



A Chinese Clergyman

Missionary Stories No. 5



The
Story of a Chinese
Clergyman



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THE STORY OF A CHINESE CLERGYMAN TOLD BY HIMSELF.

LIEO YIN-TSUNG is a priest of the Hankow District, and is now in charge of St. Peter's Chapel, Hankow.* He and his wife, with their four little girls, have long been an interesting family not only to us, but perhaps especially to strangers, for the picture is in sharp contrast to those all about. These bright-looking, neat, healthy girls, running and playing about the chapel compound, or studying in school; and the father, not ashamed of the daughters, but interested in their progress, this, compared with the hobbling, drawn-faced, painted little images in the better families, has been a sight to make one at once rejoice and lament—lament that such sights should be so rare. And now there are two sons to reward all this love and faith.

It occurred to us lately to question whether this happy family were after all a contrast to the parents' own youth, or whether, though they were heathen then, they could perhaps look back to such happy days in their childhood. We more recent comers, who have not known the native clergy long, have to go to headquarters for information which is an old story to the veterans. And here is the result of the inquiry, translated partly from the abstract Mr. Liao himself kindly wrote out, partly from the explanation of these notes during a three hours' talk.

I was born in the Hsien-lin district of Hupeh Province in

* The Mission at Hankow is under the charge of the American Episcopal Church, which is in communion with the Church of England.

1864, the only son and the only male hope in a family of three brothers. For this reason not only my parents but my uncles treasured me and used various means to avert danger to my precious life. I wore about my neck a silver lock to keep my soul from slipping inadvertently away from my body. Until I was ten years old I had my head shaven and was dressed as a Buddhist priest, so that the spirits should be deceived into thinking me one, and therefore sacred; and I was constantly called by the family "dog" and "slave-girl," that the same spirits—or others—might consider me not worth taking. I do not remember much about my childhood, except that my older sister and I were very fond of each other and that she took care of me. She did beautiful needlework, and people often asked her to embroider things for them, her skill was so great. I have still some of her work. She could not read a single word, and simply helped about the house, sewed, or looked after me. I played ball sometimes with the other boys, and sometimes helped in the harvesting, or in gathering firewood on the hills in winter. And I remember, too, that I was not good at picking up things (*i.e.* at thieving), to which the other boys were addicted, largely because I was afraid of being caught. I always got less than the others, and hence they called me "No good."

My father had plenty of land, and I did not have to work, but I did not go to school till I was ten, when I grew a queue like the others and began my studies. By the end of two years I could repeat the "Four Books" and also the "Juvenile Learning," but did not know what any of them meant, nor do I remember wishing to understand them. The Chinese way of studying is always this for children, and I thought nothing about it until I was about twelve years old, when I remember asking the meaning of something.

When I was eleven we had a bad harvest, and my widowed mother—my father had died when I was five—was in straits, for her property was mostly in the ground and what came from

it. My sister had been betrothed to a friend's child, and now my mother asked that she be taken to his mother's house to live until the marriage, so that she might have no further expense for her. This was agreed to, so I was sent with her



[Kindly lent by the publishers of THE SPIRIT OF MISSIONS.]

LIEO YIN-TSUNG AND HIS WIFE AND THEIR FOUR DAUGHTERS.

to her new home, she and my mother and I all crying bitterly at the separation. She was not at all happy there, and at last I brought her back for a while, much to the joy of all of us.

When I was not yet thirteen it was decided that I must

leave school and go to an uncle who lived in Hankow, there to learn some business and reach, perhaps, a higher place than now seemed open to me at home. I was delighted with the idea, for I had never once been away from the village. The journey was made in company with one of my uncles, the same one who is now still living with me, an old, old man. He thought I would not be able to walk so far, and was going to have a wheelbarrow for me ; but my excitement and pride kept me up, and we reached the river, twenty miles away, by the end of the first day.

Here I for the first time saw a boat. Near my village there were only mountain streams not big enough for even a skiff ; and so when I saw a Chinese house-boat floating on the surface of the river I cried out to my uncle to know what it was, saying that it looked like a big duck. We got on board, and very full it was of people and baggage. When it began to move I was frightened, and during the whole two days not once did I look out from the cabin. Thus I reached Hankow without having received any impression from the forest of masts at the mouth of the Han and the houses crowding the bank. The streets seemed to me full of people, and I was very unhappy. I did not like my aunt either, nor my cousins. Whether it was that I was homesick, or that I was unconsciously influenced by my mother's low opinion of this relative, expressed sometimes at home, I do not know ; but I would not play in the house, and was not allowed to go on the street for fear of getting lost in the hurrying crowds.

So when, after a month, my uncle said he would take me across to Wuchang to see my maternal aunt, wife of the catechist, Mr. Yang, who lived in the Boone School compound, I loved my aunt at once, though I had never heard anything about her before. She was a kindly woman, very fond of children, and there was something in the home atmosphere, the church services, and the neighbourhood of the school full of boys which was both new and attractive. My uncle

noticed how changed my manner was, and when he was about to return to Hankow he asked me whether I were willing to stay on here without him, and perhaps enter the school. I eagerly agreed, and he left without me. Mr. Hoyt was in charge of the school then, and it was too full to allow of my entering that year; but by the next I should go in with the new class, and meanwhile, as I attended the church and heard also my uncle's instructions in his family, I learned to know and love the Doctrine.

Then came my first lessons in a foreign school when, in 1878, I entered Boone School at the age of thirteen and one-half. There were about thirty boys there. About a year later, when I was fifteen, I was baptized.

During this year I had a letter from my mother telling me to come home. Rumours had reached my village that I had been sold to the foreigners, and though my mother had had letters from me and did not entirely believe the reports, still she wanted to see for herself, for she loved me dearly. I could not leave when she first wrote since it was in the midst



A CHINESE SCHOOLBOY.

of a term ; but when the summer vacation came I appeared at home, much to the surprise of the neighbours, who had readily believed the story of my having been sold.

My sister was still at home, and we were all very happy together until the sixth day of the sixth month—my dead father's birthday—arrived. Then my mother told me to worship my father's tablet and burn incense before it. I said that my father was not there, and why should I bow to the wooden thing? He would not know if I did worship or did not, for his body was in the grave and his spirit was not on the earth. She insisted, saying: "Foreigners do not worship in this way, but you are not a foreigner ; why cannot you do it?" Then I refused, and she was very angry, so angry that I ran and hid at a neighbour's. Everyone sided, of course, with my mother, calling me "Foreigner." You must remember that I, a boy of fifteen, was then the only person in the village who believed in Christianity—the only Christian most of them had ever seen—and I had been baptized only a few months, so I felt very lonely. By afternoon I wanted to go home. I crept to the door and peeped in. My mother was making dough, and looked angry still. Then I thought of something. It was an extremely hot day and she was perspiring freely. I took a fan and, going in, stood behind her and fanned her. She did not speak, but I saw from her face that the trouble was over for this time. I thanked God very heartily for this deliverance.

After a month's time I began to think of going back to school. When I asked my mother's permission, she reminded me that her ambition for me was to do something higher in life. I replied by quoting our proverb that there is nothing high but scholarship. She finally consented, seeing, perhaps, that my behaviour was not as bad as it might have been and that the principles of the Doctrine were good. She never, either then or afterwards, objected to my believing as I did.

It was when I was seventeen that my two uncles, the



A RIVER TEMPLE AND PAGODA NEAR HANKOW.

one in Hankow and the one in Wuchang, decided that I ought to become betrothed, and selected the daughter of a friend of theirs as my future wife. My uncle, Mr. Yang, asked me if I were willing, and I remember saying that I wished I could see her, that I knew nothing about her, and how, then, could I decide? My uncle said he had seen her, and since this was all that was possible I consented, and the matter was arranged. Everyone was pleased with the match, for the girl's father was a well-to-do man, with no sons and only two daughters. She was then fourteen years old.

My wife was the younger of the two sisters, and especially beloved. Her father was private secretary to an official. For four years a teacher came regularly to the house to give lessons to the daughters, and in that time the younger one learned, as I did, to repeat the "Four Books" and part of the "Juvenile Learning." She says she did not like much to study, but it was something to do.

When she was three and a half years old the binding of her feet began. I have asked her if she were not happy as a child, in a family with plenty of money, servants to wait on her, and a father and mother who loved her and gave her everything. But she says, "No; my feet were always being bound. They ached all the time, and I could not play, I was so lame." The binding was gradual, but steady. At first the side of the foot, including the two smallest toes, was drawn under by a bandage that was at first loose, then tighter and tighter. Soon the other toes were included in the binding, and at last the whole end of the foot was drawn back and under, bound tight to the sole. This resulted in the breaking of some of the bones of the foot itself. Of course, this was not done in a year. In fact, it was not considered completed until she was ten years old, and her feet were a little over three inches long. Every eight or ten days during these years the bandages were loosened and the feet soaked in warm



A CHINESE CHRISTIAN FAMILY ATTACHED TO THE S.P.G. MISSION IN NORTH CHINA.

During the Boxer persecution of the Christians the girl Aitzu, standing up on the left, and her two brothers, Changyu and Changshun, standing in the centre and on the right, were massacred.

water, making them more pliable ; then the cloths were replaced and drawn a little tighter than before. At one time her feet and ankles became so weak that they were put in wooden splints, in order that she might still be able to walk upon them ; and this she was forced to do in spite of the pain, for if they had been unused then, she would have been unable to walk ever afterwards. Often she secretly loosed the bandages a little, but her mother always found out and drew them tight again. And this, too, was because she loved her. She remembers no games, and no going out, except sometimes on the back of a servant, to see the sights of the streets. But she learned to sew and to read, as I have said.

When she was ten years old her mother died ; and since there was no one now at home to take care of her, she was sent to the house of a relative. Here she sometimes was able to loosen the foot bandages a very little, for this woman was not so strict as her mother had been. About this time her father adopted a son from a family where there were plenty. This year also he took a good deal of his wife's money with which to open a shop for his daughter's husband. This did not succeed, and the money was soon gone ; but the father, who was very fond of his little daughter, still paid for expenses as before. Her betrothal to me took place when she was fourteen. Not long afterward, when she was sixteen, there were some serious disturbances in Hankow, and her father wished me to marry her at once, so that I might take her to Wuchang and protect her. I could not marry her then, for I was still in school, but Mrs. Yang said that she might come and live with her. Then at last I had a chance to see her. I was very glad to have her in the family, so that she might be instructed before we were married. My uncle and aunt taught her with their own children, and she liked it. I have not asked her what she thought, either then or before, about being married. I suppose she knew it must be, just as I did, and so took it as a matter of course. In China the boy and

girl do not say whether they like it or not ; their families decide for them.

During this year Mr. Sowerby and Mr. Graves both asked me if I would like to study and by-and-bye become a clergy-



CHINESE MANDARINS.

man. I thought about it, and at last said I should like to do so ; but I was afraid my mother would not consent to my going as far away as Shanghai, where the divinity school was. However, I made a plan to gain her approval. My sister had been married and had gone to her husband's home, so my

mother was now alone. I went out to the village, told her that I wanted to go to Shanghai for at least three years, and proposed having my betrothed come out to live with and take care of her. Then when I returned I could marry and take my mother and my wife to Wuchang to live. After much discussion she consented, and the arrangement was made.

But when I had been in Shanghai only two years news arrived of my mother's death. I at once came home to bury her, for, though only twenty years old, I was head of our house and must, therefore, be present at the funeral. It had been expected that the Buddhist priests would be invited, and that all the other customary rites, including the burning of paper money for the support of the soul in the other world, would be performed by myself as chief mourner. Of course, I had to tell them that these things could not be. Everyone was shocked to hear this, for to them it seemed most unfilial, and in China nothing is worse than an unfilial son. My family were especially indignant, for they also would be disgraced by my behaviour. My sister burned the money, and so did the others, but that did not make up for me.

When my uncle from Hankow arrived I went to meet him and made my reverence to him. Before I had said a word he struck me on the face, so as to raise a great swelling on it, then struck me again and again and kicked me. Because he was old and I young I could not return the blows. Then he threatened to send me to the *yamen* for punishment as an unfilial son. I replied: "You may have me beaten to death if you like, but I certainly will not do this foolish thing." Then they all began to talk about the matter. Some said that since my Church forbade my doing these things and I was a servant of the Church I must follow its rules or lose my position. Others of them told my uncle that if he should hurt me the Church might protect me, and some of the family property be lost. And I think he said, too, that I would not be moved from my word. So he came to me and said, "If

you will not have the priests and will not burn the *cash* paper, will you at least give a feast?" for this would take away from us the disgrace of a funeral where no money was spent. I



A CHINESE LADY, SHOWING THE RESULT OF BINDING THE FEET.

said that I would, and he arranged for me to invite fourteen tables full of guests! That would be one hundred and twelve persons, and I spent in all thirty or forty thousand *cash** or

* Perhaps at that time \$25 (gold)—a large sum in China.

this and the other expenses of the funeral. For this I had to go in debt at the time.

When I left the village my betrothed remained there with my sister for another year; by that time I had finished my studies in Shanghai and was again in Wuchang. This was in 1888. I was stationed first at St. Thomas's Chapel, acting as catechist, and six months afterward I was married. My wife had been brought back to my aunt's house, and there Mr. Graves baptized her three days before the wedding. When he examined her for baptism he was surprised to find how well she answered after only a year's teaching, and although she had been in a heathen family for three years since that time. This unusual ability was because she knew how to read and could study by herself.

I was made deacon in 1890 by Bishop Boone, and that same year my first child was born—a little girl named Yuentsen. My wife wished to bind her feet just a little to make them look pretty, and they were that way for about a year. No tight bandages, but a strip of cloth wound around and around under the stocking, making the shape more pointed at the toe, and more broad at the instep. Then she asked me what I thought about binding them tighter. I asked her if she thought God made a mistake when He created her feet to be large; that surely they were, like her hands, already perfect, and that to try to change them would be foolish, and also an insult to God Who made them. She did not reply to this, and I then asked her if she remembered her own childhood. "Did it hurt," I said, "when your feet were bound?" "Yes," she said; "very much." "Then do you not love your own child that you should wish to make her suffer too?" The feet were loosed at once, and neither hers nor those of her three sisters were ever bound again; so they can run and play just like boys.

I worked on in Wuchang as deacon and priest until 1900, when I was moved to Hankow, and because, since then, I

have had two sons, my neighbours say that crossing the river changed my luck. The first little boy, because my wife had so longed for him, was baptized "Samuel," and the last baby was, on Christmas Day, baptized "John." They have home names besides, which we use in speaking to them.

My old uncle, who has lived with me for many years, never liked the girls. He still remained a heathen until a few years ago, and not only would not hear the Doctrine or read our books—which he despised as not being classics—but would rail at me, treating me as though I were still a boy. I used to manage to teach my little girls their Catechism when he was about, so that he could not help hearing something, though he pretended to be asleep, and at last he realised that he was being well treated, changed his ways, and was baptized. But he still did not want the girls, and when at last the little boy was born—the first male descendant in the family—he was more pleased than anyone else. On the third day he came in to see the child and drew from his coat something which he was about to put around the baby's neck. Then I saw what it was. It was one of the silver locks such as I had worn about my neck when I was a boy to keep me safe. "Ah! sir," I said, laughing, "the old feeling is still there, isn't it?" Then I explained that if he put it on for beauty it was all right, but if as a charm we could not allow it. And so it was taken away, and little Samuel now has a cross instead.

My heathen neighbours have wondered that I did not despise my daughters, for it is the custom in China to esteem girls lightly and to value boys. But I have never been sorry that I could not change them. They are good children, they like me, and do not fear me unless they have been naughty. When they were all little I played school with them sometimes, giving them real lessons, but not being very strict; and they would sit around in a circle, as solemn as if they were real schoolboys. Now the two eldest are at St. Hilda's and they are fond of their lessons. I do not care that girls should have

deep scholarship, but they should know how to read and write and keep accounts, and also know geography and some physical science. Then they must be able to cook and sew and embroider. My wife and I hope that they will be happier than we were as children, and I think they are.

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