

WOMEN and MISSIONS

AUGUST, 1925

The Rainy Day

By Pearl S. Buck

Happily not all students who return to China have the tragic experience of the young man in this story; but that the majority of these western educated students do find themselves in extremely difficult situations when they return home, every missionary knows. Some missionaries say that the returned student is the most needy type in China today. The church in America knows little of his home conditions, but it should know more and provide him a faith which will enable him to endure and give him a friendship and sympathy upon which he may depend. The writer of this story, Mrs. J. Lossing Buck, is associated with her husband in the University of Nanking.

IT was a dark and rainy day in November—so dark, indeed, that the light of mid-afternoon scarcely penetrated the rice paper of the latticed windows in the small livingroom of a middle-class Chinese home. A shaft of dull light came through the open door, and falling across the floor to the wall opposite, threw into relief the cruel old face on the painting above the table. It was a picture of the first Ming Emperor, and his face, with its slit eyes and protruding jaw, is really the face of a demon. About this shaft of light sat a circle of people. At one end of it, in the seat of honor at the left of the table, directly under the Ming Emperor, was old Mr. Li, Teh-tsen's grandfather.

He was speaking first, as was his right. He had prepared his words very carefully and was now raising and dropping his voice in measured cadence, ending each rounded sentence with an appropriate quotation from the classics. He had begun by clearing his throat and spitting upon the damp brick floor. Then he had passed a delicate old hand, with long, yellow nails, over his sparse beard, which straggled down the front of his gown. The gown was of grey cotton, and it was spotted with bits of food dropped from his bowl of rice at mealtimes. In his right hand he held a long, bamboo pipe. It was black with age and gurgled when he used it with accumulated richness.

He continued to stroke his yellowish white beard slowly and in silence for a few minutes. Then he began to speak, his eyes fixed, not on Teh-tsen, who, as befitted his years, sat upon a stool at the extreme end next the door, but upon the fringe of rain dropping from the eaves upon the worn stone threshold outside.

"You are now returned to your people," said the old man, gazing at the rain and speaking in a high, quavering voice. "Four months have you been idle at home. Neither do you seek a position where, by your industry and your western learning, you may support honorably your grandparent and your parents and your brothers and sisters.

"What say the Ancients? 'A son should sacrifice his own flesh that his parents may feed thereon.' This you have not done.

"You have forgotten that we, your relatives, accumulated with great pains the money wherewith you were sent to the barbarous outer countries, that you might get western learning. Even your third cousin, who, as you well know, is only a poor farmer, gave his savings, amounting to twenty-two dollars, that you might become educated in the western manner. To him also is due a return.

"What say the Ancients? 'The son who does not nourish his own family, and especially his grandparents and his parents, let him be as a dog.'"

The old man stopped to clear his throat. The stout man at the other side of the table in the second seat of honor hastened to speak in the interval.

"The worst of these things, honorable father, is that this unworthy son of mine refuses to marry the girl to whom he has been betrothed since he was a child. He speaks of western customs. We did not bid him learn the western customs, only the western books, that he might find a position with higher remuneration. Now he deprives us of grandchildren. He deprives us of any one to worship our tablets when we have ascended into the heavens; he ordains, this worthless son, that we, his grandparents and parents, shall go into the spirit land with no one to care for us. How can this be endured?"

Teh-tsen listened to these words with extreme dismay. He was a dapper young man, in foreign clothing neatly tailored and up to the western mode. On the street he swung a cane and appeared self-sufficient. Here in the dim room among his elders in their long gowns he shrank into a rather insignificant youth, narrow chested and timid. He sat now with his hands between his knees, rubbing his palms slowly back and forth against each other. He gazed from one to the other of his relatives—his grandfather nodding his head at the father's words, his rheumy eyes fixed on the falling rain; his father, stout, impatient, thickened with much food; his uncle, a thin, selfish face and nervous, dirty hands, a secret opium smoker. In a corner apart sat his mother upon a little bamboo stool, a bent figure in a blue cotton garment, wiping her eyes furtively on her apron. Behind these four figures he saw in his mind's eye a crowd of avaricious brothers and sisters, greedy cousins, his crabbed old farmer uncle—all eager to share the income he was expected to bring in with his superior education. Hands—claws—grasping talons, for everything he could produce.

They had educated him, then, merely because he had happened to be the brightest boy in the clan, the one with the quickest brains. They had educated him merely as an investment for old age. A furious rage filled him. A torrent of burning, reckless words rose in his

throat. He waited an instant, setting his teeth sharply over them. He knew, of course, that it would be idle to speak. He had no redress from his own people. Legally his father could even kill him if he wished to do so. To be sure, this could scarcely happen, but the possibility reminded him of his helplessness.

Centuries of self control behind him stood him in good stead now. He rose and bowed deeply to his grandfather. Then to his father. Then to his uncle, twitching and grimacing in his seat. Lastly to his mother, who yearned over him secretly although she dared not speak.

"I pray you forgive me, honorable ones," he said in a low voice. "I will endeavor to be more dutiful."

He was conscious again of the wave of blinding anger rising up in him. He steadied himself and walked stiffly from the room.

He went out into the street. The rain fell drearily and the dampness between the high brick walls on either side of the narrow way was as chill as death. The gutters along the street overflowed with waste and filth so that the cobbled stones ran with a viscous, black, evil-smelling liquid. It rose against his polished tan shoes and left a stain.

He uttered an exclamation of disgust. He remembered that only a week before he had called upon the magistrate of the city and asked permission to organize a "sanitary street association." The magistrate had been suave; had complimented him upon his civic spirit; had promised nothing.

Teh-tsen looked bleakly at the rain falling in long, straight lines. How could China progress with men like that in power? How helpless he was against them—how helpless every one was!

The rain beat upon his smart felt hat and dripped from the brim. The hat was rapidly softening in the dampness—drooping over his eyes. His clothes were beginning to feel wet against his skin. He walked on.

Could it be that only six months ago he had been standing on the platform in the huge auditorium of that American university to receive his degree? He had been given a prize as well for his essay on the comparison of eastern and

western philosophy. It had been a brilliant piece of work, his professor had told him. How proud he had been! He had been one of the best students ever graduated from that university. Pretty good, when one considered that all his work was done in a foreign language, too! He had come back to his native city thinking only to consecrate all he had to the good of his beloved country. He was so sure of himself, so glad to see his family, so confident of their pride in him.

And then immediately they had fallen upon him like a flock of carrion crows. The very first night his father had talked with him concerning the salary he must demand from the local government school, should he teach there.

"I should like to consider the service I can render to my country first," Teh-tsen had said hesitatingly. "If they need me in the school —"

His father stared at him, his fat yellow cheeks hanging.

"You think of yourself only!" he exclaimed. "I am now ready to retire from active business. The times are hard and the shop is not paying. Your grandfather is old. Your brothers and sisters must be cared for. Your uncle is unwell and is not able to work. Besides, there are several of the relatives who gave you money for your education. They will expect at least rice from you. More than that, your future wife is in the house. Your mother needed help and there is no use in hiring a servant when one has a daughter-in-law. These are all dependent upon you. You are the eldest son."

Teh-tsen had been confounded. Somehow he had forgotten how things were. He had been away so long—eight years. And then he thought of the stupid, slovenly girl he had seen in the kitchen. He had, of course, imagined her merely the servant. His wife? A sick rebellion filled his heart. Never! He had even had angry words with his father. But all to no purpose. They were determined to bend him to their will, these relatives of his; planning together to break down his resistance by sheer, ponderous immovability. He was smothering under it. Worst of all, he was terrified to feel himself actually weakening under the

calm, inexorable pressure of family opinion. His ideals already were not the glowing, living realities they had been when he had stepped from the ship at Shanghai. They were dimmed and remote. After all, he was only one person. What could he do among so many who cared nothing for better ways of living and thinking?

His shoes were sticky with the street filth and his trousers bespattered. He had come away in his haste without his top coat and the penetrating, ceaseless downpour had wet him through. He could feel the icy water trickling between his shoulders. The sky was a sodden lead color. The rain continued to fall.

He shivered a little and wondered if there were any warm spots in the whole city. His own room was as cheerless as the rest of the house, with its brick floor exuding moisture and the damp, windowless walls. Besides, meagre as the room was, he was compelled to share it with his two brothers and he remembered angrily how they examined his books with unwashed hands and left spots upon the white margins. Only yesterday he had found his beloved philosophy textbook with a sheet torn out. His youngest brother had wished to wrap up his small cash in paper before thrusting them into his belt. There was no privacy anywhere.

He wondered apathetically how he could get warm. If he were once really warm again he might find a little courage somehow to go on with his purpose. He feared more than anything that he would be weak enough to give up; to marry the ignorant woman; to throw away his life. Then new anxiety came into his mind. He cried to himself:

"But what of my sons, then, with such a mother? What would be their hope?"

He had not thought of them before. They gave him a little new strength. He seemed to see their tiny hands clasped, begging not to be born. "No, no, I will not," he promised them eagerly in his heart.

A tall house loomed up before him, a foreign house. Ah, that was where Mr. Hemingway lived, his old teacher when he had been a boy in the grammar school. He had been a kind man, a young American, full of earnestness. He would go in and see him. Perhaps he could get

warm. He might even talk with Mr. Hemingway and tell him his troubles and get a little advice—a little encouragement.

He rang the doorbell. Then he waited, his coat collar turned up and his hands thrust into his pockets for warmth. The vines upon the house were beaten flat with the rain and the ground was spongy with it. Leaves were fluttering down, brown and wet. The door opened. It was Mr. Hemingway. How he had aged! A stooped, rather sad man, who peered at Teh-tsen uncertainly.

Teh-tsen put out his hand.

"You do not remember me, Mr. Hemingway? I am your pupil, Li Teh-tsen. I have been away for many years. Now I come to see you again."

"Ah, yes—yes," said Mr. Hemingway uncomprehendingly. He had had many students and he did not remember Teh-tsen. "Come in."

Teh-tsen stepped into the hall. Oh, how warm it was! He followed Mr. Hemingway into the study. Oh, heavenly warm! A small stove crackled in the corner. Teh-tsen stood before it, his clothes steaming.

"Dear me, I am afraid you are wet," said Mr. Hemingway, staring at him. He was very near-sighted.

"Only a little," answered Teh-tsen modestly.

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Hemingway absently. There was a huge pile of papers to be corrected on the desk and he had planned for an undisturbed morning. He was feeling wretched with a cold coming on, too; this rain! If he had an assistant now—but of course there was never enough money for things as it was. Nothing scarcely for these young western-trained teachers who demanded such impossible salaries nowadays. However, here was this young fellow who probably wanted something. He had better see what it was at once.

Teh-tsen seated himself. He hovered as near the stove as consistent with politeness. He looked about the bare little study appreciatively, enviously. Books—warmth—privacy; what a fortunate man Mr. Hemingway was! It must be easy to be good and noble and strong in such surroundings.

He felt the delicious warmth creeping into his flesh. He wished to open his

heart to Mr. Hemingway. But he must wait for his old teacher to speak first. Perhaps the opportunity would come later.

Mr. Hemingway asked a few questions. Teh-tsen spoke politely of Mr. Hemingway's country; wonderful country, wonderful people!

"I hope," said Mr. Hemingway severely, "that you will use your knowledge now for the good of your own country. China is in a bad way. She needs all you can give her."

Teh-tsen listened. Now they were getting to it. He could tell his fears and hopes soon. He did truly want to help his country, but—

"Still, I hope you have a different attitude from most of these young fellows who come back from England and America and France," Mr. Hemingway went on in a slightly higher tone of voice. The thought of the precious morning slipping past and the pile of uncorrected papers began to harass him a little. His head was aching. If only he had an assistant! Really it was too much to expect a man to do so much alone. But the scarcity of funds—

"The trouble with all of you," he continued, his irritation rising, "is that you want nothing but money. You want easy jobs and no responsibility and a big salary. Nothing else will please you. Meanwhile, the hard posts where service is greatly needed go empty. Will none of you have any courage? I must confess, Mr.—ah—Li, that I am very much disappointed in the returned students."

The room was quiet. Mr. Hemingway played with a paper knife at his desk, and glanced unconsciously at the clock. He was a good man who had borne much. He had not had a furlough in eight years and he was tired and discouraged. Moreover, he was a true teacher, who had always had to work with insufficient materials and this had gradually broken him.

The rain beat monotonously against the window panes. The silent room began to fill with a tense feeling. Mr. Hemingway thought of all his disappointments, and somehow the young Chinese in his smartly cut western clothes seemed to personify them. The young man felt suddenly that he was

back in the conclave of harsh criticism in the dingy room in his home. Misunderstanding chilled both their hearts.

Teh-tsen rose and bowed. This, after all, had been a respected teacher. He must not forget his own breeding and politeness.

"I grieve that we disappoint you, sir, and I bid you goodbye, sir," he said proudly, and went again into the street. He felt suddenly weak and a sob came into his throat; he stared resolutely ahead to keep back the tears. Well, he must go on alone somehow.

How it rained! The warmth of the few moments was soon dissipated and he felt tired and dispirited. Where could he go now? Home—there was no other place for him. It meant giving up. But life was insupportable as it was. He would have to sacrifice himself as others had done and as others would have to do—throw away his dreams—crush out the longings—stand and see his country stagger along because his hands were not his to serve her.

He would have to marry. The law could compel him. He thought of the sullen face of the betrothed—her unkempt hair. She was a servant cheaply bought in childhood, nothing more. His memory presented him cruelly with a hundred pretty faces, gay faces, the faces of the girls at college. They might marry as they chose. Even the women could marry as they chose in America. He thought of the young white men of his own age—his classmates. They would choose, too, each would choose—perhaps one of the pretty girls. But this would not help him. It was idle to think of it.

He turned his head restlessly and looked from one side of the street to the other. The dark brick houses huddled together silently in the steady, cold rain. How he wished he could get away! But he had no money of his own. If he could run away to Tientsin, to Shanghai, even, he could find work—be free. And then he thought bitterly that he could never be free. Wherever he was they could reach him, could force his return. And, after all, could he himself bear to be an outcast from his clan? An eldest son could scarcely so forget

his honor, were he a true Chinese. No, better keep his self-respect, at least.

The streets were nearly empty now of people. A few beggars crept about, whining and drenched. A woman hurried past him to buy hot water, her kettle in her hand and her apron thrown over her head to protect her from the rain. A child walked sedately home from school under an enormous oiled-paper umbrella. The short November day was darkening. Soon it would be night. It continued to rain. He must go somewhere. Of course, he must go home. But going home would be to give himself up. Well, there was nothing else.

He turned his steps slowly toward his home. The future years passed before him—drab, full of work at first, successful perhaps afterwards, but always with emptiness within. He seemed to see again that fantastic picture of his children, their little hands clasped, begging not to be born. And then it came to him in a flash of light the service he could render them, at least.

He stopped at the little apothecary shop on the corner and gave a low order.

The fusty little shopkeeper bent his head.

"Three pills of black opium?" he repeated softly. "Ah, yes."

He wrapped them furtively in a bit of brown paper, and gave them to the young man, and his yellow hand curled about the money dropped into it.

Teh-tsen walked home, his head erect. Strange he had not thought of this before! He smiled a little. After all, it was not necessary that he should have gone abroad and spent all that money to learn. In this moment of crisis it had not been any of his American professors who had taught him what to do. Not one of them had told him how to live. True, they had helped him to write the brilliant essay. It was wrapped up carefully in oiled silk and was put away in the bottom of his trunk together with his diploma and some other things he did not use every day. No, it was the ancient revenge his ancestors had used, the time-honored protest against a world awry, which was to be his solution, his self-sacrifice, now.

He entered the courtyard of his home. The kitchen opened on the left of the gate. The door was thrown wide and the fire from the brick cooking stove shone on the face of the stupid, sullen girl who was feeding in straw to the blaze. He shivered a little and set his lips. Ah, he had decided wisely!

He went into the living room. It was empty. On the table was a pot of tea and two bowls. He felt of the pot. It was cold. Everything was cold, he thought with a touch of irritation; this miserable rain! He poured a little of the cold tea into a bowl and rinsed it out and threw the rinsing onto the floor. He placed the pills in the center of the

hollow of the bowl. Then he poured in a little tea very carefully. Three black pills in an ounce of tea. He swallowed them and took another gulp of the cold tea.

Then he went into his room. It was dark and for once he had it to himself. His brothers had not yet returned from the shop. He went to the bed and took off his shoes. He lay down and turning his face to the wall, he pulled the quilt up over his shoulders and closed his eyes for sleep.

On the tile roof over his head the rain beat steadily down with a soft, soothing murmur. The long day slipped gently into night.

Work for Deaf Children

THE work being done at Chefoo, China, for deaf children is one of the most interesting special lines undertaken by the Presbyterian Church in that country. Children are sent to the school from all provinces, and only the capacity of the school limits the number who would come if there were room. The most moderate estimate of the known deaf of China puts their number at 400,000, and the opportunity which there would be to tell of Christianity to the children alone in this group is inestimable. As one of the annual



TWO YOUNG MEN OF CHINA

reports of the school indicates, "The deaf form the only class in the world who must have schools before they can understand anything of the Christian religion."

The Chefoo school for the deaf was started nearly forty years ago by Rev. and Mrs. Charles R. Mills, missionaries of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions. Mrs. Mills retired from the work in 1923, when she was honorably retired by the Board. Miss Anita E. Carter is now the principal, and under her leadership the work is going on unabated.

One particularly pitiful case last year was that of a little boy, only eight years old, who came to the school from the hospital. Because he could not hear, the little lad had been struck by a train and it had been necessary to amputate his leg. The surgeon who asked that he be taken into the Chefoo school said that the child would have to become a beggar if he could not be received into the school.

In addition to Miss Carter, there are ten native teachers and assistants in the school. The first girl to be graduated has just completed

five years of service as teacher of the younger children. Industrial training is given every child, and special effort made to prepare each for self-support. The Chinese Church is being slowly educated to the need of training its deaf children, but the financial support which the church has heretofore given the school was much less the past year—due in large part to the disturbed condition of the country and also to the closing down of so many hairnet factories since the fashion for bobbed hair has prevailed,