

with some change of clothes on his back and clutching a wooden meal box with some rice, preserved ham and fried beans in one hand. That was all they had for the long trek.

Shortly after they set out, they ran into a couple of mountain porters and made the long trek together. Mountain porters made a living by carrying supplies and native products on their backs across the treacherous terrain. There is a popular saying – “Traveling across Sichuan is more difficult than ascending to the skies.” These porters, carrying fifty to one hundred kilograms of goods on their back on a long trek with full exposure to the weather, suffered unimaginable hardship.

One night, they lodged at a small inn on the mountain. They sat in a circle and soaked their feet in hot water in a wooden bucket. The water turned filthy and blackish in no time. A porter told the young Yangchu that soaking feet in hot water could relax the sinews and stimulate blood circulation, and that without doing so, the feet would swell the next day due to overexertion. The porter noticed a couple of blisters on the sole of Yangchu’s feet and immediately borrowed a needle to pierce them, saying that if they were not pierced, it would be impossible for him to walk the following day. It was time for dinner. Yangchu saw each porter have a bowl of “*Mao Er Tou*”¹ and a bowl of salty rice soup and enjoy themselves very

¹ “Mao Er Tou” is a colloquial expression in Sichuan’s rural areas, meaning a bowl of rice filled to the brim.

出门不久，他们便遇见几个“背二哥”，于是便结伴同行。什么叫“背二哥”呢？大巴山地区交通不便，人们所需的生活物资和外销的土产品，全靠人力背运，从事这种背运职业的人被叫做背二哥。自古“蜀道之难难于上青天”，可是背二哥们却背负一两百斤的货物，风吹日晒，跋山涉水，可见是何等地艰辛啊。

晚上，他们在山里的一家小店住下，几个人围着一只大木盆用热水洗脚，不一会儿盆里的水变得又脏又黑。洗脚时，一位背二哥大叔热心地告诉小阳初，用热水泡脚能舒筋活血，不然第二天脚就会肿。他看见小阳初脚上起了水泡，忙借来针帮他挑破，并告诉他，如果不挑破，第二天便不能走路。该吃晚饭了，小阳初看见背二哥们每人一碗“冒儿头”¹、一碗盐米汤，吃得津津有味。小店里的床更是小阳初没有见过的，两条长凳上放上一块木板，铺上一点稻草，上面一张竹席，几个人一张床，十几个人一间房。睡前，背二哥们脱去上衣，用布条蘸着盐水，洗涤肩上的血痕，那些紫黑的血痕，看着都令人心紧，可他们一边洗还一边说笑。这是晏阳初第一次与劳动人民直

¹ 那时四川农村小饭店卖米饭用碗量，每碗米饭堆得冒出碗沿，故称“冒儿头”。

much. The beds in the inn were something that Yangchu had never seen before. A bed was just a wooden panel placed on two stools. A thin layer of straw was spread on the panel, topped by a bamboo mattress. Several tenants shared a bed, and each room had more than ten tenants. Before going to bed, the porters took off their clothes and dipped a shred of cloth in salted water, and then used the cloth to rub off the blood marks on their shoulders. The purple-black blood marks looked horrible, but the porters were joking happily with each other while rubbing off the blood marks. It was Yangchu's first encounter with the working class and his first experience with their hardship and tenacity. During summer and winter breaks in the subsequent years, Yangchu always joined the porters on his treks between school and home. The porters enjoyed singing a folk song – "Nothing is longer than the road, nothing is shorter than the year, nothing is softer than the rice, and nothing is tighter than money." The song increased Yangchu's understanding of and sympathy for the working class. After he was converted to Christianity, this sympathy was elevated to a sense of responsibility, compelling him to ease the suffering of his fellow countrymen by preaching the spirits of Jesus. His experiences on the treks would play a role in his choice of a life path.

接接触，他朦胧地认识到劳动人民的疾苦和坚韧。后来每年的寒暑假，他回家往返的途中，都要与背二哥同行。背二哥爱唱一首山歌：“长不过的路，短不过的年，松不过的冒儿头，紧不过的钱。”这首歌加深了晏阳初对劳动人民的理解和同情，在信奉了基督教后，这种同情又升华为一种责任感，他觉得自己应该用耶稣的精神去解救这些苦难的同胞。这种感受为他后来选择人生的道路奠定了一定的基础。

姚明哲牧师

经过五天的艰苦跋涉，在第五天的晚上，晏家兄弟终于到达阆中的天道学堂。听到敲门声，校长姚明哲牧师²亲自开门迎接他们。他把晏阳初领到学生宿舍，安排他与一位学生同睡，大哥便到附近的客店投宿去了。

连续走了几天路，晏阳初虽然疲惫不堪，但他在床上翻来覆去睡不着，想到自己远离家乡，明天大哥一走，就看不见一个亲人了。这里一切都是陌生的，能过得惯吗？如果过不惯，怎么办呢？想着想着，他不禁呜呜地哭起来了。姚牧师听见了，急忙过来查

2 姚明哲 (William H. Aldis)，中国内地会传教士，英国人。他原是一名测量员，后来放弃本职，从事神职。他于1898年达到阆中，并开办了西学堂——天道学堂。

Priest William H. Aldis

After five days of hard trekking, the Yan brothers finally arrived at the Tian Dao Academy in Langzhong. At night, they knocked on the door of the school, and were received by the principal William H. Aldis², who was also a priest. Mr. Aldis showed them to the student dormitory and arranged for Yangchu to share a room with another student. His brother lodged at a nearby inn.

Although exhausted from the long trek, Yangchu had trouble falling asleep. He twisted and turned in bed, thinking that when his brother was gone the next day, he would be alone in a town far from home. Everything here was new to him. Could he cope? If not, what should he do? He thought about all these and burst into tears. Priest Aldis heard his weeping and hurriedly came over for a check. He consoled Yangchu, who promptly calmed down.

Early the next morning, Priest Aldis sent somebody for Yangchu's brother. He asked Yangchu's brother to take Yangchu home and send him here again in two years. Hearing this, Yangchu became very anxious, blurting out: "Mr. Aldis and brother, my parents sent me here to study. I've suffered a lot of hardship on the way here. If I go back now, how can I face my parents? Please just let me stay for another night and see how I perform." Priest Aldis agreed. On the night of the same day, although he missed his

2 William H. Aldis was a British missionary of the China Island Mission. He was originally a surveyor who later quit his job for priesthood. In 1898, he arrived in Langzhong, where he set up the Tian Dao Academy, a Western-style institution.