

Chi Chih Yi—A Manchu Woman Philanthropist

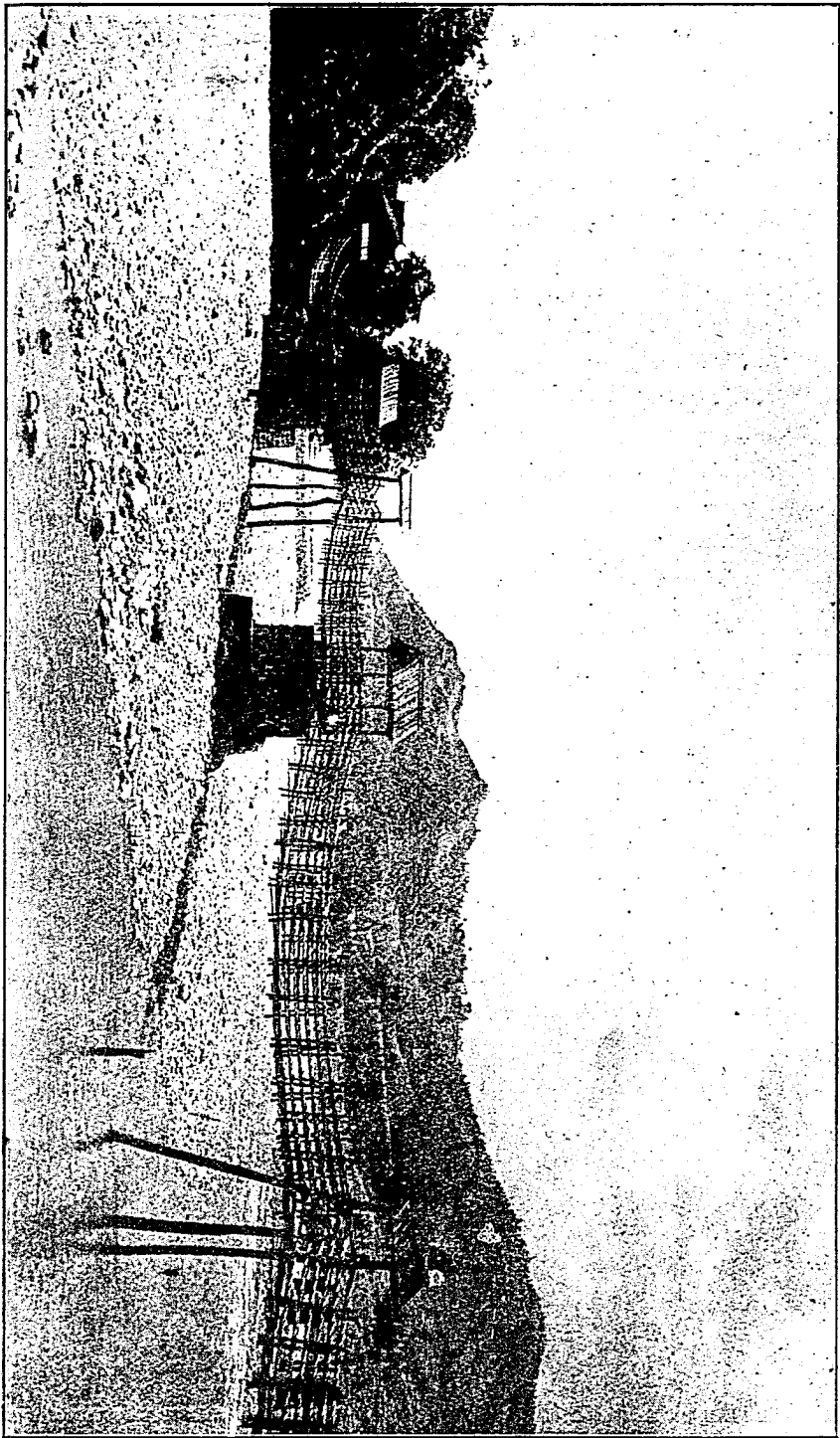
LO SHU HUA

CHI CHIH YI, my teacher, was the daughter of Hsiang Kung of Chin Chow, a General under the Manchus. She lost her mother in her earliest years and was brought up under the direct supervision of her father. She began her education at the age of eight and pursued her studies for more than fifty years. She was well versed in the Classics and History and excelled in drawing and embroidery. For thirty years she was closely associated with her father in his official capacity. She assisted him with his correspondence. (Chih Yi was given the full education of a Manchu youth of good birth. She rode, she could shoot with the bow and arrow and, during the thirty years of association with her father in official life, wore man's dress. To the end she had somewhat of a man's stride and bearing. Her affections were true and deep but given to very few. She was hardly capable of a caress though her voice and eyes were most expressive. Her judgement was always sound: her range of interests and breadth of sympathy unusual. Translator). She died in 1914 of overwork.

During the years I studied under her I found her ever ready to contribute to any good work.

She was of a deeply filial nature. Seeing that she had neither brother nor sister, and that her father in his old age would need succour she determined to forgo marriage so that she might be free to fulfil all the mourning rites for her father. At the time of the passing of her mother a will was made enacting that no child of any relative should be received into the family by adoption. For this reason the general treated her exactly like a son. Being himself a man of sincere nature and just in all his dealings, he was greatly distressed at the weakness of the nation and since all his efforts to induce the governing powers to reform were unavailing he decided to give up his official post and lead a life of retirement. He used often to say that men and women should be equally well educated as that would make the women not consumers merely but producers also, to the great advantage of the country.

After the "Troubles" (1900) he settled on his country estate to enjoy what was left him of life. The next year Chih Yi founded a girls' school under the name Shou Yi in order to carry out the ideas of her father. She herself undertook the greater part of the teaching of Chinese. Old friends shewed their sympathy for the public spirit of the general by collecting \$500 for a Memorial in his honour. The

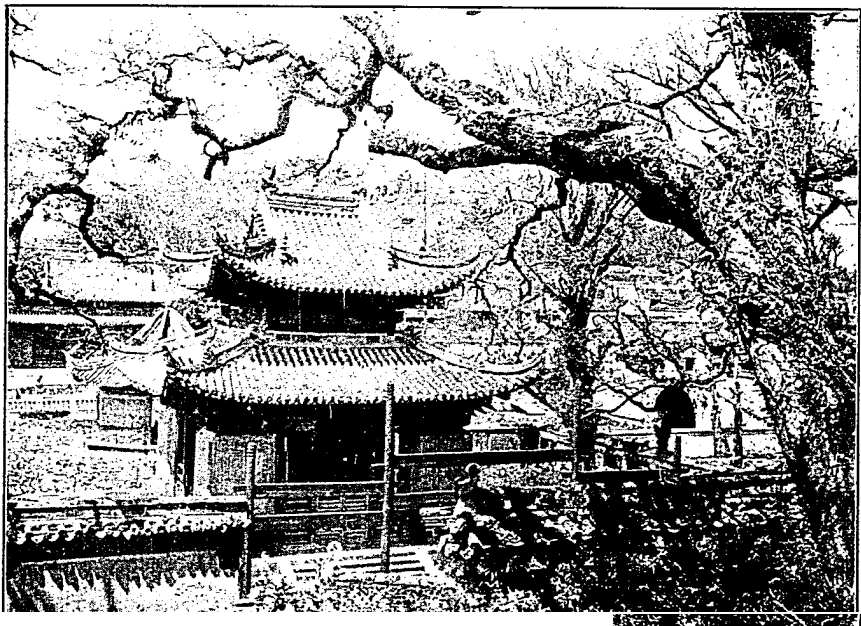


SUSPENSION BRIDGE, NORTH-WEST SECHWAN.

Photo by Robert Fitch.



PUTO SEASCAPE



Photos by Robert Fitch.

ENTRANCE TO SOUTHERN MONASTERY, PUTO.

family proposed to erect a hall to his memory but his daughter would not hear of the idea and begged that the money might be used for founding a school since that had always been her father's intention. The money was handed to Mr. P'êng of Kiang Su for the establishment of a higher primary school for boys. After a few years Mr. P'êng was accused of some crime and banished. The school was closed. (P'êng was the editor of a daily paper in which he had ventured to comment on the malpractices of one of Yuan Shih K'ai's sons. Translator.)

Chih Yi was deeply grieved but as at that time an Imperial Edict had been issued to encourage the establishment of girls' schools she resumed her work in connection with the Shou Yi Girls' School, added more classes and changed the name to Chên Yi. There were about fifty "chien" available for class rooms. For funds she depended on the rent of house property and garden land. This proving insufficient she sold or pawned all effects of any value to make up the deficit. (It was pathetic to watch the gradual disappearance of every silk robe, each bit of old jewellery and china, and to see her break her coarse maize cakes saying, "this is the food of the poor. I eat it because I desire to." Translator). From the thirty-second year of Kuang Hsü to the present day more than ten years have gone by and the money spent in the upkeep of the school amounts to more than \$10,000. This was raised by the sacrifice of all her worldly goods. From this school have gone out many graduates who owe their entire education to the unaided efforts of Chih Yi. She was a woman of the type who does not easily express herself in words. (Yet those who heard her speak of the "doctrine" of her beloved Classics will never forget the flash of the eye and the deep feeling which welled up in the expressive tones of her voice. Translator).

In the autumn of the third year of Hsuan T'ung after the passing of the revolution and the founding of the Republic, the minds of the people were greatly disturbed and no more classes could be held in the school. In the ninth moon the situation became worse and Chih Yi thought of organizing an association of Women's Refuges to which women might flee for safety if there should be any rising in the city or a mutiny amongst the soldiers. I joined her in this effort and secured the assistance of a generous hearted American Mai Mei Te (Miss Luella Miner). In the formation of this association through wind and snow she went hither and thither and finally succeeded in establishing Refuges to the number of seventeen. The minds of the women were thus kept in peace in spite of all rumours and disturbances. (Many women came to the Refuges and lived in them whilst rumour was particularly rife. On three nights in which Peking was looted

many a woman sat on her "k'ang" with her refuge ticket and badge beside her; the only thing which reminded her of available help and kept up her courage. Translator). Soon after the Republic was established the school was re-opened but the funds were quite insufficient. The Foundress was terribly grieved. The anxiety told heavily on her health and strength. I, Shu Hua, being one of her students could not bear to see her in such a plight and did all I could to help her by devoting all my efforts to the raising of funds for carrying on the work for which she had given and borne so much. The school has made great progress and it will be a great loss should it fail now. But the good work she began will remain as an example and inspiration to future generations.

