

WOMAN'S PART IN CHINA'S RE-BIRTH

Equal Rights, Equal Chances

A FORTNIGHT ago, *The Listener* published an interview with Dr. Hubert Smith, who was for many years Medical Adviser in Shanghai. Dr. Smith spoke of some aspects of domestic life in the China he knew, the China of Shanghai and of the coastal cities. But there is more than one China. Dr. Lai-Yung Li maintains that the real China lies toward the interior, for it is here, he says, that 85 per cent. of the Chinese people live. And he had a great deal to say, not so much concerning their physical way of life as concerning their moral and spiritual welfare. For Dr. Lai-Yung Li is a Christian and an ardent supporter of China's New Life Movement.

"The New Life Movement has affected the womanhood of the whole country," Dr. Li told me. "The women of China have always held an honoured position in the household, but in the new China the women have equal political and economic rights with men. Formerly a woman was unable to inherit land or money, which must always pass through the male line. But now all that is altered."

Creating a National Conscience

"What exactly is the New Life Movement?" I asked Dr. Li.

"It's a movement to regenerate China. You see, for thousands of years the people of China were discouraged from interesting themselves in the affairs of government and were taught that the administration of the country was the exclusive concern of the ruling class. The people consequently ceased to have any

interest in the Government and lapsed, as their rulers intended they should, into complete disregard of national affairs. They sought merely the welfare of their own family or clan and cared nothing about the responsibilities of citizenship. Now something must be done to break down the demoralising influence which centuries of this apathy have had on the Chinese people. A new national conscience must be created and developed. And this is the aim of the leaders of the New Life Movement."

Four Virtues

"Is it then a purely political movement?"

"It has a spiritual significance also. It aims at directing the thoughts of the people of China to the ancient high virtues of etiquette, justice, integrity, and conscientiousness. These four virtues were highly respected by the Chinese people in the past, and they are vitally necessary if the rejuvenation of the nation is to be effected. So you see New Life is a blend of the old and the new, for its fundamentals are rooted in China's past, and at the same time it incorporates many of the principles of western living."

"And do you think that the New Life Movement, which first came into being in the minds of the educated leaders of China, has yet had any influence upon the peasant working in the fields?"

"Yes. For one thing, it is bound up with his hatred of the invader. Then he sees its influence in other ways. He sees that free education provided for his children; perhaps his daughter goes to work in one of the new co-operative factories."

GATHER YE ROSE-HIPS WHILE YE MAY

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Vitamin C through taking increased quantities of green vegetables, provided that by the processes entailed in their preparation and cooking the vitamin is not destroyed or thrown away.

During the summer and autumn, there are usually plentiful supplies of fruits and greens, and there are new potatoes (more valuable than old potatoes for their Vitamin C content). You must be prepared, however, for the winter, with supplies of Brussels sprouts, cabbages, cauliflowers, spinach, preserved tomatoes, and gooseberries. We women will have to be extra busy "making hay while the sun shines" this year, what with making preserves, doing the extra gardening while the men are away, in addition to our more assiduous darning of stockings!

New Recipe for Beauty

We are fortunate in our supplies of apples, for some of those that come in

during the winter are quite valuable sources of Vitamin C. What a pity that blackberries are not very useful in providing C—for then so much use might be made of those two blackberry bushes that grow on the West Coast, one on either side of the railway line!

If Brussels sprouts are cooked in the proper way, eight sprouts will supply about one-third of your day's need; but about half its original Vitamin C is extracted into the water in which the green vegetable is cooked. The losses are greater the larger the quantity of cooking water used. Added to this, they lose in value if they are given prolonged steaming or keeping hot. The housewife scarcely realises how much value she is losing from those costly items in the household budget by inattention to the details of correct cooking. It would be a good thing if we had a slogan to the effect that you can tell from her beautiful complexion that she drinks her vegetable water!

NEXT WEEK: "The Fly Nuisance," by DR. TURBOTT.



WOMEN OF CHINA: The cheerfulness of these Red Cross workers is symbolic of the spirit in which China is facing up to the fight against aggression

New Zealand's Contribution

Dr. Li spoke also of Rewi Alley, who in 1938 became chief adviser of Chinese Industrial Co-operatives. At that time the co-operative factories owned neither a lathe nor a chisel, but Rewi Alley set to work to organise this important side of China's war machine. "He is," said Dr. Li, "New Zealand's contribution to China."

The new factories had naturally a marked effect on family life, continued Dr. Li. Thousands of young girls had found employment in them. This meant that, being financially independent, women had a great measure of practical freedom.

"And doesn't this result in the gradual breaking-up of family life? Hasn't the family, as a unit, ceased to be so important?"

"No, because the New Life Movement in China has done nothing to destroy the deeply-rooted Chinese respect for parents."

"Have parents in New China the same right to arrange marriages for their children as they had up to a few years ago?"

"Official consent is necessary. But I should say that now the final O.K., as they say in America, rests with the children."

The inflection of Dr. Li's O.K. reminded me that he himself had gone to an American University.

Exchange of Students

"Many of the leaders of the New Life Movement have attended American Universities," he said. "Until recently many universities in China operated an exchange system with American and Canadian Universities, and I myself went on exchange to the University of Pennsylvania. My wife is still a student in Fukien Christian University, China."

"Is university education free in China?"

"Yes, in Government institutions, but the students have to keep themselves while at college and pay their own expenses. However, it is worth noting that after the war broke out and many students were unable to contact their parents the Government undertook to support them. Primary education is of course free to all."

"And do women get the same chance of a university education as men?"

"Yes, under the new Chinese constitution women are regarded as the social and political equals of men. At my own college (Lingnan) I should say that about one-third of the students were women. And there was about the same proportion of women in the other Chinese colleges I had contact with. You'll probably find that that compares quite favourably with the proportion of women students in New Zealand colleges. I know that in the University of Pennsylvania only about a third of the students were women."

—M.I.

Dress Does Not Change

"THE usual garb of a Chinese girl student," says Dr. Lai-Yung Li, "is the traditional one-piece tunic, with high collar and short magyar sleeve. Even in American Universities most Chinese girls cling to the traditional costume, wearing it long for formal occasions and knee-length for ordinary wear. This is one of the few ways in which China's women have not been influenced by western ideas."