi-circles. She appeared to be watching their movements and while so occupied a figure approached her.

"You are deep in thought," said the person.

As if awaking from a reverie, "You have arrived, Kum Tong," she replied. "I have been musing on the fascinating view before me. I was trying to versify the panorama before my eyes."

"Versification again," said he with a laugh; "it is becoming epidemic with you and me. I have been doing the same thing on my way here. I have been invoking the muses, not to immortalize what I have seen on my way from Shanghai to Soochow, but

simply to acknowledge my appreciation of you. I have been humming it to myself, but I will sing it now for your musical ear :—

“ The tide is up, my heart is sore,
Why should you thus delay ?
Tarry not, Lowdah, another hour,
But yulow us away,

“ I long to see the lovely maid—
Her image haunts me now ;
Never did such a precious jade
Shed lustre on Soochow.

“ The jade pins on thy floral head
Would be a mimic thing ;
Useless the scent the flowers spread,
Though bounties of spring.

“ The pearls that o'er thy forehead range
Would be of no avail,
Though e'en for a starry challenge
Were never know to fail—

“ Were it not for thy pleasing form,
Thine eye of shining hue,
Fresh as the flower in the morn
Full of the sparkling dew—

“ Were it not for thy smiling face,
Thy hair of jetty gloss,
Thy figure of heavenly grace—
A wonder to the folks.”

"Oh," said Sih Jin, "you appear as if you were in love with me or else you would not be expatiating like that on my person. What more have you got?"

"Nothing more. I could not proceed any further. Other thoughts came into my mind. Leaving Shanghai, my place of safety, I thought I was rushing into the tiger's den. If I were to stay here for a week, I would surely be known."

"Known! Not only that but arrested. I would advise you to leave at once in the same boat by which you came."

"You asked me to come. I came for your sake. I cannot say whether you are in the wrong in saying that I appear to be in love with you. However, I came for your sake. Why leave at once?"

"I know you came at my request. Thoughts similar to yours have been hovering in my mind. Just ponder over the horrible nature of the punishments the laws of our country will subject you to if you are arrested. We are accustomed to see criminals receiving blows from the bamboo and paraded about the streets with cangues round

their necks. It is an ordinary sight to us, and we are indifferent, because we are not the sufferers. But your case is different. You are not an ordinary criminal."

"Why is my case different? A criminal is a criminal. But it won't affect you. I shall be the sufferer and not you."

"That's true, but to hear of a friend undergoing such punishment is far from being pleasant."

"Then you take me for a friend only?" he asked with a scrutinizing look.

"Oh, no; more than a friend. That's why I advise you to leave at once. It would pain me to know that you have been put to torture to confess your doings, your future plots, names of your confederates, their whereabouts and their revolutionary schemes. It would pain my feelings to be told that you received 500 blows on your cheeks to confess certain things, that you were made to kneel for a whole day on iron chains till you could bear the pain no longer, till your knees were indented, till the flesh could bear the marks no longer and till blood oozed. Then

your will, your determination could stand firm no longer and then like a child you would repeat the whole story."

"You say you take me to be more than a friend. Is that what you think of your great friend? You consider him perfidious, faithless, betraying his staunch adherents. Oh! Heaven, never, never will such a thing happen with me," said Kum Tong in anger and disgust.

"I don't mean to say you are perfidious and faithless. I am just picturing to you how horrible the tortures are. They will beat your ankles till with agony your will shall waver, your determination shake."

He struck the marble table beside her with his hand as if by an involuntary impulse and in a nervous voice spoke—

"Sin Jin, this is too much. You are making the worst of a case that is bad enough already. Instead of encouraging me in the regeneration of China, you are forecasting bad omens."

"You are misconstruing my good intentions. I advise you to leave at once. If you are caught, they will distort and twist your

fingers to extort confession and then you will not be able to strike this table with your hand as you have done."

"I beg your pardon. I did not mean it," he said in a trembling voice. "I could not control my indignation at the idea. As a champion of civilization, I am prepared for all these."

"All these!!" she answered calmly. "I have merely given you the preliminaries."

"Tell me all," he said, a crimson glow overspreading his cheeks. "Tell me the worst, tell me the most excruciating one, till my hairs stand on end, till my nerves quiver, till my heart beats high, till I bathe myself in a sweat of terror, till I lose all my courage."

His tone was touching and sorrowful. She remained silent for a while, watching the rustling of the leaves of a shrubbery close by her. He gazed at her for some time, but no word was forthcoming.

"The leaves are shivering," he broke the silence. "What is the good of watching those leaves—mute work of nature. You had better see me shiver when you have read out to me your catalogue of punishments."

"Let us go and sit down under the arbor in the middle of the pond. There is more breeze there," she put in.

Full of thoughts hand in hand they walked towards the arbor like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The man was not the first man and the woman was not the first woman and the garden was not the Garden of Eden, but for a time it appeared to be so, inasmuch as there was no other human being near by; and it was interesting to follow the course of events, whether this woman was going to hand the man over to Satan, to his untimely doom, to die a horrible death at the hands of the infuriated royalty.

"Mr. Li," she said, gazing at the creepers round about the arbor. "I do not want you to misunderstand me. You know you are not now in the Foreign Settlements of Shanghai where no one could touch you. You are now in Soochow and like a bird in my hand. I can sign your death warrant if I choose, but I do not want to do so. For your welfare I advise that you should flee from here. Perhaps there are people on your track."

"Knowing this how foolish of you to ask me to come here. Having come, what makes you so anxious that I should go back?"

"Look," she said. "How could I bear to hear that they have cut off your beels to prevent your escape. How grieved would I be to know that they have chained you by the collar bone! I would lose sleep with anxiety if they hung you in a cage and let you die of hunger and thirst. Nay I would die of sorrow if they thought decapitation was not sufficient for you and therefore enveloped you in an iron net and killed you with thirty-six cuts."

Here she paused though she did not seem to have finished.

"You have not completed the list," he said, apparently not much affected. "They can fill my body with wind and puff it up and then kill me by a kick. They can grind my bones as if I were the greatest rebel ever known. But tell me honestly what makes you so anxious for my safety?"

She hesitated in her reply.

"Humanity," she said, after some reflection.

"Humanity. Impossible. Human misery is so great and of such daily occurrence to our eyes that substantial sympathy is a hopeless task—too ponderous to undertake."

"That's true," she said, "but if every one of us were to relieve, as far as possible, sufferings immediately under our eyes, the stock of human misery would lessen to a great extent."

This silenced him, though by no means a satisfactory explanation to his mind. It was like philosophising on the question.

"What I cannot understand," he said, "is why you should ask me to come here to a dangerous place and now should all of a sudden be full of anxiety for my safety. It cannot be humanity by itself alone, but some other factor inactive at first, but set in motion now or aroused from a deep slumber."

"Then it is love in your opinion," she said.

"Probably; you have given me two very good causes—Humanity and Love. You have given very satisfactory explanations but still——."

"Still what."

"Still my mind tells me there is something else."

"Well, then, that something else is that I give you warning for the sake of our father."

"This satisfies me. How did you come to know me?" he enquired.

"By your voice," she said. "And how did you recognize me?"

"By your features, by your fame in the study of the Classics."

* * * * *

The Hanlin, in his residence in Shanghai City, received the following letter from Sin Jin from Soochow:—

"The fact of not receiving any telegram from me must have convinced you that Kum Tong did not come to Soochow as promised by him. I stayed three days in the Liu Yuen gardens and enjoyed myself to my heart's content. I want to visit the Kwan Yin hill before I return to Shanghai."



CHAPTER VII.

THE PLOT MISCARRIES.



ON her return from Soochow, Sih Jin took suddenly sick. Mrs. Lau was her best friend and was her constant companion during her illness. Both foreign and Chinese doctors had attended her but she was progressing very slowly. Her principal complaint was a sore foot. She could with difficulty walk. Mrs. Lau informed her that there was a Taoist doctor of very great repute and it was worth while to see him. So they both took rickshaws and alighted at the door of this physician. Sih Jin told him what was ailing her and wanted to know whether she was suffering from rheumatism or if the sore in her foot was caused by the evil spirit. This the Taoist undertook to find out by divination. To prove to his patient that he was a master

of his profession, he showed her a certificate purporting to come from Chang Tien Sze who is believed to exercise authority over the Evil Spirits. He then put on his Taoist clothes. Burning two candles and some incense sticks before the image of one of the Eight Immortals, he put some copper cash in a receptacle and after chanting some incantation, he shook the receptacle with both hands and dropped the cash on the table. Looking at the cash, he went through certain calculations on his fingers and turning round to Sih Jin informed her that it was not rheumatism, but the other malady she had herself mentioned. She asked for a cure. He wrote her name and age on a piece of paper. He again said some incantation, and burnt the paper with her name and age before the Immortal. Holding a knife in his hand and chanting something as before, he drew a small circle on the wall and then taking some water into his mouth, pierced the wall with the knife and blew the water on to the wall and on to the foot of Miss Sih Jin. He wrote some kind of hieroglyphics on an oblong piece of yellow paper and folding it up asked her to carry it on her person for a week as a talisman.

Another piece of yellow paper similarly written she was to burn—the ashes of which she was to mix with some tea and then drink the mixture. He finally informed her that while walking about she had trodden on some earth hobgoblins who had followed her to her house. These offended visitors must be sent away with an apology. She was therefore to burn some candles and incense sticks and make an offering of some wine and bean-cakes at the north-eastern corner of her house that very evening after dark. She was also to wash her foot the next morning with alum water. This was all the mystical cure prescribed for her.

She returned home in company of Mrs. Lau and to her astonishment she found the Hanlin waiting there. He was reclining on an arm chair, reading a newspaper. It was the *Sin-Wan-Pao* for the day. On seeing Sih Jin, he sat down and asked in a cool manner—

“What is the matter with you?”

“Sick, badly sick,” she replied.

“Sick! Hang it. It is a very recent illness. What I want to know is, what have you been doing all this time? Where are all the plans you were to execute? If you did

not care for me, you ought to have cared for your own honour. I see you have managed to swallow the insult publicly offered to you."

She coloured at first as if she had a guilty conscience and then she said, evasively—

"I do not understand what you mean."

"Don't you," he said in an angry tone. "Where is that Kum Tong? What have you done with him? He doubted your honour in his talk with you, although everybody knows you are as pure as a fairy, yet you overlook the matter. As to the harm he is doing to his country, I could not tell you all if I were to talk until day-break."

"Doubted my honour! Poor fool, he said that in ignorance," she replied.

"Said it in ignorance! How do you know? Some sort of friendship between you and he is ripening now, I suppose."

"Friendship, yes I had to do that for your sake," she put in, pertly. "You are no Hanlin at all, if you want to condemn a man for nothing. Is that the way you would administer justice, if you had an official post?"

"Surely not," he replied. "But you seem to have lost all ambition. Did I not tell you how glorious the future would be before you, if you could manage to hand this man over to his proper deserts? How much royalty would think of you?"

"But," said she, "you cannot blame him. He is implicitly under the belief that he is doing good to the millions of China."

"I see, then," he said, "he has converted you. You have turned to be a revolutionist as well. If that is so, I will hand you over to the authorities instead of him. If this man can turn a woman's head round, he is a source of much greater danger than the authorities have any idea of."

For the moment she did not know how to reply but in a flash an idea came into her mind and bracing herself up she said—

"You are now threatening me. Do you not know that you are not in the City now. You are now in the Foreign Settlement of Shanghai. In my house, I can hand you over to foreigners as a spy, as one deputed from Peking to slay the patriotic Reformers of their country."

This was too much for the Hanlin. He was about to burst into a rage, but sober thoughts prevailed. It was not only Kum Tong that he was after; there were several others besides, whose doings he was studying. He had other missions to perform. He knew if she were to carry out her threat, "the scavengers of civilization" in the employ of foreigners would enquire into his character and detain him for a few days. Although nothing could be found against him, yet it would not be a pleasant ordeal. Besides he would no longer be considered an expert at his business by those who had deputed him. So he tried to put a good face on a bad business. Controlling himself, he said—

"Look, Sih Jin. You are getting to be too independent altogether. You have forgotten with how much care and tenderness I brought you up since your childhood, when I picked you up as an orphan. You did not know what had become of your people. You have forgotten my kindness and now when I am in need of your assistance and in a dilemma, you assume a defiant attitude."

"What better can you expect?" she answered, "after throwing me off with no means for my support. I have had the humiliation of making my living by singing here and there as if I were a harlot."

"I did not throw you off my shoulders. You would not come to terms. You would not marry anybody. You would not marry me. I could not keep you in my house as an unmarried woman all your life."

"But what about your telling me a lie—a deliberate lie?"

"What lie?" he asked, perplexed, not understanding what she meant.

"You told me that my father was alive and that you would some day be able to find him."

"I did not say that your father was alive. What I did say was that I had information said to be reliable that your foster-father was still living."

Some thought crept into her mind and threw a shade of sadness over her.

"But, then," she said "why do you want to persecute this innocent man. You are a man of learning. You have attained

the degree of Hanlin. You want to rise in the world. You want to get up the official ladder. You would like to see a large number of tablets adorning the entrance of your house recording the distinction you have attained. From Siau Chai you passed the examination for Chu Ren and, to crown your literary assiduity, you obtained the degree of Hanlin. In official posts from Chesh'ien you can become Chzefoo, from Chzefoo you will be promoted to be a Taotai and from Taotai you may rise to be a Futai and so on. Your Fung Shui may be good, but evil deeds will spoil it."

He gave a sarcastic smile and proceeded. "My good woman, you are talking like a child. You call this man innocent. He has distributed recently through the length and breadth of the Chinese empire five hundred thousand pamphlets of a revolutionary nature. He is inciting the people. He is shaking the foundations of society. The principle of five relationships, without which society cannot subsist, is being endangered. To follow his doctrine is a violation of the relationship which exists between sovereign and subject, father and son, brothers, husband and wife,

and friends. This being so, it is against the teaching of the Sages of China. His pen is exercising a great influence. Already some twelve officials have started from Wuchang against the advice of Chang Chih Tung and are on their way to Peking, at the risk of their lives, to protest against the assumption of power by the Empress-Dowager. We have a better government than this maniac proposes to introduce. He is talking about a representative government. Have not we got enough of representation? Do not our village elders settle up matters themselves? Do not our guilds make up rules and regulations and have the right of representing the views of the people to the proper authorities? Have not our gentry the right of protest? Do not we sometimes pull down the yamen of a Chesh'ien and punish him ourselves and our actions are forgiven by the merciful throne if he has been oppressing the people? What good will railways and machinery be to us? They will simply throw millions of our people out of employment to starve for want of labour. We have better order and less crime than in many countries which are efficiently policed at a heavy expense. We do not want

an expensive police force. Our people are the most lightly taxed people on the face of the earth and why should they sigh for a government on the foreign model and then have to murmur under a burden of taxation? Our code of laws is much simpler and more easy of comprehension than the rigmarole into which one has to go in foreign laws. Why should our women have more liberty? What good can come from men and women intermingling in society? We are all weak creatures. We were born with an animal nature. We only want a standing army, because the foreigners will not leave us alone. We are contained in ourselves. We do not require any outside resources. We do not trouble the outside countries. But still the foreigners, the outside barbarians, will not leave us alone."

Sih Jin liked other people to hear her talk, but here she had a long lecture given to her full of very reasonable ideas not easily to be refuted.

"I have done my best," she said, after a short silence, "What more can I do?"

"You have done your best to further the cause of that revolutionist," he replied. "You have been corresponding with him in far different ways from what I expected."

He rose, paced about the room as if to find some correspondence, and then as if by instinct he opened the wardrobe where lay the papers on "Developing the resources of China by borrowing foreign capital." Giving a glance, he picked up the pamphlet.

"Here," he exclaimed, "you have been working together with him. Borrow foreign capital? you may as well sell China. Now my faith is perfectly shaken. I did not believe it, but my private detective was perfectly right in informing me that Kum Tong did go to Soochow, but you allowed him to escape. You false woman, you have been playing double."

She sprang up in anger, snatched the paper from his hand and exclaimed, "What business have you to open my wardrobe. Yes, I did allow Kum Tong to escape; what can you do to me?"

"What can I do to you?" he shouted, stamping his foot on the ground and striking the table with his fist. "I will see that you

are arrested for being a traitress to your country. I was right in my suspicions as to your duplicity. You false woman, who would have two likenesses of yourself in one taking. I will see that you are dragged to prison. I swear by Heaven. I swear by this fire," pointing to the lamp, "I will carry out my threat," he said. So saying he departed abruptly.

Sih Jin was overwhelmed with grief. It was not anger this time. Mrs. Lau, who had been a quiet listener of all that had occurred from the other room, came to her, tried to soothe her, advising her not to take seriously to heart the threats of the Hanlin. It was very likely in a temporary fit of anger that he had uttered those words and never meant to carry them out. If he did mean anything, she could always find a warm friend in her husband who would help her. But it was not the fear of getting handed over to the Chinese authorities that was now working in her mind; some other thoughts as quick as lightning were passing in her thoughts. It was now conclusively proved to her mind that her father was dead, but according to Kum Tong's version he did

not die a natural death. She had been brought up in a decent manner and never had such a thing as playing double ever crossed the threshold of her mind. There was nothing to justify her conduct except that her duplicity was for the sake of a dear friend. Her head was busy till far into the night when sleep at last brought her relief.

Next day there was an unusual number of callers—friends of the Hanlin. The quarrel between her and the literate had reached their ears.

Koh in a censuring way deprecated the intimacy between her and Kum Tong saying, "This man is rather light in the head. Customs, which centuries have fossilized, he wants to uproot. He is undertaking a gigantic task which not even a bold man would ever think of. Instead of thanking his stars for his narrow escape from Peking, he is raising up fresh dust. He is stirring up the Hans not only in China, but also in every nook and corner of the earth. Success will not be worth trying for. There will be a rising among the scum of the land, such as local bandits, pirates, thieves and other bad characters, much to the detriment of trade. Sih Jin,

you have been very foolish to form a friendship with this man. You have exposed yourself to serious danger. You are lulling yourself with the idea that you are living in a land of justice and freedom. You may so call these Settlements. But if the great trade of Shanghai is menaced by his doings, the foreign community will be aroused. You will have to answer for your relations with this man. You have badly compromised yourself. You will be made over to our mandarins and condemned to the worst sentence a woman ever received in the pages of history."

Mr. Tam had a different story to tell. Whether she was working for the Reformer or the Conservative Hanlin he did not know. If the suspicions of the Hanlin were properly founded, he was very glad of it. There were at least a man and a woman in China enlisting public sympathy for a noble cause. He himself was a determined Reformer and if he had his way, things would change very quickly. He was prepared to lay his head on the executioner's block. Sih Jin's work was grand and, if properly explained, would

receive the support of any foreign consul who would never hand her and her colleague over to the tyranny of their country.

Mr. Lau took a different view. Sih Jin was a woman and was unnecessarily meddling with affairs that did not fall within the province of her sex. She was too daring. Whether she was with one party or the other, she was exposing herself to danger. Danger was uppermost in his mind. It would be out of decorum for her sex to be taken up to a court of law for enquiry even if that was to end in an acquittal. She had placed herself in that position and a phantom of her trial was rushing before his sight. His advice was for her to change her identity in some way or other. She should either assume foreign garb or be married to a foreigner and thus adopt his nationality, exempting her from the judicial powers of her country.

For the first time in her life elaborate lectures were poured into her ears. They were all more or less touching on her safety, and this, strangely, for the time, did not seem to concern her.

Something more than intimacy had grown between her and Kum Tong and he was the master of her mind's domain. All that was hinted as to her own danger was even more probable in the case of Kum Tong, and to extricate him from his difficulties was to her a primary consideration. Love's magnet was drawing them closer. Whatever might befall, self was outweighed by the welfare of the other. On account of the callers and their long discourses the day was soon far gone and darkness, the alternative of light, set in.

* * * * *

In the court yard in the mass of darkness a close observer might have seen two figures, facing each other and engaged in earnest conversation.

"I am leaving to-night for Nagasaki by the Saikio Maru. A conference of Chinese delegates from all parts of the world is to be held there in three day's time. I must hurry. I could not leave without gazing once more on your lovely features, without hearing once more your silvery voice, to take it with me tingling in my ears. You have completely

won me. I find myself as it were divided between two cares. I had only one and swore that it would be the only one, but you forced the other on me."

"This day has been full of more cares to me than all the cares of your life put together," said the other. "Danger to your life has always been worrying you. I find that my life is also hanging by a slender thread. I am to be extradited sooner or later as your confederate in crime. Where shall I flee?"

"Go to Japan with me to-night and we shall live together free from fear. I would rather die a thousand deaths myself, Sih Jin, than see your delicate frame wither with anxieties and fear."

"Go with you," she said. "No, Kum Tong, that will never do. I, a woman, and you, a man, travel together; what would people say? I cannot do that unless I am properly married to you. What should I do alone in Japan? Why they should join my name with yours I do not know. Probably evil deeds of ancestors are calling for retribution or perhaps in my pre-state of existence I have been guilty of some very dark deed and

violated the laws of the Father Heaven and Mother Earth. Why should my father have died a horrible death? Why should I be made the football of fortune? Why should I from a foster-father's hand become the protégé of this mischievous Hanlin and then have to earn my livelihood by singing and entertaining people as if I were a shameless courtesan? There must have been dark deeds somewhere. I must atone for them."



CHAPTER VIII

THE REVOLUTIONARY CONFERENCE.

LET me transport my reader far into the Far East, into the Land of the Rising Sun, which, touched by the magical wand of Western civilization, has taken its place, within a quarter of a century, among the great nations of the world. In Nagasaki, under the roof of a Confucian temple, there was to be held a Conference of Chinese delegates from different provinces of China and from other parts of the world where the yellow man had found work and personal safety. Whether it was to be a Conference or a Council of War against the suicidal policy of their country, these pages will reveal.

To the Roll-call answered fully one hundred names. There were representatives from the Straits Settlements, the United

States of America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The political refugees attracted the most attention. There were present Sun Yat Sin, Kang Yue Wei, Liang Che Chao, Kin Lee Sun, and others. Having assembled in the hall, the business of the meeting commenced. A vote was taken to elect a Chairman and it was unanimously agreed that Kum Tong should preside. He rose and thanked the assembly for the honour accorded to him. He suggested that all speeches should be made in Southern Mandarin so as to avoid confusion and that all present might be able to understand each other.

The first speaker was a delegate from the Malay Peninsula. He rose, bowed to the assembly and said:—

"Fellow-countrymen. I do not know whether I can call you such. My people for generations have lived in the Straits Settlements. We have become as it were a different race. We flourish and prosper under the benign rule of Great Britain. We owe our allegiance to the Queen Empress. We have a voice in our governmental affairs. We are represented in the Legislative Council. Our

persons and property are protected and are therefore secure. We have no wish to revert to the jurisdiction of a corrupt country like China which has to-day become the foot-stool of nations. The pitiable state into which China has fallen arouses our sympathy. I come here to say on behalf of those who have deputed me that we are ready to support the efforts of genuine Reformers with a heavy purse. When I say a heavy purse, I mean to say that there is plenty of money at our back. Of the Chinese who have left the father-land to seek for new pastures as aliens in the lands of the unknown, we in the Straits Settlements have done the best. There are millionaires amongst us and we are willing to give our last farthing to see everything overhauled in the Celestial Empire and set on a modern basis of progress and enlightenment. We thirst to see the Great Emperor Kwang Hsu resume the reins of government. Our knowledge of China is derived from newspapers and hearsay resources. We have no practical and personal experience of the country. Therefore I have to leave it to abler men to let the present assembly know what are the best ways and

means to devise for the reformation of the Celestial Empire. With these words, gentlemen, I conclude and thank you for your indulgent hearing."

"I am from the Yankee Land," said the second speaker, "I want to tell you a little of the grievance our countrymen are labouring under in that part of the world. I mean the Chinese Exclusion Act. Failing to receive any remedy, we deplored the apathy of our government, but we find that it is not apathy. Our country has not got the backbone to fight for our cause. We are all laundrymen and live from hand to mouth. We will manage to save a few dollars, nay we will make use of the money which we lay aside to bring our dead bodies to China and with that money we will return to China to die a premature death. But before we die, we will make a wholesale slaughter of corrupt officials and if we find the people bigoted, we shall have no mercy for them either."

"Order! Order!" said the Chairman.

"Order!" said a voice. "Why, we have crossed seas and mountains to come here to meet each other. We should be allowed to

“speak our minds freely whether we mean homicide or regicide. Let a rebel speak like a rebel.”

“Freedom of speech! freedom of speech!” all shouted in chorus.

Representatives from secret societies were the most enthusiastic for freedom of speech and the general outburst for such a course was what they desired.

On behalf of the fugitives, Mr. Kin made a very sensible speech. He said politics and conservatism coupled with ignorance were in such a topsyturvey state in China that without freedom of speech matters could not be properly explained. According to his station in life, he had done for the good of his country all that was within his reach, but, alas! with the result that he found himself an exile from the country of his birth and even then was lucky to find himself alive. It is well-known in the history of the world that to reform a country, the first thing which should be done is to educate her women. This he had early recognized and had therefore started a school for girls in Shanghai, but for want of encouragement from the

wealthy class, the project had to be abandoned in its infancy. When the Empress-Dowager was making a wholesale sweep of progress, he convened a meeting of the gentry and influential merchants. He sent a telegram of protest in the humblest terms against the deposition of the Emperor, and this nearly cost him his life. If he had not taken refuge in Macao, he would have been in his grave. The world was of opinion that reformation should come from the top and that it was impossible to work it up from the bottom to the top. There was his friend Kang Yue Wei present who had followed the proper course and had gained the ear of the Emperor. The result was deplorable. The Empress-Dowager demolished in one day what took considerable time to build up. It is said that when diplomacy fails, there is no alternative but to have recourse to arms. Something similar to this was done by our friend Sun Yat Sin, who knew that talking and reasoning were like throwing pearls before swine. Sun Yat Sin preached self-abnegation, but, alas! pitiable for China, the rising was nipped in the bud. "So you will see from the few words I have spoken

different ways and means have been tried without success. He will be a wise man—wiser than Solomon—who can tell the present assembly what is the best cure for China and which is the best end to begin at."

As soon as Mr Kin had done speaking, a tall strong man rose and after bowing to the audience, spoke—"I look like a perfect stranger to you all. I would not tell you my real name for reasons well-known. I belong to a secret society and I have given a false name for record in your roll-call. You have heard from the last speaker that peaceful ways have all failed. What can be done next? I do not think for a moment you can suggest anything else but a general rising throughout China. I represent the Sam Hop Ui (Triad Society). There are representatives of other secret societies present who will explain themselves. I leave them to speak for themselves. But I am authorized to speak on behalf of the Pak Lin Kau (White Lotus Society) also. We Triads emanate from the White Lotus. We still remember the Five Ancestors who were White Lotus and managed to escape from Shantung. We derive our birth from them. We can boast that

Kwangtung, Kwangse and Fuhkien are practically in our hands to-day. Our object has been to drive away the Manchus. If we receive the support of other societies, I can vouchsafe that I will prevent plundering and smuggling among my people. I will direct their energy towards stuffing down reformation into the throats of the Manchus. But we must have money—a large amount of it too."

Whereupon a bald-headed, ugly looking man jumped up from his seat. "Money," he interrupted. "We want it also. You say your people can turn three provinces against the government. I say I am deputed by the Society of Brotherhood (Ko Lao Hui). We can be the rulers of the Yangtze Valley any day. Yangtze riots must still be fresh in your memory. We can do more than you expect. We have regard for nobody. We are stoics. Bring a knife and cut off my arm and you shan't hear a slight murmur of suffering from me. You shan't see the faintest sign of pain in the muscles of my face. Our followers have the same indomitable endurance. People say that we burn and kill the

innocent and that the last time we embroiled the Manchu Government into trouble with the outside Powers. But what can the Manchu Government expect from us. Our promoters were soldiers who fought and bled for the Imperial Government during the Taiping rebellion. It was through our services that the great rising was suppressed, and what has been our reward? Nothing at all. When things quieted down we were disbanded with nothing to look forward to. This was the treatment we received for our loyal and faithful services. The Brotherhood can bring into the field thousands of men who not only have pluck, but are also well armed. Some plan should be organized. There are representatives of other Secret Societies who, I understand, are very anxious to speak."

An old man with the appearance of a Taoist Priest got up to speak. "I am the only one left to speak on behalf of one more secret society. I represent the Boxers (E Wo Tuin) and its cognate branches—the Great Sword Society (Tai Tau Hui) and the Red Lantern Society (Hung Teng Hui). Our followers are all over Shantung, Shanse

and Chihli. The Red Lanterns are experts in giving signals and the Great Swords famous in the use of swords. We are past masters in thaumaturgy. We are invulnerable to arms and weapons of all kinds. Once you pass through two great swords, join our order and tie the red cloth of distinction round your head, wrist, arm and waist, you do not belong to this world. Up to the present our blind government has been adopting repressive measures against us. Not long ago on a cold winter day, when some of our men were going through their usual exercise of boxing on a hill in Shanse, some government soldiers were despatched there to shoot them down. For fully one hour they fired on them. Not one was killed: the shots only got into their cotton-wadded clothing, but could not pierce the skin. The bullets tore and blew off their clothing, but could do no further damage. One of our countrymen—a preacher of Christianity—had the audacity to send an elaborate report crying us down into the Foo at Shanse. To punish him for his crime our Holy Preceptor merely made a sign of his finger at the house of this outcast, and some blind impulse made him walk out of his house

and walk as far as the house door of our Preceptor and then drop down dead. We are Invincibles. I am prepared to follow any course unanimously agreed upon by the present assembly."

A certain Revolutionist rose and said :—
"Gentlemen, you have heard with great attention all that has been said by the different speakers. The whole can be summed up in a very few words. It amounts to this :—

"Different ways and means, peaceful and revolutionary, have been devised and acted upon for the reformation of our country, but all without success. The people can no longer drag on their existence with the present state of affairs, therefore a desperate attempt should be made to overthrow the Manchu Dynasty and if possible re-assert the sons of Han, failing which let the country be divided among the Foreign Powers. I would therefore propose the following resolution :—

"The delegates are authorized to organize a secret systematic plan for a general rising throughout the Empire so as to overthrow the Manchu government in exchange

for any other government under which the people will have better administration, more justice and rights of equality with other nations."

Kum Tong could not suppress his indignation at the idea of a general rising. He rose from his seat and addressed the assembly—

"Although I am acting as Chairman of the present meeting, you cannot deny me the rights of an individual speaker and I would like to protest in very strong terms against the resolution. To do so, I must bring facts to convince your minds why this resolution should not be seconded or carried. I have therefore to address you at great length and occupy more of your time than you may expect. To go carefully into the matter, I have to begin from the first speaker. The first speaker, I must say to his credit, has spoken to you with an honest conscience. He has told you honestly that he and his people have a meagre knowledge of China, which really means that they do not know what are the causes of China's great drawbacks. But they are ready to help us with

their purse for any purpose answering to the good of China. This is a very laudable object and deserves our sincere gratitude. But as to what the other speakers have said, it is merely a parody. Their logic does not hold water. They are speaking as if they were in a delirium. I am afraid the majority of our countrymen now in the land of the Stars and Stripes have not got money enough even to pay their passage out to China, not to say anything of the money required to arm themselves for such a daring undertaking. Those who have spoken on behalf of the secret societies I consider worse. They are fanatics—pure and simple. The Boxer representative is speaking as one would speak of fairy tales if he had a volume of the Arabian Nights in his hand. No country in the world can boast of having discovered any element by which the human body could be made invulnerable. We are made of flesh and are subject to pain. You know as well as I do that ninety-five per cent of those who belong to secret societies are the scum of the land. I admit that there are educated and well-to-do people among them, but their percentage is very small indeed. So we have to take the

scum as the constituents. And what these scum are I would like you to know. They are nothing but the worst characters in the land. Men of no principle. As soon as they get sufficient encouragement to rise, they will rob, plunder and set the whole country in flames. They have no regard for sex, age or rank. They will turn our rich and populous country into a desert full of ashes. Do you think the Great Powers of Europe will allow all this to take place and look upon it like idle spectators? Certainly not. What you mean by the resolution is a division of the country. Division of the country is already threatening China. This is not the object of true Reformers. This is not the object for which you have been convened from different parts of the world. The object of true Reformers is not to upset the present dynasty. Their object is to compel the present dynasty and the people to throw in their lot in common with the other nations of the world in the path of progress. To attain this object two great difficult things must be achieved as preliminaries, *i.e.* dispel ignorance from the country and abolish dishonesty. To dispel ignorance is not a very difficult task, but how

can the golden rule of honesty be brought in? We want schools throughout the country on western models. We want to change the present curriculum of education. We want our youths to go through such books as give a true knowledge of the world as it is to-day. We want newspapers throughout the country for the people to know what is going on in the outside world every day. In a few years we can dispel the darkness of ignorance. As to dishonesty, I do not know how it can be overcome. Why should Indian tea monopolize the market? Why should our silk industry be in such a low state? Why should it be said that our officials have to buy their posts? Why should it be said that they grind the people with squeezes? Why should not they have decent salaries given to them? Why should it be said that our house servant receives his commission for everything we purchase through him? Why should we meet a street hawker asking for two times the price of an article? It is on account of dishonesty: many people are not patriotic. It was on account of dishonesty it is said that in our wars our shells were found full of dust. It is on account of dishonesty it is said that

our army and navy consist of rags and tags. We want to preach from one end of the empire to the other the gospel of honesty. It is not of such an immediate importance for us to have missionaries to preach to us the gospel of Jesus Christ in its ceremonious form, but we want them to preach to us the gospel of solid honesty first. We want tracts after tracts written by them on honesty and dishonesty. We want a prophet to convince the people that nothing but honesty will preserve their great Empire. Dishonesty as it is said to be going on now in many quarters will bring the country to a much speedier ruin than they expect."

The representatives of the secret societies were disappointed. Kum Tong's speech had a marked effect on the audience.

After recounting the different concomitant facts, he condemned the resolution and proposed a fresh one :—

"That all ways and means be devised and adopted for the reformation of the country, but any measure leading to a rebellion or rising in the country should be discouraged."

Although what he had said was full of wisdom and was listened to with attention and deference, he found to his regret that the motion was lost by a large majority. Poor man, he did not know that you cannot make omelets without breaking eggs.

Many other resolutions were proposed and discussed, one of them being to get the aid of a foreign Power to put China on a proper footing. The speakers occupied a whole day and a whole night without coming to any conclusion. Exhausted with want of sleep and food, the meeting had to break up.



CHAPTER IX.

SIH JIN'S SUPERSTITION.



PRETTY Sih Jin was feeling miserable. There was a mixture of real and fanciful woes haunting her mind. She was brooding over her condition in life. There must have been some dark—very dark deeds committed either by herself in her pre-state of existence or by her ancestors, the fruits of which she was now reaping. And all this belief was engrafted on to her mind as being orthodox or else why should her father have received capital punishment and why should she herself, in spite of her beauty and learning, find herself accused of being concerned with revolutionists, although she had nothing in common with them. And not only that, her life from her very childhood up to now appeared to her to have been as if she were

an outcast from among the elect of Him who made the world. She must atone for her hereditary sins.

Although she had a good Chinese education and had read many translated books on Western ideas and customs, she had an implicit faith in the superstitions, religious doctrines and traditions of her country. Having once believed in her fanciful sins and want of moral worth, her mind was agitated as to what she ought to do to atone for the iniquities of her own creation. She thought of going to Canton to join the great Sisterhood there, make a vow never to marry and lead the life of a vegetarian. She thought of giving up all her rich belongings for some noble cause. Let some charitable institution have her money for funds to buy coffins for the destitute, to make clothing in winter for the starving and freezing poor. Or a temple might be built for some deity or the funds might go to repair bridges in the country neglected on account of the poverty of the people. She herself could make a living by following the occupation of a hair-dresser to wealthy ladies after having joined the Sisterhood. Trains of thought one after

the other were making her uneasy and restless. Then she thought of becoming a nun when she could endow her favourite nunnery with the few dollars she had. There were nunneries in Hangchow and Hangchow was a good place to live. Even when we want to become charitable and a philanthropist, we are at a loss to know on which charity to empty our purse. She was undecided and could not make up her mind. However she was determined to make a beginning. She must not delay. A large quantity of water was used in Shanghai and in so doing the fluid was polluted by the people every minute of the day without thinking for the moment that they were committing a sacreligious offence. Very few, if any, made reparation for this inevitable transgression on the part of mankind. The idea crossed her mind to make atonement for this sin common to all which would bring about a remission of her own other sins. At once she sent five hundred dollars to one of the temples, requesting that a number of priests and nuns perform for seven days an expiation ceremony for the defilement and waste of water, whenever they considered the time

most appropriate for the performance of such ceremonies.

To go to Hangchow and become a nun she had chosen as the best course. But her resolution was still shaky: she had conceived something more than friendship and more than love for Kum Tong. If she were to shave her head all over and put on the costume of a nun, love for Kum Tong must become a matter of the past. Their acquaintance would have to cease and without him could she be happy? It was a difficult question to answer. However, in the meantime, her programme of good and philanthropical work should be carried out. Whether she would give up being a wordling could be decided later on. Mrs. Lau was the only companion now whom she had taken into her confidence.

It was now about the middle of the twelfth moon; Mrs. Lau, in her usual daily visit, was having a long conversation with Sih Jin one afternoon and as she recollected, she said to the latter:—

“Sister, I have just recollected what my neighbour has been asking me to do for her.

She lives two houses away from mine. Her husband is a Wei-Yuan deputed from Nankin to look after the tribute rice. She has given birth to a very handsome little boy. Both the father and the mother were very glad. The boy is now two months old. Yesterday they sent for a fortune-teller to tell the boy's fortune. The father belongs to the genus tiger, the mother to the genus fowl and the boy to the genus dog. The fortune-teller asked for the cycle, month and hour in which they were respectively born. The boy was born at meridian. Astrologically, he said, his solution was that the relationship of the three horoscopes with each other bore out to him that the luck of the parents was too weighty altogether for the existence of the infant. To counteract the pressure thus brought forward the boy should have the adoption of a hundred families. Therefore it is necessary that the boy should have a silver necklace made on the subscription of a hundred different families. She has asked me to go about for her and solicit subscriptions from one hundred different houses. I do not know how to do it myself. You are more accustomed to seeing strangers. It would be

a virtuous act if you would undertake the task."

"Very good," replied Sih Jin, "I shall be most happy to do anything to preserve the life of the unfortunate child. But I thought the fortune-tellers based their calculations on the five elements—water, fire, wood, metal and earth."

"Fortune-telling is such an intricate science," said Mrs. Lau, "that I know nothing about it. I believe the physiognomists take the five elements as the basis of their mysterious computations. You cannot put much reliance on these fortune-tellers. I believe this fortune-teller of whom I have just been speaking is trying to make some money out of this simple lady. To ward off the evil, he is going to nail a charm outside her house. An octagonal wooden thing with a trident on the top."

"However," said Sih Jin, "I cannot go about now for this necklace. The end of the year is drawing near. It is already the sixteenth of the month. We shall have plenty to keep us busy for a month at least. I have selected the twenty-sixth day to have a

thanksgiving service for the outgoing year. The twenty-third will be universally observed as the ascension day of the kitchen god. There will be nothing but exchanging congratulations for the first four days of the year. On the evening of the fourth you know is the reception of the god of wealth. And I can count up to the fifteenth for one thing or other."

"Oh, yes," said the other, "the seventh is said to be the anniversary of silver, the eighth of grain, the ninth of the skies and the tenth of the earth."

While conversation was thus proceeding between the two ladies, Sih Jin's amah entered, saying—

"Madam, I have just seen a Buddhist priest undergoing penance. He is in a cage standing on spikes of iron nails. He has made a vow to remain there until charitable people take compassion on him and release him. He is locked up with about two hundred locks made of iron, silver, &c. Every lock has an intrinsic value of its own. I saw two locks opened by a rich lady and she paid forty dollars for them. You would be 'laying up stores' for yourself, if you

would see a lock or two taken off, so as to lighten the confinement of the holy man."

Though Sih Jin was full of superstition, she did not seem to relish the idea.

"Oh, no," she said, "I would rather distribute my money among the beggars on New Year's eve."

The plan she had laid out for herself was to be executed after the New Year's festivities were over. In the meantime she was occupied in making preparation for the great day that comes only once a year. She ordered a general scrubbing, washing and cleaning of the house. Auspicious phrases were written on red paper to be posted on the door and walls. "Quinary happiness enter the threshold." "Success to every enterprise." Such were the signification of some of the phrases. She was out every morning to make different purchases. Flowers of various kinds to adorn her hall—narcissus being indispensable. Two long sugar canes to be tied by the two sides of her bedstead to convey an idea of loftiness after a kind of its own, to rise knot after knot in wealth, honour and prosperity. A paper sedan-chair of the most fanciful

make for the kitchen god to ascend to Heaven with reports of more evil than good of we poor mortals below. Musical instruments to receive Mammon on the evening of the fourth. Candles of longevity, confections multifarious so that she could treat her New Year callers not only with sweets but also with sweet words. When offering candy sugar, she could say, "Here is sweet, may your life be sweet." When handing peanuts, which are called "long life fruit," she could say, "May your life be long, may you never grow old." If her fingers were to place before her visitor any confection or dried fruit round in shape, she could say, "May everything go smoothly with you like the smoothness of the round surface." She must buy plenty of olives. Two olives are placed on every cup of tea, not to say here is olive tea, but to say take some sycee tea. Nothing foreboding evil should be spoken during the festivities. Every one accosts each other with the words "Koong Shee Fah Chai," *i.e.* "Congratulations; may you become rich." She did not forget to buy the Almanack; if the hours covering the New Year's day were inauspicious, she must

keep her front doors shut for the day and every one must go in and come out by the back door or vice versa. She bought a dozen lamps to illuminate her house so as to dispel all darkness on that night of importance—the New Years' eve. For should your person reflect a shadow larger than usual, the disliked summons from the other world will come to you some time during the ensuing year and you will have to lay off the mortal coil.

Preparations for the New Year were progressing with her. There were other nick-nacks to be attended to. She overhauled her wardrobe and trunks. Red covers for chairs and tables were taken out. Ornamental incense burners and candlesticks of the very best brass were placed on the joss table. The front part of her bed curtain was decorated with choice hangings, among which were to be seen two lions made of tufts of silk and a number of fishes of fine embroidery. A brand new carpet was laid on the floor for prostration before the Joss table and for exchanging congratulations of the season, should a caller desire to do so by kneeling.

Sih Jin was very particular about paying off her bills. According to custom she cleared her accounts three times a year a few days before the festivals, that is, the Dragon Boat Festival, the Mid-Autumn Festival and the New Year. The twenty-fifth day of the month had arrived and she asked the amah to go round to the different shops for her bills so that she might pay them off. The servant did not care to take the trouble and said, "Madam, you need not worry yourself about it, they will come round themselves sooner than you expect."

"I know that," she replied. "I don't like to be owing people. Those who can afford to pay their bills are generally left last by these bill collectors. But they worry those who are hard pressed. It reminds me of a funny tale. A man is said to have evaded payment for two consecutive years. The shopkeeper made up his mind to get money out of this customer either by hook or crook at the end of the third year. Unhappily at twelve midnight on New Year's eve, which was the time appointed for payment, he missed the debtor who had hid himself inside a

temple. After a good deal of search he found out where the man was, but the dawn had broken. It was after twilight and you are not supposed to collect debts on New Year's day. The man had sworn to get his money and holding his lantern lit in spite of the light of the day approached his defaulting customer who came out from his hiding place and on seeing the party kicked the lantern, extinguishing the light, and accosted him with New Year's congratulations. The shopman had to go without asking for his money."

"I do not exactly understand what you mean," said the amah.

"Don't you?" replied Sih Jin in surprise. "Although it was dawn, and consequently New Year's day, the man by having his lantern lit meant that it was eve for him and that he could still demand payment without infringing the universal custom."

The day for the ancestral worship arrived. She could only think of her father and mother, so she placed two pairs of chopsticks on the table and while going through the "kow-tow" it struck her that this worship was not supposed to be performed by one of

her sex. How glad she would have been if she had a son, and then another thought came into her mind, if she did have a son, would he have been old enough for the present task? But if he were old enough, he would be worshipping the ancestors of his father and not of his mother. It is said that infants or children who have not as yet learnt to speak are able to see their ancestors on such days and for fear of their getting frightened they are not allowed to stay in the room where worship is going on.



CHAPTER X.

THE ABBOT OF TIEN CHOH.

 HERE are the Heavens above and Soo and Hang below" is a very common proverb among the Chinese. Soochow and Hangchow are reckoned as being earthly Paradises and nothing can be compared to them in beauty except Heaven itself. Such has been the belief among the sons of Han for hundreds of years.

Hangchow is the capital of the Chekiang province and is about 270 miles away from Shanghai. It was formerly called Wu Ling. In the Sung Dynasty Emperor Hsiao Kong made it his capital. It has, therefore, quite an historical importance of which very few cities can boast. Besides being noted for its beautiful lakes and natural scenery, it has a world-wide fame not only in China but over

the whole of Europe and America for the superior quality of every variety of silk which it produces. The Imperial looms of Hangchow provide the Imperial Household with large quantities of the very best silk and the people in that trade are kept busy all the year round. The city is surrounded by a strong thick wall having a circumference of over 33 miles. The entrance to the city is effected by ten heavy gates which remain closed from sunset till sunrise. The Governor of the province, as well as the Tartar General, the Provincial Treasurer and seventy-two other officials have their official residences within this wall. There is also a large Examination Hall where all those who have obtained their Bachelor's degree go to compete for the Master's degree. All the houses and shops in the city are both large and picturesque. Hangchow within and without has a population of over half a million souls.

Tourists, male and female, in large numbers are attracted to this place on account of its lovely scenery and holy temples. Lake "Si Wu" is something exquisite and words fail to convey to the mind the beauty

of the spot. The mind is awakened not only to the charms of nature, but also to historical recollections. The remains of "Nghoh Fi," one of the most loyal and faithful ministers of the Sung Dynasty, are buried by the side of this lake. Fronting the tomb and in a kneeling posture are two iron figures of a man and a woman, that of Chen Kwei and his wife. It was due to the treacherous design of these two persons that Nghoh Fi met his premature death. They have been placed in this humiliating position in order to do penance for their wickedness and as a warning to others not to follow their bad example, but to remain loyal and faithful to the last.

Round about this lake are many famous monasteries and historical pagodas. Among the monasteries the Tien Choh monastery is the largest and contains about 600 monks whose chief occupation is that of tilling the fields. The building is divided into three portions and is of enormous extent. There are other renowned monasteries but none can rival the Tien Choh monastery as regards spacious accommodation and the number of resident monks. There are the Ling Ying monastery,

the Fi Lai Fong Monastery, and the Zing Monastery. The hill on which the Fi Lai Fong Monastery is built was blown to its present position by a miraculous wind. There was a monk who had seen quite three-quarters of a century. He was famed for his piety, learning and skill in the art of drawing. The brush in his hand could produce living pictures. Throughout the length and breadth of the Celestial Empire there were high price bidders for his productions. His epidendrum on paper was just as good as the epidendrum by the side of Si Wu lake. Painters all over China coveted his skill and placed his copy before them for imitation. Though many attained his fine touch in many respects, yet none produced his epidendrum. Temperate habits and a religious life had brought him to his seventieth year. There was no sign of old age in him save his grey eyebrows and wrinkled forehead. His eyesight and health were just as good as that of a youth of twenty. He was the Abbot of Tien Choh Monastery but for the most of his time resided in Fi Lai Fong Monastery on account of its sacred hill. Powerful men and lovely women crawled at his feet. He had

seen the world in a way in which very few have the opportunity of seeing it. The heavy in heart resorted to him for advice. For the last thirty years of his life he had not tasted animal flesh of any kind. He had become a strict vegetarian. Penance with him had become a habit. For years he had not known what it was to stretch his limbs for sleep on a bed. His bed was simply a large chair with a mosquito curtain where in a sitting posture he took sleep by snatches and nods. Before Aurora, before dawn, he was at his prayers in the morning. He was an expert in physiognomy and had foretold good and bad luck. His religious life combined with his qualifications had raised him to renown and respect. He was a Commissioned Officer during the Taiping Rebellion and had distinguished himself not only in bravery, but also in mercy towards the conquered. Choh Zue was the name of this distinguished monk.

One morning after saying his morning prayers, he sat down on a stool as if in meditation. The morning breeze was rustling the leaves of trees and other plants round about the monastery: the cock's shrill clarion

was still announcing the dawn of day and the ploughmen were plodding their way towards the site of their daily avocations. The senior monk of the Fi Lai Fong Monastery was standing by his side.

"Brother," says Choh Zue, "I had an ominous dream this morning. Before I took up the religious order here I had a son and an adopted daughter. I do not know what has become of them. To be true to my Maker, I had dismissed them from my mind. But this morning I dreamt two Yamen runners entered the precincts of this monastery for my arrest. The boy-monk called me out and on seeing the runners I asked them what was the offence for which I was to be arrested. They said my son and my daughter were rebels. I was to be beheaded for being father of such wicked children and the same fate was awaiting all who had anything to do with them. In fright I awoke." Here Choh Zue heaved a sigh.

"What time of the morning was it?" asked his companion,

"Three o'clock."

"Three o'clock. Dreams of that time are full of true significance," said the other.

* * * * *

The battle between two great antagonists in the domain of Sih Jin's mind was still raging. Her delicate frame bore up under it bravely. Her imaginary sins were dictating to her a life of retribution. Her love for Kum Tong was dissuading her from any change. Time after time she consulted her conscience, but her conscience was indecisive. At last she appealed to her judgment. Her resolution was made. She must go to Hangchow and consult this oracle—this great Buddhist priest.

She engaged a boat for herself and a few companions of her sex, and took with her the necessaries for a pilgrimage. The boat was towed by a steam-launch and she soon found herself on the shores of Hangchow. Walking along the side of Si Wu lake, she saw the iron figures of Chen Kwai and his wife. Every passer-by either slapped the figures or looked at them with disdain. This scene was too much for Sih Jin. It embittered her sad heart. Like a fanatic she was already

repining for her sins: the sight before her brought home to her heart more strongly the penalty of her own sins. Mounting the hill on her way to Fi Lai Fong Monastery, there were niche after niche containing busts of gods. She honoured them all with candles and incense-sticks, as she passed along one after the other. By the time she arrived at the monastery it was noon: the great bell inside was ringing; the monks from their different occupations were hurrying into the mess-room to sit down at their respective places for the mid-day meal. Sih Jin was disappointed and had to wait for three quarters of an hour. Then she proceeded into the temple and after going through the usual religious ceremony she asked to see the famous Buddhist priest Choh Zue. The attendant monk spoke with a sarcastic smile.

"Madam, our master sees visitors by pre-arranged appointment. He does not know who you are and you have made no appointment."

"How do you know?" she replied, "that I have made no appointment; how do you know that he would not see me?"

"I know you have not made an appointment," continued the priest; "if you had, he would have left word that some one was coming to call on him to-day."

"That is no matter," said Sih Jin. "Take my card and tell him that a lady from Shanghai wants to see him and that if he has no time to-day, she will call on him to-morrow."

The priest thought for a while and then went to seek the advice of some of his comrades.

"It is no matter," said one, "it will be no trouble to our master to see this lady to-day. Perhaps she might subscribe a thousand taels for the benefit of this monastery."

The priest walked in and it was about an hour ere he returned.

"Our master will be glad to see you in his library just now." He escorted Sih Jin through half a dozen court-yards and then coming to a tastily-built house, ushered her before the great Lama. The room was not large in any way, but was spacious enough for half a dozen people to sit inside. There was a huge bookcase full of books on one

side of the room and then there was another case piled up with the drawings of this artist. Choh Zue was reading the life of Buddha and as Sih Jin entered, he rose with joined hands repeating O-me-deu-fah. He asked her to sit down and said—

"Madam, what can I do for you?"

"Master," said she, "I have heard of your fame as a great physiognomist. I have come to ask you to be so good as to tell me my luck."

"Lady," he replied, "if you want me to be conscientious, this is not the proper time of the day to look at your features. Medical skill subscribes and physiognomy avows that the best time to look at one's countenance is early in the morning when nature is in her blooming youth. After a good night's rest you will have the freshness of a rose: the physical powers will be at their zenith: the complexion of your face will be at that time as the powers of nature would have it to be. As to myself, I will be in a better position to come to an exact diagnosis according to the laws of physiognomy. Just now, after half a day's work, my powers of observation

are enervated. Please come to-morrow early in the morning."

"There is something in my heart," she said in a sad voice, "which is weighing very heavily with me. The sooner I know my fate, the better will it be for me. As I am at present, my mind is in confusion."

The old priest was as it were awakened and appeared to be interested in her.

"What is all this which is depressing you?" he said. "Of course I should not ask you such a question, but if in any way I can relieve your mind I shall be most happy."

"Master," she said with a sigh, "I am one of the most unfortunate beings in creation. I am full of hereditary sins and to expiate them, I am thinking of giving up the world and becoming a nun. But I have not been able to make up my mind. I thought of coming to you to find out from your knowledge of physiognomy what fate has in store for me."

"Madam," replied the Buddhist priest, "observing from your conversation that you have something of very great importance at

stake, it will be so much the more to your satisfaction that I should be able to tell your fortune with accuracy, which can only be done early in the morning."

"Very good," she said. "I only want to know the future. Most fortune-tellers say a good deal about the past, but very little about the future. What is past is past and is of no interest to any one."

"It may be so," replied the priest, "but it is the past that foreshadows the future. That's why fortune-tellers expatiate at length on by-gones so as to be able to tell coming events."

"It is my past history," she said, "troubling my mind as to the future; my life has been an extraordinary one and if it be of any help to you to-morrow, I am ready to relate the past."

"Oh, of immense help," continued the holy man. "But for two reasons I do not know whether it would be advisable for you to do so. Why tell one's secrets to any one. Why assist a fortune-teller in his science: let him make his guess whether right or wrong and even if right, let him depart with a

doubtful idea as to whether he had been correct or not."

"You are good at heart," she said. "I have no one in whom to confide. It will relieve my heart of a burden. Perhaps you will be able to give me some advice."

"If you are pleased to trust me," responded the priest, "I will make myself worthy of your confidence."

"I was born in Soochow," she continued. "My father was beheaded for having had something to do with the Taiping Rebels. Why years after the rebellion he should have been hauled up I do not know. I was then adopted by a priest. I saw him only once or twice. He had a son. I then passed on to the care of a Hanlin. I am now accused of being a revolutionist simply because of late I have made the friendship of Li Kum Tong, the Great Reformer. If you ask me why a woman should make the friendship of a man, I say this man stands to me as a brother, because he is the son of the priest by whom I was adopted at one time and whom I saw only once or twice."

Here the mind of the priest was waving to and fro in the air. His dream—his ominous dream—was coming back to his mind.

"However," she went on, "there can be no doubt that I am full of sin. Some dark deeds must have been done by my ancestors or by myself in the pre-state of existence for which I am suffering. Why should my father have died such a horrible death? Why should I be accused of being a revolutionist? Why should I be the football of fortune? I must atone. I want to become a nun. I want your advice, Master."

The priest was completely upset, but, composing himself, he replied—

"Lady, the ways of gods are mysterious. I will pray for you and pray for myself. Come to-morrow in the morning when I can tell you from physiognomy whether you are destined for the life of a nun."



CHAPTER XI.

THE MONK'S COUNSEL.



FOR the first time in his life, Choh Zue was in a dilemma. His dream—his ominous dream—was rushing into his mind. What he had dreamt was not an empty dream. It was an apparition. Coming events cast their shadows before. This young lady who wanted to become a nun was his adopted daughter and this Great Reformer was undoubtedly his son. He did not know what had become of them, but now their existence was revealing itself. The very fact of his adopted daughter having called was sufficient in itself to ensure his arrest. She had herself confessed the crime to him. Of course she would say that she was innocent. To be merely concerned in anything politically which would upset the old regime was rebellion

from a Chinese point of view. What was he to do? See her or not the next morning? Thoughts of this description were passing through his mind and would not give him rest. Some idea similar to the saying that two heads are better than one struck him. He thought of consulting the senior monk of the monastery to whom he had related that forenoon his dream of the morning. He sauntered out into an open space and there saw the senior monk sitting down on a rockery.

"Brother," said he, "I related to you a dream this morning and little did I think then that I would be convinced to-day as to realizing this dream. The lady who visited me this morning is undoubtedly my adopted daughter. She wants to become a nun. She considers herself full of sins, as she has been accused of being connected in the revolutionary measures of the so-called Reformer Kum Tong. I have read about him in the Shanghai papers. She does not know that I am her adopted father."

"So much the better," replied the monk. "Don't let her know or else there will be an

effeminate scene of tears. Let her take the order of the holy life of a nun and you have just to harden your heart. As a monk you are not supposed to think of your children, but of the Great Maker. We all want to reach to that extent of purity in life so as to besit cremation in kong after death."

"What you say is correct," replied Choh Zue, "but you do not exactly know how the whole matter stands. I am afraid this Li Kum Tong is my son."

"If your son, what then?"

"What then! Why, you know the authorities want him and will punish him as a rebel. They will also arrest me as being the father of this rebel."

"Yes, so far as that goes," said the monk, "your dream of this morning has forewarned you. You cannot deny being his father."

"I do not wish to deny it. I do not care to undergo the penalty. Punishment for causing rebellion is very, very severe. Every living soul belonging to the monasteries with which I have any dealings will be arrested and killed."

The senior monk fell from his sitting posture in fright and dismay.

"I did not think of it at first," he said. "You are Master and would be considered as having imparted the same evil to your disciples which your son possesses. Hundreds of innocent lives will be sacrificed for your sake and you will have to answer for their blood before Pluto."

Choh Zue bent his head, and maintained a silence of some minutes and then raising his face towards the heavens, he cried aloud, "O-me-deu-fah." He gazed at the cerulean sky for a considerable time and then tears of sadness trickled down his cheeks. "Never," said he, "never can that be; never shall I allow hundreds of innocent people to die for my sake, for certain things done by my children of which and whom people here have not the slightest knowledge. I thought of refusing to see her to-morrow morning, but that will not amend matters. I must speak to her frankly and come to some solution of this difficult question."

The sleep which Choh Zue used to take by snatches and nods did not come to him

the whole night. There was a tumult going on in his mind. He was known for his piety and the thought that his piety was going to be the cause of a general massacre of all his flock was too excruciating to bear for an instant.

Early next morning Sih Jin arrived. Choh Zue ushered her into the same apartment where they had their last interview.

"Please sit down, Madam," he said. "This is the time for physiognomists to expound their science."

He scrutinized very carefully her forehead, the bridge of her nose and the nose itself. "I am puzzled," he continued. "I do not know how to tell your luck. Comparing the story you have told me about yourself with what your features bespeak, I find they do not correspond in some respects. Your forehead indicates that your life had been an irregular one. This accounts for your having passed from one hand to another and had to make your living by singing. Although you lived in competency it was not the life one would desire to live. But the bridge of your nose forebodes a great calamity."

"That's why I want to become a nun," she interposed.

"You told me yourself," continued Choh Zue, "that you were suspected of being a revolutionist. By becoming a nun you intend to atone for your sins. I am afraid you will be adding to your sins. If you are arrested for being a revolutionist, all the nuns in the nunnery will have to share your fate for having sheltered a person like you under their roof."

"What am I to do then?" asked Sih Jin. "I come in good faith and want to atone for my sins, but if evil is to come out of good what am I to do? I have nothing left but to commit suicide by taking opium."

"You need not do that," advised Choh Zue. "Why should a precious life like yours be lost. You had better make a clean breast of yourself before the proper authorities and tell them honestly who are really the revolutionists."

"You want me to betray my very best friend Li Kum Tong," she said bitterly.

"It does not matter if he is really a revolutionist."

"But he is not a revolutionist. He is an honest and a very conscientious Reformer."

"Sih Jin," said Choh Zue nervously. "You do not know perhaps that I am your adopted father."

She gazed at him with a piercing look and then fell down on her knees.

"Father," she said in sad ecstasy, "I am glad I have met you. This reformer Li Kum Tong is then your son. Do you wish to see your only son die a horrible death?"

"Certainly not," he replied without the slightest hesitation. "Far from that I am willing to die for him."

"So am I," she put in spontaneously. "Why should you advise me to make a clean breast of myself?"

"There are very serious consequences involved."

"It may be so. Why betray a true Reformer?"

"My child," spoke Choh Zue with a sigh. "I have a very good opinion of him myself. But any one who preaches against the old order of things is considered a rebel."

"But then it does not follow that I should betray him."

"I have told you already, my child, there are serious consequences involved."

"That means," she said, "that you and I would lose our lives for him."

"If it were only a matter of losing your life and mine, I would not be so earnest. Hundreds of innocent people who do not know him even by name will have to suffer."

"His followers, you mean; why they are ready to jump with him even into a fire."

"My child, I do not mean his followers at all. I mean hundreds of monks inhabiting these monasteries and hills who are my disciples will have to lose their lives simply because I am the father of a son who is rebelling against the Son of Heaven."

Her face changed colour. She changed into a meditative mood. What she had thought of small consequence was now revealed to her as being of the highest importance. When she found that her life was in danger because she was a friend of Kum Tong, she had felt exceedingly miserable, ascribing her

bad luck to real and fancied woes. Things had gone now not only from bad to worse, but from worse to worst. Hundreds of innocent lives were at stake. What could be done? Never mind, she did not care. She did not know the inhabitants of these hills, and had nothing in common with them. Why should she be false to a warm-hearted friend.

"Father," she said, "plague and wars kill thousands and if anything happens to the inhabitants of these villages they cannot hold me responsible, no more than they could hold me responsible for the consequences of plague or war."

Choh Zue was surprised at her obdurate heart. But there was nothing to cause surprise. She had seen more of the world than many of her sex. She had known false men. She had known how out of policy many infamous things are done by supposed honest and trustworthy men.

In a tone full of pathos, "My child," said Choh Zue, "you know what a painful and lingering death your father had. Do you wish your adopted father to die in the same agony?"

The death of her father recalled to her mind many a sad thought. She was softened. But still she was irresolute. "I could not help his death," she said nervously.

"But you can help mine," replied Choh Zue. "Filial piety will dictate to you the right course."

There followed a long silence. Filial piety rang in her ears. A whirl of thoughts ensued. Her heart was now completely softened. In a reverie she reviewed the different concomitants. What was her motive? Atonement of sins. But the course she was pursuing was not answering that purpose. On the contrary it would add considerably to her sins. Her adopted father was right. Thinking for a few minutes longer, she seemed to take stronger views than Choh Zue. What good would it do to her to make a confession? She would simply be confined in gaol until the capture of her friend. She resolved to bring him back to Chinese soil, make a clean breast of herself to him first and then share his fate with him. She could not reconcile herself to the idea of deceiving him.

"All right," she said to Choh Zue, "I know what to do. I won't harm you." So saying she half rose to depart.

"Are you glad that you have met your adopted father," asked Choh Zue, "although you have but a faint recollection of him?"

"Oh, yes, I am very glad," she replied rather absent-mindedly. "I wish we had met under more favourable circumstances."

Sih Jin returned to her lodgings at the foot of the hill. After a little rest from excitement, she determined to write a letter to Kum Tong. Determination overcame sincerity and after a short reflection she penned the following letter:—

"Ever since your departure, I have not been the same person I used to be. I do not know how to describe my feelings as I do not know them myself. Nothing consoles me. There seems to be something wanting to make up my poor life. There appears to be a void which nobody else can fill but yourself. Here in beautiful Hangchow I feel as if I were in a wilderness. Her calm lakes, her verdant hills, her great antiquity do not interest me. I have seen enough of the pleasures of the world and am sick of satiety. I

have pondered over the circumstances of my life till my brain becomes feverish. How to atone for my sins is always ringing in my ears. The answer to that question is lost in a labyrinth. Thinking both by day and night has weakened my brain. I feel as if I were a maniac. Sometimes I think of seizing a pair of scissors and cutting my hair off, I mean make a nun of myself before entering a nunnery. At other times the well-known saying that life is not worth living prompts me to lay my hand on opium and commit suicide. I am enveloped in complete darkness. The only ray of light which is keeping me as I am is the thought of you. And the thought of you is burning in me like wildfire and has given me brain fever. If I could see you once and once only, I would be satisfied and would immediately follow the first course dictated by my own conscience. Every minute's delay works the duration of a year on my nervous system. On your return, if alive, you would find me a pale nun in one of the nunneries of Hangchow; and, if dead, you will find that I did not die of natural causes. I must have your succour. Return to me at once or else it will be too late."

CHAPTER XII.

THE REFORMER IN THE TOILS.



RIOT had taken place in Wuhu. The situation was alarming. Houses were burnt and property looted. Officials were at their wit's end how to suppress the rising. Foreign warships round about the China coast were despatched under sealed orders to proceed to the Yangtze. Kolao Hui men innumerable were busy at their work of devastation. Information as received by the Chinese officials convinced them that Kum Tong was the instigator of this trouble, he having convened a meeting of Secret Societies in Japan. Proclamations were posted broadcast in every street of Shanghai, emanating from the Governor of Soochow. A reward of ten thousand taels was offered for any person who would bring him dead or alive. The

proclamation began and ended in the usual Chinese red tape style. It commenced, "I, Official of the second grade of the red button, Governor of the province of Kiangsu, having received telegraphic instructions from the Grand Council, do hereby issue this proclamation," and ended, "Those who may be found abetting the evil-doers will be summarily executed. Let all implicitly obey."

The news of the outbreak had reached the public at Nagasaki, but the details were not to hand. Kum Tong was very much upset with the tenor of Sih Jin's letter. She was suffering in mind and body for his sake and he left for China on the very day he received her letter. The steamer arrived in the evening after dusk. To his surprise and dismay he saw the proclamation posted on a lamp-post on the wharf. A sensation of deadly fear ran through his soul. Why did not Sih Jin inform him of this? Perhaps the proclamation was only posted that day. But no, the dates on them removed the supposition. It must have been posted some days ago, and why did not she warn him? She could have done so by a telegraphic message. Perhaps she was in Hangchow

still and did not know anything about the proclamation for his arrest. He must go to her house at once and see if she was in Shanghai, but he might be recognized in the street. He jumped into a ricscha and got the hood and apron to cover himself from being seen.

Now Sih Jin was not the lively girl that she used to be. She had by this time lived to know her share of joy and her share of pain. There was nothing but woe in her wisdom. She was sitting alone in her house in Shanghai which had not been given up although she had been to Hangchow. She was going through the pages of San Kwoh Chze when one of her servants announced that the Hanlin was coming. With a grim face, she attempted to take no notice of him.

"Ha! ha! Sih Jin," said he, entering the room. "Your favourite Kum Tong is now in a fix. Ten thousand taels is a pretty good sum for his head. Bless your stars that a reward is not offered for yours."

She gave him a disdainful look, not even rising from her seat and continued reading her book.

"You are in my power now," he went on. "You have been in a dream all the time. You have always looked on the Foreign Settlements as a place of safety from the authorities of your country. Foreigners are not such idiots as to harbour criminals in their jurisdiction."

He meant to wound her pride. He wanted to humiliate her and see her stoop down to his feet and beg for mercy. He expected a scene. He expected her to cry and go into hysterics, but there he was mistaken.

Springing to her feet in a rage, she said, "I have had enough of you; begone from my house."

"Begone from your house," he repeated sarcastically "I have been paying the expenses of running this house for some time. I have as much right to be here as yourself."

She jumped like a wild cat, seized a revolver that was hanging on the wall and pointing it toward him, she said, with words more becoming a man than a woman, "Don't taunt me any more. I have had more than enough of you. I will shoot you and then shoot myself."

He was amazed at her boldness. The man sank into him. His timid nature betrayed itself. Instead of confronting her with the qualities of the sterner sex, he feared for his life. He looked round in horror, when his eye caught sight of a figure making its way through the wide courtyard into the house. He recognized the person. It was Kum Tong. Quick as lightning, he ran into the room behind. Sih Jin in her excitement thought the man was more than a coward, but the figure of Kum Tong passed in, facing her like a statue.

"What are you doing with that revolver?" he said in surprise.

"Oh," she said trying to choke the falsehood down her throat, "this is the revolver you said you brought with you from Australia. I was looking at it in remembrance of you."

"You were looking at it in remembrance of me," he murmured. "Could that be true?" he said in a loud voice, looking at her with attention. She simply gave a glance at him.

"Sih Jin," he went on, "there are proclamations broadcast about the place for my arrest. Are you aware of it?"

"I am," she replied hesitatingly.

"Why did not you warn me of the danger by cable?" he asked, still believing in her staunch friendship.

She did not reply, but he paused for one. There was a silence for a minute or two during which time her face changed colour.

"I was very anxious to see you," she said in an earnest manner.

"But if I were arrested on my way to your house, how could you have seen me?" he asked rather incredulous of her sincerity.

"Well, I could not help that." The words came from her lips as if she had summoned pluck to her aid.

"In that case," he went on, "you did not care though you saw my life sacrificed to gratify your desire of seeing me." The words went bitter to her heart. Conscience could no longer play at dissimulation. She hung her hand while a commotion was raging inside. He perceived her manner and began to lose faith in her.

"Well, then," he spoke in low accents in an unwonted way, "you do not mean to say that you sent for me on purpose to see me fall into the hands of my enemies?"

"If I wished to ruin you, I could have done that when you were in Soochow," she began, intending to explain herself, but then all at once she remembered the Hanlin was in the other room listening. How could she talk to him confidentially? She was going to say "wait a little and I will explain myself," but then uncalled-for memory brought to her recollection the heartfelt conversation which passed between her and him in Soochow. Comparing with what she said then, anything which she would be saying now could not justify her present conduct. She began to consider herself mean.

"You have said yourself you were aware of the danger overhanging me, why then bring me into the tiger's mouth?"

She was choked with her tumult of feelings. She tried to rise from her seat, but her limbs had lost the power of motion. The revolver she was holding in her hand dropped on the teapoy. She heaved a sigh.

"Sih Jin," he said with sadness shown in every muscle of his face, "I am surprised that you are not able to explain yourself. Remember in Soochow you asked me to leave at once. Remember what you said on that occasion."

Her recollections became more vivid. She was unable to reply.

"You said," he went on, "that it would pain your feelings to know that I had been put to torture to confess my doings, my future plots, names of my confederates, their whereabouts and their revolutionary schemes. You said it would hurt your feelings to know that I was made to kneel for a whole day on iron chains till the flesh of my knees could bear the pain no longer, till blood oozed from the flesh. Tell me, Sih Jin, if you are still possessed of those feelings."

She could not reply. Her face which had become marble white was now turning deadly pale.

"You said," he continued rather hotly throwing aside his sadness, "you said you could not bear to hear that the authorities

had cut off my heels to prevent my escape. You said you would be grieved to know that I was chained by the collar-bone."

Still there was no reply. She was breathing heavily.

"False woman," he said, "those of your sex are fickle but perhaps the history of the world has not known a more fickle woman than you are. You said you would lose sleep with anxiety if I were hung in a cage and died of hunger and thirst."

Tears ran down her face and relieved her throat. "Enough," she spoke at last, "every word of yours is a sting. No use to talk any more." Then mechanically like a dying person she reached the opium couch and laid her hand on the opium box.

"I see, I see," he said with a sneer "you want to commit suicide by opium-poisoning. Your own conscience has found you guilty."

As if inspired by some spirit, "I have not got a guilty conscience," she said in a strong voice holding herself firm.

"What do you want that opium for? You said in Soochow you would die of sorrow if I were killed with thirty-six cuts. Why cannot you explain yourself?"

"Yes, I can," she replied, "I would die a thousand deaths for you. I have not deceived you. I cannot explain myself before a third party."

"A third party!" he started in amazement.

"Yes a third party," dropped in the Hanlin. "She is adding lies on to lies. It was not enough to deceive me. She has now deceived you in turn to screen herself."

"Oh, Heaven!" she screamed, "come to my help," and darting like a mad woman to a table near her she picked up a pair of scissors and cut her hair off. Kum Tong was softened. In her features now he read sincerity. It struck him that the presence of the Hanlin in the other room prevented her from explaining herself. He blamed himself for having been rather harsh in his words. Tender regard for her came back to his soul. He was enraged at the presence of the Hanlin. There they were facing each other—a champion of the West and a champion of the East—a Reformer and a confirmed Conservative. Sih Jin had cut her hair off. She meant now to be a nun all

her life. Kum Tong lost his hopes of Sih Jiu. Love and hatred incited his bitterest feelings and in a fit of fury he took up the revolver.

"You are the man," he said, "who has been working for months for my arrest. You traitor, you want to ruin China."

"You are a traitor," the Hanlin retorted. "You who would upset the old order of things. You have played enough of your game and shall have now to pay dearly for your whistle."

"Say what you like," replied Kum Tong. "I have to die but before I die I would like to have the satisfaction of killing an enemy of Reformers." So saying he loaded the revolver. The Hanlin ran out of the house in fright followed by Kum Tong. Just a few yards away from the door of the house a shot was heard. A mournful event had been the result. Blood was spurting from the right shoulder of the Hanlin who screamed aloud as he dropped down on to the ground. In fright and in dismay Kum Tong tried to escape, but a Sikh policeman, on hearing the cry, was making his way fast towards him. On seeing the guardian of the peace, he

delivered himself and the revolver. Sih Jin, who had run after these two men, was standing aghast at the scene before her. The swarthy Indian, from his instinct, though ignorant of the language, was convinced in his mind that this woman must have been the cause of what appeared to him to be a love-affair, and consequently she was taken into custody.

Never in the history of Shanghai had an affair of such great political importance occurred. The news spread like wild fire. To the Chinese public, Revolutionist Kum Tong had been arrested and the poetess Sih Jin was concerned in the affair. The strangest part of the news was that the capturer of Kum Tong was a coloured man who was lucky to be the recipient of ten thousand taels.

The International Mixed Court appointed the next Friday for hearing the case. Women were anxious to have a glance at the poetess Sih Jin. They got up early in the morning before dawn so as to complete their toilette before the proper time. The male sex residing within the limits of the Settlements were fired with curiosity at the career of this extraordinary being Kum Tong. The sides of Nanking Road, footpaths, shop-counters,

windows and house tops were crammed. A sea of heads was visible to see the two criminals marched to the Court of their corrupt country. Kum Tong was handcuffed as a would-be assassin and Sih Jin was deprived of her liberty. In regard for the fair sex, they were both accommodated in a carriage in charge of two police officers. Men of means had paid fancy prices for windows in the Nanking Road for their families just to have a look at the dauntless Reformer of his great country fossilized with corruption.

As the carriage passed, voices crying out, "We will build a temple for you to last for generations" were heard from many quarters. Poor Kum Tong was in mind on an executioner's rack, but the encouraging words gave him some consolation.

The entrance to the International Mixed Court was kept clear by a dozen police. The Court assumed a more dignified appearance. The Assessor appeared in his Consular uniform and the Magistrate was there in his full official gear. The Chief of Police with his sword hanging at his side appeared in his proper place, holding the briefs of evidence in his hands. According to custom immemorial,

Kum Tong and beautiful Sih Jin had to go down on their knees. Kum Tong did not look like a bad man; his forehead bespoke intelligence. Delicate Sih Jin looked more like a princess than an ordinary criminal kneeling before the Bench. The Chief of Police gave a summary of the actual facts to the Court, pointing out carefully that the police were prosecuting the male prisoner not for anything connected with politics but merely with the offence of having discharged a firearm thereby causing greivous bodily harm to one Hanlin. The stalwart Indian was the first to give his evidence as to the arrest and the circumstances which justified him taking the prisoner into custody. Doctor M. described the wounds of the injured man. The Assessor after a long consultation with the Magistrate notified the police that the case was remanded until such time as the wounded man was able to appear.



CHAPTER XIII.

THE UPHEAVAL.



THE closing year of the Nineteenth Century was big with misfortunes for China. The calamity did not come unexpectedly. Shanghai, the centre of the Chinese world, was enveloped in complete darkness one fine morning at 9 a.m. Rumours were afloat of a Patriotic Association called the Boxers. Although the Chinese people do not profess to believe in anything beyond the domain of the senses, still there were individuals in responsible positions who aided the Association. How the members attained supernatural powers is thus briefly described by a writer:—The members bow to the south-east, recite certain mystical sentences, and then, with closed eyes, fall on their back; after this they arise, eyes glazed and staring, possessed of the

strength and agility of maniacs, mount trees and walls and wield swords and spears in a way they are unable to do at other times: semi-initiation renders the body impervious to cut or thrust, while the fully initiated fear neither shot nor shell. The various sub-chiefs are fully initiated, but the supreme chief is more gifted still—he sits in his hall, orders the doors to be opened, and while remaining there in the body, is elsewhere in spirit, directing, controlling, suggesting and achieving.

However, whatever were the beliefs, as soon as the Boxer Uprising had been subdued, China found herself a foot-stool for the nations. As a drunken man of the previous night regrets his doings, China began to deplore her orgies. Those who were responsible, began to ask each other as to what they had done. They had involved their country into an unheard-of-trouble from which it was difficult to extricate her. She had thrown down the glove to a dozen Treaty Powers. It is more than enough to make one enemy and even then how difficult it becomes to come to amicable terms with that

single enemy. The following is said to have given impetus to this rising and justification for it.

Chinese converts had deserted Chinese for foreign cults. They irritated their fellow villagers by refusing to take part in or share the expenses of village festivals. They shocked the official mind by getting their religious teachers to interfere on their behalf in litigation. The missionaries rode in green chairs and were recognized in certain ways as the equals of Governors and Viceroys. Kiaochow, Port Arthur, Wei-Hai-Wei, Kwongchow-wan &c. had been reluctantly ceded. China was nominally an independent state, yet she had to abide by foreign dictation. Extra-territorial status had left the foreigners lords of the land. Foreign intercourse and commerce had been forced upon her. Port after port had been opened to international commerce much against her will. Having an intelligent, cultivated people, sober, industrious and civilized when Europe was a barbarous country, homogeneous in language, thought and feeling, with everything required for existence of human life, entirely independent of outside resources, she

found no benefit accruing from treaty relations and thought herself merely a loser.

These reasonings were the views that justified the responsible parties after their way of thinking in trying to throw off the harness yoked upon them. But now in sober moments they found that the means which had been adopted were not sane. The wrong end of the telescope had been put to the eye. Now they began to say to themselves, Why massacre native Christians? Though Christians they still owe their allegiance to the Emperor of China. Why are we not able to govern them as the Japanese govern Japanese Christians? There must be some fault in our ruling system. Why do their religious teachers interfere on behalf of their flocks in litigation? There must be some flaw in our judicial system. We could make the missionaries understand, should it be necessary, that their work is not of this world and that they are taking too much on themselves, if we only knew how to do it. We must blame our own stupidity. It is not by murdering helpless missionaries that we can drive home this sentiment into them. We want to reform our own

constitution. If we had an efficient army and navy, Kiao-chow, Port Arthur, &c., could not have been taken away from us. In all our complaints we have to blame ourselves. It was our ignorance and blindness that made us forget the sanctity of Legations. If we want to throw off any of the yoke put on us by outside force we must do it in a proper way. If the Boxers were a patriotic association, we should have seen that the state was able to control them and not have given them such a large margin as to control the state. We commenced our work like barbarians, like cannibals. The history of the world shows that oppression never succeeded for any length of time. Administration tempered with justice and mercy has been triumphant everywhere. But how to acquire this administration? By modern education and civilization.

At last wiser counsels prevailed. China had received a never-to-be-forgotten lesson. Her potentates set up a new programme. Schools of western-learning sprung up from one end of the empire to the other. Her laws were recast. Her system of governing was completely overhauled. Her sons and

daughters possessed of qualifications for the improvement of the country were summoned from different parts of the world to her succour. A general amnesty was proclaimed for all those who had offended the conservative and blind government of the bygone days. After a long and painful confinement Reformer Kum Tong and Poetess Sih Jin were released from their prison so that their abilities might be available for the good of mankind. As a true son and a true daughter of China, our hero and heroine proceeded on their laudable mission. The successful work done by them will be placed before my readers in a volume by itself.



CHAPTER XIV.

CHINA'S FUTURE.



IN the distant future there is a mighty change in store for this great empire of China stretching from the frozen waters of the Amur river to the borders of the tropic zone, from the shores washed by the waves of the Pacific Ocean to the snow-crowned mountains of Thibet.

The great Arbiter who controls the destinies of nations had made China one of the greatest nations in the world. By leaps and bounds China had risen to the highest acme of civilization. She did not boast of millions of warriors and thousands of war-ships and weapons of precision. She did not utilize her immense virgin resources and sacrifice the lives of her countless millions to carry out policies of conquest or aggrandisement.

China had become a great nation by commerce, by the industries of her people and by unearthing her vast mineral resources for the benefit of mankind. The Chinese Emperor took his seat as befitted him in the Council of Nations with his bright yellow robe unstained by a single drop of blood either of his own or other nation's subjects. When the mineral products of other countries were exhausted, China distributed with an impartial hand what she had hoarded up and she was looked up to as the bountiful mother common to all. Instead of "China for the Chinese," "China for the world" had become the motto. China and the world became one family. The words "extra-territoriality," "foreigners" and "passports" were no longer to be found in dictionaries and were only known to patient historians writing a page of China in the nineteenth century. Her mercantile fleet covered the seas, her produce occupied every mart of the world, her people were happy, contented, brave, chivalrous, generous and kind. Where there was suffering and want, China contributed her part. Her sons and daughters rushed to the ends of the earth with eagerness and zeal to heal

and rescue. Where there was war or rumour of war, China was there to exert her influence for peace and right.

Our great-grandchildren stood side by side without distinction of race and without racial feeling, but with that touch of nature which makes the world kin and carried out the most beautiful of all precepts:—

“Peace be to all and good will to men.”



GLOSSARY.

NOTE.—Chinese names and words used in this work are spelt according to the pronunciation of three different dialects, i.e., Mandarin, Cantonese and Shanghai.

THE THREE KINGDOMS.—A set of books said to be the history of China in the Later Han Dynasty. The country was afterwards divided into three kingdoms.

CHEE KEH LIANG.—Chze Keh Liang, called Koong Ming, was the prime minister of King Lau Pe at the time of the three kingdoms. He was a very clever man and is said to have invented wooden horses which could walk uphill.

FOUR BOOKS OF CLASSICS.—Sayings of Confucius recorded by his disciples and generally quoted as subjects for essays in literary examination.

CHANG TIEN SZE.—Lived in the Ching Dynasty and is said to have had authority over the evil spirits, and this power is supposed to have descended to his offspring through a seal.

KANG YU WEI.—A Reformer, native of Canton, who escaped from Peking in 1898.

SON OF HEAVEN.—A title of the Emperor of China.

EIGHT IMMORTALS.—Consist of 7 males and 1 female who are said to belong to the world of gods.

HONG.—A firm, an establishment, a place of business.

HANLIN.—The highest literary degree in China and may be compared to a LL.D. The examination takes place at the Metropolis once in every three years.

SIN WAN PAO.—A Chinese newspaper in Shanghai.

LI TAI PAH.—A poet in the Tong Dynasty and is said to have been very fond of wine. He was drowned in trying to grasp the shadow of the moon when under the influence of liquor.

KOW-ROW.—A ceremony of prostration or of kneeling down on both knees.

SHAU CHAI.—The first literary degree, or the equivalent of a B.A. Examination held in one's own district.

CHING CHING.—An expression used to ask one to take or eat anything.

FINGER GAME.—The Italian Morra.

CHU REN.—The second literary degree. Examination held in one's own province.

WU CHZE SWE.—A son of the prime minister of King Ping Wang at the end of the Chow Dynasty. His father was beheaded for having given his sovereign a moral advice and Wu Chze Swe himself would have met the same fate had he not escaped.

5TH KANG.—A kang consists of two hours and commences from 7 o'clock in the evening and lasts till 5 in the morning. 5th kang extends from 3 a.m. to 5 a.m.

CHEE FOO.—A Prefect.

- FUNG SHUI.—Means literally wind and water, a superstition associated with the belief of good or bad luck according to circumstances of different things.
- TAIPAN.—A term used for the head or manager of a foreign firm.
- TAOTAI.—An official higher than a prefect or Chzefoo.
- CHE HSIEN.—A District Magistrate.
- YAMEN.—The Court or the offices of an Official.
- FUTAI.—A Governor.
- CHONG YUN.—The first successful candidate at the Metropolitan Examination.
- PO NGAN.—The second successful candidate at the Metropolitan Examination.
- TAM FA.—The third successful candidate at the Metropolitan Examination.
- TSUNG-LI-YAMEN.—Ministry of Foreign Affairs, now changed into the title of Wai-Wu-Pu.
- WOOCHOW.—Silk producing district in the province of Chekiang.
- CHING CRA.—Please take tea.
- GOLDEN LILY.—An epithet for the small feet of a Chinese lady.
- CHE NING.—See CHU REN.
- WONG KWAY FUN.—A famous actor.
- PING WANG.—Ruler of the Tsao State at the end of the Chow Dynasty who beheaded his prime minister for having given him a moral advice and wanted also to kill Wu Chze Swe, the prime minister's second son.

YU SHIH.—One of the standard books of China.

LOWDAH.—Head boatman.

HAN.—Chinese as distinguished from their ruler the Manchus.

SOO AND HANG.—Abbreviations for Soochow and Hangchow.

Joss.—A Chinese idol or god.

NGO FEI.—A loyal minister and general in the Sung Dynasty who had nearly succeeded in rescuing his sovereign from the hands of his enemies, but was brought back by the treachery of Chen Kwai to die a premature death.

CHEN KWAI.—Was a prime minister in the Sung Dynasty who by deceit caused the death of Ngo Fei.

KONG.—An earthenware vessel for holding water.

FOO.—A Prefecture.

WUHU.—A Treaty Port in the province of Anhui.

SAIKIO MARU.—Name of Japanese steamer.

SAN KWOH CHZE.—The three kingdoms, a book.

CHANG CHIH TUNG.—Name of a Viceroy.

WEI YUAN.—A Deputy.

YULOW.—To scull a boat.

O-ME-DEU-FAH.—An interjectional expression of holiness used by Buddhist priests.



