

hour. Her sons must sustain her. A true man would not marry—if he knew it would open a fatal leak in his mother's heart. That is all—"

The Minister's quiet words were uttered with the intent to kill romance in the soul of Yuan.

"It is a very effective sentiment," I said, "but I should have to know the Mother. I do not believe in the motherhood of China, because—you have said it: 'We do not listen to women in China.' You must listen to women before you can have a national motherhood."

"Your view is interesting," he said. "China has held on for centuries, clung to types," I added. "You have your coolies, your merchants, and your students. Each class has its subdivisions more rigid than our whole social scheme. The wife of a scavenger-coolie must breed a scavenger-coolie—and her daughter, and her daughter. If she should breed a merchant, there would be a scandal among the scavengers. The whole class would quiver with hatred and rebellion. You animalize your women so they will breed true—an animalized society. You raise a great man artificially, with infinite care—and then sacrifice him, stop his evolution, prevent his blood from lifting his race, all to preserve these ancient abominations—"

"I wish to understand about raising a great man artificially," the Minister said.

"A man born of a woman whose soul has never breathed—a woman to whom the most obvious fact of all existence is that she is a racial inferior to man; that her body is an electrode of evil desires; that she is a spiritual nonentity, a karmic retribution upon her father, in her not being born a boy—I say, a man born of such a woman and fathered from babyhood to maturity, is artificially raised."

"Thank you—I see clearly your point of view—" Shan Wo Kai replied. Then with a gentleness that was consummate, and in less than a thousand words, he laid open America—American women, American system and manhood—left her down, veins open, and virulent septicæmia set in. His remarks were not only poisoned, but poised. Yet it was so true a picture of our national life that a man of vision could read the whole story in every issue of every great American daily.

"I realize what you have seen," I answered. Certain women are unlovely here—apes of the worst of men, bold, loud-voiced, much given to brutal things, and much do they suffer, but they are awake. Strange in this man's world, but awake; a few are making weird uses of their freedom, but they are realizing their freedom. It is the women who have shown us the value of men. Women should know, for theirs is the agony of bringing forth men. This sense of value becoming a national conception will make war impossible. . . . Your women in the mass have not risen to the conception of bringing forth men. Your society everywhere reflects the de-humanized non-resistance of the Chinese women. It is like the hand of death upon the whole country's manhood. Who has not seen your spiritless acceptance of a wrong in the coming of the Allies? Men must have courage from the women. Courage does not come from women reconciled to be a mere physical usage. If in America we lost as many cattle by a river running wild, as you lost farmers recently in an overflow of the Huang ho, America would rise to prevent a recurrence with millions in appropriation and the best engineers of the world. The meaning all this that America, through free women, is breeding individuals. We count individuals lost in every calamity. To you the loss is but a number representing types. The spiritual hope of the world lies in the individual. He will make the brotherhood. Forgive me for saying so much, but a great love-mating is more important to the good of the world, than the abstractions, China and America."

Both Chinese were smiling. I had a peculiar sense of my words striking harmless against a bony wall. "Perhaps now we had better take the case of Yuan in its more intimate aspect," said the Minister.

I bowed.

"I speak with intense admiration for your conceptions," he said, "but I am a servant of China. Yuan is trained to

be. Your country would despise this woman; China would despise Yuan Kang Su—if they mated."

I bowed.

"Five years ago, Japan gave us a series of severe defeats," Shan Wo Kai said with bitterness. "The Allies have just now given us another. You attribute this to our national cowardice—which is far from proven to my satisfaction. Rather, as I see, it is modern warfare against non-equipment and disorganization. You who have travelled so extensively in Asia will grant China's superiority to Japan mentally and morally. And yet it was the young Japanese students who went abroad learning the Western ways that enabled them to overwhelm us five years ago. These young men will lift Japan to the first flight among the Powers. You have heard of the big part played by the Japanese infantry—among the so-called Allies?"

"Yes."

"It was the work of the Japanese youngmen. They will furnish breathing places for their crowded people."

"But you have told me that you despise war and commerce," I declared—"these matters which Japan is learning from the West. Yet, you would use your finest young men to copy Japan's copy of the West. China would use my friend Yuan to learn and become expert in war and commerce—the bane of Europe and the madness of America. Where is your superiority to Japan and to the West? You will be at the heels of Japan, but fifty years behind Europe and America in the national psychological agony of a nation passing through, first, its military—and then, its commercial stage of growth. Europe has developed monsters in this art of War, and America has developed monsters of Commerce. These men are self-magnified to show the horror they reek with to the few who will see. They are Nature's correctives—I pray not futile ones. And yet you would follow us. You would use Yuan Kang Su as one of the young enlighteners to carry this ignis fatuus back to the Orient. You would deny him children and break a woman's heart, so that he may take to China the rankest toxins of these civilizations—that you both despise. . . . You must see, you, princes among men, that the imitator must always copy; that what one race has martyred itself to learn, cannot be instantly assimilated by another. You must see that by the time you have your copied explosives and war-engines brought to a finer point than we have ever brought them—we will be able to poison your rain-clouds, and from afar make deadly the air of your cities. You must see that metal cannot master mind. . . . If we could only see so well and clearly—that mind cannot master spirit—"

At this moment, certain memorable telegrams were brought in.

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Imagine how the face of a mountain, seen from a great distance on a gray day, would change, if as you watched, a light rain began on the slopes. So it was with the face of Yuan, as he read his telegram—a scarcely perceptible alteration, as if his features were withdrawn a little in a mist. The Ambassador was deeply occupied with the other messages. It suddenly occurred to me that our conference was at an end; that I was very tired, and far from the Other Room.

Now, the answer on the part of China which I had expected that moment from Shan Wo Kai—did not come until months afterward.

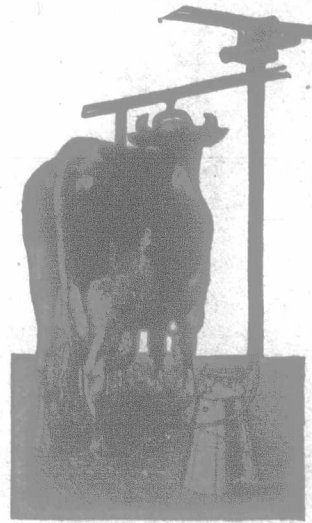
I was miserable. I had talked too much. The Minister had hardly unmasked his batteries. His first and last words after the receipt of the telegrams was honor for me and regret for the necessary ending of the talk. . . . Yuan, who could not leave, had rung for a cab. He said that he would call at my hotel early, and pressed my hand. . . . I remember looking away to the north and seaward from my hotel window that night; thinking of the advantages of saying little at all times. I felt that I had done Yuan little good.

It helped me to remember, however, certain walled cities of China—where

*Shan Wo Kai was speaking thus of Japan long before the Powers granted her promise and potency. This was four years before the Russo-Japanese war. America at this time was inclined to regard the fine showing of the Japanese with the Allied Armies, as a dramatic bit of good fortune.

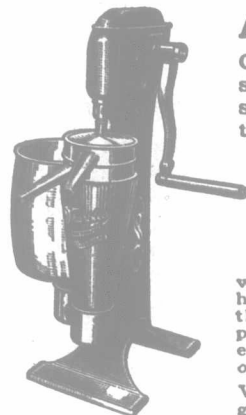
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