

young wife's flight, and, needless to say, he was not long mourned by Er Ku Niang.

Providence having settled her troubles so very satisfactorily, Er Ku Niang decided not to become a Christian, but to remain for a time at least in their company. Being a widow, she was privileged to give service and she soon found employment with the foreigners whom she had so frequently derided. Poor little ignorant Er Ku Niang. The world was too kind to her, its flattery too open and she soon held ideas far beyond her station. It was impossible for her young mistress to convince her that she should pray to the true God, who would change her heart into something sweet and humble.

'I don't want a sweet and humble heart,' she would reply; 'I feel that I was not born to serve, and I mean to marry an official with, oh, plenty of money. Then I shall be a lady.'

Despite these worldly ambitions, Er Ku Niang suddenly fell in love with Chang Er, the cook of the place. This in itself was perhaps indicative of her proper sphere in society. But against this feeling for Chang Er, which had come so swiftly into her heart, the Chinese girl raged and struggled.

In the first place, Chang Er was a cook and a Christian, and the latter she would never become. So to strengthen her resolutions, she bought some paper gods and pasted them up in her room. This room was not far distant from Chang Er's kitchen, and Er Ku Niang always burned her incense when the wind blew his way. Sometimes, too, she prayed long and shrilly, but only when she heard Chang Er singing his hymns. Those prayers always silenced Chang Er, a fine manly fellow, who, at these times, would set his lips and pray silently for Er Ku Niang, but not to her gods. As much as she rebelled against this tender feeling in her heart, so was she angered with Chang Er for his indifference toward her.

'I shall never marry any but a Christian girl,' he told his mother, who took delight in repeating the remark to Er Ku Niang, for the old woman feared that the young widow thought herself irresistible. Also, like mothers with an only son, she strongly suspected that Er Ku Niang was one of many in love with Chang Er.

But she was almost deceived by the girl's fine indifference, for she answered sweetly: 'Oh, as to that, Christian should wed with Christian; now I could never be happy with anyone but a worshipper of the true gods of my own people.'

But when she went to her room that night she threw herself face downward on the brick floor in front of her paper gods. There she lay for a long time, muttering prayers that it was well Chang Er could not hear; prayers filled with bitter execration of her own wayward heart and pleadings for strength to follow her own will.

She arose somewhat comforted, but the next day, when she saw Chang Er lift a wounded bird from the ground and stroke it tenderly she fled again trembling to her room. This time she did not beseech her gods, but with frantic haste tore them from the wall and stamped upon them in a frenzy of rage and desperation.

Then suddenly she grew calm, standing a little shipwrecked mariner in the waste of her paper gods; an instant she hesitated, then dropped upon her knees, as she

had often seen her mother do, and for the first time in her life she prayed:

'Jesus, Jesus, help me; help me!' Only this, but when she had done a strange peace filled her wayward heart. It was not long, however, before she was angry with herself for turning to the foreigner's God, and she resolved to leave the place where she was so unhappy.

Chang Er overheard her telling her mistress that she must go, and with a strangely sinking heart, he saw the baby Er Ku Niang had cared for bury its little head in her bosom.

'She has a good heart, for little children love her and I love her,' he said to himself, and was very miserable.

He sat sorting beans at the corner of the house, when Er Ku Niang walked by toward the gate.

'Good-bye!' she called gaily, with a clear little laugh, but her eyes were red.

In answer Chang Er raised his head, looked at her searchingly, and said: 'Why will you struggle against your heart, which was meant to be good and kind?'

'You mean, why will I not become a Christian?' she cried, flushing angrily. 'Why should I when I hate them all?'

'You do not hate them all. You do not hate me, Er Ku Niang,' said Chang Er sternly, 'and some day you will long to acknowledge the true God.'

'Never!' cried the girl, trembling for fear her secret was discovered. 'Never, and you will be sorry you are a Christian in the days that all say are coming. Why, all the foreigners and their followers are to be cast into the sea—and that day of wrath is soon to be here. But,' she added, mockingly, 'you will doubtless renounce your Jesus when trial comes, so I need not fear for you!' And with this shaft she fled, leaving Chang Er staring sorrowfully after her.

From that day on the devil seemed to control Er Ku Niang. She refused to live with her mother, but went instead to an old heathen aunt's, and there she mocked the Jesus sect to her heart's content; not that, either, for content and Er Ku Niang were strangers.

So two months passed, and daily rumors of coming massacre of foreigners and Christians filled the city. Gradually Er Ku Niang's manner changed; she seemed restless, and finally one day informed her aunt that she would return to her mother that night. Night came, but before the sun had dropped behind the western hills riot and bloodshed ran like wildfire through the city of Peking.

Er Ku Niang's aunt was paralyzed with fear; she suddenly remembered that Er Ku Niang's mother was a Christian, and so thrust the daughter out upon the street, bidding her seek her own mother and not to endanger other people's lives because she was the daughter of a vile Christian.

It was dark when Er Ku Niang staggered forth, but she could see her way quite plainly, for the sky above her was lurid with flames. She was glad—yes, glad to be free, but when she saw the great flames rushing upward from the mission where her mother lived, she wrung her hands in agony and turned in another direction. Where should she go and to whom? Ah, it was of Chang Er she thought. Chang Er, the despised Christian. She seemed borne on a great wave of love in the direction of the place where he had lived.

Although she kept in by-streets and al-

leys, she saw the flames growing brighter, smelled the smoke, heard the crackle of the burning, mingled with the fierce cries of the mob of Boxers, busy with their horrid work.

But, worse than all, every now and then there smote her ear the moan of fugitives and death shrieks of the overtaken. She crouched once in a niche in a wall, and she prayed to her mother's God. While there fled by her young men with aged parents on their backs; wives with little children on their breasts. Sometimes husbands were with them, but often not. And sometimes a stray child ran by, shrieking for mother or father. Many of these poor victims were cut and bleeding. Er Ku Niang fainted once when a young girl fell dead and almost at her feet, but she recovered and turned from this sad sight back to scanning each pursued one as she fled past. No, Chang Er was not there, and Er Ku Niang, desperate beyond control, fled out into the deluge of fire and blood to seek him.

As she was rushing toward the danger instead of away, she was allowed to pass unmolested. Her garments were torn; her hair hung about her fear-distorted face; she shrieked as she ran, and so wild she looked that many superstitiously thought her a demon sent out to encourage the human sacrifices.

Headless of dangers, the girl fled in the direction of Chang Er's old home and suddenly she met him, face to face, staggering along, his aged mother on his back. But before she had time to speak his name a huge knife cut his mother from his back and cleft the gray head in twain. Then she saw the man fall upon Chang Er and struggle with him.

With a cry of love and anguish Er Ku Niang rushed forward and flung herself between them. The Boxer fell back and Er Ku Niang recognized a distant cousin. They stared dumbly at each other, while Chang Er cried aloud one great cry that thrilled Er Ku Niang to the heart.

'Er Ku Niang! Er Ku Niang! Spare her life. Kill me but spare this woman!'

But Er Ku Niang cried imperiously: 'Spare this man's life! My cousin, spare it for my sake!'

'He is a Christian and will not recant—what is he to you?' roughly demanded her cousin.

And as Chang Er lapsed into unconsciousness, he heard her cry again: 'This man is my husband, if he dies I must!'

How she wrought upon her cruel cousin's heart was never known, but he sent Chang Er and Er Ku Niang into the country, where they found refuge. Here Chang Er was nursed back to life and health again by Er Ku Niang, who never ceased her secret prayers to Chang Er's God. To him she had surrendered her heart in its entirety while she fled seeking Chang Er on that awful night of June 13, 1900.

When the Boxer Rebellion was quelled Chang Er and Er Ku Niang were married in an improvised chapel near one of the ruined mission compounds.

The slayer of Chang Er's mother had been killed in a quarrel with another Boxer, and Chang Er felt glad that he could mourn his mother without bitterness or revengeful feelings toward anyone connected with Er Ku Niang.

As it was, he made a home for wife and mother, for Er Ku Niang's mother had escaped the massacre, and their home is a united one, all three happy in loving and serving the one who so wonderfully showed his grace unto them.