

2 The Missing "Treasure Book"

Soon afterwards, the publication of Ms. Cumming's book was spotted by Mrs. Archibald Little (1845-1926), another English author and traveler. "... travelling through the English Lakes in the month of June and rejoicing in the rhododendrons and azaleas, so lovely there, I read Miss Gordon Cumming's account of the azaleas on the hills behind Ningpo, and thought I must some day come to China just on purpose to see them. But I did not then think that I should ever really do so."

In 1887, Mrs. Little started her journey to this ancient oriental country with her husband, Mr. Archibald John Little (1838-1908), a famous British merchant in China. Unlike other foreign ladies, Mrs. Little was actively involved in social affairs. Aware of foot-binding causing great harm to Chinese women, she set up *Tien Tsu Hui* (Natural Foot Society) in Shanghai, campaigning against the detrimental practice. Meanwhile, she visited Li Hongzhang (1823-1901), Zhang Zhidong (1837-1909) and other important officials of the late Qing Dynasty (1840—1912) for support. Hu Shih (1891-1962; a famous Chinese literary scholar and philosopher) called her "a benefactor of Chinese women's liberation".

Mrs. Little arrived in Ningbo in a mid-spring day of April. Her journey was recorded in her book *The Land of Blue Gown*, published in 1901.

Mrs. Little couldn't wait to go to Xuedou Mountain the day just after she arrived in Ningbo from Shanghai. "But there came a moment of intense excitement, when we first caught sight of azaleas, pink beneath the fir trees. Then there was a hillside or two in the distance all ruddy with them. At last we were carried over such a hill and sprang out and gathered our hands full of pale pink, of rosy red, of mauve and again of pur-

ple reddish azaleas. They were quite as lovely as in English gardens We lunched by a swift stream, on whose banks grew what looked like violet flowers, but violet flowers with leaves most unlike violets. And there we sat and watched the rafts go by."

The azaleas at Xuedou Mountain and the picnic by the stream, a strong recommendation by Mrs. Cumming in her wanderings, were surely caught by Mrs. Little. Neither did she miss the waterfalls and deep streams at the Xuedou Temple, built on flat ground at the summit of the mountain. As seen in her description: "bushes of azaleas in full blossom, like delicate pink and mauve fairies, projecting over the precipice."

Particularly, on the night of her stay at Xuedou Temple, Mrs. Little received a "book" from the monks — "Unlike most travellers' books, each traveller seems to have tried to write something worth the reading. There are notes by Dr. Macgowan giving some little account of the history of the place. Sir Walter Medhurst has written careful advice as to what walks to take, and in what order, though this seems to matter less, where all the surroundings are lovely. Someone has given a list of the birds. No one so far of the flowers. Mr. Ernest Major has selected a legend of a great exterminator of mankind, who tried to slay one of the priests, but the priest lifted his finger and the sword would endow the monastery. Dr. Fryer has added his quatum, especially noting that the two trees at the entrance are splendid specimens of *Salisburia Adiantifolia*."

The "treasure book" — full of vivid and vibrant records of expatriate "impressions of Xuedou" — was passed down "from generation to generation", yet unfortunately has not survived to the present day.



A sketch of Buddha statues at Ningbo's Tiantong Temple, drafted by Cumming.

THE "THREE FINE BODIES" IN THE BUDDHIST MONASTERY OF TIENTONG, NEAR NINGPO.
(From a sketch by Mrs. F. Gordon-Cumming, published in the GAZETTEER by Mr. H. Simpson.)

3 Tinned Beef Flying off a Cliff

Following the footsteps of Mrs. Little, Mrs. De Burgh Daly (1859-1935), born in Ireland and formerly named Emily Lucy French, also visited Xuedou Mountain.

She was trained as a nurse in London in 1888 and was sent by the Church Missionary Society to Ningbo, where she oversaw a small women's hospital. Two years later, she married Dr C. C. de Burgh Daly, a medical officer at Zhejiang Customs (one of the four customs established in the early Qing Dynasty), and the family moved from Ningbo to Yingkou of northeastern China in 1893 due to a change in her husband's employment. Then in 1915, Mrs. Daly published her memoirs *An Irishwoman in China* in London.

Mrs. Daly had travelled all over such attractions in Ningbo as Mount Taibai, Xuedou Mountain and Mount Dalan, coinciding with the tour of Mrs. Cumming and Mrs. Little. But she seemed to have more spare time since she once stayed at Xuedou Temple for ten days in a row.

She was impressed by the abbot of Xuedou Temple, who was honored for his "genuine religious feeling and ascetic life". According to Mrs. Daly, "he had the face of a visionary, and seemed absorbed in worship or contemplation, never taking any notice of our presence; whereas the other monks talked to us, asked us questions, and loved to pose before the camera."

Mrs. Daly was awakened at two in the morning — as Mrs. Cumming had been — by the sonorous boom of wooden fish (aka. Chinese temple block) resounding through the courts. "Then followed the shuffling of many feet and the priests' monotonous chant, or still more monotonous repetition of the name of Buddha — Omitofu, Omitofu, Omitofu — over and over again, perhaps a thousand times. This exercise is considered to have a beneficial effect in withdrawing the mind from worldly thought"

Mrs. Daly chose to picnic at the edge of a very steep hill, when a dramatic scene arose. "One day we ... were as usual extremely hungry. A tin of corned beef absolutely refused to be opened; it was banged and hammered until it..... Suddenly, inspired by some demon and by a particularly strenuous bang, the beef rushed out of the tin and flew in one solid mass down the mountain-side into the valley hundreds of feet below, followed by our hungry eyes and many lamentations, and leaving us to quarrel over the number of scones each consumed, and the fair division of a succulent Amoy pomelo, an excellent fruit like an enormous orange, which I have never seen at home."

The writings of these ladies are very witty and humorous, rich with details of their daily lives, and highly engaging to read.