

ernmental organization by at once hammering nails into the pole. It was close to their laundry, and served admirably for the clothes-line, a bamboo tied at one end with a string to a nail in the pole and the other end stuck through the paper in the window of the telegraph operator's apartment. But this is nothing. Years ago, when the telegraph was first laid down, the people took turns to displace the wires and sell them for their trouble, and to chop the poles up for firewood. It continued for a considerable period, until an offender—or one whom it was surmised had done this or would have done it if he could—had his ears cut off, and was led over the main road to the capital, to be admired by any compatriot contemplating a deal in wiring or timber used for telegraphic communication purposes.

Just below the town the river ran peacefully down a gradual incline. I decided that a comfortable seat under a tree, spending an hour in preparing this copy, would be more pleasant than moping about a noisome and stench-ridden inn, providing precious little in the way of entertainment for the foreigner. Next door a wedding party was making the afternoon hideous with their gongs and drums and crackers, and everywhere the usual hue and cry went abroad because a European was spending the day there.

I imparted to my man my intentions for the afternoon. Immediately preparations were set on foot to get me down by the river, and it was publicly announced to the townspeople. The news ran throughout the town, that is Hwan-lien-p'u's one little narrow street, a sad mixture of a military trench and a West of England cobbled court. And instead of going alone to my shady nook by that silvery stream, I was accompanied by nine adult members of the unemployed band, three boys, and sundry stark-naked urchins who seemed to be without home or habitation. One of these specimens of fleeting friendship was one-eyed, and a diseased hip rendered it difficult for him to keep pace with us; one was club-footed, one hair-lipped fellow had only half a nose, and they were nearly all goitrous. As I write now these people, curious but not uncouth, are crouched around me on their haunches, after the fashion of the ape, their more Darwinian-evolved companion and his shorthand notes being admired by an open-mouthed crowd. Down below my horse is entertaining the more hilarious of the party in his tantrums with the man who is trying to wash him—

CHAPTER XXI

The mountains of Yuen-nan. Wonderful scenery. Among the Mohammedans. Sorry scene at Ch'u-tung. A hero of a horrid past. Infinite depth of Chinese character. Mule falls one hundred and fifty yards, and escapes unhurt. Advice to future travelers. To Shayung. We meet Tibetans on the mountains. Chinese cruelty. Opium smoker as a companion. Opium refugees. One opinion only on the subject. Mission work among smokers and eaters.

Mere words are a feeble means to employ to describe the mountains of Yuen-nan.

As I start from Hwan-lien-p'u this morning, to the left high hills are picturesquely darkened in the soft and unruffled solemnity of their own still unbroken shade. Opposite, rising in pretty wavy undulation, with occasional abruptions of jagged rock and sunken hollow, the steep hill-sides are brought out in the brightest coloring of delicate light and shade by the golden orb of early morn; towering majestically sunwards, sheer up in front of me, high above all else, still more sombre heights stand out powerfully in solemn contrast against the pale blue of the spring sky, the effect in the distance being antithetical and weird, with the magnificent Ts'ang Shan⁵⁸ standing up as a beautiful background of perpendicular white, from whence range upon range of dark lines loom out in the hazy atmosphere. From the extreme summit of one snow-laden peak, whose white steeple seems truly

⁵⁸ The range of mountains which I had skirted since leaving Tali-fu.—E.J.D.