

Chefoo, China THORNTON WILDER

IT USED to be said that to have lived in China during those years between the Boxer Rebellion and the 1911 Revolution was to have enjoyed a foretaste of Heaven. Skilled and tireless servants could be engaged for six to ten dollars a month. There were superb cooks and inspired gardeners; there were tailors able to copy faithfully the fashion plates from Paris and London. International trade and diplomatic relations were expanded. Chinese officials had been rendered tractable by the “foreign devils.” In fact the Empress Dowager had finally deigned to accord ambassadorial rank to representatives from those late-appearing, those barely civilized powers of Europe and America. Vast new markets had been opened; money could be made easily. Clerks and accountants could be taught the methods of the western world, though the beads of the abacus continued to be heard clicking in the back rooms of offices. In the Imperial City and in the treaty ports the privileged were borne from place to place in the two most soothing conveyances obtainable since the womb: first, the sedan chair suspended from men’s shoulders; then—after the introduction of rubber tires—the jinrickisha. There was leisure for talk at the clubs on the Bunds, at the eternal tiffins, and teas, and dinners. There were numerous celebrations in the international compounds: Independence Day, Bastille Day, royal birthdays. There were boating parties, polo matches, and picnics “in the hills.” Even in the missionary compounds there were cricket games on St. George’s Day among the Anglicans and *Kaffeeklatsches* with the Lutherans and open-house concerts at the orphanages and institutions for the blind. “Old China hands” still refer to those days as sheer Heaven. “You didn’t have to raise a hand.” My own father—a rugged individualist from the state of Maine—returning to America after fifteen years was unable to tie his own shoes without a spasm of annoyance.

And yet:

There was another saying often heard up and down the China Coast: “Living ten years in China either makes or breaks a man.”

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My father as Consul-General had to ship home scores of "broken men," alive or dead, or to bury them in some potter's field. Any head-shaking tongue-clicking moralist (that is to say, any American) can see why living in this earthly paradise might lead a man to lose a grip on himself. But there were other elements in the China scene that contributed to breaking a man. There was the spectacle of omnipresent misery,—untended, ignored, and uncomplainingly endured.

To consider the second of these first:

A Scandinavian diplomat's wife wrote her sister: "We live a charmed life in the international city. There is no need for us to leave its enclosure. The tailors, the jewelers, the dealers in works of art bring their wares to our homes. Even when we drive out into the country we pass along a wide avenue shaded by great trees. Many of us have been here for years without advancing more than a few yards into the native city. Our husbands forbid us to enter it . . . Finally Lady B. and I rebelled. We made expeditions every Thursday morning. We selected certain trusted houseboys as guides and unnecessary guards . . . Oh, Marie! What shall I say? On one day we seemed to see mostly goitres and tumors; on another only leprosy and scrofula; and on another the *children*; and always emaciation, skeletal arms and legs, blindness—flies swarming upon the poor sufferers' eyes." Another testimony: a missionary's wife told my mother that when she arrived many years before in one of the treaty ports her life was made miserable by the sight of a group of old people and young women with babies who camped, night and day, before the barred gate of the compound where she lived. One evening, during her husband's absence and to the loud consternation of her servants, she directed that a dozen cups of condensed milk and a large platter of rice and dried fish be carried out to them. Within an hour a howling mob of hundreds had gathered before the gate. In the end the treaty port's police had to drive them away *with bamboo poles*. In the larger missionary compounds there were rice-kitchens, but doles were arranged under complicated systems. "Some of us have been destined to starve, some to eat." Even the bright young men sent out from Europe and America to work in the banks, import-export offices, and law firms—even the attractive young brides who came out in due time to

join them—could not long remain entirely unaware of the ocean of suffering around them. A slow creeping apprehension is more disintegrating than a brutal confrontation.

Consider then the human multitude in China.

Years later, in Algiers, during the Second World War, we found ourselves in a plague of locusts. We were cloaked and bonneted and shod in locusts; our jeeps careened from side to side in haystacks and puddings of locusts. We were filled with wonder at nature's fecundity. Yet what is many, what is few? What is large, what is small? We have been told that there are more stars in the firmament than all the men and women born into the world since its creation; more than all the locusts. Heraclitus said, "Man is the measure of all things." It is frightening to contemplate another measure; perhaps a star or an atom can be better said to be the measure of all things: it obscurely undermines a man's self-esteem. This multitude was another confrontation that tended to make or break men in China. New York or London was a larger city than Nanking or Foochow (not to consider Peking, where no reliable census has ever been or could ever be taken) but the Chinese population lives in the street, spills into the street. Even in the coldest weather it surges about you, it encumbers you, it is underfoot . . .

But that's not all. All those hundreds of thousands of eyes rest on you for a moment, really see you (you are the "foreign devil") and in those two glances is neither antagonism nor admiration nor even indifference,—there is a touch of curiosity and some amusement. There is something that is more chilling for an occidental. The Chinese have lived in this density of population for tens of centuries (even the villages convey a shoulder-to-shoulder density); their customs are fashioned by it; their religion has been moulded by it. Those glances reflect also the reason for the omnipresent untended misery: they devalue the importance of *any one individual life*.

Associated with my father's work in Shanghai was a delightful and thoughtful American, Judge Thayer of the International Court. Someone once asked him his opinion of that often quoted phrase about life in China either making or breaking a man.

"Well," said the Judge, turning his level quizzical gaze on the questioner, "living thirty-three years anywhere on the earth

either makes or breaks a man, doesn't it? Maybe China merely accelerates it."

Even small boys are affected by these confrontations.

In 1906 my father—through connections he had made at Yale College—was appointed American Consul-General in Hongkong, China. At the time of this appointment he was editor and owner of a newspaper in Madison, Wisconsin, which he had bought with borrowed money, a loan which he was still struggling to repay many years later. He took his wife and four children—another child was to be born four years later—across the Pacific Ocean on what was then a month's journey. Mrs. Wilder and the children were to enjoy the "sheer heaven" I have described for only six months. The educational opportunities in Hongkong appeared to my father to be unsatisfactory and he sent his family back to Berkeley, California. When he was transferred to Shanghai three years later some of us rejoined him. Thereafter like a chess-player he moved his wife and five children about the world, sending some to Europe, some to America, and some to north China—always in the interest of the young people's education.

My sister Charlotte and I were sent to the China Inland Mission Boys' and Girls' Schools at Chefoo in Shantung Province, on the coast some 450 miles north of Shanghai. All our fellow students were missionaries' children. Missionaries hated the consuls; consuls hated the missionaries. My father was the only American (or even European) consul within memory who admired, who venerated missionaries. The duties of a consul (apart from salvaging or burying human derelicts) were largely given over to ratifying contracts and facilitating international commerce. Consuls were selected "at home" for astute business sense, for an unsentimental attitude toward drifters and wastrels, and for representing their native lands' character as congenial and even convivial good fellows. Consuls hated the missionaries for their clamorous demands (missionaries could not see why the consuls should not personally relieve all China's sufferers from drought, flood, and famine), for their pride in their calling (it appeared to be arrogance), for their stern disapproval of consular ways (that is, smoking, drinking, card-playing, absenting themselves from church attendance, and

otherwise misrepresenting before the Chinese people the great countries from which they came), and for their passion for martyrdom,—in troubled times they had to be rescued by river gunboats, literally dragged from their besieged churches and compounds. The missionaries hated the consuls. When it became known up and down the Yangtse Kiang River that Dr. Wilder at Shanghai fell over himself in order to be serviceable in any possible way to those “noble Christian men and women,” there was great rejoicing. It was assuredly this reputation for serviceability that enabled him to have us enrolled in those schools. I suspect my father selected Charlotte and myself as the two of his children most in need of the edifying influences we would find there. Besides, the board and tuition was very cheap.

It was a good school. All the teachers and administrators were English or Scottish. Of the one hundred and twenty students in the Boys’ School one hundred were English, about a dozen were American; there were a few Scandinavians. Much attention was given to religion, but there was none of the “hell-fire” evangelism that I was later to encounter occasionally at Oberlin College and even at Yale. The background was not primarily of the Anglican Church but of those denominations they called “chapel,”—Methodist, Congregational, Presbyterian, and so on; hence there was little class-consciousness. In a history recently published dealing with Henry Luce and his publications the writer quotes from Luce’s letters telling of floggings and of that tyrannizing of older over younger boys that was called “fagging.” Harry was at the school longer than I was. I heard of only one flogging, before my time; a boy had stolen a watch. In the classes we were often given short written tests; the three students who received the lowest grades were thwacked smartly over the palm of the hand with a ruler. I had many occasions to compare my rising welts with those of my fellow-students.

It was a very English school, modeled on those “at home.” Games—cricket and soccer—were compulsory. Latin phrases abounded: permissions to leave the grounds were accorded us on *exeat* days. We were addressed by our last names; if a number of students bore the same family name they were known as Smith Major, Smith Minor, Smith Tertius . . . Quartus . . . Quintus . . . and so on, to Smith Minimus. The sons of an

eminent medical missionary in Peking, Dr. George Wilder, arrived at the school before and after me. I was Wilder Minor. Wilder Major and Wilder Tertius were to be my best friends among my fellow students, as well as five years later at Oberlin College.

All the students (and teachers) had nicknames. I was called "Towser," though the nickname at home had been Todger.

Every Sunday the students of both schools marched into the great city of Chefoo,—two by two, in long "crocodiles," as the English say—to attend the Church of England services there. Sunday is not a day of rest for the Chinese. The long procession was often held up in the narrow streets by a blockage of one kind or another. There we saw on either side: the goitres, the tumors, the abscesses, the flaking white stumps of a leper's arms and legs, the blind, the skeletal children . . .

The life of a missionary in China is a difficult one. The missionary must be an exemplary Christian, an exemplary representative of the nation from which he came, an exemplary representative of that triumph of human development WESTERN CIVILIZATION. In addition—following the steps of St. Paul—he should be an inspired orator in an appallingly difficult language, and a profound student of the Chinese thought-world, the Chinese *ethos*. Many missionaries labored for years without making a single convert other than those unhappy adherents they had rescued from destitution and who were universally called "bowl-of-rice converts." The missionary was fortified throughout these disappointments by his sense of his mission. He had received a "call" to preach to those who walk in darkness. Now there is no doubt that there is much that the great Chinese people can learn from the Christian dispensation,—but how? Occasionally there appeared a missionary, a joyous man, who learned and reveled in the language, who had slowly and wonderingly entered into that subtle, disciplined, tradition-buttressed world: the Chinese mind. I have known some of these men and their families; I have attended their churches.

The majority of the American missionaries came from small colleges and seminaries in our middle southern states. Their religion turned largely upon SIN. The early translators of the Bible into Chinese found difficulty in translating that word. The Chinese knew all about wickedness and injustice, but when

these "foreign devils" harangued them from street corners, beseeching them to confess their sins to God and be saved, they could only listen with blank wonder. The Chinese are not introspective. They had not diverted irrigation canals; they had not "stripped" copper coins; they had not stolen their neighbor's piglets. My father was once rendered very angry by a chance remark of a fellow-consul who held that "the missionaries had introduced sin into China." Only an occasional missionary was able to render Christianity *attractive* to his native listeners, to himself, or to his family.

I was assigned to Room 7, North Corridor. The room was on the second floor; its large window looked on the school's paved quadrangle; it contained four beds,—all for Americans. I settled in easily, for novelty quickens rather than intimidates me. In class work Americans were at a disadvantage. English students begin the study of Greek, Latin, algebra and geometry several years before Americans do; moreover they were well advanced in those basic studies, the history and geography of Great Britain and its empire. We were frequently rebuked and derided for speaking the English language incorrectly. We gave the impression of being stupid, ill-educated, and uncouth. There was little possibility of our ever, ever growing up to be gentlemen.

I was introduced to two of my roommates, a third arrived a week later. Wilkins was a fat boy, easily excited by anything unusual, given alternately to giggling and bursting into tears. Like many of the smaller boys he was often poignantly homesick. They missed those compounds in remote stations, those parents who had received so awe-inspiring a Call, those amahs of boundless understanding, devotion, and noble firmness. Smith Sextus was gloomy, bilious, and very religious. Fortunately for me, they were loquacious; they introduced me to all the customs, taboos, written and unwritten laws of the community. They put me in possession of the idiosyncrasies of our overseers,—the masters, the prefects. Two weeks later, delayed by the mumps, our fourth member arrived,—Dawson Minor, like myself a "new boy." His older brother was seventeen and had been in the school for five years. He was in the sixth form, a prefect and a pillar of the school, a captain in soccer and even in cricket. He took his turn in conducting prayer meetings,

impressively. He would have been Head Boy, if he had been a little better in his studies and if he had spoken the English language more intelligibly, for the Dawson brothers were of Tennessee stock and their speech was difficult for any of us. They were tall and knotty. Dawson Major was a model boy; Dawson Minor, fifteen, was of a very different sort. He had a square, uncheering face. His eyes weighed appraisingly, even distrustfully, everything that was said to him. There was an insolence and a suggestion of violence under his control.

After lunch the students were granted a twenty-five minute break in the day's routine during which we were permitted to return to our rooms. We entered Room 7 to discover Dawson Minor standing in tense fury before our house mother, Miss Cunningham, who was unpacking his suitcase. He had not foreseen this procedure. Most boys have secrets—secret treasures—that are not to be revealed to the prying adult: fossil shells, a faded admission card to the St. Louis World's Fair, pages torn from the Sears-Roebuck catalogue displaying unobtainable delights in shotguns or Brownie cameras, a dog-eared copy of *My Forty Years as a Wild Animal Trainer*—fetishes for comfort in a dark hour.

“Dawson Minor, these are your roommates. This is Smith Sextus and this is Wilkins. We all wish they were better students, don't we? But they seem to teach things differently in America. I suppose that's because it's a *new* country. And this is Wilder Minor. He's only been here a fortnight and we hope he'll learn our ways.—You may sit down, you other boys.—Now let's see what your dear mother has sent. I hope she read carefully the list of recommendations . . . American mothers seem to have their own ideas. I don't know why that is. Oh, dear me, I find only five undergarments; and I see only *five* pairs of stockings . . . There's been a good deal of mending here, hasn't there? . . . I hope they hold together in the laundry. . . . Collars, yes. Shorts for games. Singlets.—Bless my soul, what are these? Look, boys,—*beads*! Really, Dawson Minor, at the *Boys' School* we don't play with beads. Beads! I think you'll outgrow them soon. Ha-ha-ha-ha!”

Miss Cunningham had managed in a very short time to disparage his mother and his native land, to expose his poverty, to

cast doubt on his manliness and to violate a sanctuary in his heart. The prayer beads were a gift from his amah at a leave-taking of all but unbearable pain.

"Why, they're *Chinese!* Are you sure they're clean? One can never be too careful. You must know that we have very little to do with the Chinese at this school, Dawson Minor. All of us—and all of your parents, except Wilder Minor's—are here to *help* the Chinese, to show them the Truth and the Way, but . . ."

And so on.

Many boys and girls of that age, all over the world, go through hell a part of the time in their relations with adults, another part of the time in their relation with their coevals. Hell.

The moment after Miss Cunningham left the room Dawson Minor went to the window, overlooking the large square that served for recreation between classes. It was enclosed on three sides by the main building of the school,—classrooms, assembly hall, dining room and kitchen on the first floor; dormitories, linen rooms, and so on, on the second. Opposite our window the square was bounded by a high white-washed stone-and-rubble wall; beyond the wall the ground rose toward the Girls' School and the mountains. Standing at the window Dawson Minor could see at his right the great entrance gate. Without turning his head he asked, "Is that big door locked at night?"

"Yes."

"Did any of you ever get over the wall?" None of us answered. "Is there some other door you can get out of at night?"

Wilkins asked, "Where would you go?"

"To town."

"Even in the day you're not allowed to go to town. Even on *excet* days you're not allowed to go farther than the playing fields."

"You don't know anybody that ever went to town at night?" The idea was so preposterous that we didn't even shake our heads. He continued addressing Wilkins. "How long have you been at this school?"

"Three years."

"You don't know *anybody* who got out at night?"

Wilkins was so intimidated that his voice cracked. "My first year a boy was caned for even going downstairs at night. In front of the whole school."

“How caned?” Wilkins leaned over and made a gesture of lowering his trousers.

“What was he doing downstairs?”

“He tried to get in the kitchen.”

“Don’t you get enough to eat here?”

We all nodded slowly and gravely. Again Wilkins piped up. “He said he had to have a lot of treacle and sulphur. He had worms.”

Dawson Minor’s eyes kept examining the room. “What time do they turn the lights out?”

“Nine-thirty.”

“Do the masters walk up and down at night and look in the rooms?”

“There’s a master on duty; he sleeps in the room down there. They change every week. Some masters try to catch you. You get a demerit even if you whisper.”

Again Dawson Minor strolled to the window, his hands in his pockets, whistling. (Students received two demerits for whistling indoors, four for putting their hands in their pockets.) He said slowly and chillingly: “Did you ever hear of people that walk in their sleep? I walk in my sleep. When I was at the Kuling School I walked in my sleep a lot.”

Smith Sextus who had listened to this talk with growing resentment declared belligerently, “You didn’t go to the Kuling School.”

“Yes, I did. A business man in Nanking had a kid who had fits. He paid my father to send me to the Kuling School with him to watch him when he was sick. I went there two years.”

The school for boys at Kuling was a very different institution from ours at Chefoo. It was situated at a fashionable summer resort in the hills far from the coast. The cost of board and tuition was said to be *ten* times higher than ours. The majority of the students were American, drawn from the homes of diplomats, oil men, and import-export men. Most of the students were being prepared for entrance into American universities. Religious exercises were limited to one hour on Sunday. Athletic games were properly coached to resemble struggles to the death. Very little was known about it at Chefoo. It was thought to be worldly, godless, and invested with glamour.

Smith Sextus returned to the attack with one more sneer. "Why would you want to go into the city at night?"

Dawson Minor was at his best under challenge. A great actor. He turned, took his time, and replied coolly, "Why, to make money, of course."

A Tennessee wildcat.

All the boys—to a varying extent—waged an unremitting war against the masters, and vice versa. Because we were all, in both camps, of English or Scottish stock, the contest turned on the burning issues of FAIR PLAY,—the gift to civilization of our race. But fair play is not as self-evident a code of behavior as it is generally believed to be. Justice, Honor, and Conscience may be implanted by God in every human being, but they are certainly interpreted, shaped and trimmed differently by environment, social class, private interest, and individual condition. Adolescents develop a fanatical idea of what is "fair." Adults, whom experience has taught that this ideal is at best an exhausting accommodation, have the authority to impose their convenient interpretations on the young. In short ALL ADULTS CHEAT. The result is that all adolescents brood over their wrongs, arm themselves for resistance, and seize every opportunity for retaliatory "foul play." Foul play is permissible to victims of foul play. Most boys are able to estimate quickly how far another boy has progressed in his accommodation to the unfairness of adults—including one's parents. It was soon obvious to us that Dawson Minor was a seasoned veteran in that unremitting war.

In the limited time that was accorded us for desultory conversation the American boys tended to associate together. Dawson Minor let the conversation flow about him unheeding. We Americans were deeply engaged in the matter as to where we were to go to college "in the states." It was all settled that Wilder Major and Wilder Tertius were to go to Oberlin College; others were to go to Berea, to Claremont; Dawson Major was to attend the college and divinity school from which his father had graduated; Harry Luce and I were to go to Yale.

For several weeks Dawson Minor behaved with the circumspection proper in a new boy. Because of those deficiencies I

have mentioned he was put back into the lowest forms in certain subjects. He was brilliant in English composition and spelling, in "Bible," and "athletics," in arithmetic (he even mastered quickly those tormenting problems in pounds, shillings, and pence); yet he calculated to a nicety the degree of dullness that became his situation. He avoided association with his important older brother. He made a favorable impression. He afforded happy opportunities for the masters to score off him. In Room 7 he proved to be a fairly companionable roommate. He took no undue advantage of his seniority. During the limited free time accorded to us we generally found him lying on his bed studying ("boning up on") Latin and Greek. He took little part in our excited talk about games or food or the unfairness of masters or the cost and quality of the products at the school's candy store or "tuck shop." We were puppies; he was a huge, indifferent, unsmiling mastiff. We were never able to forget for long, however, that first alarming conversation. From time to time, with apparent casualness, he asked us about our homes, our proficiency in Chinese, what we planned to do when we left Chefoo. We knew well that everything he said and did was related to some plan, some Grand Plan.

For several weeks I was the only one in the room who was aware that he prowled at night. Later I learned, from him, the stages in his campaign. He studied the behavior and habits of the successive masters on night duty. He satisfied himself that none of them ever turned a flashlight on the sleeping students after ten-thirty. He went downstairs several nights a week as practice runs. The next problem that faced him was that of external doors and windows. The masters and all who had charge of us had tea—that unalterable, sacred institution—at four-thirty. We had supper at six-thirty. We came in from games or recreation at five-thirty. Dawson Minor found ways of returning to the main building at five. It was then that, ever so casually, he examined the windows and shutters in the long assembly room, in the classrooms, in the piano practice room, in the tuck shop. The building was old and aged by extreme alternations of humid heat and bitter cold. It has been often said that to the impassioned will nothing is impossible. It stimulates the imagination, nourishes both audacity and patience, and sustains endurance. In the gardeners' and caretakers'

shed (tents and chairs for prize-giving day, wheelchairs for invalids, old cricket bats and wickets) he found a screw-driver. He found a strong wrench that could twist eroded latches. He strolled into forbidden territory, into the Headmaster's office, the faculty's cloakroom, the ladies' sittingroom: windows, shutters, latches, and locks.

By October 15 he had found—or rendered practicable—three avenues of egress and ingress.

One night in early November he spent three hours in the native city of Chefoo. He repeated the visit a week later. Thoughtfully considered, these were notable achievements. The next step was to make money; but, first there was something else he must do.

He must tell someone about it.

Men do not climb the Himalayas or discover the source of the Nile for their own private pleasure or even for the benefit of mankind. In human life the reward conferred upon feats of daring and ingenuity is the admiration of their fellow men: its name is Glory. Dawson Minor felt a great need for an audience of at least *one*.

His eyes rested speculatively on his roommates. We were a sorry lot. We were anxiously law-abiding, meek, and indubitably "good." No adventurer would dream of confiding in Wilkins. Nor in Smith Sextus, who detested Dawson Minor. There remained Wilder Minor, but Wilder Minor was light-minded; he enjoyed everything; he thought everything was funny. There was the danger that Wilder Minor might not be impressed.

In the meantime I had contrived too—though less ambitiously—to leave the bounds of our compound and to "go to China." On several afternoons a week we were all required to take part in compulsory athletics, cricket or soccer; on Wednesday afternoons, however, we were permitted to engage in some exercise of our choosing, tennis, running, jumping, swimming in season, or "rounders." I put in a request to pursue cross-country running. This privilege was open only to older boys of proven reliability, but it was accorded to me, probably because of my father's position. I gave my solemn promise not to linger in the villages, not to fall into conversation with the "natives," not to touch the offerings on the graves,—simply to complete

the three-mile course and return to the school. This was delightful. On leaving the great gate of our quadrangle one turned left, ascended the slope, passed the tennis courts, passed the high walls surrounding the Girls' School, and reached the country road that ran level under the mountain. It ran through intensively cultivated fields and past farmhouses—every farmhouse is a family village; above all, it ran among many graves. These were upright inscribed slabs, graceful *stelae*. At the base of many of them were small altars or thrones, some of them in the shape of primitive houses surrounded by offerings in bright colored paper and festooned with streamers invoking the dead. The seacoast of Shantung is almost treeless, but at the mile-and-a-half turn-around point of my course was a fine grove of sycamores and gingko trees enclosing a semicircle of noble tombs. This I called the Grove of the Ancestors. Long distance running has little resemblance to the shorter heats; it is solitary and ruminative. Already at that age I had the notion that I would be a writer. It is well known that writers require long stretches of time alone,—to think. I thought throughout the entire course, but I thought best in the Grove.

One afternoon I was resting there, sitting on the ground with my back against a tree. I was not even thinking, for I had fallen asleep. I woke abruptly to find Dawson Minor sitting opposite me.

“Oh!—Hello!!” I said.

“Hello!”

“Did you get permission for cross-country?”

“I'm supposed to be at hurdles.”

This was the first of many conversations in the Grove and it was there that I first became aware of Dawson Minor's grin. In the School he seldom smiled and then only in a superior removed way. Here—particularly when he had something outrageous to say or when, as on this occasion, he knew that he was not wanted—he resorted to a broad grimace. At first it seemed to have nothing behind it except brazen impertinence. I wrote in my journal that it was like the reflection of a winter sun on a sheet of polished tin. I was to understand later that it was a mask to conceal despair. We had no liking for one another but each saw in the other someone to contend with, to explore,—like dogs of different breeds.

We sat in silence.

Presently an elderly man entered the Grove. He bowed to us gravely, his hands clasped within the sleeves of his jacket. Dawson Minor rose—as any Chinese boy would do in the presence of a senior—and saluted him with great propriety. They held a long conversation. The old man seemed to be explaining the inscription on the central monument. When he had finished, Dawson Minor folded his hands; lowered his head several times, then, raising it, declaimed in a high singsong nasal voice what must surely have been a prayer. The old man took formal leave of us and returned to his village.

“What was that, Pepper?” (By this time we had acquired nicknames. Dawson Minor had introduced from American slang the word “pep,” which led to his being called “Pepper.” I was called Towser.)

“Whenever any ‘foreign devils’ come here, the village sends someone to keep an eye on them. A few years ago some boys from the School kicked up an awful mess here.”

“Was that a prayer you said?”

“Sort of.”

“Who taught it to you?”

“My amah.”

Silence. The grimace.

“The same amah that gave you the beads?”

“Yes.”

“What was her name?”

“Go Po.”

“Do you . . . do you *believe* in it?”

He shrugged his shoulders, looked about a moment and then said to me with the greatest directness, “Everything Chinese is good; everything American and English is sickening.”

I rose, grunted something, shook my feet preparatory to running, and started toward the road.

“What did you say?” he asked sharply.

“Think what you like. Say what you like, Pepper. But remember this: I’m not eight years old. Don’t talk to me like I was.—It’s late. You’d better run back the short way by the bathhouse.”

I looked back at him. The grin had disappeared from his face. He was staring at me with a sort of fierceness, struggling with himself. Finally he said, with a stammer in his excitement,

“Last . . . last night I was three hours in the city . . . and that was the third time.”

“Dawson, you’re crazy as a coot. Why do you do it? You’ll get caught and sent home.”

The joyless grin returned in strength and he dashed past me down the hill.

We exchanged few words in Room 7. Wilkins and Smith Sextus were a roomful in themselves. One morning at the washstands Wilkins whispered to me, “I think Dawson has been walking in his sleep a lot.”

“Well, if I were you, I’d keep it under my hat, Beanie. If any trouble comes, you don’t want to be a part of it. The less you say about it, the better off you’ll be.”

Fortunately, Smith Sextus slept and snored through everything.

The following Wednesday Dawson Minor was sitting in the Grove of the Ancestors when I arrived.

“Have you been making any money, Pepper?” No answer. “What is it,—opium? . . . Gambling? . . . Fortune-telling? . . . I know what it is! It’s snake-oil medicine. You’re going to get found out and sent home. I don’t know about your father and mother, but most fathers and mothers would just about die. And we up in our room are going to get into a mess of trouble too. ‘Trees’ [our Headmaster Dr. MacCartney] will call us into his office and ask us a thousand questions. Maybe I’ll be sent home because I didn’t run and tell him that you walked in your sleep. I don’t want to know anything. I don’t want to tell a pack of lies.”

My tirade made Pepper very happy. To him this was the first whiff of glory.

“What are you so crazy about money for?”

“If you have money, you can do anything.”

I rose and shook my shoes. “Like what?” I asked.

“Like going to Harvard,” he said passionately. “Like curing leprosy. Like . . . like preventing those floods. What’s the matter with you? Can’t you see that money can do anything?”

“You’re crazy,” I said. “You’re crazy as a mad dog.”

I started down the hill.