

Dr. Sun Yat Sen

An Oriental Doctor

By

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THERE is born occasionally somewhere, in one or another country, at periods far apart, some superman who justifies our human racial dream. Out of the many religions, out of the stuff of the philosophers and the visions of the poets we have wrought our ethical ideal. It is a dream of a real and not of an abstract justice for all, of a courage that transcends any danger or disaster, of an unselfishness that partakes of the divine, of a strength and high purpose that triumph over every obstacle. It is the dream of the half-gods and heroes. One of these was born in a village of Kwang-tung province forty-six years ago. His father was a convert to Christianity and was employed as an agent by the London Missionary Society. At the age of eighteen he became attached to the Anglo-American Mission Hospital in Canton and at the age of twenty years went to Hong Kong to study in the College of Medicine which had been newly founded there by the English physicians and surgeons, and which is now a department of the University of Hong Kong. Here he was a diligent student for five years, both in the medical school and in the Alice Memorial Hospital, and took his degree at the age of twenty-five years, being the first graduate of the new college. He then went to Macao to practice medicine. Here there was a large well-built hospital where Chinese patients were treated according to old Chinese methods. He persuaded the Chinese governors of the hospital to allow him to practice there and to introduce new Western methods into the ancient system. His honesty and unselfishness impressed them, and they said "Very well, we will let him have one wing for European methods and the other shall be for our own; later we can judge of the results." He did a great deal of the surgery, and performed many major operations requiring skill and cool judgment. Occasionally he called one of his old teachers, James Cantlie, F. R. C. S., from Hong Kong to assist him.

SURGICAL work in China is less private than in the West, and the surgeon had to perform his operations in the presence of friends and relatives of the patient as well as lay members of the hospital board who came to watch the procedures. They were especially interested in the operations for stone in the bladder (a common ailment in that province) using their fans vigorously on themselves to prevent fainting during the early incisions, and making loud expressions of their astonishment and approbation when the stone was produced before their eyes. There, our young surgeon worked indefatigably and successfully for a considerable time, winning every one to him by his unique and magnetic personality. James Cantlie, the English surgeon at Hong Kong, who has written a book about his old pupil says: "It was a goodly journey to Macao by sea, and took me away a considerable time from my daily routine of work. Why did I go this journey to Macao to help this man? For the reason for which others have fought and died for him—because I loved and respected him. His is a nature that draws men's regard toward him and makes them ready to serve him at the operating-table or on the battle-field; an unexplainable influence, a magnetism which prevails and finds its expression in attracting men to his side."

LATER our young surgeon removed from Macao to Canton to practice his profession. It is but a little step for a medical man with a large mind to compare the disorders and diseases of the human body to those of the body politic, and surely there was pathology enough in the body politic of China. When this larger vision came to him he was transformed. No longer satisfied with the arduous daily duties of a practitioner of medicine, he conceived the regeneration of a vast empire, the introduction of Western civilization, and the giving of liberty and equal opportunity to four hundred millions of his fellow countrymen. From the day he gave up his hospital work to the astonishing time when he was made the first President of the largest republic in the world, his story is a romance of hairbreadth escapes, imprisonment, intrigues, conspiracy, persecution; and through it all he drew men to him by the ardor of his patriotism, by his courage and endurance, by his modesty, wisdom and balance of mind, by his unselfish devotion to the one great cause that filled his whole field of vision. We are not surprised to learn that George Washington was his example and inspiration. For nearly twenty years he was a wanderer throughout China, and in all parts of the world where there were compatriots to teach and arouse, in Japan, the Malay Peninsula, the Straits Settlements, the Hawaiian Islands, many cities of the United States, in London and on the Continent. He taught the need of a bloodless reform, a peaceful rebellion of the whole people against Manchu misrule and despotism. In all sorts of disguises, with a price set upon his head, he wandered about the world as a political missionary, spreading the tenets of a new gospel of hope and liberty for the downtrodden millions of his native land. By removing his cue, allowing his hair and mustache to grow and giving up his Chinese for Japanese or European dress he was often able to pass for a Japanese.

SOMETIMES he travelled in oriental countries as a spectacled pedlar with a pack of knick-knacks. For weeks together living on a little rice and water, journeying many hundreds of miles on foot, lying hidden on river junks, concealing himself for months in fishermen's cabins and on islands—these were some of the hardships he had to endure in his missionary work, from the mouth of the Yangtse to the borders of Thibet, and from the far North to the far South throughout China. Wherever he went he established centers of influence, made converts to his cause among the rich and the poor, and delivered quiet, dispassionate, convincing speeches that held his audiences spellbound. Spies were after him everywhere. Many a hired assassin was baffled. The long crooked arm of the Manchu dynasty reached over the planet in vain to grasp him. At one time the price set upon his capture amounted to a half-million of dollars. He has told in the *Strand Magazine* for April, 1912, of some of his escapes, and he has described what would have been done with him had he been kidnapped and returned to China, as was tried by both the Chinese minister in Washington and by the Chinese Legation in London. "I well knew the fate that would befall me—first having my ankles crushed in a vise and broken by a hammer, my eyelids cut off, and, finally be chopped to

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small fragments, so that none could claim my mortal remains." The old Chinese code did not err on the side of mercy to political agitators. One story of a narrow escape is too extraordinary to be passed over without a description.

In September, 1896, he sailed for England, and on the eleventh of October he was kidnapped in London by order of the Chinese Ambassador, and confined at the Chinese Legation in Portland Place, ostensibly as a dangerous lunatic who was to be shipped back to his own country. Here he was locked up in a room for twelve days awaiting the arrangements for his transportation to China in some suitable vessel under satisfactory surveillance. How he came to be rescued from this nearly fatal predicament is told by himself and also by Dr. Cantlie, his former medical preceptor. There was an English servant in the Chinese legation who told his wife one day of the piteous plight of this imprisoned Chinaman. This woman wrote an anonymous note to Dr. Cantlie who was then living in London, went to his house near midnight, pushed the note under the door, rang the bell, and disappeared. As Dr. Cantlie says: "Had this humble woman failed in her purpose, the regeneration of China would have been thrown back indefinitely, for the last of the reformers would have lost his life and the Manchus would be still in power." This alludes to many of his revolutionary co-workers who had already been beheaded.

The note of the humble woman read:

"There is a friend of yours imprisoned in the Chinese Legation here since last Sunday; they intend sending him out to China, where it is certain they will hang him. It is very sad for the poor man, and unless something is done at once he will be taken away and no one will know it. I dare not sign my name, but this is the truth, so believe what I say. Whatever you do must be done at once, or it will be too late. His name, I believe, is Sin Yin Sin."

In a fever of anxiety Dr. Cantlie rushed at once to the head of the Marylebone police and thence to Scotland Yard. This was at 1:30 a. m. The police said it was none of their business, that he had done his duty by reporting the matter, and should go home and keep quiet. He called again next morning with Sir Patrick Manson (also a friend of Sun Yat Sen) and they were told that either a drunkard or a lunatic had made the same report during the previous night. The police advised them again to go home and keep quiet about the matter. They said they could do nothing as it did not concern them.

THEN the doctor bethought him of the English Foreign Office, and by getting in touch with a member of the staff there and notifying the newspapers, Sun Yat Sen was saved in the nick of time by the intervention of Lord Salisbury. In another twenty-four hours the dangerous lunatic of the Chinese Legation would have been transhipped to China for decapitation. It would be too long a story to tell of his numerous other miraculous deliverances. He ran the gauntlet of these ever-present perils with imperturbability. He had no thought of himself, only of the welfare of his country. To a friend who remonstrated with him for not taking greater precautions, he once said: "The cause will not be ruined by my death; everything is in order, my death will not affect it; the whole scheme is worked out to the most minute detail; the leader is appointed, the generals are ready, the troops are organized, and nothing that can happen to me will make any difference. A few years ago, my death would have been a misfortune, but not now."

WE can form some further estimate of the character of Sun Yat Sen from the biography written by Dr. Cantlie, as well as from the observations of Frederick McCormick who has lived in China the past twelve years and who has just written a book on "The Flowery Republic." Dr. Cantlie writes that he feels he has failed in the depiction of the character of "this extraordinary man"; that his respect and regard for him may appear to have warped his judgment, but that he has restrained and not exaggerated his feelings toward him. He goes on to say: "I have never known any one like Sun Yat Sen; if I were asked to name the most perfect character I ever knew, I would unhesitatingly name him." He describes how every one, children, servants and masters alike, conceived a deep regard for him. He speaks of his sweetness of disposition, his courtesy, his consideration for others, his interesting conversation, his gracious demeanor, his self-effacement, his seeming to be a being apart, consecrated for the work he had in hand. He had no care for personal honors, place, position, or reward. When the cable message came to him in Dr. Cantlie's home in England asking him to become President of the Chinese Republic he did not mention it for some time, and then only casually. The presidency might come and go—his country's regeneration was before everything.

Mr. McCormick interviewed Sun Yat Sen when he was President of China, and I will condense the description of his visit:

"I was astonished at finding no guards outside, no doorkeeper, and no usher. It was about two minutes before the President came in, attended by a secretary and an aide. We shook hands, he dismissed his attendants, and we sat down alone at the round table before the grate. The fire had gone out. The room was cold and I kept on my overcoat. He was dressed in a military suit of winter khaki without insignia. He was a little diffident, I thought because of his mixture of native reserve and foreign training. He smiled boyishly and somewhat sadly. He is forty-seven. He looked about that age, and I wondered how much or how little he might resemble in appearance, or possess the qualities of, the 'Heavenly Prince' or the founder of the Ming Dynasty and whatever other reformers and invaders in Eastern Asia have worked wonders such as he has worked. A half-sad smile played around his mouth, and his small stature added nothing to his impressiveness. It was somewhat strange, half disappointing, half wonderful. Here was the man who, it appeared, had done the one thing in all the world most needful. Everything about him was simple, and his manners took me off my guard. He was most like a simple boy. He seemed to be dreaming of some yet greater event, perhaps a yet greater fate which he saw dimly and was trying to make out. It was as though he felt a martyrdom, of which he was not fully conscious, hanging over him. I did not wish to leave him. There was no doubt of his magnetism."

At the ceremonies of the resignation of Sun Yat Sen as provisional President and the inauguration of Yuan Shih-Kai as President, the chairman of the Assembly, in a speech of eulogy of Sun Yat Sen, said that his services were an example of self-sacrifice and purity of purpose unparalleled in history, and that it was due solely to his magnanimity and modesty that North China and South China had become united in one great republic.

Shortly after this he retraced his route to Shanghai as an ordinary citizen. Mr. McCormick says of him:

"This man, unschooled in statecraft and having given his life to agitation, conspiracy, and the organization of rebellion, showed conspicuous gifts as the head of the Republic of China. Under the eyes of all mankind he was calm, self-sacrificing, hopeful. He was an extremist among revolutionaries. According to his own words, he would not hesitate to invoke the aid of every engine of warfare to attain the revolutionary aim of freeing his countrymen from the bondage of the past represented by Manchu rule. Yet his ideal was the attainment of this end without bloodshed. He has the best power of the agitator, and he is notably honest, making the kind of impression most likely to remain, that of sincerity and high purpose. He pursued his aim for twenty years undaunted, and then realized it, and his great services were recognized almost unanimously in his election to be the first President of his country. He gave himself a country and his country a government."

SINCE the inauguration of his successor, Yuan Shih-Kai, Chinese affairs have not moved smoothly. There has been further revolution, and it is difficult for outsiders to see clearly the drift of events. It is said that Yuan Shih-Kai thinks the ideal of a republic like that of the United States unattainable in his country and that he condemns Sun Yat Sen and his followers as visionaries to expect so much. On the other hand it is intimated that the present President is entrenching himself as a military despot with the object of founding a dynasty of his own. At any rate the meagre reports that come to us seem to show that he is usurping the functions of congress and taking the power into his own hands. The only news of Sun Yat Sen is that he is a fugitive, that he fled to Japan, that one hundred assassins were sent out from China to seek him out and rid the government of danger from that quarter. Another news item was to the effect that he was to be arrested for embezzlement of funds entrusted to him by patriots. Perhaps that aura of martyrdom of which he seemed to be dimly conscious bespeaks a swift end.

"Chill blow the winds of the world.
There are thorns and bruises for the feet,
And lurking shadows spreading snares;
And there are bitter herbs to eat.
The only home light shining far
Is the cold splendor of a star."

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