A LAN

A Story for Boys and Girls

By Mrs. R. Hutchinson

When a very little girl, my father and mother arranged all the preliminaries, and I was betrothed to the little son of our neighbours, Mr. and Mrs. Fam; and then, although I was very fond of my own parents and home, I had to go to live and be brought up in the same home as my future husband. So mother packed my little wooden box, getting together all the clothes possible for me to start the new life.

For a while I was just as happy as little girls usually are. My new mother treated me as one of her own children; but after a few years she got very seriously ill. We called in the doctors, and spent such a lot of money on medicine; but she did not get better, and, in spite of all the money Mr. Fam spent to get her healed, she died.

Mr. Fam after a while ceased to mourn for his lost wife, and because he had us little folks to care for he began to look out for another wife. But, alas for me! his choice fell on a woman who had differed from my own mother and hated her. Everything I did or said was wrong, and an excuse for her to beat me. She kept me out working in the fields, never allowing me to rest, and not even giving me the opportunity to wash or make my clothes look nice, always with the idea that by-and-by I should get ugly, so that her stepson would not want to marry me. If only he could be persuaded to send me back to my own people, she would be amply revenged upon my mother, for in the eyes of all the people our whole family would be disgraced.

But Siu Chin and I had played together, gone or walks together, gathered fuel for our fires in the bleak, cold winter-time, and in this way day by day we had grown to care for each other; so that when this woman began to speak of Siu Chin becoming engaged to some one else better-looking than I, he said no. I, A Lan, was his betrothed, and he cared not for any one else. When he said this, Mrs. Fam ill-treated me worse than ever, and Siu Chin was not allowed to speak to me, and rarely indeed to see me.

About this time our Heavenly Father caused a tract to be given to Siu Chin, and for the first time he read about the true Spirit and Jesus coming down from heaven to teach us how to be good and to save us from our sins. Near our home was a chapel, where other boys and girls and a few grown-up people met together to worship this living God and pray to Him to help them day by day. By-and-by he learned so much about Jesus that he would not join in the worship of our ancestors or go to the temples.

Mr. and Mrs. Fam were very angry when their son began to listen to this foreign teaching, and made home so unbearable that at last he decided to escape and ask the pastor at Yingtak to give him a chance to love and work for Jesus. Siu Chin, helped and encouraged by the neighbours, made preparations for himself and me. We started off, and at last we got safely over the mountains to Mong-fu-kong, and then to Yingtak.

Mrs. Fam was so angry that she went to the Yen-liang chapel, and stayed there all the day, shouting, tearing her hair and clothes. She said she would never leave the chapel until we were brought back; but at the end of the day she was carried home, still threatening to punish me when she once again got me in her power.

Now comes the very brightest and best part of my life, for the pastor at Yingtak got me admitted to the boarding school, and for the first time in all these years I was made clean and comfortable. For two years I have been in the school here. Every Sunday I go to church, and on the last Sunday of the old year, 1910, I was baptized and admitted as a member of the Wesleyan Church here in Yingtak, and am trying day by day to be good and love Jesus. Siu Chin is now in Canton, studying for three years, after which he is to be a preacher here in this Hakka district, telling people of the One who is able to save and help all who come unto Him.

O Lord, alone in the Divine Essence, much do I wonder concerning men who are in the true way, how it can be that after they have received the gift of true life they do not attempt to help those who are outside the truth into the true way.

RAYMOND LULL

Further copies of this Bulletin of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society may be obtained gratis. All enquiries to be addressed to Home Organization Department, W.M.M.S., 24, Bishopsgate, London, E.C.

No. 86
On Tour among Indian Villages

The crowd stares at us and pushes in through the door of the hut, shutting out all the available light, until we station one of our number to keep them off while we quietly conduct our Christian family worship. This over, we mount our machines and ride off through the dusty paths and uneven tracks over the fields.

But Yakob, with his sad, determined face, runs along beside us as we pedal slowly. He wants to show us a new way to the next village, and also wants us to inspect his lands. In due time we come to them, and are shown with some pride the well dug by his father at considerable cost. These lands under cultivation belong to his brothers.

But what are those strips of land lying idle in the midst of the well-tilled fields? Those are his lands. Why are they idle? Is he lazy because he has become a Christian? Not at all. He is a most industrious man. The fact is, he is illegally prevented by the landlords of the place from cultivating the land on which he and his fathers before him have lived for generations.

Why have they done this? Because they are determined to keep these 'Impertinent Pariahs' in their place, and he has dared without their leave to become a Christian, and they have decided to make an example of him.

It was sad to see his hungry looks as he gazed at his lands that might have been green with promise of a rich harvest. Now the time has gone by for sowing, and there can be no harvest for him.

What, then, will he do? Will he relapse into heathenism and give up the unequal fight? Not he. He is determined to fight on though he stands alone, and, rather than retrace the step he has taken, he will suffer the loss of his only regular means of livelihood and seek work elsewhere.

I admire the man's grit, and wish there were more like him. Some may wonder why he cannot get his legal rights. The answer is simple—the law is expensive.

More Injustice

In another of our villages a member of our congregation went to a certain place where he has trade relations. He had bought a sheep and butchered it, and was selling the meat to those who desired it.

Now he is a Pariah by birth. Whilst he was disposing of this meat, a Hindu of the caste village came to him and asked for some meat. I imagine that the Pariah was rather flattered at the idea of a casteman asking him for anything to eat, and he gave him a piece of mutton as a gift. This the Hindu gladly took home and ate. The highest castes do not eat meat, but in these parts most Hindus do.

When this matter became known to the other castemen there was great commotion in the village—not at the idea of a Hindu eating meat, but at the thought of a Pariah having the audacity to hand meat to a casteman. They do not seem to have thought of punishing the casteman who asked him for meat. All their wrath fell upon Peter, for that was his name. Such impertinence in a Pariah must be summarily punished! So they gave him an unmerciful beating. Now Peter, if he had laid to heart the teaching of the New Testament, would have taken the beating meekly and we should have heard no more about it. But he has some of the old fighting spirit of the Apostle whose name he bears. So he went to the magistrate and laid a complaint before him against these high-and-mighty caste people.

The whole countryside was aroused. The assailants moved heaven and earth, or rather earth and hell, to escape from the consequences of their wrong-doing. But all in vain. The case came on for trial before a righteous magistrate, who found them guilty and fined them heavily. The worst indignity for them was that part of their money was actually paid to the despised Pariah whom they had beaten.

When I heard the result I asked the elder of our church in Peter's village if he was glad about it. He answered unhesitatingly, 'Yes, they did a great wrong and were properly punished.' I quoted to him the words of the Sermon on the Mount, and his face fell. But I must admit that it was easy to quote, not so easy to practise. 'Is it the old man in me or a right feeling that makes me also glad that wrongdoers were punished?'