

Sketched While Boxer Bullets Pelted Thick and Fast

MISS CECILE PAYEN, THE GUEST OF MINISTER CONGER, TELLS HER STORY FOR THE SUNDAY CALL.

MISS CECILE PAYEN, the celebrated miniature painter, who as the guest of Minister Conger and his family was cooped up in Peking, dictated the following story for The Sunday Call. It is a woman's graphic account of the sufferings and suspense endured during the siege of Peking. The most thrilling incidents, forgotten in the hurry of the first interviews, are vividly described.

Miss Payen ventured out into the Peking street with easel and brushes when others huddled under cover. Twice her stool was shot from under her and many of the sketches bear realistic bullet-holes.

She was the first woman to welcome the allied troops when they quietly marched into the tennis court. It was her idea to quench their maddening thirst with tea, and, aided by other willing hands, she labored for almost five hours ladling out the thirst-quenching beverage.

Miss Payen describes the pathetic burials of the infants who died from lack of proper nourishment. The little tots could not stand the horsemeat diet, and one after the other they sickened and died. It was a sight to wring the heartstrings.

Of the 2700 people housed in the British concession only 700 were Caucasians, the remainder Christianized Chinese. Their daily life, their hopes and fears, are described by Miss Payen as only a woman can.

Miss Cecile Payen, although still a young woman, has won high honors on the field of art, having captured the first prize in miniature painting at the World's Fair in Chicago.

The sketches, executed while Boxer bullets pelted thick and fast about her, will be of exceptional interest. Miss Payen will not exhibit them until she is once more safely housed in New York and the terrors of the awful siege have grown more dim in her memory.

We did not live during these six awful weeks in Peking. We did not see, but a thousand deaths a day. It was death by life, grim specters trooping through our fanes. Plague, Boxer tortures, these and kindred evils stalked through our thoughts, waking or sleeping. The past faded into a dream, the present was a nightmare, the future a blank.

I left for Peking on the 2d of April, expecting to spend some weeks as the guest of Mrs. Conger, wife of the United States Minister in Peking. The days flew by on pleasure's wings until June was at hand. Then flocks of clouds began to gather. Each day they grew, but the people at the various legations shut their eyes to them and the ball of pleasure rolled on.

"I came to a sudden standstill on the 15th of June. We were having tiffin on the veranda. A group of men strolled from the club houses. They broke the news as quietly as possible. They said that word had been received from the missionaries warning the foreigners for the destruction of every foreigner in Peking. 'No cause for alarm,' reiterated the men, but hands shook as they poured the tea and even the men paled under their bronze. There were no tidbits of gossip served with the biscuit, no light laughter and breezy repartee. Coming events were casting their shadows before.

"It was decided to try and escape to Tientsin, and escorted by a military guard Mrs. Conger and the rest of us waited at the station from 7 in the morning until 11 at night, but no train came. It was fortunate, after all, for it would have been from the tramping into the fire.

"On the night of the 16th I was startled at a faint red glow that gradually draped the sky in crimson. 'The Boxers are burning the chimenen,' explained Mr. Conger. The chimenen is the north gate, used only by the Emperor as an entrance to the Temple of Heaven.

"It was a never-to-be-forgotten scene. We watched it from a point of vantage, spellbound at the sight. Never a pyrotechnic display could even suggest a type

of the magnificent spectacle. The flames licked the sky until the vault of heaven seemed a writhing, seething volcano that even the people in Tientsin must see. "June 15 the black-bordered day in my diary. You of the outer world shuddered over the murder of the German Minister, Baron von Ketteler. But they, those in Peking, who had known and admired the courtly Baron, imagine if you can their feelings. Sorrow, but sorrow mixed with fear—the dread foreboding that such would be the common fate of all. "Oh, what a night of torture was that.

At the first faint streak of dawn we received another message. 'The Boxers have sworn to kill all foreigners within twenty-four hours.' It ran, 'and all must seek safety in the British concession.' The 20th of June, says my diary—June, the month of roses, when all the air is sweet with the perfume of the myriad blossoms. Ah, yes; that was your June out here, in the blessed land of peace and plenty. But that 20th of June, which I scrawled with hasty fingers in my diary, that was June 20 in Peking, with a storm of shot and shell falling.

"Very quietly we packed our things to move into the English compound. Twenty-four hours' grace, by oath of the Boxers! But only over the dead bodies of our menfolk! And then? Death, perhaps mutilation at the ruthless hands of the Boxers.

"At 3 o'clock on Wednesday afternoon, June 20, we were all in the compound. Boxer bullets had rained upon us thick and fast on the way, but we were unharmed. Minister Conger was assigned a house, and we did our best to stow ourselves into the six-room dwelling place, which thirty-two people shared. Besides these, many more came there daily for their meals.

"From the very first we realized that food was going to be scarce, and used it sparingly. Meat gave out in a few days. 'Horsemeat!' said the men, and the women shuddered and would have none of it. But there came a day, and it was not distant, when hunger's demands must be satisfied even by horsemeat. Imagine women of delicacy, used to every luxury, being reduced to such lengths.

"But it is in such straits that the true fiber shows through all veneering. There made no man, those brave women of Peking, but did all in their power to assuage the sufferings produced by the foul air and insufficient food. For the men and women it was frightful, but for the children it was more often—death. Ah, merciful heaven, how the sufferings of those little ones tugged at the heartstrings. And we were so powerless to help them—not a drop of milk, not even an egg. Nothing to do but to watch their white faces grow thinner and their pleading eyes with the unchildlike black circles gazing hungrily at you until the white, tired eyelids closed forever. Seven little ones died in those eight weeks and their wasted forms were tenderly laid to rest.

"Another painful sight was to see the spirited young fellows who had lately entertained recitally brought in on stretchers wounded unto death. Oh, it was sickening. They would go out in the front so full of life and courage and in a few short hours be carried in wearing a brave smile, but their pallor was ghastly and the streaks of blood—oh, what stories they told of shattered limbs and of heroes' lives slowly going out!

"In those first days in the compound we had hoped against hope. We knew that we had but 350 soldiers against that horde of Boxers, but still, out there in the distant, beautiful Christian world were friends who would surely come to our rescue.

"They will come, they will come,' we chanted over and over again. We Americans planned our faith in the Fourth of July. We set that national date for the relief of the city. Surely on that day of days rescue would come. 'The American soldiers will get here then though they crawl,' was the oft-repeated statement. So frequently was it said that even those of other nationalities came to believe it. But the Fourth came in unheralded by a single firecracker, and the Fourth went out with never a sign of relief and naught but the bursting of Boxer shells to break the silence. 'Ah, Dio mio, you said it

would come to-day,' wailed an Italian woman. "Our daily fare was now boiled rice three times a day, but rice of a very inferior quality. There was cracked wheat, too. Horseflesh was varied with mule meat. Now I realized why the dogs had been saved under the shadow of famine. In addition to the 700 legationers there were the 2000 Christian Chinese to be fed. Every dog weighing seven pounds was killed and distributed among them.

"We had fresh meat just once about the middle of the siege. A soldier on the im-

perial wall killed a passing Chinese who had a pig, a duck and a chicken. The soldier brought them to us. Mrs. Conger offered him money, but he insisted on trading the meat for a glass of beer.

"Hope was now dead. We had grown accustomed to the bullets and heeded them not more than buzzing flies. The Boxers fired wildly, but we knew it was only a question of time when the end would come. The Boxers were ignorant of our numbers until a crazy Swede escaped the guard and clambered over the wall into the midst of the Chinese. A same man would have been instantly killed. The Swede told them we had only 350 men, instead of the supposed thousands. Moreover, he told them that they were firing too high, and immediately their bullets were directed according to his instructions. The Swede made his way back into

our lines and was put under heavier restraint, though many demanded his death. "I no longer stayed in the house, but saved on days when we were especially warned, ventured out to sketch. This work was my only solace under the distressful circumstances. True, I risked death more than under cover, but since death was certain it might as well come sooner as later. If a Boxer bullet should claim me my work it was just as well, I thought.

"When the history of the siege of Peking is written the historian may not dwell upon that barricade, but to the artist it was a beautiful sight. Rows upon rows of sandbags made up of embroidered silks and costly fabrics that would have paid a king's ransom. The world never saw such a barricade before and never will again. The finest weavings from the four corners of the world went to make it. It was the most decorative and ornament-

Boxer shells. I have written in my diary under that date that it seemed like a contest between the elements of heaven and hell, with fiends using their powers to swell the tumult.

"And in the midst of this pandemonium a woman went mad. She was a Russian. With several others she had been assigned to a pavilion in the compound. This pavilion had a roof, but no sides, and was surrounded by boxes and barrels to shield

body and wound him or kill him. "On August 11 I was sketching in the street, when suddenly I saw a line of moving figures that doubled and trebled and ever came nearer and nearer. All went black for a dizzy second and then—and then—but who can ever describe it!"

"They had come, the allied forces had come when hope was long since dead. "I found my voice, and a woman in a window above repeated the joyful words. In a moment men, women and children were pouring out of the houses and surrounding the tennis court, where the allied forces had drawn up.

"What a moment it was! I could have hugged them, grim, worn and bedraggled as they were.

"They looked ready to drop in their tracks. Dust-begrimed, their tattered clothes caked with mud, unkempt, their eyes glazed with sheer weariness, their tongues swollen in their panting mouths, they looked the levellest line of men I ever gazed upon. And heroes they were, the whole 200 of those allied troops. Before we saw them we had thoughtlessly complained day after day because they had not promptly marched to our rescue. When we looked upon them we realized what a terrible heart-breaking, body-racking journey that desperate march to our rescue had been to them, fighting, starving, thirsting the sleepless days and nights.

"Troops of other nations were there, but I saw only the American soldiers, the boys in blue. God bless them! How haggard and drawn and bedraggled they were. Their very tongues hung heavy with thirst. Suddenly I thought of tea! Thank God, there was still some left. At my suggestion Mrs. Conger set her coolies at work brewing it, and with the assistance of other ladies we handed it around among the troops. There were something like 2000 of them, and it kept us busy from 3 in the afternoon until 7:30 o'clock at night.

"And that was called a tea party and by rumor twisted into the report that when the allied army reached us they found us gay and happy at a lawn party! Oh, the pitiful irony of such report.

"They came to us when Death was at our elbow. In another twelve hours all would have been over. When the troops pressed their way through the Chinese forces they discovered that the Boxers had undermined our lines. They had already begun to store it with gunpowder and it would have been ready for the match in a few hours.

"We had been just eight weeks, even to the hour, in the compound when relief came. Now that we are back in God's country it all seems like a hideous nightmare."

"Saxon Fireplaces Are Now the Thing."

"The imposing hall fireplace has become almost an absolute essential in the new country houses, where from small inglenooks the fireside has pretty well developed into a room to itself with the hearth as its heart. What the possibilities of a really stately chimney piece are is shown in the hallway of a new and very splendid country residence. The house itself is built after the style of architecture popular in the time of the second King George, and the hall is a great square room finished at one end by a lofty arch. Inside that arch is a very luxurious inglenook. The white marble fireplace shows a beautiful block of the hearthstone, in which is laid in brasswork the motto and arms of the family. While all the hall is done in red, the inglenook furnishings repeat the color, but in a deeper, richer tone, and its wall and floor space is furnished as a complete tearoom. A brass inlaid table, beautiful Benares ornaments and mahogany chairs decorated with brass give it all a very solid and comfortable appearance and it forms an ideal winter tearoom.

It is a fashion transferred from last season and followed this autumn in the country houses, where seasoned hickory legs are just beginning to crackle, to dispense with andirons entirely and build what is called a Saxon fire. This requires a broad hearth space and a good flue, for the logs are laid in a sort of pyramid shape in the huge brick cavern, and when they ignite and fall together they all lie flat upon the hearth, just as an outdoor fire is made. There is usually an iron-work depending from the black throat of these chimneys, on which the chestnut roaster is hung, and the effect is antique and interesting.

While the fireplace of the hallway grows bigger and bigger and the poker, tongs and shovel increase to the size of a crusader's lance, the bedroom hearth is sensibly limited to the least possible area and made more and more decorative. The prettiest of these cozy corners are tucked in an angle of the room and wrought entirely by tiles and pewter. The tiles are very small and of cream or green, or brown, with the hot, tongs and trimmings of pewter. Sometimes quaint garlands of pewter or a motto in antique lettering are worked upon the surface of the tiles, while the coal basket or fire irons are made of steel that is polished like silver.

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the inmates as much as possible from the elements and bullets. The thundering uproar and maddening cannonading drove the poor woman hysterical and finally into madness.

"Whenever an alarm was rung, whether for fire or attack, it came from the chapel bell. How we dreaded its sound, for not a day or night passed that it did not repeatedly startle us in affright. We knew not what danger its sound portended. That was during the first weeks of the siege. Curiously enough, as the siege progressed the sound of the bell began to have a strange effect upon the Chinese. They seemed to think its clang was the signal of danger to themselves. They would stop firing at its first tap as if waiting in expectation for something to happen.

"Most of the attacking Boxers who were armed with guns had a curious way of

shooting them. They would point their weapons in the direction of our fortifications, turn their heads and bang away. The Christian Chinese explained to us that the Boxers fired thus aimlessly at us because they believe that the man at the trigger has no control over the direction of the bullet. To their untutored minds all they have to do is to press the trigger and fate does the rest. If the bullet is destined to kill any particular person fate will guide it carefully to that person's

head.

"One night of the siege in particular is burned in my memory. It occurred toward the end of the chain of horrors. The weather had been sultry and muggy for several days. Then came a thunderstorm, peal upon peal shaking the compound. Surely the Boxers would not fire upon us in such a storm! But they evidently took it as a sign of heavenly aid, and every lull in the thunder was made hideous by the bursting of the screaming, hissing

bullets that ever knocked an enemy.

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