

## TWO MONTHS' HOUSEBOAT TRIP IN CHINA

Fairport Missionary in Western China Tells of Her Interesting  
Trip Up Yangtse River to Station.

Suifu, Szechuen, China,  
October 6, 1913.

My dear Mr. Greene:

My promise to write of our houseboat trip up the Yangtse has not been forgotten, but I must confess that its fulfillment has been neglected.

When we reached Ichang, the end of our steamer travel, we found that our freight had not arrived though it had left Shanghai some time before us. Our houseboats had already been

often they had to climb over rocks so rough and steep that progress was difficult. They were either barefooted or wore only straw sandals. The rest of their clothing depended upon the weather. On a warm day their uniform was generally Nature's own. It is no uncommon thing to see a boat drawn by a crowd of men innocent of all clothing. They attract no more attention than would be given at home to a barefooted boy.



Trackers Pulling a Boat Through One of the Rapids.

engaged and one family happened to have a few dishes and cooking utensils. So we immediately went aboard and all ate together until our things reached us.

There were three families and each had its own boat. Houseboats vary but ours were alike, the kind known as four room houseboats. Such a boat is about sixty feet long and ten or twelve wide. Twenty or twenty-five feet in front is reserved for a deck, not however for the pleasure or recreation of the passengers. Here the fifteen or twenty men employed as oarsmen and trackers sleep, eat, and work. Back of the deck are four rooms. The first two are each about seven feet long. The one next to the deck was used as a sleeping room and the second as dining and living room. Behind this was the kitchen, somewhat smaller. The last room, which occupied the rest of the space, was known as the captain's room. Here were kept the ropes for the trackers and here the "rudder-man" stood, steering our boat through rapids and shallows. You can imagine that with the necessities of housekeeping even on a very limited scale our quarters were decidedly cramped. Our cook slept on the floor in the kitchen. Whenever he had a chance he went ashore to buy supplies. With a tiny stove and a table to share his compartment he had just about room to stand but in some way or other he managed to keep us well fed.

During the day unless there is a good wind for sailing the men either "track" or row. Our boat had two oars, some have more—exceedingly awkward affairs, each manipulated by from six to ten men. They are not used as oars at home; I scarcely know how to describe the motion. The men stand in a row with backs toward the middle of the boat and both hands grasping the oar which is held parallel to the length of the boat. To the rhythm of their rude boatmen's songs and shouts and the pounding of feet, they move the oar back and forth, scarcely raising it out of the water. One wonders how the boat moves at all but it does.

At mealtime—which for a Chinaman is almost any time—the men sat on the deck with their bowls of rice and vegetables while the boat went on if there was wind enough to fill the sail or was brought to shore if there was not. Between Ichang and Chungking they ate three times a day; between Chungking and Suifu it was five times. All this not from a difference in need but because it is custom. If you want to know what custom is, come to China. It is the iron-clad thing that holds the people to certain ways of doing and thinking because it has been so from time immemorial. Reason apparently has no place in their reckoning.

In the evening an awning was erected over the deck and the men slept rolled in their blankets and so close together that, as I heard someone say, "if one turned over, all had to turn." At daybreak they were up and off, following what seems to be a general Chinese custom of getting a good start on the day's work before breakfast.

Most of the way for the two months that we were on the houseboats, the men "tracked." That is, they walked along on the shore drawing the boat by a long rope to which they attached smaller ropes that were drawn out in a fan-shaped arrangement. Sometimes they had a smooth, sandy path; more

fields near at hand and mountains in the distance. Frequently we saw isolated homes or groups of dwellings or a temple or a shrine, all looking very peaceful and picturesque. Yet we were quite aware that if we could come closer to them we should find a generous allowance of China's ever-present filth and poverty. Poverty here in the West, however, does not mean what it does in some parts of the country. Famine is unheard of here and it only the natural resources of the country could be developed great wealth would be realized.

The most interesting thing that we saw on our trip was the Buddhist temple at a place called Precious Stone Castle. It is built on the top of a high rock that from a distance looks almost square. It takes a long climb to reach it, first up numerous stone steps and then up rickety wooden ones in a many-storied shaky wooden pavilion built against the side of the cliff. Once at the top a scene of great devastation greeted us. Before the revolution of 1911 there were five priests in charge of the temple; now only one is left. During the troubles soldiers visited the temple and threw down and broke every idol in the place and there were scores of them of all sizes. When we were there, a year later, things were apparently just as they had been left. Idols were lying on their faces in the dirt; we saw a man kick one which lay in his path and say, "Get up!" Heaps of straw and mud showed quite plainly of what these "gods" are composed. Some people are still worshipping them. What a tragedy it was! These piles of rubbish unable to protect themselves being asked for help by ignorant people who spent their few cash for incense and spirit money to burn before them.

A story was told us which shows that the priests are not believed free from the faults of common people. We were shown a hole into which it was said that rice once flowed every day, a gift from heaven to supply the needs of the priests. Greed prompted them to enlarge the hole so that they



Broken Idols in the Buddhist Temple at Precious Stone Castle.

places the river bends so that one seems to be entirely shut in. Sometimes on top of a seemingly inaccessible rock a temple can be seen. In several places images of Buddha are carved in the face of the cliff. At one spot, with the aid of field glasses, some ancient coffins are visible. They are hundreds of feet up the side of the gorge. No one knows how long they have been there or how they were put there. It is not improbable that they are thousands of years old.

Besides the gorges there are the rapids. It is a rather exciting experience to go through them. Sometimes the ropes break and the boat goes down-stream at an unpleasantly rapid rate and the whole thing has to be done over again. In this way boats are frequently wrecked on the hidden rocks. It is necessary to have extra trackers in crossing the rapids. Sometimes as many as a hundred men and five or six ropes are used. The men go on all fours and every muscle is strained. Even then they are barely able to crawl along.

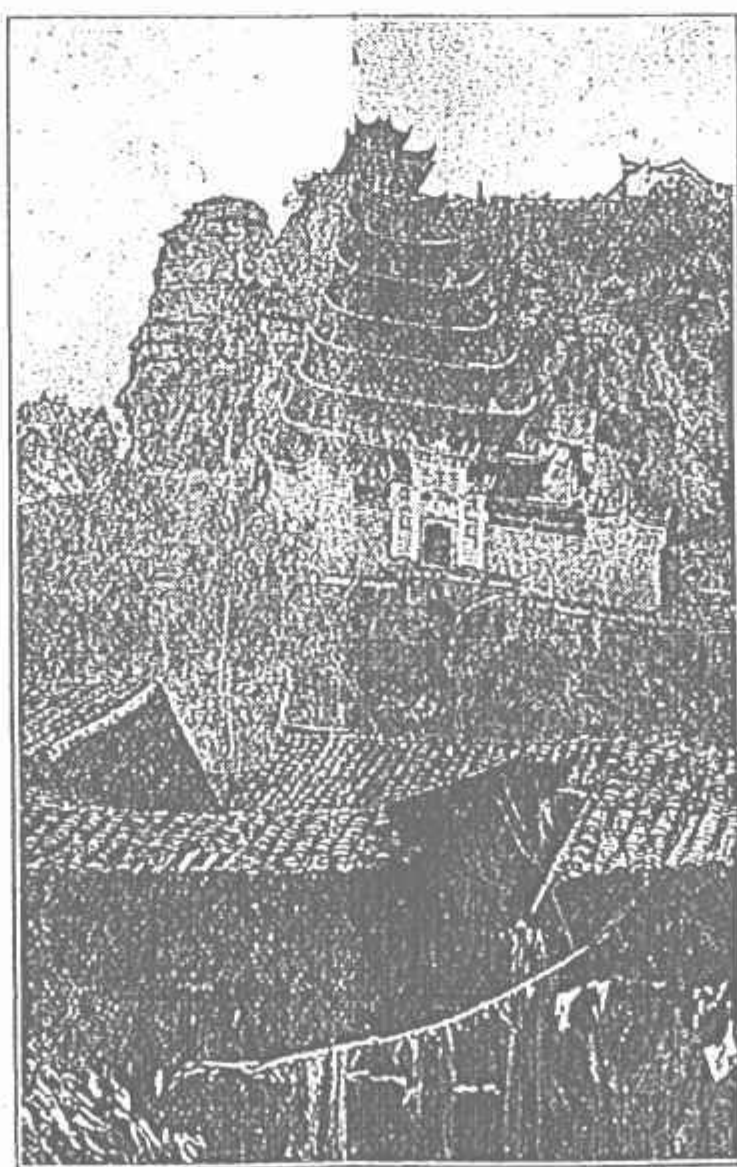
At two of the most dangerous rapids we all left our boat and walked. The first of these rapids, the worst of all, was reached early in the afternoon. So many boats were ahead of us and it took so long to get over that we had to wait twenty-four hours for our turn. Our captains were good enough to anchor our boats in the very edge of the rapids and the whole party had a good dose of a near relative of seasickness.

Another of the rapids has an interesting legend connected with it. It has existed only a few years and is called the New Dragon Rapid. People say that a dragon was buried under a mountain beside the river. He grew there for many years and finally became so large that he struggled for freedom. In digging his way out he caused a landslide which made the rapid while the dragon swam down the river. The landslide part of the story is true; as to its causes others might differ.

After we passed the gorges the scenery was very different in character but still beautiful. There were green

could have more rice which I suppose they thought to sell. But alas for their hopes! Nevermore was a grain of rice found there.

Our long journey ended in Suifu on April 9th. We arrived early in the afternoon. Our missionary friends



The Rock of Precious Stone Castle.

Showing the wooden pavilion built against its side and the Buddhist temple on top. In front can be seen the manner of drying clothes by stretching them on a bamboo pole.

came to the boat to meet us and some of the Chinese Christians came to give us a welcome. It was a noisy one I assure you. They used enough firecrackers to celebrate several American Fourth's. At the riverside two men held a long pole to which were attached strings of firecrackers which were set going at one end and continued for what seemed like ten minutes though I suppose it was not more than two or three. When we were finally

in our sedan chairs and started for the mission compound, a man ran along in front of our chairs or beside them with more firecrackers. And again when we reached the compound there were still more.

The weather was already getting warm and as there was no reason for our staying in the city we took our teacher and went up to the hill on May 16th. Our "summer resort" is very near to the city; it takes us only three hours to reach it. There are four cottages which belong to members of our mission. When all the people were on the hill we had a community of fourteen including three children. The cottages are built of mud and all but one have thatched roofs. The rest of the missionaries were unable to leave their work before the first of July so we were alone for six weeks. However we were perfectly safe. Later in the summer thieves visited us several times but their coming caused no trouble save a good deal of annoyance.

It had been our intention to stay on the hill until the middle of September but the latter part of August rumors came that soldiers were on their way to Suifu and that the city gates might be closed indefinitely. In that case we needed to be inside the city so we came down the hill with more speed than order. So far the city gates have not closed and they are not likely to do so now. The only trouble has been with money. The money system in China is a nuisance at best and sometimes worse. Generally we count a Chinese dollar worth about fifty cents of United States money. But variation is such that for a thousand dollars of Uncle Sam's currency a man may one year receive twenty-two hundred Chinese dollars and the next year only eighteen hundred. And expenses are sure to be most when exchange is lowest. Recently exchange has been up and down and in Chengtu, the capitol, men have even been beheaded for refusing to take too little cash in exchange for silver.

Yesterday my husband met on the street two men on their way to execution. Each one had on his head a placard telling the nature of his offense. Twenty soldiers were guarding them and two soldiers were holding each prisoner. In front of them walked the executioner carrying his huge sword. People on the street were careful not to come too near and one could hear them saying, "The beheader! Look out!" I have been told that the place of execution is not far from our home but I have not seen it and you may be sure I shall not look for it or make any inquiries as to its locality. The Chinese flock to a beheading as people at home do to a circus and talk about it for weeks after. A short time ago two men were beheaded and as we passed through one of the city gates a few days later we saw photographs of the affair fastened to the wall for everyone to see and there was a crowd of people looking at them and discussing them.

As I have said, things in Suifu have been quiet so far and bid fair to remain so. We have just heard of serious fighting at Chungking two weeks ago, not between opposite parties, but if you please, between rival factions of the same party. In one way or another, China seems doomed to have her share of trouble for years to come.

Very sincerely yours,  
Alicia Morey Graham.

## SPECIALS FOR THIS WEEK

Lenox Soap, 8 bars for	25c
Evans Napha Borax Soap, 7 for	25c
Proctor & Gamble Napha Soap, 6 for	25c
Zava Pomo, Grandpa's Wonder and Star Soap, 6 for	25c
Use Creamo Creamo, the best of all, 3 tins	25c
Peroxide Bath Soap	10c
Kirk Bath Toilet	10c
Quaker Corn Flakes, 3 10c pkgs. for	25c
Kellogg's Corn Flakes, 3 10c pkgs. for	25c
Washington Crisp, 3 10c pkgs. for	25c
Quaker Oats, 10c pkg., 3 for	25c
Mother's Oats, 10c pkg., 3 for	25c
Tako Buckwheat, 10c pkg., 3 for	25c
Puritan Buckwheat and Pancake, 15c; 2 bags for	25c
Parker's Buckwheat and Pancake, 15c; 2 bags for	25c
Karo Syrup, 3 10c tins for	25c
Large pail for 25c; 1 gal. can for	45c
A quantity of good Corn, 3 cans for	25c
A quantity of good Tomatoes, 3 cans for	25c
Our Mistletoe Brand, 2 cans for	25c
The best Oleo money can buy for the price	20c
Salt Pork, sweet as a nut, by the chunk, 5 to 6 lb. average, per lb.	14c
Premium Hams, whole, per lb.	20c
Premium Bacon, whole, per lb.	22c
Premium Cals. Hams, per lb.	15c
A large shipment of White Foam Flour; 1/2 bbl. sack for	70c
8 sacks for	\$5.25
A 1/2 bbl. sack of Granite Flour, 75c; bbl.	\$5.60
Try a sack of our Vesper Flour; per bbl.	\$6.00
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Bed Quilts	\$1.00 to \$2.50
Sweaters	\$1.50 to \$6.00
Flower, Oil Cloth Patterns	65c, 85c, \$1.00, \$1.50
Stove Boards	60c, 70c, 80c, \$1.00
All kinds of Mittens and Gloves	10c to \$1.00
Men's Underwear	50c and \$1.00
Men's Wool Hose	25c and 50c
Men's Overalls	50c, 65c, 85c, \$1.00
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