

My Several Worlds

A Personal Record

BY
PEARL S. BUCK



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MY SEVERAL WORLDS

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AMERICAN ARGUMENT
HOW IT HAPPENS
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TELL THE PEOPLE
WHAT AMERICA MEANS TO ME
AMERICAN UNITY AND ASIA
OF MEN AND WOMEN
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ALL MEN ARE BROTHERS (*Translated from the Chinese*)

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THE MAN WHO MADE CHINA
ONE BRIGHT DAY
THE BIG WAVE
YU LAN: FLYING BOY OF CHINA
THE DRAGON FISH
THE WATER-BUFFALO CHILDREN
THE CHINESE CHILDREN NEXT DOOR
STORIES FOR LITTLE CHILDREN



Photo: Dubois

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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. To-day, 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 half-way round 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

centre, 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 succour 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.

Half-way 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 endeavour, 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 idyll 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 labour 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 neighbours. 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 whisky 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 humour 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 towards 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 neighbour, 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 honour 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 humours 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 to-day.

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 towards 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 towards teacher and friends and officials and neighbours 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 favoured 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 neighbours', 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 nextdoor 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 defence 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 diarrhoea 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 practise, 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 quarrelled. 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 kindness of servants was warmth at home, and so was the friendliness of our Chinese neighbours. 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 babbling, 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 flavour. 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 grown-ups 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 flavour, 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 con-