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Excerpt from a letter to Sir Horace Mann from Sir Horace Walpole, *September 26, 1781*

"All sublunary objects are but great and little by comparison.... Is anything more lean than the knowledge we attain by computing the size of a planet? If we could know more of a world than its size, would not size be the least part of our contemplation?...

"What is one's country but one's family on a large scale? What was the glory of immortal Rome but the family pride of some thousand families?"

Horace Walpole's Letters, Vol. 8, p. 13

I

Green Hills Farm,
Pennsylvania,
June, 1953

THIS MORNING I ROSE early, as is my habit, and as usual I went to the open window and looked out over the land that is to me the fairest I know. I see these hills and fields at dawn and dark, in sunshine and in moonlight, in summer green and winter snow, and yet there is always a new view before my eyes. Today, by the happy coincidence which seems the law of life, I looked at sunrise upon a scene so Chinese that did I not know I live on the other side of the globe, I might have believed it was from my childhood. A mist lay over the big pond under the weeping willows, a frail cloud, through which the water shone a silvered grey, and against this background stood a great white heron, profiled upon one stalk of leg. Centuries of Chinese artists have painted that scene, and here it was before my eyes, upon my land, as American a piece of earth as can be imagined, being now mine, but owned by generations of Americans, and first of all by Richard Penn, the brother of William Penn, who founded our state of Pennsylvania. Had I prayed Heaven, I could not have asked for a picture more suited to the mood for this day's work, which is to begin my book.

The reader is warned, however, that the story is incomplete, and, worse still, that it is told upon different levels and about different places and peoples, the whole held together merely by time, for this is the way my life has been lived and must be lived until I die. Geographically, my worlds are on opposite sides of the globe and for me, too, only the years of my life tie them together. There is yet another diversity and it is within myself. I am a creature instinctively domestic, but the age in which I am born, combined with whatever talents have made me a writer, have compelled me to live deeply, not only in home and family, but also in the lives of many peoples. But of my several worlds, let me begin

with the personal since that, in truth, is where we all begin. This book is not a complete autobiography. My private life has been uneventfully happy, except for a few incidents whose disaster I was able to accept, and a human being could not, I believe, have less than I to complain of against fate. A happy childhood, marriage in its time, love and home and children, friends, and more than enough success for a creature singularly without ambition and born with no competitive sense whatever—this is the story of my secret years.

The fortunate chance I have had, above all else, has been the age into which I am born. Never, or so it seems to me as I read history, has there been a more stirring and germinal period than the one I have seen passing before my conscious eyes. I might have grown up secure and secluded in the comfortable and pleasant small town of my ancestors, taking for granted the advantages of families accustomed to more than their share, perhaps, of comfort and pleasure. Instead I had as my parents two enterprising and idealistic young people who, at an early age and for reasons which still seem to me entirely unreasonable, felt impelled to leave their protesting and astonished relatives and travel halfway around the globe in order to take up life in China and there proclaim the advantages of their religion. To them the task seemed inevitable and satisfying and they were devoted to it for more than half a century, and this in spite of coming from no missionary stock. There was nothing in either family to produce two such Christian adventurers as my parents, and none of their children has continued the zealous mission. I can only believe that my parents reflected the spirit of their generation, which was of an America bright with the glory of a new nation, rising united from the ashes of war, and confident of power enough to "save" the world. Meantime they had no conception of the fact that they were in reality helping to light a revolutionary fire, the height of which we still have not seen, nor can foresee.

As a result of this early voyage of my young parents-to-be, I grew up on the Asian side of the globe instead of on the American side, although I was born, quite accidentally, in my own country. My young mother, who was only twenty-three years old when she went as a bride to China, had four children rather rapidly, and as rapidly lost three of them from tropical diseases which at that time no one understood how to prevent or to cure. She was distracted enough so that the doctors ordered her to be taken to her home in West Virginia for two years. It was in the last few months of this long rest that I was born, and thereby became an American citizen by birth as well as by two centuries of ancestry.

Had I been given the choice of place for my birth, I would have chosen exactly where I was born, my grandfather's large white house with its pillared double portico, set in a beautiful landscape of rich green plains and with the Allegheny mountains as a background. I was a welcome child, a circumstance conducive, I believe, to natural good nature and a tendency to optimism. At any rate, I had a happy beginning in a pleasant place, and at the age of three months, my mother's health being restored, I was transported across the seas to live and grow up in China. Thereafter Asia was the real, the actual world, and my own country became the dreamworld, fantastically beautiful, inhabited by a people I supposed entirely good, a land indeed from which all blessings flowed.

My parents, who were my sole source of information concerning this dreamworld as I came to the age of questions, certainly did not mean to tell me lies. Their own memories had not indeed been entirely pleasant. The war between North and South had shadowed their early years, four of my father's older brothers had fought on the Southern side, and had shared in the stinging defeat. The hardest blow of all was that an arbitrary line had divided their beloved Virginia and had left their ancestral homesteads in the new state, albeit only by a few miles. But they

were spared the worst hardships of the reconstruction period, and by the time they had finished their education, my father at Washington and Lee University and my mother at the then fashionable Bellewood Seminary in Kentucky, the discomforts of war were gone, if not forgotten. Moreover, both families were glad to see the end of slavery, a burden far too heavy to be carried by a people committed to the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, not to speak of the Christian religion.

In China, however, my parents conveniently forgot all the less admirable aspects of their country, and while I was a child they regaled me with memories of quiet village streets, large houses set far back in trees and lawns, decent folk walking to church on Sundays to worship God in beautiful old churches, law-abiding men and women, children who obeyed their parents and learned their lessons in school. Doctors cured the few sick folk, or sent them to wonderfully clean hospitals, and certainly no one had cholera or dysentery or typhus or died of bubonic plague. Neither were there lepers to be seen lounging along the streets, intimidating the pedestrians and shopkeepers, and beggars there were none. I am not to be blamed therefore for having grown up with illusions about my own country.

If America was for dreaming about, the world in which I lived was Asian. The actual earth was Chinese, but around China clustered a host of other nations and peoples, whose citizens I frequently saw and some of whom I knew well. Thus I learned about India very early indeed, and that was because our family physician was an Indian and so was his stout and kindly wife, although they spoke English and were members of an English mission and there was certainly some admixture of white blood in their veins, for India's blood does not run pure after hundreds of years of domination by white men. When in my insatiable thirst for stories I pressed these friends to tell me about their own childhoods, for I was a tiresome child for questions, the tales they

told were of India, and listening, I shared their lives in a torrid land, where whole populations sat and waited, almost fainting, for the rains. I became acquainted with fabulous snakes and with apes swinging in distant trees. I learned of other gods, I heard a language different from the two I spoke as my own, and early I knew the woes of India and what her people dreamed.

And high on the hillside across the valley above which we lived in our low brick house, a Japanese lady lived with her English husband, and from her I learned of Japan, until I went there myself time and again, first with my parents and then later alone, and thereafter so often that Japan became my third country. Among our friends were Asians, too, from the Philippines and Siam, from Indonesia and Burma and Korea, and thus early I conceived a world wherein China was the center, and around us were these other peoples, all friendly, all interesting and ready to be visited.

To the dreamworld of the West, however, belonged the English friends we had, who lived behind the barred gates of the British Concession in the port city of Chinkiang on the great Yangtse River, and among them were also a few French and Italian families. But the French and Italians I really knew well were the Catholic priests who came to visit us sometimes, and three or four nuns who had an orphanage for children abandoned on the streets or the hillsides but still alive. I could imagine India, or Java, but Italy I could not, nor France, and scarcely England.

For in the secret thoughts of the Chinese, thoughts often confided to me by my Chinese playmates who caught them from the talk of their elders, these westerners were "foreigners," as my playmates called them and as I thought of them, too, and they were potential enemies. "Foreigners" had done evil things in Asia —not the Americans, my small and even then tactful friends declared, for Americans, they said, were "good." They had taken no land from Asian countries, and they sent food in famine time. I accepted the distinction and felt no part with other Western

peoples of Europe, whom at that time I considered also my enemies. Our version of the universal game of cops and robbers in those days was the endless war of Chinese and all good Asian allies against the imperial powers of the West, and as the sole American in the game, it was my duty to come forward at the height of battle and provide food and succor for the ever-victorious Chinese. Thus half a century ago did the children of Asia play at the game of later reality, and it was quite by chance that a small yellow-haired American represented her country among them.

Halfway between the two worlds, however, were the children of my Chinese adopted sister. Years before I was born, when my parents had lived in an interior Chinese town on the Grand Canal, my mother was called one night to the house of a Chinese lady who was dying. My mother would never tell me her name, but I knew that she was the first wife of the head of an old and wealthy Chinese family. My father had become acquainted with the head of this family through their mutual scholarly interests and had tried to influence him to be a Christian. In the course of this endeavor, he had asked my mother to call upon his friend's wife, which she did, and the lady was attracted to my mother, and my mother to her, so that when a sudden illness became obviously mortal for the lady, she called my mother to her bedside and asked her to take her small daughter, who she feared would suffer if left alone with the concubines. With the father's consent the child was given to my mother for her own and my parents adopted her. Her name was Ts'ai Yün, or Beautiful Cloud, and I remember her as a lovely gentle young woman with a soft pretty face. She was already married by the time I was born, and had begun to bear the large family of girls who became such an embarrassment for her. My mother had followed the Chinese tradition for Beautiful Cloud, and when she had finished her education in the mission school for girls, my mother betrothed her to a handsome and also good young man who was the son of my father's assistant pastor. It was

a happy marriage and a suitable one, the young man followed in his father's footsteps and became a pillar of the Church in a mild and agreeable way, and the only embarrassment was the regularity with which the girl babies appeared in their home. A first girl they accepted with welcome, a second one a year later with equanimity, a third with gravity, a fourth with consternation. By the time the sixth one came the situation was critical. People were asking, how is it that Christians have nothing but girls? Inasmuch as the matter had become a subject of prayer for the church members after the third girl, the next question was, how is it that our prayers are not heard? Actual doubt of the foreign god began to arise and my father, who had tried to take no notice, exclaimed "Oh, pshaw" several times a day, as was his habit when perplexed. We were too humorous a family not to see the absurdity in the situation and yet we were quite aware of its seriousness. No one suffered more than my pretty adopted sister, who felt that all was her fault, and never was her husband's goodness more manifest than when he refused to allow her to take the blame. He was at least an example of Christian fortitude, as my father remarked.

As for me, I loved the children and enjoyed them as much as sisters. The eldest two were nearly my age and we had wonderful playtimes when they came to visit us or we went to visit them in their home some miles away. I have told this story for my American children in a little book, *The Chinese Children Next Door*, and those who have read that book will remember that there was a happy ending, for after six girls, my distracted Chinese sister did give birth to a fine boy. This ended the family. Neither she nor her husband dared to risk an eighth child who might be a girl again. It gives me pleasure to remember that I was told by an Indian friend that Jawaharlal Nehru once read my little book aloud to Mahatma Gandhi, who was lying ill at the time, and it made him laugh very much, because it was the sort of thing that might have happened in India, too.

It was a happy world for a child, even for a white child, and in spite of lepers and beggars and occasional famines, and our ruler, if you please, was a proud old woman in Peking, the Empress Dowager, or as her own people called her, The Venerable Ancestor, and I supposed that she was my Venerable Ancestor, too. When I think of that world of my early childhood, I remember the Empress Dowager as the central figure, and one as familiar to me as though I had seen her myself. Everybody knew how she looked, and any little Chinese girl, in our games, was proud to represent her and for a throne to sit upon the tussock of one of the tall pointed earthen graves that dotted our hillside.

I did not realize, then, that the Empress was not Chinese, but Manchu. She had black hair and eyes and the lovely cream-pale skin of the northern people. She was not tall, but she wore embroidered satin shoes set high on padded soles in the Manchu fashion, and her shining black hair was worn high on her head so that actually she looked tall. When she sat on the Peacock Throne, its dais raised several steps above the tiled floor of the Throne Room of the yellow-roofed Imperial Palace in The Forbidden City in Peking, everybody said she looked as tall as a man. But the height was more than physical. She was proud and wilful and her eyes could make anyone tremble. She was dangerous, we all knew that. The meekest little brother among us had to play the part of the young Emperor in our games, so that the Empress could terrify him and lock him up in prison.

I cannot remember when I first learned that the Empress Dowager was not Chinese, and that many Chinese thought of the dynasty as alien. I knew the Manchus, for every important city had a special reservation for them and we had one in Chinkiang, too. It was on the edge of the city and a high wall surrounded all the Manchu houses. At the front gate stood Chinese guards, and no one was allowed to come in without their permission. It was not imprisonment, supposedly, but simply that all Manchus needed

special protection because they were related to the royal house and so were part of officialdom. Actually it was a luxurious imprisonment, for this was the Chinese way of conquering enemies. When the Manchu invasion of 1644 was successful in a military sense—and almost any people could invade China successfully, it seemed, in a military sense—China did not resist. The people were apparently passive, mildly curious, and even courteous to their conquerors. The real struggle came afterwards, but so subtly that the conquerors never knew they were being conquered. The technique of victory was that as soon as the invaders laid down their arms the philosophical but intensely practical Chinese persuaded them to move into palaces and begin to enjoy themselves. The more the new rulers ate and drank, the better pleased the Chinese were, and if they also learned to enjoy gambling and opium and many wives, so much the better. One would have thought that the Chinese were delighted to be invaded and conquered. On the pretext of increased comfort, the Manchus were persuaded to live in a specially pleasant part of any city, and to be protected by special guards against rebellious citizens. This meant they were segregated and since they were encouraged to do no work, the actual and tedious details of government were soon performed by Chinese, ostensibly for them. The result of this life of idleness and luxury was that the Manchus gradually became effete while the Chinese administered the government. The Manchus were like pet cats and the Chinese kept them so, knowing that when the degeneration was complete, a Chinese revolutionary would overthrow the rotten structure. Revolution was in the Chinese tradition and every dynasty was overthrown, if not by foreign invasion, then by native revolution.

As a child, of course I did not know how nearly the end had come for the Manchus. Until I was eight I did not know. Those early years were carefree ones for me and for my little Chinese playmates. Looking back, it seems an idyl of happiness. I had many

people to love me. My parents, though busy, were always kind and ready to heed me, the Chinese servants were tenderly indulgent and spoiled me dangerously, always taking my side against discipline. Did my mother set me a task as a much-needed punishment, I had only to look sorrowful and my Chinese amah would secretly perform the task, or if it had to do with outdoors, then the gardener or the second boy would do it, and the cook himself was not above helping me in a pinch. My mother discovered them eventually, and tried to show them that they were not really helping me, and indeed were preventing me from learning the proper lessons of self-discipline, to which their reply was bewilderment and murmurings that I was only a child and must not be expected to know everything at once. Discipline, in their estimation, was the expression of adult anger and the child must as a matter of course be protected, since anger was merely a sort of dangerous seizure. My mother gave up persuasion and learned to set me tasks that the loving Chinese could not perform for me, such as looking up words in the English dictionary and writing down their meanings. And then how the agitated Chinese tried to help anyway, and comforted me in the cruel labor by smuggling in sweetmeats, or rewarding me with a toy that one of them rushed out to buy on the market place, a pottery doll dressed in bright robes of paper, or a bamboo whistle or a sugar tiger stuck on the end of a stick!

Once, before I was eight, my father whipped me for telling a lie, and horror spread through the servants' quarters and even among the neighbors. I had broken the gardener's hoe and then said that I had not, and in his grief, in order to stave off the whipping, the gardener swore that it was he who had done it. My father had seen the event, however, and the whipping was swift and hard and the gardener stood weeping in the doorway with peanut candy bulging in his pocket. Such foods were forbidden, for the germs of tropical diseases were hidden in them, but they were

fed to me secretly and I ate them without qualms because the Chinese did, and built up a like immunity, I suppose, for I was the healthiest child imaginable, and suffered from none of the ills which seemed to beset the average white child. Nor did I consciously deceive my parents, I think, for I believed what they said about white people, who seemed to die or at least to fall ill with amazing ease. But I did not consider myself a white person in those days. Even though I knew I was not altogether Chinese, still I was Chinese enough to eat sweets from the market place with impunity.

Thus I grew up in a double world, the small white clean Presbyterian American world of my parents and the big loving merry not-too-clean Chinese world, and there was no communication between them. When I was in the Chinese world I was Chinese, I spoke Chinese and behaved as a Chinese and ate as the Chinese did, and I shared their thoughts and feelings. When I was in the American world, I shut the door between.

In the Chinese world, it is true, we often discussed the Americans. My parents fortunately were well beloved by the Chinese, and except for a few unfortunate facts, such as my father's absurdly large feet and immense height, and my mother's quick temper, I had nothing to be ashamed of. My father was revered as a man of kindness. But other white people did not always fare so well, and their characters were sometimes dissected with mirth and thoroughness. I knew what no other Americans knew about the white people and their secret lives. I knew that a certain man kept a secret whiskey bottle in his closet, and that a certain woman would not sleep with her husband. I knew that an old gentleman, actually fastidious, suffered monstrously from indigestion, and that another, a lonely young man, tried to make love to any woman who would allow it, even to the gateman's wife. Nothing was private in the Chinese world, nothing could be kept secret, the very word for secret also meant unlawful. It was a

richly human world, steeped in humor and pathos, for more often than not when the laughter was over, some kindly old Chinese would say tolerantly, "But these Christians are good, nevertheless. They do their best and we must not blame them for what they do not know. After all, they were not born Chinese. Heaven did not ordain."

I had no direct contact with the Empress Dowager, of course, however real she seemed. She lived far away in Peking and I was an American child living outside a vast old city some two hundred miles from the mouth of the Yangtse River. Shanghai was the only exit to my Western world. Through that motley place foreigners came and went, and brigands grown rich, and retired war lords lived there under British or French protection. But the whole of China behind that gate to the Pacific Ocean was remote indeed from Western ways, and it was this world that the Empress governed. She was the more fascinating to me because she had not been born a queen, but a commoner. Her father had been a small military official and the family was almost poor. She had worked hard as a child, the eldest daughter compelled to take care of younger children. Yet she had one advantage as a Manchu, and one that I had, too, as an American. Her feet were never bound as the Chinese then bound the feet of their girls, and she grew up with a free and imperious air. When she was sixteen she was a beauty but even had she not been she would have been compelled, as Manchu girls usually were, to go to the Emperor's palace and stay for the inspection period. If she were chosen as a possible royal concubine, then she would leave her home and family and live the rest of her days in The Forbidden City, a concubine who could be claimed by her lord, or who might never be so claimed. It was a tragic immolation if she were not noticed, but this girl was noticed, and she became the Emperor's concubine and bore him a son. And then because she was born to power she moved toward it by the very strength of her own nature until she ruled the greatest

kingdom in the world, The Middle Kingdom, which the West called China. It was a romantic success story and the Chinese admired the woman for it and forgave her many sins that she later committed even against them, and which in the end brought the walls of empire crashing down.

We did not dream of such disaster. When I think of that first world I ever knew, it was all peace. I see a circle of green hills and purple mountains beyond. Between the green hills were the greener valleys, tilled to the last inch by farmers of four thousand years. Ponds full of fish lay outside the gates of farmhouses, and every family had a pig and some hens and a cock and a water buffalo. Beggars were on the city streets, but unless there were refugees from a famine in the north, those beggars were as professional as the city thieves. They were organized under a beggar king and from all shopkeepers they exacted a certain alms, if not daily then regularly, and did any shopkeeper fail to pay the usual sum, the most hideous of the lepers and the deformed were stationed outside his doors to scare away his customers. But to be a beggar was to accept a lowly life, unless one went still lower and became a professional soldier, lower because soldiers destroy and consume and do not produce. We had no beggars in the hills and the villages, but we did have soldiers. There was an earth-walled fort on top of one of the hills near our house, and the terror of my life was that I might meet a soldier on the road to the Chinese girls' school where I went every day. If I saw one of those lazy fellows lounging along the road in his yellow uniform I ran more fleetly than any deer into the big clanging gate of our compound.

"What is the matter?" my mother inquired one afternoon.

"A soldier!" I gasped.

"So what of that?" she asked too innocently.

I could not explain. She belonged to the little white world and she could not understand. But in my other world I had been taught that a soldier is not a man, in the civilized sense of the noble word.

He is separated from the laws of life and home, and it is well for a girl child to run fast if he comes near.

"True," old Madame Shen said one day when she was instructing me with her granddaughters, "not every soldier is a devil, but it is hard for him not to be. He has a devilish trade."

Madame Shen was a neighbor, a matriarch in her own domain as much as the Empress Dowager was in the palaces of Peking. Her granddaughters were my schoolmates, for the Shen family was enlightened and there was already talk of not binding the feet of their youngest girls. The older girls had bound feet, and while I did not envy the pains and aches of that dire process whereby the toes of each foot were turned under into the sole and the heel and the ball of the foot brought together under the arch, still there were times in those early days when I wondered if I were jeopardizing my chances for a good husband by having what would be called big feet, that is, unbound feet. The older girls of the Shen family would not think of unbinding their feet, although my mother did some practical missionary work on the subject. When one of them was later sent to board in a missionary school, she was compelled to loose the foot bandages, but she confided to me that every night she bound them tight again. In that world it was important to be a woman and if possible a beautiful woman, and small feet were a beauty that any woman could have, whatever her face.

The Empress in Peking was careful never to interfere with the customs of the Chinese she ruled and when once a Manchu Princess returned from abroad in Western dress, she asked her to show her what she wore to make her stout figure so narrow at the waist. The Princess turned to her own daughter, a slender girl in a Parisian gown, and said, "Daughter, take off your garments and show Her Majesty your corset."

The young Princess obeyed and the old Empress surveyed the grim garment of steel and heavy cloth.

"Of the two tortures," she observed, "it is easier to bear the

Chinese one."

It was perhaps because the Manchu rulers were always careful not to disturb the customs of the Chinese that their dynasty lived longer than it might have otherwise. Certainly we were scarcely conscious of being ruled at all. There was a magistrate in each county seat who was understood to be a representative of the Viceroy and at the head of each province was the Viceroy, the representative of the Throne in Peking, the capital of the nation, but the main duty of these officials was to see that every family continued free to live its life, interfering only when some injustice was done. I never saw a policeman in that early world of China, and indeed, saw none until I went to Shanghai and in the British Concession stared at the dark Sikhs, imported from India, their heads wrapped in intricate and brilliant turbans, or in the French Concession at the trimly uniformed Annamese policemen. I used to wonder why they stood there in the streets obstructing the traffic and waving clubs at people.

In the world of our hills and valleys and even in the city we needed no police. Each family maintained firm discipline over every member of the group, and if a crime was committed the family elders sat in conference and decided the punishment, which sometimes was even death. For the honor of the family the young were taught how to behave, and though they were treated with the utmost leniency until they were seven or eight years old, after that they learned to respect the code of human relationships so clearly set forth by Confucius.

Yes, Chinese children were alarmingly spoiled when they were small, my Western parents thought. No one stopped tantrums or wilfulness and a baby was picked up whenever he cried, and indeed he was carried by somebody or other most of the time. Babies ate what they pleased and when they pleased, and little children led a heavenly life. The Chinese believed that it was important to allow a child to cry his fill and vent all his tempers

and humors while he was small, for if these were restrained and suppressed by force or fright, then anger entered into the blood and poisoned the heart, and would surely come forth later to make adult trouble. It was a knowledge as ancient as a thousand years, and yet something of the same philosophy is now considered the most modern in the Western world in which I live today.

Right or wrong, these spoiled children emerged like butterflies from cocoons at about the age of seven or eight, amazingly adult and sweet-tempered and self-disciplined. They were able by then to hear reason and to guide themselves in the accepted ways. Since they had not been disciplined too soon, when they reached the age of learning they progressed with great rapidity. The old Chinese, like the most modern of the Western schools of child psychology, believed that there is an age for learning each law of life, and to teach a child too young was simply to wear out the teacher and frustrate the child. As an example, for the greater convenience of both child and parents, little children went naked in summer and in winter had their trousers bisected, so that when nature compelled all a tiny creature needed to do was to squat. Thus was he spared the nagging of a mother who wanted to be relieved of diaper washing. As for the babies, they were simply held outside the door at regular intervals and encouraged by a soft musical whistling to do their duty if possible. It was a delightful and lenient world in which a child could live his own life, with many people to love him tolerantly and demand nothing. Instead of the hard pressed father and mother of the Western child, the children of my early world had grandparents, innumerable aunts, uncles and cousins and servants to love them and indulge them.

If the child were a boy, when he reached the age of seven still another person became important in his life. This was his schoolteacher. In that Chinese world the teacher held the place next to parents for the years of childhood and adolescence. His was

the responsibility, not only for the mental education of the child, but for his moral welfare, too. Education was not merely for reading and writing and arithmetic, not only for history and literature and music, but also for learning self-discipline and proper conduct, and proper conduct meant the perfecting and the practice of how to behave to all other persons in their various stations and relationships. The fruit of such education was inner security. A child learned in the home how to conduct himself toward the different generations of grandparents and parents, elder and younger uncles and aunts, elder and younger cousins and brothers and sisters and servants, and in school he learned how to conduct himself toward teacher and friends and officials and neighbors and acquaintances. Being so taught, the youth was never ill at ease, never uncertain of how to behave or of how to speak to anyone. The essential rules were simple and clarified by the usage of centuries, and so the growing personality was poised and calm.

The very houses were ordered in the same fashion. We young persons knew where to sit when we came into a room. We did not take the seats of our elders until we ourselves became the elders. With each year we knew that we would be given certain privileges, and if we claimed these too soon we were the losers, in the respect and estimation of other people. We were patient, therefore, knowing that time would bring us all things. How much easier it was for me to live in that world where I knew exactly what to do without being told or scolded than it is now for my children to live in my present world! How confusing for my American children not to know, for example, whether an adult wants to be called by his first name, or by his last! I know a family where the children call their parents by their first names, and I feel the confusion in those children's hearts. The relationships are not clear and therefore they do not know where they belong in the generations. They know they are not adults, they know that the adults are not

children, yet the lines are not defined as they should be, and children lose security thereby.

In my early world we were all taught not to sit until our elders sat, not to eat until they had eaten, not to drink tea until their bowls were lifted. If there were not enough chairs we stood, and when an elder spoke to us, however playfully, we answered with the proper title. Did we feel oppressed? I am sure we did not, nor did that word occur to us. We knew where we were, and we knew, too, that someday we would be elders.

And school! We all loved school and knew it was a privilege, especially for girls, to go to school. Most boys and certainly most girls could never go to school. The Old Empress favored girls' schools in her latter years, but she said that she feared to increase the taxes to an amount necessary for public schools. Nevertheless, after she heard of Western schools, she sent out an edict commending the idea of education for girls as well as boys, and many private schools were opened as a consequence. I wonder sometimes nowadays, when I see reluctant children forced to school, whether compulsory education really educates. In my early world it was a priceless opportunity to go to school, and to say that one did go was to declare himself a member of the aristocracy of the educated.

For our class consciousness in that Chinese world was entirely based upon education, and the object of education was not only mental accomplishment but moral character. Our teachers made us understand and indeed believe that a well-educated person was well-bred and had moral integrity as a matter of course. Much was forgiven the ignorant and the illiterate, but nothing evil or foolish was forgiven the educated man or woman, who was supposed to be a superior person in the old Confucian sense of the princely being. Plato once taught the same lesson.

Since education insisted upon moral as well as intellectual attainments, the governors of the country were chosen from

among the educated, and the old Imperial Examinations were the narrow gate through which all educated persons must pass if they wished to get the good jobs of the government. The material of the examinations was excellent test material, involving memory as well as thought, and a knowledge of history, literature and poetry was necessary. Those who passed with the highest marks were chosen for government administration, and since the best minds were naturally the most successful, it was inevitable that superior men became the actual rulers of the people. The hit-or-miss methods of modern times would never have been accepted in that old ordered world. It was from the Chinese Imperial Examinations that the English adopted their own Civil Service Examinations, and later the United States based our own Civil Service upon the English system.

I am glad that my first years were in an ordered world, for though it passed, still the memory holds of what it means to a child to live in such a world, where adults were calm and confident and where children knew the boundaries beyond which they could not go and yet within which they lived secure. My parents had their work of teaching and preaching their religion, and this kept them busy and happy and out of their child's way. I had lessons to do, the lessons of my own country which could not be taught in a Chinese school, American history and literature, the history and literature of England and Europe and of ancient Greece and Rome, and I confess those countries seemed to have little to do with the world in which I lived. But a solitary child learns lessons quickly and most of my day was free for play and dreaming.

How sorry I feel nowadays for the overcrowded lives of my own children, whose every hour is filled with school and sport and social events of various kinds! They have no chance to know the delight of long days empty except for what one puts into them, where there is nothing to do except what one wants to do. Then the imagination grows like the tree of life, enchanting the air. No

wonder I was a happy child, and that my parents were happy, too. We met briefly, we smiled and made communication about necessary matters of food and clothing and the small tasks of my day. My mother bade me hold my shoulders straight, and my father reminded me at table to hold my knife and fork as he did. Upon this subject of the knife and fork my mind was kept divided, for my mother ate her food as Americans do, cutting her meat and then putting down the knife to take up her fork, but my father ate as English people do, holding the fork in his left hand and the knife in his right, and piling the chopped food against his fork. Each gave me directions and sometimes I obeyed one and sometimes the other, wondering at first, and then accepting, as children do, the peculiarities of parents and letting chance decide each meal. Meanwhile my private choice was chopsticks.

My early memories are not of parents, however, but of places. Thus our big whitewashed brick bungalow, encircled by deep arched verandas for coolness, was honeycombed with places that I loved. Under the verandas the beaten earth was cool and dry, and I had my haunts there. The gardener made a stove for me from a large Standard Oil tin with one side cut away. He lined the three sides with mud mixed with lime and then set into it a coarse iron grating. When I lit a fire beneath this and put in charcoal I could really cook, and of course I cooked the easy Chinese dishes I liked best and that my amah taught me. I had a few dolls but my "children" were the small folk of the servants' quarters or the neighbors', and we had wonderful hours of play, unsupervised by adults, all of whom were fortunately too busy to pay us heed. I remember going to bed at night replete with solid satisfaction because the day had been so packed with pleasurable play.

Under those verandas, too, I kept my pet pheasants and there I watched the tiny thimbles of tawny down pick their way out from the pale brown eggs, and there I smoked my first corn silk cigarette, an unknown sin in my world, but introduced to me by

the red-haired small son of a visiting missionary who had lately returned from America.

"All the kids smoke in America," the rascal said and so we smoked in the latticed cellars while our elders talked theology upstairs. It was not exciting enough for me, however, for in my other world any child could take a puff from a Chinese grandparent's water pipe and adults only laughed when children choked on the raw Chinese tobacco smoke. Opium I knew I must never taste, even though sometimes the parents of my best friend might administer it for an ache in a small stomach, for opium was an evil. My parents spent weary hours trying to help some addict break the chain that bound him and I feared the sweet and sickish stuff, imagining, as children do, that if once I tasted it I would grow thin and yellow, like the father of my next door playmate, and never be myself again.

There was more than that to opium. Our city, which lay beyond the fields and ponds and down by the river's edge, had once been captured in July, 1842, by the British during the Opium Wars, when China had tried to stop the entrance of opium from India under the English flag and had failed. The Manchu general, Hai Ling, was in charge of the defense of our city in those years, and feeling himself disgraced by defeat he retired into his house and set it on fire and so perished. The English, incensed at the loss of revenue, had insisted on their right to trade, maintaining that it was not they who had introduced the opium habit to the Chinese, that opium was grown on Chinese soil and greedy Chinese traders merely wanted all the income for themselves. Probably this was partly true, for nothing in this life, it seems, is simon-pure, and the hearts of men are always mixed. Yet there were many Chinese who were not traders and who honestly enough were frightened at the tremendous increase of opium-smoking among their people, and it was also true that most of the opium, especially the cheaper kind, did come from India, and not only under the English flag, but also

under the Dutch and the American flags. My vigorous parents sided entirely with the Chinese and did their doughty best to help many a man and woman to break the opium habit.

The use of opium, it may here be remarked, was not native to China. It was first brought in by Arab traders during the Middle Ages, and was then introduced as a drug beneficial in diarrhea and intestinal diseases. The Chinese did not begin smoking opium until the Portuguese traders taught them to do so in the seventeenth century when it became a fashionable pastime for officials and rich people. Most Chinese, even in my childhood, considered it a foreign custom, and indeed their name for opium was *yang yien*, or "foreign smoke." The feelings of the average Chinese can therefore be understood the better when a substantial part of the English trade was in opium, grown in India for markets developed in China.

The Chinese lost the Opium Wars, and after each loss the price was heavy. Treaty ports were yielded, the rights of trade and commerce were demanded and given, and high indemnities had to be paid. The story can be read in any good history of China, and I will not retell it here, except as it influenced my world. Chinkiang, my home city, had been deeply affected by the wars, although it was still an important city, for it stood at the junction of the Yangtse River and the Grand Canal, and so was in a key position for the transmitting of tax money and produce to Peking. An early writer, J. Banow, in his book, *Travels in China*, says of my Chinese home town in 1797: "The multitude of ships of war, of burden and of pleasure, some gliding down the stream, others sailing against it; some moving by oars, and others lying at anchor; the banks on either side covered with towns and houses as far as the eye could reach; as presenting a prospect more varied and cheerful than any that had hitherto occurred. Nor was the canal on the other side less lively. For two whole days we were continually passing among fleets of vessels of different construction and dimensions."

In my time, however, Chinkiang was a treaty port and the stretch of land along the river's edge was a British Concession. High walls surrounded it, broken by two great iron gates that were always locked at night. Within the boundaries lived the British Consul, his vast house set high on a wooded hill, and all the English and Americans and other foreigners, except for a few missionary families who preferred to live among the Chinese. My parents were among these. They were constitutionally unable to preach what they did not practice, and the discrepancy between a gospel of love and brotherhood and the results of the Opium Wars was too much for them. They could not live happily behind the high walls and the iron gates, although the streets there were clean and shaded by trees and beggars were not allowed. Happy for me that I had such parents, for instead of the narrow and conventional life of the white man in Asia, I lived with the Chinese people and spoke their tongue before I spoke my own, and their children were my first friends.

Did I not see sights which children should not see and hear talk not fit for children's ears? If I did, I cannot remember. I saw poor and starving people in a famine year, but my parents bade me help them in relief, and I learned early that trouble and suffering can always be relieved if there is the will to do it, and in that knowledge I have found escape from despair throughout my life. Often I saw lepers, their flesh eaten away from their bones, and I saw dead children lying on the hillsides, and wild dogs gnawing at their flesh, and I saw rascals enough and heard rich cursing when men and women quarreled. I cannot remember anything evil from these sights and sounds. The dead taught me not to fear them, and my heart was only made more tender while I chased the dogs away as best I could. It is better to learn early of the inevitable depths, for then sorrow and death take their proper place in life, and one is not afraid.

And how much joy I saw and shared in! Our Chinese friends

took me into their homes and lives, and that wonderful simplicity which is the result of long living mellowed all their relationships with me. The kindliness of servants was warmth at home, and so was the friendliness of our Chinese neighbors. Their laughing curiosity, their unabashed ignorance of our Western ways, their pleasure in seeing our house and what we ate and how we dressed were all part of the day's amusement. If my kind was different from theirs, I never felt it so, and I did not discern in them the slightest dislike of what we were.

For much of this I must thank my parents who in their quiet way made no difference between peoples. We were the only missionary family I knew in those days who welcomed Chinese guests to spend the night in our guest room and eat at the table with us. I am sure this was partly because my parents were themselves cultivated persons and drew to them Chinese of like nature and background. They disliked a crude and ignorant Chinese as much as they disliked such a person were he white, or even American, and thus early we learned by their example to judge a man or woman by character and intelligence rather than by race or sect. Such values held, and they were natural to the Chinese, too.

How shall I conjure again those childhood days? I rose early in the morning because my father demanded it. He got up at five o'clock and when he had bathed and dressed he prayed for an hour in his study. He expected then to find the family waiting for him at the breakfast table. If any one were not there he would not seat himself at the end of our oval teakwood dining table, that piece of furniture imperishable in my memory. There he stood, tall and immovable, his blue eyes gazing across the room at the landscape beyond the high windows. When a small girl hurried through the door and slipped panting into her chair he sat down, and with him all of us. He then asked grace, not carelessly gabbling, but with a moment's preceding silence. In a solemn voice peculiar to his

prayers, he asked divine blessing and always that this food might strengthen us to do God's will.

The food itself was simple but it seems to me it was always good. In the morning except in the summer we had oranges, the beautiful sweet oranges that were brought by ship and bearer from Fukien, where such oranges grow as I have never seen elsewhere, although I have seen even the orange groves of California. For we had a great variety of oranges. There were tight-skinned Canton oranges for the winter, and there were a dozen varieties of mandarin oranges or tangerines and there were large loose-skinned oranges, but the best of all were the honey oranges, the *mi chü*, which came in the season of the Chinese New Year in late January or February, and were often sent to us as New Year's gifts. The skin peeled from them easily, and inside the sections parted at a touch, each so full of sweet juice and fine fragrant pulp that to eat this fruit was one of my great pleasures. There was always a plate of oranges on the sideboard, I remember, during their long season, and we ate them when we liked, sucking them if the skins were tight.

When the oranges were gone we had loquats, those bright yellow balls of delicate flesh deep about the brown stones within, and then came apricots, not just one variety but several, and perhaps fresh lichees, imported from the South, and sometimes tree strawberries in their brief season. When the peaches ripened we were well into summer. The earliest peaches were the blood-red ones, enormous and slightly tart, and then came yellow ones and the sweet flat ones, and finally the huge white peaches that were best of all. My mother canned them in the American fashion, buying her jars from Montgomery Ward and Sears Roebuck. Of course we had bananas and pineapples and melons of many kinds, watermelons, red, white and yellow, and little sweet golden muskmelons. Melons were summer fruits and we ate them freely but never if they had been cut in the streets, for we knew that flies

were deadly enemies, carrying dysentery and cholera and typhoid in their tiny claws. Years later it took me a while to endure the sight of flies in my own country, for somehow I had not expected to see them here, too. And let me not forget the many varieties of persimmons that were ready to eat in the late autumn. The best of them, the big golden seedless ones, came from the North where they were ripened in the warm ash of charcoal ovens, but I liked very well, too, our small scarlet seeded ones, filled with sweet juice. From Peking came also the dried persimmons, dusty with powdered sugar, and as big and flat as pancakes.

After the fruit at breakfast we always had a special sort of porridge invented by my father. It was made of whole wheat and the servants ground it at home on a Chinese stone quern. I hear a good deal nowadays from dietitians about the superiority of slowly ground grains, but I learned about it long ago from the Chinese. All the grain there was ground by hand on stone querns, and the breads were delicious. Our porridge was delicious, too. My mother roasted the cleanly washed wheat slightly, before it was ground, and when the porridge was cooked by a long slow process it had a toasted flavor. We ate it with sugar and white buffalo cream, richer than cows' cream. It made a nourishing dish, and it was followed by eggs, and hot rolls or hot biscuits, for my family came from the American South and seldom ate their bread cold. Coffee for grownups was inevitable, but my mother got her coffee beans whole from Java and ground them in a little square wooden mill with an iron handle. I drank water, boiled and cool.

Breakfasts were always solid and American, for my parents worked hard and expected their children to do so, but the other two meals were less hearty. To these meals I was indifferent and usually ate first within the servants' quarters, to the consternation of my mother, who was astonished at my frequent lack of appetite without apparently ever guessing its cause. The servants' food was plain but delicious. Indeed the diet of the poor in China was

remarkable for its flavor, if not for the variety which richer people had. Even their breakfast I liked much better than my own. In our region it was rice gruel served very hot, with a few small dishes of salt fish, salted dried turnips and pickled mustard greens, and an egg, now and then, hard-boiled and cut into eighths. The servants' midday meal was the best, and that one I ate heartily enough and as often as I dared. It was rice, cooked dry and light, a bowl of soup of some sort, another bowl with Chinese cabbage and fresh white bean curd, and still another with a bit of meat or fowl. We needed no dessert, for fruits and sweets were considered between-meal dainties. At night I supped alone with my amah, and in secret, well before our own family night meal. We ate the leftovers from noon or we drank a soup made from the browned rice at the bottom of the big rice pot.

Years later when I went to North China to live, but that was in another world, I did not eat rice but wheaten breads with vegetables and infrequent bits of meat. Feather-like twisted crullers, salt and not sweet, and tea made breakfast, with dates and persimmons for fruits, or roasted bread, paper-thin and a foot in diameter, wrapped around chopped garlic. For the second meal of the day, since in North China people eat only two meals a day except in the harvest season, we ate noodles or bread roasted against coal embers and dotted with sesame seeds, or steamed bread-rolls filled with chopped meat and garlic, or boiled dumplings, very small and dainty and filled with bits of meat and fresh ginger, or with chopped spinach and bean vermicelli. I am never in the least homesick for past worlds, for I live in the present, yet I come nearest to nostalgia when I think of the variety of Chinese food. Each province had its own fruits and vegetables and dishes, and every city was famous for some dish or other, and every restaurant had its specialty and every family its private recipes, and no one thought of food and cooking with anything except lyric pleasure.

The other evening, sitting with Chinese friends here upon my own terrace in Pennsylvania, we remembered together a few of the most famous dishes of our childhood world—the Yellow River fish soup so deliciously cooked in Ching-chow, the steamed shad of West Lake, the cured fish and beef of Chang-sha, the plum flower fragrant salted fish of Chao-chow, the steamed crabs of Soochow, the sweet and sour fish of Peking, and the dried shrimps of Tung-ting Lake.

And of wines, the best, we agreed, was the Shao-hsing wine of Chekiang, and then the Mao-tai wine of Kweichow and the distilled Fen-chow liquor of Shansi. And of teas the green Lung-ching tea of Chekiang was our favorite, but also the Pu-êrh tea of Yünnan, plucked from the mountain named P'u-êrh, and the Chi-men red tea, and the Lin-an green tea of Anking or the jasmine and the Iron Lo-han tea of Foochow and the Hangchow chrysanthemum tea.

As for fruits and vegetables, there are so many that only a very few could be mentioned. We spoke of the oranges of Hsin-hui, in Kwangtung, the pumelos of Sha-tien, in Kiangsi, the taro of Li-pu, the red and white dates of Tê-chow in Shangtung, the Chefoo apples and T'angshan pears, the watermelons and grapes of Sinkiang, the Shanghai muskmelons and the Peking persimmons, the kumquat oranges of Foochow, and the olives of Kwangtung province, the bamboo shoots and mushrooms of South Hunan, and the Kalgan mushrooms, Ho-p'u lichee nuts and Nanking lotus root.

But other foods cannot be altogether forgotten, as for example, Techow smoked chicken, Canton steamed young pigeon, Nanking salted duck, Peking roast duck, Canton's one-chicken-three-tastes, Fuchow hash, King-hua ham, Szechuan's pickled salted greens, arrowroot from West Lake, a Peking summer drink made from sour prunes, mushroom oil from South Hunan, rice flour from Kwei-lin, bean curd and sauce from Anking in Anhwei province.

And we stopped there only because one must not go on

forever.

The gala days were the days when we were invited to wedding and birthday feasts, and then the menu included a score and more of different dishes, each perfected by centuries of gourmets. For Chinese are always gourmets. The appearance of a dish, its texture and its flavor, are subjects for endless talk and comparison. A rich man will pay his cook a prince's salary, and yet he will humbly heed the criticisms of his friends concerning a dish set before them, for in China cooking is pure art in its most fundamental and satisfying form, and when a dish is criticized by those who know all that it should be, none can take offense, since there is nothing personal in criticizing an art.

One item of significance—the best dishes were always seasonal as well as local. I am a great believer in the seasons. Even here in my own world, I have no relish for sweet corn in January or strawberries in November. Such seasonal monstrosities are repulsive to me. I want my corn in August, young and green, and I do not want it for a longer time than it should continue, because other vegetables must in justice have their turn. Freezing is inevitable in this day and age and I have the implements, but I am lackadaisical about the whole affair, and had I my will, I would never eat a dish out of season. Turkey should appear at Thanksgiving and at Christmas, and for me the bird does not exist at other times.

So in my earliest world I ate rice flour cakes at New Year's but never thought of them at other times, and in the spring I ate glutinous rice wrapped in green leaves from the river reeds and steamed, and with it hard-boiled duck eggs, salted and sliced, or if I longed for sweet, then with red sugar, which I know now is full of vitamins, but which I ate then merely because it was delicious. And in the summer we ate crabs with hot wine, but not in the autumn when they were dangerous, and the only delicacy we children ate at any time of the year was the barley taffy, covered with sesame

seed, which the travelling taffy vendor sold as he wandered along the narrow earthen roads of our hills and valleys. Whatever I was doing, intent at my books or playing games in the long grass outside the gate, when I heard the tinkle of his small bronze gong, struck with a minute wooden hammer, which he did while holding the gong and hammer in one hand, I gathered a few copper cash from my store and ran to beckon to him. The taffy, dusted with flour to keep it from being sticky, lay in a big round slab on the lid of one of the baskets he carried suspended on a bamboo pole across his shoulder. When we had argued over the size of the piece I could buy with my coins, each of which was worth the tenth of a penny, he took his sharp chisel and chipped off a portion. It was a delicious sweet, congealing the jaws, long lasting and very healthy, since it contained no white cane sugar.

One of the benefits of sharing the food of the poor, and how generous they always were, was that I ate brown rice and brown flour and brown sugar. Yet the strange human passion for whiteness possessed the Chinese, too, and when a poor man became rich, which he did as often as among other men, immediately he took to eating white polished rice and flour and white imported cane sugar and wondered why he did not feel as well as he used to feel in his days of poverty. And though I was pitied for my blue eyes and yellow hair, my white skin was always praised, and it was counted a misfortune if a daughter in a Chinese family was born with brown skin instead of with a skin of light cream color. The northern Chinese are tall and fair in comparison to the dark short brown people of the South, and so the women of the North are much admired, although Soochow has its share of beautiful girls and must always have had, since old Chinese books are full of their praises. I find this same desire for whiteness here in my present world, where a darker Negro will try to marry a fairer one, and where I am told that gentlemen naturally prefer blondes. A friend explained it the other day by saying that the

desire of all people is toward the brightness of the sun and their fear is toward the night and darkness. I doubt it is a matter of such profound anthropological meaning, but it may be.

Throughout those long and glorious days of my early childhood there was always something to see and to do. Behind our compound walls, whose gates were never locked except at night, a warm and changeful life went on. My father was often travelling, but my mother did not leave her children and when she had to go we went with her. This meant, too, that many visitors came to see her, Chinese ladies who were curious to meet a foreigner and see a foreign house, and these my mother led gravely through our simple home where there was actually nothing more wonderful than a sewing machine but where, everything seemed strange and therefore wonderful to eyes that had seen only the age-long furnishings of the usual Chinese house. My own friends came and went, and our favorite playing place was the hillside in front of the gate, where the pampas grass grew tall above our heads. Here in the green shadows we pretended jungles one day and housekeeping the next. Or we played in the wheat straw in the little stable where my father kept his white horse. In a sunny corner of the south veranda I spent many winter afternoons reading alone, and in that spot I read and re-read our set of Charles Dickens, refreshing myself meanwhile with oranges or peanuts. Here let me say that to my taste we Americans ruin our peanuts with over-roasting. Peanuts are not meant to be brown but creamy white, roasted barely enough to take away the raw edge of heir earthy flavor, and not until they look like coffee beans.

For change and excitement we went on rare occasions to the hills for picnics or to see Golden Island, where a giant lived, who froze my heart when I looked into his fat bland face. He was in an inner room of the vast and famous Buddhist monastery, an immense figure in the grey robes of a priest, eight and a half feet

tall, and broad in proportion. He sat with huge hands placed on his knees, and he would not get up unless he were paid to do so. Even then he would not always get up to show us how tall he was, for he was often in a surly mood and kept the money anyhow. If I had nightmares, it was about that hideous gigantic priest.

Golden Island is one of the famous spots of Chinese history and it was visited by Marco Polo. Long ago it ceased to be an island for the river moved its bed and left it standing in dry land, and the historic temples and monasteries, once the possession of emperors, in my time tad only remnants left of the imperial green and yellow porcelain tiles of the Ming dynasty. The pagoda still stood, however, elegant and graceful against the sky.

In the river was the bigger but less famous Silver Island, and a picnic there was an expedition requiring the hiring of a boat to carry us to and fro, and we had to spend a day for the trip. It was a fascinating one, however, for the narrow pathway clung to the steep rocky cliffs and when I had climbed to the top and looked down upon the yellow whirlpools of the river, here as wide as a sea, I was pleasantly terrified.

The Chinese moon year was rich with treasures, too, of feast days, each with its particular dainty to be made and eaten, and each with its special toys and delightful occupations. Thus at the Feast of Lanterns our faithful servants bought us paper rabbits pulled upon little wheels and lit within by candles, or lotus flowers and butterflies or even horses, split in two, one half of which I carried on my front and the other strapped upon my back, so that I looked like a horse walking in the dark, to my great joy. And in the spring there were kites made in every imaginable shape, and sometimes we made them ourselves of split reeds and rice paste and thin red paper, and we spent our days upon the hills, watching the huge and intricate kites that even grown men flew, a mighty dragon or a thirty foot centipede or a pagoda that needed a dozen men to get it aloft. We played with birds in cages and birds, that

could talk if we taught them carefully enough, black macaws and white-vested magpies, or we had nightingales for music. We listened to the wandering storytellers who beat their little gongs upon the country roads or stopped at villages at night and gathered their crowds upon a threshing floor. We went to see the troupes of travelling actors who performed their plays in front of the temples far or near, and thus I early learned my Chinese history and became familiar with the heroes of the ages. The Chinese New Year was of course the crown of all the year's joys, and on that day my two childhood worlds came near to meeting, for we exchanged gifts with our Chinese friends and received calls and went calling, dressed in our best and bowing and wishing "Happy New Year and Riches" everywhere we went. Such occupations and pleasures belonged to my Chinese world into which my parents seldom entered with me, for they remained foreign, whereas I was not really a foreigner, either in my own opinion or in the feelings of my Chinese friends.

Yet there was always the other world on the fringe of my Chinese world, the white world, and the white world had its own holidays and pleasures. Halloween, for instance, I faithfully observed with a jack-o'-lantern made from a yellow Chinese gourd and the kindly Chinese neighbors pretended to be terrified when a fiery grinning face shone through their windows on the October night. Christmas, too, was a foreign festival, a family joy, and so were the Fourth of July and Thanksgiving. My parents were careful to observe all such days and to teach us what they meant. And these were not all. When Queen Victoria's birthday came around, every American as well as every other white family received an invitation to the British Club, a forlorn little house up in the hills surrounded by a small racecourse for ponies. On the Queen's Birthday the Club took on dignity. The hall was decorated with the British colors draped around the black and white portrait of Queen Victoria, a plump and severe-looking little woman, and we all sat

on benches and stared at her and listened to a discourse by the British Consul and diplomatic replies by the other Consuls, usually only the American and the French.

Then we stood and sang "God Save the Queen" as heartily as we could, although I could never understand why the tune was the same as "My Country, 'Tis of Thee," and after it tea was served, a very English repast of buttered buns and jam and hot Indian tea and sweet biscuits, and the children, half a dozen or so of them, ran races and received prizes. My memory of those white children is that they were always wan and pale and ran so listlessly that it was easy to win, and win I did, being brown and strong, until my parents were ashamed because I took so many prizes.

"On the Queen's Birthday, too!" my mother whispered to me reproachfully. "You should let an English child win." But I was not able to do less than my best, even for the Queen.

That early world seemed as stable as the sun and moon and all its ways were peace. And yet, before I was eight years old, even I could discern that it might come to an end. In Peking the Empress Dowager was having trouble with her heir, her adopted son, the young Emperor Kwang-hsü. Parents of only sons sympathized with her, especially if such sons were wilful, handsome, intelligent, rebellious youths. I heard the young Emperor discussed in my own family and thought of my brother, eleven years older than I, whom I scarcely knew because he had been sent away to college when I was but three. He was sometimes a trouble, too, and I knew that my mother was often sleepless when he did not write and she could not know what was happening to him in faraway America.

We all knew about the young Emperor, for his life had been dramatic from the first. When the Empress Dowager had entered the Imperial Palace, she soon became the favorite concubine of the Emperor Hsien-feng. Yet so tactful and graceful was she in his house that even his consort, the First Empress, had not been jealous of the beautiful courteous girl. When she bore a son she

was raised to the rank of Western Empress, the First Empress being given the title Eastern. The two Empresses continued as friends, twenty-five years in all, and it was a legend in our countryside that these two ladies, the wives of one man, had never quarreled throughout that long time. They were very different, for the Eastern Empress was quiet and retiring, a fine scholar and a real connoisseur of art and music and literature, while the Western Empress, who became the regent after the Emperor's death, was a good executive, active in many ways, and interested in political life.

The Emperor had died in a very strange and tragic way during the Arrow War, but long before I was born, so that I knew about it almost as a legend from my Confucian tutor, Mr. Kung, who was supposed only to teach me to read and write Chinese. Since he loved to talk and I loved to listen to the melodious flow of his beautiful Peking language, I knew all about the Arrow War. It was a little war and I doubt that many westerners have even heard of it, yet it was one of those incidents, seemingly slight, upon which turn mighty events. Some time between the years 1850 and 1860 a few enterprising Chinese merchants bought a small ship, named it *The Arrow* and had it registered under the English flag in Hong Kong. They then plied a trade in the southern waters which was called honest trade but certainly smelled of piracy, and since the Viceroy of one of the southern provinces wanted to rid the coast of the pest of pirates, he seized *The Arrow* among other ships and pulled down the English flag and put the Chinese crew in jail.

The British heard of the insult to their flag and were immediately angry, whereupon the Viceroy, terrified because of the previous Opium Wars with Great Britain, sent the prisoners in their chains to the British Consulate, but neglected to apologize for the flag, which doubtless he considered merely a bit of cloth. The Chinese had no sacred associations with flags, and looked upon them as no more than decorative banners. The British Consul flew

into a rage, however, and sent the men back, whereupon the harassed Viceroy had them all beheaded for making so much trouble.

At this Britain declared war again and seized the Chinese Viceroy and sent him to India where he died in exile. France, Russia and America were invited to join with Great Britain in the new war, but only France accepted, using as her excuse the fact that a French missionary had recently been killed in the province of Kwangsi. The foreign troops marched upon Peking, and the Emperor and the Empress and their baby son fled to Jehol, a hundred miles away. There the Emperor suddenly died, and the young Western Empress was left alone with the heir.

She had no time to mourn. At such a moment it was always possible that discontented men might snatch away the throne. While the dead Emperor's brother, Prince Kung, still in Peking, persuaded the invaders to a treaty, although not until the beautiful Summer Palace outside the city had been burned down, the resolute Western Empress returned quickly to see that her little son, T'ung-chih, was set in his father's place. From then on she never ceased to keep her firm hand upon the throne.

She had need of firmness and she knew it. No one realized better than she that the times were dangerous. The Western powers were pressing hard upon China as still another colonial possession, and the Manchu dynasty was dying. Hsien-feng had been a weak Emperor, and the heir was a baby. She needed to be strong and to find strong men to help her. Prince Kung and the two Empresses were appointed regents, yet Prince Kung was too able a man, and the strong young Western Empress soon felt that it was he who was the real ruler. She deposed him and thereafter she and the gentle Eastern Empress were the regents until T'ung-chih was seventeen. Then she married him to a lovely Manchu girl named Alute.

In these days, in this Western world in which I now live, the

marriage of Elizabeth of England and Philip reproduces in modern terms that old and beautiful love story of T'ung-chih and Alute. A whole nation rejoiced then as now, and the Western Empress, who had become the Empress Dowager, planned to yield her regency to her son. She was eager for a grandson that the throne might be secure. Three years passed, however, without a child, and then suddenly the young Emperor was smitten with smallpox and died. The throne was empty again.

Again there was no time for sorrow. Within the palace, the capital and the nation, there was a strong party that wished to displace the two Manchu Empresses and set a Chinese upon the throne. Once more the Empress Dowager had to act quickly. She sent for her great general, Li Hung-chang, then in the city of Tientsin eighty miles away, and ordered him to bring to The Forbidden City four thousand of his best men on horseback, with artillery. In thirty-six hours, exactly at the planned moment, they arrived without any one outside knowing yet that the Emperor was dead. The men had wooden bits in their mouths to prevent their talking and the metal strappings of the horses were wrapped in cloth for silence.

As soon as she knew she had this military support, the Empress Dowager stole out of the palace to the house of her sister and lifted from his bed her eldest nephew, a little boy of three, and took him, asleep, back to the palace with her. When dawn came she proclaimed him her heir, the throne had an Emperor again, and the little boy became the Emperor Kwang-hsü.

All this was only story to me, for it had happened before I was born. What I knew actually was the trouble that Kwang-hsü made now when he had become the Emperor. I suppose the Empress Dowager was already dreaming of something like retirement and enjoying herself, for she had many interests and amusements. She liked to paint, and had she been free to devote herself to art she could have become notable. She was a fine calligrapher, she loved

flowers, she had a magnetic and enchanting way with birds and animals, so that she could coax wild birds to come to her at call, and cicadas to sit upon her wrist while she stroked them with her forefinger. She had a profound love of nature and was fond of certain vistas about the palaces, especially about the rebuilt Summer Palace, and she would have been glad, I think, to leave the affairs of state to her adopted son. But she did not deceive herself. He, too, was impetuous and weak, and though she had provided the finest of teachers for him, he was unable to think and plan as a statesman. Moreover, and this really terrified her, he seemed bewitched by the ways of the West. It had begun in his early childhood, in a manner which had seemed innocent enough. The eunuchs who were his servants had been hard put to it to amuse the lonely little boy, torn from his home and family, and they had searched the city for toys. But he grew tired of kites and clay dolls and paper lanterns and whistles, and at last one of the eunuchs remembered that there was a foreign toyshop in the capital, kept by a Dane, who stocked a few Western toys for the children of the foreign legation families. Thither the Imperial eunuchs went and they bought a toy train for the little Emperor, a magical toy which could be wound up to run. He was delighted with it, and they, poor souls, pleased and relieved to find something that could amuse their tiny sovereign, hurried to the shop again and again until the astonished Dane found himself on the way to riches. Every imaginable trinket and toy was bought and at last he searched the European countries to find something new for the baby Emperor.

Thus from early years Kwang-hsü believed that from the West came strange and wonderful objects which his own country did not know how to make. As he grew older he read of machines and railroads and he wanted to study science and he began to dream of reforming his nation and making China as modern as were the Western nations. Nor was he the only one. There were men who had the same dreams, and two of them were the Emperor's own

tutors. Unknown to the Empress, they encouraged their young ruler to imagine himself as the head of a vast modern people, a new China, and they tried to persuade him to the first dreadful step toward his complete power. It was to murder the Empress Dowager, his adoptive mother.

Here was the stuff of Shakespearean drama. The young Emperor was torn between loyalty to the great woman who had brought him in her own arms to the Imperial Palace and his sincere belief that China must be changed. He loved and admired the Empress with the force of all the tradition which had trained him to obedience to her not only as his sovereign but also as his adopted mother, and filial piety made his conscience tender. Yet he saw clearly enough what she would not, that China was in peril if she did not modernize to defend herself. Hungry Western powers were nibbling at her coasts and inland rivers, and she had no ships of war, no armies with which to beat them off. It was the age of empire, and any country not strong enough to defend itself was considered fair prey for Western empire builders. But China had never built an army or a navy, for she had not needed such defenses. The strength of her superior civilization until now had conquered every invader.

"We are being carved into pieces like a melon," the old Empress groaned, and indeed they were, and yet she could not trust the impetuous young Emperor. She was partly justified for in a burst of reforming energy as soon as he became Emperor, within a hundred days, he had sent tens of edicts flying over the country, announcing new schools to be set up in temples, new railways, new laws and customs. Everything was to be changed and at once.

The people were confused and inside the palace immediately there was deep division. The old princes told the Empress Dowager that order must be restored. The modern advisors of the Emperor and his reformers must be routed and killed. The Emperor, they said, must be restrained.

When the Empress Dowager had to act, she acted quickly. Though I was a child and far away in another province, I can remember the consternation of my parents and our liberal Chinese friends and the satisfaction of our conservative Chinese friends, including my tutor, Mr. Kung, when we heard the news one early morning that by a *coup d'etat* the young Emperor had been taken prisoner and locked up on an island, that Yuan Shih-k'ai, the Commander of the new Western-trained Chinese army, had deserted the Emperor to take his side with the Empress Dowager, that six of the reformers had been killed and only two of the leaders, K'ang Yu-wei and Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, had escaped. A strange silence pervaded our region that day and doubtless it spread over the whole country. What now was to happen? The foreign governments, it became evident during the next few weeks, would do nothing. Opinion was divided but on the whole it sided with the Empress Dowager and with the conservative party. The foreign governments did not welcome reforms which might rouse the people of China to knowledge of what had been going on.

The first edict we next received was signed by the Emperor, but every one knew that the Empress had written it and sent it out over his name and the imperial seal. It was moderate enough, mildly saying that the reforms were going too fast and the people were becoming confused.

"Our real desire," the edict announced reasonably, "was to make away with superfluous posts for the sake of economy; whereas, on the contrary, we find rumors flying abroad that we intend to change wholesale the customs of the Empire, and, in consequence, innumerable suggestions of reform have come to be presented to us. If we allowed this to go on, none of us would know to what pass matters would come. Hence, unless we hasten to express our present wishes clearly before all, we greatly fear that petty officials and their underlings will place their own construction on what commands have gone before, and create a

ferment in the midst of the usual calm of the people. This will indeed be contrary to our desire, and put our reforms for strengthening and enriching our empire to naught."

Then followed the retraction of all the young Emperor's edicts during the past hundred days, and we knew that The Venerable Ancestor was back on the throne again and in full power.

It was in the year of 1900, when I was eight years old, that the two worlds of my childhood finally split apart. I had held them tied together by my very existence, I could see them clearly and combined from our vantage point on the hill above the Yangtse River. Sometimes in the morning when I looked abroad from our veranda, my mind flowed on beyond the green hillsides and the greener valleys, their ponds like diamonds in the sunshine, beyond the dark-roofed city and the bright breadths of the river, beyond to the sea. Across the sea was America, my own land, about which I knew nothing, and so upon which my imagination played with fantastic freedom. It all belonged to me, the near hills and the valleys, the city and the river, the sea and the land of my fathers.

In an academic fashion I knew, of course, even in those early years, that I was not Chinese, and I felt a rough justice in street urchins calling me "little foreign devil," or in their pretending when they saw me that it would soon rain, since devils, they said, come out only when it is going to rain. I knew that I was no devil, and to be called one did not trouble me because I was still secure in my Chinese world. Did these naughty children know me, they would not call me a devil, and I merely made reply that they were the children of turtles—that is to say, they were bastards, a remark which sent them into shocked silence. My parents did not know for years the significance of the retort, and by that time I was old enough to be ashamed of it myself.

In the year of 1900, however, throughout the spring, the beautiful springtime of the Yangtse River Valley, I felt my world splitting unexpectedly into its parts. The stream of visitors

thinned and sometimes days passed without a single Chinese friend appearing before our gates. My playmates were often silent, they did not play with the usual joy, and at last they too ceased to climb the hill from the valley. Even my schoolmates did not clamor to share my desk seat. I was a child spoiled by love and gifts and at first I was bewildered and then sorely wounded, and when my mother saw this, she explained to me as best she could what was happening. It had nothing to do with Americans, she said, for surely we had never been cruel to the Chinese nor had we taken their land or their river ports. Other white people had done the evil, and our friends, she promised me, understood this and did not hate us. Indeed, they felt as warmly to us as before, only they did not dare to show their feelings, since they would be blamed. At last I comprehended that all of us who were foreigners were being lumped together in the cruel fashion that people can adopt sometimes, for particular and temporary reasons, which are no real reasons but merely vents for old hatreds. But I had never known what hatred was. I had neither been hated nor had I ever hated anyone. I could not understand why we, who were still ourselves and unchanged, should be lumped with unknown white men from unknown countries who had been what we were not, robbers and plunderers. It was now that I felt the first and primary injustice of life. I was innocent, but because I had the fair skin, the blue eyes, the blond hair of my race I was hated, and because of fear of me and my kind I walked in danger.

Danger! It had been an unknown word to me. Noxious insects and reptiles were dangerous, but now we were in danger from people, I and my family and all white men, women and children like us. For there came creeping down from Peking in the North to our mid-country province the most sickening rumors about the Empress Dowager, she whom I, too, had learned to think of as The Venerable Ancestor, not only of the Chinese but of all of us who lived under her rule. She had turned against us. Because greedy