

**CLIMBING:**  
MEMORIES  
of  
A MISSIONARY'S WIFE  
by  
Mrs. Jonathan  
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**CHAPTER THIRTEEN**  
**TREASURED MEMORIES**

*GOD uses human channels  
To reach human hearts.*

- S. D. Gordon

How an Old Woman Was Won by a Sketch

A cross, crabbed, old creature whose face resembled a piece of crinkled brown paper, with two holes through which sharp, black eyes looked you through and through! No wonder she had earned the name, "Old autocrat"! For more than twenty years, this woman had experienced to the full her power and authority as senior over the entire Chang clan, whose numbers were legion.

The old woman was indeed a character. Only the pen of a Charles Dickens could do her justice. For twenty years, she had lived a widow alone in her two-roomed house. When her husband died, she had her own coffin made and placed in a safe place - just outside her bedroom window! It was supported from the ground by bricks and covered carefully with many layers of straw mats. Her two rooms contained an indescribable conglomeration of things she regarded as treasures: crocks of every size and degree of imperfection, stuffed with old, worn out things that emitted a far from pleasant odor.

The one place always kept clean and tidy was the brick platform bed in the inner room. Neatly folded quilts of bright colors were always in evidence. The tiny brick stove built against the kang carried welcome warmth into the hollow brick bed.

Yes, the Old autocrat was indeed a real character. For more than a year, I had utterly failed even to get a glimpse of her, for she feared one look from me would mesmerize her. Then one day, when we were spending some days preaching in the village, one of the younger members of the family with whom we were staying said to me: "Oh, I do wish you could win our old grandmother, the autocrat. She is making it so hard for us Christians. Everyone fears her tongue.

Many would come out and join us, but they are afraid of her, for she hates Christians."

As she was speaking, a sudden thought came to me and, turning to my dear Bible woman, in whom I had complete confidence, I said, "Mrs. Wang, please go over to the old woman's door and try to get in touch with her while we stay here and pray." Off went Mrs. Wang as quickly as her poor, crippled feet could carry her. Reaching the old woman's door, she knocked several times with no response. She knew the Old autocrat was within, for the two-leafed door was barred inside. Just as Mrs. Wang was about to turn away, she heard the bar being drawn aside and then very slowly the door was opened, just a little.

"What do you want?" came gruffly from inside.

"I just want to pay my respects to you, my venerable grandmother," said Mrs. Wang, sweetly.

"I know what you have come for, just to talk against my gods," was the sharp retort.

"No, indeed," said Mrs. Wang quickly. "I'll not say a word about your gods: I'll only talk about mine, if you let me in."

This seemed to please the old woman. The door opened, and she and Mrs. Wang began talking about me. Later I was amused at the highly colored picture she drew of me, but it succeeded in rousing the old woman's curiosity. Before long, she exclaimed:

"Do you think she will come over if I invite her?"

Scarcely able to hide her elation, Mrs. Wang replied, "I think she would if I went for her."

A few moments later we were all startled by my Mrs. Wang bursting breathlessly into our midst, saying, "Come quickly, the Old Autocrat has invited you over."

We all started at once, and on reaching the old woman's home I was surprised at the warmth of her reception. But inborn fear was evidently struggling with equally inborn courtesy. The latter won as she placed, for me, one of the least rickety of her chairs. Almost immediately, the old lady opened fire. "Do you mean to tell me those eyes do not see me?" she asked, pointing to a hideous, contorted picture representing the GOD of wealth.

Realizing the need for great care in dealing with this strange old character, I replied: "Do you really think they can see you?"

"Of course they can! And those, and those," pointing to pictures of several minor gods.

Before replying, I raised a cry for wisdom, and then said: "Venerable grandmother, do you think I can make eyes that can see?"

"You! Certainly not," she replied emphatically.

"Then," I said; "If I make eyes that seem to look at you far more really than any of these gods, and make them on paper like these gods are printed on, will you, my venerable grandmother,

believe that these eyes, which you think can see you, are only picture eyes that seem to see?"

For several moments we faced each other, looking straight into each other's eyes, while the crowd around us waited with bated breath. Then the old woman tossed her head, and with a laugh of victory, said, "Ah, but you can't,"

"You just see," I replied quickly. "Wait here; I'll be back in a few moments." Away I flew (or tried to) through two courts and down an alley way to my room, where I found my husband reading his Bible.

"Oh, quick, Jonathan," I cried, "get me a red and blue pencil, a fountain pen, a lead, and an indelible pencil." While he was gathering these together, I told him what I was about to do. Then, catching up a large, unruled writing pad and the pencils, I hastened back.

The crowd had greatly increased. The room was so packed I could scarcely find elbow room. Then, placing the old woman close beside me so she could see every line I drew, I started to draw.

Many years before, my father had taught me to draw a human face by rule. These rules I determined to follow. As my pencils flew, the interest increased till the crowd swayed back and forth in their effort to see what I was doing. When the first rough outline was finished, I tinted the cheeks and lips with red pencil, colored the garment with the blue, and the hair black with the fountain pen; but the final touches were to the eyes. While putting these to the eyes, I kept praying the Lord to help me make them life-like. When the last touch was given, I felt startled, the eyes were so life-like.

"Oh, give it to me; give it to me!" cried the old woman, trying to grasp the picture from me.

"No, no," I replied; "you cannot have it unless you promise not to worship it." Then, making my way to where the GOD of wealth was pasted on the wall, I held my picture close beside the horrible, distorted face of the GOD, the eyes of which, strange to say, looked very life-like. The old woman had followed me closely.

"Now, venerable grandmother," I said, so that all could hear, "which pair of eyes seem to look at you most really? Speak truthfully." The old woman remained silent for a few moments while a great stillness reigned in the room. Then, with a great sob-like sigh, a catch in her voice, and a look in her eyes half frightened, half awakened she stretched out her hand, saying, beggingly: "Say no more, Lady. Give me the picture, and I will promise not to worship it." I gave it to her with a gentle pressure. I could see the old woman had been under great strain. And what wonder! To have the deeply rooted beliefs of almost eighty years destroyed in a few brief moments!

As I turned to leave, a woman in the crowd called out, "Perhaps you don't know, lady, what a *hao chao hua-ti* our old grandmother is [being interpreted, the Chinese means a connoisseur in art]."

"Oh, are you?" I asked, turning to the old grandmother. "Then we shall be great friends, for I am a connoisseur in art too! I have lots of pictures, and every time I come to Changte I shall try to remember to bring you one." So, in the months that followed, many a brilliant picture, cut out of

illustrated papers supplied us by friends at home, found its way to the Old Autocrat's walls, gradually replacing the execrable pictures that had for long covered the walls and had earned for her the reputation of being a collector of art!

The spiritual change that came in this strange but lovable old woman was slow but steady; but for more than a year the villagers had continued reason to fear her tongue. Her devotion to us both was touching in the extreme. When visiting the village, she allowed no one but herself to entertain us. It did, at first, give me a creepy feeling to think of that coffin so close, just a few inches away! As the influence of the Gospel came to gain its power over her, she seemed to lose interest in the coffin.

The time came when my husband and I were away from the Changte region for five years. On our return, we once more paid a visit to the Old Autocrat's village. As we entered the little church, the first thing to catch my eye was the old woman's coffin resting in a prominent place just beside the preacher's desk. Turning to the evangelist in charge, I said, "Mr. Li, you surely are not going to let that thing remain there?"

With a surprised look, he replied: "Why not, lady? It's empty!"

Not being able to give a satisfactory answer to the "why," the coffin remained as a convenient resting-place for Bible and hymn books.

The time came when we must bid farewell to our dear, old Changte field. Shortly before the tearing up began, old Mrs. Chang, for we can no more call her "Old Autocrat," appeared at our door. What a delight she took in examining everything, from the kitchen stove to the globe in my husband's study!

But that which seemed to fascinate her most was the pictures. Again and again she turned to them. As we stood together looking at a beautiful water-color drawing of snow-capped Rocky Mountain peaks, which my artist brother had given me many years before, I saw a strange, to me, beautiful wistfulness on the old woman's face; and the thought of the chrysalis came: how it was shut up in its hard, uncomely crust till the time of its deliverance. So, I thought, this old woman, with her instinctive love for the beautiful, has been enclosed, imprisoned, in the hard, unbroken crust of heathen environment, but the, grace of GOD had begun to work and the time of her deliverance was at hand, when she would come forth unfettered and beautiful to ascend to the GOD who made her.

Who knows but some day you and I shall meet the once Old Autocrat, now a beautiful soul changed into His image, in the glory land!

### The Wolf-Boy and His Mother

A lad about fourteen years of age named Cheng (surname) Wootsi (given name) left his home in Changte city to visit his aunt in the mountainous region to the west. It was winter, and the wolves were causing terror in the villages.

Wootsi, as we shall call him, when on a message up the village street, was attacked by a great wolf. Before it could be driven off, the poor boy's face was terribly mangled. For months the

ignorant villagers did what they could for the lad, but when it seemed the boy would die, he was brought to our mission hospital. The case was a most unusual one. For almost a year he remained in the hospital, tenderly nursed by his mother, who was a widow and devotedly attached to her boy.

The doctor spoke of it as the most difficult case he had ever had. For many months, the process of grafting was carried on, which proved only particularly successful. One eye was saved and a new mouth formed. But when all was done that could be done, the boy's face still remained such a horrible spectacle he was obliged to wear a mask.

While in the hospital, the poor, torn lad had won the hearts of all by his gratitude for every kindness, his cheerfulness and patience under suffering, and his simple, loving nature. The hearts of both mother and son were opened to the Gospel message by the kindness shown them, and both became Christians.

Our little band of Christians were startled and deeply moved at the weekly prayer-meeting one evening when Wootsi rose and prayed, as follows: "O Lord, I thank Thee for letting the wolf eat my face. If this had not happened, I might never have heard of this wonderful Saviour."

Later Wootsi was given the humble position of water carrier for the mission station, for the missionaries felt it would be the height of cruelty to turn the poor lad adrift to the "tender mercies of the heathen." In spite of his terrible handicap, he became beloved by all, even the foreign children.

Never can I forget the boy's sympathy and sorrow when our precious golden-haired Florence was stricken unto death. For days and days the lad waited outside the bedroom door every moment he could get from his work, praying for the word of hope that was not to come. When at last he was told the spirit of the child was no longer with us, his heart-broken grief was touching to witness.

About the time Wootsi became our water carrier, I was greatly in need of an *amah* for the children. I had been praying for one, the right one, to be sent to me, above all else a woman with whom I could trust the children, for often the work among the women necessitated my absence from home for many hours at a time. During the last year Mrs. Cheng waited on her son in the hospital, I had often been impressed with her tenderness and patience. To help her out with the hospital expenses, we had her work for us some hours each day. It was not long before she had won the love of all. On Wootsi's leaving the hospital, she came to us as a permanent nurse.

A year later came that terrible cataclysm of horror, the Boxer uprising. To face the long journey southward to Hankow by cart with small children and *without Mrs. Cheng* was to me appalling. But would she, could she come? We laid our need before her. For one day, she hesitated, going about the house as if dazed.

At evening, she came with tears, saying, "Oh, my Shepherd Mother, I must go with you. My old mother (eighty) weeps, but says I must go. My boy needs me, for his face still needs dressing, but he too tells me to go, *for the children need me most!*"

Weeks of terrible experience followed. (*Goforth of China*, chapter 10) Through all, Mrs. Cheng proved herself an untold blessing to us all. Twice she was tested as few have ever been, but how

nobly she stood the test! On that terrible eleventh day, when it seemed all were to be massacred, this wonderful woman, when separated; with little Ruth from the rest of us and attacked by men demanding the child, lay down, covering the little one and taking blow after blow upon herself. By the mercy of GOD, they were both saved, as their assailants turned to get their share of the loot.

That night, about 2 A.M. our whole party was again facing seemingly certain death. Several Chinese came to Mrs. Cheng, begging her to leave us and save herself. They even promised to have her taken safely back to her home at Changte, but she refused. It was a very dark night. We had no lamp nor candles. Suddenly I heard a sound of weeping outside. Following, the sound, I found Mrs. Cheng sitting alone on a narrow verandah, weeping bitterly and moaning aloud: "I must go; I must go; even if they kill me, I must go!" Sitting down beside her, we clung to each other in our distress.

Then a strange thing happened. Two Chinese women, creeping along the wall, appeared through the darkness, and, on reaching us, knelt down before us and began to weep; Almost too surprised for words, I said, "Are you Christians?"

"We don't understand," was the reply.

"Then why have you come to us now?"

"Because our hearts feel sorry for you." These words but inadequately convey their beautiful, touching sympathy, for, as I have said, tears were in their eyes and their looks and manners meant more than words. But before I had time to say more than a few words to them, the call came to get into our carts.

During those terrible days that followed, when almost starved, when sickness came to first one, then another, when all were exhausted and tried to the last point of endurance, Mrs. Cheng, through it all, thought not one moment of herself but only of those she served.

When at last Shanghai was reached and the parting came, we to go to Canada, and Mrs. Cheng to the care of our friends in Chefoo, quite a party escorted the beloved nurse to the coast steamer. As the last, tearful farewells outside her cabin door were ended, the dear woman drew me aside and sobbingly said: "Oh, my Lady, do take good care of the children!" As we parted, smiles were mixed with tears.

## THE STORY OF THE TATUNGFU MISSION

**"Of whom the world was not worthy"** (Hebrews 11:38).

While on our vacation at Peitaiho, in the summer of 1932, an urgent call came for my husband to hold revival-meetings at Tatungfu, an important city in North Shansi. The invitation had come, from the Swedish Missions of that region, which were affiliated with the China Inland Mission.

The journey was a long and expensive one, and I had been urged to accompany my husband. Dr. Goforth and I decided we would ask the Lord to send us sufficient to meet all traveling expenses,

for we did not wish those dear "faith" missionaries to be put to any expense by our coming. Shortly before we were to leave for Tatungfu, a letter was received from a woman in America enclosing a check amply sufficient to cover our travel. The donor said, "This is for yourselves to be used in any way you think fit." It was indeed a gift *timed of the Lord*, a blessed seal of GOD upon the coming mission. We went forward with a sense of joyful assurance of the Lord's being with us.

How can I write of the two weeks spent among those sorely tried, faithful, isolated Swedish brethren and sisters, and the hundred and fifty Chinese leaders who gathered for the meetings! As I recall those days they seem almost too sacred to record.

I was humbled and brought low before the Lord when I found my part in the mission was to be an hour each morning, with the forty or more missionaries. What could I give them? How could I help them? The deeply lived life in CHRIST was revealed in every face. All I dared do was just to tell simply what the Lord had done for me. Rarely if ever have I felt the Lord's upholding and presence more than while in fellowship with those simple, earnest, seeking souls, most of whom were from lonely, isolated centers with not more than two or three in a station.

Never had we been in any part of China where the tragic side of missionary life was more in evidence. During the Boxer uprising, every missionary - man, woman, and child of the Swedish Mission - also many Christians, were martyred. We were taken to what they called "The Sacred Spot," a Chinese court yard in the center of the city. While standing together in the court, the woman missionary in charge of a girls' school there, told us how, in that very court, in 1900, six missionaries and four children were cruelly put to death. As I listened to some of the awful details, a deathly faintness overcame me. Miss B., seeing this, laid her hand on my shoulder, saying, "Take comfort, Mrs. Goforth, I have a wonderful thing to tell you." She then told of how five years after the Boxer troubles she had opened a girls' school in the court. One day some of the children, poking in a heap of rubbish in a corner of the court, discovered a small, English pocket Testament. It was almost falling to pieces and the printing indecipherable, but when it was brought to Miss B., she found the following words alone stood out quite clearly:

**OF WHOM THE WORLD WAS NOT WORTHY** (Hebrews 11:38)

How wonderful that just these words should have stood the storms of five years: that the Lord himself might speak through His own Word of the glories of those who suffered martyrdom for His name's sake!

We were told that, even at the time of our visit, an average of four missionaries died yearly in that region of typhoid fever or were killed by bandits.

The senior lady missionary attending the conference told me in broken English some truly remarkable stories of how the Lord had answered prayer for her. Some of these I took notes of at the time. I will give just one, believing it will help others as it did me.

In the spring of 1900, she and her husband and several children were in Stockholm. All preparations had been made for their return to China when a cable came telling of all their missionaries having been killed by the Boxers.

All their money had been spent on an outfit for China. A time of great testing came. One day the young servant girl came to Mrs. H., saying, "There are no more potatoes." They practically lived on potatoes. Mrs. H. began to cry, saying, "I have no money. We will starve." Again, she gave way to sobbing. The young girl laid her hand gently upon her, and said, "Mrs. H., don't cry. *This is just an opportunity to see what GOD can do!*"

Mrs. H., in telling the story, said, "I was not going to let the little servant be better than I, so I got up and went about my work, but in my heart I kept saying, 'I will see what GOD can do.'

"About 11 o'clock, before we needed to put the potatoes on, a rap came at the door. On opening it, a man stood there and said, 'Are you Mrs. H?'

"'Yes,' I replied.

"The man told me he had come on the boat from Finland, where he had heard Mr. H. speak on China.

He said, 'As I was coming to Stockholm, I thought I would bring a few bags of potatoes, as you might need them. And I just put along with them the half of a sheep!'" Mrs. H. ended the story by saying, "That is the way the Lord deals with me."

~ end of chapter 13 ~

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