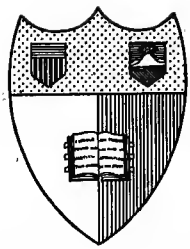
CHUN TI - KUNG

His Life and Adventures

A Novel



CHARLES WILLIAM WASON
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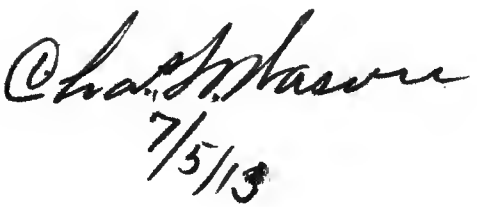
CHINA AND THE CHINESE

Chun Ti-kung



Chun Ti-kung

His Life and Adventures

A Novel

By
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CHAPTER I

THE ANCESTRAL COFFIN-SHOP

CHUN TI-KUNG'S father, Chun Se-fei, kept one of the most popular coffin-shops in a good-sized village called Pa-li Kiao, not far from the Foo City of Chow-shing in the Province of Chekiang. Pa-li Kiao, being interpreted, means a bridge eight *li* distant from some more important town.

Chun Ti-kung's father had been for years gradually putting by coin from his system of investing largely in planks of wood when cheap, and these in almost every year gave him a good return when they were converted into coffins; the price of a coffin for moderately rich people often amounting to £100 or even £150 sterling.

In the periodical famine years, and in the years 1862 and 1863, when the Taiping rebellion had devastated the country for miles around, and corpses were constantly being brought down for some sort of interment, his business increased to such an extent that his stock of boards was considerably reduced, and he found himself a well-to-do man. Many of the corpses belonged

to the poorer classes whose neighbours and friends could only raise funds for the most unpretentious of burials; but every now and then the head of a rich family required his services and a large profit was made.

In these years it was at first a great disappointment to find that many could not even raise the lowest price that Chun Se-fei could make up his mind to accept for the commonest shell, but had to bury their dead in rags; although, when his planks were becoming reduced in stock, he had reason to congratulate himself, as he found it practicable to increase the price in proportion to the demand. It is astonishing to what a degree of inconvenience the Chinese will put themselves to bury their dead decently, often leaving the family heavily in debt.

In 1876 his wood-yard was again well filled. After good crops and the disaster of a sharp cholera epidemic, the demand for coffins was enormous, and the elder Chun found himself rich as riches in China are estimated: he was worth in our money about £40,000.

Coffin-shop may seem a strange term to European ears, but to call the owner an undertaker would be misleading, as in China the buying of a coffin is a simple business proceeding. When the bargain is made the transaction finishes. Priests superintend the obsequies and interment, aided by the professors of that most mysterious doctrine "Feng shuy," who have to choose the site of the grave, just as in building they have to choose the site of a new house, and the position of its doors and windows.

Many people buy their coffins years before there is any prospect of their being required, and will often

show them to you with pride, resting in one of their halls or back rooms, in readiness.

Chun Se-fei, the father, had a younger brother, Chun Yu-tai, who, having been rather a wild youth when the Taiping rebellion was at its height, ran away from home and joined the Imperialist army; in which, for undoubted pluck, he was promoted from rank to rank, as engagement followed engagement, until he soon found himself commander of one thousand men, and received from the Peking Government, at the particular request of Li-hung-chang, the *Hwang Ma-kwa* (or yellow riding jacket), a decoration much coveted by the military in China. A year after the taking of Soochow, and the virtual suppression of the Taipings, Chun Yu-tai petitioned for a post as a small mandarin, and having Li's good-fellowship, and also having gained the reputation of not being a greedy man after money (an unusual and greatly-to-be-encouraged character in the eyes of the Peking high officials), he had gradually advanced in favour, so that after gaining good opinions at all the posts to which he was raised, he was finally appointed Tao-tai of Hoochow-foo.

Chun Yu-tai had been married for some years, and to several wives, but was at the time at which our story begins still childless, and bethinking himself of the imperative necessity of having an heir, to sacrifice at his tomb and to carry out the yearly celebration to the dead father and ancestors, he was troubled in his mind. The thought of his elder brother Chun Se-fei occurred to him, and although no correspondence had passed between them for years, he was well informed that Chun Se-fei's family consisted of four sons and a

daughter, and after much consideration he determined to make proposals for the adoption of one of his nephews. The letter had to be carefully worded, pointing out that he should do his best to push his nephew in the career of the literati, and admitting that his own fortune would have been better worked out if he had had more education.

"My most superior Brother," he wrote, "and one who must always wish to have the dignity of promoting the fame of the family, will you condescend to attend to the solicitations of your small unfortunate brother to whom Providence has denied a son, and allow the transfer of one of my worthy nephews, to be as it were blood of my blood and flesh of my flesh? I think that I can push his career upwards, and as too much in a granary is liable to rot, to part with one of your offspring for a time might be well, and I hope I shall approve of him for my heir."

When the letter reached Pa-li Kiao it caused much excitement, brought as it was by a Tao-tai's runner on ponyback, in itself a great honour.

At first Chun Se-fei had serious qualms that it was simply a requisition from the Tao-tai of his district for dollars, and felt no eagerness to acknowledge his own identity, but ascertaining that the messenger came from his own brother, the letter was opened, and it was seen that it would need serious consideration, and an early reply. The runner was therefore shown where to take up his quarters and obtain his meals, being told that next day an answer would be in readiness.

Chun Yu-tai was known to have obtained promotion, but his brother had not heard that he had risen so high.

He had always been looked upon and talked about as a relation who was more or less of a disgrace, for having chosen the low profession of arms (than which there is none lower in China excepting that of priests and actors). The proposal was therefore very much a surprise.

That evening the grandmother, Chun Se-fei, the eldest son, and the second son (also in the coffin business), held council far into the small hours, when a unanimous decision was arrived at that Chun Ti-kung, our hero, should be offered as the candidate for adoption. The reasons for this choice were, that as Chun Se-fei was well off and elderly, the eldest son, who was married and a father, was wanted at home for the sake of the business, and the second son was the father's favourite. All three were keen men of business, delighting to carouse together at China New Year, or in fact whenever a feast or holiday gave them an excuse to shut the shop, so that the duty of attending on their uncle's whims was readily relegated to the third son, Chun Ti-kung.

Chun Ti-kung was quite a different being from the other members of the family. Chinese women's lives are so suppressed, monotonous, and, as we may almost conclude, devoid of thought, that it is difficult not to think that Chun had derived his proclivities rather from his mother's father than directly from his mother herself. This grandfather of Chun Ti-kung's had been very fond of books, and might have become a great scholar had he not died young.

From the early age of six Chun Ti-kung had shown similar tastes, and now, having reached his nineteenth

year, he had already passed his three preliminary examinations at Hangchow, enabling him to compete for further honours. His advancement in life depended on these successes, and was by no means secure, as his papers *might* be sent in for examination after examination, and year after year, until he had reached his dotage, without result.

Chun Ti-kung was somewhat of a dreamer; he loved the hills and waterfalls that abound near Pa-li Kiao, and would wander about them trying to imitate the odes of the best Chinese writers, or making sonnets to a lady's eyebrow. To his love of books and writing was added a great admiration for all the ancient, well-preserved records of the ceremonies of former centuries. The proper conduct during times of mourning or rejoicing, in the worship of ancestors, in the celebration of the spring and autumn birthdays, even in shaving, was of serious import to his mind. In fact, he was a follower of the doctrines of Confucius, which, with the many additions of superstition tacked on by Buddhist and Taoist priests, forms the religion of China.

The day after Tao-tai Chun Yu-tai's letter had been received the runner was summoned after the mid-day meal, and was entrusted with a handsome folded dispatch. With some "cumshaws" (gifts) and good wishes for a prosperous ride he was sent on his course.

The dispatch set forth in carefully selected characters, that a fortnight from date the small and worthless third son of Chun Se-fei would be sent to pay his benevolent and much-to-be-honoured uncle a submissive

visit for the purpose of re-connecting friendship and cementing family ties; concerns always to be held in remembrance.

On the same morning, little anticipating how much business of serious import to himself had been settled during the hours that he slumbered, Chun Ti-kung was naturally surprised at receiving a written and formal request to present himself before his father at two o'clock in the afternoon, in the big room of the house where all feasts were given, and the rites to ancestors paid, at China New Year and birthday festivals. He of course donned his long gown and ceremonial hat, and on presenting himself, found his grandmother, father, mother, and elder brothers all in readiness for his appearance and anxious to communicate to him the great good fortune that had been decided on for him, whether he liked it or not.

As a matter of fact, the offer with all its possible opportunities was just what Chun Ti-kung would have wished for himself: the proposal was quite unexpected from the quarter whence it came; and to be able to continue his studies and to gain a name for scholarship was his great ambition. It was therefore with an excessive affectation of indifference that he expressed his dutiful submission to his parents' wishes, the exaggerated display of any feeling among the Chinese generally indicating the opposite of what they pretend.

"One further remark of importance," said Chun the father, "which is that we think it only right that your marriage should be celebrated before your departure, for often when fully occupied, the days and months roll by, and we take no count of them. You might follow

in the steps of your uncle, and have no son to continue the name after you."

Chun Ti-kung had, almost as a matter of course, been betrothed to a neighbour's daughter about a year before, but as he had never seen his betrothed, and felt no inclination for marriage, he shrugged his shoulders at this remark. For this unseemly conduct he was severely rebuked by his mother: and knowing that his clear duty under the circumstances was to complete the arrangement, he changed his tone, or rather his attitude; and proceeded to ask his father and mother to make all arrangements for the happy event to come off as quickly as possible.

In China the bride and bridegroom have not much trouble about their marriage, all being arranged by their respective fathers and mothers, and in most cases through a third party, who is called in to make the proposals. Marriage resolves itself into a matter of bargain. The bride's father, if in equal circumstances, generally gives more than the son's father, which seems reasonable, as the girl and her children belong to the other family, which is in future responsible for their maintenance. The exchange of presents, clothes, jewels, and furniture, is all done by the seniors through the go-between, and, until the marriage-day, the bridegroom, at any rate, can do pretty much as he likes.

A lucky day was accordingly chosen from the Chinese calendar, by the priest's advice, and the exchange of presents and visits having been completed, the bride was brought home to her father-in-law's house in the prosperity-and-happiness-giving red chair belonging to

the village. The priests attended, the mystic silk strings were exchanged, the wine from the same cup was drunk by bride and bridegroom, and Chun Ti-kung became a married man by all the laws and customs of the Empire.

On the wedding-day, and the day after, the bridegroom was hard worked, what with having to entertain the guests, and having to eat and drink a great deal too much. But ye ladies! what a time had the bride! For five or six days, dressed up in state, she had to stand and bow to all the guests introduced to her: her poor head crowned with ornaments weighing seven or eight pounds, and the other clothes almost equally uncomfortable; and this ceremony lasting each day from noon to seven o'clock.

Chun Ti-kung's father had naturally foreseen that the necessarily long-drawn-out preliminaries to Chun's departure would take a week longer than the period mentioned in the letter to Chun Yu-tai. "For otherwise," as the father said, "would it have looked well to force off one's son on to the hospitality of his uncle in unusual haste?"

CHAPTER II

COUNTRY MOUSE AND TOWN MOUSE

ALL things now having been arranged, and five days having elapsed since the wedding took place, Chun Ti-kung and his belongings (which his father had been far from niggardly in furnishing) were put on board a native boat which, with the exception of a few *li* of land carriage, would bring him to Ningpo.

The wife remained with her father and mother-in-law.

The Chinese are emphatically a stay-at-home race, and few of them travel beyond the limits of their own or the next adjacent parish, with perhaps one or two visits to their Foo City, during their life-time. Chun Ti-kung, as will have been noted, had been as far as Hangchow for his examinations, and had spent some days there, but beyond this, nowhere; so the route before him, first to Ningpo, then by foreign steamer to Shanghai, and thence again in native craft to Hoo-chow, appeared a serious undertaking.

Some rapids on the way down from Pa-li Kiao, and the shouting and excitement of the crew, greatly astonished him, but in spite of apparent danger he

arrived at Ningpo without mishap, where for the first time he was to come into contact with the "foreign devil;" the only words that really express the Chinese feeling towards foreigners, even after years of association.

It is possible, I suppose, that there are out-of-the-way places in Europe where inhabitants may exist who have not heard of railways, and who do not understand the meaning of the posts with wires. If so, they must surely be people who have not learned to read and who lack intelligence. In Chun's case there was no lack of intelligence or knowledge of Chinese books: but there were no links, no intermediate steps, to convey to his mind the myriad experiments that have resulted in the marvels of modern invention; and it must be a great shock of surprise that first assails a person in Chun's position.

The only information that is given to a Chinaman is that the steamer is a "Ho-lun Chuen," something to do with fire, wheels, and a boat. "The superior man" however, as Confucius says, "is not an utensil." He has still room for endless observing and learning. And Chun, after hearing the explanation from the friendly banker in Ningpo to whom he had been sent by his father, with trepidation in his heart but calmness on his features, was next day conducted on board the s.s. *Tun sin*, and wished good luck in a glass of *samshu*, while fire-crackers were let off on the wharf to cheer his spirits.

The steamer had a good number of passengers, but though many of his fellow-countrymen with whom Chun talked had often made the trip, to his disappoint-

ment none of them had any clear notion how the power of moving through the water was obtained.

A fireman whom he had recognized as hailing from his own village, and with whom he began a friendly talk while the steamer was still at anchor, showed him the boilers, the coal bunkers, and the engines, through the skylight, but as the fireman's ideas of how the engines were made to work were far from either theoretical or practical correctness, little enlightenment was obtained. After the steamer had started, Chun tried to make a few observations on his own account, but his hopes were dashed, and his feelings hurt, when, on trying to peer in at the door of the engine-room, he found himself unceremoniously pushed back by a greasy arm thrust through a dirty shirt-sleeve, with a phrase he did not understand, "Get out of this, you d—d Chinee."

The twelve hours' passage was enlivened by Chun's making the acquaintance of the son of a Shanghai foreign bank comprador, a specimen of the native gilded youth of that place. This young man, anticipating some fun from Chun's evident greenness, began the conversation: made himself very agreeable to win Chun's confidence; and succeeded in so far that Chun agreed to put up at the hotel which this young gentleman Pei recommended. Chun at the same time insisted that Pei should see him through dinner on his first evening in Shanghai, to which Pei only too readily agreed.

Chun arrived at Shanghai at seven o'clock in the morning, and after being pushed and dragged hither and thither by the hotel touts, finally, with Pei's well-

directed efforts, found himself at the Guest House Chang Chun leu (or Everlasting Spring), where he was taken to what seemed to him a luxurious apartment.

Shanghai has many native hotels pure and simple, but the Chang Chun leu was one of a few old foreign "hongs" which have been converted to this use by enterprising proprietors, and although dirty and ill-managed, the facts that visitors could here experience the novelty of tasting foreign "chow chow" if they liked it, and that "coal-fume" or gas is laid on, generally keep them full, and Chun was lucky to find himself so easily accommodated. He ordered breakfast for himself and Pei, after which that young man had to leave to report himself to his father, and Chun, after washing his hands and changing his clothes, began to consider what he should do.

His arrival at the wharf, the scrambling and jostling for himself and his baggage, and the rapidity with which some big foreigners, with few disputes, had cleared the steamer of its passengers, had greatly bewildered him. It was so different from his experience at Hangchow, where with his three hundred fellow students, there had been endless delay in identifying the competitors, and allotting to them their respective cells in the Examination Hall, although they only arrived in comparatively small parties. In walking to the hotel he had only vaguely taken notice of very wide streets, and such tall houses as he had never before seen, his mind being in fact harassed by the total disappearance of his baggage, which Pei, after having it pointed out, had sent to its proper destination.

Qualms seized him, after observing Pei's strikingly handsome silk costume, that his own clothes were not good enough; and then, seeing people looked so busy, he felt uneasy about choosing the right time to call on the banker to whom he had letters of introduction. Finally he settled to leave these matters to be discussed with Pei at dinner, and asked his host how best to employ his time till then.

"My worthy host," said Chun while eating his midday meal, "what way do you recommend as being most appropriate to your humble guest for filling a few spare hours?" The host, with a view to the largest "squeeze," at first suggested a horse carriage, but finding that Chun thought this extravagant, proposed that he should take a "Tung yang Choi" for a ride down the Bund and over to Hongkew. Chun was perplexed and silent: here was a carriage of some sort apparently without horses, and bearing the curious name of "East foreign," whereas Chun had attributed all these kind of changes to West foreigners. Seeing, however, that his host waited, and not wishing to appear inexperienced, he gave his consent, and in a few moments was told that the carriage was at the door. He put on his hat and went down, nervous but determined, and was agreeably surprised to find what a far from formidable-looking vehicle a jinrikshaw is. On moving off he remarked to himself, "Verily this is better than a wheelbarrow and quicker than a sedan-chair."

His ride through the settlement filled Chun with wonder. One of his first acts was to stop the rikshaw, alight, and, to the astonishment of the bystanders, gather together some of the dust of the road. Never

before had he seen a road made of granite chips, and it was not till long after that he found out how the smooth surface was accomplished. In a letter of this time that he wrote to his father, he described the roads of Shanghai as "smooth, cut out of solid stone."

Chun in his rikshaw went down the Bund enjoying the really pretty picture. On each side of the road were trees just then putting on their bright green coats, beyond them on the right the handsome river was crowded with boats of all descriptions, from the sampan riding lightly like a duck on the water, to a high Tientsin junk, from the steam launch to the man-of-war and grand mail steamers; on the left, houses higher and bigger than any palace, finer than it had entered into his heart to conceive.

At first he was inclined to believe the houses were built of stone, but finding one of red brick he supposed that the others might also be made of brick and covered with plaster, like the Loongfung Pagoda on the Sehoo (Western Lake). Still, the glass windows, the absence of dirt, the number of the houses! Wonderful! A cart passed him, and all at once sprinkled his wheel, and the rikshaw coolie's legs, with sparkling drops of water, astonishing to see; but what diverted his attention and upset his equanimity was the number of horse carriages, constantly driving to and fro, sometimes at such close quarters to his rikshaw wheels, that he made a start to jump out on the other side, so that on one or two occasions he almost destroyed the equilibrium of his carriage and draughtman, the latter at intervals turning round to remonstrate.

Chun had read of horse carriages at Peking, but

never had thought of their going fast or without being led, and when he began to piece together in his mind the number of foot passengers, the horse carriages, and rikshaws and wheelbarrows that he had seen, he drew the conclusion that some great *fête* or fair must be going on, the cause of which he must ask Pei in the evening.

One little occurrence impressed itself very strongly on Chun's mind. His rikshaw collided with another, almost upsetting it, the occupier of which, a merry British tar, felt the necessity of jumping out and proceeding to pummel his coolie's head. Chun drew in his breath, for forth from the side walk, tall, dark, bronzed, with dark-blue clothes and a red turban on his head, strode a Sikh policeman, who laid hands on the obstreperous white man, and telling the rikshaw to follow, marched him away. Chun's reflections formed themselves into this, "Was this a *Tung-yang?*" The *Se-yangs* are evidently white. We have a black god in most of our temples, but what could *this* creature be?

The lamp-posts and the telegraph-posts with wires passing overhead he made a mental note of in his brain to inquire about afterwards.

There is nothing in the structure of the wooden bridge at the end of the Bund to attract the attention of a Chinaman. The streets of Hongkew, beyond it, are for some distance bordered by plainly-built shops, little if any better than may be seen in any China city, so that when the rikshaw coolie—who had early in the engagement, much to his delight, received the order to go slowly—assumed an appearance of ex-

haustion, and asked, "How many more *li* do you wish to go?" Chun, seeing that there were now uninteresting vacant places between the shops, and tired of novelty and excitement, gave the order to turn and go back to the hotel.

On some shops on each side of the way he now for the first time noticed the advertisement of *Tung-yang* goods for sale. Getting down and entering one, he was shown some specimens of Japanese porcelain and tortoise-shell ware which were new to him. These he admired and could not help wishing to buy, but as he felt the need of economy, he bowed to the shopkeeper, and saying that he would return in a few days, left the shop.

To the already numerous "wrinkles" in Chun's mind had been added this one, that he had discovered that *Tung-yang* (Eastern Ocean) meant Japanese. He came back to the hotel by four o'clock, and as the coolie, backed up by the landlord, charged only twice the amount that was due to him, Chun suffered only a moderate "squeeze."

Chun felt very grateful to the host when the latter brought him as a means of passing the next hour a newspaper of the day in Chinese to read. Chun had not known that a daily paper was issued in Shanghai by the *Shun-Paou* office. Besides the *Peking Gazette*, which is entirely official, there are no newspapers in China excepting those started as a speculation by foreigners in Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Tientsin, and it was a novel treat to Chun to read the news. As the daylight was failing, he drew near the window to

finish reading the paper, and hearing ship bells ring five, raised his head, and caught sight on the opposite bank of the creek of a small flickering orange spark. Dropping his paper in surprise, he saw without any apparent assistance the spark become a steady fixed light, in a globe as large and bright as the moon itself. The streets, previously fading into darkness, now shone brightly illuminated. The shadows, however, had all the darkness of night. Then, too, Chun noticed that other high posts had also become lights. This was his first introduction to electric and gas lamps.

"Your honourable guest awaits you," announced the proprietor of the *Chang Chun leu*, and Chun hastened down to meet and welcome his newly-made friend. Pei greeted him gaily.

"My brother," he said, "if you will allow me to have the honour of so addressing you, I have taken the liberty of speaking with this old dormouse of a landlord of yours, and I have suggested, if you agree, that this being your first visit 'beyond the doors,' you should treat yourself and me to a meal served in foreign fashion, washed down with a bottle of foreign *samshu* which they call 'sham-ping.' In the meantime let us smoke a cigarette."

Chun answered, "I shall always be ready to accept any suggestion made by my elder brother, and feel myself bound to be grateful for the efforts you make to enlighten my mind."

Cigarettes were brought and smoked—these pernicious luxuries Chun had already seen at Pa-li Kiao—

and in a quarter of an hour dinner was announced. The requisite bowing and gesticulating as to who should take precedence in entering the dining-room having been properly gone through, Chun finally pushed his friend into the seat of honour on his left hand. The table was lighted by gas and covered with a tablecloth—two novelties to Chun—and there were funny instruments in the way of electro-plated spoons and forks and knives instead of chop-sticks. With Pei, however, Chun did not feel shy, and found the implements not very difficult to control, and with a quart of Jules Mumm "sham-ping" between them they soon began to talk freely.

Chun, eager for information, inquired first about the electric light. "Oh yes," was the answer, "but it doesn't pay; the Teen-seen (telegraph) means something about lightning and wire, the engine that makes it is down in Hongkew, and works very much like a steamboat engine, only differently."

"The pavements? Yes, certainly an improvement on old Shaou Shing, but the cost, how much *don't* they cost? Very dear are the foreign settlements and their ways. Fair or *fête* here? No, there was nothing unusual in the traps that you saw, they were only the usual business people going about their affairs. The place is always busy, excepting on *Le-pai*, the seventh day, when our Custom-house is closed, and as a rule the foreigners do not open their offices unless we ask them. The gas overhead? Yes, that is generally used now. You bake the coal and make it give out a breath of itself, which lights when you apply a match to it."

"Then," said Chun, "how are matches made?" But this Pei did not know, and beginning to find the questioning dull, said—

"Take another cigarette and let us walk around; you may have seen pretty girls in Hangchow, but I think I can show you better and comelier here. Finish the sham-ping. Here's to you. Come along."

No Chinaman is what we call moral in the limited sense of the term, there is nothing wrong to his mind in amusing himself with "sing-song girlie," even though he may be thrice married; and although Chun had always been a quiet, steady young man, he was quite open to do and dare a little excitement with friend Pei, especially with the half quart of champagne inside him.

So out they started: Chun in his quiet suit of blue cloth with a darker blue jacket and a cap of black silk, contrasting strongly with his companion, whose cap was of civet fur, his jacket of æsthetic green, and coat of pale pink satin, his leggings of primrose tied at the ankle, above white stockings, terminating in yellow shoes deeply decorated with black velvet, a dress indeed that for harmonious colouring would have attracted admiration in Regent Street. Their pig-tails differed in splendour—Chun's slender, quiet, and unpretentious; Pei's broad at the base, thick throughout, and gradually ending in silk braid—swagger from start to finish. Their hats too they wore with a difference; the manner of wearing a Chinese hat is indicative of character. A steady man wears his a good way back from his forehead, while a rakish

young fellow will pull it half way down to his eyebrows.

It was apparent that Pei had mapped out the evening's entertainment pretty carefully for his own amusement, for when he and Chun arrived at No. 10, in an alley-way off the Foochow road, and knocked, they were immediately shown up to a nicely lighted and comfortable room—cups of tea and a plate of melon seeds were placed before them. Presently two young women, whose names were Le Keaou-lin and Ong Tu-pao, very handsomely dressed, and accompanied by their *amahs* carrying silver water pipes for smoking pale tobacco, were shown in and introduced. A wink of previous acquaintanceship passed between Pei and Miss Le Keaou-lin. They were pretty girls not more than eighteen years old — too much whitened and painted, and their hair too much gummed and plastered down for foreign ideas of beauty, but with attractive ways, full of conceits, talk, and songs.

Chun was at first quite a wet blanket, not knowing what to say, but after Miss Ong Tu-pao put her hand on his shoulder and said, "Dear Mr. Chun, I hear you come from my dear old native place Hangchow, and that you can give me all the news about it since I was there," Chun found himself ready with the first compliment he had thought of and answered—

"What a happy place."

"Nonsense," replied Ong Tu-pao. "I don't want humbug, I want you to tell me all you can of the old city. If the walls are rebuilt, if the suburbs show more trade, and if the festivals on the Sehoo go on as ever."

Chun answered that most of his time in Hangchow had been spent in the Examination Hall, but that one day he had gone to the Sehoo Lake and enjoyed himself very much. Ong Tu-pao did not push her inquiries further, indeed it is doubtful if she had ever been as far as Hangchow, but the reserve was broken, and Chun having been enticed out of his shell they were all soon in merry conversation.

To Chun's inexperienced mind, a woman who could talk, who knew a good many pieces of the acknowledged poetry of China, and who was prepared to cap verses with him, was full of fascination. He wrote—

> Her form is like the swaying willow,
> Her eyes are like lakes in autumn
> When no wind ruffles the surface.

She sang to her lute—

> A dragon from the Eastern seas,
> A phœnix flying in the skies,
> So does he seem to me.

He replied—

> The phœnix fain would perch on the swaying willow;
> The dragon would mirror himself in the calm lakes.

But time was flying, and Pei signalled that *samshu* was to be brought: it came, in delicate little cups of fine porcelain, slightly warmed. Nasty? Not at all, if the wine is well seasoned. This came from the Shantung district, and was nutty and tasty, and much appreciated by Chun.

The game of Italian "Morra" was then started; this game looks simple, but it requires remarkably quick eyesight and judgment, and as the forfeit for the

loser is—in China—to drink a glass of wine whilst the victor does not, it happened that Chun had to drink a good deal more than his opponents.

The *amahs* handed their mistresses the Chinese apology for a guitar, and some songs were sung, delightful to Chun and Pei, who enjoyed the monotonous falsetto, the octave crowded with many more divisions of notes than in European music.

Pei now suggested to Chun that it was his turn to order refreshments; and Chun, who had lost count of time and dollars, called for hot soup, fish, sweets, and more *samshu*. By this time it was past one o'clock, and Pei, knowing that he had already incurred parental displeasure for staying out so late on the first day of his return to Shanghai, began to fidget and wanted to leave. Chun, however, had just confided to Ong Tu-pao, in strict confidence, his and his uncle's name and address, his future grand prospects, and his hopes that she would never forget him, and would not hear of breaking up the party so soon.

At half-past two Pei had disappeared, and Chun might have been seen sleeping snorefully on one of the couches, covered up carefully with a sheep-skin rug.

Early the next morning the coolies of the establishment roused him, and he sat up with a racking headache, and a dismayed feeling that he did not know where he was. The head coolie brought him a cup of warm tea, and while he sipped it and began to recover his scattered senses, a slight little figure slipped into the room, kissed him on the forehead, and begged

him to remember all that he said last night, and at the same time, with a twinkle in her eye, pressed into his hand a small piece of paper with Chinese characters on it; a bill, in fact, for thirty-five Mexican dollars.

CHAPTER III

BRIDEGROOM AND SING-SONG GIRL

CHUN TI-KUNG'S father had treated him liberally, as besides supporting his wife, he had made him an allowance of about seventy-five pounds a year, so that he might never feel himself entirely dependent on his uncle. The sum, given by a rich father, sounds insignificant to European or American ears, but if we could, or rather would, live on Chinese principles, we might all of us become independent, if not rich, before we reached the age of forty years. Chun Se-fei's personal expenses scarcely exceeded what he had allowed his son.

Chun had been deeply impressed with his father's generosity when he first heard of it at Ningpo through the bankers, and felt horribly disgusted with himself at having placed himself in his present position. He could not help feeling himself dissipated and disreputable-looking,—he hardly knew his way back to the hotel, and all the time staring him in the face was the wretched bill—

One table for 4 persons .	$10
One supper . . .	8
Shaou Shing wine . .	5
Hire of musicians . .	12
	$35

Old Chun Se-fei had supplied him with what he considered amply sufficient cash to carry him through to Hoochow. After arriving there, he could begin to draw his allowance from the bankers; but here at the beginning was an expense which had not been reckoned upon by any of the parties concerned, but which he wisely considered could not be disputed. "If you have been foolish, pay for the folly and commit it not again," he said to himself.

Chun called for a basin of water, washed his feverish face and hands, and left the house saying that he would return and settle the bill. Fortunately for him Pei's credit, at any rate as far as introducing guests went, had not yet been exhausted, so that no opposition was made to his leaving the premises.

So, then, to walk back to the hotel, without showing that he felt as if everybody were staring at him, to face the interview with the bankers, and ask from them more than a month's income at one fell swoop. "For," said Chun to himself, "if the small Chinese supper cost thirty-five dollars, what must the foreign dinner have cost?"

Poor Chun. To hardened sinners it may be easy enough to face a landlord's inquisitive eye, but to him, who had passed his first and second examinations with credit, how mean and despicable did it feel to have to come home early in the morning, and ask for breakfast, everybody knowing, as he thought, that he had not been in bed all night.

To Chun's simple mind, the fact of having to present his letter of introduction to the bankers and ask for accommodation was a monstrous bugbear; and until it

seemed absolutely certain to him that the thing must be done, he sat in a succession of hot and cold shivering fits.

Eleven o'clock struck, and having resolved to face the worst, he called a rikshaw and drove off to the addresses with which he had been provided, first to a cousin in the Maloo who was to identify him to the great Ningpo banker Tung Yu, on whom his credits were.

The cousin was expecting Chun Ti-kung's call, welcomed him cordially, and after a short conversation expressed his willingness to vouch for Chun's identity to the Tung Yu firm, which he did; that is to say, he took him to the bank, told one of the subordinates pretty high up in the office, that Chun was his cousin, who had letters of introduction to the firm, and finding that Tung Yu was engaged, left Chun to look after himself.

Waiting for an interview with a principal at home, and waiting for such an interview at any Chinese *hong*, are very different things. In England you are perhaps shown a seat and told to wait, but in China you are virtually introduced to a large number of people, all more or less interested in the business, and all equally anxious to find out what you have come about.

Chun, after waiting some time, was easily persuaded by one of the older clerks in the office to explain his business and show his credits, when the clerk said—

"Oh, we knew all about this yesterday, there is no need for your honourable self to wait, only show us that you have the same signature as in the letter of credit, and your draft will be honoured."

Chun's mind was relieved for the moment, but as he wanted information as to how to proceed to Hoochow, he stammered a little, asking, "But how shall I get up to my uncle?"

To the question, "What uncle?" his answer, "Chun Tao-tai of Hoochow," caused the elderly clerk to change his tone, and instead of answering the question immediately, he, like a Scotchman, replied—

"When do you wish to leave? Where are you stopping?"

Chun, though a youngster, had sufficient "savvy" to reply that his great object was to leave for his destination as soon as possible, if they would let him know the best way in which it was to be done. The old clerk told him that he would make inquiries, and added—

"I think I shall be able to make all arrangements for you to start on the evening tide, which will probably serve at seven o'clock."

Chun rose to go, still feeling that two such bills as he must present so soon might injure his credit, stammered and hesitated on his way to the door. The old clerk again took him by the arm and piloted him into a small private room; remarking, as soon as the door was closed—

"My young friend, it would be a pity for all of us if we had not once been young. We knew that you arrived yesterday, and it was our business to find out that you spent the evening with Master Pei."

The term "Master Pei," so applied to his guest of the previous evening, rather opened Chun's eyes to the fact that he was a notorious black sheep. He

explained the whole position, and the amounts that he felt himself bound to pay. The elderly clerk, laying his hand on Chun's shoulder, remarked—

"Remember, youngster, that as Mister Tung Yu and many of us come from a village close to yours, we are more or less friends. The difficulty you are in at present is small, you have been a little extravagant, I admit, but give me a receipt for all the money that you think you may require for expenses here, and to-morrow after tiffin you shall be started properly provided for your trip to Hoochow. Remember one thing more, if you really find yourself in want of money; send to us rather than apply to the outside usurers. You will find that anything in reason will be done for you on more moderate terms than you will get elsewhere. The proverb 'Be economical with the cash and the silver will accumulate' is not one that I need bring to your mind."

Chun had looked at the hotel tariff, and calculated what he supposed his liabilities amounted to; and the clerk could not suppress a broad grin when he saw that the entertainment at No. 10 came to the larger half. "Your treat, I suppose?"

Chun answered simply, "I don't know," and having received the dollars, made his bow, promising to be punctual the next day.

It was now past one o'clock; so Chun, feeling in good spirits, went back to his hotel with a fine appetite for a good meal, after which he enjoyed a good sleep, a natural habit in a Chinaman. By and by Master Pei dropped in, hoping that he might induce his friend to go gallivanting with him again, but he found Chun

grumbling about the bill of the previous evening, which Pei hoped had not yet been sent in, so he wisely left, recommending in his facetious way a brandy and soda for the doldrums. The fast native youths affect foreign manners.

So Chun dined quietly by himself and then took a turn down the Bund, to observe, with a much-exercised mind, more of the foreigners' improvements or devil-tries. He had remarked, when washing his hands at the hotel, that the water he used had not to be carried up from a well or creek in buckets, but flowed as from a mountain stream into the basin through a leaden pipe—how surprising!

On his walk, he received a shock of alarm at finding himself and the adjacent objects within a radius of a few feet suddenly lighted up by an extraordinary glare. The bright light rested on him for a few seconds, then throwing dark shadows before it, travelled to the top of one or two houses, to the opposite end of the street, and finally withdrew itself, apparently into one of the ships in midstream. Only the electric search-light from one of the men-of-war, but to Chun another inexplicable phenomenon.

Confused and tired, Chun went back to his room to sleep, perchance to dream, till a late hour the next morning, when he enjoyed again the *Shunpaou* or Chinese newspaper, spent some time in dutifully writing to his father, and then proceeded to tiffin at Tung Yu's *hong*, to which he had received an invitation.

At tiffin Chun found that Tung Yu himself presided. The meal was on a little more elaborate scale than usual. Tung Yu sat with the elderly clerk and his

young guest, making inquiries about his native village, and giving Chun good advice for an hour or so. When tiffin was over, and the clerk was bowing Chun to the door, the latter remembered that he was still in need of a few more dollars with which to make a present to Ong Tu-pao, so drawing the clerk on one side he told him of his wish for a little more money. "You see," he said, "I shall have no expenses as far as I can see for a long time in the future, and although my hotel bill for the dinner, including the sham-ping, only came to ten dollars, still if I pay away all the money you gave me, I shall always feel worried in case anything should happen on my way up country."

The elderly clerk smiled. "You had much better leave the bill with me and let me settle for you—you have got cheaply out of your escapade, and I will provide you with a motto against Master Pei and his kind, that 'When you fly with eagles you should have an eagle's strength.'"

Chun would not hear of this arrangement, and said, "But—honourable Mr. ——?"

"Loo of the lowest degree," replied the other.

"Well, my honourable friend Loo, I think that I was so well treated that the least I can do is to make the remembrance of the evening as pleasant to my entertainers as it was to myself. I want you to let me have my own way on this occasion."

The clerk scratched his head doubtfully.

"Your boat, you know, leaves at four p.m. when the tide serves, from the Szechuen jetty on the Soochow creek. We have already sent a fast *chit* boat to your uncle to

say that you are leaving. I am afraid you may miss the tide."

"No fear," replied Chun. "I will go to the boat at once and see that all my things are in order, make my call, and return in good time for the start."

So Chun got his extra dollars, saw where the boat was situated, and that a coolie was installed over his belongings, and rushed off in great hurry and excitement to pay his supper bill.

Ong Tu-pao, Ong Tu-pao, the sweet name had been ringing in his brain for, it appeared to him, months, but when he got to No. 10, and, after considerable delay, Miss Ong made her appearance dressed in a fascinating masquerade costume as a man, Chun was rather disappointed to find the payment of the bill and the present of ten dollars received in a very matter-of-fact way.

"Come and see me the moment that you return from Hoochow," said she. "I am engaged for the theatre this evening, and if," with a smile, "it had not been for one whom I appreciate I should not have appeared in this costume. I see you have had tea, so I hope you will excuse my running away or I may be late. Good-bye. Come again soon."

She waved her little hand, bowed and retired, leaving Chun in disgust at what he considered want of feeling. Vexed at the slight conveyed by Ong Tu-pao's manner and words, he reflected also, that it was mean of Master Pei to have saddled him with the whole cost of the entertainment.

Poor little Ong Tu-pao, merriest of mortals, her appreciation of what best suited her boyish cast of

beauty cost her dear. It was illegal for a woman to put on the imitation man's attire that she wore. The mandarin hat, high boots, sable skin coat and pigtail, were amusing and becoming, but the Tao-tai Iseng, breathing out fire and damnation against sin and sinners, inveigled her into the infernal city of Shanghai; and who can say whether she was returned to her native village in disgrace, or if she never again left the prison alive?

CHAPTER IV

FROM SHANGHAI TO HOOCHOW

CHUN arrived on board the boat two hours or more before the tide served for starting; he was feeling out of spirits, lonely and depressed, and tried to occupy his thoughts by arranging his books and other belongings. As his dinner was served at about the same time that the boat was leaving the jetty, he hardly noticed, until he went again on deck, that he was clear of Shanghai.

Great are the pleasures of an up-country trip in a house-boat in China. To a foreigner it means freedom from telegrams, from letters, from business of all sorts; and although, on the Thames, house-boats may be more luxurious and more elaborately furnished, they can never pass beyond the region where letters are expected and telegrams may be sent.

A Chinese boat-house is, like everything else in China, uncomfortable. The fittings are all ill-fitted, and the draughts come in from all directions. A Chinaman, however, dresses in furs and wadded clothes in cold weather, and to him the inconvenience of draughts is slight. At the end of April, when the days are growing long and warm, a boat trip is delightful indeed, and as Chun from the deck watched the

moon rising, while the *yuhlo* (the great single oar worked by four men at the stern) sent the boat quietly along, he felt a fine return of spirits, and a happy trust as to what the future might hold in store for him.

For miles around Shanghai the country is a plain as flat almost as a billiard-table. You may climb to the top of a seven-storied pagoda and look round a circle of land as perfect as the circle of water you can see from a ship in mid-ocean, with nothing but a hillock or two, or a pagoda, to break the line of the horizon. In spring-time your eye will rest on many patches of wheat just ripening, on here and there an acre of peach-trees in full bloom, on fields of rape with its brilliant yellow flower. You notice the creeks of water meandering and fertilizing in every direction, and must be struck by the richness of the land.

Every now and then the four rowers working the great *yuhlo* varied their work when the banks served, and going on shore with a tow-line, dragged the boat along at an even, slow walking pace. At these times Chun also took a little walk along the banks, little as a Chinaman generally likes walking; he immensely enjoyed observing the features of the country new to him, and was not at all disappointed on hearing that, owing to contrary winds, the trip would probably take four days instead of three.

At Ta Kwang Miao, a name meaning great-brightness-temple, Chun was much interested in watching several boats paddle out to mid-stream with large birds perched on each gunwale. The boatmen push the birds off into the water, they dive, and presently, to the sound of a loudly beaten rattan, return, each bird to its

proper master, some with fish in their beaks and some without, the thriftless bird receiving a tap on his head from the bamboo. This was cormorant fishing, poor fun for the birds, as each wears a ring round its throat which prevents them from swallowing the fish that they catch. The birds, however, generally look brisk and in good plumage, and probably have a good tuck in after their day's work is over. What surprised Chun was, that although the boats were at no great distance from each other, every bird seemed to know the tone of his own boat's rattan, and no squabbling as to ownership followed the dive.

On the morning of the fourth day the Lowdah told Chun that the hills of Hoochow were in sight, and that he would probably arrive by two o'clock. He packed up his baggage in the odd baskets, pig-skin boxes, and nets affected by the Chinese traveller of Chun's class, read the message over again that he had been instructed to deliver to his uncle verbally, and tucked the letter from his father into his waistband pocket. The boat passed through a picturesque but dilapidated water-gate, and stopped in a wide piece of water inside the walls of Hoochow-foo.

At Hoochow folk are very inquisitive, always seeking for some new thing, so when it became bruited abroad that a stranger was going to call at his Excellency Chun Yu-tai's Yamen, fortunately no great distance from the boat, Chun was rather disgusted at finding himself the leader of a motley procession, members of which at times indulged at his expense in remarks on his appearance and clothes, intentionally uncomplimentary.

Arriving at the Yamen, he delivered the red paper slip that does duty as a Chinese visiting card, and was told to wait; nasty little boys still stood round chaffing him in a merciless way, until Chun and the two boatmen who accompanied him, found it difficult to keep their tempers.

Privacy in China is little regarded; staring crowds collect on small provocation, and are allowed to enter gates and even doors without much check; and in the precincts of a Yamen one is more public property even than elsewhere.

The room in which Chun was told to wait was not far from the hall in which his uncle was delivering judgment on the day's peccadilloes, and the crowd, gradually finding other attractions more agreeable to them than that of watching a stranger sitting on a form, dispersed, leaving Chun listening to what was going on in the inner hall.

A voice suddenly roared out, "Give him two hundred blows with the heavy bamboo, and his accomplices one hundred blows each. Do the rascals think I am going to be kept up all night listening to their lies? Clear the Court—the business is over for to-day."

For a short time longer, while the seals were being locked up in the presence of his uncle, the crowd meanwhile thronging noisily through the gates, Chun was left to himself; but his uncle, now having found time to look at his card, was again heard shouting.

"Where is the boy? what have you done with him? why have you kept me so long from knowing that he had arrived?"

"Judgment seat, you asses? Hang the judgment seat! Is not a man to welcome his own relations?"

It was a principle with old Chun Yu-tai never to wait for an answer to any question that he might ask of his subordinates, so striding into the waiting-room, still in his robes of office, he immediately singled out Chun as the man most likely to be his nephew, and tapping him on the shoulder, cried—

"Well, nephew, I am glad to see you here at last."

Chun Ti-kung made a ceremonious bow, and handed his father's letter to his uncle, who read it carefully through. Chun Yu-tai was a fine specimen of a Chinaman, six feet two in height and built in proportion; his long robes made his appearance decidedly imposing, and the younger man, who, although well-built, stood only five feet seven in his cotton socks, felt at a disadvantage.

His uncle began making inquiries as to his grandmother. "An old lady now she must be, I must get leave to see her as soon as I can. My brother? Well? That is all right. All your brothers and sisters in good health? Good. Come along with me now, I want to get rid of this panoply of office, which is far too warm, and I want to see that you are comfortably settled in your rooms, to which those stupid pigs of servants might have shown you when you first came, if," with a laugh, "they were not afraid of doing anything that I might disapprove of afterwards. Do you mean to say they have not sent for your baggage, or paid off those Shanghai boatmen? Come," he shouted in a stentorian voice, "are all you fellows asleep?"

The attendants hurried in, and after being roundly abused, were told to bring in his nephew's luggage at once. Chun Yu-tai added—

"And tell those rapscallions of Shanghai boatmen, that if they stay in Hoochow to-night repeating hashed-up stories about the wonderful wages to be earned in Shanghai, and all sorts of other yarns about that place, I will see what their skins are made of to-morrow."

Then taking Chun by the shoulders he led him to his own room, asking him to wait while he divested himself of his robes, reappearing again quickly in a plain, long, wadded coat and black cap.

"Come along, nephew," he said, "I am sorry that your parents insisted on doing all that business of marriage for you, but I quite see that you were not consulted in the matter. The rooms prepared for you are in the wing, and I hope sincerely you will find them comfortable, and that we shall get on well together."

Chun followed through a back door of the Yamen, and taking a turn to the right was shown through a small door into a small off-shoot from the central court, fronted by a garden planted with palms and a few green bushes. The door he saw could be fastened from the inside, while the three sides of the garden were enclosed with brick walls, so that his seclusion was complete. The garden was laid out in a way that thoroughly suited Chun's taste. Dwarf trees in pots, a little tank-like pond overhung by a fine weeping willow, some gardenia bushes, and small twisting paths, made the most of the limited space.

The apartment consisted of two rooms, a bed-room and a reading-room. "In which you can work either for yourself or for me," said his uncle. "But look here, I do not know your opinion of foreign ways yet, but I have learned in my campaigns to like one thing that they like, and that is bathing," and preceding Chun to a little room behind the bed-room, he showed him a Soochow earthenware bath-tub full of water. "You may order hot water, of course, if you like; but if you follow my plan you will take it cold during the warm weather."

The idea of taking a cold bath gave Chun a shudder down his spine, but he concealed it from his uncle, and expressed himself, as indeed he felt, delighted with his quarters.

A man put his head in at the door to say, "The luggage has arrived."

Chun Yu-tai jumped up, saying, "Now you can go along; see that you have the right number of boxes, and then the boy will show you where to meet me for dinner at seven. You have heaps of time to get ready, it is only six o'clock now, and I want the boatmen to get out before the city gates close, so don't dawdle just now."

Chun hurried out after his uncle to do as he was told. The men were soon paid and dismissed, a far easier task from a Yamen than anywhere else, especially if your uncle is the chief.

At seven o'clock a servant came to Chun's door and led him to a small room where his uncle received him, the table having been laid for dinner, and they took their seats. The dinner was a plain one of soup made

of lotus leaves, fish, rice, duck stewed with garlic, and tea.

Over the after-dinner pipe, Chun Yu-tai sketched out for his nephew the plan he wished him to adopt, the hours in which he would expect him to act as his secretary, and learn the business of the Yamen.

"As regards meals," he said, "you had better at present share them with me, only, of course, when it is agreeable to you; when you have work to do, or want to study, you have only to tell your boy at noon and he will see that the meal is served in your room. By the way, Ah Hwuy."

"Yes, sir," answered a respectable-looking coolie.

"You take care of this gentleman, and see that he has what he wants."

Ah Hwuy *kow-towed* to Chun, and said, "I hope, sir, to merit your approbation."

Chun felt very well treated, and began to make some rather effusive remarks as to the fatherly kindness with which he had been received. His uncle shrugged his shoulders, answering in a somewhat crusty tone—

"Look here, I know you are now talking as you should, but I get too much of this sort of palaver every day of my life. I shall be pleased if you are satisfied after a trial; but in the meantime, understand that if I do not want you at any special meal, I shall not hesitate to assert the same privilege that I have given to you, and I shall ask you to stay away." Then seeing that his nephew looked disconcerted, added—"But now as it is time for bed, let us first drink a glass of *samshu* together, and then say good-night."

Chun dropped quietly into harness at the Yamen,

and found a good deal to make the work interesting—legal technicalities as to land tenure, claims to estates the title to which had been lost during the rebellion, the common cases of theft and assault, all were interesting to him. The home life was not altogether so pleasant; he found that the first, second, and third wives were all averse to his being made his uncle's heir, and he had often to put up with cold looks and nasty innuendoes, whilst his uncle after a long day's work dozed in his chair, so he gradually took to spending more and more time in his own rooms studying, where he was often disturbed by his uncle, to take notes of some dispatch that had to be sent off by dawn.

CHAPTER V

HIS UNCLE THE TAO-TAI

CHUN YU-TAI, or Chun Tao-tai, to call him by his title, was one of those men who had actually rebelled against the dreary grind necessary for literary advancement, but happening to fall upon times when personal courage and promptitude were of value, he had found his services appreciated.

He had been on friendly terms with Li Hung Chang—for so long a time the leading spirit in China—and had worked with Chinese Gordon in his campaign for the Imperial Government, and carried ever in his heart the memory of the quiet, unshowy way in which serious operations had been conducted by that great man, without bombast or fuss of any sort.

In consequence of these memories, his views as to intercourse with foreigners were much more broad and liberal than that of most of his colleagues. Nothing annoyed him more, or roused him more quickly into prompt action, than to hear that a missionary had been pelted with stones for preaching, or that a harmless individual on a visit to the country had been treated with indignity.

Chun Ti-kung, on the contrary, was decidedly preju-

diced against foreigners, and their arrogant assumption of superiority. On this subject his ideas had not reached further than what is shown in a Chinese map of the world, in which China is shown as taking up nearly all the space, while Foreign Powers are represented as inhabiting little islands dotted around its borders.

For missionaries he had a special aversion, and on a day when he came across a foreigner (a devil, to his mind) trying to divert a crowd from attending a ceremony at the temple, vociferating and reiterating—"This is all false and wide of the truth," Chun felt his blood begin to boil; he blustered forward with the remark, "What new-fledged people are these who come to our towns telling us what is true and what is false? Is your country as long established as ours, and can you defend the opium traffic that is attributed to you?"

The crowd began to grow and thicken; the foreigner continued the argument in very bad Chinese, Chun answering hotly. The sympathies of the crowd were evidently being enlisted on the side of their countryman, a few stones and some mud were thrown by youngsters on the outskirts of the mob, and there was every appearance of a bad time coming for the lonely stranger, when very opportunely the Tao-tai's chair appeared on the scene, on a visit to a fellow official; the crowd was buffeted from side to side as the chair coolies made their way through the comparatively narrow space, and as soon as he had passed, the Tao-tai ordered back his bodyguard of twelve soldiers to see that the crowd did not form anew. His quick eye had caught sight of the prominent place taken by his nephew in the disturbance,

After the evening meal on the next day, as the two men were cracking their melon seeds, Chun Yu-tai remarked to his nephew, "I suppose you saw me passing by the other day when you appeared to be speaking to the people. I am not going to ask you any questions; but before you go any further in that direction, I want, as an older man than you are, to ask you to look for yourself into questions that you now take on hearsay. The foreigner to your mind is a brute beast; now have you any reason for that feeling of dislike? When I was your age I also hated all that I heard about them, and would, if it had been possible, have driven them from the country. Since then I have come into contact with foreigners, and have studied their books, especially that one that they call their Sacred Book, and I find that their theories of life are in many respects similar to our own. Their idea 'Do unto others as you would they should do unto you,' is in fact more practical than ours, 'Do not do unto others what you would not have them do to you.' They date their religion almost as far back as the time of Confucius, and we know what difficulties there are in finding information about his time. These Christians, all professing the same religion, have got so far from the original position that one-half of them or more call the Supreme Being whom they worship 'Teen Choo,' the other half call him 'Shang Te.' Both of them acknowledge a third God with the unfortunate name of Ya-soo, which requires very little change in pronunciation, as you know, to make it mean 'wild pig,' a name that you must often have heard in your intercourse with anti-foreign parties.

"Ya-soo is said to have been the son of a virgin, but in

both the French and the English religions he is reported to have had three Fathers, Teen Choo, Shang Te, and Da Vid. The last was a king of the time of Confucius. He led a bad life. In our own traditions there are accounts, you know, of similar miraculous births, and I am afraid that even in our Ancestral Worship there are ceremonies which we do not wish to omit for fear of consequences, but in whose efficacy we do not wholly believe."

Chun tried to remonstrate.

"Hear me out," said his uncle. "Get the books which you have never read. Read them, and then if you like come and argue with me. In the meanwhile, remember I will not have you bringing yourself, and consequently my Yamen, into disputes about foreigners. I think of course that they made a big mistake in insisting on this country being opened to teachers of religion instead of traders; it was probably on account of their old proverb—'First teachers, then a gunboat, and then trade,' but as the Treaty was made, and the missionaries are respectable people preaching peace and virtue, no one under my control shall treat them badly. When next I talk with you, you shall give me your opinion; but I know that your views are borrowed from other people only, and not well-informed people either. As Mencius said, 'There are no such things as righteous wars, but some wars are better than others.' The foreigners took Peking, but they enabled us to beat the Taipings, and we should, I think, do our best to prevent any new misunderstandings arising."

CHAPTER VI

A SON TO WORSHIP AT HIS GRAVE

It was a busy time at the Yamen; there were claims by silkmen against the pawnshops for having sold their silks in too great a hurry when there was a rising market; there were continuous fights going on about the proper boundaries of certain properties, and rights of way; there were transit passes to investigate, and the host of petty sins and omissions that come before a magistrate every day of his life. During the three years that young Chun lived in Hoochow, Chun Tao-tai did his best to make his nephew acquainted with his work; he usually made him attend as his secretary and reporter on the cases brought before him, showed him where to find the records of decisions on similar points, and how to draw up the forms of petition and defence in a manner fit to bring before a judge. At the same time he encouraged Chun in earning some money as a pleader when a case was offered to him.

The Tao-tai's reputation for never accepting bribes was so long established, that he had rarely of late years been tempted in that way. On one occasion, however, on which a suit for adjustment had been laid before

him, he smiled after going through the particulars, and sending for his nephew said, "Here, my boy, is a case in which one side has deposited one hundred and fifty dollars, and the other only fifty dollars. Read the papers through carefully, and report to me on it."

Chun accordingly took the documents and studied them, and much as he wished to appear averse to bribery in his uncle's eyes, he could not help determining that the dearer-paid application had the more justice on its side, and after a night's consideration he told his uncle his opinion with rather a sheepish air.

The Tao-tai rubbed his hands with a satisfied look, remarking—

"Quite right, my son, quite right, I had arrived at the same conclusion myself, but these fellows, though they may be equally rich, sometimes try me by pleading as if they were poor and oppressed by their richer neighbours; one must learn to judge not on the amount offered, but on the true merits of a case. Your decision has pleased me, for" (with a chuckle) "I thought you might have gone in for appearing too clean-handed."

The two months of September and October are almost always the months necessitating the hardest work in the Yamen, as outside the current work there are estimates to be formed of the production of the silk, wheat, and cotton crops, and the quantity of tribute rice, assessed as due to the Government against them. In the winter months there was a considerable amount of distress amongst the poorer agriculturists,

who had hardly had time since returning to their homes to lay by a store for a severe winter, although the large amounts of undergrowth that could be collected on the uncultivated grounds prevented what is sometimes the hardest of evils, want of fuel. All these had to be helped. At China New Year, Chun Ti-kung saw for the first time the ceremony of locking up the seals and closing the office for the regulation time of thirty days —one week before, and three after. On the first day of the New Year he assisted in receiving all the lesser officials in their fullest robes who called to pay their ceremonious visits, and at one or two official receptions that were given by the Tao-tai.

Spring came round with its new duties. Through all the year Chun Ti-kung conducted himself with modesty and propriety, giving satisfaction to his uncle, with whom his intercourse gradually had become more intimate and familiar, although at times he still had to submit to some hard words and names from the wives —the words "interloper" and "cuckoo" being frequently mentioned in his hearing, and with intent.

His uncle gave him a fair allowance, a small part of which he sent to his parents in Pa-li Kiao, whilst on his own account he had developed great interest and enthusiasm in the drilling of the troops, and had persuaded one of his uncle's veterans to teach him his drill, and, as the veteran was an athlete, wrestling, running, and jumping. When there was rifle practice he would shoot with the other soldiers, and became fairly proficient. As all this was done in the early morning, he hoped one day to astonish his uncle; but the Tao-tai knew all about it, and liked him the better, and

would laugh in his sleeve at the lame excuses that Chun Ti-kung had to make for a black eye, or a sprained wrist or ankle.

In February, according to the foreign year, a large red envelope had arrived from Pa-li Kiao by a special messenger, the contents of which were to the effect that Chun Ti-kung was a father, and that his heir was strong and healthy. This, which is generally great and joyful news, especially to a Chinese father, was, I am afraid, received rather apathetically. The acquaintance with his wife had been very short, and in the altered life and ambitions that he had been leading, Pa-li Kiao and its accessories were more or less relegated to the past. In a dutiful and official sort of way, he had from month to month sent letters to his father, hoping his honoured relatives and wife kept in good health, and that prosperity continued with them for ever; enclosing the paltry sum that he hoped would be sufficient to prevent his wife from being a pecuniary burden on their greatly esteemed hospitality; although at the same time hoping her services as a dutiful daughter-in-law were performed with love and alacrity, and that she should be corrected, if such were not the case.

Poor daughters-in-law in China have often a very bad time, but, as a matter of fact, Chun Se-fei's business was still very prosperous, and Chun Ti-kung's wife was pampered and made much of to an extent more than was good for her. She had latterly been sending angry messages (she had never learned to write), grumbling that her husband did not send for her to Hoochow, which Chun Ti-kung ignored, but which rather tended

to increase the hostile feeling that his marriage had from the first caused.

Chun Ti-kung had never told his parents of the remuneration that the Tao-tai gave him, but had left the allowance which had been steadily paid in for him by his father, to accumulate in the hands of Tung Yu, the bankers at Shanghai, who, in consequence, formed high opinions of such an economical constituent.

The "joyful news" had of course to be communicated to the Tao-tai, who felt glad that there was now no chance of the son whom he intended to adopt dying without heirs, and remarked, "You must give him a good education, and see what can be made of him." But the supper that was given in honour of the event was not hilarious, and the poor little beggar who had been ushered into the world was a nonentity as far as his father's thoughts were concerned for some time.

Handsome presents and letters full of high-sounding phrases were sent both by the Tao-tai and his nephew to their relations, and Chun's wife and son, and it is to be hoped they were received with more enthusiasm than that with which they were sent.

Chun Ti-kung during the period under review had improved greatly in appearance since leaving his home. He carried himself well, and had greatly developed his physique by vigorous exercise; altogether he was a handsome Chinaman, with rather that Jewish cast of countenance that many of them have.

His uncle, although rough at times, was a fairly well-educated man, whose demeanour was generally very dignified. The officials and their sons, with whom he

was brought into intercourse, were mostly well bred and very polite, and Chun Ti-kung had benefited from associating with them. He was inclined to conceit possibly, but this feature in his character was not easy of detection, and what lad of nineteen is not readily forgiven for having it?

CHAPTER VII

WORK AND PLAY

WHEN the next October came round, and the mornings and evenings began to feel exhilaratingly brisk, the Tao-tai turned up one day in his nephew's quarters, and said—

"Nephew, I have noticed that you are looking rather fagged out during the last week or two, and I am myself wanting a rest. There are rumours of some rascally pirates on the Tai-hoo, and I propose going in the *chop*,[1] taking a gunboat with us, and trying to clear the beggars out. I am fond of a scrimmage myself; and if you are not, you at any rate may try. I hear you have in the early mornings been taking some interest in the daily drills in the camp, and have made yourself fairly proficient. Go down now as much as you can, and do your best to become a good shot both with gun and pistol. Your office work is at end for the time, and it will be a good fortnight's work to get muscles into play, and a greater facility in the use of fire-arms. It came naturally to me, but to some it is not so."

Chun Ti-kung, who thought that his visits to the

[1] Mandarin boat.

camp had been quite unobserved, was at the same time pleased and excited at the proposed expedition, and for the next two weeks played with his arms and legs in a way that he had never done before, running, wrestling, shooting, and marching, as only young nerves and muscles will allow.

The day but two before the expedition was fixed to start, Chun Tao-tai announced at the early parade that on the following day a competition would be held for the best shot, the best runner, and the best wrestler.

The camp was situated outside the city walls, and was as usual in the form of a square, with mud walls about twelve feet high, and a ditch outside, six feet in width, filled with water. There was only one entrance, to the south, and in the interior were the mud huts and tents in which the soldiers (about five hundred men) were lodged, whilst between them and the gate was a good-sized parade ground, well levelled and hardened by having been watered during the night. The appearance of the ground on the day of the competition was gay in the extreme. Innumerable flags of bright colours flaunted from poles, and from all the huts, tents, and entrance gates, whilst over the slightly raised platform from which Chun was to give his decisions floated a large flag with an enormous character for "Chun" in scarlet on a white ground; and, mind you, there are few handsomer decorations than well-formed Chinese characters. On the three sides of the square fronting the judge, the soldiers who were not competing stood with their rifles in their hands, looking extremely handsome in their blue and orange uniform, with black turbans and boots; a white circle with the word

"Chun" stitched on the blue cloth between their shoulders and on their breasts.

At 10.30 Chun Tao-tai, in his green chair, clad in full mandarin clothes, and his hat bearing the crystal button and peacock feathers, followed by the other high officials of the city in green sedan-chairs, and by his officers, entered the parade ground and took his seat, the soldiers presenting arms in a fairly unanimous manner. The competitors for the shooting prize were called upon to come forward, and it was evident that most of the men were not very confident shots, as only twelve men competed; but these proved pretty even, and it took more than an hour for the contest to be decided in favour of a veteran who had served under Chun in his campaigns.

For the running, thirty competitors came forward, so that it had, on account of the course, to be run in two heats. Chun Ti-kung competed, winning one heat, but when it came to the final, a wiry middle-aged man, who was greeted with considerable chaff under the sobriquet of "Chih-to-Siao-too,"—"Plenty eat, small belly,"—won it rather easily.

The third contest, for wrestling, only brought five competitors, the other soldiers knowing from experience that they had no chance against the champions; but after two or three bouts had passed without any great advantage to any one of them, a row commenced in the crowd before the gate, and a stranger pushed unhesitatingly through the soldiers amidst jeering shouts of "Ei ya," "the God of war," "the boaster, he can beat them all."

Proceedings were for a time stayed, whilst Chun,

after learning what had led to the confusion, looked angrily at the man, and remarked, "You had better make good your boast at once, or it will be the worse for you." The stranger bowed in a very composed manner, and moved away to the back to undress, during which time another bout was played, resulting in one of the wrestlers getting a heavy fall.

The stranger was then ordered forward, and certainly did not seem to warrant his self-confidence. For one thing, his head and face had not been shaved for days, and nothing so soon makes a ruffian out of a Chinaman as inattention to these particulars. One feature, however, immediately struck the crowd—the enormous length of arm that he had. This eventually caused the overthrow of the two still in the match. He would not allow them to close until they were pretty well spent, and then he appeared to have no difficulty in putting them off their legs. His condition was splendid, and his endurance enormous; the bouts were long, and the last one with the most noted of the lot of wrestlers lasted half-an-hour.

The win was a very unpopular one, and whilst the stranger was dressing, cries of "Lallyloon,"[1] "Chang-mow,"[2] robber, rebel, were heard resounding on all sides, which made the Tao-tai very angry. He called the man up at once, and ordered three of his soldiers to take him safely through the crowd, and send him on his way. Some of the satellites around Chun's chair had been whispering that he was one of the robbers of

[1] Corruption of Portuguese word, *ladrão*, robber.

[2] Chang-mow=*long-haired* (rebel); not shaven, with only pigtail.

the Tai-hoo, and wanted him to be detained, but as the Tao-tai knew himself to be in a bad temper at his best men having been beaten, he was too just to want to investigate at such a moment.

The cause having been removed, the excitement soon subsided, the troops put through a few manœuvres, and the Tao-tai and his nephew returned to the Yamen with their motley *cortège* of ragged Yamen loafers.

At all Yamens there are crowds of men lounging about on the chance of some job, the most dissipated-looking, beggarly-clad ruffians that you could see anywhere in a day's march. When the mandarin goes on a ceremonious call, red umbrellas and red hats of a Welsh shape are served out to some of these men, and one or two gongs, which, being old, give forth a good sound, with which to lead the way and clear the streets. Some go before and some follow after the green chair in which the Tao-tai is seated in his robes of office, and one or two rather better-dressed satellites, with mushroom-shaped white straw hats, with red silk streaming from the top, mounted on the most ragged and miserable-looking ponies that can be imagined, precede and close up the procession. A mandarin procession is about as well-dressed and imposing as a Punch-and-Judy show, which, by the way, reminds me that the China Punch-and-Judy show is almost identical with that in Europe, and that the squeaking voice is almost —but hold on, or else reminiscences will stop the procession, which would be very disrespectful, and not in accordance with the Book of Rites.

As after events proved, the victorious wrestler was a rascally pirate; he finally met with his deserts in being

condemned to the Ling ch'ih, or the lingering death by ten thousand slices. When carried out properly, this torture means pressing a piece of wire network over the skin, and slicing off with a sharp knife the portions that protrude through the interstices, the network being shifted from one part of the body to another until death resulted. Now-a-days the death is hastened, and so is not quite so brutal.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TAO-TAI TELLS TALES

HOOCHOW-FOO is situated south of the Tai-hoo, or big lake, a sheet of water about fifty-two miles long and fifty miles broad, very irregular in shape, and varying in depth from about ten feet to four or even less, with islets of various sizes dotted about in its waters, and many rocks just, and only just, covered when the lake is fairly full. The hills around its margin and the islands are of soft decaying granite, which is good enough soil to support a considerable and varied number of trees, shrubs, and flowers, although here and there the plain rock shows purple shades through the vegetation. One of the islands, called Tung-ting, is celebrated throughout the two provinces of Che-kiang and Kiang-su for its fruits, especially its peaches.

When Chun Ti-kung first saw the place in the spring, all the hills and islands were covered with azaleas, the trees gay in their young green, and the peach-trees in blossom, whilst the low ground was brilliant with rape in flower, and the fields with the emerald-coloured coming crops. It was a lovely sight. In the autumn, when the leaves had turned and the tallow-trees were wearing their handsomest coats, it

was in its way equally beautiful. None of the hills range above six hundred feet, but rising as they do abruptly from the flat alluvial plain that forms so large a portion of the vast province of Kiang-su, they have a majesty of their own, fantastic as they are in shape, and many of them capped with mud walls of former camps. Small fishing-boats flit hither and thither with their white, blue, or brown sails, making brilliant reflections in the water, and cutting up the shadows of the hills and trees. Gaily-coloured temples of yellow or red, and brown and grey farmhouses, show brightly through the foliage in the intense sunlight. A pheasant crows and flies like a rocket from one cover to another, a flock of teal or a duck or two rises suddenly in front of the boat in which you may be enjoying yourself, and all the time five or six large hawks soar overhead, from time to time crossing your path, and casting so black a shadow that in great heat you notice a flash of darkness when the shadow covers your helmet.

The city itself was far from having recovered from the effects of the Taiping rebellion. Acres of ground still lay simply covered with the *débris* of ruined houses, with here and there a wall standing, and apparently wondering what its fellows were doing in such disorderly and incorrect positions. Now and again an old ruin was made use of, through all sorts of makeshifts, while a few shops or dwelling-houses showed newly built. The main street where the market was held, the street in which most of the silk-merchants transacted their business, and one or two other small offshoots, might have been compared to an oasis in a desert of bricks.

The creek from the east entered the town through the water-gate, and for navigable purposes terminated in a large square pond about half-way through the city. On two sides of this square piece of water stood the best houses that had yet been rebuilt, also several handsome *hongs* and shops. The Tao-tai's Yamen, the front of which faced on the main street, had a back entrance almost opposite the water-gate. The sides, or banks of the pond, had formerly been faced with well-hewn blocks of granite, but, like almost all such works in the province, had fallen into disrepair. Many of the stones had slipped down, the existence of the embankment being maintained by shapeless planks and ubiquitous mud.

To the bunding in front of the Yamen's back entrance was warped a smart-looking "gunboat" junk, the rowers' seats covered over with a blue-and-white awning, and at her stern an unwieldy but comfortable *chop* or mandarin boat, for the accommodation of Chun Tao-tai, his nephew, and others, who would have overcrowded the gunboat.

The two days that had elapsed since the events related had been occupied in seeing that the arms and ammunition were sufficient and in good order, and in provisioning the boats for the venture against the pirates.

The hour for starting was fixed for six p.m. Shortly after that time the boats were both under weigh, the gunboat towing the *chop*. The expedition passed through the water-gate, and the heavy iron-bound doors immediately closed behind them.

The Tao-tai, having shaken off his cares of office, was

in capital spirits, his nephew and Tung Che-tsai (his second in command) were also both pleasantly excited over the enterprise before them; so that when about half-an-hour after the boat had anchored for the night, dinner was served, it proved a most enjoyable meal. Fresh-water crabs and water-nuts, although not pretty to look at, are delicious when really fresh, and the usual *entrées* of a Chinese dinner are good or bad according to taste, and Chun liked them much. The frogs outside kept up their usual nightly concert; every now and then the wind brought down the boom of the drum, and the tap-tap of the bamboo, that are signs of the watchmen on the city walls being awake. When the *pièces de resistance* at every Chinese dinner (one or two bowls apiece full of plain boiled rice) had been disposed of, and pipes were set a-going, it only wanted a good story or two to make enjoyment doubly enjoyable. This Chun Tao-tai proceeded to do by narrating some of his experiences in his past campaigns.

"When," said Chun Tao-tai, "I ran away from home, it was with the full intention of joining the Taipings. I had some weeks before met a man (who I have since found out was the man they called the Chung Wang) in a tea house, where he was trying to enlist supporters, and showing most plausibly and ingeniously how the whole country was over-taxed; how it was a shame that the great Chinese people should continue to be ruled over by an alien race like the Man-chus; and how if they would only rise unanimously now, they might again put a descendant of the Mings, the true son of Heaven, on the throne. Chung Wang was a truly good speaker, and when I came away my ears burned,

and gradually the determination came to me to join the movement. But by good chance, when on my way to a place that was an open secret as a rebel *dépôt*, where you would be told where to go and what to do, I turned into an inn for a night, and there met a man called Le, who shared the same room with me. I was tired and fell asleep, hardly noticing him, but in the morning I found the poor devil vainly trying to put on his upper jacket, which he had thrown off on account of the heat. One arm hung helpless by his side, and I saw an unhealed wound cut through the flesh on the right side of his neck. I helped him on with his coat, saying—'What sort of a business is this?'

"He hesitated, and then replied—

"'I have deserted from the Taipings, and tried to join the Imperialists, but the devils caught sight of me and left me in this state, so that if I am caught by either one lot or the other, they may all kill me. When I was shot I fell down, and I suppose they thought me dead. I have been crawling along five days with nothing to eat or drink, but what I could pick up in the fields or the rubbish heaps, and I have never had a night's lodging till last night, when I managed to slip in here without being seen. My name is Le. I was an honest cobbler in Canton, till those miscreants persuaded me that I was paying too many taxes, that rice was too dear, and plenty more talk. But, father, old father, help me! Do a good action,' and here the poor fellow fell on his knees.

"At first I thought he was one of those begging impostors with whom we are all too familiar around here, but as almost immediately after the exertion of

kneeling he fell down on his side and seemed to become unconscious, I examined the wound on his neck, took away the nasty grass and rags with which he had stopped the blood from flowing from the arm, and came to the conclusion that there must be something wrong, when the arm seemed as though it had no life in it. My first thought was to run away when I saw the man still lying as though dead at my feet, for I feared I might be charged with a murder. Fortunately for me better counsel prevailed, and after interviewing the landlord, who was equally eager not to have such a catastrophe reported as happening in his house, I got the wounded man up-stairs, where the landlord administered some *samshu*, which brought back the man's breath, and insisted on putting the arm straight according to custom, as he said, whilst he bound it round with some old cotton cloths. The poor fellow then fell asleep.

"When I had run away from Pa-li Kiao, I had sold everything I could, and pawned all my winter clothes, from which I had about $10 about me, so that I could afford to wait for a time, and hear what had induced the man to desert from the Taipings, as this appeared of great importance to myself.

"For some time he took very little notice of either of us, but after a time he opened his eyes and began talking feverishly—

"'I am Le, and I do not remember my other names. I am an honest cobbler from Canton, but I joined——' and here he looked round surprised at his surroundings —a bare room, a dirty straw mattress, and two common-looking fellows looking at him, were all that he saw. The poor wretch turned to me and said—

"'My great noble friend, whose presence seems to have been with me ever since I was born, there is something that it seems I must tell you, but everything is in a mist!'

"Much astonished as I felt, having only met the man the previous evening, I could not but listen, and slowly the words came from Le's mouth.

"'Taipings—Taipings! Promises of low taxation, cheaper rice, happy times, and abundance everywhere. I am a Taiping. Oh! the long, long march, the cities we have taken, the temples we have pulled down, the country that we have made desolate and without men. But patience; we shall soon see heaps of copper cash, rice, and happiness!'

"It was like a man talking in his sleep. Le asked for some water to drink, and in the same monotonous voice continued—

"'Yes, yes, the cities are taken, the people are dead or gone away, and we are the great Taipings; and now Great Peace! but the peace does not come. The country is barren, nobody builds where the houses have been pulled down, no one comes to the shops to buy anything, rice is very dear, we soldiers get no pay, and rice! rice! I must have rice!'

"Le sprang up from the bed, screamed, fell back, and was dead.

"My boy, the man's words changed my career, and I went and enlisted at the next Imperial camp I came to. This was the beginning of my lucky career—and so Le proved my benefactor. Poor Le, who did not remember his other names."

The Tao-tai, after his talk, lay back and pointed out in a few short sentences, how that the Taiping rebellion, if carried through as it commenced, might have proved a good thing for the country; but that, after a period, the Teen Wang having to a greater or less extent gone mad, and the jealousy amongst the other Wangs having destroyed any chance of unanimous action, the various expeditions from Nanking only destroyed without any hope of restoring.

"Naturally, the whole people were only waiting anxiously for the stronger power, little caring which, to make some sort of order again where at that time all was disorder, and when his Excellency Gordon" (Ko-tung, Chun called it) "came to the help of China, things rapidly came straight, not without taxation still having to be kept high, very high, much higher than in the times of the Ming dynasty."

Tap—tap—tap—tap, came distinctly, and somewhat solemnly, on the still air, the watchman's note, causing the frogs for a second to stop their perpetual racket, and showing that, at any rate on that part of the city wall nearest the boats, the watchmen were still doing their duty. The Tao-tai, looking at first one and then the other of his watches, remarked that it was only half-past ten.

"And as," said he, "I have not had any sort of a holiday for more than two years, I propose that we order in another kettleful of that excellent wine of your father's. We shall have a lazy day to-morrow, and at present I am liking to hear myself talk."

Tung Che-tsai, who had gone out to smoke a pipe of

opium, slipped in, looking wide awake and refreshed by it—in fact, quite a different being from what he was when he left, and said—

"Honoured sir, how can we thank you for treating our humble selves to such unmerited honour?"

Chun Ti-kung thought his uncle made a grimace.

The kettle was brought, the small china tea-cups replenished, and whilst the two listeners amused themselves by eating oranges and cracking melon seeds, the Tao-tai, between puffs, told various stories of the actions he had been through.

Speaking about the courage of soldiers, and at the same time of the curious effects that panic sometimes caused, he said—

"It was at the storming of Kahding that my men were supporting the Ever-victorious army in their assault on the city, which was by no means a very hazardous affair, when all at once, from some unexplained reason, the whole body of assailants, who had advanced within two hundred yards of the walls, and were under the enemy's fire, came to a dead stop. We —their officers—shouted and cursed at them to come on, and then, as that had no effect, we shouted and cursed at them to retreat, which was equally in vain. There they stood, until about a tenth of their number was killed, when as suddenly as the halt had happened a sudden rush forward set in, and within ten minutes the breach had been scaled and the city had fallen. Not many days after this, we had been pounding away all the day at the walls of Soochow, and had made four practicable breaches in them, when General Gordon,

hoping to stop unnecessary slaughter, sent a flag of truce to the Wangs, who were all in one quarter of the city, consulting as to what was to be done. The flag was acknowledged, and after a time, I am told (for I was with his Excellency Li Hung Chang at the time), Gordon himself, who knew no fear, went to visit them with a Chinese interpreter. I know not with what arguments the Wangs were brought to see the hopelessness of their position; but at any rate, almost before we had heard of the flag of truce, the gates of the city were flung open, and our detachment under Li commenced to march in. An officer from Gordon's picked troops handed Li a note, which he read, and angrily remarked—

"'How can this foreigner have promised these Wangs their lives, when they are forfeit by all the laws of the empire? It cannot be.'

"We marched through the city, no one molesting us; in fact, the soldiers of the Taipings had thrown down their arms. We came to the quarter where the Wangs were, when Li, in calm and deliberate words, told them that it was impossible that General Gordon's promise to them of their lives could be kept, that they had courted death, merited death, and that death must be their portion; but as they had proved themselves brave and strong, it should be without any torture.

"He then ordered them to be beheaded, which was immediately done, and Li Hung Chang went back again, I believe, to his boat that was in the city moat, whilst I was told off with my portion of the army to remain where I was, to prevent any plundering of the inhabit-

ants, or any uprising, the hour being then about seven p.m. Not long afterwards—and I really think I was never so afraid in my life—General Gordon appeared, in a most excited state, and carrying, for the first time that I had ever seen him do so, a revolver in his hand. He did not speak Chinese well, but one of my men interpreted him as saying—

"'What is this I hear—the Wangs beheaded after I had promised them their lives? Where are they?—let me look, and then let the villain Li look out for himself.'

"The beheaded bodies were shown him, and never did I see such a storm of passion as passed over his face.

"'I am dishonoured, but I will punish the evil doer. Show me where he is, and he shall find I can be an enemy as well as a friend.'

"Nobody, luckily, knew where Li Hung Chang had gone, and I am told that Gordon walked about the city and the camp all the night trying, but failing, to find him. In the morning it became generally known that our greatest help, Gordon, had thrown up his command, and left for Shanghai, and without the impulse of his energy the campaign seemed to collapse. Gradually news of some fresh successes of the rebel armies under Chung Wang came to our ears, and I think it must have been six weeks before the mighty Gordon once more rejoined our forces (during all which period the rebels were again gaining ground), and then the rebellion of more than fifteen years' standing was snuffed out.

"I never knew," concluded the Tao-tai, "how

Gordon's views with regard to Li Hung Chang's action were altered, but I have been told since that they became friends again. How great and how little are the doings of men!"

Their little kettle gave them each one more cup, and the clock said one, and off they went to bed.

CHAPTER IX

IN PURSUIT OF PIRATES

THE navigable creek was for some distance parallel with the south shore of the Tai-hoo, and just before reaching Nanzing, about fifty *li* from Hoochow, a cross creek connects with the Tai-hoo. The intention was to take the *chop* as far as possible down to the Tai-hoo, then to embark on board the gunboat and cruise about the lake in the vicinity of where the pirates had lately been observed, and if possible to try and seize their boats. It was slow work towing the *chop*, even with the assistance of six trackers pulling on a rope attached to the mast; but at about five o'clock the cross creek was reached, and after proceeding about half-way down, it became too shallow and narrow for the *chop*, so that the anchor was dropped and the men told to get their meal, and to be ready to embark in the gunboat. The country through which they had passed was then still in a very waste state; here and there patches showed signs of again being brought under cultivation, and some field labourers were to be seen irrigating their crops; twenty people at the outside were all they had passed, and in the creek where they now were, not a sign of human life was visible, even

the omnipresent China dog seemed to have been starved out of the country.

As they entered the creek the dip dip of an oar was heard coming from the direction of the lake, and a fast boat, one of those used for letter-carrying, and paddled by the feet as well as the arms, came rapidly up to the gunboat, gave them some pass-word, and came on straight towards the *chop*, when it proved to be the scout who had been sent by the Tao-tai through the lake to meet the gunboat at the mouth of the creek, and report on what the pirates were doing, and pilot the gunboat on the lake. This man had been nicknamed Uhr-thoo, or "ears," from the great gift he was said to possess of quick hearing. The man was brought forward to Chun and told his tale.

"Your most worthy Excellency, I hurried up the creek to meet you at this spot where I had expected that your Excellency's boat would have to stop, as there is evidently some big enterprise on foot amongst these smart-fingered blackguards. I have seen and passed six of their craft, all sailing down to apparently the same point, and all fully armed and manned, and I thought it best at once to come up, as they must greatly outnumber the company that is with you, to warn you of the force you may have to encounter. I passed near enough to one of the boats to hear them speaking of the causeway which your all-knowing self is aware lies between the island of Tung-ting Shan and the mainland, and also something about meeting others to-morrow night there. I was trying to get nearer and learn more, but they noticed me and hallooed at me to stop. I shouted back 'letters of

importance from Soochow,' and as the wind was dead against them I was beyond their reach in a very few minutes. I trust that my action meets with your Excellency's approval."

The Tao-tai nodded, and after some consideration sent for the head boatman, and told him to unfasten the long, narrow, fast boat for dispatches which had been in tow behind the *chop*. The Tao-tai then asked Chun Ti-kung to bring him his writing materials, and for some ten minutes he wrote rapidly two letters, the one to the officer in command of his troops at Hoochow, the other to his second official in rank, whom before leaving he had invested with full power for action during his absence. The best rower was chosen for the fast boat, and was sent off by the Tao-tai, who said—

"You must get these two letters into Hoochow to-night, you can be back there before twelve. The gates will be shut, but this is my signal," and he showed him how to knock and call in a certain way. "And if any of them are asleep, tell them I will shoot them when I get back."

The next day broke bright and sunny, in fact a rainy day in October is rather a rarity in these regions. The Tao-tai was up and about as soon as it was light, and indeed was in a great fidget, as he could not tell whether his messenger had succeeded in getting to Hoochow in proper time or not; but the change in the wind was much in favour of his scheme, and when he and his nephew sat down to breakfast he had pretty well recovered his equanimity, and related to the latter the orders that had been sent in the letters to Hoochow.

The two gunboats that were at Hoochow when they left, with seventeen soldiers each and a corporal, were to be dispatched at once to his aid. If another gunboat had fortunately put into Hoochow, it was also to follow quickly.

The dispatch-boat man with the wind at his back managed to make a very good run up to Hoochow, and arrived at eleven o'clock, and although he had great trouble in getting the sentinels to take any notice of his signal, as, Chinese sentinel-like, they had put themselves under cover, finally he had been able to deliver his dispatches, upon which some excitement naturally ensued in the camp and amongst the gunboat people.

The next morning at noon the fast boat came back into sight flying a small red flag to show that it had a lucky message to deliver. The rower told that three gunboats with their complement of men had got away from the city at a little before half-past seven, and were coming down the creek, and as the wind was fair the gunboats would probably not be more than an hour after him. The boatman handed the official answers to the Tao-tai, saying—

"And so, your Excellency, I have been no sluggard;" and at a sign from the Tao-tai he retired.

No wonder that, after a good meal that his Excellency himself ordered to be given him, the poor chap rolled himself in a blanket and fell into a sound sleep, from which he was on no account to be awakened till absolutely necessary; but then, as the dutiful nephew remarked—"My honoured uncle never seems to forget anything, great or small."

It was not till four o'clock that the gunboats came up. On inspecting them it was found that the Tao-tai's instructions had been carefully carried out, they had the desired number of soldiers and victuals for four days, whilst their seven-pounders seemed in good order. As the men had only had time in the early morning for a very hurried cup of tea with cakes made of dough, after a long night's work in getting things in order, they were told off to get their meal and rest. The Tao-tai sent them five bottles of *samshu* from his *hong* boat through their captain; his rules against drinking when on service were very strict, but, as he remarked, "Every rule is well broken at times." So for a couple of hours there was a buzz of conviviality and low laughter.

At five o'clock the Tao-tai with his nephew went on board gunboat No. 1, and the punt from the *chop* was towed astern. Uhr-thoo the pilot went with them in his fast boat, leading the way. Progress was slow, as in some parts the creek was narrow, and the overhanging branches so thick that the side oars could not be used; but at about six the entrance to the lake was reached, when it was found that the overhanging bushes would have to be cut away before the gunboats could get through. This was done as silently as was possible.

The moon had set at about seven, and shortly afterwards Uhr-thoo was sent out to find out what he could. Meanwhile the intervening branches were cut down, and the gunboats with muffled oars pushed through into the lake, and were steadied with bamboos planted in the mud.

An hour elapsed during which the cheep cheep of the crickets and the sting of the mosquitoes were the only evidences of life, and then suddenly, and so silently that his approach had only just been noticed by the man on the outlook, Uhr-thoo's boat sneaked alongside. He was taken at once to the Tao-tai, and said—

"Your Excellency, I have been across to the causeway, and am quite unable to comprehend what is the business that these pirates have in view. There are two of their boats on this side of the causeway whose occupants seem to have left them empty and unguarded, and outside the causeway, some distance off, anchored in the lake, there were, so far as I could see, four boats with their lights burning. Then, as I was turning away to give you my report, a brighter glint of many lights showed through the trees on the island hill some distance from the causeway, and it is there evidently that they are holding some sort of a consultation or devils' feast, but, as I said, I cannot make out what they are doing."

Chun Tao-tai as usual kept his thoughts to himself, and told Uhr-thoo to guide the gunboats to where he had seen the lights. The night was starlight, but the darkness was considerable; so slowly, and very slowly, to prevent any splash from the oars, the gunboats moved forward, every now and then becoming entangled with the ropes and bundles of reeds that are placed to mark where rocks are near the surface, and sometimes with a great drag fishing-net that had been left for the night, and could be searched in the morning. Uhr-thoo, however, proved himself a good pilot, and the boats were safely moored under the island hill.

The night was so still that the slightest noise seemed, at any rate to their excited ears, to sound to a great distance. The Tao-tai gave some instructions in a low tone, with the result that Tung Che-tsai and four of his best subordinates departed with as little noise as possible in the punt, the gunboats not moving. Chun Ti-kung would have given anything to know what the orders were, but not a word was said. All felt the intensity of the silence; then came over the water a rumble of one boat touching against another, a groan, a slight sound of scuffling, and then the sound of the punt returning. When Tung Che-tsai came on board, he reported that on arriving at the pirate gunboats, which were of great capacity, anchored alongside of each other, no notice was taken of the approach.

"I boarded the first," said he, "and the guard was gagged and bound before he was thoroughly awake; the watchman of the second boat was just caught by the throat as he was jumping on the shore, and could only make a groan, and there they both are in the bottom of the punt. I tried to sink the boats," added Tung Che-tsai, "in accordance with your Excellency's instructions; but as they are big and strong I could not have knocked out one of their planks without making a great noise, so I returned to you for orders, fearing to attract the pirates' attention."

"*Haou ting haou*" (good, very good), replied the Tao-tai. "Get the prisoners on board and send them to me."

In the meantime he again ordered Tung Che-tsai and six soldiers into the punt to return to the boats at the causeway with two tins of kerosene oil, winding

up with the remark, "Do nothing until you see three of my rockets in the sky, then make as much noise as you like in sinking their boats if possible, but at any rate set fire to all that is above water, and the greater the flare you make the better."

CHAPTER X

A BLOODLESS VICTORY

THE prisoners were chained with the iron fetters which are used in all Chinese prisons, links of iron about one and a half inches long; the one had the long front hair, which proved him to have been some time in rebel employ, whilst the other had apparently only recently docked his tail. Chun Tao-tai, who first addressed himself to the younger of the two, soon ascertained that it was only four days previous to his capture that, under promises of large profits, he had given up his occupation as a fisherman on the lake and joined the pirates and cut off his tail, and when Chun remarked, "You had better encourage your tail again, and get steady pay as an Imperialist soldier," he *kow-towed* with much enthusiasm.

The other was quite of a different class, and appearances were certainly not in his favour, as he bore all the evidences of being one of those poor devils one occasionally sees in China, who would do anything, holy or unholy, for the sake of a pipe of opium. It is the poor and the very poor who show these signs of opium-smoking that our missionaries make so much stock out of, and there is no doubt that when those of the

lowest orders deprive themselves of necessary sustenance for the sake of indulging in the pipe, the physique, and the morale also, falls very low. The prisoner before Chun was one of this type; and as he had now been nearly forty-eight hours without his pipe, he was in a terribly nervous and distracted state. He knocked his head hard and repeatedly on the floor, and began with the regular beggar's whine to make excuses. The Tao-tai brought him up very shortly, saying—

"I suppose you know something about what is going on in yonder grove? Will you tell us what it is, or will you prefer 'persuasion'?"

The man, like all his class, began with snivelling and drivelling, protesting that he knew nothing, but when the Tao-tai said—"You rascal, will you die a pirate's death?" he changed his story entirely, and told as follows:—

"Eight days ago an old man had been watched who was apparently trying to locate some landmark on this corner of the lake. The old man's conduct had twice been reported to Peng Yu-lin" (the pirate chief, who was actually the winner of the wrestling competition), "but he probably thought they were the outcome of a crank's brains, and had paid no attention to the old man's movements, until it was reported that evidently the place that he wanted to find had been found in, or on, this mound."

"How," said the Tao-tai, "should the proceedings of an old man attract any attention?"

"Your most worthy Excellency," was the reply, "must know that the stories of the lost treasures that had been concealed during the rebellion, either by the

Wangs or the fugitives themselves, have been most largely spoken of, especially in that island of Tung-ting Shan, whose inhabitants are mostly bitterly infected" (he spoke to curry favour) "with the wish for a return of the Ming dynasty. Peng Yu-lin, being a native of the place, knew of these tales of hidden treasure, and when he heard that the old man was apparently interested in a mound for some reason unknown to anybody else, had the old man caught and examined him himself. The *Laou pih tow*" (old white head) "at first could only be brought to say, that in running away from the Imperialists after the defeat of the rebels, he had somewhere about this place dropped five *strings* of five thousand cash, and that circumstances since having proved unfavourable to every one of his undertakings, he, being poor, had made a journey on the small chance of recovering the lost cash.

"'You bold-faced liar,' Peng replied, 'do you think I am such an idiot as to believe such a made-up story? Five thousand cash would hardly pay your expenses to or from any hole. I shall try and make you tell a different tale.' So, to force the *Laou pih tow* to speak, two small bamboos steeped in bees-wax were inserted between the nails of his thumbs and the flesh, and lighted at the top, and for only about a minute could he stand the hideous torture. He fainted, but when he came to, and was again threatened with the same torture in each finger separately, stated that two years ago he had been a priest in Ningpo, and had been called in by a dying friend, to whom the Muh Wang had given his little son in charge; that this

man, under a solemn promise of secrecy, had received from Muh Wang the information, that in the event of death he had made provision for the son that he then left with him (and who was still only eight) to lead a respectable life. The place where the money was to be found, and a plan of the surroundings, the dying man placed in my charge as a priest, and said, 'I leave the secret, the child, and the trust to you; if you behave justly I hope you may benefit.'

"'I, most honoured sir, broke my vow, and sent the son of Muh Wang away to his ancestors with a dose of opium, and hope that the fact that I have succeeded in finding the place and the secret of the key to where the treasure lies, may make you and me rich and honoured.'

"'Where is the place and where the key?' was Peng's reply. The *Laou pih tow* pointed to a mound on the hill above us, and after a little fumbling handed Peng (as far as I could see) a small plan and words. Peng laughed after receiving the paper.

"'You thought it was good for the son of Muh Wang to join his ancestors; I think it is better also that you should do so. The Muh Wang has been at times a friend of mine, and so we must part.' The *Laou pih tow*, with a heavy stone at his feet, was dumped in the lake.

"I and that other prisoner were left to take care of the boats alone, and the others left to search the mound some hours before you captured me."

Chun Tao-tai ordered the witness away, saying—

"Let the poor beggar" (the term was slightly less polite) "have the pipe of opium that he would sell himself for, and when we prove whether his story is

true or false, we will see what we can do with him. The other prisoner chain to a rower's bench to work an oar, and tell him that it depends on himself whether he chooses to become again an honest man or not."

It had by this time become quite dark. Chun's position and the number of his men were sufficient to guard against any attack on the part of the pirates, who even with four boats certainly would not muster one hundred men. So a hasty dinner was ordered for Tung Che-tsai, Chun Ti-kung, and his uncle in the cabin, and amongst much interesting narrative, many were the surmises as to what the amount of the treasure would prove, Chun Tao-tai concluding with—

"I believe your two prisoners and the sunken gunboats are the best results we shall see. It is not well to be about in the night when evil spirits have power, and rest is proper for man, but I think that to-night we must give up our rest; some one may find out that we have taken possession of the deserted boats and give the alarm, and if there should truly be treasure in the graves the pirates may be removing it even now. I shall divide our men into three parties—six men can destroy the enemy's empty boats, a few can stay with our boats, the rest will climb the hill with me and surprise the pirates; if any of these parties need help they will signal to the others for it by a gun and hoisting three lights."

There is no tide in the Tai-hoo, and Chun Tao-tai and his men landed easily, but soon found themselves in difficulties. Until they reached the base of the hill one or other of them found himself ploughing leg-deep in a bog that had formerly been a rice field; then the

creek that runs round most hills in the province had to be crossed in the best way it could, and then the bamboos and undergrowth of the hill faced. An ascent of three hundred feet does not seem a gigantic task, but with no lights and an undergrowth of nearly ten years it is difficult enough.

In a short time, however, the company of sixty men with their leaders had gained the summit of the hill, and the object of conjecture, the wonderful grave, became visible, enclosed as usual in a reed fence, and with its fir-trees showing out dark against the light of the torches that were being used by the pirates. The entrance to the graveyard was facing the east, and Chun Tao-tai and his forces were behind it; he determined to divide his small strength into halves and meet again in front of the entrance to the grave, the signal to be given by one side to the other to be three caws of a crow—not at all an unnatural phenomenon, and not likely to attract attention. Chun Ti-kung was left a little in the rear, with two soldiers who had the signal rockets. His uncle told him that no forward movement would probably be made until a full half-hour after he had seen the rockets. The path was easy, and very soon and agreeably from the dead silence rose the signal "caw, caw, caw," and from the further side "caw, caw, caw," and again all was silence. A minute after, and whizz! brilliant firework stars were for a few seconds intermixed with the stars in the sky, whizz! another, and whizz! a third rocket went up. A thumping sound was heard from the west, and presently a flare from the boats below appeared, showing that the pirates' boats were fired as the Tao-

tai had ordered, whilst Chun Ti-kung was with his men racing up the hill to join their comrades.

By the people occupied in the grave no notice had been taken of the rockets, but on the shore, to which Chun Tao-tai had turned his attention, a great commotion was visible, and shortly after two or three runners were seen ascending towards the grave. It was then a matter of anxious waiting. The Tao-tai knew that he was not strong enough to take the initiative safely, when "ping," the sharp sound of a rifle-bullet, a harsh order, and the whole space round the grave, which had previously been illumined with torches, was plunged in darkness—the light that was still burning in the south-west from the gunboats on fire intensifying the darkness on the side where Chun Tao-tai was. He lay on his stomach watching anxiously with his eyes on the grave, and all his soldiers had to do the same.

A panic had seized the pirates, a set of untrained men unaccustomed to obey orders, some fearing that the redoubtable Tao-tai of Hoochow was coming with his soldiers, and some that spirits from the grave were resenting the sacrilegious attempt to remove the treasure. This was much the effect that the Tao-tai had wished to produce; a stream of terrified men pushed through the gateway regardless of the orders of their leaders, and passing close to the Tao-tai's hidden soldiers, raced down the hill to regain their boats and get away on their waiting gunboats.

At the end of half-an-hour the welcome sound of boats crunching on the sand where the pirate gunboats lay came to their ears, and very shortly afterwards the

news was confirmed by two soldiers who had been sent down to watch, that the pirates had fled from the island. Chun Tao-tai raised himself from the ground, had the signal of three "caws" again made, and very soon the two parties were re-united. Chun's first thought then was to give rest to his men.

"You, Ta-thoo, and forty men," he ordered, "move up nearer to that mound, and keep some on the watch there for the night: provisions shall be sent up to you. My nephew and I will go down to the gunboats and determine what is to be done to-morrow. Those rascals have been frightened by the glare of their gunboats burning, and will certainly not come back to-night."

Both Chun Tao-tai and his nephew were undoubtedly glad to get on the gunboat and turn in, and nothing happened during the night to break their slumbers.

In the morning the Tao-tai's surmises proved correct, and none of the pirate craft were visible outside; the small boats had evidently been employed in taking off the crews from the mound during the night.

The early morning found all the military of the expedition climbing up to the grave, instructions having been left with the gunboats to hurry up and report should anything seem to threaten them from the lake. The grave was soon reached, and Ta-thoo met the Tao-tai at the entrance to the enclosure, and reported that nothing had occurred during the hours of the night.

The small force marched up to the mound, that had loomed so mysteriously in the darkness the night

before under the influence of torch-light, but which now wore the appearance of a simple ancestral grave with three pinnacles; the grass and plants that surrounded it were trampled down and battered down in a way to show that many intruders had entered its precincts. The Tao-tai selected four or five of the privates best known to him, called them from the ranks, and with them and his nephew commenced to investigate the mystery of the grave and its surroundings. Footprints were everywhere, leading hither and thither, and it was not till after some minutes had been wasted in wandering round and round, and in and out of the bushes, that a bunch of hollies was noticed by the Tao-tai not far from the back of the mound, which showed a path well trodden between them. To his nephew he said—

"There may be a chance of finding some clue in there. Go through and see if you can see anything."

The thicket of holly, mixed up with brambles, ferns, and other shrubs, was a thick one, and extended some way back from the grave, whilst the opening noticed by the Tao-tai was so narrow that it might have passed as a run for hares or pheasants; but on passing through the thick branches, that had evidently been very tenderly treated by those who had passed through them either going or coming, the path widened considerably.

Quite unexpectedly Chun Ti-kung almost fell over one of the men, who was on his hands and knees, and was even more disconcerted than Chun Ti-kung himself.

"What have you here?"

"Nothing," was the reply; but Chun Ti-kung, who

noticed that the man had something in his hand, returned—

"What's that?"

A dollar was shown, which the man, in a woebegone way, explained that he had just seen and pocketed.

"You fool, give it to me," was Chun's reply; but instead of pushing on, he began carefully to look about him, and after some minutes noticed that a patch of about two feet square in the pathway seemed much less worn down than the rest, so he ordered the man he had detected in pocketing the dollar to dig the mud away with his bayonet, and sure enough, about two inches below the surface, a flat stone was discovered, which might or might not mean something. Chun Ti-kung ordered the man to precede him, came out of the bushes to fetch a spade, and seeing the Tao-tai, told his story.

The Tao-tai had seated himself on the grass and was smoking; but when Chun Ti-kung had finished what he had to say, he sprang up, caught the soldier a buffet on the ear that sent him sprawling on the grass, and turning to his nephew, said with a smile—

"That foolish fellow is and always has been trying to steal, and is nearly always found out; the funny thing is, that when he succeeds he always wants to return his theft. I have no doubt he would have come back here by and by, and planted the dollar where he found it. This precious dollar has, however, probably given you the key to the grave lock, so he shall not be punished or rewarded. Give me that dollar, you thief."

The pirates in their hurried departure had not

entirely lost their heads, and the looser earth that covered the stones, if it had not been for the episode of the dollar, might have been passed without notice. When the stones were removed an underground passage was discovered; and the Tao-tai, who had joined in the investigation, remarked—

"Anybody in that hole is caught. Who volunteers to go and see what is down below?"

CHAPTER XI

MUH WANG'S TREASURE

CHUN TI-KUNG, much to his uncle's delight, claimed that as his nephew he ought to be the first to go through the underground passage, and as only one at a time could descend it was allowed.

As it proved, there was no danger attaching to the deed, as not a pirate had stayed, but still to drop down some five feet into a hole, crawl through a passage not more than three feet high, and find yourself in a cavern hardly high enough for uprightness, and half expecting to be stabbed or shot, requires considerable nerve, and no doubt as the other men also with their lanterns joined him in the darkness, Chun Ti-kung's heart-beatings must have moderated.

When five men had entered after him, Chun Ti-kung ordered the next comer to be stopped, as the space was not big enough to hold more with any utility, and the men blocking the passage tended to suffocation, although there was evidently some ventilation from above, which came through the apex of the highest of the three mounds.

The light of the lanterns disclosed five or six gunny bags, full, and the one that had been latest packed, not

having its mouth tied, proved to be full of Mexican dollars.

Chun Ti-kung, as soon as this was seen, went himself to report the position to his uncle, so that a strict watch should be placed on the entrance, as the bags and whatever might be found behind passed out.

"Black-hair-but-having-many-years," said his uncle, "it is, as you say, desirable to be on guard. Go back if you like, and I will see that nothing goes astray." Chun went back, and the already packed bags were passed out and up.

The question then suggested itself as to where was the remainder of the treasure that the pirates had been disturbed in removing, and for some time no solution presented itself; the ground was dug up, the sides poked into, but nothing showed. At last, as for the fiftieth time Chun Ti-kung knocked his head against the ceiling, or rather top of the cabin, he noticed that instead of being semi-circular, as most Chinese graves are, the roof was level, and he called his men's attention to the fact. Chinese lanterns are decorative, but not good illuminators, in fact unless you pull the candle through the shade they may be said to make darkness only more visible. However, after a few minutes' scrutiny, one of the men noticed that in one corner five bricks looked as though they protruded from the rest, and pulling out one or two, the portion of the ceiling above evidently moved, and some pieces of mortar fell. Ta-thoo, who was one of the soldiers employed, rushed forward, pulled out a third brick, and then, in excitement, as more mortar fell, with a great effort he dragged out the two others, to find himself knocked with two other men to

the ground by the falling back of a trap-door which was hung on hinges, and which being of wood, with bricks cemented to its outer surface to appear like the rest of the ceiling, swung back with considerable force.

Three of the lanterns were extinguished by the fall of their owners, so that the holders of the other three, not having noticed what had been going on, were in utter perplexity as to what had happened, and as to whether the pirates were upon them.

A short panic ensued, and the entrance for some seconds was the desire of all, but Ta-thoo, recovering himself, remarked in a jocular way—

"What folly to seek below the happiness that can only be found above." The lanterns were re-lighted and the position of affairs disclosed, and Ta-thoo from the shoulders of his fellows crept through the opening. Shortly after his ascent, a helper was called for by him, as he excitedly shouted through the trap that the bags were too heavy for one man to manage.

"Put up a plank to let the bags slide down or the contents may all get loose." The plank had to be sent for, and was not long in being brought, but in the meantime two or three bags had been pushed down through the opening, and the first one falling, the seam ripped, and showed the contents to be of *shoes* of *sycee*. Amongst the natives their currency, excepting that of copper cash and bankers' drafts, is represented by unwieldy blocks of silver of the value of about $10. The whole trade of China is carried on through this uncouth medium.

Proceedings were stopped for a time until some sort of a slide could be rigged up, and Chun Ti-kung, glad of a

chance of getting out of the stuffy atmosphere, climbed out and reported affairs to his uncle.

"Small beginnings have sometimes large endings," was the quotation that came to his lips. Naturally both of them were eager to find out what quantity of booty there was, and when the planks from the gateway were fixed up, no time was lost in trundling down the bags.

The hiding-place had been cleverly planned, and could only have been made with a considerable amount of work, and, as Chun Tao-tai remarked,

"Only kept secret by the loss of one or two hundred lives; but then during Muh Wang's time lives were only worth ten or twelve dollars. It must have been well managed, and in some way he must have got the better of his comrades. Possibly it may have been the treasury of some one of the temples, whose disciples used at one time to flock to their shrines."

A drop of five feet from the level of the ground left a space between the top level of the central mound, which was some fifteen feet high, in which a chamber of nearly six feet square had been excavated, and from this space bag after bag was passed down, some heavier, some lighter than the others. Time passed so rapidly that nobody thought of it, until Ta-thoo and his underling, who had been in a sort of stoke-hole for hours, shouted down that they were finished and could do no more work.

It proved to be past one o'clock (when you have no watch the stomach is a wonderful time-keeper), and as the report was that a considerable number of bags still remained to be removed, and no attempt on the part of the pirates at reprisal was apparent, rice and its

usual adjuncts of vegetables, fish, and tea were served out. The work was carried on by relays of men, for Chun was too anxious to get the unexpected find back to Hoochow to allow any delay.

To finish, the number of bags finally counted turned out to be one hundred and sixty-nine, the value of which could not be ascertained without the help of the bankers; and when the quantity was reported to the Tao-tai, and that no more were visible, his anxiety about Peng Yu-lin and what he might attempt in rescuing such a treasure increased. The treasure made quite a respectable little mound of its own, and the whole afternoon was spent in carrying it down and placing it in the gunboats.

When this task was safely finished, at eight o'clock a start was made, and Hoochow reached without mishap, although from the number of small boats that had put out from Tung-ting there must have been a considerable stir there.

All were thankful when they arrived. On their journey home the Tao-tai told his nephew that he should forward the treasure and a full account of its discovery to Peking, reserving only a small amount with which to reward the proper conduct of his soldiers.

At this stage the faithful transcriber or translator remarked to the narrator—

"Surely you have not taken all this time to tell a story without a climax—no seizure, no fight, no excitement!" The narrator answered—

"I tell the tale as it happened. The fighting came after when the Tao-tai pursued and punished the rebels, but as Chun Ti-kung had gone up to Peking by that time

those events do not fall within the story of his adventures."

It ought also to be recorded, that a considerable time after the events now related Chun Yu-tai received from Peking his full credentials as *Fu-tai* (Governor), but as the alteration of his title would only lead to confusion, I think it better to continue the story under the lesser title of "the Tao-tai Chun," or "Chun Tao-tai."

His father also received posthumous honours, and was promoted to mandarin rank on account of his son's good deeds.

The fame of the Tao-tai as a determined and honourable man was greatly increased in Peking by his upright conduct; the authorities sent him a handsome reward in money, and gave him to understand that any petition he might present for himself, or for his newly-adopted son, would be favourably received at head-quarters.

CHAPTER XII

UNCLE AND NEPHEW

THE Chinese peasant of the Central Provinces is probably one of the happiest and most contented mortals under the sun. It is admitted that his taxes, levied for the most part in grain for the Imperial Government, and increased by an equal amount that passes into mandarin pockets, are heavy; that in the event of any disturbance the rioters are tortured and punished severely; and that their work is hard and continuous, excepting during the extremely cold weather.

Still the ground repays the constant cultivation spent on it. At their work you always find the labourers chatting and laughing, and with many leisure minutes to spare for any unusual sight or incident. After work they adjourn to their tea-shops, and engage in dominoes or in animated discussions on the topics of the day, gathered from the *Shenpaou* or *Hupao*, read out to them by some poor student so reduced in circumstances that he is glad of the tea given by the tea-shop proprietor, and the cash subscribed for the interpretation of what is unintelligible to some of his hearers, as an addition to what he earns from teaching the few pupils he can find in the village.

The women, after their field work is over, return to their homes and children, and many merry games are played. The younger men, who have not yet learned the lesson of not doing more than is absolutely necessary, join in, and on summer evenings there reigns an appearance of relaxation and content. Perhaps, during the season, kite-flying is one of the games that attracts most attention amongst all generations, and a fight of kites is really exciting. The kites are wonderfully made and in innumerable patterns—ladies, mandarins, butterflies, beetles, and perhaps the best of all, centipedes, and attain an immense height. In the fight, great skill has to be exercised to obtain the victory, which consists in bringing the string of one kite in contact with the string of its opponent at such an angle as to cut the string, when the defeated kite falls ignominiously to the ground, and many high words and explanations pass between the respective owners. A tale-teller comes round, and during the hot nights you may find half the village seated round him listening to his stories for hours, the monotony being occasionally broken by the introduction of some well-known song or quotation, in which the listeners show their appreciation by murmuring the words in a sort of chorus. Their fairs, on certain fixed dates, attract great crowds, and a general feeling of jollity pervades them, and the visits to the temple, that is generally in the neighbourhood. At China New Year time, for a fortnight or three weeks, nothing is thought of but visiting, feasting, and good wishing. The best clothes are all brought out of their boxes, and if you have not a good garment to your name, you go to a pawn-shop

and get the loan of one for a day or two for a consideration. The Ethiopian indeed does change his skin, for at times you may meet your coolie in the street and mistake him for a rich man!

It is a sad fact to realize, that such an industrious and energetic population should be ground down to a simple hand-to-mouth existence by excessive taxation, but, as I began by saying, they are not unhappy in their lives.

At the time of Chun Ti-kung's narrative, there was little of this fun going on, the country, as already pointed out, only having begun to show symptoms of recovery after the devastation caused by the Taipings; but, on the whole, there was increasing satisfaction to the population as prosperity gradually returned, now that peace had been thoroughly restored.

As the patches of ground were gradually cleared and sown, the soil that had lain fallow for years yielded splendid crops, and to those who had, or could borrow, a little capital, it soon became evident that a very new seasons would set them on their legs again.

When the rice was just fit for harvesting, and the fields wanted preparing for the spring crop, whilst further patches were being cleared of the undergrowth, business at the Yamen was slack. The pirates on the Tai-hoo had, as usual after vigorous action, abandoned their practices for a time, their boats having been probably intentionally sunk or hidden in out-of-the-way corners of the lake until the vigilance shown at the time by the commanders of the gunboats should slacken. The men supported themselves in the meantime by returning to their usual occupations of fishing

and farming. Chun Tao-tai devoted himself to the study of the few foreign works that had been translated into Chinese, while Chun Ti-kung was very glad of the opportunity to once again work hard at the books of the classics, which formed such an important part in his approaching examinations at Peking.

One day, when business was over, the Tao-tai went to Chun's study and asked him if he had carried out his wishes and read the translated foreign books which had been provided.

Chun Ti-kung replied—

"I have done so, and in many of the books there is much that is difficult to understand, but from them it would appear that foreigners have made deeper researches than ourselves on some subjects."

The Tao-tai said—"It is so."

"In the book they call Sacred, or heaven sent," said Chun, "all appears admirable, and none of those bad things could I find of which those joss-men (missionaries) are accused. But in the commentaries on this book, I must say I dislike the impertinent way in which they speak of ancestral worship; advising the people to abandon these our most cherished ceremonies. This seems to me very bad, for not only would it cause a dismemberment of all our family ties and relations, but it would, I think, to a great extent diminish the power of the Government itself. A parent could then be no longer honoured or disgraced before or after death through the good or evil deeds of his heirs, and what inducement would there then be to walk uprightly? May I ask for your valuable opinion on the subject?"

The Tao-tai was much pleased when, from Chun Ti-kung's remarks, he found, that in spite of his other studies he had really read the books attentively, and after re-lighting his pipe and moistening his mouth with the fragrant green tea that stood at his elbow, he replied—

"You are a dutiful nephew, and quite right in your censures. When I told you to read their books I had no wish that you should adopt their opinions. My thoughts are, that we can learn much that is useful from them. Who that has travelled in one of their steamers can doubt that it is superior to a junk? And this steam carriage which they talk so much about, and which they say might go from Peking to Canton in a few days, why should it not prove beneficial?"

Chun Ti-kung here murmured that he believed foreigners could tell lies, and was promptly told not to be a fool.

"Before you left Pa-li Kiao what notion had you of a steamboat? Look at these lightning posts going up with the Imperial sanction, and by means of which we are to hear from Peking, Shanghai, or anywhere else in a few minutes, and tell me, what do you or I know of how the lightning is managed? Try and look at what is being done without prejudice because foreigners are teaching us, and learn all you can. On the subject of religion it is quite different. What do all the teachers in the world know about it? What is there beyond the ancient doctrine of the 'Ying' and the 'Yang'? We know that there is life and death, light and darkness, health and sickness, goodness and wickedness, luck and ill luck, pretty equally

divided; beyond that nothing. Take care of the fields and the trees, and you shall have enough to eat and wherewith to dress, is a quotation from the Sacred Edict which I have always thought of more importance than the tales told by priests, in most cases for the dollars that they get by telling them."

The Tao-tai, dropping general topics, then told Chun in a pleasant way how helpful and useful he had found him, and that he had finally determined to make him his son and heir.

Chun tried to express the pleasure and gratitude that he really felt, and then feeling almost awkward with the strength of his emotions, which he knew it was decorous to conceal, turned to the almanack and remarked that the next day was the one appointed for beginning to wear furs, and that he saw snow lightly falling through the window. The old and the young man parted for the night, each feeling the warm glow of mutual sympathy.

CHAPTER XIII

THE TAO-TAI ADOPTS CHUN

AFFILIATION in China entails a ponderous ceremony. The head of the clan has to give his consent, an auspicious day for the event has to be fixed by the priests, invitations to all friends and clansmen have to be issued, and a grand feast prepared.

On the day settled upon, the guests, on arrival, were presented with sweets and tea, and when all those expected had assembled, an adjournment was made to the hall of ceremonies, where the necessary arrangements had been made.

The first operation that Chun Ti-kung had to go through was, after having performed the *kow-tow*, to remove his uncle's boots and stockings, to wash his feet in warm water, to dry them and relace the coverings. He then had to dress himself in the white clothes of mourning, and with a willow wand in his hand, after touching the tablets, to prostrate himself and present prayers, incense, and offerings at the shrines of the various ancestors whom Chun Tao-tai, instructed by the priests, thought fit to receive the homage; the most important being those of the Tao-tai's grandfather and father. The priests present prolonged the ceremony

with long chants, to the accompaniment of a hollow bamboo, a bell, and a drum; paper representations of *sycee*, horses, garments, and all sorts of commodities were burnt in the incense-burner placed in the centre of the room, after which the ceremony resolved itself into a feast, that continued up into the small hours.

Chun Ti-kung had become the recognized son of Chun Tao-tai, and had to receive many visits of congratulation at the Yamen on the following days, in Chun Tao-tai's presence, which as a matter of course he had to return.

At Pa-li Kiao, on the Tao-tai having told his brother of the accomplished fact of the adoption, Chun's son (who had the name of Chun Fei-ting) was, although still quite a baby, made to pose as the host of a banquet in his father's honour, at which Chun Ti-kung's father and brothers thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

The wife dictated a letter to her husband in which, after a few complimentary phrases, she complained that he had not sent for her to join him in his honours at Hoochow. Chun had the ready excuse that his departure for Peking was close at hand, and did not hesitate to avail himself of it, but promised that he would come and see them all on his way to the North. December came, and everything as regards Chun Ti-kung's relations with Chun Tao-tai and his future prospects were settled. It was determined that he should make the move for Peking when the Peiho River should be clear of ice, probably about the end of February or early in March. The Tao-tai had set his heart on Chun Ti-kung passing his examinations with honour, but at the same time he begged of him not to omit the oppor-

tunity of going through a course of study at the Peking University, where instruction was given by foreign professors, and his words were—"I think you will find so much to interest you that it will be a relief after the monotonous study of our classics. Use your body as well as your mind, and do not be afraid to take a holiday when you feel overworked, as I can afford you plenty to live upon, and one or two years more or less, what are they when they are gone?" Very judicious advice, that was pretty constantly insisted upon by the Tao-tai during Chun's remaining stay at Hoochow.

Chun had now lived three years with his uncle, and the time had come for his departure for Peking, where he intended reading for some time with a well-known teacher, preparatory to passing his examinations.

The Tao-tai took an affectionate farewell of his adopted son, and Chun had no further excuse for delaying his visit to Pa-li Kiao. He wished to see his parents again, and his old home, but he felt a great reluctance to revisiting his wife. The messages that she had occasionally dictated in letters from home had shown an unsubmissive and grumbling turn of mind, that was perhaps natural in a young woman so quickly separated from her husband, but Chun considered her impertinent and tiresome, and this produced a feeling almost of loathing against a being linked to him for life.

In the natural course of events Chun's wife should have followed his fortunes and lived with him; but at his especial wish, and supported by his uncle in the matter, a family arrangement had been made that she and her child should remain in Chun's old home. He

regretted his marriage, but of course considered it necessary and proper that he should have a son. Chun now wished to see his boy, and make arrangements for his life and education during his absence in the North.

Chun arrived at his native village early in March, and found no alteration in the well-remembered scenes. Three years had made but little change in his family. The exact time at which Chun would arrive had not been known, and his wife appeared finely dressed up to pay some calls in the neighbourhood, her favourite way of passing the time; she was not sorry to be able to show herself to her husband in what she considered her most becoming costume. In the house it was her duty, as a respectable first wife, to wear sombre dresses, but finer attire was permissible for paying visits; her long upper jacket, buttoned on the left shoulder, was of pink brocade, with a deep border round the neck, and cuffs of sky-blue satin; where the two colours joined was a line of black satin edged with embroidery. The finely kilted skirt of black gauze opened over wide trousers, that she wore rather long to conceal the fact that her feet, though small, had not been very tightly bound during her childhood. She had, however, pinched them into pointed shoes with high heels, to imitate the lily-foot, and she minced along with an artificial, tottering step. Her thickly-gummed hair, much of which had been tweaked out to simulate a high forehead, was gay with stiffly-wired flowers and filagree silver pins.

All this might have been charming to Chun if he had only happened to be fond of his wife; as it was, he thought her gay clothes contrasted badly with his

mother's quiet, dark-blue dress, and he would have preferred a more homely and sober appearance; their little boy had, however, come in with his mother, and when Chun saw what a well-made, manly little fellow he was, his irritation died out, and he could not help feeling proud of such a son.

Chun gave the Tao-tai's presents to his aged grandmother, whom he found broken in memory, and lying in her blue-curtained, four-poster bed. She was amused when the satin, furs, and ornaments were opened before her, and was told they were sent by her son, Chun Yu-tai. She noticed the name, but did not grasp that the presents were sent by him, and burst into tears, saying —"Oh, my naughty, poor son, he has gone to be a soldier, a disgrace to our family, and I shall never see his face again." Chun felt glad that his adopted father was spared such a depressing interview.

The greater part of his week's stay was spent by Chun in the company of his little son Fei-ting, whom he carried with him to revisit the scenes of his youthful dreams. The child was too young to understand, but his father took a pleasure in petting him, and built fresh lovely castles in the air, to include little Fei-ting.

The more Chun saw of his wife the less he cared for her; he met her as rarely as possible, as he had, he said, vowed himself to a state of celibacy until after his examinations. When he had, in private, remonstrated with her about her talkativeness, and her impertinent manner towards her mother-in-law, he found that she had quite a temper of her own, as she asked him what she *might* do if she might not talk, and if he thought

that the dirty old books he was so fond of reading were of any use to her. Chun came to the conclusion that further remonstrance would be useless, but that the sooner his son should be removed from his wife's influence the better.

Though capable of feeling strong likes and dislikes, Chun was not of a combative disposition, and would at any time rather try to slip past a difficult position than face it. In this he was like his mother, who, in spite of her strong legal position and almost unlimited powers as a mother-in-law, had fallen before the stronger will and sharp tongue of her daughter-iu-law, and practically allowed herself to be governed by the younger woman.

Chun was glad when his visit came to an end, and congratulated himself on having maintained a proper attitude of respect towards his relations when it had been required, but he had to admit to himself that he had outgrown his parents and his old home. Irksome above all he had found the feasts given in his honour by his father and brothers, as much for their own pleasure as for his, with nothing more to discuss at the prolonged sittings at table than the interests of the poor little village and its surroundings, his father and brothers meanwhile indulging in more *samshu* than was good for them. Chun had sometimes thought his uncle's views of life and his opinions over bold, and wide beyond propriety, but at least his uncle's conversation was interesting and stimulating, and Chun felt glad that fate had led him into a wider world than that of his native village. And so, after he had seen the village school-master, and found him an efficient scholar,

capable of teaching his son the rudiments of Chinese learning, and had obtained his father's consent (which was not necessary, but filial) to his son being sent to the Jesuit College in Shanghai on his seventh birthday, Chun was glad to shake the dust of Pa-li Kiao from his feet.

CHAPTER XIV

MURDER AND SUICIDE

WHEN Chun Ti-kung arrived in Shanghai on his way to Peking, he found that no steamer would leave for Peking for at least a fortnight. After the first few days spent at his old hotel "Everlasting Spring," he began to feel rather bored with his own company, and the thought occurred to him that he might look up his old acquaintance Pei, with whom he had three years before spent an amusing evening, although at the time he had thought that Pei had treated him shabbily. He remembered that, after all, the amusement had not cost him very dear, and a change of any sort would be well worth the money over again. He accordingly sought out the old clerk at Tung Yu's bank, who had helped him out of his first dilemma, and asked him if he could furnish him with Pei's address.

The old clerk at once became very grave, and said that rumour had been busy with Master Pei's name in a far from complimentary manner; it was said that he had squandered and gambled until his father had cast him off, that he was living a reckless life, that nothing was known as to where he lived or what he lived on, and, to wind up, the clerk strongly advised Chun to have nothing to do with him.

It is quite possible that Chun might have followed this advice, but by a curious coincidence, as he was turning out of the alley leading to the Bank, he jostled against Pei himself in company with another young man.

Chun was at once recognized and greeted with effusion, and introduced to the friend, Chang, and the three young men walked along the street together.

In answer to Chun's polite questions as to the name, age, and occupation of his new acquaintance, he learned that he was the son of a rich silkman, lately deceased, of Nanzing.

Whatever might be the state of Pei's exchequer, he looked as flourishing as ever; he invited Chun to dine with the pair of them, and Chun was only too glad to accept.

The dinner, served in a private room, was a dainty, not to say an extravagant one; and as Pei was in rollicking spirits, and could be very amusing when he chose, two hours slipped away very agreeably.

Pei then asked Chun to join them in a pipe of opium, but as Chun never smoked it, the two excused themselves for a time, leaving Chun to smoke a cigarette; in about half-an-hour they returned, and dominoes were called for to pass the evening. Chun took a hand and lost a few dollars, when, as he noticed that his comparative ignorance of the game appeared to irritate his companions, he pleaded his incapacity, and told them he should much prefer watching their play.

"Well," said Pei, "if you don't want to play, Chang and I will just have a game before we go to the theatre; but before beginning again we must have a

bottle of shamping out of what you have lost to the two of us."

The champagne was brought, and Pei and Chang drank most politely to Chun's health, and then settled themselves to their game, which Chun noticed assumed a very different aspect to the one in which he had played. The stakes were raised to a much higher limit, and extra bets were made at different points in the game. The luck was on Pei's side, and Chang soon showed that although he might be a rich man he could not lose gracefully.

Chun felt very uncomfortable in looking on and listening, though the combinations that he watched being handled, looking over Chang's hand, were interesting. He was offended when after a time Chang asked him to move away, as he fancied that Chun brought him bad luck.

Chun, really vexed, laughingly remarked to Pei—"May I bring the bad *Fungshui* to your side of the table?"

Pei immediately answered, "With pleasure."

The game finished, almost incredibly, in Pei's favour, and after that there was a troubled quarter of an hour over accounts, as Chang disputed every bet that had been made, although all had been committed to paper, and even accused poor Chun of having acted as a confederate with Pei.

On Chun rising in anger and advancing to choke the words in his throat, Chang apologized, and the three adjourned to the theatre, where an unpleasant amount of bickering between his hosts made Chun resolve, as he had done once before, to have no more

to do with Pei and his friends; when he had watched an act of the play, he made excuses and went back to his hotel.

It was two o'clock when he got there, and he slept till dawn, when his landlord rushed in, in a state of excitement, and told him that he had just heard that Pei had been foully murdered, and that a detective was waiting outside the door to take Chun to the scene of the murder, "as it is reported that your most honourable self was seen in company with him and another after midnight in the Ta Kwang Le Yuen" (the great playhouse).

Chun admitted the fact, and replied that he was ready to go, but that he could hardly believe that Pei was murdered, as he had left him so short a time before in no dangerous company.

When Chun was dressed, the detective led him quickly through the streets, in the brilliant dawn, to an English-built house at the corner of two streets. There was a crowd at the door; the Sikh policeman passed the two through into the house. The detective took Chun up-stairs into a small room nicely furnished in European style. The crimson curtains were drawn across the windows, the gas-jets still alight, and dominoes scattered about. And there on the red carpet, with his handsome face upwards, lay Pei with blood oozing from his temple, but otherwise so calm-looking and undisfigured, that Chun threw up his hands in dismay, exclaiming, "Oh, poor Pei, who has done this?" Chun was not allowed time for thought, as the detective said roughly—

"As you know Pei Tai-tsan perhaps you can say who

this is," and Chun turning saw a seated figure, its arms outstretched on the table with the face hidden between them. A great pool of blood gleamed at its feet, into which from time to time a heavy drop splashed.

"I think I know," said Chun, "but I must see the face."

A policeman interfered, saying, "Nothing must be touched until the magistrate comes." So Chun in terrible agitation had to wait on in another room hour after hour until the mandarin arrived at eleven, with two Chinese officials, whose duty it was to settle how the two men had come by their death. The magistrate was one of the progressive party, and had also brought with him an English doctor, whom he had asked as a favour to come and help him by giving his professional opinion on the case.

At the inquest the medical evidence was first taken: one official, after some curious manœuvring with lighted candles and incense, arrived at the conclusion that this was the work of a devil; the second official that a third party had shot both men; but the foreign doctor, after examining the wounds and their direction, inspected the pistols, which had been left lying where they fell; he then pointed out that the one on the table by Chang's hand had only been fired once, but the pistol on the floor by Pei three times, and it was his opinion that Pei had shot Chang twice, as was shown by the wounds, and had then shot himself, for the skin of his temple was charred as though the pistol had been fired close to his head.

It appeared from the examination of several witnesses, that after Chun had left the theatre, Pei and Chang

had adjourned to Chang's house to continue their gamble. The coolie who admitted them and brought them refreshments, had heard high words and a shot (probably Chang's), and then three shots in quick succession; he had run away shouting to the cook that there was a devil in the house; the cook would have fled too, but had been stopped by the appearance of a foreigner in his pyjamas from next door, so he had hidden himself. The coolie, at the advice of his friends, had returned; and as he was quite clear in his evidence that only two men had entered the house, Chun was freed from the suspicion of having been present at the murder. He reflected, with a shudder, that he might have spent months in prison if the coolie and cook had not been found to give evidence.

Chun Ti-kung was then called as a witness, and found it a very unpleasant ordeal. The magistrate did not spare asking him how and where he had become associated with such a character as Pei, and the particulars of the two occasions on which they had been together being brought out by a few questions, caused amusement that made Chun very uncomfortable.

The magistrate, who had information as to Chun's character and relations, and had all along only intended to give him a lesson, dismissed him saying, "You should have known that there is no evil to which a mean man will not descend, and have avoided such society, especially as I hear you intend trying for your degree."

The case was fully reported by the native papers, which declared that such an instance of depravity as Pei's had not been heard of for a hundred and fifty years.

Chang had been little known in Shanghai, and no papers could be found to show how money matters stood between the dead men. Pei had left many bills, though he had paid in hard cash for his last dinner.

Chang was the last of his line, and on this account the family claimed heavy damages from Pei's father, on the ground that a child could not have been properly brought up to depart so widely from the straight path. They were awarded damages to the amount of ten thousand taels, and would probably have ruined Pei's father in the end, had not Chang's wife in Nanzing, who was *enceinte* at the time of her husband's murder, given birth to a son.

Chun had another miserable interview, this time in private, with the magistrate, who thought it his duty to talk to him seriously. He recommended Chun to write a full account of the affair to his adopted father, in order to forestall the stories that would certainly be invented by talebearers.

Chun did as he was advised, and waited for the answer, although doing so entailed missing the first steamer going North. He ate the rice of mortification in solitude and distress, hardly venturing out of his quarters, as he fancied that people stared and pointed at him when he went out.

The five days before the answer came seemed endless, but it came at last and relieved his mind.

The Tao-tai wrote that Chun was to blame, and that the consequences of his folly might have been serious; that he hoped this experience might teach him caution in choosing his friends, but that the affair was now finished and would soon be forgotten. "Do not be

little-hearted," the letter wound up. "Go at once to Peking, and work hard, and always remember that I am not a fair-weather friend."

A steamer left next day, and in it Chun took his departure. He had a fair passage to Tientsin, and from there an uncomfortable cart journey to Peking without let or hindrance.

CHAPTER XV

GLORY AND HONOUR

Of Chun Ti-kung's life and experience in Peking it is not intended to tell at any length.

Chun Tao-tai and he had so laid their plans that he had two clear years before him free from all work and anxiety, during which to devote himself entirely to working at the classical books and commentaries, and to perfecting his own literary powers, that he might be able to take his degree at the next triennial examination. The Tao-tai himself, however, hardly looked for such success.

Chun on his arrival, after searching for a day or two, obtained comfortable and quiet lodgings; he might have lived with distant relatives in the city, but preferred living alone that he might work in undisturbed peace. He began at once to apply himself diligently and enthusiastically to his work with a celebrated teacher.

The awful time of examination found him fully prepared and calmly convinced of his own powers. His early and continuous study stood him in good stead, and he came out of his cell in the Examination Hall tired, pale, and exhausted, at the end of the three

days' ordeal, but confident that he had done good work, and that the subject of his trial essay had brought out his capacity for fine and poetic composition, and that his remarkable memory had not failed to supply him with all the quotations and allusions necessary to good Chinese writing.

Most, indeed nearly all, of the students left Peking directly after the examination to return to their homes; but Chun was feeling so languid, and averse to making a move of any kind, that he resolved to wait where he was to hear the results of the examination.

After an interval for careful comparing of the students' papers, the official lists came out, and were published in Peking.

Chun's heart swelled and throbbed with happiness and gratified ambition to find that his name was amongst the first, and that he was the proud possessor of the Hanlin degree, the fourth and highest degree attainable. The lists were sent all over the country where the students were dispersed, and were read by many of them with weary and broken spirits, and with regrets that another three, six, nine, or even forty years had repeated the same old story of failure.

Chun's career was now assured; all offices in his country were open to him, for could he not write exquisite impromptu poetry? An appointment was sure to be given him in the course of time.

Whether from a morbid state of health, brought on by overwork, or from a kind of shyness, Chun felt strongly averse to returning home even for a visit; he knew that feasts and ceremonies awaited him, congratulations from every one, and a public interest in his

doings that he found hard to endure. He was in love with books and solitude, as he had been from his boyhood. A telegram was sent to the Tao-tai, "Successful —Hanlin—await my letter," to which he received the laconic reply, "Longevity."

His uncle was naturally much elated by the good news, but felt uneasy about the last words of the telegram. Why did not Chun return; why should he stay away? He feared that his boy's health had suffered, but he had to wait, and spoke to no one of his anxiety.

The official list of successful candidates was posted at the Yamen in Hoochow, Chun's name at the top. The town was in great excitement that such an honour should have fallen to the place, though in reality the glory of having reared a Hanlin and his father belonged rather to Pa-li Kiao; in both places there were loud rejoicings. The enthusiasm was a little damped when the Tao-tai made the statement, undoubtedly disagreeable to him to make, that his son would not yet return, but that entertainments in his honour would be arranged and notified next day.

Chun had written to the Tao-tai the meaning of his telegram, saying that he felt it would be unwise to break up a course of life for which he considered himself well suited, and which he could evidently pursue with good results; he would, therefore, with his honoured father's permission, begin at once that course of studies at the Foreign College he himself had recommended two years before.

Letters of congratulation and praise poured in upon Chun from all his friends, and from many people who

had never met him; this was pleasant enough, and did not tend to lower him in his own estimation; but the letter that came from the Tao-tai really made him ashamed of his selfishness, though it contained no word of reproach. He wished that he had gone himself with the good news to the kind old man.

The letter simply said that the relief in getting Chun's telegram had been great. It expressed his father's deep thanks and gratitude to him for his dutiful conduct and hardly-earned honours, and concluded: "It has been hard for me, at my time of life, to deprive myself of the pleasure of seeing you with your glory fresh upon you; but I cannot disappoint you at such a time. You desire to study at the Foreign College. So be it. I only insist on your taking a month's rest. Then do as you please."

Chun now thought it too late to repair his selfish error, but he obeyed his father on the subject of taking a holiday. He petitioned the Council of Preferment for leave to spend some further time in study before taking office, on account of his youth, and the rescript to such an unusual request appeared in the next issue of the *Peking Gazette*—"Request granted."

After this Chun went away for a month's rest to the Western Hills, lodging in a Buddhist temple. He spent his time strolling about under the beautiful trees, playing the flute, and dreaming to his heart's content, sitting in the evening on the bench outside the gate beside the goggle-eyed stone dogs to chat with the monks. The outdoor life soon restored him to health, and he went back to Peking thoroughly refreshed.

On his return he took to his new studies in the

Foreign College like a duck to the water, and found them very interesting. His subjects were English and French, Mathematics, History, and a fair smattering of Natural Science. The attitude of his mind towards his new work was rather curious; he looked upon foreign teachings as ingenious speculations. Wherever memory was required he learned with great ease and rapidity; but he never became imbued with the Western scientific spirit. His new knowledge was a polish to the surface of his mind, and never penetrated deep enough to influence his inexact way of thinking of life and natural phenomena. The two languages, with his fine ear, he mastered thoroughly and quickly, and he could manage calculations and experiments with precision and accuracy; but he would not have acted on this knowledge, and it would have been quite unsafe to have left explosives or delicate instruments in his charge. He learned the Western explanation of thunder and lightning; but this theory did not expel the more poetic old view of spirit-voices and heavenly anger; both ideas found a place in his brain, and floated there amicably together. Foreign history was as romance to him, and he still found no difficulty in accepting monstrous traditions of his own country. He learned that stars were flaming suns of enormous size, and remembered, and could tell, all the facts of astronomy that he learned; but underlying this new knowledge he had a deep, half-unconscious scepticism, and sometimes felt a vague irritation at what he considered the arrogance of Western thought and action.

It was now not necessary for Chun to work so continuously as when he was going up for his Chinese

degree, and he allowed himself to accept the invitations of his numerous friends; he would stroll in the city with a congenial friend, or take rides on mule-back.

The years slipped by in this new life with pleasant monotony; he did not fail to keep up a desultory correspondence with the Tao-tai, his own family, and with Tung Yu, his banker in Shanghai. Chun's money matters were in a remarkably flourishing condition; it was not necessary, in the quiet life he was leading, to spend a quarter of the allowance made him by the Tao-tai; and he had put by, for nearly eight years, most of the money he had received, including a considerable sum that came to him from the pirate raid. His banker had, with his eager consent, invested at various times in land and houses in Shanghai that had increased enormously in value. As Chun had never withdrawn the yearly interest, and had given Tung Yu instructions to go on making the same kind of investments, he found himself gradually growing rich. When Chun wrote of these things to the Tao-tai, he received the answer—"It is not of great importance that you should save money; I spend less than I receive every year, and all will be yours when I die."

CHAPTER XVI

WELCOME AND FAREWELL

A TIME came at last, at the end of little more than five years of life in Peking, when Chun felt he had given enough time to study, and that he would have to take office and do his share of work in the world. A desire to travel, and see something of the foreign countries whose languages and ideas he had been studying, a rather unusual craving for a Chinaman in his position, took possession of his mind. He wrote of this wish to his adopted father, and, instead of receiving a rebuff, as he almost expected, the Tao-tai had replied that, if he were the age of his son there would be nothing that he should like better for himself, and that, as he knew the Ambassador who was to be sent next to England, he would use his influence at Peking to procure Chun's appointment to the position he desired, as interpreter to the Marquis Kung.

This application, one of the few the Tao-tai had ever made to the Peking authorities, was favourably received, and Chun was ordered to call on Marquis Kung, who welcomed him cordially, and promised the appointment. "What greater pleasure could I have," said the great man, "than to take with me to England a son of your

father and a scholar of the Hanlin degree?" He sent many complimentary messages to the Tao-tai, and advised Chun not to delay his departure for home, as, although he did not expect to leave China for six months, their going might be hastened; for the Ambassador then in England was in failing health, and had applied for leave to return to China.

With some regret, Chun prepared to leave at once a life that had suited him so well, and wrote to his adopted father to expect him in Hoochow in ten days, and managed to make his journey home in that time as he had calculated.

His hired house-boat reached Hoochow just as the short-lived dusk was falling, and as he neared the walls the sound of gongs and crackers showed that he was looked for and seen; so hastily diving into his cabin, he exchanged his shabby blue travelling clothes for his new official dress. Passing through the water-gate, he saw boats anchored on each side of the creek in that still ruined and dismantled part of the city, with lanterns displayed from mast-top to water-mark. Flags waved from the shore, bombs and crackers innumerable burst and snapped, while horns and drums made uncouth additions to the general row.

Instead of being allowed to use the back entrance to the Yamen, he had to pass down the narrow side passage on a carpet of red cloth to the front gates, which had purposely been kept shut. Chun advanced and knocked with proper modesty at the small right-hand gate of the entrance.

"Who is there?" was asked from inside the gate.

"The unworthy son of his Excellency Chun Yu-tai," he replied.

The two large central gates were at once thrown open wide, and the Tao-tai stepped forward. Chun made low and repeated bows, and the two men passed through the court into the Yamen hand in hand.

The place was crowded with friends and acquaintances eager to do honour to such a distinguished scholar as Chun. He was glad to find that the visits and merrymakings, official and private, in the next two weeks, caused him less vexation of spirit than in former days, and that he could endure with smiling indifference much talk from obvious flatterers and ignorant bores, that would in his earlier years have set his sensitive young nerves tingling with irritation.

Three months were spent very contentedly and happily by the father and son together in the bright autumn weather; they enjoyed each other's society, and discussed gaily every subject that arose. They did not always hold the same opinions, and the Tao-tai's admiration for foreigners and their institutions still remained greater than Chun's.

"Your spirit keeps younger than mine, my father," Chun would laugh; "I cannot so easily get rid of the beliefs and customs to which I was born and bred."

"Why should you drop your old faiths, my son, although you should adopt some of the foreigner's inventions?" said the Tao-tai.

"The foreign professors," answered Chun, "teach that an active faith in science, and the unalterable laws it has discovered, is necessary to the proper understanding and management of these inventions, and that

this same active belief in science is logically incompatible with our faith."

"Is their religion, then, logically compatible with their knowledge?" asked the Tao-tai.

"No, my father," said Chun; "on this subject alone they discard their scientific principle, but they call their religion above science, and ours beneath it."

The two men laughed.

"From what I have seen of foreigners," Chun continued, "I think that now-a-days Western religion is only held true by the paid teachers of it, by women, and by some old men."

"But, my boy," said the Tao-tai, "this Western religion was certainly held true by the great Gordon."

"Ah," said Chun, "that is probably why some foreigners say that Gordon was partly mad."

"You have still to see the working of these ideas in foreign lands, and I envy you the chance," said the old man.

Both were sorry when a sudden notice was sent from Peking that the new Ambassador would leave for England on the 1st of January, and that Chun must join the Marquis Kung, and begin his duties as interpreter a week before that date in Shanghai. The Tao-tai almost regretted having given his consent to the scheme of travel; and he made Chun promise not to stay away from him longer than the two years to which he had agreed.

"As regards Fei-ting, my grandson," he said, "authorise his masters to let him come here in the holidays, and to send his school reports to me, and I will look after him in your absence."

On arriving in Shanghai, Chun's first care was to visit his little son Fei-ting at school. He was glad to see the boy, now nearly eight years old, looking sturdy, handsome, and in every way satisfactory; his teachers gave a good account of his conduct and ability. He was shy at first with his young father, whom he did not remember at all; but after Chun had taken him out to luncheon, and given him a silver watch, the shyness wore off, and the child became friendly and talkative. When I am old, thought Chun, will my boy leave me as I leave my adopted father whom I like and respect so much? The boy cried when his father left him at the school and said good-bye. Chun smiled at the tears.

"I never cared for any one enough to mind leaving them," he mused. "It is well to have one's affections under control; but perhaps it is a little dull. If that impossible princess of my dreams should come to me, gracious, lovely, and gifted, could I not forget myself at her side, and feel for once the happy intoxication of love?"

CHAPTER XVII

OVER THE WESTERN SEAS

On the day fixed, the Marquis Kung and his suite started for England in the mail steamer. Chun Ti-kung and the secretary shared a first-class cabin, far better, as Chun at once saw, than the quarters given to Chinese first-class passengers on the coast steamers. His companion's habits subsequently proved a great annoyance to him.

The other members of the staff were apportioned, some to the second, and some to the third class, and were neither wanted nor seen on the voyage. The steamer was far larger than any in which the Chinamen had travelled before, and they walked up and down, making comments on the breadth of beam, the strength of the bulwarks, and the length of the ship, coming to the conclusion that no sea could make her uncomfortable, for no water was strong enough to make such a vessel rock.

The sight of the engines through the skylight inspired Chun with an ode,—that was subsequently much admired by his countrymen—in which he compared the forces that sent the boat through the water to overpowered demons coerced to man's service, the puffs of

steam, the smoke, the throbbing, representing their protests against their hard and ignominious slavery.

At the first luncheon on board, the three Chinamen had seats together, and Chun did not know if he were more amused or disgusted with the conversation of two English ladies who sat next to him, and who were going to Hong Kong. They had discovered that the Marquis and his secretary knew no English, and not thinking that Chun might understand, talked to each other with the utmost freedom, remarking on the clothes and appearance of the three Chinese, alluding to the horrid custom they had of wearing long nails, and envying the sable coat which the Marquis had thrown over the back of his chair. The captain was not present at this meal, and the two ladies had quite a field day.

The Marquis and Chun kept up a desultory conversation together, and once or twice when the Marquis asked Chun, "What are these chattering magpies saying?" and Chun told him, he grinned so broadly that the Englishwomen began to suspect that the horrid men understood their remarks, and turned their talk to less personal topics.

Before the next meal it became known on board that Chun was the Ambassador's interpreter, and the ladies made their apologies through the captain for any thoughtless speeches they had made. The Marquis and Chun expressed themselves quite satisfied.

The lady next Chun then quite changed her tactics, and devoted her conversation entirely to him, asking innumerable questions, and probing curiously into his past life and future prospects to such an extent, that Chun, who had never talked to a foreign lady before,

and who had a very decided opinion as to the shamelessness of such conduct on the part of a female, said quite quietly, but in a voice that from its slowness and clear articulation carried far, "Please be silent." Coming as this did after the ladies' apologies, the captain was seized with an explosive attack of coughing; the cough seemed contagious round the table, the general talk was suspended for a minute or two. Chun meanwhile told the Marquis that foreign women seemed entirely devoid of propriety.

Alas for the stability of the strongest steamer! Chun had thought that, after his experience of travelling to Ningpo and Tientsin, he had arranged his things securely in the cabin; but as the vessel began to take long steep rolls, his baggage seemed to become animate —one basket with a cover of string network leaped on to the sofa, scattering its contents on the floor. Chun, trying to reduce things to order, suddenly felt himself very unwell, and had to call the steward. Neither he nor the Marquis knew much about anything more until the anchor was let down in Hong Kong harbour.

Here they had to land to pay some calls; during the rest of the voyage, until they had passed through the Suez Canal, both of them thought they had known the worst of sea-sickness, and really enjoyed the interesting voyage.

Asiatics seldom travel first-class, and many of the passengers thought and showed that they felt it to be obnoxious to be in such close proximity to Chinamen. However, Chun's habits of cleanliness were in his favour, and before Singapore was reached he had made

himself rather popular with a fair number of his fellow-passengers.

Like many of his countrymen, he was fond of children, and would play with those on board, much to their *amahs'*, if not always to their mothers', delight; his game of cat's-cradle was much admired and imitated by the bigger children.

If by chance Chun wandered into the smoking-room, there was generally some chaff, which he did not understand, about his taking a hand at poker. Some domino-players, seeing that he was attracted to their quarter of the room, asked if he would like to play; he was pleased, and proved himself no mean antagonist, for he had in late years played constantly in Peking, with dominoes too that require a better memory than the western game, as the numbers run higher.

After passing the Suez Canal, the steamer met the Mediterranean in one of its most sulky moods, and the sea-legs of the Chinese failed them utterly; they remained in their cabins in patient suffering until they arrived at Southampton. Here they were met, and at once escorted to London, to their own embassy, in rather a dilapidated condition.

Chun felt much interested in travelling for the first time by train, but he carefully kept a calm demeanour in the most correct manner. "The superior man betrays no emotion in new circumstances." Feeling rather tired after the rough tumbling and pitching endured during the previous days, he fell into a doze, and dreamed that he was flying through the sky on a fiery dragon, which, in spite of hideous noises made to frighten it off, managed to swallow the moon and cause

a total eclipse, when Chun woke with a start to find they had plunged into a tunnel.

The outgoing Ambassador was glad to see the Marquis Kung, and gave him and his suite a hearty welcome. He had petitioned for leave more than nine months before, having found the English climate too trying for him, and rather sourly remarked, after a nasty fit of coughing—

"Our paternal Government has seen fit to relieve me of my office at last, but I am doubtful if they have not also relieved me of my life by keeping me here until the fogs came again. May better fortune attend my far more gifted successor."

The Marquis protested against these gloomy forebodings, but the poor man proved right, and died on his return voyage just as he reached Hong Kong. The Marquis Kung did his best to hasten the sick man's departure, and the whole new staff worked hard and continuously for some days in order to grasp the situation of affairs, and fit themselves for their new duties.

It was the dull season in London, so that, with the exception of a few dinners to the outgoing and incoming Ambassadors, and receiving and returning the visits of the representatives of the Powers of the earth, their society engagements were not numerous.

Chun Ti-kung found plenty of work in translating numerous official communications, and had always to attend the Marquis at any interview with Englishmen, but he rarely found it necessary to be in the office beyond the hours of ten to four, and was getting rather tired of the monotony before May came, and with it

many more invitations, as the season began, to all sorts of functions.

The position of a Chinaman in foreign countries is not generally a happy one; his dress is too peculiar to admit of his living a free life, and he has no chums outside his own Embassy. Chun tried at times to wear foreign clothes, in the hope of going about town to see life without being so conspicuous and attracting constant attention, but no English hat could effectually conceal his queue and shaven pate, so he had to resign himself to being stared at, laughed at, and even shouted after as a comical curiosity whenever he went beyond the doors of the house in which he lived.

PART II

PART II

CHAPTER I

AN ENGLISH MAID

JOHN SCARTH many years ago published a pamphlet in China called *China for the Chinese*, and coming out as it did when the country was in the throes of the Taiping rebellion, it was much read by those interested in China, and found many adherents. The principles laid down were, that it was beneath the dignity of a great nation like the Chinese to submit to the yoke of an inferior race such as the Manchus, and that the rebellion merited encouragement rather than suppression.

The rebellion, as previously pointed out by Chun Tao-tai, had no root in itself and died its death, and the pamphlet would not have been mentioned here (it will probably now be remembered but by few) had not a copy of it found its way to the back of some books in a book-case in an old library at Bayswater, and fallen into the hands of a young English lady, whose chief amusement lay in the reading of any and many books. Twenty years and more had aged the world, and the dynasty had not been changed; but the arguments, tersely and strongly put, were still of equal interest, and took hold of the imagination of Nellie Serjeant to such an extent that she really became

enthusiastic on matters Chinese, and took considerable trouble in obtaining from the libraries what books she could bearing on the nation, its history, manners, and customs. The library was a nice shady place, situated at the back of an old house, and looking on to a garden where the patches of green gave rest to her eyes when wearied with plodding through some of the mysteries of a little-understood civilization, or the vagaries of a new novel.

To give some clue to the girl's character, and a glimpse at her life and surroundings, a short retrospect is necessary. When nine years of age she had lost her mother, and was left to the care of her father and two sisters, the youngest of whom was six years older than Nellie. Her father was then struggling in a small way as a South American commission agent, and the consequence had been that her sisters had not been able to obtain other than a very incomplete education. Two years afterwards Fortune turned her wheel, and Mr. Serjeant, by a speculation in coffee, when that crop had failed in Brazil, made a handsome fortune. It was hinted that he had acted on orders from abroad, and that had foresight had its rights a moderate commission would have been his wage; but the telegraph wires were out of order at the time, and the time that had elapsed before communication was restored, had sent the coffee market mad, so that, as his transactions were made through various channels, it was almost impossible to prove whether he had actually received the orders before or after he went in for the quite unusual speculation. That his former friends abroad were not sparing of their abuse, and that he gave up his commission

business are facts, but then as he remarked—"I have worked hard and am content to retire on my laurels." He was a pompous, self-conceited little man, but sufficiently wise to avoid any serious ventures after his run of luck, although to hear him talk at his city Club, you might have been led to believe that he was still a heavy speculator, had you not perceived that his remarks hardly carried weight, although his fellow members were willing enough to listen to him when he invited them to lunch or dine with him at the Club, which he was very fond of doing. At one of these dinners he was told of a great bargain that was in the market, a house, fully furnished, that was to be sold at Bayswater, belonging to an old family that had come to grief. This house he had sense enough to secure, and in it the Serjeant family had been settled for ten years.

Nellie's two sisters had entirely given themselves over to the pleasure or misery of husband and society hunting, so that as a natural consequence she had been very much relegated to the society of her governess and masters, and had developed a taste for reading and day-dreaming unusual in a girl of twenty-one. She was brown-haired, grey-eyed, and far from bad-looking, with a neat, rather small figure, and small hands and feet. She did not care for society excepting when lawn-tennis or any active exercise was its object; and until lately, when both her sisters had succeeded in getting engaged to be married, they had been only too glad to leave her in the background. Nellie was content but very reticent. At the time when she first makes her appearance in this story, she

was much annoyed at finding that her sisters, instead of, as formerly, paying little attention to her movements, were now constantly insisting on the wrongfulness of her secluding herself so much. They had gone so far as to induce their father, whom in a way Nellie loved, and to whom she felt grateful for a good education, to express a wish that she would go about more and be more companionable, like her sisters.

On a certain May afternoon, when she was enjoying herself in her sanctum, the two sisters, smartly and rather loudly dressed, bounced into the room and exclaimed almost simultaneously—"Really, Nellie, this is too bad. Here are we all ready to start; you promised to be ready at three, and here you are muddling your head over your stupid books when we ought to be at Baislay!"

Nellie, without attempting excuse, ran out of the room to change her dress, whilst her sisters fidgeted about grumbling. Baislay was a house in Kensington inhabited by a rich widow, Lady Withington, who had at some previous garden-party met and taken a fancy to Nellie; hence this the first invitation to the house, which was considerably higher in the social scale than most houses the Serjeants visited at.

Lady Withington was a widow of the age of thirty; she was a great reader, and took much delight in all the newest distractions in the way of authors, artists, or travellers whom she could manage to induce to come to her gatherings. Although she persistently declared that she would never marry again, many were of opinion that with her well-dressed and rather handsome figure and pretty face, and especially with her

well-filled purse, she would be far from disagreeable as a companion through life; her invitations were not often refused, and she had many suitors with whom she flirted at arm's-length. On this particular afternoon she was greatly elated at having, through a little intriguing with Foreign Office friends, obtained a promise from Marquis Kung and his suite to be present at her garden-party. While she was welcoming the Serjeants, she was really fretting under the yoke of Chinese politeness (that is the politeness of being unpunctual), when his Excellency, with Chun Ti-kung as his interpreter and his suite, advanced towards her across the lawn. The fantastically-dressed figures were a novelty to most of the guests. Their flowing silk robes, thick-soled black satin boots, round beaver hats with differently-coloured buttons and peacock feathers in some of them, created a flutter of excitement, and all eyes turned and watched with amusement the Marquis's grave bow of salutation and his limp handshake, the remainder of his suite bowing in conformity. Young Marston of the Foreign Office, who was an old friend, then introduced Chun Ti-kung to Lady Withington, and pleading as an excuse for his departure pressing business of which the Marquis was cognizant, left the whole party on her hands. She felt inclined to be angry, but when on turning to Chun and asking him if his Excellency would like to walk round the garden, the answer came back, translated into almost perfect but slowly-spoken English, that his Excellency would like for a time to watch the game, that was new to him, her awkward feelings vanished; and chairs being brought for the party, she soon found

herself busily engaged in trying to explain through Chun the intricacies of lawn-tennis. The Serjeants had also been furnished with chairs near the others; the suite, excepting Chun, who sat, standing rather disconsolately behind the Marquis's chair. Nellie, with her last enthusiasm in full career, followed the conversation with keenest interest, eagerly scanning the appearance of the Marquis and the other members of the Legation. Most of them were rather old and fat-faced, and not heroic in any way; Kung's questions were shrewd.

The conversation lasted some half-an-hour, during which tea and cakes were served, and Nellie's sisters had left to join one or other of the sets of tennis, Nellie declining to play. She observed that all the Chinamen refused cream to their tea, and the polite backward shake of the hand with which they did it.

The talk over, Lady Withington and the Marquis rose and began to stroll round the garden and through the hot-houses; Nellie followed, with Chun at her side; their talk could only be disjointed, as the services of his interpreter were constantly called into request by the Marquis. Chun was good-looking, and taller than most of Kung's suite, whilst the robes and thick-soled boots added considerably to the semblance of height. His figure had quite formed during his five years' residence at Peking, and the year that he had already spent in England. His manners he had carefully trained to that calm and slightly cynical style aimed at by the followers of Confucius. He was slim and wiry, and when he shook hands at parting, Nellie noticed with a strange thrill his typical Chinese hands

—cold, sinewy, small and taper-fingered, suggesting curiously the idea of cruelty.

"Good-bye, Miss Serjeant," he said; "I hope that this will not be the only occasion that we meet."

Every word was quite separated from the other, and rather slowly spoken, his r's were generally turned to l's, and the th was a trial to his tongue. Lady Withington, when their guests had left, patted Nellie on the back and laughingly remarked—

"Thank goodness that is over; no fear of our losing our hearts to those peacocks! It has been very good of you to have helped me out. We will have a glass of claret cup to revive our exhausted frames, and then I must run away and see if my other guests have left me and fled."

Nellie, a little vexed at the speech, took the claret cup; but finding that some final tennis sets were being formed, she was eagerly snapped up, and soon lost herself in the excitement of the game.

The London season was at its height. The Serjeants' position in society had been gradually improving for some time past, and had been considerably improved by their appearance at Lady Withington's. Invitations began to come from unexpected quarters. Her sisters now found no difficulty in persuading Nellie to go with them to any sort of entertainment when there appeared to be a chance of increasing her knowledge of China and Chun Ti-kung. They met on several occasions, and Chun Ti-kung, when his duties would permit him, was only too glad of a companion who would talk to him as one reasonable being to another, and not only constantly ask what he thought of this or that, and

whether he did not think the West far better than the East. So their acquaintance gradually ripened; Chun Ti-kung with her was quite willing to admit that many things he saw were very superior to anything to be seen in China, whilst on the other hand he would point out that in some things he still thought China took the lead, especially in the matter of the starving poor in cities, who numbered, he thought, considerably less in most of the cities of his land than in London. It showed a widened view for Chun Ti-kung to admit that China had not everything possessed by other Powers.

Nellie could not help seeing that smiles and remarks were made as Chun Ti-kung's intimacy with her increased; but these rather stimulated her in her course than otherwise, and when, during conversation, she found that Chun had never visited St. Paul's or Westminster Abbey, she insisted that on the first spare afternoon he should go with her and see them. Such an invitation would have been decidedly forward in an unmarried Chinese lady, and rather took away Chun's breath; but he reflected that "the perfect man has no immutable sentiments of his own, for he makes the mind of mankind his own," and consented.

Chun admired freely the dome of St. Paul's and the grand proportions of the buildings. Before they left a choral service began, and they sat down for a few minutes and listened to some psalms chanted to Gregorian music, which Chun whispered to Nellie reminded him of his priests at home. With Westminster Abbey he was less impressed; his attention was much distracted by the numerous statues and

busts of England's great men. When they came out Chun said—

"I thought you only had one Heavenly Father, and yet in there you seem to have hundreds."

Nellie explained that they were statues of our greatest men who had been in the Church, in politics in war, and in writing, when his answer was—

"Do you mean to say that some of your men were twice as tall as my father?"

Nellie was puzzled what to reply, and said, concealing a smile—

"I have never thought why some of the statues are so much out of proportion with the others. I suppose that it was a matter of the sculptor's taste."

When Nellie arrived at home in a cab with Chun (whom she asked to tea, but he declined), the vials of her sisters' wrath broke over her—"Are you not ashamed of making yourself so conspicuous with that yellow-skinned Chinaman? You know you had promised to go with us to those theatricals at Granwood, and we waited for you for half-an-hour, until James told us you had gone out with that man. When we arrived without you we were ready to sink with shame when asked why you had not come; and worse still, when Lady Withington came into our group, shaking hands and laughing, 'Oh, this is too romantic! Fancy naughty Nellie playing truant with one of the nobility of China!' It was too bad; even James had the impertinence to grin when he told us where you had gone."

Nellie's temper was roused, and as she left the room she answered—

"Please remember that I am my own mistress."

So pride and obstinacy were further enlisted on the side of what was afterwards called "such a sad infatuation."

The sisters endeavoured to bring parental authority to bear in the matter, but Mr. Serjeant was at that time puzzling his brains over arranging return garden-parties and dinners to those who had been entertaining his daughters and himself. He pooh-poohed their fears as childish nonsense, for he still thought of Nellie as a child, and asked them to assist him in making up lists of the people to be invited, and all the rest of the programme. The task was so entirely congenial and so unexpected that Nellie's affairs were quite thrown into the shade. Chun Ti-kung and she used pretty constantly to meet and talk at all sorts of concerts and entertainments without being called over the coals. Out of mischief, Lady Withington looked on at and enjoyed assisting the growing intimacy. Nellie was for the time prime favourite, and when by chance (?) there was an orchid or some other rare flower in the conservatory that had "Sinensis" on its label, "My dear Nellie," she would say, "I do so wish you would ask Mr. Chun Ti-kung the Chinese name of that new flower that I showed you this morning—I do so love to know things by their real names;" and if half-an-hour elapsed before Nellie could learn the strange Chinese sounds and their proper inflection correctly, who could wonder? When, to one of his dinners, Mr. Serjeant asked an old friend who for years had been Consul at one of the Chinese ports, he said to his eldest daughter, "I wonder if there would be any chance of getting round

that Marquis and his interpreter; he seems to be going everywhere, and I am sure that to get Austin to talk to him and translate what he thinks of things would be good fun, as well as a great honour to us. Try if Nellie can work it." It must be admitted that the sisters expostulated, saying that Nellie was already making herself the talk of the town, and that they thought they had better not; but Mr. Serjeant was swelling with importance and self-satisfaction at having a possible chance of a Marquis dining in his house; and the sisters, partly influenced by the same idea, and anxious to impress their future husbands, who were to be present, gave way, and asked Nellie if, after all her kindness to him, she thought Chun Ti-kung could persuade the Marquis to come with him to dinner on that day fortnight. Nellie was at first inclined to hold aloof, thinking, how can they ask, or expect me to ask, a favour, after the way in which they talked about him? But then hearing that the Consul would be present, and drawing her own conclusions that Chun Ti-kung in consequence would not be required to interpret all the evening, she changed her mind, perhaps curious to see if Chun Ti-kung's friendship would bear the test, and at any rate anticipating a nice long talk with him during the evening. She sent a note to him asking him to call, as she had something to say to him. Chun had been drifting as well as Nellie further than either thought. The principal business at the Office had been for some weeks little more than reading and answering the invitations that flowed in from all quarters, and attending the various functions that the invitations meant. He had to confess to himself that

the pleasantest hours he found were those that he spent with Nellie: that when with other ladies there was a feeling of being patronized which he resented; whilst when left after dinner with the men, or when joining them in the smoking-room, his perception was keen enough to show him that his presence was a bore, often, if a conversation were going on, causing a dead pause. Now and again he would come across some one who was interested in him and his country and thoughts; but with him, as with most Chinese in London, the life was a very solitary one.

Nellie's summons was answered by him in person in the afternoon of the day that he received the note; and when after a good deal of hesitation on her part, he came to understand the favour she was asking for her father's sake, he smiled and remarked that it was nothing, and he would do much more for her sake, promised her an answer next day, and then, accepting the tea offered, he chatted on other matters until many visitors interrupted the *tête-à-tête.*

Chun Ti-kung, having taken the Hanlin degree, was in China higher in literary rank than the Marquis, who had contented himself with the third degree, so that his opinion had great weight with the Marquis, who, on hearing his request, readily agreed. Chun, calling for the book of engagements, cancelled one that had been already settled for the day named, writing across it "Send excuse," and posted the Marquis's and his own red cards of acceptance to Nelly.

CHAPTER II

THE EAST WOOS THE WEST

On the succeeding day Chun felt he had an excuse for calling at the Bayswater house to see that the answer had not by any chance miscarried, and was shown into the library. Nellie was standing ready to receive him.

"Thank you so much for your kindness to my small self," she said, laughing at her own imitation of Chinese politeness; and Chun, falling in with her humour, really *kow-towed,* that is, went on his knees and knocked his forehead thrice on the floor. He did not do the regulation three times kneeling and nine knockings; he thought to himself as he did this, that rather than be caught in such an attitude to a woman he would sacrifice his right hand; but aloud he only said, "The kindness is altogether on the side of your noble self in inviting us."

The suddenness of the action, which she had naturally never witnessed before, and in all probability would never see again, took Nellie quite by surprise; but Chun, having recovered himself rapidly, came to her relief, saying—

"You have often asked me what the *kow-tow* was like,

and now you have seen for yourself, but remember it is a secret between you and me."

"Certainly, certainly; how nice of you to explain things which I could not really understand; it is quite plain to me now what I read in the newspapers some time ago, that the Ambassador of England had refused to *kow-tow* to your Emperor," blushing and laughing. "It is not dignified, and I don't want you to do it again. Be sure I shall never forget, and I shall never tell tales out of school, but thank you, thank you very much."

"Your slightest wish is, you see, my law."

The acquaintance was certainly ripening, and as in the course of conversation which followed, it transpired that Chun had still left unexplored the British Museum and the National Gallery, two appointments were made to visit them together during the following fortnight. Nellie after the epoch of the invitation certainly took her own way, and although she was hardly of sufficient importance to figure in Society papers, yet great curiosity was aroused, and surmises made as to the possibility of an English girl giving herself to a Chinaman; bets were passing freely on and against the event. Her own feelings at the time must remain a mystery; a strong attraction she must have felt, strangely mixed with an almost weird feeling of fear when out of Chun's company. As to her acceptance or rejection of Chun's offer if he made one, she could not decide, but left the decision to the hour and the mood. Of Chun's conduct there is no expression to be used except—blackguardly; but in after years he long and bitterly repented his duplicity.

As a Chinaman, there was nothing wrong or unusual in taking to himself a second wife; but the very fact that during his conversations with Nellie he had never alluded to his position as a married man, showed that he was aware that if Nellie knew he had a wife living, it would probably put a stop to their further pleasurable and unrestrained intercourse. He concealed the facts: a subtle vein of deceit and self-conceit ran in Chun's mind, and he reasoned that it was for her or her friends to learn his antecedents; and that after all was said and done, a foreign woman must be considered honoured by becoming even a second wife to a Chinaman who had taken the highest degree. However his conduct may be viewed, his purposes had by this time become fixed, and he had written to his father by adoption, Chun Tao-tai, telling him of his intention, and asking for his approval.

The dinner at the Serjeants' house was a large one, but composed chiefly of men, the three Miss Serjeants, and Lady Withington, who, when she had been told of the alien guests, had insisted on going, saying—

"You know I am very inquisitive as to how all this mandarin-ducky flirting is going to end." Mr. Serjeant was only a trifle more inflated over this fresh acquisition. Mrs. Austin, the consul's wife, and a Mrs. Conway, were the only other representatives of the fair sex. Nellie was taken in by Chun Ti-kung, and Lady Withington, who sat next Mr. Serjeant, asked in a whisper if he really approved of the match coming off, which made him very hot and uncomfortable, indifferent as he was to what had been going on, excepting in so far as he could use the circumstances for his own aggrandise-

ment. Mr. Austin, who was a well-known sinologue, managed to draw out the Marquis into some quaint reminiscences of his life and experiences, which amused Lady Withington but made the rest of the company rather dull, as most of them were trying to hear what was being said. Nellie's and Chun Ti-kung's conversation was mostly confined to her explanation of what they were eating and drinking, as elsewhere he had been nervous of showing ignorance by asking questions. The Marquis had developed a taste for port wine, so that the sitting after dinner, to Chun's disgust, promised to be rather prolonged, and when one of his neighbours —who, he subsequently found out, was engaged to the eldest Miss Serjeant—suggested that, as he did not seem to want more wine, they should make a move, he was very glad to agree.

On entering the drawing-room, where only a few other men had as yet found their way, he was beckoned by Lady Withington to a seat next her and Nellie, and the trio were soon busy in conversation.

"Have you learnt to dance yet?" was the first of Lady Withington's questions.

"Not yet, and I fear that our dress and boots are ill adapted to the custom," looking first full at his questioner and then at Nellie. "I envy those who are more expert."

"Mr. Chun, I am afraid you are learning how to flatter," was the smiling reply, "and I shall caution my friends. But there, I declare, is my old friend Mr. Balfour just coming in at the door, so you must keep Nellie interested till I come back," and away she went.

Chun Ti-kung took the vacant seat, and began by saying that he hoped he should have found an earlier opportunity for a quiet talk.

"And that is why I suppose you stayed so long drinking," was the reply. "I always thought the Chinese were drinkers of tea."

"I came away as soon as opportunity met me; the Marquis is fond of wine, and there is nothing to blame in that, all our best poets praise the use of wine when relaxation does not interfere with business."

"You should not take me so seriously, I was only joking; and to show you that it was so, we will go and sit down out there where the flowers are, and you shall translate to me one of those pieces of poetry on wine drinking."

She leading the way, the conservatory was reached. Chun remarked—

"I wonder how it is that even here you seem constantly to use our lanterns, although none of you understand the characters on their outside, which are meant to bring you happiness, wealth, and longevity, and many other good things."

"We English are becoming more liberal every day. Anything we think pretty we bring from all parts of the world, and I am afraid we almost prefer foreign productions to our own."

"But is it possible that you think things admirable coming from China?" was Chun's leading question; but whilst Nellie was blushing and hesitating over her reply, Lady Withington came quickly to where they were sitting.

"I am sorry to disturb you, but the Marquis is going,

and is asking for his illustrious secretary. Why does he use such long words?"

Chun Ti-kung had to pull himself together, and, shaking hands with his two friends, with a sigh followed Lady Withington into the drawing-room, not in the frame of mind befitting the superior man. The Marquis and he were soon in their carriage driving to a ball at one of the Legations, where Chun spent a dreary hour, especially as on the way to it, the Marquis had in a mockingly parental way inquired how the courting of the fair English lady progressed, and whether his father had been informed of the coming happy event.

To Nellie and to Chun the interruption of their talk in the conservatory had been upsetting; the former knew that at the time her answer would have been "Yes," but with the prospect possibly of three or four days intervening before another opportunity should occur for Chun Ti-kung to speak, her hopes and fears started up alarmed. Chun, after a sleepless night, determined to put his fate to the test by writing a letter, especially as after having read some English novels, he felt that for him to behave as a lover should, would be almost impossible. The letter was difficult enough, and Chun Ti-kung sincerely wished that such matters were arranged in England, as in China, through a third party. The letter was not ready to post until four o'clock the next day, so that Nellie received it the day but one after the memorable dinner. Its contents were as follows—

"MOST GRACIOUS LADY NELLIE,

"My eyes dazzled by your loveliness, and my heart over-full with thoughts of you, I stretch my unworthy self on my couch at night to rest, but sleep refuses to come. Can you conjecture the cause? Can you imagine the presumption that is forcing these words on to the paper through trembling fingers? It is yourself that is causing the tumult in my system; that makes other affairs that should appear of importance sink into insignificance; that renders the only hours worth living those that are spent with you. One of our proverbs says, 'A wife should excel in four things—virtue, speech, deportment, and needlework,' and where outside of your most enchanting self could I find such excellence? Must I fall from all hope of happiness through my unworthiness, or will you consent to be my most prized possession, my wife, to rejoice with me in any further honours which my country may bestow upon me and mine, or to share my grief, if misfortune prevail? The stretched cord will not bear the strain for long, and I pray you not to forget that long and slow are the hours during which joy and misery hang in the balance.

"Your small suitor,

"CHUN TI-KUNG."

The letter had been written and torn up many times before it took shape in the above form, and before it was finally dispatched: qualms as to its propriety were very troublesome to Chun. Strange to say, the very formality of the document coincided with Nellie's

notions of Chinese character. After deliberation she wrote a short answer—

"DEAR MR. CHUN TI-KUNG,

"You must leave me alone until to-morrow afternoon, when you may call, as I must have a talk with you before answering the question in your letter. I hope you will not spend another sleepless night.

"Yours sincerely,

"NELLIE."

Chun was far from down-hearted after receiving this note, and although the next day, quite out of harmony with his spirits, turned out sombre and rainy, the weather could not on that occasion produce the depressing effect that at times it succeeds in doing. From skilfully put questions as to the customs of Englishmen contemplating marriage, he had arrived at the decision to purchase an engagement ring, and the morning he found almost too short for visiting many of the best shops with one of the junior foreign assistants attached to the Embassy, and choosing one that he thought appropriate. His first choice was an opal, but on being told that the stone was considered unlucky to its wearer, he changed it for a fine diamond set between two deep-coloured sapphires, and he might have stopped there, but when the shopman (probably having heard or read of the Chinese favourite jewel) showed him a necklace formed of a double row of pearls, nothing would satisfy him until he had purchased it at the cost of £400. At the time Chun's

prospects of marriage can have hardly been called secure, but, as he reflected, marriage for me in China now-a-days would mean a much larger outlay, and to that old shopkeeper, Nellie's father, gifts will probably smooth matters over more than words (in which reflection he was probably right); whilst if Nellie meant what she said, in hoping I should not have any more sleepless nights, I cannot grudge her any pleasure in reason; as to my father's consent being obtained there can be no question. So with a light heart Chun left the shop, ordering his purchases to be sent to the Embassy before two o'clock, drove to his bankers, cashed his cheque for what he wanted, and returned in time to eat a good meal, to make a comfortable toilet, to receive and pay for his purchases, and drive to Bayswater a little after four o'clock.

For Nellie the day had not been passed so agreeably. She had kept her room till lunch time, and had tried all she could to think what should be the end of the day's appointment; at one time depressed, the next confident of what her answer should be. At lunch she and her sisters were alone. The latter, discontented with the weather and consequent upset of their engagements, thought it a good opportunity to tell Nellie that they hoped, now the horrid dinner party was done with, she would leave off her flirtation with that interpreter man. It is not pleasant to have the names of your friends suddenly forgotten, after they have been persuaded to do what was wanted of them, and although Nellie did not lose her temper, her indignation at their vulgarity certainly scored in Chun's favour, and added a stimulus to her half-formed resolu-

tion, to set their and the world's opinion at defiance. "Cats" I am afraid was very much the unexpressed epithet applied to them in her mind. No sympathy had ever existed between them, and the last month's residence at home had been very unhappy, unless she were in company with Chun or Lady Withington. When her sisters left for a little repose, as they were going to a ball in the evening, Nellie rang the bell, and told the footman that she was going to the library, and if Mr. Chun Ti-kung called to show him in there.

On his arrival these orders were obeyed. Advancing across the room, he bowed quietly to Nellie, who had been sitting in an easy-chair. She jumped up as his name was announced, half extending her hand, which he did not take, remarking—

"When next I take that hand it must be mine for ever or not at all."

Nellie nervously asked him to sit down, saying—

"But, Mr. Chun, by what you say you expect in a wife, you make me think myself very unfit; I am not fond of sewing, I cannot speak Chinese, and my habits are certainly not such as you are accustomed to. Do you not think you would run the risk of being very unhappy if I were to consent to become your wife? And what would your family say?"

Chun could only gather encouragement from this speech, and answered—

"Your heart must answer for you; your language and bearing have opened my eyes to a great superiority living in you, that cannot be found in my own country-women, and I can only repeat what I have already written. Be my wife, my family are sure not to be

displeased, and I have already written to my father, Chun Tao-tai, to avoid any unnecessary delay."

"How dared you write to your father before you had spoken to me?"

"Because I thought, and think, you like me. It can make no difference to you, as he knows nothing but Chinese, and even if I am unhappy enough to have made you angry, he will never come to England to meet you," and here Chun diplomatically covered his eyes with his hands, which were he knew an attraction to Nellie.

"It was foolish of me to mind, but if we go back together to China, and if——"

Chun here thought it time to use promptitude, and producing the ring from his pocket—

"Your heart must answer the 'ifs,'" he said. "May I place this ring on your finger, and are you going to marry me? There is plenty of time to answer your questions by and by."

Then as Nellie hesitated, he managed to gain possession of her right hand; he did not know the proper hand, but somehow it got changed for the left, and the ring found its place on the third finger, whilst Nellie's head declined to his shoulder, which was very embarrassing to him. He kissed her forehead as a father might his child's, and Nellie, looking up, shivering at what had passed so quickly, and possibly disappointed at not receiving a warmer embrace, burst out crying.

"I wonder if I have done right. Tell me, tell me that you love me, and always will."

"It is so, it is so; and still further to bind you to

myself I have a necklace of pearls, the symbols of purity and constancy, which I wish you to accept."

As the pearls were being clasped about her neck, Nellie wiped her eyes, saying—

"They are too lovely," and pressed his hand to her cheek.

The necklace had then of necessity to be taken off for admiration, and whilst doing so Nellie was seized with a panic about the scene which she knew must occur with her father and sisters. She begged Chun to take back his presents until he had explained matters to her father, but Chun was firm.

"If I were to take back what you have accepted it would be very unlucky," and Nellie had to continue wearing the ring, although the necklace was returned to its case, and for a time hidden in the drawer of her desk. The ring, too striking to pass unnoticed, was not without its fascination, and she was pleased at Chun's not allowing her to take it off, although she remarked with a smile—

"I am afraid you are already proving too strong; you condemn me to solitary confinement until you have seen my father to-morrow morning, as I am sure my sisters would notice; the stone is so bright, and I seldom wear any rings."

"What if your father refuses his consent?"

"Then I don't care, and you and I must fight or run away together; but you must tell him all about your father and his high rank, and everything may go peacefully. Go to him in his office to-morrow at eleven, and he may come back with you here to lunch. Write a note to him making the appointment."

This he did before he left, and the remainder of their conversation resolved itself into questions about his relations and friends in China, his prospects, and their probable future home, which I am afraid Chun painted rather *couleur de rose*, although, knowing himself to be well off, and certain of obtaining promotion, he was justified to some extent in painting things as he intended them to be instead of as they had been in the past.

Of the wife living in Pa-li Kiao not a word was said, and as Chun had always been very reticent about his own affairs, it is doubtful if the Marquis or any of his staff were aware of the existence of any such person.

The clock on the mantelpiece struck six, and Nellie, bethinking herself of every-day life, rang the bell and ordered tea. It was getting rather dark, but in reply to the footman's "Shall I light the gas, miss?" she answered "Not yet," and turning to Chun said, "I delight in the twilight," with which he agreed. Shortly afterwards her eldest sister entered, and asked her if she were going to dress before or after dinner, to which Nellie replied that having a headache she thought she would go to her room and not go out again. Her sister began, "What nonsense," when for the first time perceiving Chun, she gave him a slight bow and flounced out of the room banging the door.

"Good twilight," was Nellie's remark, handing Chun his tea, and laughingly holding up her finger with the ring.

"Bad temper," Chun replied. "How can such different fruits come from the same stem?"

CHAPTER III

A PERILOUS MARRIAGE

MR. SERJEANT, as already explained, was nothing if not pompous, and when he received Chun Ti-kung's letter asking for an appointment, he immediately sent an answer by hand to the Embassy quarters, regretting that at the time mentioned he had an engagement, but asking Chun to postpone his visit, and to lunch with him at his Club at one p.m. On Chun's presenting himself at his office, "Excuse me for five minutes" was his salutation, and after appearing fussily engaged for about that time in pretending to arrange and bestow papers of importance, he gently pushed Chun down the stairs in front of him, and entering a hansom drove to the Club, remarking—

"You see, Mr. Chun, we are busy people in this town of ours, and as a rule I insist on all matters not of a business nature being discussed after office hours; but seeing that you can hardly be expected to understand the intricacies of our system, I have made an exception in your favour."

Chun bowed in reply, and expressed his sorrow at having evidently misunderstood the hour which his daughter had told him as the most likely to find him disengaged.

"Oh, my daughter! My daughters are giddy-headed, and may seem to think nothing of greater importance than dresses and entertainments. I suppose that your object is something of the sort."

Chun was beginning to explain that his call was on a matter of greater import, when the cab drew up at the Club. The lunch-room being naturally full at the time, no opportunity for private conversation for some time presented itself.

Mr. Serjeant's attention was fully occupied in watching the sensation that the appearance of his guest caused, and in pressing on Chun the various dishes and wines he ordered, a special brand of Madeira prolonging the sitting, although Chun's appetite for food or wine had long been satisfied. Finally an adjournment to a quiet corner in the smoking-room was made, cigars were lighted, and the object of Chun's call was asked.

Probably no man could have been more truly surprised than Mr. Serjeant, when Chun in his slow English quietly answered that he had come to ask the hand of his daughter Nellie in marriage, though of course the unheeded warnings of his eldest daughters came to his mind. His first attempt was to pooh-pooh Chun's proposal, telling him that such a demand was absurd and "d—d nonsense." When Chun told him that it was only after asking his daughter's consent that he had come to speak to him, he saw that the affair was serious, and with hand-shaded eyes sat in deep thought for some minutes.

With all his faults Mr. Serjeant was not at heart a bad man, and the neglect of which memory momentarily accused him—of this his youngest daughter—caused

his heart to reproach him. He considered how little in common there could be between them, for her to contemplate, ever so slightly, isolating herself from all ties by marrying such an unknown quantity as a Chinaman. He realized that his power over her and her actions was practically *nil;* and yet, could such a marriage lead to happiness, or rather to anything but misery? Then on the other hand, the worst side of him gained its say—the notoriety, the remonstrances that would pour in to him against the match; the attitude of a quite unbiassed and just position in which he could pose, tickled his fancy, and following up an idea that Nellie had not long ago suggested to him, of becoming an ancestor of great men, his opposition weakened, the match seemed gradually to appear less preposterous; and then, what with the unusual strain of thought, and possibly the extra glass of Madeira, he had to pull himself together with a start to prevent his thoughts ending in dreamland.

Nothing suits a Chinaman better than waiting; they will wait until you have exhausted fruitlessly all your best endeavours at explaining that telegraphs and steam transit are improvements on the system of older days; in business they will wait to fight for a farthing long after a foreigner has made up his mind to sacrifice half his commission; worst of all, they will wait till your temper fails, and then act as seemeth to them best.

Probably Chun appreciated the character of his future father-in-law sufficiently to follow the nebulous thoughts that were passing in his mind. Anyway, it was the upsetting of a chair that gave the shock to Mr. Serjeant's reverie, and when the desired effect had been

produced, Chun's voice, as sedate as before, broke the silence—

"May I ask your most honoured and desired answer?"

Mr. Serjeant, feeling that he was in a weak position, and more or less ashamed of himself, replied with an effort—

"It appears to me that there is nothing to be done in the matter but for you to come home to dinner—I had an engagement, but that must be put off—and let me confront you with Nellie. I tell you I shall try and dissuade her from any such foolishness as this marriage appears to me. At the same time, if she has made up her mind, you will of course give me authentic information about your position and ability to support my child in a fitting manner, and then, after I have interviewed your 'head' at the Embassy, we must have a longer talk."

"Certainly, certainly," was Chun's reply; "I accept your most obliging invitation to your dinner at eight."

He had, when his appointment of the morning had been postponed, sent a telegram to Nellie informing her. He told Mr. Serjeant what his position and prospects were, and the interview ending—it had extended till nearly four o'clock—he wrote a note to Nellie saying that as her father had asked him to dine and meet her, he thought it would be only respectful to wait impatiently to see her until then; which note he delivered at the door himself. He little imagined the disturbed condition of affairs prevailing at the Bayswater establishment at about the same time, the effect of a telegram received shortly before from Mr. Serjeant to Miss Serjeant—"Have excused ourselves from dining

at the Powers, Chun Ti-kung dining with us. Order special dinner for five." That something urgent was the cause of this alteration in plans was evident to both the elder sisters when they had put their heads together, and Nellie would undoubtedly have had a bad time of cross-examination to go through, had she not immediately on receipt of Chun's telegram shut herself into her room and resolutely refused to open the door.

"Your friend Chun is coming to dinner," was shouted at her.

"I know," was the reply, "I am resting till it is time to dress."

Mr. Serjeant could not escape quite so easily, and upon his ring being heard, he found his two indignant daughters eager to know what had happened, but replying that "they would know soon enough," he made his way hurriedly to his dressing-room.

The atmosphere of the drawing-room was unpleasantly charged with thunder when Chun Ti-kung was shown in. The dinner was naturally constrained, and it was certainly a relief when the move to the drawing-room came. Mr. Serjeant stopped Nellie as she was leaving with her sisters, saying—

"I want you to stay and speak with Mr. Chun and myself, please keep your seat."

He dismissed the servants, and, turning to her with his best parental air, commenced a carefully thought-out speech.

"My dear Nelly, Mr. Chun has this afternoon made a communication to me which has taken me quite by surprise, but as he has told me that it was made with your consent" (Chun bowed), "I suppose you know

all about it. He tells me that he has asked you to become his wife, and that you have dutifully referred him to me for my consent. With or without that, I know you can do as you please, and I cannot—as I should certainly like to do, refuse—with any chance of success, so that my only object in asking Mr. Chun to dinner is to hear from you both that you have really made up your minds to this most unusual course. My dear child, can you really say that you think that the marriage can be for your welfare? Since Mr. Chun left me I have made the inquiries that he authorized me to make, and am bound to tell you that he is reported to be rich, and in all probability will rise high in his country's service, but until I hear you yourself say what your wishes are, I can—Mr. Chun will excuse me for saying it—hardly believe what he has told me."

Nellie having screwed up her courage, and nerved by Chun's anxious look, simply said, "Mr. Chun has told the truth. I have never met any one I liked better, and I am willing to give my life into his care."

Chun rose and made a most profound bow, whilst Mr. Serjeant, whose vanity had been again tickled by the accounts given him of Chun's prospects, feebly remarking, "Then the sooner it is known the better," rose and led the way to the drawing-room, rather timidly ushering the couple in with—

"My dear daughters, Adelaide and Fanny, allow me to introduce your future brother-in-law, Mr. Chun Ti-kung."

Of Nellie's experiences after the above announcement had been made and generally become public property, it would be tiresome to give details—of her sisters' undis-

guised antagonism; of the letters of remonstrance; the pious entreaties from hardly-known enthusiasts begging her to "consider the awful responsibility of being unequally yoked together with unbelievers;" that the comforts of European life and the protection of English law would be so terribly unattainable in the country to which she would be exiled—all arguments were pushed indiscriminately down her throat, and to each and all she turned a deaf ear. Further inquiries as to Chun Ti-kung's status elicited confirmatory statements as to his wealth and position. Mr. Serjeant excited as much attention, praise, and abuse as he could reasonably expect.

Chun, having received a letter from his adopted father reminding him that his leave would expire in six months, pressed for an early marriage, and Nellie consented to the event being fixed for the middle of July.

Settlements were then spoken about, and although such things were quite a novelty to a Chinese mind, Chun, after consulting with his English friends, telegraphed to his banker, Tung Yu, for a remittance of £2500, Nellie's father settling the same amount on her himself. The whole sum was deposited for her, in the name of trustees, in one of the leading English banks that dealt with China, which was entitled to pay her the interest at five per cent. per annum, quarterly, although she was not allowed to trench on her capital without referring to her trustees. The marriage was successively performed at the Legation and in St. Jude's Church, a large crowd manifesting its interest in the latter ceremony, to which Lady Withington and a

number of her friends gave their support. The breakfast that followed, Mr. Serjeant, as might have been expected, had provided in lavish manner; and it was attended by more celebrities than he had ever before managed to bring into his house. In his speech he posed as a philanthropist who had consented to welcome a son-in-law from far Cathay, hoping that such unions might tend to bring about a better understanding, knowledge, and appreciation of nation with nation, until in fact all people should live together as members of one vast family, all diverse interests being merged for the common good. Such sentiments naturally met with much applause and many sneers, and Nellie all through the wearisome time found all her resolution required not to lose heart entirely. At last she and Chun drove off in the brougham from Bayswater to the railway-station, and Chun Ti-kung was once again a married man, to all intents and purposes, as far as English law could make him, though how far his previous marriage in China might or might not have invalidated Nellie's share in the operation, whilst she was in England, is not clear, and has never been brought in question in a court of law. Their honeymoon passed off in an uneventful and moderately successful way, spent as it was amidst the gaieties of Paris, where one more or less remarkable couple attracts small notice.

The Marquis Kung was only able to spare Chun from the Embassy for a week, and at the end of that time the newly-married couple came back to England. They had taken a furnished house for six months from an acquaintance of the Serjeants', the owner having to

leave town for some time. The house was near enough to the Embassy for Chun to get there in a few minutes, and was very pretty and well furnished.

Chun left all matters of household arrangement to Nellie, after they had consulted together as to how much money it was necessary and advisable to spend, and she proved herself a good manager. There was no friction between them, and they led a bright and happy life until they left England early in the following year.

Their many friends and acquaintances were curious to see how such an oddly matched pair agreed, so that their visitors and invitations were very numerous.

Nellie became at last a little wearied with so much gaiety; she had known for some time that she would become a mother, and one evening asked Chun—

"Do you mind if we refuse some of these invitations?—does it please you that we so seldom spend an evening at home?"

"All plans please me, my jewel, that you make," he answered. "I leave these things to your judgment as you know the customs of your own country. When we get to China it will be my pleasure to guide your conduct as here you guide mine."

"But, Chun," said Nellie, "it is not custom I wish to conform to, but your wishes."

"Custom is powerful, my fair-face," said Chun; "it is the embodied experience of our forefathers, and wishes must give way to it."

"That is too conservative for my mind," said Nellie, laughing, "I wish custom to give way to me."

After this, for the last few weeks in England, they led a quieter life.

While they were in Paris Chun had received the answer that he was expecting from his adopted father, Chun Yu-tai, which gave his full sanction to the marriage, but ended with the pertinent remark—

"Wherefore you, having a son to come after you, should burden yourself with a second wife, I cannot understand. You say that this foreign woman is to you the greatest happiness that you could have imagined possible. If so, be careful to be quite open in all your dealings with her, and on no account keep anything secret from her. No woman will long stay in ignorance of anything she thinks you are anxious for her not to know, and where deceit once shows itself, or is shown, what wise man can say where it will end?"

This warning caused Chun many qualms of conscience, or, to translate what he felt, "large fear," and on their voyage out he determined to try to make opportunities for arguing about and justifying polygamy, but he found the task very difficult. Nellie, from the commencement of her acquaintance with Chun, had applied herself diligently to the study of the Chinese language, and with his assistance, Sir T. Wade's "*Tsz urh che*," some vocabularies and dictionaries, had made good progress. Husband and wife proved fairly good sailors, and when one day in the Mediterranean, in smooth water, she had come across the mention of a concubine in a certain book of light Chinese literature, and asked for information, Chun, before he had quite realized the position, found that he had pretty well explained the very different position between the first and the other wives in a Chinese household; the latter, as a matter of fact, unless they bear children, having

little if any social status. Nellie's remark in reply that she could not understand any woman under such circumstances agreeing to be wife No. 2 or 3, did not facilitate explanations, and no idea of her actual position entered her mind.

As usual to a first-time traveller by the P. and O. the changing scenes and amusements, the mixed company, and the excitement of landing and seeing all there was to be seen at the various ports of call, were sufficient to drive away broodings.

Chun and his wife were at first regarded with unfavourable curiosity, but as time progressed, and his manners were found to be quiet and civilized, and hers distinctly pleasant, they met with few disagreeables. On the whole, relations between the husband and wife were certainly drawn closer by their closer association, and there is no reason for supposing that the strange marriage might not have proved a lasting success if they had remained away from China.

CHAPTER IV

FIRST MISGIVINGS

On the steamer's arrival at Hong Kong, Chun, much to his surprise, found a letter awaiting him from his adopted father. Chun Yu-tai wrote in deep sorrow to inform his son that he had just received letters from Pa-li Kiao, telling him that Chun's father and his two eldest brothers had all been smitten by cholera and were dead, and that although it was not indispensable or indeed seemly that Chun Ti-kung should resume his previous position as son in the village, yet the mother had written begging Chun Tao-tai's sanction to her son's going to her assistance. The letter went on:—

"My esteemed sister-in-law appears more or less crazy with grief, and your wife urging the same thing, I have acceded to their request, and desire you to make arrangements to go straight to them on your arrival at Shanghai before coming to me. Your post as sub-prefect under the circumstances I have arranged to keep open, and you are now on the lists at the capital as expectant Tao-tai. When the news first reached me from Pa-li Kiao, I made a passage to Shanghai, and arranged for your son there to proceed

from the school to his mother. He has improved greatly in appearance and quickness since he has been at the foreign school, and I feel proud of him, and think it will also be well for you to become better acquainted with him; you will probably have to spend at least three months at Pa-li Kiao when you get there, arranging matters."

The Tao-tai naturally attached no importance to the second wife, and did not even mention her, but to poor Chun Ti-kung the news and instructions contained in the letter were a terrible blow, upsetting as they did his plan to take Nellie direct to Hoochow, and keep her there in the comfortable Yamen of his adopted father, until some way of unburdening himself of the secret of his previous marriage suggested itself. Now there seemed no loophole but open confession; but, Chinaman-like, he still procrastinated, and after telling Nellie the news, which, as she had never before heard of the natural father and brothers, rather startled and puzzled her, shut himself into his cabin. For the first time since they met he did occasionally, during the two days at Hong Kong and the three days up the coast, speak harshly to her. He really needed to think out what possible course to follow; her presence could not fail to be a reproach, the more so as he had grown sincerely attached to her, and with Chun, agitation generally revealed itself in harsh conduct. Finally, but not till the last moment, he determined to leave her in Shanghai, and so put off a little longer the disclosure that was becoming more and more a nightmare of terrible weight.

The altered manner, the change of all the plans that

had been formed and discussed, the uncertainty overhanging their movements on arriving at their destination, and what she looked upon as her future home, sent Nellie's spirits down to zero. She had made some fellow-passenger friendships with some ladies returning to, or with, their husbands, but their movements were naturally all settled, and the only consolation she could derive from them was that there were two or three comfortable hotels at which her husband could undoubtedly leave her. Sympathy with the wife of a Chinaman was necessarily rather cold, and promises of assistance not forthcoming; and when, on their arrival at Shanghai, Chun Ti-kung, in a curt way, told her that he must at once leave her on board the steamer, and ascertain what was the best thing to be done, poor Nellie's first experience of China was not what could be called cheerful. Chun Ti-kung, after packing up his own things, had thought it quite unnecessary to help her with hers, simply telling her to have everything ready against his return; perhaps this might have been a relief in distracting her thoughts, but she thought him unkind, although she resented the remark of the stewardess when called in to help her—"What could you expect from a Chinaman?"

Chun had gone ashore at eight in the morning, called on Tung Yu, his best friend, at once, and had then to get some of Tung Yu's foreign friends' assistance in obtaining admittance to one of the third-rate foreign boarding-houses, which at last was grudgingly permitted, the better hotels refusing to take in natives. All this took time, and it was nearly six in the evening before he could return to the steamer to relieve Nellie's

anxiety, and get the cabin luggage up to the boarding-house; but then, as he had regained his equanimity, and they at last sat down to a quiet dinner in a comfortable private room, Nellie blamed herself for having lost heart over such a small matter, and Chun Ti-kung heard her regrets with composure, and even acknowledged that he himself had not kept the strictly middle path. The stewardess had no reason to complain that she had not been remembered, and had wished Nellie "Good-bye and good luck," although her after-remark was, "However came she to do it? a nice pleasant lady too!"

The wonderful scheme that Chun Ti-kung had decided upon was as foolish as it was absolutely sure to fail, but Chun in the way of deceit was as dunder-headed as the ostrich of the fable. His only notion was to go alone to Pa-li Kiao, leaving Nellie for a few days in Shanghai, to engage a separate dwelling in the village for his foreign wife, and to persuade his mother and Chinese wife, on condition of rendering them the services they had solicited, not to disclose the fact of his being a married man or the father of the boy, until he should give them leave to do so. Under the circumstances, on his arrival there he found promises in plenty made only too readily: both mother and wife knowing full well that taking a second wife for a man in his position could not be looked upon but as a foregone conclusion, and not attaching at first much importance to the matter in any way; their interest being more centred upon what he should determine to do about winding up the business, or placing some one in charge, while outstanding accounts were being settled.

The sudden death of his father and brothers had necessarily left matters in a somewhat complicated condition, and one day's investigation was sufficient to show Chun that a month or more must be devoted to clearing up accounts. He found by chance that two shops in the outskirts of the village could be rented, as the *fengshuy*[1] was said to be unlucky, and these he immediately secured and placed in the hands of carpenters and white-washers to convert into one dwelling with glass panes for windows. He then wrote to Shanghai, asking Tung Yu to make and forward such purchases of foreign furniture as he thought would tend to make the Chinese shanty moderately comfortable for the time that it was necessary to occupy it, all the time cursing the hard luck that had left no other way open to him. He remained at his mother's house in Pa-li Kiao to receive the furniture and get matters further under weigh, writing to Nellie that he would return in six days at latest. He had found his son much improved in appearance, and thought him a boy to be proud of; which made it so much the worse for him, that he had made no explanation of his real position to Nellie. The excuse he then found for himself was that it would be better for her that she should hear all when apart from foreign women and their ideas.

On his return to Shanghai, he found that during his visit to Pa-li Kiao his wife had been by no means neglected. Nellie's experiences whilst left at the boarding-house were not of an unpleasant nature; her position as wife of a Chinaman of the mandarin class was a novelty; the acquaintances she had made on the steamer visited

[1] *Fengshuy* (literally "wind and water"), geomancy.

her and invited her to their houses. The influence she could bring to bear on Chinese ladies of her own rank, to whom it is no easy task to obtain admittance, was a point seized upon by those missionaries, male and female, of the China Inland Mission and other societies, who believe that the regeneration of a race is obtained through the influence of mothers. Her tales of the happy months that she had spent in England after she had married Chun Ti-kung cast a glamour around his character that he was far from deserving; altogether her time and thoughts had been fully occupied, and she had found herself a person of interest. Clothes are seldom a matter of indifference to feminine minds, and Chun Ti-kung had suggested to her, that for privacy's sake she had better provide herself with two or three native costumes of the soberer colours in consequence of the family mourning, and had also begged Tung Yu's wife, whom he had asked to call upon her, to show her the most suitable and comfortable clothes to procure. The very fact of trying on and having fitted such novel habiliments further distracted her, and doubtless Tung Yu's wife, who was a capable woman, thought that when in her Chinese clothes, Nellie looked much more like a Chinese lady than most lady missionaries do. Then again more interest came in, from a resident who had a great passion for ancient embroideries calling upon her, and one day, after having invited her to tiffin with him, showing her his collection, and pointing out the beauties of his best pieces, with the kind idea of giving her a new occupation, in what he had judged must prove a dull and monotonous existence at the best, although he had

no idea what a hard life Nellie would lead in Pa-li Kiao.

Altogether poor Nellie thought her marriage was proving a successful one, and had spent an agreeable and useful fortnight. When Chun Ti-kung returned from Pa-li Kiao she greeted him warmly, and told him he must not leave her long again, as her baby would be born in less than two months' time. Chun was expected to be sympathetic, but felt so desperately ashamed of his position, and nervous about the future, that his reception of this reminder was chilling to every nerve in Nellie's body. Chun stayed one day in Shanghai, picking up two or three more pieces of furniture that he had thought out as being necessary, and then with his wife left for Ningpo *en route* to take up their residence at Pa-li Kiao in April.

At its best the house procured by Chun was nothing but a one-storied wooden building originally intended for a tea-shop. The front rooms were of a moderate size, about thirty feet by sixteen. It faced on the street, from which the door opened immediately, without any division from the shop that Chun had converted into a sitting-room. Facing the door was a staircase more like a gangway ladder than anything else, that led direct up to the upper storey, and was closed by a trap-door at night. The back rooms were little more than closets; the two up-stairs Chun had found just big enough to harbour a couple of small iron bedsteads and washing-stands; whilst the front room he had furnished with Chinese cupboards for clothes, some chairs, a sofa, and a carpet and curtains, two luxuries unknown among Chinese. Credit must

certainly be given Chun for having procured more comfortable pieces of furniture than those straight-backed atrocities that usually pass for chairs and sofas in Chinese dwellings. The back door to the premises opened behind the staircase into an enclosed yard, lessening the size of the back rooms down-stairs, one of which he had appropriated for his study, whilst the smaller one he had fitted up with shelves for crockery and linen, which as a rule occupy hardly any space in native economy. The walls were simply whitewashed. The back yard was surrounded by a fence of dry and knotted reed stalks, sufficiently high to prevent its being overlooked, and attached to occasional bushes and trees that rendered it strong enough to keep out pigs, or deter any moderate-minded buffalo. The yard itself was nothing but a trodden-down piece of mud, in which many chickens and ducks lived and died, a dirty piece of water in one corner supplying the latter birds with sufficient water to support existence, but not amusement. Behind the fence at the back of the yard, after a margin of about two feet of pathway, that facilitated trackers' work in dragging boats either up or down stream when water sufficed, ran a deep creek some thirty feet in width leading down from the hills sometimes after rains speeding along with the force of a torrent, at others filtering dully through barely-covered stones. A bamboo latched gate in the fence allowed exit to the path. On the left side of the back door the kitchen was placed, considerably improved and enlarged since Chun took the house. The ill-fitting boards, windows, and doors, really seemed intended to invite draughtiness, and the two shops combined were,

in spite of the improvements, about as uncomfortable a residence as could be found out of China. On the passage to Ningpo, which proved quite a smooth one, Chun began his talk of disillusion.

"Dear Nellie, you must not be very much disappointed at the quarters to which I am obliged to take you. The unfortunate deaths of my natural father and brothers, who were, as I have told you, in a humble position, forbid me for some time occupying the comfortable establishment which I had intended. And as you see me now, according to the rules of the Book of Rites, wearing cotton clothes and not shaving, which is very repugnant to me, so we shall have to put up with a small house and few comforts for at any rate three months after the death took place; but for my affiliation with Chun Yu-tai, and arrangements he has made, it would have had to be a year."

"Never mind, dear, what is good enough for you is good enough for me," was the affectionate reply; "but why, oh why, do you keep things that are happening so long before you let me know? Of course I could not stay in Shanghai alone now, but do not let us keep secrets from each other; I am now so quite alone, and so far from any I know."

Chun must have blushed if he could, but covered his cowardly conduct with irritability, and answered—

"Who can avoid the inevitable?"

Unexplained deception continued to weigh very heavily on his mind, knowing as he had done since their talk in the steamer that Nellie's appreciation of Chinese philosophy and customs (as far as she understood them) did not at all extend to bigamy. "In

patience," thought Chun, "and if possible in keeping the truth from her until our child is born, is the only chance of her ever forgiving me for his sake, if not for my own; and oh, if only it were my mother instead of my father that was dead, how much easier it would all have been."

That he redoubled his attentions during the short voyage and the rather rough travelling to Pa-li Kiao, only tended to show how really inexcusable his conduct appeared to himself.

The remainder of Nellie's story is taken partly from letters written by herself to Lady Withington, and partly from particulars furnished by Mr. and Mrs. Fulford.

CHAPTER V

DISILLUSION

Saturday.—My husband told me this morning on board the steamer, that the place to which we are going is not at all the place he intended, and will fall far short of what he has led me to expect, as, owing to the death of his natural father and two elder brothers, he must live for at least three months in the strictest retirement. I must remember that Chun Se-fei is the natural father and Chun Yu-tai the adopted father—I nearly wrote "unnatural" father, but do not feel like joking at all. As far as I can recall, his words were, "Will you for my sake put up with the only little house in my native village that I could procure at such a short notice? I know it is very inconvenient, and very far from what you have been accustomed to, but three months will quickly pass." He has been so good and attentive for the last few days and during most of the voyage, that I hate myself for feeling as I do about it all; but everything seems so mysterious and changing that I am getting very nervous, and as there is nothing to do on the steamer, and no one to talk to, I must write to prevent constantly thinking the same thoughts over and over again. First came the death of his real

father, and the appearance of a mother whom I had never heard of before (I am certain he told me that he had no mother); now the common and uncomfortable house, so different to a fine Chinese house, with gardens, which he had talked of, and in fact the words keep ringing in my head, "What next? what next?" I must try and be calm and patient, as I know all this worry cannot be good for me, and I think this little writing is rather soothing, although sometimes I feel I could hate myself for being a fool.

Sunday.—Chun (I ought to call him Ti-kung, but cannot) has had to spend all the morning at Ningpo, and here am I all alone on the steamer, wondering over still the same thought, "What next?" I have had tiffin on board with the English officers, who are very civil, but I always seem to think they are pitying me or despising me. I never travelled in a river steamer before, and this they tell me is one with what they call "a walking beam"; it looks very funny. The cabin we have used is very comfortable, and the food is not bad.

Monday.—Chun returned at four, and after packing what little there was left open, we went ashore with our luggage to a Chinese inn, and when I saw it I began to cry. Everything was so dirty, and at dinner there was nothing but oil and rice, oily fish, and then oniony ducks and oily vegetables, some scraps of pork, and then tough sweets. If, dear Lady Withington, you ever see this diary-letter of mine, I know you will say, "I told you so," though you never did! I cannot get rid of the swaying motion of the steamer to Ningpo, although the sea was smooth. Chun says it is because

it was a much smaller boat than the one from Europe; but I am so sick of everything that I cannot think anything nice, although Chun has been good, and assures me, as the missionaries did at Shanghai, that I shall soon get used to and like the Chinese "chow chow."

Tuesday.—We have spent such a night, and thank goodness Chun has gone to see about a boat to Pa-li Kiao. I am sure I should die if I had to sleep here any more. The bedroom was bare and dirty, no carpet, a bed with a mat to sleep on, and no covering but a horrid smelly sort of quilt that must be fifty years old. It was so hot that no covering was needed, but I have been bitten all over with mosquitoes and fleas, if not something worse, and am wanting to scratch all over, and cannot even get a bath. The coolies outside did not stop talking all night long, sometimes singing; the smell of their sickly tobacco filled our room thoroughly, and with the mosquitoes, fleas, and uncomfortable bed, prevented sleep. We could not even keep all our windows open, as some were overlooked from the opposite side of the courtyard. I must say Chun was good enough to try and fan me to sleep, but after a time he dropped off himself, and I had to lie awake wondering how he could.

Friday.—Oh, it is worse and worse every day! The boat, up to a place I forget the name of, was pleasant enough, and we had some bread and chicken, and some claret that Chun had managed to buy in Ningpo, but that only lasted three hours. Then we got into two bamboo chairs, the jolting of which nearly made me sea-sick, and were carried up as far as we could go

before it got dark, through prettily wooded and cultivated country, reminding me a little of Devonshire, but the smells were too disgusting. At one time we were following a lot of buckets which the coolies were carrying, and as the smell seemed to come from them, I got angry, and told Chun he was stupid not to make them stop, and go in front of them. He shrugged his shoulders rather impatiently, and said, "It is only manure;" still he made them stop, and we passed ahead of them, apparently much to their amusement. It was very hot all the way, and of course we had no ice, and lukewarm tea seemed the only beverage that gave any refreshment. At last we reached the place where we had to spend the night. It was hardly more than a common wooden hovel, and it is really useless writing down again the horrors of the hours spent before the sun rose. It was worse even than Ningpo, and it was a mercy that we still had some of the food brought with us, as the people seemed to eat nothing but rice, stinking fish in oil, smelling worse than a lamp turned up too high, and nasty-looking vegetables. We had to be content in the early morning (it was five by my watch, but I suppose it ought to be "set," as they do the clocks on board ship) with a brass basin and a dirty blue rag with which to wash our faces and hands; and as I had been foolish enough not to have put off my foreign clothes, my appearance attracted so much attention, that when we were starting quite a crowd of men, women, and children assembled to see us off, and the women were all anxious to touch and feel my clothes, which gave me the shudders. I remembered those dreadful beggars that we passed coming

out of Ningpo gate, with their heads covered with a sort of white scaly skin, which Chun says he thinks is called leprosy in English.

On we went, up hill and down dale, only waiting an hour at a tea-shop for some tea and to finish what food we had with us, until we reached here (Pa-li Kiao), at six p.m., when I was so tired that I simply undressed and flung myself on the bed, thankful to see sheets and a mosquito net again. It was quite in the early morning that I awoke, but on calling to Chun I found he was not in his room, which is next to mine, and had to call for some time before he heard me, which is no wonder, as these people seem to do almost without sleep in the summer, and there was a regular babel of cocks and hens, pigs, men and women, and especially coolies, who, as they carry anything down the street, apparently find it necessary to keep up a chorus as one follows another; as far as I could make out, the first said, "Oh heh," the next "Oh ha," "Oh heh," "Oh ha ho ho ho heh hi hoho ho heh ho ho," and then all the same over again. When Chun came in he brought me a cup of delicious tea, but I was quite nervous with irritation, and asked him why on earth they made such a noise; he replied that it was the custom of the country, and that they were carrying green tea down to Ningpo, but I said, "I never heard such a noise in Shanghai." "Because the Foreign Municipal Council have put a stop to it in their settlement," was his reply. "Then why don't you stop it here?" "I have not the power." "Well, I must have something, a bell or something, to make the boy or coolie come when I call; I have been crying myself hoarse to get a bath,

and not a soul has come." He replied very gently that he was sorry that he had forgotten the bells, but that he would order warm water from the tea-house, that was not far off—fancy having to send for warm water to a tea-house!—and let me know when the bath was ready. Half-an-hour after he told me the bath was ready, and he would show me the way. I had been too tired to notice anything last night, but when I got to the top of the so-called staircase, it was so steep I was almost frightened to go down; however, remembering that when I was quite young I used to delight in going up a ladder into the attics, I screwed up my courage, and taking firm hold of the banister, that Chun told me he had had put up for me, I found the descent not so bad as it looked. Chun then led me through the back door down a brick path to a wooden hut just like a bathing machine without wheels; inside was a small looking-glass and a Soochow bath tub, the same as I used in Shanghai, with nice warm water, into which I was only too glad to get, after my two days' experience of Chinese life in inns, although there was a piece of cabbage-leaf floating in it, which at first I thought was something alive. When I got out of the bath I found nothing to stand on but bare boards, but feeling in much better spirits from the regular scrubbing down I had given myself (heavens! what a state my hair was in—it had taken fully two hours to wash and dry), I brought to mind that it was our first day here, and that gradually I would manage to get things more "ship-shape," as the sailors say. I went up-stairs to dress, quite determined to be good, and when I passed Chun's office, which he had shown me as we came down, and

which was just at the bottom and right of the staircase, I peeped in and asked him if he would order breakfast in half-an-hour. When he saw me looking a little more like myself than I have been for some days, he smiled and said, "Certainly; I shall be quite ready, and am glad you are looking better." I dressed myself in my black serge Chinese suit, which I find very uncomfortable, using a pair of man's braces to keep up my trousers and all the other necessary underclothes—an invention of my own, as I could not bear the tight string that Chinese women use to keep up theirs. Then I came down, determined, as I have said, to be more amiable. When I got into the parlour (that is our one room down-stairs), I thought it looked quite nice; the window, which is not a large one, was open, with white muslin curtains; there was white matting on the floor, a table spread with a white cloth, comfortable chairs, and even a piano in the corner. The boy shortly afterwards brought a very good fish, fairly well cooked, and we were really enjoying it, when unhappily it occurred to me to suggest that the door should be opened for the breeze; there were no back windows, and almost immediately afterwards all my good resolutions went to the winds. The window in front is about three feet from the ground, and above that a foot of white painted glass to prevent people from looking in. Not a moment had passed after the door was opened, when I heard a "cluck, cluck," and looking down, found a hen busily scratching at the matting, calling for its companions to enter; two were seated on the door sill, hesitating, but before I had realized what was happening, or Chun had risen to drive out the intrusive birds,

one of the wretched Chinese dogs upset the birds on the door sill and sprang in, I suppose smelling my foreign blood (as I am told they can); it began making jumps forward and backwards, so that I was really frightened. Before Chun had managed to drive the brute and the hens out, and shut the door again, I was almost hysterical; Chun tried to soothe me by saying that we must have some wire netting and some windows opened to the back, but all my appetite was gone, and the only thing I could do was to go up-stairs and lie down, and oh, how steep the stairs seemed! Chun sent me up some soup and fowl for tiffin. I felt better after eating, but it was too hot to dress again, so I spent the remainder of the day in bed reading and writing; these up-stair rooms are much cooler than those down below, as with the doors open the wind can blow right through. Chun wished me good-night at about ten. I felt rather ashamed at not having examined the whole of our small domain—not even the front room up-stairs, which is shut off from our bedrooms by half-doors, the centre filled with green gauze silk.

Saturday.—This morning Chun sent the boy into my room at half-past six with hot tea. I had my bath, and after putting on my trousers, went down to breakfast in my thinnest tea-gown, which was given me by you, dear Lady Withington, and which I have found so useful in the hot weather during the voyage, enjoyed the fish and hot bread and milk which I had to get Chun to order for me. It is very annoying that this Ningpo dialect is so different from the mandarin that I have learned, that I can rarely understand what the

natives of the place say, whilst they can't or won't understand a word from me. I rather think they enjoy listening, and then with a stolid face replying, "Puh tung" (we do not understand), as they see it vexes me. After breakfast Chun, instead of at once going out or into his office, walked quietly up and down the room five or six times; he stopped opposite me in the chair in which I was sitting idly watching him, and gently but firmly taking me by both hands, said very gravely, "Nellie, you must make up your mind to act differently to what you have been doing since we left Shanghai. I am as sorry as you for the inconveniences that we are having to put up with, but I have explained, and indeed apologized more than is fitting from husband to wife. You seem to forget that in our marriage we both promised 'for better or worse,' and it seems to me that you have settled to have nothing but the better. I have sent to Shanghai for the netting to keep out the fowls and dogs when the door has to be opened, and for other things that I had overlooked, but you must not forget that you are my wife and in China, where a husband's rights are greater than in England. I am not scolding or threatening, but I cannot have a constantly complaining wife at home to add to my other worries, which are by no means few." You know the effect that the touch of his small hands has on my nerves, and as they tightened on my wrists to an almost painful pressure while he was speaking, I found myself thinking that I had been mean; and then, with his black eyes still holding mine, he seemed to read my thoughts; he released my wrists, and added much more gaily, "As I have said before, it is only a matter of three months;

try and look upon it as a long picnic, such as those we once had in England, which, although pleasant, were always accompanied by some discomfort." I was really ashamed of myself, and hanging my head, said, "I will try." I hear my friends say, "How weak," but even after thinking the affair over for some hours before putting it down on paper, I do not see what else I could have done.

CHAPTER VI

THE FULFORDS

THE milk after the first day or two struck Nellie as having an unpleasant taste: she discovered, by accidentally seeing a water-buffalo driven into the yard to be milked, the source from which it came. The beast was new to her (although she might have seen many in Shanghai), and the water-buffalo's intensely ugly appearance so horrified her that she insisted on condensed milk being procured.

One morning, hearing screams from the bath-shed, Chun rushed in and found his wife standing helplessly, wrapped in a bath-towel, gazing in horror at a full-sized centipede, lying still on the ground, which he was successful in crushing with his foot.

Complaints appeared daily in her letters about the almost unbearable smells, from the liquid manure passing to and fro in the street, which indeed, as Nellie wrote, could not be disguised by smoking a cigarette, and is one of the drawbacks to living in China.

However, the various improvements suggested and thought out by Chun gradually came up from Shanghai, or were executed by local carpenters; the bath-tray, the condensed milk, bells, the wire-netting, more

lamps, furniture, and matting for the room above, which Nellie had found out was cooler and more adaptable than the down-stairs room, as when she sat there the curiosity of the population as to a foreign woman's occupations would generally ensure a crowd of three deep at the door. The piano had to be left below.

A baking-oven, a regular supply of American flour and yeast, an ice-chest and ice from Ningpo (where it is largely used in preserving fish), and a clock, had not been overlooked. Many passages show that Nellie had become very fidgety, nervous, and irritable, but towards the end of the week the following extract shows that she was either becoming more accustomed to circumstances, or that the circumstances were becoming more bearable.

I see I wrote rather too strongly about the hens coming into the parlour last Friday week. The horrid things seem everywhere in China, and quite an institution, so much so that in telling my story in a letter to a friend in Shanghai, she wrote back quite chaffingly that I was really making mountains out of molehills, as she constantly found them strolling about her kitchen picking up the scraps, and Chun, I see, thinks me quite curious for disliking them. To-day I did like them. Chun and I were going through the yard to look at the creek, which is now half full and rushing down like a mountain torrent, and very exciting, when Chun spied a centipede, and making a sound of "cluck cluck" to our cock who was standing near pointed the insect out. The cock cleverly espying it made a

tremendous noise to draw his wives' attention, but before any one of them had a chance, he rushed to it and gobbled it up. Good cock, but bad to his wives, as Chun tells me they are a favourite morsel with fowls. Dogs are kept out effectually by the wire, and the cook told me that the "great master," *i. e.* my husband, had insisted on the dog being killed that had jumped through the door.

Sunday.—Chun has just told me that an American missionary is going to preach in a large room that he has rented this morning, and asked me if I would like to go. Of course I said yes, and he said that for once he would accompany me. I shall write more after I return.

The service over, I came back rather disheartened, but in other ways amused. Notwithstanding the regular lessons that I have had with a teacher in this wretched dialect, I found I could hardly understand anything that Mr. Fulford the missionary said. Mandarin is a much prettier language than either the Shanghai or Ningpo dialects, and I wish they would all speak it!

As a rule Sunday here, and all over China, is just the same as a week-day, excepting in the foreign settlements, where there is a diminution in the traffic, and where at any rate the ringing of the church bells reminds you of a day for rest. It is pitiful to realize that all the people around you are going through the same drudgery day by day, from year's end to year's end, excepting on a few days set apart as holidays, and at New Year's time, which I have not yet witnessed. The sermon was long, and the prayers longer; a wonder-

ful sound was produced by a few so-called converts, which represented singing, a succession of painful discords—I can hardly describe the noise, it was ludicrous. Most of the men and some of the women sat still in an apathetic manner, although every now and then some one or another would make that horrid noise in the throat before spitting on the floor, which is so universal that it really seems to be constitutional. It makes me shudder every time I hear it, and even Chun has sometimes forgotten himself since he came here, at which I have not hesitated to show my disgust. He is growing his nails long again. I have told him it is repulsive, but he replies that it is more aristocratic, as it shows that he does not work with his hands. Thank goodness he has not yet abandoned washing himself, as most of the people here seem to have done; the smell in the room of devotion became loathsome towards the end.

I see my pen has carried me away, and I must return to tell what happened at the close of the service. I was following my husband towards the door, and we were almost the last of the congregation; before we had reached it, to my surprise the missionary touched me on the shoulder, and requested me to spare him a few minutes' conversation. Chun evidently overheard, looked back and nodded, so I retired a few steps with Mr. Fulford, who abruptly remarked in a nasal tone—

"I have been told by some of my converts that a foreign woman was living here in sin with a Chinaman. Your dress you see does not conceal your shame. I feel it my duty to warn you that the way of transgressors is hard, but that there is always a door

open for those that repent. Your presence here has encouraged me to speak plainly."

I was so astounded at his impertinence that I believe for a moment I must have looked guilty, as he added, "The wages of sin is death." I recovered myself, and answered him in his own biblical manner, "Charity thinketh no evil," and then, not wanting to quarrel with the only foreigner I should see for a very long time, pointed to Chun at the door saying—

"I will introduce you to my husband, Chun Ti-kung, of the Hanlin degree, to whom I was married at St. Jude's last year." I walked slowly forward.

Mr. Fulford was evidently dismayed, perhaps he had seen the notice of our unusual marriage in the 'Times.'

He hurriedly apologized, and unwillingly followed me, I fancy expecting me to make a scene, to where my husband stood, when I said, "Mr. Fulford desires to be introduced." They both bowed in Chinese fashion, and Mr. Fulford was still further surprised when my husband in his exact English said very politely, "Perhaps as your boat is some distance from here, and you appear to have known my wife before, it may be agreeable to you to partake of our humble midday meal, as the heat is great." The missionary was evidently agreeably surprised, but replied that his wife was waiting for him in their boat, as it had been too hot for her to attend service, and that he guessed he must get back, but that they would do themselves the honour of calling on me the following day at five o'clock. What *do* you think of that? as I have no doubt he will ask his wife.

I did not undeceive Chun about our having met

before, as the truth might have made him angry, and I was curious to meet Mrs. Fulford, as I have seen no foreign women up-country, and fortunately he took the thing as a matter of course.

Monday.—There was not much to do in the morning, so finding that the kitchen, the furniture, and the floors were apparently being left to clean themselves, I devoted myself from 9 to 11·30 to overlooking the boy, cook, and coolie, while they made a thorough clean up, which, as I could not avoid hearing, caused a good deal of discontent, from the underbreath remarks in which Chinese are experts.

After that I felt tired, and lay down until I had to see to the tea being ready for the Fulfords. I may say that our cook makes cakes and sweet biscuits fairly well.

At about five o'clock they came; my husband was at home, and we had a good long talk for nearly two hours in English, which was to me really a treat. Mrs. Fulford evidently enjoyed the cakes, and much sugar and milk in the tea. She is really rather a pretty woman, even dressed in native clothes, and seeing that I was in like fashion she gushed, "Oh, my dear, I see you are sensible; what a comfort it is not to attract attention." Considering that she is very tall, and has yellow hair, I could not help wondering if such were the case. She was very enthusiastic about the mission work opening for women in China; envied me the position I held as the wife of a mandarin, and the influence I could exert, and went on gabbling about the good that tracts, and such tracts as she had sent to her, must produce

on the minds of natives. She went on to say that certainly I must join her in the good work of distribution, bringing out at last fifty tracts in Chinese, which, hoping to stop the flow of words, I said I would try and distribute. The fact is, that I could hear now and then that Mr. Fulford had dropped missionary talk, and was deeply interested in Chun's experiences and thoughts of Europe. Mr. Fulford never having been out of America, was greatly interested, and would now and then point out to Chun differences in thought and custom between what Chun had noticed in Europe and what took place in America, and I would have gladly listened and had my little say.

Try as I would I found it hopeless, and Mrs. Fulford's speech inexhaustible. From tracts she turned to the hardships she has had to put up with "for the Lord's sake," and then to insist on my coming to visit her, so that we might "bear each other's burdens" and "possess our souls in patience." It was at last with a sigh of relief that I heard Mr. Fulford's voice, "My dear, we must be leaving," and they left, Chun escorting them to the door. After all it has been a change, and Mrs. Fulford means well, and I have made up my mind to call upon her to-morrow. I have an idea that the hardships in her case are to be found in a comfortably fitted up house-boat, and in a snug little villa on the hills near Ningpo.

I know I am irritable, perhaps because ever since I came here I have been very much alone, the final closing of my husband's father's affairs having kept him at the coffin-shop nearly all the mornings and afternoons.

This evening for the first time we have received a batch of home papers, including some pictorials, and Chun tells me that he has ordered them to be forwarded regularly every week. It is really very thoughtful of him, and I am thankful, as they will give me something to read at night. I am steadily progressing with my study of the Ningpo dialect, and find myself beginning to understand and speak much better; my hours for study are one in the morning and two after tiffin, and when it gets cooler I may manage more.

Tuesday.—My husband for the first time has not had to go out this morning, so I asked if it would not be a good time to call upon his mother. He appeared puzzled and not over-delighted, but finally determined to go to his mother in the afternoon, and try if he could persuade her to see me to-morrow. He has been and is always so reticent about his life before his uncle at Hoochow adopted him, that I am intensely curious, and am fearful that something lurks hidden in the background ever since I heard of his natural father's existence. After tiffin I asked him to let me have a chair and visit Mrs. Fulford. "Certainly," he said, and lent me his own, which is white owing to the mourning, but big and safe, as four bearers carry it, and I must be careful of myself.

When I arrived at the boat it was just as I expected, and when Mrs. Fulford met me, and I had shaken hands, I could not help exclaiming, "Oh how I envy you! I would give anything to move about amongst all the pretty scenery, in such a comfortable boat as this." To explain, the windows had muslin curtains, a punkah was being pulled lengthwise, while the bunks

on both sides were for the daytime covered with red cushions, on which you could lie down if you liked, or sit in comfortable fold-up arm-chairs. She was pleased, but replied in missionary style, "There are drawbacks and disappointments in everything in life unless our thoughts are set on things above; but how have you been employing yourself since you came to live here? I do not pretend to understand how your husband, being as I hear rich and having such prospects, should accommodate you in such poor quarters, worse than many a Chinese merchant's that I have seen in Ningpo."

I explained that owing to my husband being in mourning for his father, he could not make any display; that I had been steadily studying the Ningpo dialect, which I found difficult, but that just now I had had a great pleasure through Chun's having obtained a weekly supply of the mail papers from England.

"Oh," said she, "do you happen to have received any fashion papers?"

"Only one of the 'Lady's Pictorial,' and I am wondering at the way fashions have changed since I was at home."

"Oh, you dear creature, I am dying to see it, and I am sure you will lend it me; I have been wanting one of those fashion papers for a month. The fact is, my husband and I intend making a trip to Shanghai in December, and as I have a piece of blue serge and another of blue silk for morning and evening wear, I have been racking my brains how to have them made up, so that they shall not seem old-fashioned or dowdy. Now I shall be all right, or at any rate nearly up to

date, and you are the good Samaritan that must help me."

I promised her the loan of the paper, through which I had glanced wondering what use it could be to me, and after that the whole tenor of the conversation changed, and she became eager to know all the latest news current when I left home, which we discussed over a well-served tea. It reminded me of my sisters in the old days when I was so bored by being asked if this or that looked or fitted well, but now it somehow seemed amusing and made me feel brighter; but at parting she felt bound to talk professionally again, saying, "Alas, after all what vanity and vexation of spirit all things are in this poor world." I got home in good time for dinner, when my husband told me that he would take me to visit his mother next morning at 11 a.m., but that I must remember that she still considered herself in deep mourning, and that she, in granting this interview, was more or less doing it as a favour to her son. I felt huffed, and remarked, "Then perhaps my absence is more welcome than my presence, and I had better stay away altogether." But Chun said that, as the matter had been broached, it had better be carried out, and I settled to go. In the evening we both devoted ourselves to reading the home papers; it seems out here as though we were fossilized in comparison to the constant movement in everything at home, from theatres to murders.

CHAPTER VII

THE CLOUDS GATHER

Wednesday.—Since writing yesterday the visit has been made to Chun's mother, and my knowledge of Chinese life has been improved, not to say disimproved. The impressions left in my mind of Chun's accounts of his relations I find so different from realities, that I am beginning to have doubts of everything he has told me, and to feel more out of place day by day.

The mother, instead of being a well-dressed and delicate Chinese lady as I had been led to expect, is a red-faced and shrill-voiced coolie woman, with apparently a great opinion of herself. Without noticing me or my entrance, she continued discussing in an overbearing manner some charges made for mourning garments that she considered excessive. Even when her son interposed, and told the tailors that they could go, and that he would look into the matter, her manner was far from courteous, and I can assure you my feelings were neither daughterly nor even friendly. Her daughter entered soon afterwards. She walked forward in a silly affected manner and made her bow to Chun, leading her boy, a nice-looking lad, by the hand, and not noticing me at all.

Chun rather sharply remarked, "You have omitted to welcome the stranger," when she gave me what appeared for a Chinawoman an impertinent nod and sat down by her mother, the pair of them staring at me without attempting to speak, until a coolie brought in some cups of tea, of which they asked me to partake. Chun Ti-kung and the boy had moved to the window, where they appeared to have a good deal to say to each other, but when I had begun to feel really uncomfortable at my inability to extract more than "Yes" or "No" from the females, the boy came over to me, and speaking in French, with a far better accent than I can pretend to, began to ask me if, being so far from home, my thoughts were not sad? I told him that his uncle's company was a recompense for many things I could not help missing. He laughed and said, "Oh, you are like me, I shall not be at all sorry to leave mother and go back to school in Shanghai, but I will come and see you often before I go, if you will allow me." I could not help seeing that his mother was fretting and fuming during the conversation, of which she could not understand a word, but Chun, who had been talking to his mother, turned to her just then, and saying, "We cannot stay any longer," we left—not on my part with any regret.

But I have forgotten the house and its surroundings in which my honoured ancestors lived. To tell the truth, the house is nothing but a large shop opening on the village street, which extends for perhaps a quarter of a mile. Next door is a sort of cooking establishment, where hams, roasted ducks, and other provisions were hanging up for sale, with a large stove or oven in

front, over which dough or rice cakes were constantly kept simmering in oil, in an iron pan, smelling unlike anything out of China. On the opposite side was an oil and wine shop, a curious but common combination; a tea-shop was next door, from which the noise of shouting and chattering seemed unceasing. I cannot remember more, but in fact the shop was one of a row in a narrow street, housed in with mats to keep off the sun, with a drain on either side, into which all the refuse of a day's clearances were thrown, such as cabbage-stalks and peelings, whilst air seemed quite an unappreciated necessity.

My mother-in-law's shop had a counter at one end, at which customers could make their terms, and the background was occupied by handsome, darkly varnished wooden coffins, the ends fronting the light, on which were emblazoned in gold Chinese symbols, giving the appearance of monsters glaring from the gloom. The up-stair room was reached by a ladder similar to that in our own house, but without a railing. The rooms were bare, and dirty to an extent that pointed to months and months' want of even dusting; the walls had once been whitewashed, and the chairs and tables were of the commonest description.

Every one has assured me that my husband is wealthy, and he certainly has always seemed to have the command of money when needed, but the miserable way in which both we and his mother are living, tests my faith, and when we got home I had to take out my pearl necklace to see if its existence had not been a freak of imagination rather than a reality. Chun when he returned with me was very silent and reserved, and so, just

because I knew it would annoy him, I had a lamp placed in the lower room and played the piano, out of spite, until a noisy crowd assembled outside the house.

Thursday.—I find the suggestion of Mrs. Fulford's of putting one's feet into a bag when sitting down to breakfast or any meal a very good one. It is marvellous how the poisonous little mosquitoes assemble under the table quite ready to assume the offensive on every occasion. The bag is certainly uncomfortably hot, but as I am not yet poison proof, as my husband is, I prefer the lesser evil.

Of course Mrs. Fulford sent for my copy of the 'Lady's Pictorial' yesterday morning, and to-day came up to consult me about the best way in which to have her dress made up, having pretty well come to a conclusion satisfactory to herself. Another mail had come up in the interim (mails are irregular, sometimes coming in too close together, and then none for a fortnight), and out of mischief I produced the later paper that had come by it, to see if the result would not be the same as it used to be with my sisters in the old days. I was not disappointed. Mrs. Fulford, after looking through the plates, was thoroughly confused, and saying that she had no idea that such changes could have been made in a week, begged the loan of the new issue, which she must study before going further into the question of making up, and after having tea, she left. I could not help laughing to myself, it was so exactly the same old story as it had been at home.

For a wonder, in the afternoon I went for a walk with my husband, which was pleasant enough, as a

cool south-east wind was blowing. Out of curiosity I presented one of Mrs. Fulford's tracts to a respectable white-haired old woman at one of the farm-houses we passed; she understood what I said, but shaking her head replied—"Honoured lady, I thank you, but I shall have to wait until some one will read it to me;" and as far as I can see, unless the tracts and bibles are left at tea-shops where one or two men in a village may be able to read them aloud, tracts, etc., are so much waste paper. Besides, the tracts are really too funny: I took the trouble on returning home to puzzle through one that had for its title 'Crackers for Christ,' which attracted me. It began with a simple little story of a boy having been taken in the act of firing off some crackers in one of the missionary chapels, and that he was going to be punished, but explained that he did not think he was doing wrong as it was in praise of Jesus, and he did not know how better to show his pleasure. It then went on to point out the boy's joy and bliss in believing, and the wonderful effect that Christianity was producing and would produce in ignorant minds. Deceitful little pig, was my comment, he ought to have been well spanked; and what fools Chinese fathers must think us. Chun rarely laughs, but could not resist doing so after he had read the story, adding, "That boy was clever!" Chun seems to have got a fit of depression since our last visit to his mother, and is so silent as to be oppressive. At dinner for the second time he suggested that I should take a trip to Shanghai, so that I might be near a foreign doctor, but I told him that I could not bear the thought of being separated from him at such a time, and that

the prospect of the journey there frightened me. So the matter stands, although I am very nervous, and the hot days as they occasionally set in seem at times more than I can bear.

Saturday.—We had rather an amusing time this evening in trying to teach each other a song of our respective countries, the result being a dreadful failure in both instances—mine the worst, as, with the squeaky fiddle accompaniment played by him, I could get nowhere near to the songs he had sung; whilst he, with accompaniment on the piano, managed to get through "Away with melancholy" pretty creditably.

Last night the rain came down in torrents; the tile protection overhead proved very defective, and streamlets of water here and there had to be supplied with buckets to catch them and our beds moved to a sound corner.

Sunday has come now, and how delightful a change, the air feels as fresh as an English May day; the street in front of our house has been swept clean of all the dirt and cabbage-stalks and orange-skins that had been accumulating for weeks. The morning meal I have enjoyed immensely, a sort of trout stewed with mushrooms, as good as I have ever eaten, and cakes that the cook calls vaffler (probably the American waffles), eaten with butter and sugar, which are quite new to me. At about eleven Chun Fei-ting, my husband's nephew, came in to see me, and to thank me for a small pocket-book that I had happened to find in one of my drawers and sent him as a present. I asked after his mother and grandmother, and he said they were well, but that he would much sooner be back at school in Shanghai than

having holidays in Pa-li Kiao, with nothing to do but fish, and no one to talk to but shop-keepers, who were constantly estimating the quantity of "dung tseen" (copper cash) that they had or hoped to make. "It is so small a life," he said, "I want to be like fa—— uncle, and go to foreign countries, and become a medicine doctor." The catch in the word was unmistakable, and there is so strong a likeness to my husband in his face and manner that—but then there is his mother, so that I must not take to being suspicious about small coincidences, which after all may mean nothing, especially as we talked French. He stayed to luncheon, to which my husband as usual came in, and we all talked away, learning many particulars of Fei-ting's life at the school, where, from the prizes and good reports given by the French priests, and brought by him to show his uncle, he seems to be making good progress.

On leaving he said, "I should like to call you Little mother," which I thought nice of him, but my husband spoke before I could, saying rather sternly, "I prefer your calling her aunt," turning to me in explanation, "Excuse it, but I am so fond of the sound of *ma tante* in French."

I had to return Mrs. Fulford's call in the afternoon. She had apparently satisfied herself as to the more appropriate fashion in which to have her dresses made up, and after showing me the patterns she had selected, and which, if I had been she, I should have thought rather "young" for her time of life, she started on a new hobby—the sin of polygamy in China, and hoped that I looked at the matter from the same point of

view. I replied, "I do not know, but I sincerely pity any second wife!"

Friday.—Nothing has happened since I last wrote, excepting that Fei-ting has been constantly backwards and forwards, and that I feel almost jealous of the amount of attention and time that Chun gives to him, as much as an hour or two at a time. By Chun's advice, I had asked Mrs. Fulford to come with her husband to dinner at seven. I am beginning to like Mr. Fulford much the better of the two; he does not seem at all so confident as she that every one who differs from him in opinion is bound to be wrong, and when Mrs. Fulford dragged in her new hobby of the sinfulness of polygamy, he turned round and said, "My dear Theodora, I think you are talking far too strongly of a question that even in the days of the early Christians was left open, and only spoken of with disapproval in the case of deacons and teachers." Chun said he agreed with him, asking Mrs. Fulford what employment she would be able to find for the majority of females over males in the land of China, if polygamy were disallowed? I felt angry at my husband's remarks, but am afraid that pleasure at hearing Mrs. Fulford being snubbed extinguished my vexation. Fancy having to bear with such a gift of God day in and day out!

Chun produced a European chess-board and had a fight with Mr. Fulford and was beaten; when the latter, saying that it was only fair that he should have his try for revenge on his own ground, the Chinese board and men were brought, at which Chun was successful (the *Tseang ghe*, not the *Wei ghe*), but the games were close at the finish. Both were pleased.

The new clock that we have lately received from Shanghai struck eleven, and Mrs. Fulford made an appearance of being shocked at the lateness of the hour, but as it was moonlight and fresh my husband and I both accompanied them half-way back to the boat, when we parted, Mr. Fulford telling me that he was going to preach on the Sunday at the usual room, which my husband overhearing, begged both of them not to be ceremonious (it shows how his knowledge of English customs has been educated), and to have tiffin with us, returning to their boat in the evening, to which they agreed.

Sunday.—I could not persuade Chun to go with me to the service, as he is anxious to avoid any probability of scandal during the short remainder of his residence in Pa-li Kiao, so I went by myself, and was pleased to find that my knowledge of the Ningpo dialect had improved, and that I could follow him much better. It was very hot, and I could appreciate the good sense he showed in making both his prayers and address short. The subject-matter of the latter seemed very appropriate, on the disadvantages of deceit and lying, as I certainly, from my limited experience in China, am convinced that a lie, even for no apparent reason, is more frequent than truth. When the service was over he came to take me out, apologizing for his wife's absence on account of the heat, but adding, "She is pretty comfortable with her books and paper, so I shall, if I may, still avail myself of your husband's kind invitation, as I confess to being very hot and tired."

I had only a Chinese bamboo umbrella, but he had

a much more sensible one of white calico lined with green. He said, quite without irritation, "I suppose my poor attempts at teaching bored your highly-educated husband last time, as I did not see him with you to-day." But on my explaining the cause he said with a sigh, "So I always find there are difficulties in every position and weariness in every walk of life;" and then in a very gentle voice, "I suppose you must find them very hard to bear at present, but never forget that patience is a great virtue, and I am very glad of this opportunity to ask you to look upon me as a friend, and on any occasion that you really think you need a foreigner's advice do not hesitate to appeal to me, if I am within call." His kind tone almost made me break down, but we were fortunately quite near home, and I was able to go up-stairs while he was shaking hands with Chun, and smooth my hair and feelings with an application of cold water. We had a very pleasant tiffin, and spent the afternoon in chatting on all sorts of subjects, and especially on the effect the opening up of China would have on the prosperity of the world. Mr. Fulford's ideas are sanguine, but my husband's remarks tended in the direction of the difficulty in reconciling so many diverging interests, especially those of the literati class. Mr. Fulford argued that a few years of closer acquaintance would bring about a closer intercourse, whilst my husband argued that the difficulties of introducing the women-kind into society were almost insuperable. I caught again the puzzled and pitying expression on Mr. Fulford's face which had struck me earlier in the day, and rather wondered what it could mean. The

lively conversation which followed, changing from subject to subject, in which I had to take part, made the few remaining hours pass very pleasantly, and diverted my thoughts from melancholy subjects, until I came to review the day's doings, when that wretched question repeats itself—"What next?"

CHAPTER VIII

AN ILL-FATED BABE

THE diary must for a time be discontinued, to enable the reader more quickly to arrive at his aim—the end; also to explain the difficulties in the position that had arisen.

On the Saturday previous to the events last narrated, Mrs. Fulford had obtained the assistance of an *amah* from Ningpo, well skilled in needlework, to assist her and the Chinese tailor in cutting out and making up her dresses in the style determined on.

Amongst scandal-mongers of any portion of the globe the Chinese *amah* would take an eminent position, and it is not surprising that amongst the items in the budget of the *amah* engaged by Mrs. Fulford, the story of Nellie's residence in Pa-li Kiao had got embodied. Mrs. Fulford was fond of talking, and gladly listened to the scraps of news about the missionary and other ladies and their doings in Ningpo; but she was not prepared for the next subject that the *amah* sprang upon her with the words, "Eiya Missisee, how long you stop Pa-li Kiao?" Mrs. Fulford replied, but the *amah*, without pausing, continued—"Ningpo side have got very culio talkee; talkee have got one piecee

foreign galee, stop this side, belong all same China mandarin No. 2 wife. Talkee he name belong Chun ta jin (Chun Ti-kung's honorary name). How fashion you tinkee? My talkee no belong true. How can one foreign woman makee so fashion shame-face pidgin? Must belong very common piecee, suppose belong true." Mrs. Fulford's reply was: "My no savvy," and she became silent during the remainder of the *amah's* stay, the silence proving no let to the *amah's* garrulousness.

When Mr. Fulford returned from his visits to the few natives upon whom he had thought his teaching had made some impression, Mrs. Fulford told the story, and asked him if it could be true? Mr. Fulford, taken aback, hummed and hawed for a minute or two, and then said—

"My dear, I am sorry to say that Chun Ti-kung has confided in me, and I have known for some days that, I am sorry to say, his first wife is living here. I——"

But Mrs. Fulford's pride was up in arms, and not allowing him to continue she burst out—

"You have dared to introduce me to a woman who is no better than she ought to be, and let me eat with her! What can you think of me or of my feelings?"

Mr. Fulford had regained his composure, and replied—

"The situation is a very difficult one, and at present I can see no clear way out of it. Chun says, and I believe him, that he greatly regrets not having tried to explain matters to Nellie earlier, but that in the present position of affairs he is fearful of the shock that this knowledge of the truth might have on his wife's health. Everything that he says and does shows that

he is really attached to Nellie, and I am very sure that he never intends to take back the Chinese wife to live with him, as the marriage was from the first distasteful to him, and forced upon him by his family. Every country has its own laws and customs, and as I can see no remedy to apply in the present instance, I thought it wise to refrain from angry words, and trust you will see it in the same light, and I hope you will not make any difference apparent in your attitude towards Mrs. Nellie Chun."

Mrs. Fulford bounced from her chair and said—

"Can I believe my ears? You, calling yourself a minister of the Gospel, think it right to leave a woman living in sin with a married man without denouncing her! You, my husband, can imagine for a minute that I can continue my acquaintance with such a character! You make me ashamed of you!"

"Gently! gently! Marrying a man that she did not know to be married was no sin on Nellie's part, and, in China, marrying two wives is no offence against the law of the land. At the present juncture I think it would be the greater sin to possibly imperil the lives of mother and child by unwarranted tale-bearing. It is a very difficult problem to solve. Mrs. Nellie, by Chinese law, is a Chinawoman, and though perhaps she might, with the sanction of her fellow-countrymen, obtain a divorce on legal grounds, what could she do with her future? Certainly the unborn babe has had no part in the matter, and its life should be our first consideration."

"Say what you will, I cannot believe it right to let the poor woman run the chance of dying in sin without the chance of repenting."

Mr. Fulford, heated by the argument, replied impatiently—

"Think what you will, who are we to judge our neighbours? But understand this, that if you think it a sin to disobey your husband and break your vow, you will most certainly commit one if you interfere in this matter at all. In my opinion it is a matter that only Chun and his wife can settle between themselves. I don't exonerate Chun at all for his deceit, but the end must be left in the hands of a higher power than ours."

Mr. Fulford had never in his life spoken so harshly to his wife before, and the result was that she broke down, sobbing and saying that with his views she had no doubt that the next thing he would do would be to bring some nasty Chinawoman to share his home with her! Mr. Fulford left the room abruptly.

A house-boat having only one cabin is a place rather inconvenient to quarrel in; still in summer weather the deck in front is by no means an unpleasant retreat for a quiet smoke, and to this the angry husband betook himself, until the dinner was announced, a meal eaten in oppressive silence, although Mrs. Fulford managed to get in the last word as Mr. Fulford betook himself to his seat on deck, saying—

"I am not at all sure that what you have pointed out to me is the path of duty. There is one duty towards God and another to man, and I must pray for direction."

At breakfast the next day Mrs. Fulford announced that she at any rate could not think of demeaning herself by lunching with an unmarried woman living with a married man. Her husband, as already related, went his own way, and congratulated himself afterwards on

having obtained the little private colloquy with Nellie, although in his inmost thoughts he probably wished most selfishly and sincerely that he was well rid of the whole complication.

On the next day but one, from one of the letters latest written by poor Nellie, it appears that she complained to her husband that the call she had made on his mother had never been returned, to which he somewhat confusedly replied, that although his period of mourning for his real though deposed father, Chun Se-fei, had expired, his mother still had to observe her full period of three years' strict mourning. He continued by saying that in three days he should be free of Pa-li Kiao, and thought it would be best for her to go with him to Ningpo, where she could be within reach of a foreign doctor. But this, for two or three reasons, Nellie would not do, and said that nothing would induce her to undertake the sedan-chair carriage down to Ningpo until her child was born. Chun expostulated, and suggested that they should take the longer route in a boat through the lakes; but Nellie proved immovable; and finally, Chun made up his mind to proceed to Ningpo by himself, and try to procure medical assistance. He was anxious about Nellie, and told her his decision, to which she only replied, putting her hand on his shoulder—

"Oh, don't go; I shall be so lonely."

The next day there seems to have been an explosion in the house of Chun, as Nellie, having an energetic fit upon her, had made an exploration of her various cupboards, and of the floors under the mosquito-nets, and, in fact, into all the out-of-the-way corners, and had

found everywhere carelessness, dirtiness, and all sorts of rubbish stowed away instead of having been put on the dust-heap, which is daily removed if the coolie is properly looked after. Fretful and nervous, she had not hesitated to call the boy a "dirty pig," in answer to which he replied that he could not see the object of a common concubine (the Chinese characters for wife or concubine are approximate in sound) pretending to be a great lady. At once she went to her husband, and in his office repeated the words, and asked for an explanation. He sent for the boy, who, thoroughly frightened, swore that he had never made use of the word "concubine," hoping that his master—who was a good master—would overlook a speech of impatience on his part, as the coolie and not he had been to blame for the dirt.

Chun then turned to his wife, saying that the laziness and rudeness of the boy and coolie could not be overlooked, and that they should be punished. He told both of them to pack up their traps and be ready the next morning to walk beside his chair that was to carry him towards Ningpo, "to which place," he said, "you must accompany me, unless you prefer coming with me at once to the magistrate."

The scamps guessed the reason for not having them punished on the spot, and agreed to be taken by him to Ningpo. Chun Ti-kung explained to Nellie that under the circumstances he must hurry his departure by one day, both to engage a new boy and to procure medical assistance. The cook would soon find her a new coolie, and in three or four days at the latest he would return. He then had to announce his intended de-

parture to his mother, who took the matter quite philosophically, as she knew her affairs were in order, and she approved of the man that Chun had put in as superintendent of the business. Chun, before starting, called on Mr. Fulford, and asked him, if he possibly could, to visit Nellie daily to see how things were progressing in his absence. Mr. Fulford, who would have greatly preferred, as already stated, leaving matters alone, but whose duties still detained him at Pa-li Kiao, could not see his way to refuse, especially when his wife, who was in the cabin where they were talking, suddenly and most inconsistently broke into the conversation—

"I saw your wife yesterday, and thought her looking so ill that I could not let her be left in the fearfully lonely position that she is in now until your return. My husband will tell you, that before I left for China I had taken my certificate in Boston as a professional hospital nurse, so that whether my husband has to leave or not, I shall remain until your return, and he can pick me up again afterwards."

Chun expressed his strongest thanks for her unmerited kindness, and left greatly relieved in his mind. After Chun had left, Mr. Fulford turned to his wife, and taking both her hands kissed her, saying, "After all you are a better Christian than I am, as without your intervention I think I should have shirked the situation and run away!"

Mrs. Fulford, in spite of the heat, came to keep Nellie company at tiffin; and the cook, who, Chinese-like, was dreadfully afraid of being left alone in a house with a sick person, showed his great satisfaction at her

coming by the words, "My too muchee glad, my fear mississee plenty sick."

When Mrs. Fulford discovered the state of nervousness and depression poor Nellie was in, she determined that she ought no longer to be left alone, and that after tiffin she would return to the boat, bring the things she needed, and take up her abode with Nellie that very evening. She told Nellie this at tiffin, who immediately became interested in planning what arrangements could be made, and showed her gratitude so simply that Mrs. Fulford's pity was almost mixed with love in spite of the whisperings of conscience.

After altering Chun's room to suit Nellie, and seeing that sheets and mosquito-nets were rightly fixed, she was able to return to her boat for her belongings, and tell her husband of her proposed movements. Of course the departure of Chun Ti-kung had, the day after it took place, become village gossip, which had penetrated to the ears of Chun Ti-kung's mother and his Chinese wife. These thought it a good opportunity to insult Nellie by sending a message through Chun's young son, that she, Nellie, must be careful during her master's absence not to injure or remove any of the valuable furniture in the house where she lived. Poor little Fei-ting had grown fond of Nellie in his boyish way, so that at first he almost refused to go, but great are the penalties of disobedience to a grandmother's or a mother's orders, and finally he had to undertake to deliver the injunction. Fei-ting had mentioned to his mother that, as his holidays were finishing, he intended calling to say "good-bye" to his foreign "*tante*," at which his mother had been much angered, asking him

what he wanted with a foreign devil. However, his words suggested to her mind the mean little spite concocted with her mother-in-law, one of the rare occasions on which they agreed.

Nellie's last letter gave a short but pitiful account of the event in a postscript to one she had ready for the next mail. She wrote—"I have just told you that I was feeling less nervous, and happier, for Mrs. Fulford kindly promised to stay with me until my husband's return from Ningpo, but now I am thrown back again into despondency. Very shortly after Mrs. Fulford had left, my husband's nice little nephew, whom I have mentioned before, and with whom I have had many amusing talks, came in to wish me good-bye. Of course I wished him good luck, and hoped that in time he would gain his object of studying to be a doctor of medicine in one of the foreign Universities; but when I held out my hand for him to shake, I found his eyes full of tears, and he broke down, begging me to pardon the message that his grandmother and mother had insisted on his delivering. Fancy the wretched woman having the audacity to send a message to me, that I must be careful not to injure or remove any of the valuable furniture during my *master's* absence! I was so astonished that I hardly knew what I did, but I think I only dismissed the boy, telling him that his grandmother and mother had better mind their own business. I am sorry for the boy—but fancy such an insult! And what can it all mean, as I said when I first came to this dreadful place?"

The storm that had been threatening all day broke in all its might at about half-past five; the rain came

down in bucketfuls, the thunder and lightning deafening and dazzling at intervals. It proved impossible for Mrs. Fulford to carry out her plans that evening; and poor Nellie passed a most miserable and lonesome night. The storm, instead of clearing the air, was followed by a day of intense mistiness and damp heat; the clouds hung so low that the light at mid-day was almost reduced to dimness; not a breath of wind moved a leaf, and the moisture as it fell drip, drip from the trees was a sound that seemed dreary enough even to dispirit the birds, while the frogs were the only beings that seemed by their guttural notes to be welcoming the rain.

A fast boat had brought a note to Mr. Fulford early in the morning, from a friend of one of his converts, who lay dying at a village ten *li* distance, begging his presence, as his convert wished to have the consolation of the prayers that Mr. Fulford had taught him to think so efficacious. Mr. Fulford was of course anxious at once to leave; Mrs. Fulford, saying she saw the finger of Providence pointing out her duty to her, started at once with her belongings to Chun's house in spite of the weather, trying to smile at her husband through the tears that fell, partly at the pain of parting, but more from a feeling of ominous depression, about what might or would happen during her voluntary attendance on Nellie.

When she reached Nellie's the effects that the storm and loneliness had had upon her were only too apparent; her pulse was high, her temperature far above normal, her talk feverish; she was constantly calling for her husband, "Chun, my Chun." Mrs. Fulford's

hand pressing on her head seemed at times to have a soothing effect, and also the application of a towel dipped in water; the ice had run out, and the daily supply had been delayed by the storm. Shortly after, the pangs of labour commenced. Mrs. Fulford's training as a nurse had been in a first-class school; she was healthy and able to bear the strain, anxiety, and want of sleep that she suddenly found thrown upon her shoulders, not only without wavering, but showing great tenderness in her treatment of her patient.

Perhaps at times the thought could not be excluded, "better for her to die," but still she fought as bravely as she was capable for the life of mother and child, and when some twelve hours afterwards a female child lay in peaceful slumber beside its worn-out mother, the relief was immense.

Nellie's prostration was so great that Mrs. Fulford still did not dare to abandon her place until stimulants had revived and sent her to sleep, when, having during the night managed to procure the services of a decent Chinese shopkeeper's wife (whose husband used to attend at Mr. Fulford's place of worship) to act as nurse and watcher, she felt at last able to throw herself on the couch for an hour or two of well-earned repose —that greatest boon on earth, repose earned in the sweat of one's brow.

The next two days, during which, although the heat was great, there was a refreshing breeze from the south, everything seemed to progress slowly but satisfactorily. Nellie was able to take the nourishment which Mrs. Fulford thought desirable, and which she found easy to procure, as on asking she found that

Chun Ti-kung had (evidently after consulting a doctor) laid in such a store of tins of arrowroot, sago, and oatmeal, champagne, port-wine, brandy, and porter, that the superabundance made her smile. The small baby seemed healthy, and less peevish than most foreign babies are, and the motherly spirit appeared to have awakened in Nellie, so that her worn face broke into smiles when for short periods the precious atom was allowed in her arms, and the calm that ensued seemed to Mrs. Fulford so beneficial that she allowed the daughter and mother to lie together until the latter fell into a deep sleep.

In the early morning, Mr. Fulford having returned from the death-bed and burial of his poor convert, walked from the boat up to the house, and was pleased to find his wife, looking bright and in good spirits, already on foot. On seeing him she ran up-stairs, saying, "Wait a moment," and after telling the nurse, whom she had found an unusually quiet and attentive woman, what to do when the patient awoke, she came down again with her hat on, saying, "Now I'm going to walk down and breakfast with you on the boat; I can safely spare an hour, and I want to tell you all that has been going on, and I really want a breath of this fresh morning air."

They took each other's hands and kissed, and perhaps felt more in tune than for a long time past; their respective stories were told on the way to the boat and during breakfast, and possibly the hour may have extended to two—what matter? there seemed no cause for uneasiness, although Mrs. Fulford did, when walking back, remark, "I wish Chun would come back

and relieve me of this dreadful responsibility. I agree with you now, and do not see what can be done for poor dear Nellie. In her ravings his name was constantly repeated; she must love him, and I fancy he must love her too, so that it is all terribly sad. Don't you hurry, but I see I have been longer away than I intended from the sick-room, and must go back quickly."

CHAPTER IX

THE BLOW FALLS

In this little world of ours there are so many sides to every question, that it is well to try and put yourself in the place of the marplot to whom you have a strong antipathy before judging too harshly.

That Chun Ti-kung's Chinese wife was a vulgar, stupid, utterly unfit companion for her husband, there is no question. That she was anxious for the rise in position that Chun's recognition of her as his wife would secure was only natural, and the way in which Chun had evaded her importunities from year's end to year's end, had certainly been unfair, though easy to comprehend. That she should find it impossible to conceal her jealousy, notwithstanding her promise of silence, especially when her son took a strong liking to Nellie, was only human nature; and so, when the news reached her ears that Nellie had given birth to a girl and not a boy, the craving to see and taunt her before Chun Ti-kung should return took such hold of her mind, that by degrees it became impossible to resist. From Chun's cook and coolie she managed to extract promises, that if by any chance the missionary lady

should leave Nellie's side she was to be at once informed.

Mr. Fulford's return, and Mrs. Fulford's intention of walking with him to the boat, were reported to her almost before they had left Chun's house, and although as a rule she was a lazy lie-a-bed, the excitement of malice roused her; she was quickly dressed and at Chun Ti-kung's door, which was opened to her by the coolie, whom she in a shrill voice told at once that she wanted to see his mistress. The trustworthy nurse hearing the noise, ran down the stairs as quickly as she could, begging and trying to order less noise, but the angry Chinese wife pushed her on one side with filthy abuse, and began to mount the stairs in spite of the nurse's efforts to hold her back. The shrill clamorous voices had in the meantime wakened Nellie with a start, and she called for help, which was almost immediately answered by the two struggling Chinawomen precipitating themselves into the room with disordered hair and torn clothes, when the nurse, seeing further obstruction was useless, let go and sank on the floor sobbing. The passions of the ill-bred Chinese wife, inflamed by the struggle, vented themselves in passionate Chinese Billingsgate.

"You pig, you born of a pig, you dog, you foreign devil, I have come because heaven has turned in my favour at last. You who have stolen my husband, who tried to turn my son to your filthy tastes, and made me call myself Chun's sister-in-law when he is my husband and always has been. What do you think he will say or think about you, when he finds you have only brought him a puny useless girl? He will return

to me, the mother of his son, and you, you mud, will be sent to earn your living in the brothel from which you came."

Nellie had in fright and terror half raised herself in bed and gazed with horror at the intruder, whom she had at once recognized; but before the hideous words, pointing truth to her worst suspicions, had finished, she felt in her heart that a fatal and long-expected blow had fallen, her face turned deadly white, and gasping for breath she fainted, while the startled baby screamed. Mrs. Chun Ti-kung, the Chinawoman, who had never seen a woman faint, stopped short, stared, and in a panic ran down the stairs and up the street, almost cannoning against Mrs. Fulford, who was hurrying to the house from the opposite direction as fast as her short breathing after climbing the hill would permit, in amaze at the noise that seemed to come from the sick-room.

On entering the room that she had left peaceful and tidy so short a time before, her first glance fell at once on Nellie, and she shivered, fearing that death had outwitted her after all, when she noticed the colour of her face and the tightened grasp with which she clutched the sheet. She raised Nellie's head on the pillow, and finding that she still breathed, turned to call for assistance, when for the first time she took in the helpless state to which the nurse was reduced, and the choking sobs that the baby was making. She felt for the moment helpless. Fortunately Mr. Fulford arrived on the scene, and when she heard his step below she called, "Abraham, come up at once, I want you. Get me some water from that small room and a fan." She

dashed the water in Nellie's face, waving the fan rapidly.

"Try now, Abraham, and bring that nurse to her senses, or the child will go into a fit." The nurse's good sense was already returning, and when Mr. Fulford spoke to her, she roused herself and soon had the crying child in her arms, soothing her. "Get me brandy—there it is on that shelf," said Mrs. Fulford, pointing. "A spoon is on the table, and try and get some between her teeth while I raise her head. I don't know how long this faint has lasted."

Mr. Fulford managed to get the spoon between Nellie's teeth, and for a second or two it seemed doubtful if the brandy would not choke her, but she managed to swallow it at last, and after a few seconds opened her eyes, and presently closed them again in a sleep of such sheer exhaustion that Mrs. Fulford shook her head, and putting Nellie's wrist in Mr. Fulford's hand, showing him where the pulse was, said, "Call me if it weakens, I must get some food ready for her the moment she opens her eyes again."

She crossed the room to where the baby was in the nurse's arms, and found it taking the breast from the still shaking woman, but although she again shook her head, she could think of nothing else possible but to allow it, so hurried down-stairs.

The cook and the coolie, after the Chinese Mrs. Chun Ti-kung had rushed from the house panic-stricken, had thought it advisable to decamp, though they returned to their duties later, and Mrs. Fulford found the rooms below vacant. Fortunately the fire had not quite gone out, and she found beef-tea, that

she had prepared the night before, in a basin ready to be warmed, so that before a quarter of an hour had elapsed her beef-tea was ready, and a pint of champagne unwired and ready to be uncorked. She sat for a minute or two idle, wishing desperately for Chun Ti-kung's return, till her husband's voice reached her softly down the stair-case, "Her eyes are open, but she does not speak."

Mrs. Fulford took the beef-tea in one hand and the bottle of champagne under her arm and mounted, gave the bottle to Mr. Fulford to open, and for the next ten minutes the two fed Nellie alternately with a dessert-spoonful of beef-tea and of champagne. The swallowing was not always easy and was purely mechanical, but when Mrs. Fulford stopped the feeding and took the pulse she felt a little more hopeful, as it was not quite so fluttering. Mr. Fulford had not been accustomed to sick rooms, and had had the sense to obey his wife's orders quickly and silently, and when, half-an-hour afterwards, he appreciated the quiet that reigned, Nellie asleep, and the *amah* and child pacified, he gazed across at his wife who was watching in a rocking-chair, with admiration of quite a new sort. The situation had brought out the woman.

During the next day Mr. and Mrs. Fulford prayed together for the return of Chun Ti-kung with the doctor he had gone to fetch.

Mrs. Fulford's resources as a nurse were pretty well at an end, and she did not know what treatment to adopt.

Another difficulty now arose: the May meetings, lasting a fortnight, for general prayer at all the open

ports in China had been fixed, and the Fulfords' time for reaching Ningpo could not be prolonged beyond the following evening without great inconvenience. Mrs. Fulford, however, determined that they could not leave Nellie alone; and when her husband gloomily suggested, "You know that Chun Ti-kung might not return at all!" she indignantly repudiated the notion; and she was right.

The delay in Chun's movements requires explanation.

CHAPTER X

CHUN'S UNFORTUNATE DELAY

WHEN Chun Ti-kung had left the Fulfords five days before the last events took place, he found his boy and coolie submissively waiting beside his chair; had they disobeyed, they knew full well that his influence would be sufficient to ensure their arrest, and they preferred trusting to the leniency of their master rather than to the thin shadow of a chance of escape.

Chun vented on them his anger and uneasiness in strong terms, saying that after all he had a great mind to pack the pair of them off to the *Te-pao* and have done with them, but on their *kow-towing,* and reminding him of his promise to take them to Ningpo, his first thoughts seemed best, as their examination and punishment in Pa-li Kiao would soon have become public property, and he told them that it should be as they desired. His four bearers, travelling by night and day (with two extra to change and change about), managed to bring him down in twenty-four hours to the place where the boat he had ordered was anchored in the Ningpo river. He would not stop for the usual night's rest, as his nervousness made delay intolerable. The bearers had rather a bad time of it,

as they were only allowed short intervals for refreshment and to get their breath, but they were as usual in good training, and were not unaccustomed to such rapid transit. On the other hand, the condition of the boy and coolie, who had to precede the chair, and were kept under surveillance by the bearers unemployed at each change, gave to Chun in his angry humour a grim pleasure, as towards the end of the journey they staggered in their walk, and could only draw their breath in sobs.

The boat attained at Hung Miao th'ou, the two poor wretches found respite: the six chair coolies, handsomely paid, no doubt spent a merry afternoon before returning to their homes, and Chun flung himself on the couch in the cabin, and slept straight through the three hours' passage to Ningpo, and an hour longer after his boat had come to a standstill close alongside the Ningpo bridge of boats—anchored barges with planks fixed from one to the other. The boy had the sense to have tea, rice, and some fried fish ready by the time his master woke; Chun felt in better spirits from the sleep and food, and the result was that both the boy and the coolie were told that the journey down had been a punishment that they would not soon forget, and that as he had no time to waste they could go their ways, but that if they should cause him any more annoyance in the future, they had better look out, as he had a good memory for faces.

Only too gladly the two scallawags took their departure, minus wages, but also minus a beating and the disgrace thereof.

On landing Chun started off at once for the Foreign

Hospital for Chinese, sent in his card, and in a very short time had explained his difficulty and the need for better medical treatment than was procurable at Pa-li Kiao. Dr. Pirn was interested in the case when Chun had told him all about his marriage with Nellie, and said he should have liked to go with him himself, but that he had two or three rather difficult operations to perform and could not leave for a week, and this, he supposed, would be too late. Dr. Pirn then said the best he could do would be to send his first assistant, who had been with him for over eight years, and in whom he had every confidence. "But even that I cannot do till the day after to-morrow, as our hands are very full."

What to a foreigner would have been a further source of irritation was regarded by Chun as the inevitable; his energy had perhaps been somewhat expended on the journey down from Pa-li Kiao, and the knowledge that he had left Nellie in competent hands proved a very narcotic. Her confinement was not expected to take place for at least a week, so he reckoned that he would have at least two clear days before his and the doctor's presence would be necessary.

In fairly good contentment he found his way to the Chinese inn to which he had sent his baggage, and after lunching, he bethought himself of the best way to pass the next two days, finally determining to call on the Ningpo Tao-tai, and also on the branch firm of his bankers, to see how his credit with them stood, as he knew his drafts on them since he left for Europe must have aggregated to something considerable, and he had been careless in keeping account.

His first visit was naturally to the Yamen, where he found himself cordially received by the Tao-tai, who having seen his appointment to Wuchang-foo in Hoopeh as Tao-tai, in the *Peking Gazette*, warmly addressed him as his elder brother of the Hanlin degree, who, he was glad to notice, had been appointed to the Tao-taiship of Wuchang, a place much below his deserts, but no doubt a stepping-stone to much greater advancement in the future.

His appointment was news to Chun Ti-kung, but when he told the Tao-tai he had heard nothing about it, the Tao-tai remembered that some official dispatches had been received at his Yamen addressed to Chun Ti-kung at Pa-li Kiao; and calling up a ready lie, he explained that he had forgotten that Chun had not yet received the letters that he had retained for him, as he had been told that his most honoured elder brother was on his way to Ningpo, and had feared that if he had sent them away they would have crossed each other.

That the official document, marked with the strongest characters for speed in the Chinese language ("through fire and water"), and a letter from his father in Hoochow, had lain for a week in the Ningpo Yamen, without any one having found it his business to forward them, was not at all an unusual occurrence. The Tao-tai, however, anxious to cover his laxity, when he handed them to Chun said, "I have no doubt that you will find your news in these, and I once more congratulate you; but before you read them I must mention that, making sure of your arrival, I have already notified the officials of the neighbourhood of the happy event, and I trust you will honour us with your presence at a

banquet which I have arranged for the second evening from this at my small dwelling."

Against the grain, for it meant quite twenty-four hours' delay, Chun Ti-kung had to accept, as he had no valid excuse to plead; the possible life or death of a second wife not carrying sufficient weight to enable him to decline such an invitation from his superior in office, his own higher degree making it all the more difficult to refuse.

He took his letters with thanks and hurried back to his inn to read them; the interview, what with the ceremonious greetings, tea drinkings, and polite bows at parting, having taken all the morning. The official document simply notified him that he was appointed acting Tao-tai at Wuchang, to which place he was to proceed immediately and take over the seals of office.

Chun Yu-tai's letter was to the effect that he had received private information of the appointment, but that there was not in reality any great hurry for Chun Ti-kung to take it up, until he had spent at least a month at Hoochow. He wrote:—

"The Tao-tai Sung, in office there at present, has pleaded ill-health, and received permission to retire for a year. I know on good authority that he is not a sick man, but that he would gladly evade the strict investigations ordered into all the revenue accounts by the Peking Government. I have written to some influential people in Peking, and you must write simply informing the Board that my orders compel you to postpone taking up your duties for a short space. His Excellency Sung by that time will have had to disgorge some of his ill-gotten gains, whether to the investigation or to the

Government, who can know? You ought to have finished your business at Pa-li Kiao, and I am anxious to see you and your foreign pearl of whom you have written so much. I cannot understand her not objecting to being a second wife; foreigners must have changed. You will see, by what I have done, it is necessary that you should at once come here for appearance sake, even if your wishes run in a contrary direction."

Chun Ti-kung at once set himself to answer both epistles, which he found a far from congenial task, especially that part of his letter to his father in which he had to explain that he could not leave for Hoochow for a fortnight at least, as his foreign wife was expecting to be confined. Next day on calling at the bank he found a pleasing surprise in the shape of a letter awaiting him. The letter set forth that, acting in accordance with Chun's instructions, the bank had, from time to time, as rents from his property in Shanghai accumulated, invested his money in ground further removed from the centre of the settlement; that without further definite instructions from Chun (his property had increased so immensely in value) they would neither feel themselves in a position to advise selling, buying further, or holding; that the rise had been very rapid, and that his estate was now worth more than half a million *taels*, so that without further instructions they should no longer care to move in any way, excepting so far as collecting and crediting with rents and interest as they fell due.

Chun Ti-kung dashed off an answer by telegram—"Shall arrive Shanghai fourteen days," and felt so elated at his position, that at the Tao-tai's dinner he displayed

very high spirits, and made many brilliant remarks, so that after the banquet, when the Tao-tai escorted him to the door, he remarked to Chun, almost reprovingly —"To meet success and failure with equal equanimity is the part of the superior man."

Exuberant spirits are looked upon by the Chinese in very much the same way that the Scotch express by the word "fey"; and it was strange how the Tao-tai's parting words gained the ascendency over Chun's cheerful thoughts that the unexpected promotion in rank and riches had naturally produced. On arriving at his boat (he had managed to excuse himself from the official dinner at about one a.m.), he found Dr. Pirn's medical assistant and the boy already on board, and asleep; the *lowdah* was roused out, and as the tide and wind were favourable, the boat was immediately got under weigh, and arrived at its destination in quick time.

Chun Ti-kung tried to get some rest during the few hours on the boat; but he could not help remembering that it was already the morning of the sixth day since he left Pa-li Kiao, and what sleep he managed to obtain was always broken in upon by a sense of disaster, probably the result of the Ningpo Tao-tai's quotation.

On arriving at the jetty, Chun found that chairs and coolies had been engaged, and kept waiting for him and the doctor by Mr. Fulford's orders for two days. A short note explained that a child had been born, that the mother was very ill, and that every moment was precious.

The chair journey up was pushed at the utmost speed

possible, but it could not be managed under twenty-four hours, and as the day was hot and dusty, three hours' rest in the afternoon had to be allowed the bearers, and the day was breaking before Pa-li Kiao was reached.

CHAPTER XI

DEATH THE HELPER

As might have been expected, the hurried retreat of Chun's Chinese wife from Chun's house had not escaped the notice of the Pa-li Kiao villagers, especially as her hysterical cries on her way to her mother's house had been of a nature to arouse suspicion of some disaster having taken place.

After her arrival at her home a high-voiced quarrel, followed by screams, had occurred between her and her mother-in-law, and was distinctly heard by the near neighbours, and every one knew that "Chun ta jin's" foreign wife was brought to death's door. These reports in a quiet village like Pa-li Kiao created unusual excitement.

Under such circumstances, it is not to be wondered at that Chun Ti-kung's arrival at Hung Miao th'ou had been keenly watched for, and that by means of a fast runner his arrival had become known at Pa-li Kiao some time sooner than he could make the journey himself. On hearing it, Mr. Fulford immediately started off to meet Chun, to prepare him for the sad position of affairs that awaited him.

He met Chun about a *li* from home, shook him by the hand, and persuaded him to finish the short distance on

foot, while the doctor and impedimenta with all speed pursued their way.

During the short walk he was able to tell Chun that the origin of the trouble had arisen from his Chinese wife having surreptitiously obtained access to Nellie's room, and the sad straits to which the visit had reduced Nellie, brain-fever, as Mrs. Fulford feared, threatening; the child seemed healthy, and he was sorry that his news was so inauspicious. Chun, who had been thoroughly upset by the letter he had already received, thanked Mr. Fulford, and then saying that his only hope was to arrive in time to see his loved wife before she died, started off at such a pace as to render further conversation impracticable. Mr. Fulford had meant to console him by saying that Chun had acted rightly in not telling Nellie the truth at the last moment; but Chun's distress was beyond praise or blame, and he only abhorred talk.

Meanwhile the doctor had been met by Mrs. Fulford on his arrival, and taken up to see Nellie, and when Chun came in a few minutes later he was informed that nobody was to go up the stairs without permission.

Chun felt annoyed, but little time was allowed him for thought, as his mother had hurried up to see him. He took her into the study (every sound in an ordinary Chinese house can be heard throughout the premises), and she begged him to overlook the great wrong his wife had done him in not keeping her promise of secrecy.

"I have severely punished her with the rattan," she said, "and she is now overwhelmed with disgust at herself."

"It is good that she has been chastised," was Chun's reply, "and well the wretch may be ashamed of herself. I cannot forget that you bore me, but your heart is corrupt, and I no longer look upon you as a mother, or the wretched creature you made me marry as my wife. A letter from my son reached me at Ningpo, telling me of the vile message you sent to my Nellie, and I know not how to believe you when you say that you were not an accomplice in this last devil's business. Go!" Mrs. Chun Se-fei fell on her knees, and with voluble tongue commenced to plead her rights as a widowed and ill-treated mother, but at a motion from Chun she was removed from the house and taken back in her chair to her dwelling, angrily and noisily pouring out her grievances to the amused crowd that accompanied her on her way.

Mr. Fulford had been drinking the coffee and eating the breakfast prepared for him, but could not help overhearing the mother's account and her son's answer, and he felt his confidence in Chun's good intentions restored; and when the latter seated himself at the table, and dispiritedly began eating the food nature demanded, Mr. Fulford tried his best to put forward some hopeful suggestions, but Chun's attention was devoted to listening for a summons from up-stairs.

More than half-an-hour had passed before Mrs. Fulford came down. She had evidently been crying, and in a broken voice said—"Mr. Chun, this is no time for hard words; the doctor thinks you may not see your wife alive unless you go up now. It will in any case be a very poor consolation to you, as she is asleep, and you must not speak, or in any way disturb her, as on her

condition when she wakes the doctor places great importance. Go up at once." And Chun did as he was told.

Poor Nellie! The nightmare horror of her position, and the helplessness of it, when she had grasped the meaning of the Chinawoman's tirade and her husband's cruel deceit, had acted on her already overtaxed strength, and quite upset her mind, so that after she fainted nothing but the ravings of feverish delirum had come from her lips.

The doctor, after examining his patient, had immediately condemned her long and beautiful hair, and, with Mrs. Fulford's assistance, it had been closely cropped, and ice in a towel bound round her head. After the operation Nellie had fallen into a troubled sleep; and her pulse was so unsatisfactory that, as has already been told, the doctor had thought it only right to give Chun an opportunity of once more seeing her in case the sleep should merge into death.

Chun, when he first caught sight of her fever-worn face, made more than ever ghastly by the white bandage, thought for a moment that Mrs. Fulford had deceived him, and that Nellie had passed the bourne. The doctor had been on the watch, and caught him quickly by the arm, and said, "There is still hope, but you must be very quiet," which enabled Chun to suppress the outbreak of remorse that had threatened to master him. After a quarter of an hour in the room he appreciated his own uselessness, and the pitifulness of the whole position proved too much for his self-control, so he left.

Mrs. Fulford met him as he came down smothering

his sobs—for it is a mistake to think that a Chinaman never breaks down at a crisis; sometimes their feelings find vent in sobs, sometimes in madness—and thought it right to tell him that she was glad he had repented of his wickedness, but that now it was his duty to rest and refresh himself so as to be fit and ready for any emergency, or in case Nellie should wake and call for him, as she had constantly done in her delirium.

Chun could not, even in his distress, help feeling a vague sort of wonder at the want of respect and consideration that he, as possessor of the Hanlin degree, experienced in his own house; but without remark he retired to his study, where Mrs. Fulford had thoughtfully installed the *amah* and baby to distract his thoughts.

The baby crowed, and he took it in his arms from the *amah* in an over-cautious manner, but he could not help feeling a parental pride at the white-coloured, smooth-limbed little morsel, and showed no disappointment when told it was a girl.

After awhile he returned the child to the *amah*, and betook himself, as he had been told, to his room, and after changing his dusty clothes, thought quietly of the child being a girl, and came to the conclusion that after all, as he already had an heir, the girl would probably prove a more congenial companion to its mother—if only. . .

Mrs. Fulford told her husband that if, on Nellie's waking, she were better, and no complications beyond natural weakness showed themselves, they might leave Pa-li Kiao on the evening tide. She sent instructions to the boat *lowdah* to have everything in readiness, and

then returned to the sick-room to relieve the doctor for awhile, and was delighted to find Nellie still sleeping peacefully.

The doctor was quite as anxious as Mrs. Fulford to make a cure of his case; he had learned Chun's position before he left Ningpo, and, although an enthusiast in his profession, he could not overlook the advantages of the honorarium that he might reasonably expect should he prove successful.

Nellie did not waken until about four in the afternoon; she seemed calm, and when for a few minutes her small daughter was laid by her side, she smiled and stroked her head. She appeared to understand what was said, and when Mrs. Fulford told her that her husband had arrived, and asked if she would see him, she nodded, though her eyes had a vacant look. When Chun came in she took his hand in hers, and did not show any repugnance when he kissed her; she did not seem to wish to speak. Mrs. Fulford could not but wonder at the apathy shown by Nellie about her position, and at her reception of Chun Ti-kung after she had been told of his disgraceful conduct.

After she had consulted the doctor (forgetting that he was unaware of any complications in the situation), she took his verdict that he considered that immediate danger was over, that Nellie was in a fair way to recovery, and that for her to remain was not necessary, as with Chun, the *amah*, and himself, they could manage the nursing between them. Without misgivings, she packed her belongings, and left with her husband for the boat after she had kissed poor Nellie, who was apparently dozing. Chun saw the Fulfords off, and

later on the doctor and he dined together, while the *amah* was left in charge of the invalid.

At about half-past nine the whole of the worn-out household retired to rest: the mutterings and grumblings of a coming storm attracted no notice; Chun went to his study, the doctor to his chair at Nellie's bedside; the *amah* and baby to sleep in the same room; and the servants to their quarters. They all slumbered and slept.

The wind for some time had been blowing in harder and harder gusts from the north-west, bringing with it the mysterious sound of uplifting leaves that predicts the rain; the clouds were rolling and piling in boulder forms one above another; the lightning and thunder had gradually increased in strength, when for a second or two all nature seemed to pause, and the storm to hold its breath, till a flash of most vivid intensity joined almost simultaneously with thunder that seemed to shake the earth, brought the downpour of rain.

Nellie awoke with the shock, and for the first time since she had fainted clearly realized what had happened: her position, and that of her child; the terrible Chinese wife, and the mother who might tyrannize over her; her husband—she refused to think of him; one thing only was certain, she must get away.

Suddenly (in some mysterious manner), Mrs. Fulford's having only just left her became a reality, and a conviction seized upon her mind that if she could only get out of the house, she would be able to breathe, she would catch the Fulfords' boat and escape—escape—escape!

The rapid thoughts had come and filled her mind

before the thunder-clap was over. A lamp was burning in the room, and she could see her little daughter lying quite detached from the *amah* on the opposite side of the room. With cautious movements and without waking one or the other she caught the child to her breast. A second flash of lightning revealed to her the doctor, who, in her confusion and the dazzling light, she mistook for her husband. As he moved in his sleep she, in an agony of fear, crouched in the shadow of the table, and then silently and as swiftly as her beating heart would allow her, stole down the staircase. The back-door was bolted, and rather than fumble she waited for the next flash of lightning; her child woke and began to scream, which added to her anxiety; but the torrents of rain drowned its feeble voice, and Chun Ti-kung, who was only separated from her by a wooden partition, slept soundly. She drew the bolt, passed through the yard, opened the bamboo gate that led to the tracking-path by the side of the now full and roaring mountain stream; stopped for perhaps a minute to regain breath, and to try and soothe her babe under the shelter of the hedge.

She looks back at the house and can perceive no disturbance, so trying to wrap her child more securely in the flannel that she had unwittingly carried off with it, she turns to the slippery and uneven mud track that leads to the broader creek. Her own clothing is little more than a night-gown. The storm-wind when she steps from shelter is at her back, and so strong is it that it blows her down the narrow path, as though she had wings; sometimes she slips or falls, but her conviction that all will be well if she can only battle through the

mile to the boat gives her a strength quite unnatural; the lightning as it shows her the path at intervals seems providential, and the thunder as it growls away further and further in the distance no longer attacks her tired-out nerves; the rain whips her mercilessly, and she cannot look back. Bruised and drenched, stumbling and panting with exhaustion, but still driven by the wind, she reaches her destination, the high bank from which she had last seen Mrs. Fulford's boat near Sankow, and then—a great despair seizes her—the boat is gone!

What help is there now in earth or heaven? Alone in this unfriendly land, could she go back to the home that is no longer a home to her? Back to her shame, to the life she loathed, to her enemies, to the man who had betrayed her trust? No! no! rather death than such a life.

With quiet deliberation she managed to tie her child to her bosom, and with a last great effort plunged into the foaming creek, and was soon carried to quieter waters, dead and at peace, both mother and babe.

CHAPTER XII

SORROW AND EXILE

FROM this time Chun Ti-kung dated the decline of his good fortune. Full of sorrow and remorse, he had scarcely buried the recovered bodies of his wife and child when he was hastily summoned to the bedside of his adopted father. He was only in time to hear the old man's last kind words.

The law of his country demanded that for three years after his father's death Chun should live in retirement without taking up his official post. In this enforced quiet he felt acutely the loss of the two beings for whom he had cared most in the world.

He wrote to Nellie's father telling him of her death, and enclosed a letter from the young doctor to certify that she had been in an unsound state of mind at the time. Chun had no difficulty in procuring a divorce from his hated Chinese wife on the grounds of jealousy and insubordination.

At the end of his legal mourning he entered with energy on his official work, and trying to enforce the reforms and upright conduct that he had learned to admire in his adopted father's Yamen, he soon found himself at variance with fellow mandarins, who, already

jealous of his fame and wealth, accused him of foreign proclivities. Some colour was given to their accusations by Chun's conduct during an anti-foreign riot that took place in his district, when he gave offence by his determined protection of missionaries and their property. This tendency was very unfavourably regarded by the viceroy of his province, a man who bitterly hated all foreigners, and Chun received in consequence open snubs and checks from his superiors. He had never been as free-handed with his money as the old Tao-tai, nor diplomatic enough to make friends at Court by lavishing gifts in the right quarters. The men working under Chun had often suffered from what they considered his superciliousness, so that he now found himself in an isolated position, and shunned by his fellow-officials.

Soon after this he was drawn into a quarrel by his next superior, and by the intrigues of his rivals made to appear in the wrong, and deprived of his official button. Smarting under the disgrace, Chun threw up his post and wished to withdraw from his ungrateful country. It was made very difficult for him to carry out this intention, and he was at last glad to escape with the loss of more than half of his large fortune, that remained in the greedy grasp of his legal and illegal persecutors.

Taking his son Fei-ting, who was now fourteen years old, he exiled himself to Singapore, where he would no longer be subject to Chinese law, and where he found many wealthy fellow-countrymen.

In a garden brilliant with tropical flowers, he has built himself a beautiful house that curves its blue-

painted roof upward under high palm-trees and blazing southern skies. Here he lives at ease, occupying himself with his books and writing, and with the education of his son; but he has not ceased to regret his fair young English wife, nor the fuller career in his native land that might still have been his if it had not been for his own folly.

THE END.