THE FARTHEST-AWAY MAN

Life in the Mountains of Southern China. How I Decided While I was in College to Leave the United States. Life Among the Tai Ya. Why Self Imposed Banishment is in This Case Very Much Worth While

By CHARLES E. PARK

For a year or more THE WORLD'S WORK *has been trying to get the stories of the men who have left civilization behind and have gone to the little known lands that seem to us stay-at-homes to be the farthest away. Our reason for trying to get these stories was simply to let our readers know why these men have gone to the lands in which they live, and why they stay. The following article is the first of several that have been secured.*—THE EDITORS.

"TO DEVOTE one's self to something higher than self, this is the answer of the ages to those who would find the source of immortal energy and enjoyment."

The above ideal prompted me to prepare for medical missionary service in the Orient, years before my acquaintance with the above quotation, and I find after nine years experience that it applies satisfactorily in my life regardless of geographical location.

A country swain, returning from the village brass band practice, I seated myself on the veranda at my old home in Washington County, Pa., and as I finished my cigar, made the decision which placed me in a position to devote myself to a cause greater than self and pursue happiness in a broader sphere of service while so doing.

This cherished ideal also caused me to dispose of my personal effects, which in turn broke up our family home at "Park Place," leaving me free to enter Wooster University for preparatory education necessary to pursue my medical course.

What fun we had, during that medical course. As I approached the vicinity of the University of Pittsburgh my chosen medical institution, I interrogated an unknown pedestrian as to the exact location of the medical plant. He replied, first giving the desired information, then asking, "are you entering medical work?" When I stated that I had come for that very purpose, he granted me a bit of voluntary information regarding the medical fraternity, to which he boasted he belonged, saying to me, "Take my advice, turn right straight around, go back down this hill and do not study medicine." Apparently he had not yet acquired his sophomore year dreams and felt that the universe was polluted with doctors. However, I proceeded on my quest, receiving, a few days later, the hospitable reception tendered us verdant freshmen by the learned sophomore class enticing us, by running from us into a small corridor in the college building where we, who knew each other so slightly that we chalk-marked our coats to avoid fighting our own classmates, could be seen standing around in the large corridor below; and when they had us all ready to make our final charge and *get them*, they pelted us with paper bags filled with flour until we couldn't see our way out, then cooled us off by turning the fire hose on us. These two kindnesses, plus the horrors of the dissecting room, where I was inspired by the skillful operations of Prof. "Bill" on the cadaver to write the following lines in memory of the victim:

He died that we might know ourselves
And ease some sufferer's pain.
"Bill," cut him up, the reckless "mutt,"
And he'll ne'er be whole again.

We had the doleful lectures of our brilliant professors of medicine. After an hour of oratory and wild beating of the air, explaining to us the etiology, symptomology, and morphology of the disease chosen for that day's discourse, letting us in on the secrets of examination and diagnosis, until we could feel our heads bulging with practical knowledge and imagined ourselves regular "Sherlock Holmeses" in medical circles, they would let us down hard, as they gathered up the precious bundle of notes always carried by professors and

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the busy men would prepare to make their exit, they would say, "at present we know practically nothing as to the cause of the disease and there are no drugs that give any particular effect on its course, therefore we must simply treat the symptoms as they arise." What an inspiration! Again, we would meet in the surgical clinic, where we would be given every symptom the patients history had ever revealed from A to Z, and after each one had been given a chance to guess what the trouble was, our kind surgeon would turn to the grateful patient saying, "The Almighty alone knows what ails you. We must do an exploratory operation and find the cause." In the very face of all these discouragements I found it possible to keep up enough enthusiasm in my work and to follow the curriculum laid down in a manner satisfactory enough for the faculty to grant me a diploma. To demonstrate this extensive catalogue of acquired knowledge and, at the same time, endeavoring to promote the cause of Christ some place where the need was great, I offered my service, making application to the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions for work in Siam. I had been kept informed regularly of the needs in Siam by a girl teaching in that country whom I had met at the University of Wooster. In fact, to cut short a long story of good reading, I had fallen in love with this missionary to such an extent that during the short period of six years that we were engaged, I offered to meet her anywhere on this terrestrial ball that she should name, to begin our voyage on life's matrimonial sea. Being accepted by the Mission Board and assigned to Siam, my fiancée named Canton, China, as a place for our meeting. I will not describe the scene on the steamer *Mongolia* in Hongkong harbor, although it was very interesting to passengers who knew that we were to meet there. Suffice it to say that we had not seen each other for three years, during which one had been in medical school and the other teaching in a mission school, separated by half the world's circumference, a plan not to be suggested by us for others to follow. Our honeymoon was spent in Hongkong, Singapore, Bangkok, and Chieng Mai, Siam, and included six weeks of travel on steamers and river boats between these cities.

In Prae, Siam, I practised medicine. I had five natives to assist in selling drugs in the dispensary, and help with the operations and caring for the patients in the hospital. We had a motorcycle, a piano, and teak wood furniture in our home. All the necessary household assistants to do the housework allowed Mrs. Park time to teach in the Girls' School. This was pleasant enough, but there came a call from Chieng Rung, China, our newest mission station, for some one to fill in in an emergency. This work had only been opened two years. We offered to go and the mission granted our transfer. We sold our luxuries in the form of heavy furniture, piano, and motorcycle. During the last three years we have been living a gypsy life. First we stopped in Chieng Rung for two years during which we were busy building houses for future missionary residences, teaching the Bible, training assistants, and introducing medicine and surgery, with the help of one faithful hospital assistant from Chieng Mai, Siam. Since leaving Prae, Siam, we have seen very few white people. This isolation from fellow countrymen affects some much more than others. It is trying for missionary children. Adults can stand it quite well unless there is continued sickness. During the early part of our term at Chieng Rung I acquired an ugly finger-infection, which resisted treatment, affecting my whole system to such a degree that resignation was made to the Board, who accepted it with the understanding that I remain at my post until some one came from America to relieve me. While treating myself, there being no opportunity for consultation, as the nearest doctor was fifteen days from me, there developed a work in Yuankiang, China, among the Tai Ya people, which grew so rapidly and encouragingly (a thousand converts in the first few months of the movement) that the Park family decided we would rather risk our lives in this interesting mass movement than leave for home. Consequently we canceled our resignation, accepting the responsibility of caring for our own bodily ailments and trusting God for the future.

How far away from home are we in our present location? Pittsburgh, Pa., is practically on the other side of the world from us in Yuankiang, China, but we are farther south, being on the same degree of latitude as the Hawaiian Islands and the West Indies. The quickest answer we could expect from Pittsburgh by mail would require three months. Pittsburgh, Pa., to San Francisco, four days;

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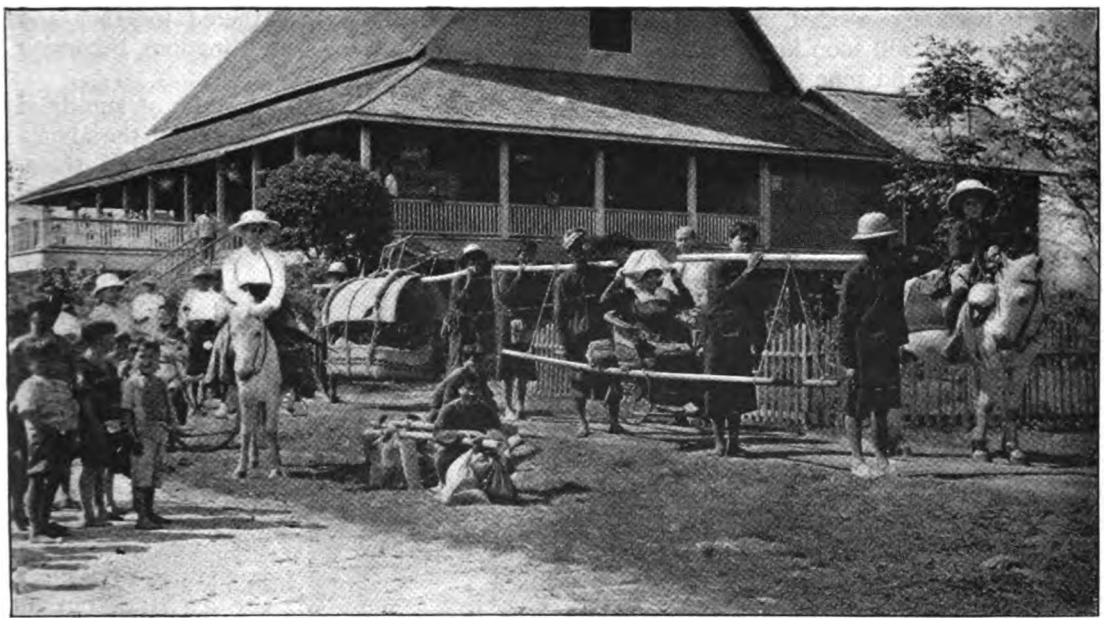

DR. PARK'S FAMILY LEAVING PRAE, SIAM

This picture shows Mrs. Park with her children and a companion starting on the long journey to Chieng Rung. Mrs. Park is seated in the chair that is being carried by the four natives. The house in the background is built of teakwood

San Francisco to Hongkong, thirty days; Hongkong to Bangkok, eleven days; Bangkok to Prae, Siam, two days; Prae to Chieng Rung, twenty-six days; Chieng Rung, China, to Yuankiang, China, our present address, seventeen days; making a total of ninety days actual travel, using the above mentioned route through necessity, not choice; not making allowance for time lost in steamship and railway connections, mule caravans, native carriers and chair bearers being bargained for and reasoned with. Caravans composed of ponies and men are often very difficult to get into action and much valuable time is lost in argument as to the shortest and best route. They are often more obstreperous than the much abused Ford car. In both cases, it is found beneficial to have a crank if you are not fortunate enough to have a self-starter.

Studying the Oriental mind along with their language, one soon discovers that he has in hand a preposterous proposition. Humanly speaking it is a psychological impossibility for the foreigner to fathom the workings of the Oriental mind.

What repays "The Man Farthest Away" for having left his home, friends, and country, to live in the other man's land, is the desire to assist in improving the inhabitants thereof by giving them what is necessary to rise above their evil spirit worship, live honest Christian lives, ease their physical suffering, treat their curable diseases, and at the same time educate them to carry on this work for themselves in the future.

In order for "The Man Farthest Away" to enjoy this task, he must enjoy and appreciate the study of human nature. He who dislikes this most interesting study and its daily application, soon dislikes the environment in which he is located. Censuring the native because of the existing condition of affairs, and not caring to assist in remedying them, he becomes the most miserable of all men. No man can fail to be interested who travels through this tropical belt beautified by its mountains, their rushing streams of water making continuous irrigation for the terraced rice fields, where crops may be grown any month of the year. These same mountains give us a comfortable change of climate during the hot season of the year, a climb of four to five hours being necessary to reach this elevation. The combination of temperatures gives us the fruits and vegetables of both tropical and temperate zones; he who sees this and misses the thronging thousands of interesting human beings, studying not their language, mode of living, ways of travel, government, tribal customs, likes and dislikes, is allowing

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himself to become one-sided. He is acquiring a flat wheel and will soon long for "the flesh pots of Egypt" and pine for his native land and its civilization.

To prove the genuineness of the call and to demonstrate the view-point of "The Man Farthest Away," let us leave the splendor and beauty of the mountain trail decked with its flowering orchids, stately pine trees, and clear, sparkling mountain streams, with their banks covered with flowers and ferns; consider, instead, the interesting study of the different types of people we find on the plains, with whom we become acquainted through the Tai language.

Arriving at Yuankiang, our present address, we found a small, sturdy, brown-skinned, black-eyed, straight-black-haired, flat-nosed people, with manners more pleasing than any Tai we have hitherto met and more hospitable than the Southern tribes.



NATIVE HOSPITAL ASSISTANTS
These men were employed by Dr. Park at the hospital in Prae, Siam

The Tai Ya are a sub-division of the great Tai family, of which there are numerous tribes living along the valleys among the vast mountain ranges of southern China, French Indo-China, Burma, and Siam. So far, I have met only the Tai (Siamese), Tai Yuan, Tai Kuhn, Tai Lü, Tai Nua, Tai Sai, Tai Ya, Tai La, Tai Kah, Tai Wao, and Tai Chung, all of these differing slightly in dialect, dress, customs, intellect, education, and religion; but there runs through the whole family the basis of the pure Tai language, joining the various fragments of this wonderful family, who have been separated for years, into one distinct Tai people.

What difference does it make if these Tai divisions have merged into various other countries and fallen under their governments, if they can only be gathered together and joined to The One Great Kingdom, becoming Knighted Sons of God.

All Tai Ya houses are built of sun-dried brick. They are dark because of the abnormally small windows or the lack of them. They are ill smelling because the house serves as home for the farmer and barn for his cattle, pigs, buffalo, ducks, geese, and chickens. The houses are regular smoke-houses also, for there are no chimneys built for the open fireplaces, which are used continuously summer and winter, except doors and windows and occasionally a small hole about the size of a hat, left in the roof above the fireplace. I have seen bed-rooms with no other opening than the door-way—dark, dingy holes I would not desire for a stable. Roofs, first and second floors, and walls of the house are made of old mother earth. The roof is built by placing heavy poles across from one wall to the other, then covering these with smaller poles crosswise with the first; these in turn being covered with a layer of bushes and brush, then a layer of rice straw, and lastly a thick layer of clay, which is pounded and tramped during dry and wet weather until it turns water quite decently, acts as a place for the family to sleep during the hot season, a place to dry their crops and meats, and a general visiting place for the villagers, for their homes are so closely packed together one can step from one to the other without any exertion.

Having no other place to live than the native mud house, and not desiring to die off in their stuffy homes, we went to the other extreme and built ourselves a loosely connected bamboo house of two rooms. The frame, floor,

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walls, and stairs were made of flimsy bamboo and the roof was made of rice straw. It is just an imitation house, being at present almost eaten up by small insects which appear to be perfectly famished in their attempt to devour it before we can get any place better provided. We have not lacked fresh air. The shack has seen us through a hot season that we couldn't have stood confined to the small hot quarters of the mud house. Our doors are made conspicuous by their absence. The amount of bamboo would not permit us to plan for windows, but we had enough to allow the openings for them. The walls have shrunken until we scarcely need the windows, there being large cracks, allowing us to see our visitors coming in almost any direction. The heavy winds cause the shack to sway on its posts until it resembles a bird's nest, almost always stopping our clock (a timepiece with a pendulum). The roof leaks during heavy rains, but many of the mud roofs also leak and we are allowed the privilege of clear instead of muddy water to soak in. However, we are glad to report that rooms for us above the new Chapel are nearing completion.



"TAI YUAN" FATHER AND "TAI LÜ" MOTHER
With their child. The man was Dr. Park's dispensary assistant at Chieng Rung Hospital

The Tai in this locality present the most interesting and inspiring scene we have ever witnessed. A revival which grows with amazing rapidity following the exact course one would expect the Gospel to take among people who have groped in darkness for centuries. There are fourteen hundred converts to Christianity in this valley where a few years ago there were none. Until a few Sabbaths ago religious services were held under the largest trees in the central village, through necessity, not choice, there being no houses that would accommodate the crowds. Three hundred or more have been present at each meeting. Our forces are inadequate to cope with the rapid increase in numbers. They come to us begging us to accompany them to their villages and free them of their demons. The missionary has all he can do to keep up with the growth and has no time to visit and tour the non-Christian villages. The whole field seems like one big family. It develops beyond our fondest hopes. There is nothing of a discouraging character worthy of mention. There is no shouting, but the religious influence spreads. Villages from another province have just come to request us to send elders and evangelists to free them of their spirits and teach them of Christianity. In the past these spirits were their masters. At weddings, funerals, harvest feasts, in fact any occasion of importance, these spirits were propitiated and fed with the best the land could offer. Home brew flowed freely and women as well as men vied with each other as to the amount that could be imbibed during one feast, sometimes even going so far as to anoint each other with the liquor. At present when these feasts are given there are no intoxicants used. A modest feast is given instead of the old expensive debauchery and in all customs they are gradually giving way to our Christian methods. They are happy, loyal, industrious, and, although they are illiterate, they are not nearly as ignorant as one would expect. They present wonderful possibilities. They respond readily to Gospel teaching, which results in a radical change in their habits of living. There is very little quarreling and little or no thieving or murdering. The isolation of the Tai Ya in China,

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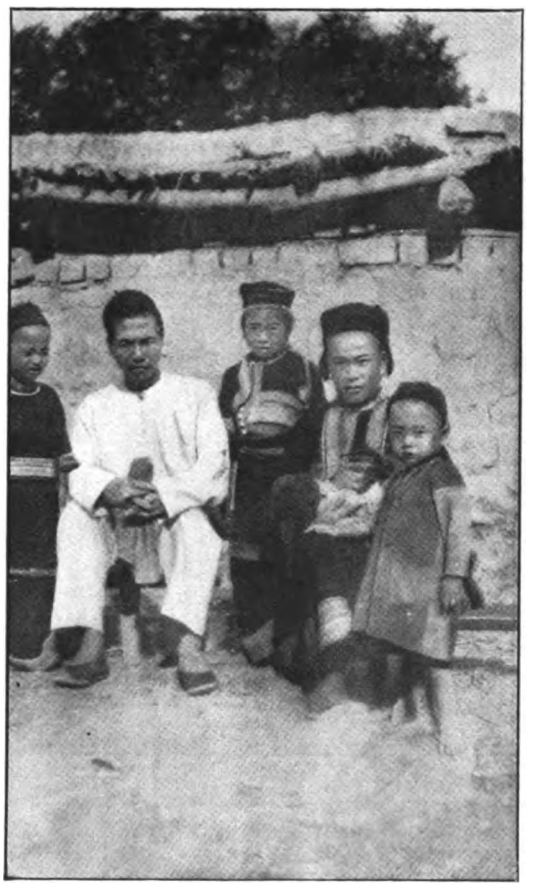
caused by the rugged mountains round about us and many bad rapids in the Red River, has its benefits as well as its inconveniences. During four months of clinic work here, I have not seen or heard of one single case of venereal disease and upon inquiry have been told by reliable citizens that the condition does not exist among the Tai Ya people. There are no saloons or houses of ill fame.

Women's wearing apparel is modest and handsome, considering their homes and environment, and although they work hard they always look neat, wearing their silver buttons, trimmings, ear rings, finger rings, and bracelets at all times. They use elaborate trimmings in colors, sometimes as many as fifteen colors and shades of silk thread are used in piping and many patterns of very fine cross stitching are used on their skirts, jackets, aprons, and head dresses. A picture fails to do justice to this costume because of the inability to reproduce the color scheme. The Tai Ya woman's glory is not in her hair. Her hair is completely covered by black heavy cloth bound tightly in such a manner that it holds the hair firmly. Often the hair is not combed for from three to ten days.



A "TAI LÜ" FAMILY
In front of their mud house, which is typical of the structures in the interior of Yunnan

Men wear blue home-spun cotton goods with probably one silver ring, a silver bracelet, and a good substantial hat which acts as a sunshade, as well as an umbrella. They wear trousers of much the same cut as the Chinese. Their jackets are variable, but usually buttoned across the chest in a double breasted effect. Leggings, head dress, and belt may have a small bit of embroidery on them but, as usual, the women lead in dress. Ten years ago the men wore the Chinese queue, but ever since that time the head has been shaved. Children of four or five years of age dress much the same as their adult brothers and sisters.

The Tai Ya are under the government of Yunnan Province, China, and must assist in supporting it. They are imposed upon in many instances by the petty Chinese officials to whom they must pay taxes. The Tai have village head men, and a higher Tai official who intercedes for them when there are questions to settle regarding payment of dues, but they have no representation in the affairs of the country they live in. Bandits of the ex-soldier type, in bands of two or three hundred, continue to prey upon the merchants, farmers, and missionaries wherever there is sufficient money and merchandise to lure them. Our mail has been held up and parcel post packages taken. Freight sent by pack animals has been tampered with. Yunnan Province is at present in a precarious condition because of the continued change of high officials both locally and in China proper. We realize that we are, as it were, beside a sleeping volcano that may become active any moment. We, of course, are hoping that the new régime in Peking will aid us.

The former religion of the Tai Ya was purely spirit worship, which was carried on incessantly. There were the family, house, water, fire, disease, river, tree, and many, many others the names of which I will not attempt to give, spirits which had to be cared for in their various complex ways, just as the spirit medium found necessary, this me-

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dium or spirit doctor being able to converse with the particular spirit offended and obtain first-hand information on any question of importance.

When anything serious happened to persons, domestic animals or rice crops, the village medium was called in to determine what had offended the particular spirit in question and what must be done to alleviate the distress. Whatever was decided upon by the medium must be right, for no one can contradict the spirit doctor; therefore, directions given must be followed out to the minutest detail. If the trouble was soon ended, the evil spirit was supposed to have been appeased by the offering made, but if the condition persisted or increased in severity, serious mistakes must have been made in carrying out directions and the spirit was supposed to have been doubly offended. The medium would come again and another attempt would be made to rout the demon or to appeal to its weaker personality and decoy it away by chanting to it, beating a gong to frighten it, anything, in fact, that entered into the mind of the medium as a good thing to try. The most common demand made, for any and all kinds of grievance, was that of animal life; from that of the smallest chicken to the best oxen or water buffalo owned by the afflicted, according to the emergency or demand of the occasion, and in every case where these killings occurred, the medium received one leg of whatever the sacrifice called for, as payment for service rendered. These mediums were called to officiate in almost all cases of sickness, marriage, death, and burial. The whole idea of religion was connected with this abominable and benighted custom of spirit worship.



JOHN AND WILMA PARK

Children of the author of this article. It is the children of the "farthest away man," according to Dr. Park, who find the life in distant lands most difficult

Medical work naturally was taken care of by the spirit medium. Our commonest drugs were unknown and unused, and there were no locally manufactured articles such as the Chinese carry—tiger teeth, desiccated bear's gall, et cetera. The only thing used to relieve pain was a crude form of opium bought from the Chinese to dope the sufferer while nature did the rest.

Babies are born more nearly like little wild animals than I have ever seen or heard of anywhere. No doctor, no medicine, no midwife; seldom much if any attention from the immediate family; left alone in a dark, dingy, dirty, back room of her mud home, the mother gives birth to her young, cutting the umbilical cord with a sharp splinter of wood prepared for that purpose, and tying it with a bit of cotton string, and attending to herself and the infant, until the fond husband at the appropriate time appears on the scene, condescendingly agreeing to bathe and dress his offspring. Sanitation is a word not spoken of in this department of medicine and surgery, as it is practised in the Tai Ya household. However, with all this evidence on the wrong side of the balance, regarding the proper care out-lined by us civilized earth beings for the obstetrical case at home, I venture to say that there are proportionately less cases of pelvic disorder here than in most of our highly civilized countries. This, of course, being attributed more to the robust condition of the female, which is brought about by her entering into the outdoor manual labor in assisting to harvest the rice crop, instead of whiling away her time attending to a spick and span new home.

Infants do well enough during their first year, but they are allowed to nurse as many years as they care to, which causes much trouble in their digestive system, which is aggravated also by the poor quality of food given them in their second and third years. This solid food—uncooked fruit picked green,

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raw meat with other indigestible delicacies—being handed to it to try, and allowing the child to feed the mosquitoes with its precious blood, lead usually to a course of colic, chills and fever, which either kill the child outright, or leave him victor in the war of the survival of the fittest. No milk is used in this country, although they have the cows, buffaloes, and goats. Until the babies are better fed there must continue a high rate of infant mortality.

A unique custom, observed here is that of an annual May Day festival, or picnic, where the young folks of the community turn out for a gala day under the spreading shade trees at a convenient spot on the bank of the Red River. Smoking tobacco and sweets are for sale. The younger generation of unattached femininity parade in groups, adorned in their finest, brightly colored clothes, decorated with buttons, beads, finger rings, ear rings, bracelets, necklaces, and chatelaines all made of silver. The awkward young men are also arrayed in their finest garb, but this is comparatively modest. The girls bring food for the occasion. The men bring home-made liquor. The uppermost idea in the minds of those congregated is match-making, which may or may not result in marriage. The popular couples separate themselves from the crowd and, as they journey toward the home of the young woman, they partake of their May Day feast. The visit is continued after their arrival at the home of the girls' parents and may continue long into the wee small hours of the night, in a way not approved of in respectable society nor by our Tai Ya Christians, although to the non-Christian there is no moral guilt, as there is no law with them against the practice of adultery by unmarried people.

This naturally brings up the question of matrimony. The wife is bought with cold cash in addition to whatever silver ear rings, bracelets, buttons, et cetera, that the young man may wish to lavish on his lady friend. The young men think of the girls of marriageable age in terms of dollars and cents, one young fellow being heard to say, as he inspected a photograph of several young ladies snapped by the missionary, "Oh, that one can be bought for thirty dollars. I'll have her." The match is quite often made by the parents years before the adolescence of the contracting parties. When the popular age for their marriage has arrived, arrangements are renewed by consulting the spirit medium as to the proper date for the beginning of festivities. On the selected day the husband-to-be gives a chicken, a duck, a goose, a pig, a dog, some rice and some liquor as a peace offering to the spirits. The animals are killed and, after the guests have put in their appearance, a big outdoor feast is given. When evening comes they all repair to the home of the groom where two elderly men and two elderly women with two girls are commissioned to go and invite the bride to the wedding. Acting in the capacity of escorts they remain at the bride's home until her six attendants, chosen in like manner, are ready to escort her to her wedding. Arriving at the home of the groom, a late indulgence of food and "fire water," followed by merrymaking among the intoxicated guests, solemnizes the wedding and the couple are considered married. At earliest cock crow of the morning, the bride, in order to obey the orthodox rule of etiquette, must scamper back to her home, where she remains until the next night, when her husband makes another feast in her honor. This second feast is given on a more moderate scale, only one pig being killed, but a great deal of liquor goes with it. This second feast is given at the home of the bride's parents; she accompanies her husband to his home, but leaves again the next morning as before. The third day the husband entertains at the home of the bride's parents, taking a duck, a chicken, and a quart of whisky for the wife and parents. Again the wife is escorted home, with the husband remaining the one night. This feasting and visiting is continued at frequent intervals, numerous times during the first year or until the wife becomes a mother, giving birth to her child at the husband's home, after which she makes her home with him. Should the child be born at the home of the bride's parents, it is understood to be illegitimate and the husband need not recognize her as his wife. This, we are sorry to relate, happens quite often because the customs of the land do not restrict adultery among newly married and single people, free love being practised without penalty until children are born to married people. The husband is desirous of having male children to inherit his rice field and attend his family spirit after death.

Three gun shots announce a death. The beating of a gong summons friends to come

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A GROUP OF "TAI YA"
This gathering is of converted natives whose meeting place was under the large fig tree shown in the picture

and remain with the family the first night. At daybreak a duck and a chicken are killed and cooked with the rice, which is eaten by the assembled friends, with the exception of one dishful that is offered to the spirits. The women of the village are summoned to prepare rice ready for cooking, this invitation being made by a relative distinguished as a mourner by binding a white cloth about his head, white being used in place of black for mourning. This accomplished, a pig is killed, then a beef, later a buffalo, the number being limited only by the wealth or poverty in the afflicted family. Children of the deceased, as well as women relatives, wear white jackets the day of the funeral. A small piece of white cotton is given each guest as a souvenir of the occasion. The coffin is made after the fashion used by the Chinese. The corpse is followed by the band of musicians already mentioned and is accompanied by women friends and relatives, who express their sorrow by the continuous wailing and weeping, while men friends not assisting in the capacity of pallbearers carry festoons of gaily colored paper. The spirit medium figures prominently in all the proceedings and is depended upon to call back the family spirit to the home, following the burial of any member of the family group. This is accomplished by the upturning of one of the stools used as chairs by the family and placing in it the head of a recently killed dog, a bowl of water, and a bowl of rice. This offering is carried out in front of the home. While the medium endeavors to call back the spirit to care for the others in the family, the home must be kept absolutely quiet, or the weird vocal tones produced, the drum beaten and the spirit entreated to return, may all be in vain. Anything which may happen later is naturally blamed on some member of the family failing to keep absolutely quiet at the psychological moment.

The study of these interesting people, whom I have introduced to you only slightly, by poorly outlining a glimpse of their customs, together with the opportunity for service in the Lord's work, carrying out His last command to "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations," repays "The Man Farthest Away" for all his isolation, inconveniences, and hardships of being away from friends and loved ones.

I am a missionary, heart and soul. God had only one Son and He was a missionary and a physician. A poor, poor imitation of Him I am or wish to be. In His service I hope to live, in it I wish to die.

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