

Chapter 1

The Opium Cure

“Shoot him!”

The gaunt young commander snapped his order to General T'an, tossing his head in the direction of the south room in the Shanghai mansion, where a middle-aged American surgeon waited. The high-ranking officer expected his orders to be carried out with customary swiftness. Wasn't he marshal of the armies of China, responsible only to the Generalissimo himself? Indeed, he was Chang Hsueh-liang, ruler of Manchuria, the wealthy and famed “Young Marshal” of the Chinese Republic.

General T'an stepped deliberately into the doctor's temporary office down the hall. He nodded soberly toward the commander's room. Without waiting for the general's words the graying American, elbows on desk, his squared jaws resting solidly in his powerful hands, spoke coolly in fluent Chinese.

“Did he tell you to take my head?”

“Not exactly. But you have the right idea.”

“Just as I told you. This means we are making progress.” The surgeon's blue eyes warmed as he spoke, his long sensitive fingers accenting a certain oriental quality of his features as they pushed his cheeks and the corners of his eyes upward.

“Except that his own physicians are still giving him the blossom of the poppy.” The general was dubious.

The situation was more than serious. At that moment in a very real and singular sense, missionary Harry Willis Miller, M.D., F.A.C.S., was responsible for the future of China. As a well man, the Young Marshal had been a beloved genius. Now desperately sick and wasted from opium addiction, he was a hazard and a handicap to the central government. Many would welcome his death. However, if he were to die, it might trigger a national uprising. Because of his losses in the north he was in bad repute with the military and must take temporary leave from China. Yet no foreign state would accept him in his condition.

The Young Marshal was a brilliant field commander, but in devilish fashion opium had purchased his body and was negotiating for his soul. His Manchurian armies were bowing to Japan's invaders, not so much

from superior force and tactics as from his personal dereliction. The drug-racked commander had already been pushed or scared from Mukden down to Peking, his courage burned out by the opium pipe.

Basically a kind and unusually gentle man, the Young Marshal was driven to dope by the constant conflict between his own personality and the ruthless demands of his military assignment. The eldest son of a powerful Manchurian ruler, "Old Marshal" Chang Tso-lin, the Young Marshal was noted for his wealth as well as for his military acumen. He would shrewdly convert his paper money into silver and deposit it outside of Manchuria in such banks as New York's National City or Chase National.

It was well known that the Japanese had long plotted the downfall of Chang Tso-lin, and they were commonly blamed for his death by a bomb explosion on June 4, 1928. Expecting a collapse of the Manchurian government at the death of the old strong man, they promptly made overwhelming demands on his mild-mannered son. However, the clever Young Marshal managed to keep secret for a week the fact of his father's death, which gave him needed time to reorganize the government.

Although he ran a tight military dictatorship in Manchuria, the young commander had an abiding concern for his people and their welfare. From Madame Chiang Kai-shek he had heard much about Shanghai Sanitarium, opened in 1928 by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, largely through Dr. Miller's efforts. He longed for a similar institution at Mukden, his capital. From the wealthy Young Marshal's point of view, financing such an institution was not the principal problem. Rather was it a question of staffing a hospital and procuring equipment.

In the meanwhile, persons in Shanghai were urging the establishment of a hospital in Manchuria. To them, the lack of money was a major obstacle. And so it happened that in 1932 when the Young Marshal was himself anxious to establish a Mukden Sanitarium, two women - Dr. Miller's wife, Marie, and her friend, Mrs. John Oss-arrived in Mukden to solicit funds for a Manchurian hospital. They carried with them a letter Dr. Miller had obtained from the Young Marshal's close friend, General Chang Chuin, then mayor of Shanghai and later secretary general to Chiang Kai-shek on Formosa.

Normally, officials had to wait for days for an audience with Marshal Chang, but when he learned that two women wished to talk with him about establishing a hospital, he called them in without delay.

Startled at finding the Young Marshal so emaciated and pale, the women were reluctant to ask him for anything. But when with a friendly smile he asked, "What can I do for you?" they took courage.

"The China Division of the church-the Seventh-day Adventist Church-would like to start some medical work in northern Manchuria," they told him. "We have been thinking about building a hospital one hundred fifty miles or so north of Mukden where Dr. Martin Vinkel already has set up a temporary clinic, and we were wondering if you would give us the names of individuals who might be interested in such a venture."

"How much money do you need?" he asked them, his evident interest only partially concealing his weariness.

"We were hoping possibly for thirty thousand dollars," they said cautiously.

"You will need a whole lot more than that to start a medical institution for Manchuria," he replied firmly. "This is a big place. Never mind about soliciting anybody else. I will give you one hundred thousand dollars to start."

The women did not know what to do. They had never dreamed of anything like this. They replied weakly that it was wonderful, but they would have to go back and talk with their leaders at Shanghai.

"Who is this you have to confer with?" he asked them.

"Mrs. Miller's husband - and other persons with the China Division," Mrs. Oss replied.

"You bring Dr. Miller here." The Young Marshal's overtones suggested a command.

A few days later Dr. Miller arrived in Mukden. As Miller recalls it: "The Young Marshal made these propositions: He wanted a hospital in Mukden. It must be the best, and he not only would give us one hundred thousand dollars, but would provide us all the land we wanted in Mukden's beautiful memorial park, the finest area in the city.

"Obviously it was a providential opening, for up until then no building had been permitted in the beautifully wooded park, and now our group was invited to stake off all the land we wanted. Before long, we had a fine walled compound with a sanitarium and hospital, and homes for doctors and nurses, all a personal gift from the Young Marshal."*

*This was in 1933, after the Japanese had established the puppet state Manchukuo.

Against this background W. H. Donald, the Young Marshal's astute adviser from Australia, had approached Harry Miller one day in 1933. Wise in matters of the Far East, he, along with James Elder, a thoroughly trustworthy financial man, was largely responsible for the business affairs of the Young Marshal. He and Elder had come to Miller's office at Shanghai Sanitarium, and were seated before the surgeon.

"Dr. Miller," Donald began, his voice and expression betraying a profound gravity, "the time has come when we have to do something about the Marshal's addiction. The Generalissimo and T. V. Soong agree, and the Marshal himself is anxious for a cure." T.V. Soong was treasurer of the Chinese government and a close friend of the Young Marshal. Miller knew that Marshal Chang had tried the opium cure in Mukden several years before, without success, and later at the Rockefeller Medical Center in Peking with the same discouraging results.

The Young Marshal's condition was now more grave than ever - so serious, in fact, that during official conferences or interviews, his doctors had to come in every fifteen or twenty minutes to give him an injection, usually of strong and powerful drugs. He was entirely dependent upon them for sleep or bodily rest of any kind. Still worse, his wife and a household guest, Elsie Chow, had become addicted also.

"We have heard of your success with opium cures and wonder if you would come to see what you can do for the Young Marshal," Donald said. "The national situation is so complex that if something is not done soon the Generalissimo fears the danger of a major rebellion, and we can't afford this now, with the Japanese pressing in from the north and the Communists from the west."

Dr. Miller was well aware of the political crisis. Frequently members of the Generalissimo's cabinet, sometimes Chiang Kai-shek himself, met at the sanitarium, carefully stationing guards at the outer gates, throughout the compound, and at their doors.

"I have work here which I cannot leave," the doctor demurred. "I will undertake the cure on three conditions: First, the Young Marshal and his family must be brought to Shanghai." This was quite an undertaking because he was always accompanied by a large bodyguard of both Russians and Chinese, so mixed in order to avoid any plots that might be hatched by a clique if the guards were of one nationality only.

"Second," Dr. Miller specified, "his wife and Miss Chow must take the cure with him." Harry Miller was well acquainted both with

Madame Chang and with Elsie Chow who in later years became the second Mrs. Chang. He was not underestimating the influence of women.

“And third, General T’an, his chief of staff, must understand that I have absolute authority over the Marshal and his bodyguard until the cure is completed.”

General T’an’s dependability was above question. He had been one of Miller’s patients, and felt that he owed his life to the American doctor. There is no one more loyal than a devoted Chinese.

It was impossible to arrange accommodations for the Young Marshal and his large staff at the sanitarium, so it was agreed to undertake treatment at his Shanghai mansion nearby. On the appointed day Dr. Miller took some nurses and went to the mansion. After lingering longer than the busy surgeon was accustomed to, he saw one of the Young Marshal’s doctors coming down to the general waiting room.

“Could I do something for you?” the doctor asked Miller somewhat superciliously.

“I am here at the request of the Marshal,” the American replied. “We are undertaking his cure from the drug.”

“Just how do you plan to treat him?” the Chinese physician asked.

“We have our own plan,” Harry Miller told him with calculated restraint. “I don’t think it will be necessary to go over the details. It is the Marshal we are treating.” It would have been disastrous to describe his treatment to the Chinese doctor, for he was one of those profiteering from the drugs administered to the beleaguered Marshal.

Furthermore, the projected therapy easily could have precipitated harmful professional comment. It was the doctor’s intention to use cantharides, a drug commonly known as “Spanish fly,” which actually had little direct relationship to the cure itself. He used it on addicts more as a distraction than as a direct therapy. The cantharides developed a blister when applied to the skin area. He then injected a serum from the blister, under aseptic conditions, and the psychological effect was salutary, in fact almost amazing.

Because of the weakened moral fiber of victims, many opium “cures” are not permanent, but the Young Marshal was a man of unusual stamina and determination. His prognosis would be excellent if the proper conditions were met.

“Well, whom do you want to treat first?” the Chinese doctor next inquired of Miller.

"We will start with the Marshal," Miller replied, "and after we have him well under way we will treat the ladies."

"But we think you should start on the women first, and if they get along all right then try the Marshal." The Chinese was now speaking for his fellow physicians who were contriving against the cure. By this time Dr. Miller was becoming impatient.

"We will begin with the Marshal as I have said," he answered firmly, then turned and left.

In a matter of hours the Young Marshal called Miller back to the mansion, where he was met by the same doctor with the same rigmarole. Once more Miller returned to the Sanitarium, certain that the Young Marshal and General T'an would seek him out. They did. This time Donald was sent down to see Miller and inquire why the treatment was not begun.

"When you get those doctors out of my way so that I can get past the entry hall we will start," the American replied, relating the happenings of the past few hours.

There were no further delays; but when Dr. Miller was ushered in to see the Young Marshal, his heart fell at the prospect of the miserable addict. Could he ever respond? Madame Chang was also frail, now weighing only eighty-four pounds. Miss Elsie Chow appeared younger and stronger.

"Well," the Young Marshal began after the greetings, "here I am. I will do whatever you want me to do."

"Now, Marshal," Miller told him guardedly, "I have taken others through this cure, and I am going to be very careful with you. I will do the best I know how, and will stay right with you and look after you myself. There is no reason why we cannot succeed. But it must be very clearly understood that I have complete authority over this place, including your bodyguard, your staff, and your physicians. You must understand that they are to take orders from no one but me; not from you or anyone else. There must be no reservations. No matter what you say under any and all circumstances, I am to have complete authority. If you agree to that, we will succeed. If you don't, there is no point in going ahead." Dr. Miller was well aware, from many previous experiences, of the agonies and commotions attending these cures, and of the intensified temptation.

Without hesitation the Young Marshal called his chief of staff.

"General T'an," he instructed, "you're to listen only to Dr. Miller. He has complete control and authority over this household and will be

given anything he wants. Listen to him and only him, follow his instructions and orders explicitly, I command you." The Young Marshal and Miller knew that faithful General T'an would carry out those commands implicitly and rigorously.

Turning to the American, the Young Marshal said, "I put myself wholly in your hands." Satisfied, Dr. Miller started the treatments - first an enema and then a rectal anesthetic which placed the Young Marshal in a sound sleep. At this point the Sanitarium team arranged things in the house for more efficient operation. The Young Marshal's bed was replaced with a hospital bed. They found tablets which the physicians had stuffed under the sheets and pillows, and even in the mattress itself. This was not unexpected.

A few hours later, after the Marshal had been started on his program, Madame Chang called to ask why she was not being treated.

"Pretty soon he'll be well, and I'll be left in addiction," she said fearfully.

"We thought it wise to take the Marshal first, to see how things go," Miller spoke to her reassuringly. Actually, he wanted to be certain that the Young Marshal was progressing favorably before undertaking her case, which involved more risk because of her extremely poor physical condition.

"But I want you to start now - today," she insisted. Her earnestness finally persuaded Miller to go ahead. Miss Chow, on the other hand, was not so eager for the cure. But she realized she could not be addicted while the other two were cured, so she braced up and began, although at the time her cooperation was less noteworthy than that of the others.

Intravenous medications kept up their body fluids, and less habit-forming sedatives were substituted for the opium. By the third day the nurses, under Dr. Miller's close supervision, began easing up on sedation, quite aware of the probability of diarrhea, vomiting, severe cramps, and muscle aches, a condition which could last for several days. Hot compresses and other physical remedies minimized these withdrawal symptoms and kept the patients as comfortable as possible. Later all sedatives were discontinued, causing even greater pain and discomfort for the patients.

Madame Chang held up remarkably well and went through the entire routine with great courage. Miss Chow showed less fortitude; but the Marshal was the noisy one. Finally he refused to take anything by mouth and had to be fed by tube. He began to complain loudly that the

Americans were abusing him. He could be heard over the entire mansion.

It was about this time that Miller began to realize the Chinese doctors were seeking to set the guards against the sanitarium team, hoping in that way to sabotage the cure.

Dr. Miller turned abruptly to General T'an, hands now firmly on the edge of the desk. The picture was quite clear. The Young Marshal's three Chinese doctors were determined to block his opium cure. His addiction had made them handsome profits. The American doctor and his treatments must go-even if he had to be shot.

"Get that quack and his opium ring out of this house! I don't care how, but get them out!" Miller commanded in a low voice level with authority though threaded with concern.

Later in the day the general returned to the missionary's office.

"They are gone," he reported simply.

Surprised and gratified at this speed, the doctor expressed curiosity about his method.

"Very simple," General T'an assured him with oriental modesty. "I went to them and said, 'You hear the Marshal making a lot of racket. He is now quite determined that someone will give him the drug, and that would undo the whole affair. But if somebody does give him something - though I know you men wouldn't do it - naturally the American doctor is going to suspect that since you men possess the medicine, you are the ones to blame. Now I have been ordered by T. V. Soong, treasurer of the government, that if anybody interferes with Dr. Miller or slips some medicine to the Marshal he shall be summarily shot. While I know you men wouldn't do it and I should hate to shoot you, that might be demanded by the government if the doctor suspects you are the ones that interfered. He has complete authority, and I am bound to carry out his orders. Could it be that you prefer not to linger here?' Well, those men couldn't get their clothes together quickly enough. They made a dive for the railway station and jumped the train for North China. They now believe che wei fen pan shih i-yang ying [this person is a very hard rock]."

After General T'an sent the doctors on their way in panic for northern China, Miller turned to deal with the Young Marshal. The crisis had arrived. Going through the tortures of the damned, he became violent. The doctor, determined not to give him the comfort of sedation and thus prolong his cure, wrestled physically with him until

finally the Young Marshal began to wilt completely. Then he started to cry.

It was a strangely unreal experience for the missionary doctor, sitting there on that warm June day in 1933 with one of the great field commanders of the Orient, the ruler of Manchuria, sobbing like a child. And then the Young Marshal told him a story which had been locked closely in his heart.

“My father was a military man, and required that I, the eldest son, should follow his steps,” he confided. “I never wanted to be a general. I simply wanted a professional education. But I was forced to go along with the Chinese tradition which requires the eldest son to follow in the footsteps of his father and to be the family head. When I would go out to battle and my soldiers killed a lot of people, it caused me such pain and anxiety that I didn’t know what to do. I felt so sorry for those poor people who were being shot, because I knew that they were not guilty of any crime and had as much right as I to live.

“And then on some occasions it became my terrifying duty to have to condemn some men to death. This all haunted me so much that the only way I could get any rest was to smoke the poppy. And soon after I started, my wife fell into the practice with me, and opium took over our home like a horrible disease. Miss Chow also became addicted. I am eternally grateful to you for this cure.”

A few days later arrangements were completed for one of Miller’s colleagues, Dr. Read Calvert, a Shanghai Sanitarium nurse, and W. H. Donald to accompany Marshal Chang and his family to Europe. This was considered wise, not only for his own recuperation, but because of still-smoldering reactions from his military failures in the north. Before leaving to board the ship, however, the Young Marshal demonstrated his gratitude in an unusual way. Calling Dr. Miller to his room, he set the doctor down beside the bed.

“Dr. Miller, I have settled all my bills for the care here, and have paid for all the help from the Sanitarium. Now I want to do something for you personally.” Then, in the presence of Dr. Calvert, he handed Harry Miller an envelope. “Get yourself an airplane or a house,” he instructed. “Remember, whatever you do, this is for you alone.”

Dr. Miller expressed his appreciation, and after the manner of the Orient placed the envelope in his pocket, to be opened later when he was out of the presence of his benefactor. “I had an optimistic idea,” Miller says, “that it was probably a check for anywhere from five hundred dollars to five thousand dollars, which of course would be an

unusually fine personal gift. But when I went outside and opened the envelope, I found a bank draft for fifty thousand dollars made out to me! For once I was dumfounded.

"But I knew it would not be right for me to accept money. By now we had two hundred workers in the China field, and each was doing his part just as faithfully as I was. Besides, I thought of the nurses and doctors at the sanitarium who were working day and night to keep up their end of things. After a little conference, Marie and I decided to put the money in the bank for a badly needed hospital at Lanchow in the great northwest territory of China. This meant the Young Marshal had not only given us Mukden Sanitarium, but now one at Lanchow as well."

Some time later W. H. Donald recounted the events of the Young Marshal's European trip. He told Dr. Miller how he had observed the new spring in Marshal Chang's step. "Marshal, you are a different man," he had told him enthusiastically. "You have a lot to be thankful for to have a man like Dr. Miller cure you."

The young commander, turning to Donald, had replied with deep conviction, "Yes, I am thankful to Dr. Miller. But you know, it was God who healed me."

For the dedicated missionary doctor the knowledge that his patient had given the credit to God brought a thrill he never forgot.

Later, Donald again appeared at Harry Miller's Shanghai office.

"The Marshal sent me down to see you, Dr. Miller. And do you know what he wants you to do?"

"No, I haven't the slightest idea," he replied. "How is the Marshal?"

"The Marshal is well, very well, and is determined to have a sanitarium in Hankow just like the one you have here in Shanghai."

Miller was well aware of the needs of Hankow, known as the Chicago of the Orient.

"I'm not sure just what to say," he replied. "At the present time we are building a hospital in Canton, another at Calgan, and are just getting under way in the hospital we built in Manchuria. Building a hospital is one thing, but staffing and equipping it are quite another. It takes money to run them."

"Money isn't a problem at all," Donald assured him. "The only question is whether you will undertake to find the personnel and to run the institution. The Marshal will give you the land and the funds for the building and will personally subsidize its operation."

CHINA DOCTOR

A few weeks later after careful investigation by Pastor M. E. Warren of the Hankow district, E. C. Wood, architect and builder, and others of the church leaders, a cablegram was sent to the Washington headquarters of the Seventh-day Adventist Church requesting permission to accept the Young Marshal's offer. "And a few months later we were building Wuhan Sanitarium on a beautiful tract of land on Hankow's East Lake at Wuchang, south of the Yangtze River," says Dr. Miller. "Furthermore, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek, a great believer in our medical work, was in it with the Marshal, adding one hundred thousand dollars to the fund. Still later Madame Chiang Kai-shek spent twenty thousand dollars for a residence on the grounds so she could come for treatments whenever she was in the area."

To Harry Miller and his helpers it continued to be a wonder that an overruling Providence had used an opium-ridden army general to provide hospitals for ten thousand sick around Hankow and Lanchow, and had picked a rock-hard American from a Midwest farm to push aside some unscrupulous Chinese doctors and to cure their victim.