

# Social Reform in China

By GARDNER L. HARDING

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"BE pleased to enter the Gate of Hope," said Captain Ho.

Our rickshaws had been trundling in and out of the mazes of little lanes and alleys just off the great trunk-road leading south from the Chien Men Gate. Captain Ho was the captain of the Peking police, educated at the American Mission College, Nanking University, who had learned Northern ways and had Northern military aspirations. He was a dapper little man, with a small, bristly mustache, and could not have weighed one hundred pounds. In his flannel suit and Panama hat he looked more like an under-secretary of the Shanghai Y. M. C. A. than a captain of police with a record for courage and quick thinking, and with four bullet wounds in his shoulders and thigh; but as he stepped nimbly out of his rickshaw the wind lifted his flannel coat slightly, and a gleam of metal from his hip pocket showed that, bland as he looked, he was still a believer in preparedness.

We were making a tour about what I may call, for lack of a better name, the social institutions of Peking, inspecting, in that intensely conservative Chinese city, the public institutions that bore witness to the very recently assumed responsibilities of an Oriental municipality.

"Of course you know what the Gate of Hope is?" said Captain Ho. We were waiting, over the customary tea and cigarettes, in a little room off the courtyard of the long, low, gray building, which was just like hundreds of other gray buildings throughout that part of the city, while the doorkeeper took our cards to the powers within.

"We call it the 'Evil to Good' institution, for it is here that women of the streets are brought from all over Peking, and it is here that they have a temporary home and refuge and a chance to live a better life. It is a very tiny institution for

such a large city. There are not a hundred women here, and I estimate that there are between four and five thousand women in Peking who have to register with the police as women of the town. This does not count the enormous numbers of 'little wives,' which is our euphonious name for concubines, many of whom are very young girls held in complete slavery in polygamous households.

"The line is hard to draw, but the professional women must register at police headquarters and be medically examined. The examination is perfunctory, but on the basis of the registration we arrange many marriages, and keep in close touch with any man living on a woman's earnings. We have a tax of from two dollars a month for women of what we call the first class down to twenty-five cents a month for women of the fourth class, and this is collected fortnightly on registration. Keeping track of them is simplified by the fact that the traffic is largely concentrated on eight streets not far from here and in about eight hundred houses on those streets, each of which pays a registration fee of from one dollar to eight dollars per month, according to its class. We watch the disorder in those houses very closely. I have often been stationed near them, and I remember one night on my rounds when I took eight girls from eight different beatings to the Gate of Hope. We usually have to take them, and often it is at the risk of our lives, for though they are beaten and ill used, they are property, and the men and women who control them are often willing to fight desperately rather than lose them. Very often we bring them straight from some terrible beating or ill usage, and by the morning after they more than likely want to go back again. Virtually none of them comes here of her own accord, because her courage has dwindled, and also because—



A squad of Peking's semi-military police. Taken during Dr. Sun's visit in 1912, when the capital was friendly. Dr. Sun is in the second row, third from the right

well, the punishments for running away, you know, are very terrible indeed."

"Have you any ways of getting at the people who make the money out of the trade?" I asked.

"Not many," said my friend, lighting another cigarette. "It would interfere with too many prominent people." I thought I had heard that somewhere before. "For all our polygamy, it is one of the institutions of Chinese life. We can't all afford polygamy. We do what we can. Men have been strangled in our jail for violating girls under twelve,—we have a very strict law against it,—and it is also a crime to live on a woman's immoral earnings."

We rose to greet the director, an astonishingly young man, simply dressed in the plain, dark-blue gown of the Chinese official classes. He was manifestly surprised to see a foreigner.

"You are the first foreign visitor he's ever had here," translated Ho, "and he can't understand what interests you."

We went through a long passageway hung with mottos, in bold Chinese char-

acters, containing invocations to virtue such as: "Industry brings content," "The tiger of passion will carry you at last to the jungle; bestride it not," and "Every woman loves a home; be grateful for this one." Between them were schedules of routine work and study. One learned that there was ethical teaching on Friday afternoons, and that the rest of the week was divided between reading and writing (many of the women are of course illiterate), lace-making, machine-sewing, cooking, and housekeeping, spinning, weaving, and basket-making. Though there was no trace of Christian influence, Sunday was given over to "recreation."

We came out into a humming, buzzing, high-studded room where thirty or more girls and women were sitting about and demonstrating to the eye the handicrafts of the schedule. The buzzing of tongues stopped at once, but the humming of the foreign sewing-machines went on with redoubled energy as these timid daughters of old China bent out of sight behind their work. Their quiet, smooth, almost expressionless faces bore little trace of their

tragic story, save here and there where a tiny undersized girl sat in a corner too weak to work, or scars and welts gave vivid testimony of past cruelty. Some of these infants of eight and nine had been little dancing-girls; others represented the toll of baby shame saved by the criminal courts from a fate worse than death.

"Where do they go from here?" I asked the young director.

"Most of them marry," he answered, eager to explain. "You see, a small fee places a girl here; then she supports herself by work. So it is not charity. Their pictures are open to the public. When a man sees a girl he likes, he sends his middleman, as in all other Chinese marriages, and we inquire fully into his character. If that is satisfactory, we allow them to see each other. And if she approves of him, he pays us a marriage fee of anywhere between five dollars and fifty dollars, and they are married. It does not end there, however. We are in close touch with the police force, and if we hear from them that he is maltreating her, back she comes again, and he has to account to us."

"Do you let men have them as 'little wives'?" I asked; but Ho refused to translate this.

"Yes, they do," he himself answered; "what can you expect? They come from very bad lives, and even this is a big improvement. The trouble is that many skinflints who would like to buy girls, but do not want to pay for them, induce them to run away and come here. Then after a respectable interval they appear as suitors and get them for their fourth or fifth wives at a nominal price. That is bad, very bad, and some people who love slander say that this institution is largely supported by such men. It is n't, and when we catch one of them, we give him the full extent of the law for fooling the police. There will always be such people."

"Has this institution anything to do with the Revolution?" I asked the director, and Ho and he both joined in telling me how, if it had n't been for the republic, it would n't have been founded.

"It is part of new China," said Ho,

"but we have no public opinion to help it. Not even the Christian missionaries know about it. But new men in the police department from the south are chiefly responsible for it. And they, like myself, received their early training at a mission college."

"Are the number of these women increasing?" I asked as we again got into our rickshaws at the gate.

"Oh, yes," Ho replied. "The thousands of students who have come back from Japan have brought with them habits which the average Chinese boy would never pick up at home in anything like the same extent. Most of the present members of parliament have studied in Japan, and although I'm an ardent Republican, and had two sons who went through the fighting round Hankow, I must confess that in this respect they're not much better than the rest."

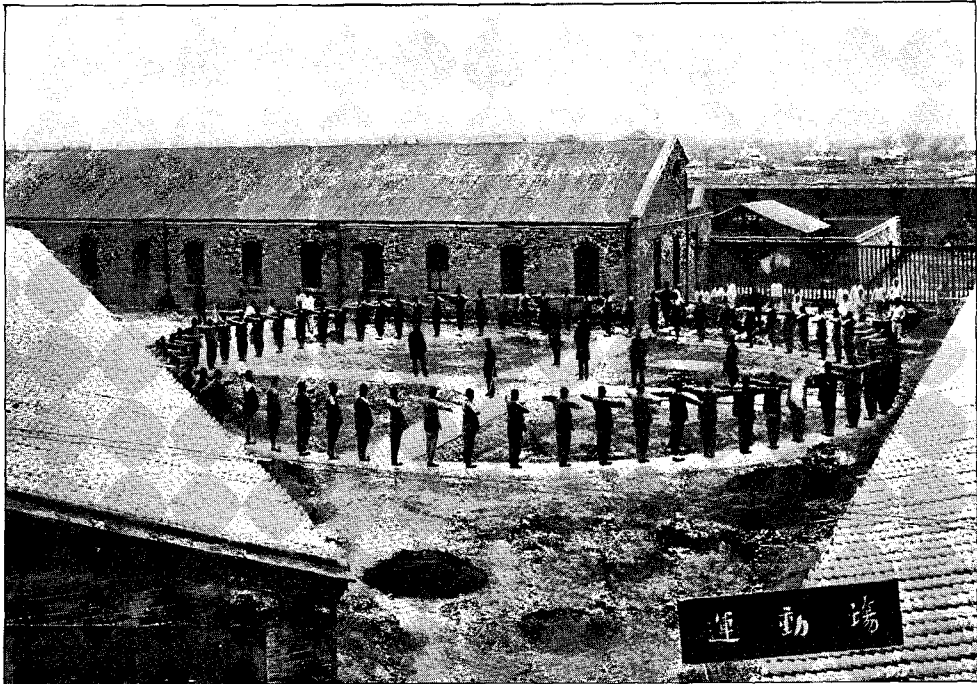
We were rolling out along the great stone-flagged road that runs toward the Temple of Agriculture.

"I'm taking you now," said Ho, "to see the Peking Municipal Prison, the finest prison in China. It is one of the really enlightened reforms of the past régime for which the Manchus received little credit. It handles the serious penal cases for the whole of Peking. Out of our population of somewhere near a million we usually have about five hundred prisoners, and many of them are first offenders. That's less than one in two thousand, and considering the fact that criminals inevitably drift toward a capital, it's not at all a bad record."

We turned a corner of the city wall, and came in sight of a group of buildings arranged like the radiating spokes of a wheel, with a fine administration building near the center, the whole, with a few outbuildings, surrounded by a low wall. From a distance it looked flat and dun-colored, like the Chinese fields around it, but going nearer, the first impression one received of the whole outfit was one of conspicuous efficiency and cleanliness.

The governor, a tall, grizzled Chinese of the older school, met us at the gate,





Swedish drill in the open air in the Municipal Prison

and six different sets of soldiers popped out and saluted us on our way through the maze of buildings to the central offices. Ex-President Eliot of Harvard said a year or so ago that the Peking Prison was the most interesting thing he saw in his whole trip through China. I think the "Gate of Hope" is more interesting, but I should place this magnificent prison a close second.

Take the workrooms, for instance. In great, high-studded rooms forty yards square by a measurement I was curious enough to verify, there were groups of forty or fifty men working at their trade under conditions, if one considers the standard of living of the far East, almost ideal. There were big rooms for ten or more trades, including tailoring, shoemaking, woodworking, ironsmithing, book-binding, spinning and weaving, basket-making, printing, and several others, not the least of which was market-gardening outdoors. It was strange to hear, out in far-away Peking, in a city through the streets of which I had traveled continuously for six weeks without once meeting a foreign face except in the tiny, walled

foreign quarter—it was strange to hear that the majority of men who came to prison knew no trade, and that the best way to make them behave themselves like decent citizens when they got out was to teach them a trade. It was all what we are still vainly trying to practise at home.

At the Peking Prison they not only teach prisoners a trade, but they have an employment bureau which connects a man with a job. They segregate first offenders from old-timers and men convicted of light offenses from those guilty of heavier ones up through second, third, and fourth offenders. In fact, forgery, petty larceny, robbery, and assault and battery are the names of cell rows where convicts of kindred offenses are exclusively confined. The governor confessed that the atmosphere of specialism in crime might be rather narrowing, but it was all in the name of modernism and system.

The parole system has been introduced, and the governor has decided to stick to it. Physical drill, an innovation in any class of Chinese society, is held daily, and the setting-up exercise I saw proved that the men enter into it with appreciation and

enthusiasm. But the outstanding note of the prison is cleanliness and order. The cells are large, and though doubling up is common, they are dry and clean. Electric lighted, of stone construction throughout, on high and level ground, with sanitary conveniences far better than home standards in China, the great prison at Peking is as much a lasting credit to the far-reaching social reform spirit of the Chinese as Sing Sing, for instance, where Warden Osborne's back is still against the wall, is a disgraceful witness to the complacent conservatism of America.

We went up into the cupola as the six o'clock bugle blew the signal to stop work, and from the first landing we could see long lines of prisoners waiting for their evening wash. They were clad in clean white suits, and they stepped briskly along to the wash-room, knowing that beyond it lay supper. Supper is set out in rice-bowls, and on special occasions there are three sizes of them, a potent discrimination against unruly spirits. Up and down the long tables, with completely shaven heads (the laundry workers have to submit to this, too), moved the cooks and waiters, and as we went on up the stairs the hum of talk which mingled with the busy click of chop-sticks showed that these Chinese had granted another mercy that we still withhold more often than not in the civilized West—the mercy of talk at meals.

Up in the cupola was the assembly-room, with rows and rows of high-sided seats that enabled the prisoners to see the platform, but not one another. On the wall over the platform I saw five crude paintings of men with beards. In regular order, beginning at the left, the governor pointed them out as Mohammed, Jesus, Confucius (in the center), Buddha, and Lao-tsze, the founder of the Taoist faith. Thus was China liberal to all religions, and every Sunday, when the prisoners gathered here, they heard a moral discourse from some representative of one of these five creeds, with the other four to frown down upon him with united disapproval if he became too partizan.

The last thing we saw at the Peking

Prison was a set of the instruments of torture with which prisoners were brought to reason in days gone by. Balls and drags for the feet, vises for breaking the bones of the hand, the terrible old slicing-knife, and, amid a host of other tools, two handsomely chased beheading swords with nicked and rusty blades—how wholesomely they fitted into the dusty chamber to which they were once again to be consigned away from the uses of man! Only the light bamboo is allowed to-day, and that very sparingly, at this prison; and as a testimony to the humane treatment, which I have since verified, let it be said that for more than four years there has not been a single attempt to escape. If one doubted that this is a model prison, could one have any better proof?

There was a day in Peking when the gutters of the streets ran in floods on rainy days, so that it was no unusual thing for an unwary victim who lost his footing, particularly a small child, to fall in and be drowned. The revelations and the odors on the coming of dry weather made it a veritable city of the damned. Since those days, before the siege, the spirit of the city has entirely changed; but even to-day the curious traveler may poke his nose into backwaters of the old capital's life, as I did the next day, and get the full stench of the unregenerate past.

The next day's trip that I made with Captain Ho included a visit to the Boys' Industrial Home (the Shih Yi Sou) and the poorhouse (the Ping Ming Yuan). The Shih Yi Sou is under the capable administration of the ministry of the interior, a thoroughly modern department of the Government, and is, in its way, wholly as creditable an institution as the Peking Prison. The 375 boys there, ranging anywhere from fifteen to twenty-one years of age, are given a thoroughly efficient trade-school education along lines that could hardly be improved in the Western world. They are taught tailoring, tinsmithing, printing, soap-making, cloth-weaving, hat-making, gardening, and half a score of other trades. But most important of all, they are taught under a clean, efficient,



The lecture-hall platform in the Municipal Prison. Under portraits of Mohammed, Christ, Confucius, Buddha, and Lao-tsze upholders of any of the religions address moral discourses on separate days

and humane system that turns out human quality, and not merely good artisans. The boys we saw about the neat, spacious, well-ventilated buildings, in their clean blue uniforms, had good, shining boy faces it was worth while going to see. And yet when they came to the institution they were beggar wastrels, orphans, paupers, young pickpockets, and incorrigibles of all descriptions. The Shih Yi Sou, tucked away in the trackless heart of this vast Chinese city, is a thoroughly up-to-date, twentieth-century institution.

The Ping Ming Yuan is hidden away quite as obscurely, but it is hidden in a shameful past as well. It is the city poor-house, and as such it is a disgrace to the city that has been touched deeply with the humane movements of the republic. Rows and rows of able-bodied young paupers, men sunk in the degenerate sloth of an idle existence, hung around the buildings. Scattered among them, with no attempt whatever at alleviation or segregation, were the aged, the blind, the crippled, the deaf, the destitute, and the dumb.

From out the squalid buildings that bordered the dirty and unkempt courtyards dull, hopeless eyes and rueful, pasty faces, men, women, and children alike, eyed us without interest and without intelligence. The broken bodies of the aged and the helpless little bodies of orphans and pauper children appeared to have been cast into this place as on some dust-heap with equal callousness. There was no expert care whatsoever; only coolies kept them in bounds and saw that they received their meals.

We had made the tour of the buildings and were turning back when our guide said to us, "Would you like to see the lunatics?" He spoke as though he were promising us an interesting show. He pointed with a grimace to a round hole cut in the wall for a door, giving upon another set of courtyards that we had not noticed. And then I heard them. I had been hearing them for some time, I believe, but now I knew what that weird chanting Babel was. We were already almost in a state of nausea, and as I started



I felt a breath of real terror. But the impulse to go was overwhelming, and we went through the little round door into the lunatics' courtyard.

I took one step inside the courtyard and then stopped. I shall never forget that sight as long as I live. There must have been eighty people in the courtyard, which was something like forty paces square, and every one of these people was a drama to himself. In the middle of the space there was a well, with a tin dipper on its rim, and in front of it a man stood, naked to the waist, with wildly tousled hair, making what seemed to be a speech, and looking me straight in the eye. I had never wholly become used to the Chinese face, especially to that hostile, absolutely unfeeling stare it turns on the foreigner as he is going through the street.

This man turned his uncanny, vacant face on me and came walking nearer and nearer. I stood transfixed with terror. And then suddenly the whole emotional tension snapped as two or three younger men rushed out and seized his pigtail, and began to play horse with him, apparently jealous at his occupying the center of the stage. The crowd howled with glee as an attendant in khaki drove them off. The man sat down on the edge of the well and whimpered; and only then could I take my eyes off him and look at the others. I could hear the sound of high, falsetto singing, but could not place it anywhere, till suddenly I noticed a dark little man, with a black mustache, in a corner, a pitiful, fat, extremely sensible-looking man, who sat with his back to the crowd and sang unceasingly.

The day was a deadly hot summer day, and the courtyard was dry and blistering; yet one half-naked wretch deliberately got down and rolled in the noonday sun, moaning piteously. A guard ran over to him nervously, picked him up bodily, and carried him to a bench. He rolled off, but in the shade, and still moaned and moaned. Near him, and regarding us intently, was a man with a red flower behind one ear and a large leaf behind the other. Everywhere I looked, my eyes

would meet a face that would at once become a vacant grin; one man put his hand to his head and crooked his knees,—he was a tall wizen old man with a face like a satyr,—asking for money in the familiar beggar gestures of the street, and grimacing horribly every time I looked in his direction.

Some were new cases, with what hope of improvement in that ghastly atmosphere no one seemed to care. And over in one corner were the women. Many of them were old, but one or two were young and pretty, and one kept putting on clothes every time I looked in her direction, one coat after another until she must have had on at least five. Here was a boy of eight, incurable, just come in. And round about them walked the coolie guards, grinning at their queer antics as at a game.

We stood there—it must have been fifteen minutes—without speaking a word. I had intended to take a picture, but as I folded up my camera Ho said, "Yes, for God's sake, let 's leave them to their misery." I can still hear the yell that pursued us as we ducked through the little round door again—a yell in which the whole eighty voices seemed to join in a fiendish chorus, and which rang through my mind throughout the journey home, and has rung in it intermittently to this day.

I left Peking for the south shortly afterward, but before I left Ho promised to move heaven and earth to have this pitiful lot of people put under decent care, and wipe out the terrible blot on modern China represented by the condition of the whole institution. I am sure that he has done it, as I heard a few months ago from a friend in the Peking Y. M. C. A. that the lunatics' compound had been entirely reformed since we had visited it the year before.

In bringing to practical extinction within ten years the age-long national curse of the opium traffic, the Chinese have shown the unconquerable resolution which makes for social betterment. That is their true mettle, and we of the Western world, for all our boasted progress

against social evils, would look long to find a moral crusade to match it in fervor *and* success. But a peep into a dark corner of the unregenerate past is necessary to set against this splendid endeavor. See-

ing and remembering the Ping Ming Yuan of Peking, we can feel to the full the imaginative application of Cecil Rhodes's famous epitaph to China, "So much to do, so little done!"



## Stock

By MURDOCK PEMBERTON

MY mother used to tell me the story  
 Of my grandfather's wooing and wedding.  
 There was not much for a young man to do in Ohio,  
 So grandfather and his bride decided to seek new fields.  
 They had saved enough to homestead,  
 But decided to buy oxen and migrate.  
 None could be had in that settlement,  
 So grandfather floated down the Ohio on a raft  
 To a lumber camp, seeking oxen.  
 The camp needed men and held him,  
 Promising him the yoke if he stayed past the spring floods.  
 Six weeks he hewed trees and hauled logs,  
 Grandmother, waiting meanwhile, fighting against the terror  
 Of probable fates that might have befallen the bridegroom.  
 He returned three months after with the oxen.  
 Then the pair traveled westward,  
 Settling at last on the Kaw, a river in Kansas.  
 He built them a home  
 With an adz and ax and his muscle,  
 Depending for food on what he killed with his musket  
 And corn she raised in the dooryard;  
 Fending her life and his 'gainst Indians  
 And worse border ruffians.  
 Six stalwart sons and four daughters  
 They reared amid hardships,  
 And they were happy.

I am about to be married;  
 That is, as soon as we can decide  
 Whether to take four rooms and bath up-town  
 Or put up with two rooms and bath  
 In a better part of the city.  
 We must be cautious about such things,  
 My monthly salary being but two hundred,  
 And we've waited four years for that.  
 It would be foolish to make a misstep.  
 Grandfather, indeed, was fortunate,  
 Living when things were so simple.