

THE BASIS  
for the CLASSIC  
FRANK CAPRA MOVIE  
starring  
BARBARA  
STANWYCK

• THE •  
**Bitter Tea**  
• OF •  
**General Yen**  
*Grace Zaring Stone*

VINTAGE MOVIE CLASSICS

NOVELS THAT INSPIRED GREAT FILMS



Vintage Movie Classics spotlights classic films that have stood the test of time, now rediscovered through the publication of the novels on which they were based.

**THE BITTER TEA OF GENERAL YEN**

1933: Produced by Columbia Pictures. Directed by Frank Capra. Starring Barbara Stanwyck and Nils Asther. Screenplay by Edward E. Paramore Jr.

## THE BITTER TEA OF GENERAL YEN

Grace Zaring Stone was an American novelist and short-story writer. She is perhaps best known for having three of her novels made into films: *The Bitter Tea of General Yen*, which was the first movie ever to be shown at Radio City Music Hall; *Escape*; and *Winter Meeting*. She also published under the pseudonym Ethel Vance. She died in 1991 in Mystic, Connecticut, at the age of one hundred.

*The Heaven and Earth of Doña Elena*

*The Almond Tree*

*The Bitter Tea of General Yen*

*The Cold Journey*

*Escape*

*Reprisal*

*Winter Meeting*

*The Secret Thread*

*The Grotto*

*Althea*

*Dear Deadly Cara*

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# THE BITTER TEA OF GENERAL YEN

*Grace Zaring Stone*

*Foreword by Victoria Wilson*



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# FOREWORD

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by Victoria Wilson

*I try to write the kind of book that I like to read. That is, tight, with plenty of incident, all of it going somewhere.*

— GRACE ZARING STONE\*<sup>1</sup>

*I want as a matter of fact to see your point of view as far as I can. I believe I can do it better when you don't argue with me.*

— MEGAN DAVIS TO GENERAL YEN TSO-CHONG

*There is something about the European eye, I can't explain the effect it has on me. It gets so—large.... But I am glad you are trying not to think too ill of us.*

— GENERAL YEN TSO-CHONG

*The Bitter Tea of General Yen* was Grace Zaring Stone's third work of fiction, published by the Bobbs-Merrill Company in 1930, following *Letters to a Djinn* (1922) and her acclaimed novel of the year before, *The Heaven and Earth of Doña Elena* (1929; also Bobbs-Merrill). "Admirable; brilliant," said Louis Golding, prolific novelist, short-story writer, essayist, poet, and author of *Magnolia Street* (a sensation in America). *Doña Elena*, set in the Caribbean in the days of the conquistadors, was about women of the Church, a Mother Superior, the seventeen-year-old daughter of a Spanish hidalgo, who is sent to a new convent and hospital in the frontier town of San Juan.

*The Bitter Tea of General Yen* takes place in a more contemporary time, the Far East in the late 1920s. It's about a New England woman of the finest Puritan stock, daughter of a college president, who arrives in a China torn apart by civil war to marry a medical missionary, son of an Episcopal rector. Both have grown up in the same New England town and known one another "always," gone to dancing class, had picnics together, "indifferent companions until suddenly, [at] seventeen," they fall in love. Bob, now a doctor, has come to China to serve in Changsha at Yale-in-China. His sole intent: to relieve the suffering of others. Megan sees her calling as being filled with beauty and dignity, and has come to China to be a part of it. She sees her role as being one of bringing happiness to others, showing that evil, sickness, poverty, and injustice can be alleviated in the filling of the heart with love for one's fellow man.

On arriving in Shanghai, Megan Davis is met at the boat by a missionary couple of the China Inland Mission. Her fiancé has been waylaid in Changsha, caught in the midst of heavy fighting between Republican and Communist forces.

Rebel skirmishes are flaring up at Sunkiang, a mere thirty miles outside of Shanghai. There is no doubt that the rebels will take the city, and Megan, full of boundless energy and restless vitality, volunteers to accompany Doctor Strike, missionary, learned scholar, translator of the Odes, on a night foray to Chapei, a "labor-ridden" no-man's section of the city, to help rescue women and refugee orphans in their charge, all of whom are trapped at a mission school.

between the lines.

Doctor Strike, a man of power, spiritual as well as physical, sees the Chinese as “the most tragic people ... For hundreds of centuries they have enjoyed the highest plane of living and thinking.... Like the Greeks they have been permitted to miss persistently the one essential truth.... the existence of a God of love.”

The whole of Chapei is ablaze, a fiery inferno, and as Megan and Doctor Strike make their way with the women and children, with packs and bundles, through barricaded streets, past bullet-ridden buildings and terror-stricken civilians running for cover, to a rickshaw stand and waiting coolies squatting between the shafts, Doctor Strike lifts the children onto one of the rickshaws and the women onto another. A tall coolie with a bamboo carrying-pole attacks Megan, hitting her on the head. She collapses, is engulfed by a mob of soldiers and refugees, and awakens to find herself being “rescued”—abducted—carried across the country by train under the protection of the powerful and elusive General Yen Tso-Chong, leader of the Republican forces against the Communists, ruler of a province who maintains an arsenal managed by an American. Yen is from one of the oldest Mandarin families, a scholar turned warlord, now considered a gangster, dissolute by the Europeans and the Americans; his troop trains have special cars for his concubines. (“We have to apply our standard to them,” the missionaries say, “and make them accept it.”)

Megan is brought to Yen’s palace, “made for a life which began and ended with the rising and the setting of the sun.”

Yen’s adviser and financial procurer is Mr. Shultz, formerly in “Customs.” He’s lived in China “longer than [Megan] has lived anywhere,” Shultz tells her. He’s a renegade, and brags that he can squeeze “more money out of his province than any man alive.” Megan sees that Shultz, “is dedicated to himself, first, last and always.” General Yen sees it differently. “My interests are his interests. As long as that remains so, I can count on him absolutely. While Doctor Strike would betray me to please his God any time,” Yen tells Megan, “Shultz has all the want of the West. Doctor Strike has nothing.”

Grace Zaring Stone spent most of her childhood “visiting around,” she said, living in many societies. She was born and raised in New York (her mother died in childbirth) and traveled to Australia, Java, France, and England.

Stone was the great-great-granddaughter of Robert Owen, the nineteenth-century Welsh cotton manufacturer, son of a saddler, who revolutionized the modern factory system and was one of the great social reformers of the day, introducing shorter working hours and safer conditions; building schools for children and adults; teaching moral education (at the Institution for the Formation of Character, to help shape “the new character of the rising population”) and doing away with punishment and the fear of penal law. Friedrich Engels described him as “a man of almost sublime, childlike simplicity of character ... one of the few born leaders of men.... Every social movement, every real advance in England on behalf of the workers linked itself on to the name Robert Owen.” At the heart of his many utopian ideas were his “village of co-operation,” based on his own factory town of New Lanark, Scotland, with its one hundred and fifty acres of farmland and two thousand villagers, and later, in America, with his sixteen agricultural settlements in the Community of Equality, beginning with New Harmony, Indiana, built along the banks of Indiana’s Wabash River. It was Owen’s profound

belief that “the character of man is, without a single exception, always formed *for* him ... Man, therefore, never did, nor is it possible he ever can, form his own character.” Man is a creature of circumstance and to believe otherwise, he wrote, “generates and perpetuates ignorance, hatred, and revenge, where, without such error, only intelligence, confidence, and kindness would exist.” Owen believed the three greatest evils of society were the institutions of marriage, private property, and religion, and that the church had made people “a weak, imbecile animal; a furious bigot and fanatic; or a miserable hypocrite.” With barely any formal education (Owen went to work at a textile factory at age ten, and at eighteen became a partner in a Manchester cotton factory), he was, from the outset, a constant and impassioned reader.

“In all the houses of the Owen descendants,” said Grace Zaring Stone, “there were many books being very thoroughly read and almost everyone kept diaries. Diary keeping, writing in general, was just something one did. Then I married into the Navy and of course that was very, very different. The Navy doesn’t express itself in diaries.”

When her husband, Ellis Stone, was stationed at St. Thomas in the Virgin Islands, “the place seemed to get me started,” said Stone, and an account she wrote of a hurricane was published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, soon followed by a short story. Bobbs-Merrill wrote to ask if she had a novel in mind. “That was a most surprising question to me. I’d had a novel in mind practically forever.”

*The Heaven and Earth of Doña Elena* was critically admired. “It has a bright direction like a silver arrow in flight,” said the *New York Herald Tribune*. *The Bitter Tea of General Yen*, written with the same subtle magic of *Doña Elena* and the same combination of delicacy and strength, was a more ambitious novel (“Remarkable,” said the *Nation* of it [Jan 7, 1931]) and was completed during the two years Stone lived in China, when her husband was commander of the US Navy ship *Isabel*, stationed on the Yangtze River.

Within a few years of its publication, *The Bitter Tea of General Yen* had appeared in twenty editions.

What interested Stone in the writing of *The Bitter Tea*, as it did Edith M. Hull in her 1911 novel *The Sheik*, was the idea of taking a white woman of good standing out of her safe milieu, putting her into a wild, exotic setting, still under the rules of “civilized” society and the protection of men, and then thrusting her into a world where most (white) men would dare not venture, or gain entry: a world beyond white colonial law.

At the heart of the novel are two civilizations, two people who come together from different worlds: an American with a belief in a Christian ethic instilled through generations of teaching, brought up to cherish the notions of goodness and mercy and forgiveness, and a Chinese warlord of rarefied tastes—elegant, educated, wise, unsentimental. Each a creature of circumstances, as Stone’s great-grandfather put forth. For three days Megan comes up against Yen’s superior mind. (“Have you read any of our poetry?” he asks her. “Do you understand our music? Do you know that there has never existed a people more purely artistic and therefore more purely lover than the Chinese?”)

Megan is shaken by the violent ways of the unchristian general Yen and at a critical moment in his campaign begs him to forgive, not execute, one of his traitorous concubines, Mah-Li, educated at the Presbyterian Mission School in Soochow and taught there to speak English, embroider, cook, and use a typewriter. Mah-Li pampers General Yen and receives h

gifts of luxury and precious jade only to betray him by her revelations of the general's plans and strategies to her clandestine lover, Captain Li, Yen's closest aide. For saving Mah-Li ("I must make the General see as I do," says Megan to Mah-Li, "that you are a child and haven't understood right and wrong any more than a child, that he must forgive you and do what he can to help you."), Yen asks Megan if what she is after is understanding or changing him, "I can make me over into some new image; the image of God, but also, slightly, the image of Miss Davis."

The questioning of Megan's Christian ethic and her attempt to make Yen over into a humanist, or sentimentalist, come at little cost to her, but her self-discovery and enlightenment come at a high price for General Yen.

Stone's novel has no hint of romantic attachment between General Yen and Megan Davis. But the script of Frank Capra's 1933 movie by Edward Paramore, based on Stone's novel, is about their impossible love: a sheltered New England woman from the West and a romantically worldly, "inscrutable" man from the East who briefly shatter the barriers of convention, race, and custom but cannot thrive in a conventional world.

*The Bitter Tea* was a lavish picture for Columbia Studios. Harry Cohn, the studio's production chief, had told Capra that the Motion Picture Academy would "never vote for that comedy crap you make. They only vote for that arty crap."<sup>2</sup> Capra set out to make an "arty" film; it was as well a story on the edge of Hollywood acceptability (a picture about forbidden interracial love) that might have a chance of winning an Academy Award.

Capra took over the picture from the heralded silent director, Herbert Brenon (his more than one hundred silents included *Peter Pan*, 1924; *Beau Geste*, *The Great Gatsby*, 1926; *Laugh Clown, Laugh*, 1928), struggling to make his way with sound pictures and with Harry Cohn. Capra replaced Constance Cummings (she'd appeared in the director's previous picture, *Father of the Year*, later *American Madness*, 1932) with Barbara Stanwyck. It was their fourth picture together following *Ladies of Leisure*, 1930; *Miracle Woman*, 1931; and *Forbidden*, 1932. Nils Asther, the six-foot-tall Swedish actor, was General Yen. Asther had studied acting at the Royal Dramatic Theatre Academy in Stockholm with Greta Garbo (he asked her to marry him three times, each time she refused) and came to the United States in 1925, the same year Mauritz Stiller accompanied Garbo to Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and to international stardom, beginning with her first American picture, *Torrent* (1926). Walter Connolly, the sublime character actor in his first motion picture, was brought out to Hollywood specifically for the part of Shultz (Jones in the film); each of the studios had tried for fifteen years to lure Connolly away from the Broadway stage. The twenty-year-old Toshia Mori was Mah-Li (Anna May Wong was originally to have played the part). Clara Blandick, uncredited in the picture, is the Midwestern missionary wife giving the wedding party for Dr. Strike and Megan Davis. Seven years later she was the stern, fretful Auntie Em in *The Wizard of Oz*. Blandick, a well-known former Broadway actress, always played "old" in pictures. *Bitter Tea* was her forty-second film.

In Capra's picture, as in Stone's novel, the portrait of China is that of empire. In the film the West is seen as civilization; the rest of the world, primitive and savage. Stone's novel is much more an education of a rarefied world.

In the film, during the course of Megan's three days in captivity, she forgets the missionary doctor she's traveled to China to marry. She finds Yen alluring; her bigoted, puritanical way

disappear as she feels a sexual yearning she's never felt before. Yen is warned by Jones: "Don't forget she is a white woman."

"I have no prejudice against her color," says Yen, tugging at the brim of Jones's hat. Yen is captivated and willing to risk all for her. Jones's response: "It's no skin off my nose."

In keeping with Capra's thwarted feelings for Barbara Stanwyck, he turned his picture into a fantasy of ill-fated love that becomes ruinous for the one who seems to make the rules.

Yen to Megan in Stone's novel: "It is true that in China ... we have a sense of harmony and a just proportion that you can never understand.... To love my neighbor as myself has always seemed to me a very disgusting injunction.... Your tenet carried out, would lead to an inconceivable state of disorder. It is possibly the theory most dangerous to humanity at large that has ever come into the world."

During the making of *Bitter Tea* in the summer months of 1932, Grace Stone was living in San Diego, where her husband, Commander Ellis Stone, in charge of the destroyer USS *Barry*, was stationed. The studio invited the writer, her husband, and their fourteen-year-old daughter Eleanor, to spend a day in Hollywood and visit the Columbia set. Stone marveled at its realism and felt as if she were back in China.

She said nothing to Capra but thought the movie was "grotesquely miscast," that Stanwyck was all wrong for the New England young woman, that her accent was "crude," her voice "uneducated."\*3 Stone was not at all happy that a Swede was playing the role of a Chinese general.

Capra took great pains with *The Bitter Tea of General Yen*, carefully planning each detail of the production. The extraordinary sets were designed by Stephen Goosson, Columbia's art director who'd worked with Capra on *Platinum Blonde* and *American Madness*. Interesting to note that the signature wall-high octagonal window of Yen's palace—and Megan Davis's bedroom—so identified with the film, and assumed to be an art director's extravagant inspired notion, is first described in Grace Stone's novel.

The stylized look of *The Bitter Tea of General Yen*—dreamy, exotic, otherworldly—was achieved through Joe Walker's camera work and innovation and Capra's direction.

The film opened in Los Angeles in January, 1933, at the RKO Hillstreet Theatre. In New York, *Bitter Tea* inaugurated the newly redesigned \$8,000,000 Radio City Music Hall, which went from being the world's largest two-a-day theater with a seating capacity of 6,250 (the stage was deemed too cavernous), to a motion picture house with a newly installed screen seventy by forty feet.

The reviews were admiring of Capra's work—"a triumph of repression; the most spectacular sequences [are] irreproachably conceived"—as well as Nils Asther's and Walter Connolly's "unusually clever performances" (*New York Times*). The picture really belongs to Asther. Of Barbara Stanwyck's Megan Davis, made somewhat muted by Capra's complicated recently replaced feelings for his star (he'd married Lucille Rayburn six months before the film's production), the critics described Stanwyck's work as "a brittle impersonation of the missionary girl, a portrait which lacks warmth and depth."\*4 One critic said of Capra's *Bitter Tea* itself, "No picture half so strange, so bizarre, has ever before passed outward through the astonished doors of the Columbia Studio."\*5



In 1934, Grace Zaring Stone published a much-admired novel *The Cold Journey*, set in eighteenth-century New England and Quebec, based on a French and Indian raid of Deerfield, Massachusetts, and a kidnapping of some of the town's inhabitants, a kind of allegory of Europe in its then present times. Carl Van Doren called the book "a novel of shuddering force, of concentrated power and sensitive beauty."

Five years later, Stone, then living in Paris where her husband was naval attaché, wrote an altogether different kind of novel—an anti-Nazi suspense—using the pseudonym Ethel Vance. *Escape* became the first of many admired Ethel Vance novels, spellbinding thrillers written with a sense of excitement; a facility of construction; and a smooth, sleek, quicksilver narrative written in another voice altogether.

The *New York Times* called *Escape* a novel of "compelling and almost breathless immediacy" (November 22, 1943). Lewis Gannett in the *New York Herald Tribune* described it as "a novel with the agonizing suspense of *Rebecca* and the deep compassion of *Reaching for the Stars*." and Rose C. Feld wrote, "If it were possible to imagine a perfect collaboration between Will Cather, Nora Waln, and Dorothy Sayers, it could be no better."

*Escape* takes place in an unnamed but recognizable totalitarian country ("We meet in a evil land that is near to the gates of Hell ...") about people caught up in the war in Europe trying to get to freedom, about a rescue from a concentration camp of one of Germany's greatest stage actresses by her American son and their desperate efforts to flee the country.

The novel sold more than two hundred thousand copies in its first three months and was a selection of the Book of the Month Club. MGM bought the film rights knowing that Ethel Vance was a pseudonym. For two years many speculated on the author's identity and rightfully assumed that the novel was written by a woman—Erika Mann? Dorothy Thompson? Rebecca West?—who'd taken another name to protect some relative or friend living in Germany. And indeed, at the time, Stone's daughter, Eleanor (then Baroness Zsigmond Perényi; later author of *More Was Lost*, 1946; *The Bright Sword*, 1955; *Liszt: The Artist as Romantic Hero*, 1974; and *Green Thoughts*, 1981) was living in the midst of dangerous circumstances, in Nazi-occupied Hungary. When Eleanor, pregnant, had no choice but to flee her adopted home, she and her mother, then visiting, both trapped in Hungary with the Germans invading Belgium, made their way out to Genoa as the RAF bombed the city.\*6 A small American boat took them away from a Europe at war and brought them to safety in New York City. MGM's *Escape*, produced in the fall of 1940, starred Robert Taylor, Norma Shearer, Alla Nazimova, and Conrad Veidt and was directed by Mervyn LeRoy.

Stone said she chose the name Ethel Vance "because it sounds like a name you were born with and can't get rid of."\*7

*The Bitter Tea of General Yen*, more than eight decades later, is an extraordinary film for which it reveals of Hollywood's—and America's—attitudes about race in the 1930s; for the look of the picture and Capra's ambitious vision and commentary about the West's insular and unknowing view of the world; and for what it brings to life of Grace Zaring Stone's subtle and illuminating portrait of a colonial China set against its two-thousand-year history, caught in time between its fierce struggle to establish democracy and its equally passionate pull toward communism.

"I don't try to imitate genius—naturally. Why should I?" said Stone. "I work terribly hard

to tell a story effectively, and do a good, tight construction job, because I can do that much. can be a craftsman.”\*8

*The Bitter Tea of General Yen* is not a great novel; it is a well-crafted novel, written with delicate hand, a book that has dignity and elegance and an intensity of vision.

Grace Zaring Stone lived in Stonington, Connecticut, until her death in 1991. She wrote several other novels under her own name; four under the name of Ethel Vance, including *Winter Meeting* (1946), which was made into a Warner Brothers picture in 1948 that starred Betty Davis and James Davis (no relation to his costar). At the time of Stone’s death, she was nearly a hundred years old.

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Victoria Wilson is a vice president and senior editor at Alfred Knopf. She was appointed by President Bill Clinton to the United States Commission on Civil Rights and has served on the boards of PEN American Center, the National Board Review of Motion Pictures, the Writing Program of the New School of Social Research, and *Poets & Writers*. She is the author of *A Life of Barbara Stanwyck: Steel-True 1907–1940*. She lives in New York City and upstate New York.

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\*1 Robert Van Gelder, “An Interview with Grace Zaring Stone,” *New York Times Book Review*, May 3, 1942.

\*2 Frank Capra, in George Stevens Jr., ed., *Conversations with the Great Moviemakers of Hollywood’s Golden Age at the American Film Institute* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2006), 98.

\*3 Eleanor Perényi to author, January 5, 1998.

\*4 Victoria Wilson, *A Life of Barbara Stanwyck: Steel-True 1907–1940* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2013), 347.

\*5 Philip K. Scheuer, *New York World-Telegram*, January 14, 1933.

\*6 Eleanor Perényi, *More Was Lost* (New York: Helen Marx Books, 2001; New York: Little, Brown, 1946).

\*7 *New York Times*, May 5, 1942.

\*8 Robin Van Gelder, “An Interview with Grace Zaring Stone,” *New York Times Book Review*, May 3, 1942.

Megan, drawing her chair over to the window, saw that the rain had given an air of transcendence to the solid Chinese earth. For the moment it had stopped raining and all the pools reflected cloudy sky, making the roadway an unsubstantial track over emptiness. Willow trees hanging over a wall at the far side of the road were silvered and delicate with moisture, and even the brutal fact of barbed-wire entanglements stretching along the foot of the wall was tempered by the fragility of tremulous drops. She had been told that the barbed-wire entanglements bounded the French Concession and that farther to the left the opening of the barricade marked the entrance to the Avenue Joffre, one of the chief thoroughfares of the Concession.

A French non-commissioned officer and several Senegalese soldiers stood at the entrance and examined, bored but relentless, all the traffic going in and out. All afternoon, in spite of the bad weather, there had been a straggling passage of motors, rickshaws, wheelbarrows, and Chinese men in long black skirts, holding large umbrellas, fastidiously picking their way among the puddles. Megan since her arrival in the house, while talking to the Jacksons and when they had gone, unpacking, directing the amah's pressing, was always conscious of the windows. In the dimness of the European house those gray windows opened strangely on the Chinese road. She was more and more conscious of them as she did various small things that had to be done, longing to possess them undisturbed, and when finally she drew up her chair in the little drawing-room and rested her elbows on the sill, she looked out at the moment when China, washed in a luminous impermanency, presented itself to her not with the dull impact of a solid fact but with the peculiar intensity of a vision seen partly from within.

On the road a car came at tremendous speed from Siccawei toward the Avenue Joffre. The fans of muddy water curving back from its wheels looked like the fins of a porpoise, and like a porpoise it lunged over the uneven road. As Megan watched, only dreamily noting, a small Ford released from examination at the entrance to the Avenue Joffre unexpectedly darted forward, and to avoid it the large car swerved sharply to the left, skidded and crashed into a telephone pole. Megan heard the crash and the tinkle of breaking glass. She jumped up and ran out the front door. Two of the Senegalese were there ahead of her and several passing Chinese had gathered. The hood was smashed in, the engine wrecked, and the chauffeur had been thrown through the windshield and flattened against the telephone pole. But Megan, only now conscious of a real intrusion, stood reluctant before the necessity of doing something about it.

The door of the car opened and a Chinese man stepped out. He was muffled in a coat too heavy for the weather, but his hat had fallen off and a thin, dark trickle of blood ran down his smooth temple. He stood for a moment beside the ruined car feeling himself apprehensively about the ribs, shoulders and arms and, satisfied that he was unhurt, feeling more tenderly still each finger of his exceedingly beautiful hands as if he could not to completely reassure himself that their slight bones were intact. He was so absorbed that Megan said to him sharply:



“Your chauffeur is hurt.”

He looked at her vaguely and smiled with a curious lift of his eyebrows, then obviously reluctant as she was, took a few steps toward his chauffeur and glanced down at him. He turned toward her again and clicked his tongue.

“Annoying!” he exclaimed in English.

Another Chinese man stepped from the car and walked around to observe the extent of the disaster with the foolishly hesitant movements of a fowl picking its way about a littered garden. He also was smothered in a heavy coat, but a cap pulled over his eyes hid his face and as everything he wore was apparently several sizes too large for him, he seemed a boy sixteen or even younger. He and the Chinese man were about to enter into a consultation when the French sergeant walked up and, brushing curtly between them, began to question the Chinese man. The boy moved away and the man answered the sergeant, smiling although their meeting furnished an unexpected but agreeable opportunity for conversation. Finally he took a paper from his pocket and showed it to the sergeant. The sergeant examined it, then looked up at him, looked him over, and with deliberate mockery saluted him. The Chinese man continued to smile, though his smile now was not directed at the sergeant; it became diffused, meditative, touching rather some particularly uncertain aspect of humanity just revealed to him. He turned away. In touching his forehead to return the salute he had discovered his fingers to be smeared with blood and this further reminder of the hazards of life seemed to deepen his meditation into melancholy. His smile vanished.

“Annoying,” he murmured once more.

From the Ford which had stopped a few yards up the road jumped a vigorous, black-bearded priest in a black soutane. He ran toward them and, paying no attention to any one else, bent at once over the chauffeur whom he laid out flat on the ground, uttering loud exclamations. Megan knew that the chauffeur was undeniably the real, if the less interesting sufferer, but she felt that the Chinese man had met with an unmerited slight from the French sergeant. And he too had been actually hurt. She exclaimed impulsively:

“Please take my handkerchief,” and drew a clean folded one from the pocket of her cardigan.

The Chinese man answered, “Thank you, but I have one.”

He took a large handkerchief out of his own pocket, unfolding it to its full size and displaying a character embroidered in the corner. Something in his gesture made Megan realize her offer had implied that he could not possess a handkerchief. She was resentful, not only because he had checked her impulse but he had also made it seem a bit absurd. She turned away from him abruptly and joined the priest.

The Senegalese and the French sergeant strolled over but they only stood looking down while the priest felt the chauffeur’s body for broken bones. Megan knelt beside him in the attitude of one ready to help and even with some reluctance ran her fingers over the chauffeur’s skull through bristling, oily black hair. The priest lifted an eyelid. Then he said to her in French:

“And the skull, is it broken?”

“I don’t think so,” said Megan; “perhaps you had better examine it.”

The chauffeur’s face was a mass of cuts, with glass driven into the flesh. She began to feel a little sick.

"It is horrible, isn't it?" she said.

"Yes, they can't stand much," said the priest, "they are desperately undernourished."

"No one seems to concern himself," said Megan, glancing still resentfully at the Chinese man who was cleaning his forehead with little dabs of the handkerchief.

"Oh," said the priest, shrugging his broad shoulders, "what do you want! They are five hundred million souls!"

And Megan saw that it was difficult for him to bear in mind the surpassing value of such super-abundant commodity.

The sound of another car stopping made her look up. A crowd had gathered by this time and the magnificence of the new arrival diverted most of the attention. Like the first it was shining and obviously new car but spattered high with the mud of rough and rainy roads. The windows were draped in chenille fringes, and through them Megan saw a woman's head, her black hair melting smoothly into the dusk of the background, her face vivid as a painted egg shell, supported apparently on a shining collar of lime-green satin. She lowered a window and leaning forward made little chirping ejaculations at the sight of the wreck. The Chinese man walked over and spoke to her. He leaned on the window, and as he talked to her with considerable animation, Megan looked at him more attentively. Nothing about him suggested any particular age; his face was smooth and of a uniform pallor, the nose long and aquiline, the eyes bulging a little, there was a curl of humor at each side of his small, full mouth and certain vigor to the modeling of his forehead, but the hands with which he gesticulated as he talked betrayed him, not so much by their feminine delicacy and beauty as by a way he had of handling things that was both fastidious and ineffectual.

The priest got up from his knees and went over to speak to the Chinese man. The small Chinese in the great coat and the sergeant joined them. The priest evidently made suggestions in Chinese. They talked a great deal, and the sergeant watched them cynically, to indicate that he had the proper contempt for a conversation of which he could not understand a word. Finally a decision was arrived at. The priest and the chauffeur of the second car picked up the injured chauffeur and put him into the second car. They laid him on the floor at the feet of the lady, bending his legs into an uncomfortable position, and the two Chinese men got up after him. Then they drove off. The priest, having watched them go, took off his hat to Megan and went to his Ford, which awaited him a little farther up the road. The small crowd of coolies and passers-by continued, for want of anything better, to stand listlessly about the damaged car. It began to rain again. As Megan slowly crossed the road to the house the French sergeant, looking at her ankles, hummed a French song called *Valentine*.

Inside the house Megan sat down by the fireplace, in which a fire was being built and lighted by the coolie. In leaving the street she had turned her back on China; the house she was in was on the wrong side of the barbed-wire barricade and in Chinese territory, but it might have been a house in Brighton, as English as it was possible to make it. There was a cottage piano in one corner, loaded with photographs in standing frames; a plum-colored carpet covered the floor and on the walls hung pictures, evidently belonging to a series and representing dogs of different breeds sitting on cushions, taking tea, and wearing lace caps and top-hats. The tea table was being set near the fire by the number one boy for the Jacksons, who had said they would be back about five o'clock.

It was the Jacksons who met Megan on her arrival at Shanghai that morning. The ship was anchored down the Whangpoo, and before she could step aboard the launch that was to take the passengers up to the jetty she was accosted on deck by a small, shabby man with a sorrowful, apologetic voice and a very drooping mustache who told her he was Mr. Jackson, of the China Inland Mission, sent to meet her. Megan turned so pale that the little man caught at her arm to steady her.

"But Bob," she stammered, "has anything happened to him?"

"No, no," cried Mr. Jackson hastily, "he is well, he is quite well." And all the time the launch was chugging up the river he continued to reassure her as to Bob's safety, for he was terribly afraid of emotional women, that is, when they were of the European race; though the outcries of a recently widowed Chinese he was capable of taking with calm. He explained to her that Bob had been unable to leave Changsha, and that while he was not exactly in actual danger, still there was a great deal of fighting around Changsha and at various points along the river, so that he might even be delayed for weeks.

"But can't I get up to him?" asked Megan. "After all, I've come all this way to marry him."

"Well," said Mr. Jackson soothingly, "well, as a matter of actual fact you cannot. I've tried to get a permit for your passage from the authorities, but they aren't permitting any women and children to travel on the river now. We want you to stay here with us, and when Bob does come we'll have the wedding in Shanghai. Mrs. Jackson and I were forced to leave our station a month ago, and we've taken the house of some friends who are in England on leave. You'll be quite comfortable with us, and it will give you a little time to adjust yourself to the conditions here. I see Mrs. Jackson now, standing on the jetty. See, the one with the green umbrella. She will be mighty glad to have you with us. She has lived for so long where there are very few white ladies."

After all there was nothing to do but go with the Jacksons, but Megan was not so deeply disappointed as her first fright had led Mr. Jackson to suppose. She could not explain to him what she had never fully admitted to herself, that she had come as much for China as for Bob.

Megan had not looked to Mr. Jackson, and she would scarcely have looked to any one, the sort of girl who would become the wife of a medical missionary in China. She had been born and brought up in a small New England college town, but she had had winters in Boston and

several trips to Europe, and because her father was for many years the president of the college she was used to a society of comfortable means and a most determined intellectuality. Bob lived in the same town, the son of an Episcopal rector with a large family. They had known each other always, gone to dancing class, picnics together, been completely indifferent companions, until quite suddenly, when she was seventeen, Megan fell in love with Bob, that is to say, she decided to focus on him all the ardors and enthusiasms, all the capacity for dreaming and questioning, of which she was capable. It was a secret passion of course and not a little desperate, because she knew with that part of her which in every sane person, and even in the young, remains the onlooker, that no one would take her seriously, least of all Bob, who was a good-looking young man, an excellent athlete, but full of common sense. And Megan did not really want Bob to be conscious of what she felt for him. She never wanted to realize him in an actual world in any rôle that he would be likely to play; it was enough for her to dance with him sometimes in a tense and beatific silence and to write a great many poems which she kept locked in a drawer in an envelope marked "in case of my death, please destroy."

Megan had been one of those dazzlingly beautiful children whom people exclaim over as if they were deaf or insensible, so that even very young she had been aware, as children of royal blood or great wealth are aware, that she enjoyed some special privilege. And not alone from the exclamations of the careless but from the attitude of her parents did she divine the privilege. Her father would tear his eyes from the pages of a book to look at her; he treated her with an aloofness that had a touch of awe. Her mother's attempts to be severe, and discipline, broke down always into endearments, so that Megan lived with her in an excited atmosphere of fancied slights, sulks, tears, kisses and passionate admiration. Megan was privately considered by some older persons as a thoroughly detestable child whose parents, and indeed most of the world, spoiled beyond reason, and to these persons her screaming tantrums enjoyed an equal fame with her beauty, but to most people this beauty had its usually happy effect of minimizing her faults and enhancing her virtues. Scarcely any one could fail to be touched when so brightly lovely a child was willing to share her cake with another or tell the truth under stress.

But as Megan grew older she began, by degrees but surely, to be a little less beautiful, until by the time she was well in her teens her beauty had left her entirely. This did not happen suddenly, and she herself was slow to realize it because the attitude of people toward her was so well established that it was slow to change. But it did change. And once she overheard some one say:

"Yes, that is Davis' daughter now; you would never think she was such a ravishing child would you?"

Megan went home and saw in the glass the thin well-shaped body, the rather hollow cheeked face of a handsome girl, a girl with some of that haggard Celtic look, together with the long upper lip, the rather blunted Celtic nose, the eyes greenish gray, brilliant and black-lashed, but she saw that of the intangible and extraordinary Celtic bloom nothing remained. She saw also that she had lost her kingdom.

Of course this loss, as in her love for Bob, would mean practically nothing to any one else, not even to her parents, and the realization only added to her bitterness and resentment. The callousness of the world to the greater part of human suffering struck her for the first time

But there was nothing to be done about that and she herself remained profoundly indifferent to all the hidden sources of grief that people around her concealed daily. She cultivated the belief that the beauty of the world is always in some sense marred, that we must all expect to lose what we most cling to, and therefore that it is our own fault if we let ourselves in for disappointment. For a year or so Megan constrained herself into the pattern of the cynic, astounding when she could by bitter speeches and pleased only when she created a flutter of alarm. Then at the moment when she felt she had established the fact that she had nothing to live for, Bob, who had come back from two years as interne in a Boston hospital, made two astonishing statements: one that he was going out to China as a medical missionary and the other that he loved her and wanted to marry her.

The young cynic vanished as quickly as she had come. The sterility of that attitude had always repelled her, even while she had taken a perverse enjoyment in its repellent effect on others. She now unconditionally renounced it. Bob was in love with her. They would be married as soon as he was settled in China and was able to send for her. Megan underwent one of those irrational and complete changes that happiness will produce in nearly any one. She was herself astonished at the change. She not only loved Bob, but some emotion had been released in her which welled up irresistibly and for which Bob alone was not enough. Up to now she had treated her religious beliefs with some indifference, sometimes with scorn, but Bob's orthodoxy, his desire to serve, seemed to her now to have the only beauty and dignity. She was going to be a part of his life, which was a life for the relief of suffering. Her part would be to bring happiness. All the misery of humanity, by which she had been only vaguely irritated when she felt herself to be a part of it, she now looked on with the sensations of a man cured of a disease who is impelled to testify to the remedy before others. She knew that no one should be unhappy, that evil, sickness, poverty, injustice, all demanded our treatment. No man would be unhappy if love for his fellow man filled his heart. During the time before Bob left for China Megan lived in a period of exultant joyousness. There were no problems, there was nothing that was not fundamentally right. She even looked at herself in the glass. She was no longer beautiful. Good. She instantly accepted humility, and she discovered that even humility may always be accepted by the proud when it is acknowledged to be a grace and ornament of the spirit.

Bob went to China and was not able to send for her as soon as they had both expected. A long summer dragged past and autumn came. Megan, still happy but a little less exultant, tried to do settlement work in the small city where she lived, a city where the prosperity of the inhabitants made such work among them so difficult, so desultory, that she gave it up. In the early winter she went to a hospital in Boston as a probationer. But she was not a success. The external ugliness of the life depressed her, and her imaginative pity for the worst cases added to an irresistible physical disgust, was such that she became fumbling and even absent as to detail. The patients themselves did not like to have her about. This discouraged her, and when her mother on a visit found her more than ordinarily hollow-cheeked, with eyes overbrilliant from strain, she promptly took her home. So a gradual depression began to settle over her. Her impulses did not change but there was no outlet for them. She thought a great deal of China. She read Bob's letters over and over and out of their bare words extracted gradually a vision of China's wretchedness and beauty. China and Bob both needed her, but Bob was now an accepted fact, dear, a part almost of herself, while China was unknown;

put no limits on her imagination. And China held the greater magic.

Then in January came a letter saying that conditions in China had grown suddenly worse. Bob gave them details that at this distance lost their significance. The British at Hankow, the Nationalists, Russian influence, all this meant nothing. Still, Megan's parents were worried. It did mean another delay. As they sat about together, Megan reading parts of the letter aloud, she suddenly felt that another crisis had come to her, like that one when she looked in the mirror and for the first time saw there a long pale face that was her own. If she could not go to China now, and to Bob, it seemed that something terrible and definite would happen to her. She did not define it, but it seemed vaguely to take the character of a loss of faith. It caught her into a panic. Looking up she saw her father and mother watching her with a common expression of anxiety on their faces. She knew by instinct that some peculiar quality of the love for her made them vulnerable, in a way that she was not, and abruptly, without reasoning, she stormed over their weakness. She burst into tears.

"But I've got to go," she cried. "I can't stand these disappointments any longer, I've got to go."

And as she knew at once, even without looking at them, that she had won, a feeling of release streamed over her.

When the Jacksons returned for tea she told them all about the wrecked car, which they saw they had seen as they came in, and particularly about the extreme callousness of the owner of the car. Mr. Jackson did not seem to think that was anything out of the ordinary.

"It was probably some rich man taking refuge in the Concession," he said. "They tell me the Cantonese are at Sunkiang, only about thirty miles away. Lots of Chinese are making for the Settlement."

Mrs. Jackson held her cup in one hand and the *North China Daily News* in the other. She read:

"Over a hundred executions of Communist sympathizers took place yesterday and the heads of some of the more prominent agitators were put in cages over the gates of the native city.' That ought to be a lesson to them. Will, why don't you go and take snap-shots of them to send home?"

Megan involuntarily raised her eyebrows and Mrs. Jackson saw her.

"But it does them good to see what goes on out here! They ought to see it with their own eyes. Why, I've seen plenty of executions at Shasi, and sometimes they hung them alive on chains on the city wall. And I'll never forget seeing heads there one rainy evening with birds pecking at them. Yes, it would do them good to realize some of this at home. No one knows what we go through out here. It is the fashion nowadays to accept everything, but it is a whole lot easier to accept things at a distance than close by. And the only way to accept calmly what happens in China is to stay at home and believe nothing any one tells you."

"It is the only way, my dear, to maintain any pleasant international relations."

Mr. Jackson smiled under his long mustache at Megan as he spoke. Megan did not have a very keen sense of humor, and unlike most people who lack it she knew that she lacked it. She considered it the refuge of those who dare not look facts in the face, but she saw that Mr. Jackson possessed a sense of fun arising from fundamental good temper, which he took to be humor, and it was a great comfort to him. As a boy she was sure he had put wet newspapers in the beds of his school fellows, and still remembered it with a wistful smile.

"Besides," he said, "you mustn't try to frighten Miss Davis."

"I'm not being frightened. I want to know what is actually happening. Whatever it is I want to know."

Mrs. Jackson returned to the *North China Daily News*, which she laid on the arm of a chair while she buttered a scone.

"It is rumored," she read, "that General Yen Tso-Chong is in Shanghai in one of the Chinese hotels of the French Concession. Not long ago the General successfully completed negotiations with the Nationalists which resulted in the turning over of his province with practically no shedding of blood. The General has a well-organized army and maintains a large arsenal under the management of a European, which turns out among other things a trench mortar said to be the equal of any. His province is one of the most prosperous in China. He is particularly able and astute, and despite his unfriendliness to the Hankow faction (his own capital has lately been the scene of numerous Communist executions) he is regarded by many

as one of the coming leaders of the Nationalists, among whom he represents the more sane and anti-Bolshevist element. The purpose of his alleged presence in Shanghai, at a time when it is held by the troops of the Northern party, is unknown.' Will, isn't that Doctor Strike General? But of course it is. Yen Tso-Chong, that is the name. He is the one who turned the Doctor out of his college."

"Doctor Strike," explained Mr. Jackson, "is a very good friend of ours. He is a very learned man, belongs to all sorts of scientific societies and is a great Chinese scholar. He has written a textbook on the Chinese language and translated the Odes. Besides that he is a man of amazing power, spiritual and physical as well, though he is not as strong as he used to be. His life of labor is beginning to tell on him."

"Is the Doctor in town?" asked Mr. Jackson.

"I don't believe he is in town. He was to get in touch with me as soon as he got back. Yet General Yen must be the Doctor's erstwhile friend. I believe he did use to think very highly of the General, who they say is a well-educated, intelligent man. He didn't seem to change his mind about the General even when he turned him out of his college. But the Doctor isn't one to give up hope of a man easily, not when he has set himself to save him."

"They say the General is very dissolute in his private life," said Mrs. Jackson. "I am surprised the Doctor would overlook that. They say he never travels without special trains for his concubines, and when you read in the French papers (they publish such things) that his concubines are sent away from a city, it means that city is about to fall."

"Is a Chinese dissolute because he has concubines?" asked Megan.

"He isn't considered so by the Chinese. But then that really isn't the point, is it? We have to apply our standard to them, don't we, and make them accept it?"

Megan sipped her tea and considered this last remark, coming so flatly from the apologetic little Mr. Jackson. It is always so easy to mock at intolerance because quite naturally each one of us would prefer to be treated with tolerance. In fact, we much prefer tolerance to mercy. Mercy is forced to recognize that justice exists; tolerance is indifferent to it. As to Mr. Jackson's statement, obviously they were here to enlighten China. To assume the apologetic attitude, the humorous, the tolerant attitude, would in his case be merely a flabby cowardice.

"Of course, that is what we are here for," she repeated staunchly, feeling however that she had not entirely clarified the issue in her mind.

Mrs. Jackson complained of a headache and took the paper over to a sofa, on which she took a slightly reclining attitude.

"Will, do you remember Mrs. Walsh's headaches?" she said. "Well, do you know how she finally cured them? She knew an old country woman back in Wales who kept a special flock of sheep and a special bed of saffron. I can't remember what this old woman did, but it seems she gathered this saffron, and then sheared the sheep from whatever part of the sheep you had the pain, all at a certain period of the moon. Then she tied this wool around the saffron and sent it to you. Well, Mrs. Walsh got some from the sheep's head and she has never had a headache since. I wanted to send for some myself," she turned to Megan, "but Mr. Jackson wouldn't hear of it. Of course he was right, but I still have headaches."

Mr. Jackson was worried that this story had been told before Megan. He looked at her a little anxiously as he said to his wife:

"It would have been an outrage for a woman of your training to consider such a thing. If



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