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**LITTLE ALMOND
BLOSSOMS**



A Little Almond Blossom

LITTLE ALMOND BLOSSOMS

A Book of Chinese Stories
for Children

BY
JESSIE JULIET KNOX

*With Illustrations from Photographs of Chinese Children
in California*

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LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY
1907

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*This Book is lovingly Dedicated
to
MY MOTHER*

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IN THE LAND OF THE DRAGON

Little Almond Blossoms

IN THE LAND OF THE DRAGON

CHUNG GOY ran as fast as his little sandals would permit, up the narrow flight of steps which led to the Chinese restaurant, and out on the balcony, where a crowd of Chinamen were watching for the great Procession of the Dragon. His little legs were encased in pale green silk trousers tied at the ankles, and his lavender *shom* (blouse) gleamed in the light of the many dragon lanterns which were swaying in the night breeze. His hair was in a long queue, and on his head he wore the little round black cap of the Chinese, with a button on top.

Chung Goy was so afraid he would miss seeing the dragon. He had never seen it as yet, for he was not so very old, and now that the long-expected moment had come he fairly trembled with excitement.

His *ho chun* (father) was on this balcony, which was near their home, and he hurried to nestle up to him, as it was cold, and the wind was always blowing in San Francisco.

It seemed as if the procession would never come; he grew tired watching so many people pass, and perhaps the fumes of the opium his father was smoking got into his brain; but, at any rate, the first thing he



Oh, what a dreadful monster!

knew he saw a great squirming thing approaching him.

It was spitting fire from its eyes and mouth, and at first he felt afraid. Oh, what a dreadful monster! it would surely devour him. He heard himself saying: "Velly bad snake—I no likee; go 'way! I 'flaid." And then he heard a voice like the muttering of thunder, and the voice came out of the dragon's mouth, and it was saying in the Chinese language: "*Samen jai* (little boy), I have come to take you to Dragon Land. Slip away from *ho chun*, and fly with me."

"Oh, no!" gasped the trembling boy, "I velly much 'flaid the big ddragon eat me up." And then the dragon spoke again, but this time his voice was as soft and sweet as music, and the fire no longer came from his eyes and mouth. He had such a kind look on his face too, and spoke in such a persuasive tone, that little Chung Goy ceased to be afraid, and slipping from his father's arms he ran down the narrow steps again, and out into the street, climbing up on the big dragon's back. He saw lots of other Chinese boys he knew, doing the same thing. He held on tightly, for the dragon went in such a squirming way that he was afraid he would fall off, and he held on to his little silk cap, too, as the dragon's speed increased, for it was his best one, and he did not want to lose it.

Oh, this was jolly! He had never thought he would ever ride on a dragon's back. What a lot he would have to tell his *mo chun* (mother)



The Chinese children all marched to the music in a row

when he reached home. It was a good thing *mo chun* did not know it now, he thought, or she would be "velly much 'flaid."

After squirming through all sorts of queer countries, the big dragon stopped so suddenly that they all fell off his back, and down his slippery sides. Chung Goy rubbed his eyes and looked around him. Oh, how funny! There were just thousands of dragons of all sizes, and this beautiful place was their home. They all had such kind faces, and spoke in such a gentle way, that no one could feel afraid. There were great groves of trees, all full of the tiny Chinese mandarin orange. Chung Goy just loved those "ollanges," but he had never before picked them from a tree, as his *ho chun* had bought them from the street-stands in Chinatown. There were trees of *lichee* (nuts), and long tables just filled with Chinese candy, delicious preserved ginger, watermelon seed, and all those good things so dear to a boy's heart.

It was night, but the trees were so full of the great dragon lanterns that it made it almost as light as day, and

there were no dark corners anywhere. There was a dragon orchestra under one of the trees, playing the loveliest Chinese music. The shrill piping of the flageolets and the beating of the "tom-toms" were indeed beautiful to the ears of Chung Goy and his friends. It looked too funny for anything to see dragons holding the different instruments with their claws. The Chinese children all marched to



Everybody giggled all the time, in their funny little Chinese way

the music in a row, holding each other by the queue.

Chung Goy had never had so much fun in all his little life as he was having now. Just as he was beginning to feel hungry there appeared before his gaze a very long table, just filled with everything a child could possibly want, and all served by cunning little dragons. There were such dainty little China cups without handles, and in them the most delicious *chah* (tea).

Everybody giggled all the time, in their funny little Chinese way, and no one told them to stop.

While they were sitting at the table the dragons brought them each a big basket of fireworks. Now a Chinese child is even more fond of fireworks than an American child, and so they all kicked up their little sandals with delight, and after each one had been given a lighted Chinese punk, they began to pop them, and oh, what fun it was! There was a delightful noise, with so much popping, and the odor of the punks was most pleasant to their little Chinese noses. It really seemed as if the more they popped, the more they had left in their baskets.

Finally, the big King of the dragons said he must take them home now, or he would not be back in time for the parade, and it would never do to disappoint the people. So each one was allowed to keep his basket, and they squirmed away again, until at last they entered the narrow streets of Chinatown, with its rows of dragon lanterns, and its odor of incense everywhere. Once more Chung Goy climbed the narrow steps, and crept into the arms of *ho chun*, who had not noticed his absence, and he arrived just in time, for just then there was a great noise of "tom-toms," and crowds shouting.

The streets were aglare with a strange red light, and looking down he saw the familiar form of the King Dragon, which was spitting fire from its eyes and mouth; but this time little Chung Goy did not feel afraid, for he knew—he knew.

TWO LITTLE CHINESE SISTERS

ONE day during the Chinese New Year, when the sea breezes blew softly through the narrow, blossom-lined streets of Chinatown, and swayed the great red dragon lanterns to and fro, Poon Chew and her little sister, Poon Yet, decided that they would take a walk through the streets, and have a look at all the beautiful things displayed in the windows. Their *mo chun* had dressed them up in their very best silken robes,—robes she had made for this very week,—and they made a pretty picture as they started out under their gay umbrella. Their blouses were of pink silk, and their trousers of pale lavender. They wore gay head-dresses, and were indeed beautiful to look upon. They would never have started out alone if the little *mo chun* had not been so busy making the great New Year cake, which was to be served with tea to her guests of the New Year.

"Let's go see Sai Gee," said Poon Chew.

"All right," replied the little sister.

Sai Gee, a little-footed playmate of theirs, lived just a few doors from them, and they had no difficulty in finding her home. Sai Gee was also dressed up in her gayest attire, but her feet were too small to find much enjoyment in running around with the children whose feet were of the ordinary size. But she could



She brought forth from the flute the most wonderful sounds

entertain them, anyway, for Sai Gee could play the flute.

It was really wonderful. She sat upon a stool, over which an embroidered robe had been thrown, and played to them. Her hair was done in a coil back of her right ear, and her little brown face was sweet and wistful as she brought forth from the flute the most wonderful sounds. Sai Gee's father was very wealthy, and so the little one had everything that money could buy. Poon Chew made up her mind right then that she would ask her father to buy her a flute. Then Sai Gee brought forth some tiny cakes, made of powdered nuts, and some tea, and preserved watermelon; and for each of the little sisters a big slice of New Year's cake.

"My! but we have good time. I likee make New Yeah call, like *mo chun*—we go now; good-by," said Poon Chew.

"Let's look in window," the big sister said; and of course the little one, having perfect confidence in Poon Chew, gladly followed, the soft little hand clasped in that of the sister. Oh, the wonderful things they saw! The streets looked like a garden, with the rows of almond blossoms and China lilies, and on every balcony swung in rows the immense dragon lanterns.

They stopped awhile—they thought it only a few minutes—to watch some boys playing a New Year's game, and then passed on by the stores, where the smell of the good things made them very hungry.

"Oh, how nice the loast pohk (roast pork) smell! I velly hungry,—we go home pletty soon," said the older sister.

"Yes, we go home pletty soon," echoed Poon Yet.

The little feet were growing tired, for they had never before been on the streets alone, and they wanted to get all the pleasure they could out of it. How they did wish they had brought some money, as they looked longingly at the great heaps of candied cocoanut and ginger on the street-stands. Their eyes must have said so, for just as they were gazing at the dainties with longing eyes a richly-dressed Chinaman came by, and the first thing they knew he was saying: "You likee candy, *ne jai*?" (little girl).

It startled them at first, but when they looked up and saw what a kind face the man had, they did not feel afraid, but replied: "Yes—we velly hungry—we no bling money; we catch 'em plenty money at home."

The man laughed good-naturedly, and having bought them a large package of candy, started on. After they had eaten some of it they noticed the growing darkness. Could it be possible that night was coming on? They had not thought of that; it had seemed so bright when they started, and it did not seem as if they could have been gone long.

Meanwhile, what of the little brown mother at home?

When she finished her cake she called her children. She had made a little cake just for them, and she wanted them to come and eat it.

"Poon Chew! Poon Yet!" she called; but no sound came back through the silence.

"Little one—*ne jai*, come to *mo chun*!" No reply.

With wildly beating heart she rushed through the tiny rooms and out to the narrow pavement. She hailed a passing policeman, and in faltering Chinese told him that her little ones were lost, described the pretty clothes they wore, and all the while her heart was wrung with a nameless fear. What would life be without the soft little arms about her neck?—the patter of the little sandalled feet?—the sound of the shrill little voices at play?

This policeman told others, and they were all searching for the two children, who were out making New Year's calls.

And it grew darker. Poon Chew trembled, as she realized that they were lost. She did not know which way to turn. Some men were lighting the big dragon lanterns on the balcony opposite, so it was really night.

"Oh, little sister, we are lost! I forget; I no 'member the way home. What will we do?" she moaned. She had no idea what direction her home was in, and her eyes were filled with tears; but now through the tears she saw some one approaching. It was—oh, joy! the old nurse Suey, leading the richly dressed little Sai Chong, brother of Sai Gee.

She was greatly surprised when she saw the children so far from home,



It was the old nurse, Suey

and they clung to her neck, weeping and laughing by turns. "Take us home—take us home;" they cried. They had walked so far and were so tired that she got a Chinaman who was standing by to take them all home in his wagon. When they arrived, they found the little *mo chun* in the greatest distress. She was very much astonished as she saw them all tumble out of the covered wagon, and they all cried and laughed, and never did the little mother receive so many kisses; and four little brown arms clasped her neck all at once, and the little sisters were so very sorry to have been so naughty that they said:

"*Mo chun*, beautiful cherry blossom—we neveh, neveh make New Yeah calls again without you."

THE LITTLE HIGHBINDER

IT was the one desire of little Sing Lee to be a highbinder. It must be a fine thing, for his father was one, and so it must be good. It was true he did not have a very definite idea of just what it meant to be one, but he knew this: his father belonged to the Hip Sing Tongs, an order of highbinders in San Francisco, and they were men who kept their promises. At night as he lay on his hard bamboo couch, with the fumes of opium thick around him, he could hear *ho chun* talking in a low tone to a crowd of men, who were all of the same order of highbinders as his father. "There is Chong Sing," they were saying; "he has told some of our secrets to a white devil, and he must die; the joss frowns upon him."

This sounded very discouraging for Chong Sing, and little Sing Lee felt sorry for a moment, for he remembered that one day this same Chong Sing had spoken kindly, and had given him a three-cornered package of *lichee* (nuts) and candy. He could even yet taste the delicious strips of candied cocoanut, and the dainty citron. Chong Sing had said he would bring him some more another time, and now—he was to die. If he died, perhaps no one else would bring candy or speak a kind word.

Little Sing Lee lay trembling in his bed as they planned the murder of his friend. What could he do? He was only a little boy, and—he had thought to be a highbinder when he was a big man like *ho chun*; and if he was going to be one, he must conquer all tenderness of heart,—and yet, this man had been kind to him, and it might be that he had little boys of his own at home.

"If I was a highbinder," he said to himself, "I no kill nice men who bling children candy; I kill bad men."

Next day he confided his thoughts to *mo chun*, but she replied: "No! no! my little boy. No use—Hip Sing Tongs heap big—heap stlong (strong). They no care if Chong Sing give *lichee*; they kill him, allee samee." But little Sing Lee did not forget. He still thought, however, that it must be a fine thing to be a highbinder, if only one just killed the bad men—men who did not give candy to lonely little children and speak kind words to them. So that very day he went around through Chinatown and organized a society of highbinders among his boy friends.

He succeeded in getting four other boys to join, and they all took their oaths very solemnly. Now that they were really highbinders they must begin to kill somebody. Not ever having killed anybody, they did not know how to go about it, or on whom to begin.

Mo chun noticed the boys carrying on a great deal of private conversation, and she wondered what it could be; so that night, after Sing Lee had burned his punks before the god, and had eaten his bowl of rice with chopsticks, she said to him: "What for you allee time whisper? You no eat—you no sleep; tell me! what you think?"

Mo chun was such a dear little brown mother, and he loved her so, that when she looked at him with her slanting velvet eyes, and asked him to tell her, he just had to, that was all. He was not afraid of her, for Chinese mothers do not punish their children, and anyway—the secret was too good to keep, so why not tell her? She never laughed at him like *ho chun*. So he crept close up against the warmth of her silken blouse—he could feel her tender mother heart beating beneath it—and he gazed at the polished hair and the pretty mouth as he talked.

"*Mo chun*—I likee be like big man—like *ho chun*. I get boys togeddeh; we be highbinders, allee samee *ho chun*."

"*Ho chun* velly fine man; he kill heap of people; I likee do that, but, *mo chun*, my beautiful blossom, I no likee *ho chun* to kill Chong Sing; he heap good—he bling me candy."

"What you mean, little boy? How you *sabe* (know) *ho chun* kill Chong Sing? Speak!—tell me!"

"Oh, *mo chun* of mine, I no sleep at night; I no can help—I hear *ho chun* say Chong Sing must die. I velly solly; he heap good man—I likee."

Mo chun was sorry too, for she knew him to be a good man, but she knew there was no use to say anything. If

they had decided upon his death there was nothing to be said.

The next day Sing Lee set forth with his little band of highbinders to find some one to kill. *Mo chun* had said: "You must not really kill them, you *sabe*, just pletend kill."

Suddenly, as they marched on, a bright thought struck little Sing Lee. "Suppose I tell Chong Sing?—he live near—I know the way, and—he was kind to me."

He then confided his secret to his trusty men, and they marched on, through the narrow streets, till they came to the home of the good Chong Sing—the man who was to be killed.

It was dark and gloomy where Chong Sing lived, and his two little children, trudging homeward through the narrow alley-way, arrived at the door just before the little highbinders. Sing Lee could see their *ho chun* as he greeted them, and they clasped their little arms about his neck, while he gazed at them with love in his eyes—and yet—he must die.

Sing Lee's mind was made up. He marched boldly to the door, and stood under the big Chinese letters which meant happiness to all who should enter there, and he could even smell the incense ever kept burning for the god,—the god who had given no warning to Chong Sing. With a soft sound of sandalled feet the doomed man appeared at the door. His face was beaming with good nature. He carried his little girl in his arms, and by his side stood his son, a manly little fellow.

With his heart throbbing as if it would burst, Sing Lee advanced in front of his men, saying, "I am Sing Lee! You were kind to me once; these are my men—highbinders—" (at this Chong Sing smiled in a very amused way, but the smile was changed to something else when the boy went on) "I no forget you; I velly lonely—you bling me candy; you say good word to me, and now—I pay you back.

"No one know I come to tell you; the Hip Sing Tongs they say you must die. They say you tell seclcts to white devil: I no know, I no care, but you good man; I likee save you. I want you to go 'way, acloss the water. You go quick! —I velly solly—good-by."

The little highbinder did not kill any one that day; he was thinking of a pale, set face, and two little brown arms clasped about a father's neck. Never mind! he would kill some one next week, or "to-morrow." Some one who was bad—who did not bring candy.

There was great surprise among the Hip Sing Tongs when their victim was not to be found. Such a thing had never happened before, and they could account for it in no way.

Of course they did not think to ask the little mother or the embryo highbinder. And while they were wondering and searching, away over across the blue sea were the Chinese father and mother, and brown, happy children—safe.

HOW AH CHEE FOUND SANTA CLAUS

IT was Christmas Eve. In the big Chinatown of San Francisco little Ah Chee and her brother Ah Gong were eagerly drinking in the words of the old Chinese story-teller as he sat on the streets and told stories for any one who cared to listen and to give him a few pennies. It was getting late, and the sea wind blew roughly through the narrow streets, and made the dear little Chinese noses so cold; but then Ah Chee did not mind, for the old man had been telling them the most wonderful tale,—something about Christmas—the 'Melican Clismas—and he had said something about it being a little Baby's birthday, and that almost everybody in the world celebrated it. She pondered over it, in her vague little Chinese way, and thought it very queer that they should make such an ado about just a baby.

The old man did not understand it very well himself, but he remembered that when he used to be cook for an American family once, a long time ago, the children had hung up their stockings on this particular night, and had some kind of a tree with beautiful things on it. They called it a Christmas tree, he remembered, and how pleased he had been when there were found to be some packages for him on that same tree. They had told him then that Santa Claus had put them there, and he could never forget the thrill of surprise and pleasure he felt at the thought that this mysterious Santa Claus, whoever he might be, should have remembered him when he had never even seen him.

And now the story was finished, and the old man went on down the street, and entered a shop where he would smoke opium and forget all about Christmas. But little Ah Chee did not forget. She sat scraping her little sandals against the pavement, thinking it all over. Her *mo chun* was upstairs in the poor little rooms, sewing by the dim light which struggled through the lattice, and wishing that she were not so poor, for she had to work very hard, and often they did not have enough to eat. The rice was almost gone now, and there were only a few leaves of *chah* (tea) left.

A Chinese mother loves her children very dearly, and always tries to gratify their every wish; so it made her feel badly to think she could not give them embroidered *shoms* (blouses), and sandals, instead of the plain dark ones they always had to wear. The children had had their rice early to-night, and had gone out in the street to play "hawk catching young chickens," they said.

She did not know the story-teller had been there, but she would not have objected if she had known, for he was a kind old man, and if she could have spared the time from her sewing she also would have listened; for a Chinese woman is like a child in many things. She had heard some one say this was the American Christmas, but to her all days were alike,—just work, that was all.

Meanwhile Ah Chee was filled with a curious longing to run away from the picturesque Chinatown, just for a little while, to see if she could not find out something more about this wonderful Santa Claus. She would give anything in the world to see him, only—she had nothing to give. All the trinkets the poor little child owned were a mud pagoda and a bit of painted wood she called a doll.

Once during the Chinese New Year her dear *mo chun* had taken them for a walk outside of Chinatown, and she had seen the wonderful shop-windows of the Americans. How different they were from the Chinese! She had also seen some beautiful things that her mother had said were dolls. She had never forgotten it, and had even dreamed of holding one of these wonderful things in her arms. But it could only be a dream,—no such happiness was for her,—for it was all they could do to get enough rice to eat, without buying American dolls.

"Ah Gong!" she cried, fired with a sudden and bold resolution, "Ah Gong! you likee take a walk with sisteh?"

Ah Gong was at that moment busily engaged in eating a dried herring, which the kind-hearted owner of the shop next door had given him; but that fact did not in the least interfere with his desire to see new sights. His sparkling Chinese eyes fairly danced out of his head at the mere prospect.

"Yes, I likee," he replied, with his mouth full of herring. "What foh you takee walk? Where you go?"

She took hold of the end of his queue, and pulling him toward her, whispered in his ear the magic words: "We go see Clismas! we catch 'em Sanny Claw."

This announcement was almost too much for Ah Gong, and his little celestial brain could not take in so much happiness all at once, so he stared at her a moment until he had swallowed the bite of herring, and then gasped out: "But Ah Gong 'flaid Sanny Claw spit fieh (fire) on us; allee samee heap big dlagon."

Ah Chee had to giggle at this, with her ever-ready Chinese giggle, but putting her long sateen sleeve round him in a protecting manner she answered him in the kindest tone: "Oh, no! 'Melican Sanny Claw heap good man—altee samee joss; we go find him; come along!"

So they started in the growing darkness, with the sweet faith of a child in their hearts. They knew not where to go, nor which way to turn, but only had the one thought—just to find the 'Melican Clismas. When they had disappeared, the shopkeeper believed they had gone home for the night, and gave them no more thought; the tired mother upstairs supposed that they were in the shop, as they often went in there and played until late, because it was bright, and the man was kind to them.

They knew they could not find Santa Claus in Chinatown, so the first thing to do was to get out of the Chinese section, and into one of the great thoroughfares of the city. On they went, past the joss house, where they had once been with their mother to burn pretty candles before the joss, and they looked up with childish admiration at the big round lanterns which hung on the balcony, and tried to read the Chinese letters at the door. Sometime, perhaps when the moon festival came, or the Chinese New Year, it might be that *mo chun* would take them again, if she had money enough to buy any more pretty candles. The good joss liked pretty candles.

There were many lovely things to be seen in Chinatown, but to-night they were going somewhere else. It did not occur to them that they might get lost, or that their dear mother might be uneasy. They were too much excited over what the story-teller had told them to worry over anything, so they toddled on, their hearts full of expectation. They had no idea what Christmas would be like when they should find it, or whether it would be alive, but they could wait. How very queer it seemed when they had left the narrow crooked streets of Chinatown, with its smell of incense and its balconies and lanterns, and found themselves on a great wide street full of people, so full of people that the heart of the motherly little Ah Chee almost failed her, and she clasped her arm protectingly around the body of her fat baby brother, and whispered words of encouragement in his little brown ear.

Many people, in the hurry of their Christmas shopping, gave a passing thought of wonder that the two little Chinese children should be in the dense crowd alone, but thought perhaps their parents were following them; and so, with a smile at the dimpled tea-rose face and sparkling eyes of the Chinese maiden they passed on, to the brightness and good cheer of their own comfortable homes. There were so many street cars, with bells clanging, carriages dashing past, and so much noise and confusion that they were both frightened. Even the brave little heart of Ah Chee beat violently under the padded warmth of her dark blue blouse, and for a moment she almost feared they would not find Santa Claus. But just then a voice said something, and a big policeman picked her up, and smiled at her, saying: "Where are you going, little one? Where is mamma?"

The timid little voice of Ah Chee replied, "*Mo chun*, she at home; can you tell me," she eagerly questioned, "where Sanny Claw is?"

"Why, yes, to be sure; he is in there."

In there,—could it be possible they were so near the wonderful being and had not known it?

They saw a very large store, with great crowds of people, big and little, jostling each other in their efforts to



"Where are you going, little one?"

get in. So all these people were hunting Santa Claus. Ah Chee in her childish eagerness slipped, and would have

fallen, had she not been caught in some one's arms. The arms belonged to a richly dressed lady, who looked down with indifference at the pathetic picture of the two little children, and was about to draw her skirts aside and pass on, when the little Christ-child must have put a thought into her worldly heart, for she turned and looked again into the wistful little faces.

They must have seen some sympathy in her face, for Ah Chee said hesitatingly, "Oh, if you please, we likee see Sanny Claw; could you show us?"

For a moment she hesitated. What would her aristocratic friends think if they saw her taking two dirty Chinese children into the elegant shop?

"Why didn't your father bring you?" she said.

"My fatheh—he die; we no got fatheh."

Something in the pleading little face, and the quiver in the little red mouths, and the despair in the great oblique eyes must have touched the woman's heart beneath all its worldly coating. With sudden decision she grasped the two little trembling hands, and throwing all her old false pride to the Christmas winds, stepped boldly into the shop, where all was elegance and warmth and light and beauty.

To her it was an old story. She had long since lost the spirit of Christmas, and the old legend of Santa Claus brought no ecstasy to her, for there were no children at her home to hang up their stockings. The little Chinese children were all eyes now, and forgot their poverty and the bleak darkness of their home as they looked for the first time at all this sparkling beauty. At last they found him—the " 'Melican Sanny Claw!" To the lady it was nothing,—such an old, old story,—but to the two little Chinese children it was the perfect and blissful realization of a dream, the one beautiful event in two little barren lives. And now—they actually stood face to face with Santa Claus. Little Ah Gong was glad to see that he was not spitting fire, like the Chinese dragon, and felt quite reassured.

Santa was standing by a sparkling tree all covered with pretty candles, such as they had burned for the joss, and on top of the tree was a great shining star.

"What is that?" said Ah Gong, pointing with his chubby forefinger to the star.

"That? It is the star of Bethlehem," said the pretty lady, with a queer catch in her voice, while for the first time in her life she realized a little of the true meaning of the star.

They did not understand, and clung closer to each other as they neared the wonderful Santa Claus. He must have come from a very cold country, for he was dressed all in fur, from head to foot, and had rosy cheeks and long white whiskers.

"See," whispered the little girl to her brother, "it is the heap good 'Melican Santa; do you see him?"

"Yes—yes—I see him; I no 'flaid now," he said, edging closer to him.

The beautiful lady was whispering to Santa Claus—actually whispering. What a brave lady she must be, and they wondered vaguely what she could have to say to him. And, wonder of wonders! Santa came right up to them, and putting out his big warm hand, clasped the trembling little cold hands of the two children, and said: "What do you want me to bring you?"

Was there ever anything so wonderful? That he should notice them, and speak to them? Their eyes almost danced out of their heads at this unexpected question. It had never occurred to their innocent little hearts that he would bring them anything, because they were only Chinese, and the Chinese did not believe in Santa Claus; they only believed in the Moon Rabbit.

As he spoke, visions of wonderful things flitted through their minds,—things they dared not name. The lady said to Ah Chee: "Tell him, dear; he would like to give you something."

Before the child thought, she had spoken the words: "Could you—oh, *could* you—bling me—a—doll?"

"A doll? Why, yes; of course you shall have a doll," he said, as the lady looked at him in a meaning way. And then all the boy in little Ah Gong's repressed nature broke forth, and he hurriedly gasped: "A knife—I likee knife."

The lady smiled at Santa again, and he said: "And what else, my little man?"

"I likee led (red) wagon—"

"No—no—" whispered the timid sister, "that too muchee—Santa no likee give so muchee."

Some more mysterious whispering went on, and Santa produced from his fur pocket a little book and pencil, and wrote down a great many things. Ah Chee did not know what he could be writing—perhaps a letter to his wife at the North Pole, but she did not care; she only knew she was going to get what she had longed for all her little lonely life, —a doll,—and her motherly heart warmed and thrilled at the happy thought.

"And what would your mamma like?" he was saying now.

"Oh,—my *mo chun*; let me see,—I think she likee wahm (warm) *shom* (blouse) and—that's all light; you must not give too muchee; you so good—you *so* good," she sobbed.

Her little starved soul was running over with the joy of Christmas—the new joy, which she had never before tasted.

"You shall not be forgotten, neither shall your mother. Good-by, and merry Christmas!" he said; and then, after showing the excited children all the beautiful toys in the shop, the lady went out with them once more into the crowded streets.

The air was full of Christmas cheer, and every one was smiling and happy, as they hurried along with their arms full of mysterious packages and called out Christmas greetings to each other.

"Do you know where you live, children?" the lady now said.

Fortunately Ah Chee remembered the number and place of their home, so the lady put them into a carriage and seated herself beside them. They waited in the carriage awhile, till a man came out of the shop and placed many bundles of various shapes and sizes in with them. It was so dark they could not see them, but at last, after rattling over the cobblestones for a time, they saw that they had entered Chinatown, and once again the odor of the incense greeted them.

Soon the carriage stopped right in front of their door, and they could see the pale face of *mo chun* peeping from the lattice.

The lady told the driver to wait, while she went with the children up the dark stairway. *Mo chun* was never so

surprised in her life as she was when the excited children rushed in, pulling the lady after them. She had begun to be frightened, and was just going down to the shop to see what was the matter, when they arrived, breathless and happy. She was very much embarrassed to have the rich and beautiful lady come into her poor little home, but almost as much excited and pleased over the gifts as the children, and to see the purse of gold that Santa had brought her. She had not dreamed there was such kindness in the whole big world, or such plenty and happiness.

It was enough to cure any amount of heartaches to note the rapture in the eyes of Ah Chee as she hugged the wonderful doll to her motherly little heart, and to see the boyish delight with which Ah Gong displayed his knife and red wagon. There were many other gifts, yet they had never even thought there were such things in the world. *Mo chun* did not know how to thank the kind lady, who had, with one gift from her jewelled hands, lifted her and her children from poverty to comfort. She could only make her a cup of delicious Chinese tea, and thank her in her pretty little Chinese way; but in her heart she thanked her, and the beautiful lady understood, and for the first time in her life realized the true meaning of Christmas.

THE MOON RABBIT



Little Priest

IT was the eve of the Moon Festival. The homes and the people of Chinatown were gay within and gay without, and the incense-laden air was full of the holiday spirit. The Moon Festival with the Chinese is something like the American Christmas, only it lasts longer, extending into their New Year.

Kon Ying had not been very happy in her little life, for she had always been made to feel that she was one too many in the home. She had three sisters older than herself, and the Chinese do not like so many daughters,—they would rather have sons; so when she arrived in the small home, it was decided to call her Kon Ying, which means “enough hawks.” After her had come a baby brother, who was petted and spoiled in every way possible, because he was a boy. As he was the only son, the parents soon resorted to a queer Chinese method. They shaved his head and called him “little priest,” allowing him to be adopted by another family. This was done to deceive the bad spirits, and make them think they cared no more for their child than for a despised priest, and had thought so little of him that they had even allowed another family to adopt him.

Little Kon Ying had been left to herself a great deal, and so had thought of many things. Perhaps



***She and one of her sisters were on the step
in front of their home***

she had thought more of the Moon Rabbit than anything else, and wondered in her childish way why it had never remembered her. She and one of her sisters were on the step in front of their home talking about it, when she saw her brother across the street, in front of the joss house. He was richly dressed, and pretended he did not know her.

The streets were beautiful to-night, so, after much persuasion, *mo chun* had promised to take the children to see the shop windows. Soon the mother appeared at the door, where in a little bowl punks were always kept burning for the god, and in her high-pitched Chinese voice told the children she was ready. Kon Ying was happy for once. She was happy to-night, because she was strong and young, and the Chinese world was beautiful. And, somehow, she felt that the rabbit would really remember her to-night.

On they went, one after another, in true Chinese fashion, but never losing sight of the polished hair of *mo chun* in front of them.

How gay it all was, and how bright! The great irregular rows of big round lanterns looked like a lot of moons, and surely the rabbit's own moon could not be more beautiful. They could scarcely tear themselves away from the bakeshop windows, which were full of cakes of all kinds. Some were shaped like the moon, and some were made into tall Chinese pagodas, a fish, a horse, or something of the kind. Some had on them the picture of the white rabbit, who is always pounding out rice in the moon. On others were painted beautiful gods and goddesses. *Mo chun* was telling them that when good little Chinese children were all asleep the mysterious rabbit would come to the shops and purchase the pretty things, to leave in the homes of the children.

Kon Ying was thinking as she pressed her cunning little nose up against the cold glass: "I likee know if I been good enough this time. I help *mo chun*—I play (pray) to joss heap plenty time; maybe the moon labbit come—maybe, I no *sabe*" (understand). She only knew that she had done her best, always; but perhaps the wonderful rabbit would not think so. Never mind! she would pray once more to the ugly little old god at home, before she went to sleep.

Soon they came to the toy shops. She felt as if she could stay forever, for there were toys of all kinds, and no one would ever know how good they seemed to a poor little Chinese girl who had never had any toys. The only one she had ever possessed was an old broken doll she had once found upon a trash heap, but she had treasured it as no doll was ever before treasured, and had given it all the pent-up love in her little starved heart. She had even named it "Kin Leen" (golden lily), and pretended that it was a fine aristocratic lady, with "little feet." She had bound its feet with strips of cloth, and it was to this doll that she had gone with all her troubles; but no one knew this. If her proud brother had known he would have teased her unmercifully.

There were so many lovely pagodas in the window, and some of them were several feet high. She would like one of these, but knew she might as well long for the moon. There was something in the window which she would rather have than a pagoda or anything else, and she longed for it so intensely that a real prayer must have gone out from her little innocent heart. It was a doll!—a Chinese doll, with big slanting eyes, like Kon Ying's own, and the most gorgeous dress of flowered silk.

Suddenly it dawned upon her what she would do when she got home. Instead of praying to the god on the shelf she would pray to the moon rabbit, and beg and beg of it to bring her a doll. If she could only have one of those gorgeous creatures, with the tuft of black hair on its head, and the wobbly feet and arms, and painted cheeks and lips, she would surely never ask for anything else. There were other dolls in plenty, but none so beautiful. They were only bits of wood, with eyes, nose, and mouth painted on them. If she had not seen the big one she might have cared for those, but now—she would never care for them; she had seen the queen.

She gasped out, in her shrill childish voice: "Oh, *mo chun*! Why—why—won't the moon labbit bling me doll?"

Before the mother could reply, a kind hand was laid upon the polished head of the little girl, and a man's kind voice said: "The moon labbit *will* bling you doll, and all the little sistehs too."

Looking up, she saw that the voice came from the lips of a notorious highbinder—a friend of her father's.

The man had been to their home many times. She had liked him, for he always had a kind word for children, and last New Year he had even brought them some cunning little mandarin oranges, and a package of Chinese candy. He

was said to be a very bad man, but he loved children. Speaking a few words of holiday greeting, he passed on into the shop, while Kon Ying and her sisters still gazed at the contents of the windows.

The big doll seemed to be saying: "I am yours, Kon Ying!—take me!" while it held out its wobbly arms in entreaty. Its painted lips seemed as if they might be forming pretty Chinese words of good wishes for the Moon Festival.

Kon Ying's little celestial heart longed for it with a terrible longing, but the glass was between them, and so—her heart could only ache in silence. It could not happen, anyway. When did anything nice ever happen to her? She had always been in the way, and there were no toys to spare for her—little "Enough Hawks."

She was so absorbed in gazing at the doll that she did not see the highbinder, away back in the shop. Her nose was pressed against the glass, and her dirty little fingers had left ten marks, but she did not know; she would not have cared if she had known. Suddenly, as she gazed, something wonderful happened. A big blue arm reached into the window from the shop, and slim fingers with long Chinese nails closed upon the doll, lifting it out of the window, to disappear from the gaze of the enraptured children. It seemed to blink its slanting eyes in farewell as it departed.

The pale yellow ivory face of little Kon Ying appeared to grow even more pale as she screamed out, in that little nasal voice of hers: "She gone—the moon rabbit no can get her now to bling to me. Heap bad spirit catch 'em doll: I so solly—I *so solly*."

It seemed to her that when the doll had gone from her sight it had taken with it the very heart out of her body, and she did not care to linger now, so they passed on, to other sights and sounds.

On a flower-laden balcony some one was twanging on a *sam yun* (banjo), but even music had no charm for her now, because—the DOLL was gone. She would never see it again; the bad spirits had taken it. Perhaps it was because she had neglected to pray to the god lately. She had even dared, when no one was looking, to make a horrible face at him, and tell him she hated him. She did this because her little heart was so heavy; no one seemed to care for her, and the god never made anything nice happen to her, nor paid any attention to her little prayers. Never mind! she would pray to the moon rabbit after this; perhaps it would hear her prayer. After she had decided upon this course she was anxious to get back to her home. The children were all getting tired now, and their wooden sandals dragged heavily upon the narrow pavements.

"We go home now," said *mo chun*; "Maybe moon rabbit come to-night."

At last they reached their home, and the tired children ascended the stairway. Kon Ying set to work to offer her sacrifices, as she was tired and wanted to go to bed. She had nothing to offer the moon rabbit except her old broken doll; so she placed it on a table and burned her incense sticks, and everybody thought she was praying to the god. But she was not; she knew,—and the god knew. At last she laid her tired head on the hard couch.

It seemed to her she had only been there a minute, when there came a great glare of light and the sound of Chinese flutes. The lattice window opened, and in marched a troop of tiny Chinamen, dressed in purple and gold. Each one carried a stick of lighted incense for a torch, making the room as bright as day.

They marched right up to where Kon Ying lay, and the most richly dressed one said: "Kon Ying, our queen has prepared a banquet for you; will your highness please to accept the invitation?"

Kon Ying was frightened at first, but something within her seemed to speak the words: "I shall be pleased to obey the commands of your queen;" and she made a curtsy to the royal messenger.

"Be prepared to go when the time comes!" he said, and vanished with his company.

By and by there was another glare of lights, and the sound of music. The lattice opened again, and there flitted in a crowd of the dearest little Chinese ladies, all clad in pink silk blouses, with lavender trousers, and pretty little golden sandals. They had so many diamonds in their hair and ears that it almost put out little Kon Ying's eyes. They each carried a tiny Chinese lantern, which shed a soft light.

The most beautiful one now approached Kon Ying and said: "The queen has sent you a royal robe; please put it on, and we will hasten to the moon."

Again the little girl gasped out: "Your highness' commands shall be obeyed;" and slipping from her couch she stood shivering upon the floor, while the moon-maidens arrayed her in a robe of palest lavender.

"Our queen heard your prayer, and has sent us to carry you to her kingdom," they said; and spreading out the wide Chinese sleeves of her gown until they looked just like wings, they told her to come, and away through the window she flew with them.

She felt as light as a feather, and could not resist the pleasure of making one real ugly face at the god as she passed. There stood on the street in front of the house a row of the dearest little sedan chairs, all glittering with gold, and carried by huge white rabbits. Before she could say a word they had opened the door for her, and placing her inside, flew away,—away from the squatty little god and the smell of incense, away from the great shining lanterns of the dragon, and the narrow, crooked streets, and into air that was so pure it seemed like a delicious nectar.

Kon Ying leaned from the window of her sedan chair and gazed at all the wondrous beauty of the sky. As they passed through the milky way some tiny star-fairies handed her a jewelled glass of the richest milk. She was very glad, for it seemed a long time since her supper of rice and tea. She was far away from the lights of the city now, and surrounded by the dazzling radiance of the stars. One very large star seemed to be the queen, and all the little stars bowed down before it, chanting the sweetest melody.

They were getting nearer and nearer the moon now, and, oh, how very large it was! To Kon Ying it had always seemed no larger than a small Chinese lantern, but now, as she came nearer, it seemed greater than the whole world. Soon she could see it no more, and the white rabbits told her that they were already in the moon. It was the most beautiful country. The velvet grass was covered with the sacred almond blossom petals, and their perfume was sweeter far than any incense. They passed through a long avenue of pure white chrysanthemums, which showered their petals upon them like snow. At the end of this avenue the chairs were stopped, and cunning little white-rabbit pages assisted them gently to the ground. A tender light flooded the place, and when Kon Ying raised her eyes she saw before her a throne, draped with the flags of the Imperial Court of China,—yellow silk, with blue dragons embroidered upon them,—and on the throne sat the queen,—the good moon rabbit who had heard her prayer.

This queen was busily engaged in pounding rice, pounding it into a powder, and then sending it down to earth,

to be eaten during the Moon Festival and the China New Year. She wore a pink gauze dress all covered with glittering spangles, and as Kon Ying approached the queen was singing:

“The small-footed girl with the sweet little smile,
She loves to eat sugar and sweets all the while;
Her money’s all gone, and because she can’t buy,
She holds her small feet while she sits down to cry.”

It sounded very pretty, as the queen had quite a sweet voice, and Kon Ying soon found herself singing it with all the others. The queen extended one soft white paw in greeting, but kept on pounding rice with the other.

All the dear little Chinese ladies and men now seated themselves around the throne. The white-rabbit pages handed each one a different musical instrument, and there burst forth the loveliest music that Kon Ying had ever heard. She found that she could play quite as well as any of them, which was a great surprise to her, as she had never before even touched a musical instrument.

After the music the queen ordered refreshments served, and they entered a bower of almond blossoms and China lilies, seating themselves at a long table, where they were served by a lot of tiny white-rabbit pages. They ate with ivory chopsticks set with diamonds. The queen sat at the head of the table, and could hold the chopsticks in her paws quite as well as any one. What a feast that was! Yet plenty of funny things happened, even if it was a royal company. The queen forgot herself, and stuck her nose right into a bowl of hot rice, at which there was a general giggle. A page quickly brought a finger-bowl and sponged the burnt nose, so it was all right.

There were all sorts of good Chinese things to eat,—delicious *chah* (tea) in little handleless bowls, all kinds of pretty moon-cakes, little biscuit made of almond meal; watermelon seed, and many other things. When the feast was ended the queen said that each of them could make one wish, and it would be gratified. Kon Ying did not have to hesitate long over her wish.

She knew what she wanted more than anything in the world, and she remembered that she had prayed to the rabbit, so perhaps—perhaps—“Oh, dear queen!” she said at last in her piping little voice, “I be *so* good if only—if only—I could have—a doll, like the one in the shop window; oh, if I could—if I could.”

Her eyes were full of tears as she finished, for it meant so much to her. The good moon rabbit replied: “You shall have your wish, little one, for you are a good child.”

Kon Ying now bade farewell to the queen and all the dear little Chinese people, and jumping into the sedan chair was soon whirling away once more, and in a short while found herself entering the window of her own home, and placing her tired body on the bed. When she awoke the next morning she remembered the queen’s promise, and—what was that on her bed, close beside her? A queer looking package, and on it, written in Chinese letters, “For good little Kon Ying, from the moon labbit.” Hastily tearing open the packet she saw disclosed—the DOLL! She fancied the god frowned when he saw it.

That night, when the narrow Chinese streets were gay with the many lanterns, and sweet with the fragrant almond blossom and lily, and the happy crowds were thronging the streets, the old highbinder passed the door. He smiled as he saw little Kon Ying seated in the doorway, holding the DOLL in her arms, and with rapture unspeakable in her childish eyes.

“Where you catch ‘em?” he inquired in a jovial tone.

“Oh, I so happy,” she said. “I went to the moon last night, and the moon labbit *did* bling me the DOLL.”

And the highbinder smiled.

HOW SANTA CLAUS CAME TO SUEY HIP

SUEY HIP was a little Chinese girl. She did not have a bright, cheerful home, but lived in a cellar, with steps going down from the street. It was dark and smoky down there, but of course it did not seem so bad to Suey Hip as it would to those who have always had a nice home, because she had never known anything else.

Sometimes the children of a wealthy Chinese merchant would toddle by in their richly embroidered robes, and their feet were so small they could hardly walk. Suey Hip would sit on the top of the steps, and when she wished, play on the pavement in front of her home. And, oh, how she did long for some of those pretty garments! But her *mo chun* worked very hard to get what she had by sewing for the Chinese stores, and there was no way to get anything more.

Now one day when Suey Hip sat on the step sunning herself, and looking with longing eyes at the people as they passed, there came a little American girl, walking with her papa through the streets. Suey Hip was very bashful, and hung her head, and scraped her little sandals on the pavement as they passed before her.

“Hello, little one,” said the man, in such a kind voice that Suey Hip looked up, and as she did so, caught sight of something in the little Dorothy’s arms that put her little motherly heart all in a glow, and she no longer felt afraid. What was it she saw? Why, just the loveliest big doll, with eyes that opened and shut, and it was dressed all in pink silk. Oh, the wonder and delight that sparkled in the dark eyes as she gazed. It seemed too beautiful to be anything but a dream, and she cried as she looked into the sweet face of little Dorothy: “Oh, what is it? Where you catch ‘em?”

Dorothy laughed as she replied: “Why, this is my dollie; Santa Claus brought it to me last Christmas.”

“Sanny Claw? Who Sanny Claw?—what’s Clismas?” eagerly inquired the child.

“Don’t you know what Christmas is?” said Dorothy. “Why, Christmas is the loveliest time of all the year. It is then that we hang up our stockings, and in the night while we are asleep Santa Claus comes down the chimney, and fills our stockings with the loveliest things—dolls and toys and candy, and, oh—just everything.”

All this time Dorothy’s papa stood listening in amused silence, as he thought it best to let the children carry on their conversation in their own way.

“I wish I was you,” said Suey Hip. “Sanny Claw no come here; we no have Clismas; you think he ever come—bling me doll?”

Just then Dorothy’s papa spoke and said: “I tell you what to do. You get your mamma to write a note in Chinese

to Santa, and we will come to-morrow and get the note and I will see that Santa Claus gets it. It is now just one month until Christmas, and who knows what may happen in that time?"

"You come again to-morrow?" eagerly inquired the child, and Dorothy said, "Yes—yes, we will, won't we, papa?"

"Yes, dear, we will come again to-morrow."

When they had passed out of sight along the narrow streets, Suey Hip toddled down the dark steps into the cellar she called home, and going to her mother, who sat sewing by a tiny latticed window, she exclaimed:

"Oh, *mo chun!* little 'Melican girl she say Sanny Claw come evvy yeah—bling doll—bling candy, toy, evvything. She say you lite note to Sanny Claw; tell him come bling me doll Clismas."

After a great deal of explanation she made her little brown mother understand, and although she herself could not really believe that anything so nice could happen to her child, yet she had a mother's tender heart, and was willing to do all the child asked of her. So she left her work, and went to a little table where there were some odd-looking writing materials, Suey Hip watching her eagerly all the while, and taking up a slender brush-stick, dipped it in an ink-like mixture, and began to make queer Chinese letters up and down the long slip of red paper. After much effort it was finished, and given to Suey Hip. She placed it carefully in a little



Suey Hip was very much dressed up

vase, and went out again to play on the streets.

She was so excited that night that she could hardly eat her supper of rice and tea and little sweetened cakes. She was almost too much excited to burn her incense before the little god in the corner, but she managed to get through with it, and was then put to bed. Next day at the same hour Suey Hip's face had been scrubbed until it fairly shone, and her thick black hair was pasted down and braided into a long queue. She wore her best trousers and blouse of light blue silk, and little red sandals. Suey Hip was very much dressed up.

The shy little mother, who had also come out on the pavement to watch for the Americans, put her fan up to hide her face when she saw them coming, and quietly as a mouse slipped down the steps again. Suey Hip eagerly handed them the note which was to mean so much to her. Dorothy's mama had come with them this time, and when she caught a glimpse of the timid little Chinese mother peeping eagerly up at them, she, with her kind woman's heart, stepped down into the dark cellar, and stretched out both her white hands to meet the little brown hands of the mother who lived in a cellar.

She managed to make herself understood, and there was a good deal of low talking, and mysterious signs between the two mothers, but they understood, as mothers will; and papa pretended he did not see and hear. Dorothy told Suey Hip it was just a month until Christmas, and that would not be very long—just four little weeks, which would soon pass. Then Mrs. Suey shyly asked them to come in and have a cup of tea, which, served in the dearest little bowls, proved to be the best they had ever tasted.

After that there were a great many calls from Dorothy and her mama, and a great deal more of that mysterious whispering between the two mothers, until at last it was announced that the very next day would be Christmas. "Oh, too good—too good," said Suey Hip, as she toddled around, too delighted to be quiet one minute.

It seemed as if the day would never pass, but after awhile the shadows began to fall on the narrow streets, and the big lanterns were lighted, and made everything beautiful; and Suey Hip knew that she was the only child in all the big Chinatown who would hang up her stocking that night.

The hour had come. She got out her very best pair of cream-colored stockings, and with trembling little fingers hung them securely to the foot of her couch, and was soon in the land of dreams. In the midst of her dream she awoke with a start. She wondered if he had been here yet. It was so dark, but oh—she felt as if she just couldn't wait. But she knew *mo chun* was tired, and she did not wish to awaken her, so she crept softly to the foot of the bed, and groped around in the dark, for her stockings. Once she almost fell off the bed, but finally her little hands found what she sought, and she felt the stockings.

They were all lumpy and fat,—what could be in them? In the top of one she felt something large—something with hands and feet and hair. Oh, joy! could it be? But she must wait and see.

Oh, how glad she was when she heard *mo chun* moving, and saw the first glimmer of the day steal into their cellar home! With one bound she was out of bed, and *mo chun* was as glad as she, for really and truly, in the dark night, the "Melican Sanny Claw" had by some means crept down there, and just filled her stockings with good things. The thing with hands and feet and hair was a real doll, with big blue eyes that opened and shut, and yellow hair and a blue silk dress. It had on the dearest little shoes and earrings, bracelets, a necklace, and a nice big hat.

Oh, how she hugged it to her heart, and could scarcely put it down long enough to see what else was there. Not only were the stockings full, but there were lovely things all around. There was the nicest little trunk for dollie, all full of pretty dresses and wraps, and there was doll furniture, and the daintiest set of doll dishes. It seemed to the poor little Chinese girl that she had everything in the world there was to have, and—what do you suppose? Poked in through the little latticed window they found a package, and on it the words—

"FOR MAMA SUEY, FROM
SANTA CLAUS."

When her trembling hands had eagerly opened it, what should she find but a whole lot of gold money? Oh, how happy she was! Now she would not have to work so hard, and strain her eyes at night by the dim candle. Now, they could have some pork whenever they wished, and they pictured all the happiness it would bring them. When Dorothy's papa and mama came that day they found the happiest hearts in the whole big city, and when they saw the joy that had come into this little cellar home, they were glad that they had given the note to dear old "Sanny Claw."

THE EASTER DREAM OF MUN CHEE



She sometimes longed to get out, she and her two little brothers

Mun Chee had a wonderful dream one night. Being a little Chinese aristocrat, she had never played just as the common people's children play, and in her little heart she sometimes longed to get out, she and her two little brothers, and run wild through the narrow Chinese streets, and to be as free as the winds, just as the children of poor people might do; but she could not do this. So much was due to her station in life, as she was to be a Chinese lady some far-off day. So one night,—just the night before Easter,—after she had fallen asleep on her couch of bamboo, she dreamed a dream as beautiful as a poor child—a child of a coolie even might dream, for dreams are free to all, rich and poor. Perhaps it was because she had gone to sleep wondering if her house would be visited by the Easter rabbit, of which an American friend had told her; perhaps—but then, it does not matter what the reason was, for suddenly she felt some soft little taps on her eyelids, and a warm breath fanned her cheek, and opening her eyes she beheld the dearest, cunningest little rabbit—a white one, with bright pink eyes. It was perched on the edge of her bed, and had awakened her by tapping her Oriental eyelids with its soft white paws. It looked so gentle that she loved it right away, and said: "Who are you?"

It replied in a tiny voice: "If it please your highness, I am the queen of the Easter rabbits; I thought you might like to go with me for a little visit to my realm, the beautiful Easterland."

"Oh, I likee go," said Mun Chee. "It must be all light to visit a queen. Yes, yes, I will go, but how?"

"Trust to me, and you shall arrive safely; I will carry you on my back."

"You? Why, you too small; I such a big girl; you no can cally me."

"Wait and see!" said Queen Bunny, and with that she began to grow and grow and grow, right before Mun Chee's astonished eyes, and pretty soon she was as big as a horse.

"Oh, how could you do it?" gasped the little Chinese girl.

"Because I am in league with the fairies, and have all power," the queen said. "Jump on my back, if it please your ladyship, and we will hasten away."

She jumped gracefully to the back of the rabbit, and clasped her plump arms tightly around its neck. They bounded up, up, until they were so high in the air that they could not see the world below.

"I neveh knew that labbits could fly," said she.

"Well, all rabbits cannot fly," said the queen, "only those of royal blood. There are rabbits and rabbits, you know, just as there are people and people. My sceptre is a white Easter lily, and whoever it touches is at once possessed of unlimited power."

Now they came to the land of the birds, where they were fairly intoxicated with the beautiful music thrilling from the throats of these feathered songsters. Some of the trees were bright blue, and were filled with all kinds of blue birds; then a yellow tree, something like the acacia, was filled with canaries, making the air fairly alive with

song. So they floated on, until the songs of the birds were but an echo.

Then came Candy-land. My! how good it smelled in this wonderful place—all pepper-minty and nice! and what a variety of trees there were—some big, big trees, just full of Chinese preserved ginger! and how Mun Chee did long to put her strong white teeth into some of it! Then there were trees so soft and white that they looked almost as if they were covered with snow; but it really was only white marsh-mallows. Then there were tiny Chinese fairies running all around, pulling bon-bons apart, and squealing with delight when they popped.

Then came Monkey-land, and this was the funniest of all, and even made a little Chinese girl laugh. Some of them were playing a game of base-ball with cocoanuts, and Mun Chee was all the time afraid one of them would get hit in the head; but they seemed to know just how to avoid that. Some of them ran up and asked her to stay to dinner with them, and then, when they thought she was not looking, they made such horrible faces at her that she was glad she had not accepted their invitation. After she had watched several games she hurried on again, looking back once, to see some of the monkeys throwing kisses at her and others making the ugliest faces. That might have been their way of being polite, though she really could not say, as she was not up in the etiquette of monkeys.

Next came the land of bears. There were all kinds,—black, brown, and white. She was scared at first, but the rabbit queen assured her they were harmless, and warranted not to hug. They were dancing some kind of a queer dance, and one silky white one, that looked just like a rug she had at home, came and asked if the little celestial aristocrat would honor him with the next dance. A look from the eyes of Queen Bunny told her she had better accept, and she did so, smiling graciously upon the bear. Around they went, in a giddy whirl, her queue flying in the wind, until it seemed to Mun Chee that everything was going around with them, and she panted: "If it's just the same to you, I'd rather sit out the rest of this dance."

"Certainly, your highness," growled old bruin, and when she was seated he brought her a dish of sweetened snowballs, which were quite refreshing.

When she told them good-by this same bear could not resist the temptation of giving her just a teeny-weeny hug, but it didn't hurt, and she was quite sure he meant it as a mark of especial favor.

Next came the land of cats. Each land had its queen, and here it was Queen Malta, an immense maltese cat with large, yellow eyes. Such a purring as they made when they saw Mun Chee and Queen Bunny approaching! It was not often they were honored by royalty. The queen approached them, walking on her hind legs, her long silky tail held by a page,—a tiny white kitten, dressed in gauze and spangles.

"In what way shall it please your gracious majesties to be entertained?" said Queen Malta; but to any one else it would have sounded like "Miaouw—miaouw—miaouw—"

Mun Chee replied: "I likee some music."

Thereupon the queen tapped a silver bell, and there sprang lightly into view a perfect chorus of the most beautiful cats. After curtseying to the royal guests they began the music, and they sang the funniest songs imaginable. Mun Chee laughed till her little sides ached, but when she applauded, the noise scared away all the cats, and they scampered off, regardless of good manners. Queen Malta called them back, and explained matters, however, and the program was carried out without any further commotion. Mun Chee would like to have lingered for quite a while in each of these strange countries, but Queen Bunny told her it was approaching the hour when they were expected at the Easter castle, and so, after a few more swift turns through the air, they began to descend softly, softly, until faint strains of music fell upon their ears.

It was a triumphant march of welcome, and the notes rose glad and high. Soon Mun Chee felt her feet touch the soft grass, and unclasping her arms from about the rabbit's neck, she stood and gazed about her in a perfect bewilderment of rapture. This was so different from any of the other countries; everywhere the eye rested upon the soft green tracery of leaves and trees, great beds of delicate fern, and flowers of every hue. Through an avenue of tall, waxen Easter lilies she was conducted by two tiny white rabbits, and as they walked, a glorious anthem sounded from all the great Easter lilies, and the golden clappers clanged musically against their satin whiteness.

All the while there was a strange and wonderful perfume filling the air, even sweeter than the scent of the punks burned before the joss in the temple. Some of the lilies bent down and kissed the dear little Chinese maiden as she passed, and their breath was sweeter than any perfume. After being royally entertained in the palace of pure white pearl the child was conducted into the queen's garden, where a feast was spread under the shade of some tall ferns. Being seated, they were served to delicious tea, in dainty cups, shaped like Easter lilies. Many good things were placed before the little girl, who was very hungry, after her long flight through the air, and nothing in her own home had ever tasted half so good as did these dishes served by the dear little white rabbits.

After much chatting and laughing the strange meal was ended, and the rabbit queen presented Mun Chee with a large basket of pearl and silver, lined with blue and yellow, the colors of the Imperial Court of China, and announced that they would now start out in search of Easter eggs. "Oh, what fun!" said Mun Chee, clapping her hands for joy. A white rabbit page went by her side, and carried her basket. Soon they came to a dense forest of fern, and Mun Chee heard a high, squeaky voice saying:

"Search for the one with long, long legs,
And you may find some Easter eggs."

"How queer!" thought Mun Chee, "to tell me about it. Well, if it has velly long legs I betteh quit looking on the glound, and look up." She did so, and away back among the ferns she saw some funny bright eyes peeping at her.

"Why, it is a stork" (stork), she exclaimed.

With that the stork came forward, and extended a long claw in greeting, and, pointing to a large nest artfully concealed among the ferns, he said: "You may take what you see, and welcome."

"Oh, thank you!" she said, and taking several of the very large eggs, placed them carefully in her basket.

"Oh, they won't break," said Queen Bunny. "The eggs in Easterland are warranted not to break."

And now the soft trill of a canary rippled from a tree,—a tiny tree, that a child could easily reach. Sure enough, there was the dearest little canary, perched on a branch, singing sweetly,—

"Come and see! come and see,
What Canary has for thee."

There in the little nest were a lot of the tiniest eggs, and all bright yellow, just the color of Mrs. Canary herself. "Oh, you gentle little thing—you so good to give me youh cunning little eggs." "Don't mention it!" said Canary. Then a white dove cooed from its house near by,—

"Coo-coo, you are true,
Come and take my gift for you."

Her gift was six eggs, pure white, with just the tiniest little pink polkadots in them. While she was admiring them she heard a gentle purr, which seemed to come from the ground under her feet, and looking down she saw peeping from a moss-lined hole in the ground a pair of pink eyes, and a white, soft paw, as the voice of this Easter rabbit purred,—

"Put your hand into the ground,
And find what no one else has found."

"Well, I likee find what no one else has found," she said; and putting her hand into the moss-lined nest, she drew out—not an egg, as she had expected, but six of the tiniest baby rabbits, no bigger than her thumb.

"Oh, you cunning little babies! You shall go and live with me," said Mun Chee; and thanking the Easter rabbit, she passed on to the home of a blue-bird, on a swinging bough, and heard her singing,—

"Roses red, my eggs are blue,
Come! and I will give you two."

What a beautiful blue they were, to be sure! just like the sky. Then a loud cackling fell upon her ear, and she could distinguish the words,—

"If you will give me a piece of bread
I'll bring you some eggs, all bright and red."

She saw that the queer voice came from a bright red little hen, who gave her some beautiful eggs when she had given the bread.

Following the sound of a sharp voice she walked along the path until she came to a most beautiful peacock, gorgeous in the spread of its wonderful plumage.

This pleased her more than any of the others, because the peacock feather is sacred to the Chinese, and is used in their temples where they pray to the joss. The peacock's offering was a very large bunch of these brilliant feathers, to take to her *mo chun*, while it said in a queer, sharp voice,—

"It matters not, my little one, how stormy is the weather;
The joss will always care for those who have a peacock feather."

"Now for the last place," said Queen Bunny; and following the sound of a terrible screeching noise, they climbed a ladder into a tall tree, and there was a beautiful American eagle. It was not cross a bit, as eagles usually are, but was singing,—

"The gift I have, little girl, for you
Is three big eggs—red, white, and blue."

It seemed to Mun Chee that the best came last, for these were such beautiful eggs, and so different from any of the others. Her basket was quite full now, and as she saw the shade growing more dense beneath the trees she thought it must be quite time for her to return to her own home. So, after bidding good-by to all the royal company of white rabbits, and having her arms filled with the fragrant China lilies, she sprang upon the queen's back once more, and sped away—away—far from the Easter palace—the palace of a dream.

PING PONG AND PING YET

PING PONG was not a game, but a dear little Chinese boy, who was eagerly looking forward to something which was almost like an American Christmas. The Chinese do not have any Christmas, but they have something else which serves the purpose, as far as their eager little hearts are concerned, and that is, the Festival of the Moon. Ping Pong's round, fat, and very dirty face looked something like a moon as he leaned over the counter in his father's drug store, and watched him weigh and mix portions of dried lizards and snakes for his customers; for the Chinese use dried lizards and snakes, and all sorts of funny things, for medicine.

It would seem so very queer to an American child, but it did not strike little Ping Pong as being at all out of the way, and he would probably have thought it just as strange to know that people took powders and pills. He thought when he grew up to be a "velly big man" like his father, he would either be a druggist or a highbinder, or better still he might be both; yet, a highbinder was one who always sought a way of killing people he did not like, and a druggist sometimes killed people he really did like,—but that was always through mistake, of course.

Ping Pong and his dear little sister Ping Yet were teasing the good-natured father to take them to the joss house. That was indeed a queer idea. Why should two children wish to go to the temple to pray to the joss? Surely the father could pray enough for himself and his family, too. But he never liked to refuse any reasonable request of his children, so he asked advice of the little mother, who was engaged in some very mysterious occupation which compelled her

to keep the kitchen door locked. *Mo chun* opened the door cautiously, and, peeping out, whispered to *ho chun*, who smiled in a peculiar way. "What foh you likee go joss house, you *hai tongs*?" (babies), she now asked, and Ping Pong replied: "We likee play to good joss to bling us pletty moon-cakes."

The mother had to giggle at that, in her dear little Chinese way, for she knew a good deal about moon-cakes, and knew about the white rabbit. But she was not going to tell all she knew, just now, so she only smiled in her sweet mother way, and gave her consent to their going.

It was just getting dark when they left, and the proud father started out to the joss house with a happy child on each side of him, and two small brown hands clasped tightly in his big brown ones. They had never been to the temple before, but they had heard it was a very good thing to do when one wanted anything very badly.

"How pletty the big dlagon lantehns look!" they exclaimed.

Yes, the big lanterns did indeed look pretty, as they gleamed in front of every door in the big Chinatown of San Francisco, and looked like big golden moons, almost as big as the moon in which the white rabbit lived. The streets were very gay at this season, and the shops were full of people buying gifts.

Little Ping Yet made a very pretty picture as she shyly patted down the narrow streets with her embroidered sandals, wide silken trousers, and blue silk blouse richly embroidered by the loving fingers of her dear *mo chun*. Her polished hair was done in a queue.

The moon rabbit must surely have passed this way, for the windows were all full of little cakes shaped like the moon. They thought that all the year, while they were flying kites, popping fire-crackers, and playing in the street in front of their home, the white rabbit must be always pounding rice.

It took them a very long time to get to the joss house, because there were so many interesting things on the way. Ping Pong, in boyish eagerness, pressed his little nose and dirty fingers right up against the glass in one place, or at least he thought it was the glass, until he fell right in, with his nose on a candy pagoda thirteen stories high, and then he found out his mistake. That glass happened to be broken out, and he was very much embarrassed. The gingerbread peacock seemed to glare scornfully at him as his *ho chun* pulled him out, and the painted gods and goddesses seemed to smile on him in a pitying way.

Little Ping Yet was as much ashamed as if she herself had fallen with her nose on a Chinese pagoda, and she hid her face with her wide silken sleeves. But the shopkeeper was good natured and said, with a kindly pat of the button on top of Ping Pong's round Chinese cap, "Neveh mind! that's all light; you heap good *samen jai* and *ne jai* (boy and girl). I hope you get heap plenty moon-cake fлом the white labbit."

They wandered on in happy abandon, until they reached the long steps, which, *ho chun* informed them, led up to the temple of the good Joss. They had so often wondered what the joss looked like; was he a big rabbit, or a peacock, or perhaps a dragon with scaly sides and spitting fire? They secretly hoped, in their innocent little hearts, that if it was a "dlagon" he would refrain from spitting fire while they were there. When they thought of what might await them, they were almost sorry they had come, and their timid little hearts beat fearfully against their blouses; but the touch of *ho chun's* strong hand was reassuring, and they reflected that surely there could be nothing so very dreadful up there, or he would not have taken them.

First they passed through a room where some Chinamen were selling long narrow red-paper packages of incense sticks. *Ho chun* bought one, and the men spoke kindly to the boy and girl, and they passed on. Up another flight of steps they went, until it seemed as if they must be almost as high up as the moon. A strong odor of incense greeted their nostrils, and it seemed good, for they were accustomed to it, as it was always burning at home before the different gods and ancestral tablets.

The odor grew stronger, and they heard some one beating the big gong. Soon they had placed their sandalled feet upon the last step, and their oblique eyes were fairly dazzled with the sparkle and beauty of it all.

"Where joss? I likee see him," they both exclaimed in awed whispers, while *ho chun* pointed to the gaudy altar, gay with its brass carvings and rosettes of red paper. Bright peacock feathers were plentiful, and seemed to stare at them with a thousand eyes. Back of it all, in a sheltered recess, was the joss. They heaved a sigh of relief that he was not a dragon. An American child would have thought him perfectly hideous, but the Chinese children have such different ideas, and they exclaimed rapturously, "Oh, velly pletty joss! heap fine god; me likee."

Perhaps they thought it best to say very nice things of him in his presence, however, because it would never do to offend him, or he might not allow the white "labbit" to visit them. So they ventured quite near, and spoke in tones he could not fail to hear.

After a whispered consultation with *ho chun* they opened the pretty red-paper package, and each took from it two incense sticks, and their father having lighted them, the children waved them several times right under the nose of the great and high one, and bowed their little heads to the floor a great many times, meanwhile asking in their innocent little way that the good joss would please make the white rabbit bring them something nice. When they had finished, they placed the rest of the incense sticks in the great brass urn in front of the joss, and the sacred ashes fell down and helped to fill it up. Every time they had bowed their heads the big gong had been beaten, and at first the noise had frightened them, but finally they grew to like it.

Ho chun thought that while they were there, they had better try throwing the fortune sticks, as he knew it would please them, so he picked up a tall round box, full of bamboo sticks, and explained it to them. They first asked the joss "Will we get any moon-cakes?" Then each in turn took the box and shook it until one stick fell out, when they picked it up, and *ho chun* read the Chinese number on it, then looked in a book and found out what that number said. Fortunately the answer was favorable, and they felt happy now. That meant that they might really expect some gift from the moon rabbit.

Before going home they all stepped out on the beautiful balcony on which were swinging the biggest lanterns they had ever seen, and they leaned over the edge, where there were great pots of the pretty China lily in blossom, with red papers tied around the stems, and looked at the hundreds of people passing below them. The grown-up people all had their arms full of bundles, and little three-cornered brown paper parcels. All was noisy and happy and bright, because it was the eve of the Moon Festival, and the shopping must all be done before the rabbit should come.

Down the long steps they went again, and into the crowded street, where all was joy and delight, and mysterious whispering.

"Oh, that pretty pagoda!" said Ping Pong, "I so 'flaid the labbit no bling me pagoda, I think *ho chun* betteh get."

Ho chun laughed and said, "No! I wait and see if the labbit come, I think bimeby he come and bling pagoda; I no can tell—we wait and see."

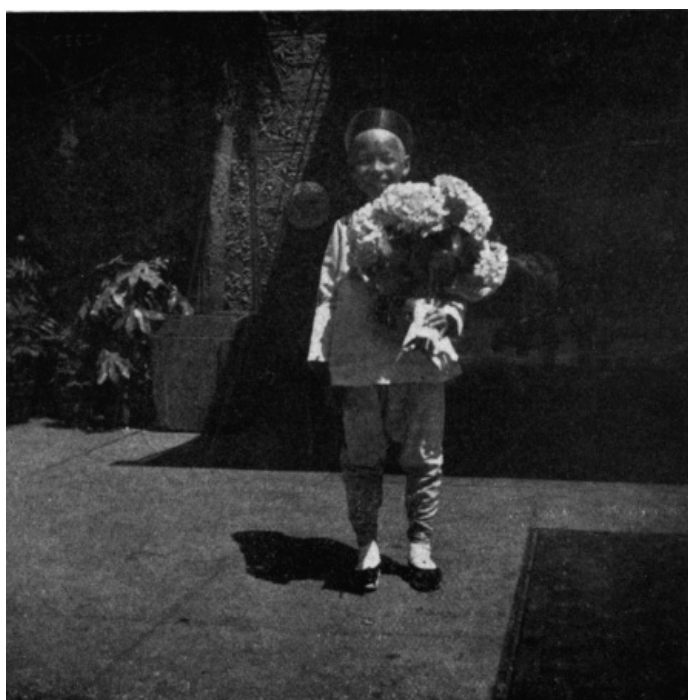
But what if he should forget to bring one? and they were such beautiful pagodas, and all made of candy. The little round faces were sober for a while, thinking how very dreadful it would be if, after all, the rabbit did not come, or, if he did come, and should forget to bring the much-desired pagoda.

They were very tired when at last they reached their home, over which gleamed the big golden Chinese letters of welcome, and in a little bowl beside the door burned the punk sticks, day and night, to keep the evil spirits from entering their home. Their tired little legs could hardly climb the stairs, but at last they were there, and had tumbled into the mother's loving arms, and had been kissed and questioned thoroughly.

Mo chun was really astonished to hear of the glorious time they had enjoyed, and of the many wonders they had seen. When they mentioned the pagoda she was suddenly seized with the giggles, and her laughter was so merry and contagious that they all laughed till their sides ached, though the children could not have told why they laughed. The mother and father knew why, but they would not tell. The hour had come, and indeed it was long past the hour when they should have gone to bed, but then the beautiful Moon Festival came only once a year, and so they might be allowed a few privileges. They were finally asleep on their beds of matting, and the mother looked tenderly at the rosy little faces as she went into the kitchen—the kitchen which for some reason had been locked all day.

Well, morning came at last, as it always does, and before the sun was up Ping Pong and his sister jumped out of bed, exclaiming: "Oh, *mo chun*, has the white labbit been?"

Oh, what were all those beautiful things on the table? Why, the whole room was changed. When they had gone to bed the night before, there was nothing there but just the things that belonged in the room, and now—and now—The white rabbit had



There was a big bouquet for Ping Pong

surely been here, for the table was covered with the most beautiful gifts they had ever seen,—lots of cunning little moon-cakes, sprinkled with poppy and caraway seed; and some like a horse and a cow, and all sorts of funny animals. And there was a big bouquet for Ping Pong, because it was his birthday too.

There were also some big candy dragons, with great staring eyes, but now, instead of the dragons eating them, they were going to eat the dragons. My! what fun that would be! and they could not wait, but planted their strong white teeth in the white heads, and bit them off. My! how sweet they were! so sweet that their bodies went next, and soon there were no dragons at all.

There were all kinds of gaudily painted toys of clay, and little Ping Yet's dancing eyes danced more than ever, and she fairly rippled over with smiles when she saw, sticking out of a bright red pair of embroidered sandals, a real Chinese doll. It looked very much like Ping Yet herself, with its bright black eyes, rosy cheeks, and coal-black hair. She thought it surely must be the most beautiful thing in the whole big world, but *mo chun* said she knew something more beautiful. The little one wondered vaguely what it could be, and how anything could be more beautiful, but she was too busy to wonder long, for Ping Pong had uttered such a shriek of delight that she almost jumped out of her little sandals. What could be the matter?

"What foh you cly? you buhn youh finge?" she cried; and he in reply pointed to the cause of all his excitement; it was—oh, joy!—a pagoda, and *mo chun* said:

"The dragon pagoda it touches the sky;
The dragon pagoda, thirteen stories high."

It was just exactly like the one they had asked *ho chun* to buy, and the dear white rabbit in the moon must have seen right down into their minds and brought what they wished. And oh, they were so glad now that they had gone to the joss house, and burned the incense and thrown the fortune sticks, for if they had not—who knows?—the white

rabbit might have forgotten them.

THE LITTLE ALMOND BLOSSOM

MO CHUN called her the little Almond Blossom, as she was so bright and beautiful, and she loved her so. Her real name was Gum Sing, and she was, so the mother thought, the prettiest thing in all the big Chinatown of San Francisco.

Gum Sing's father kept a store, where they sold all sorts of fine china and silk. She often went to her father's store, but never alone. Oh, no! she was too precious to be trusted out alone, and then she was too young to find her way through the winding streets, and the doors all looked alike to her, so the *mo chun* or the nurse always accompanied her.

Gum Sing had such a round, dimpled face, and there always seemed to be kisses lurking in the dimples. And she had the merriest little laugh,—just like music to her mother. It was not enough for *mo chun* to see this little face every day, and to sleep on the hard pillow with it at night. No, that was not enough, for how could any one ever have enough of so fair a thing? So the father and mother agreed that their little Almond Blossom must have her picture taken. That was a great day in the house of Gum. Such an event had never happened before.

Now Gum Sing did not know at all what it meant to have her picture taken, but she knew by the smiles on her mother's face, and by the careful and proud manner in which she was being arrayed, that it could be no small thing, and that some way or other she was expected to look as beautiful and as much like the almond flower as she could, as that was sacred to the Chinese.

With delight she saw that she was to wear her lavender silk blouse. "Oh, *mo chun*," she giggled, "I likee wear *ho chun's* big gold watch."

Now, although the little mother did not think it just exactly the proper thing for any one so tiny as Gum Sing to wear a watch and chain, yet this was such an important event—and such a proud moment for her—that she could see no harm in letting her have her way about it this time. She insisted upon carrying *mo chun's* big fan, too, and it certainly did look very wonderful to see it clasped in the tiny brown hand.

The trousers of pink silk were so bright and pretty, and the dainty little sandals had been embroidered by *mo chun* herself.

When all was ready, *ho chun* appeared on the scene, and the happy party started out for the photograph gallery of Hen Yin Gock.

"I so happy—I so glad," giggled the little Gum Sing, not knowing just what she was happy about, only she was such a happy little thing always, and being the only child had so much love given her. At last they reached the place. There did not seem to be anything wonderful about it. There was a window with a lot of pictures in it, and a crowd of Chinamen were jostling each other to see them. Then they ascended the stairway and rapped on the door, and some one called out in Chinese, "*Yap loi le*," which means "Come in."

They went in, and the man talked to them pleasantly, but when he went and put his head under a black curtain on some kind of a box, then Gum Sing thought it was time to complain. This was too much! She cried: "*Mo chun*—I no likee—will it hurt? I 'flaid the big ddragon come out of the box." (The nurse had evidently been telling her stories about the big Chinese dragon.)

Then the good Hen Yin Gock came out from the curtain, and assured her that there was no danger. He brought out two lovely yellow roses in a vase, and put them on a small table with a bright cover, and then told Gum Sing: "If you heap good girl, and do what I say, I give you the floweh, pletty soon."

Then he also placed on the table a flute, with gaily colored tassels, and then the cunningest little jar, which looked very much as if it might contain preserved ginger, and she was just thinking how much she liked preserved ginger when the man said: "Now keep still! look light at this box!" (The little mother trembled; could it be that after all there was something horrible in the box?) "There is a little bird in this box, and you may see it fly out if you are quiet. Now!—all leady!" (ready).

Gum Sing was so full of giggles that she could hardly be quiet, and the dimples chased each other all over her sunny face. The father and mother gazed with love and admiration at the beauty of their little almond flower, with one hand thrown carelessly on the table and the other grasping the fan.

"There!" at last said the photographer.

Gum Sing wanted to know what it was all about, yet she could not seem to find out. But several days after that, when *ho chun* was out on the pavement in front of their home, putting some China lilies in a bowl of water, a man came, and handed him a little package. Gum Sing was all curiosity in a minute.

"Oh, *ho chun*, what is it? Let me see!" she cried, and *mo chun* was almost as eager. So the father opened the package while they waited wonderingly, and there, before their eyes, on pieces of polished cardboard—could it be?—yes, yes!—the picture of their little Almond Blossom—big watch, fan, dimples, giggle and all.

But Gum Sing wonders to this day why the bird did not come out of the box.

THE CHRISTMAS OF GUM CHING

GUM CHING lived in America, but she had no way of knowing it, as she never saw any of the country, and was kept in her home all the time. As she was unfortunate enough to be a girl, she had never been permitted to go anywhere, except to play on the street in front of her father's store. Sometimes, when playing thus, she had seen little American girls drive by in carriages with their mamas, and they seemed to be having so much fun that little Gum Ching would look very sad after they had passed, and would say to her brother Gum Lee: "I wish *I* was a 'Melican little girl—they have heap good time."

It was Christmas day, yet this had never meant any happiness for Gum Ching, for the Chinese save all their good times for the New Year. But it chanced that her little brother had been attending the Mission, and learning to read,

and the little sister had heard him say that they were going to have a Christmas tree at the Mission that very night.

"What can a Christmas tree be?" said the little Chinese girl to herself; and her thoughts were busy with this all day, wondering what kind of a strange tree it was.

Oh, if she could only go! But how could she, when she had never been out of Chinatown, and there might be all sorts of ugly things waiting to catch her as she passed. She could see the Mission from their upstairs window, and she wondered vaguely if any of the little "Melican" girls who had passed in their carriages would be there. She said to herself: "Even if they should punish me when I get home I no care—because then I have something nice to think of, anyway."

The darkness came at last, and Gum Ching had never been out in the dark. She never knew before that it was quite so black, but she had made up her mind to go, no matter what the consequences were.

Now Gum Ching did not have any mama, and it was very lonely for her at home, with no one but just her *ho chun* and the little brother, who was always off playing with some boys. After she had eaten her supper, and had seen *ho chun* light his long opium pipe, she knew then that he would lie down, and not awaken until the morning. So she slipped out and toddled on, in her small sandals, in the direction of the light which streamed from the windows of the mission.

She looked up at the sky, and was just saying: "I wondeh what those pletty spahkling things are up there; I likee have one;" when suddenly she heard a mighty roar, and right through the blackness of the night came a great demon of fire, snorting, puffing, and screaming, and coming right toward the poor little trembling Gum Ching. She feared to move, and so stood quite still until the big giant had passed, and vanished again into the darkness of the night.

It was only the train, but Gum Ching did not know. She was only a girl. Onward she started again, brave little soul, and soon she had reached the Mission. No one would ever know what a terrible undertaking it was for a little girl from China.

The door was open, and a soft radiance streamed out, and lit up the timid form of the little Gum Ching, as she stood on the step, in the dark and the cold.

She could hear a confused murmur of happy voices, and just as she was hesitating whether she would venture in or turn and fly back to her lonely home again, a kind hand clasped hers, and a woman's tender voice said: "Why, come right in, dear."

Gum Ching's eyes filled with tears, for she had never before known the sweetness of a loving woman's voice. She was led into the room, not even caring now if she was punished, for it was well worth it. Her sparkling oblique eyes almost danced out of her head at all this beauty. Everywhere were sparkles—sparkles—and they fairly dazzled her. It must be a dream, she thought. She looked before her, and—what was that great green tree towering toward the ceiling? It was—it must be—the Christmas tree! And did all those pretty things really grow on the tree? she could not understand it.

Her brother could not believe his eyes when he saw her there. She?—nothing but a girl?—what right had she to enjoy herself? But she was there, for all that, and her small brown and timid hand was held in a warm and loving clasp by one of the kind teachers, and she was made to feel that, after all, in the big lonely world there was some one who cared, and her little heart was full to overflowing, and she had to blink very hard to keep back the tears—tears of pure joy.

She was given many things from that beautiful tree, and, best of all, the teacher took her home; and *ho chun* was good to her, and did not punish her at all, but promised—just think of it! promised—that she could go to the tree again next year.

HO CHIN'S FOURTH OF JULY

HO CHIN was ten years old, and had never had a Fourth of July. Just think of it! Ho Chin was the son of the Chinese Consul, and his rank placed him so far above the ordinary Chinese boys that he was very much looked up to, and respected by them. Ho Chin did not live in one of the small, dark, opium-scented rooms in which the rest of the Chinese children lived, but in the elegant Consulate with its large rooms and marble stairway; but, after all, he was just a boy, and liked the things that boys liked. He attended a very select American school, and dressed in American style. In fact, nothing was too good for Ho Chin—the eldest son of a Consul. But you know, sometimes he almost wished he was a common boy, and could run and play, and have the perfect freedom of the street boy.

Now at school he had of late heard of nothing but the Fourth of July. "What is the Fourth of July?" he finally ventured to ask.

And Johnny Moore replied, only too glad to be the first one to divulge all its wonders, "Why, it's—it's—fire-crackers, you know, and flags and soldiers, and popcorn and peanuts, and—and—everything. It's the best time of the year; say, it's just bully! Didn't you ever see one?"

"No," gasped the delighted Ho Chin. "Oh, do you think my papa would let me?" And from that time on he could hardly study, his mind was so taken up with this new subject, and he acted so strangely at home that his mama, who was a beautiful Chinese lady and loved her handsome boy, was very much worried over the change in him. He would leave his tea and rice untasted, and rush from the table most unexpectedly. Why? Because he had heard a faint whistle outside, from some of his American boy friends, and he was eager to get out to them, to talk about the wonderful event which was coming so near.

The more he thought of it, the more he decided in his mind that he had better not tell his father about it, because if he told him and should be refused—if— Oh, he could not bear the thought. He knew that his father had never allowed him alone on the Chinese streets, for wise fathers always accompany their children. For who could tell when the child of a wealthy and noted man might be kidnapped? And the timid little Chinese mother was never really happy when he was out of her sight.

So the time flew by. The Consul was called to a distant part of the state on official business, and when Ho Chin awoke in the gray dawn of the early morning his first thought was: "Well, I can't tell papa when he is not here, and I know if I told mama she would not let me go. What will I do? I can't miss it."



Through the narrow streets

The boys will think I am a coward if I don't go, and—I have some money of my own."

So saying, he crept out of bed, and astonished the servants by his early demand for breakfast. He knew his dainty mama would not leave her apartments for some time, for it took so long for the maids to dress her hair, and manicure her finger-nails, and array her in her rich silks; so, avoiding the eyes of the servants, he crept stealthily down the long marble stairway, jingling the money in his pocket as he went, and out through the narrow streets, whistling merrily, in the perfect delight of freedom. He knew he was not doing right, but here he was, at the gate of Johnny's house, and there was Johnny himself, just running out at the door, cap in hand. His face wore a look of delight as he saw the Chinese boy, and he yelled: "How'd you get here?"

"Oh, I just came; nobody knows it—and say! Let's begin! I've got some money; let's go to old Sing Chew, he's got a whole store full of fire-crackers."

Johnny's mama, looking out of the window, remarked to her husband, "So they allowed him to come, after all. Well, I'm glad of that, for he seems such a dear little fellow."

Ho Chin was as happy as it is possible for a boy to be, when he found himself in the wonderful store. Old Sing Chew was awfully busy, but not so busy that he could not see the son of the Consul, and hastened to attend to his wants.

"How is it that you come alone? I neveh see you come unless your *ho chun* bling you," he said.

The boy replied, "Oh, I am a big boy now, and I like to have a good time on the Fourth of July. This is my friend!—he goes with me." And the old man believed him, and admired the beautiful command the boy had of the English language.

It seemed a wonderful thing to Johnny that any one boy could have so much money to spend. It seemed great wealth to him, because he had only twenty-five cents for his fire-crackers, but the young Ho was as generous as could be, and they left the store with all they could carry.

What a pleasure to be a boy on the streets, where all was noise and confusion and incessant popping of fire-crackers. One boy threw a bunch under a horse's feet, and he ran away and frightened a lot of people. There were crowds of boys—boys everywhere, and a good many Chinese boys, but only those of the lower class. What would his papa think if he should meet him now, his hands and face all black with powder, and a wild and reckless air about him, which did not seem at all like the quiet little fellow his papa knew.

Finally the great parade approached. He had only seen Chinese parades, with the great green dragon, and it had always frightened him; but there was no dragon in this parade. There were soldiers,—oh, so many hundreds of them!—with their bright uniforms glittering in the sun, and their spirited horses prancing and keeping time to the music of the many bands. Many of the horses became scared at the noise, and Ho Chin, being a boy, thought it great fun to see them stand on their hind legs and prance, and act as if they would run over everybody. He did not feel afraid, and he liked to hear the big drums; they sounded beautiful to him, almost as beautiful as the Chinese "tom-toms." There were so many fine things about that parade that little Ho did not realize until after it had passed that he was hungry. He mentioned the fact to Johnny, and, strange to say, Johnny was hungry too. They were a long distance from home; what should they do?

"If I had any money left we could go into a restaurant and have our dinner," said the wary Johnny.

"Oh, could we?" said Ho. "Well, we will go then, for I have plenty of money."

Johnny did not need any urging, you may be sure, and many people in the restaurant were amused to see the two little friends seated at the table with their fire-crackers on a chair beside them. Still more amused was the waiter, who brought them such a mixture as he had never before served for lunch. It was dreadful! but it did not seem so to the two hungry boys, who, with mouths full, were so interested in talking that they did not even see the waiter. Little Ho Chin paid the bill with a kingly air, and they strutted out to pop their crackers for the rest of the day. They were having a fine time,—but what of the little Chinese mother?

When her toilet was completed she inquired for her boy, as she knew he was to have a holiday to-day, and was told that he had breakfasted earlier than he had ever done before, and they had not seen him since. They supposed

he had gone to her apartments. She had the whole house searched, and was frightened almost to death. She burned her incense before the god, and murmured: "Oh, good joss! protect my boy, and bring him to me."

At that moment her boy had just blown off his coat-tail with a bunch of fire-crackers, and it was lucky that he had not been blown to pieces. The mother could only wait till the day wore on, as her husband was not there to advise her, and Chinese women are so helpless.

After this day of delight the dark night fell, and not until then was the little Ho reminded that his mother would be worried, and he must go home. His fire-crackers were all gone, he was tired, and so covered with powder and dirt that one would never have recognized him as the elegantly dressed little boy who had left home in the early morning. "But," he reflected, "I have had the finest time of my life; I will never forget it."

It must be admitted, though, that his conscience hurt him very badly as he wended his way home. He wondered if his father could have come home unexpectedly. There was no way out of it; he must go and face it. He almost felt as if he would like to run away to some place where there were no fathers and mothers, and where it was always the Fourth of July all the year round.

He entered the great iron door, and had reached the top of the marble stairway, his heart beating with fear. He almost wished now he had not gone. The silence was so intense that he could almost hear his heart beat—he feared the worst. But now he heard a rustle of silken garments, and there came through the portieres—his mother!

With wide-open black eyes he gazed at her. Oh, what would she do? what would she say?—he stood trembling and speechless; and she?—Why, she was just a mother, after all, and with one great sob she took him in her arms and showered kisses on his handsome but very dirty face. He could feel her tender heart beating through the silken blouse, and she clasped him closer as she murmured: "The good joss has brought him back to me—my brave and beautiful little Ho."

And he whispered, "Mother—forgive me! but it was all so lovely, and—I just *love* the Fourth of July!"

And she, being a mother, forgave him.

THE LITTLE FISHER-MAIDEN

LO LUEN was the little daughter of a poor Chinese fisherman, and lived in the Chinatown of Monterey, California. She was born in this beautiful country, and did not know anything about China, except what she had heard her parents say. But this country was good enough for her, she thought, with its endless skies of blue overhead, and the big noisy ocean dashing its white spray up on the silver sands right in front of the little hut she called home.

It was a very poor place, and they were very poor people, but Lo Luen did not know this, because it was all she had ever known, so it did not disturb her simple celestial mind in the least. Then she could not get lonely, for there was her small brother, Lo Duck, who was the cunningest, chubbiest little boy that she had ever seen.

Mo chun was very busy always, in the little hut, as she was a cigarette-maker, and worked at this all the time she was not doing the cooking, and making the simple garments for the family.

The father dearly loved his children, and often called Lo Luen his little fisher-maiden. This was because she was such a help to him in his fishing. She and little Lo Duck would sit out on the ground in front of their home for hours at a time, putting bait on the hooks; and this was a great help, for it saved so much time.

He would cut up a great deal of fish into small bits, and put it in a box by the children, and they would fasten it on to the hundreds of hooks on the lines, and then the big round baskets would be all ready for *ho chun* to cast the lines into the ocean, and draw out the beautiful fish. Lo Luen was very proud when she saw the fine fish in the boat every day, for she almost felt as if she herself had caught them, since she had put the bait on the hooks. One day she had been working so hard that her father looked at her, as she sat there in the sun with her sleeves rolled up, working away as if her life depended upon it, and he said to her: "Lo Luen, how you likee go out in big boat with *ho chun*?"

"Oh!" she shouted, as she clapped her little brown hands, "I likee velly much; I likee catch big fish to bling *mo chun*."

"All light," said her father. "We no takee *hai tong* (baby); he stay with *mo chun*, he too little."

Lo Duck objected to this; he wanted to go too, but he would only be in the way, and then his mother would be worried if he went, so he was taken into the house, screaming vigorously. The timid mother felt rather afraid to trust her little daughter out on the great noisy ocean, whose waves came dashing upon the rocks with a boom like thunder; but the father said she was a big girl now, and it was time she learned something of the sea. So, while he fitted up the boat and got the nets into it, *mo chun* was dressing the little girl in her warmest blouse, all heavily padded, and then got out a very thick silk hood, fastening it securely on her head, and last of all, she took from the padded *mumboo* (tea-pot holder) a pot of boiling tea, and gave it to Lo Luen.

"*Maskee-maskee*, my *samen jai*" (never mind, my little boy), she said to the baby brother, "maybe you go next time."

Mo chun and the baby boy went with them as far as the boat, and Lo Luen jumped in gaily, and they were off. The water was smooth to-day, and everything would surely be well, thought the mother. She went in and placed a little bowl of steaming rice before the joss, so that he would protect her little girl from the wrath of the mighty ocean, and lighted the punks before him, so that the incense filled the little room.

Meanwhile, the little fishing boat went dancing over the blue waves, as light as an egg-shell, and the little Chinese girl was happy.

They kept near the shore at first, and when they passed the Del Monte hotel she saw hundreds of little American children running on the beach. She loved to watch them, as they ran with bare feet, kicking up the white sand. Some of them were jumping rope with long strands of kelp; some were hunting shells and bits of sea-moss; some were running into the foamy surf, filling their bright tin pails with water, and then hurrying from the big waves they would run back to pour the water into some little place in the sand, where they were building all sorts of wonderful things.

Some of the little girls had the most wonderful dolls in their arms,—or at least they seemed wonderful to a little girl who had no doll, except just the hard kelp balls which she had dressed up and used for dolls, as she did not like

to ask for one, for fear it would cost too much.

They left the shore now, and went farther out, where the ocean was deep and the waves were rough. The cool salt spray dashed in her face, and her long queue hung over the side of the boat and dipped into the water. *Ho chun* told her to take it in, or a big fish might come along and pull her in. Oh, what fun it was to see him cast in the net, and pull out so many big fish! but she was a little afraid of them, they were so squirmy and floppy. She cuddled up in one end of the boat, so they could not jump on her, but *ho chun* fixed a plank in front of her, so she was not afraid.

It was her turn now, and so the father produced a stout little fishing pole and tackle, and she tried her luck at fishing in the big ocean. Soon she felt a strong tug at her line,—so strong that it almost pulled her in. She tugged away, though, till she almost fell out of the boat, but it was too big for her; she could not manage it without the help of *ho chun*.

"*Maskee!*" he said, and took hold of the pole. She still kept her small hands on it, though, so she could say that she caught it. Pretty soon there came up out of the water a big, big salmon, all gold and sparkling in the sunlight. She just squealed with delight, and her father said: "Heap good girl; catchee velly big fish."

They were so interested in the work and were having such fine luck that they did not realize how late it was getting. Lo Luen was enjoying it so, that her father could not bear to stop her pleasure.

The darkness fell upon the waters now, and the sea moaned sadly. The waves grew rougher, and the air colder. It was not pretty when the sun was not shining on it.

"The wateh too black now; I no likee; I want see *mo chun*," falteringly said the little one.

They could see the dim outlines of great ships with their lights sending long, narrow rays across the dark of the ocean. They looked like stars, and made one feel as if they were not alone on the vast waters.

"We go home now—see *mo chun*; get nice hot *tea*," said the father, in a kind tone, as he clasped the little figure closely to him, and started to row home. Of course Lo Luen did not really feel afraid, with her father so near, and said: "I no 'flaid; but I likee go fast. I cold and hungly—that's all."

Her father smiled in the dark as he murmured consolingly, "Yes—that's all."

Lo Luen was thinking, as she crouched there, nestled up against *ho chun*, "How pletty those dolls were; I be so happy if I had one—just one, foh my velly own."

The moonbeams lit up the water in a silvery path, and as Lo Luen looked at this path and thought how very beautiful it was, she noticed something floating in the light and bounding up and down on the waves. It looked like a big lump of seaweed.

"What is that, *ho chun*?" she said, with childish curiosity.

"Oh, I think just a piece of wood or a bunch of kelp; you likee get it, little girl?"

"Yes, we see what it is," she said.

It seemed determined to get away from them, for almost every time they were near enough to touch it a big wave would come, and take it away in the dark, and it would be lost to sight for a while. But soon the light revealed it right within reach. *Ho chun* put out his hand and grasped it, and putting it on the fish said: "We see when we get home," and rowed away as fast as he could.

At home the little mother was getting very uneasy. What could keep them so long? "*Cheung kan ye lok*" (it is getting very late), she said. Oh, why had she ever let her go? To think of her *pao chu* (precious pearl) being out on the big ocean at night. She imagined all sorts of horrible things, and blamed herself. Perhaps she had not set enough food before the joss, nor burned enough incense. She had the tea all nice and hot, and knew if nothing had happened they would be very hungry when they reached home. So she lighted more punks before the god, and had already sung the baby's little Chinese song:

"My little baby—little boy blue—
Is as sweet as sugar and cinnamon too;
Isn't this precious darling of ours
Sweeter than dates and cinnamon flowers?"

He now lay asleep on his couch, and she was all alone.

After what seemed an age to her she heard the sound of a boat being dragged upon the sand, and ran to the door of the hut, and stood there looking out upon the beach. "Lo Luen! Lo Luen!" she called out in the darkness, "*Yap loi le!*" (come in!) and there was a rush of sandalled feet, and in just a moment two cold brown hands were clasped in her warm ones, and a dear little cold nose was pressed against her face. "Lo Luen, precious pearl, you have come back, and the joss is good," she said.

After the fish were put away *ho chun* came in, and everything was peace and happiness again. The warm room seemed more welcome than ever before, for they were benumbed with cold, and oh, so hungry! *Mo chun*, with all gentleness and love, soon had them seated, with bowls of steaming rice before them, and fried fish, and other good things which she had prepared in their absence.

After supper Lo Luen happened to think of the mysterious bundle of seaweed, and *ho chun* went out and brought it in. It was very wet, and smelled of the sea.

"I guess it's only a piece of wood with kelp on," said *mo chun*; but anyway, they tore the wet seaweed from it, while Lo Luen looked eagerly on. What could that be sticking out of the weed? It looked—it actually looked like a doll's foot. It couldn't be, and yet—With a great cry of joy Lo Luen saw her father uncover the treasure. All the pent-up feeling of starved child-life was in her cry, for there, disclosed to her dancing, oblique eyes was a doll—a real one, and a very beautiful one. She could not believe it at first, but rubbed her eyes. They were all astonished, for this was indeed an event in their barren lives.

The doll opened her eyes as if she were alive, and seemed to gaze at them in gratitude for being saved from the cruel water. Lo Luen hugged it to her wildly beating heart and her face beamed with a rapturous joy the like of which had never before come to her. She was such a little mother, always, and now she would have something upon which to shower all the wealth of love repressed in her warm little heart.

They did not attempt to solve the mystery. To them it was enough that this beautiful toy had been sent to them

from the waters. It may have been that the doll was lost in some shipwreck, or that some of the little maidens at Del Monte had left it too near the water, and the waves had carried it away. It belonged now to the little Chinese fisher-maiden, and that was enough to know.

She slept that night with the precious doll in her arms—dear little Lo Luen!

THE FINDING OF SING HO

LITTLE SING HO did not look very happy as he stood out on the pavement in front of his home. He had intended taking a beautiful walk, and had his umbrella already over his head, preparatory to starting, when his *mo chun* appeared on the scene, and said: "Where you going, *hai tong* (baby)?"

Now Sing Ho did not like to be called *hai tong*, for he felt that he was almost a big man, so he replied: "I going foh walk, down stleet."

"No, no! you too small; you stay home now, and maybe bimeby *mo chun* take you," she said; and then she hurried into the house to see if the rice was burning. When she had disappeared he stood there for a moment, with the gay umbrella over him, looking very much displeased.

He was only four years old, it is true, but do you know, he often thought he knew more than his dear mother. Now Sing Ho was the only child, and had always been loved and petted, and had never been denied anything in his short little life. He remembered many walks he had taken with his father and mother, and he had always had such a good time that he thought it would be still better if he could take a walk all alone. He had just seen two of his little friends, with their queer little Chinese caps on,



Two of his little friends, with their queer little Chinese caps on

and they had said they were going for a walk, so why not he?

He knew his *mo chun* was very busy, embroidering a *blouse* for him to wear on the New Year, and the San Nin (New Year) would be here to-morrow. So he thought in his baby way that he would take advantage of his mama, and only walk down the street a little way, and she would never know. He was too small to realize that it is a very difficult matter for even grown-up persons to find their way through the narrow and tortuous streets of the big Chinatown of San Francisco. He could not be expected to know these things.

So he wandered on, and soon forgot his fear in watching the beautiful things all around him. Chinatown was in holiday attire, and as far as the eye could reach the narrow streets were a perfect mass of bloom and beauty. On both sides of the streets were ranged great stands of the China lily and fragrant almond blossom, with delicate shades of pink.

Someway he found it very hard to get past the store windows, as they seemed to have so many things in them that boys like, and he forgot everything in the delight of gazing at them, and pressed his eager little round face right up against the glass in some places, and poked his cunning little nose into a fragrant bunch of lilies, to inhale their sweetness. *Mo chun* had some lilies at home, but not so many nor such beautiful ones as these. At every door were strange Chinese letters, and he looked longingly at great bunches of peacock feathers with their many eyes, and the gaudy rosettes of red paper which are everywhere on the New Year. Almost every one that he met carried a brown paper parcel of pork and an onion, or some kind of funny looking lettuce, for the Chinese love pork better than the Americans love turkey, and it had to be a very poor person indeed who did not feel able to buy himself a piece of pork on the New Year.

Chinamen of all kinds were thronging the streets, and so many children, too, were toddling along with some older person, that no one noticed that the little boy was alone.

He believed he had only to walk back just a little way and he would be at home. He did not know that he had made several turns, and that it would be impossible for him to find his way back alone.

Naughty little Sing Ho! There were so many American people, too, in the shops, buying curious and beautiful things. On both sides of the street were rows of great dragon lanterns. He looked at them in childish wonder, longing for the great swaying globes. Suddenly he felt something hit him on the arm, and, looking upward, saw far above him some beautiful Chinese ladies on a balcony; and what is this that they have thrown down? Something very near to the heart of a boy,—a bright bunch of fire-crackers!

He was smiling now without any difficulty. Just then he heard a woman's shrill, high-pitched voice speaking to

him from the latticed window above him, saying: "Little boy! little boy! where is your *mo chun*?"

"She at home," he replied, and then hesitatingly faltered, "*Ngo pa ngo tong cho lu lok*" (I am afraid I have lost my way).

He was crying now, and presented a very mournful appearance to the gaze of the passer-by. These ladies above him were those of the tiny "golden lily feet," and very wealthy and aristocratic, so they could not leave their rooms and come down to him, as that was not their custom. If it had been the next day they could have done so, for on every day of the week of San Nin they were permitted to leave their homes and go anywhere they pleased.

"*Ni kiu mat meng a?*" (what is your name?) they asked.

"My name? Sing Ho," he cried.

"You come up," they called down to him, pointing meanwhile to a dark and narrow stairway which led up from the street.

"It so dark—Sing Ho 'flaid to go alone—I want *mo chun*—boo, hoo," he wailed, in a pitiful little voice.

"But you must come. We find *mo chun*; we give you heap plenty fiah-clackeh (fire-cracker), plenty nice little cake; come on!"

Baby though he was, he remembered that his mother had always warned him against strangers, and told him never to allow any one to persuade him to go with them. But finally he decided that this was very different, and that anything would be better than being lost on the street.

"All light!" he sobbed, and started in great fear up the narrow stairway. Ugh! how dark it was! and he trembled, as his little sandalled feet crept hesitatingly on. When he at last reached the end of the stairway he found himself in a dark and narrow hall thick with the fumes of opium.

Where were the beautiful ladies?—and the little cakes? Nothing was to be seen but the gaunt figures of Chinamen gliding stealthily to and fro in the narrow hall. There were many doors on either side the hallway, and in each door was a small, square lattice into which the men would speak some queer words in Chinese, when the door would be cautiously opened, and he would enter. When the doors opened little Sing Ho caught glimpses of many Chinamen with cards in their hands, seated around some tables and calling out in a loud voice strange Chinese words which he could not understand. In some of the rooms he could see men reclining on bamboo couches and smoking opium. Oh, if his mother could see him now, as he stood there alone, and trembling in the half-darkness!

Just then his dear and beautiful little mother had put the last stitch in the blouse she was embroidering, and proudly held it out to the admiring gaze of her sister, who lived with her.

"He is playing outside; I go get him," she said; and with a smile on her lips she opened the door and called him.

"Sing Ho! Sing Ho!"

No reply.

"Why, that is strange," she thought. "Maybe he come in the house and go to sleep."

She hurried into the small bedroom and looked eagerly at the couch. No, there was no *samen jai* there. She was trembling now, with a nameless fear. Her pretty face grew pale, and the little brown nervous fingers were like ice.

Her boy—her baby—the honored one of the house of Sing, whose birth had crowned her with glory. Why, he must be there; he could not be gone from her—and yet—where was he? Her little tender baby boy who had never been from her side; the little brown face, naughty, sometimes, it is true, but always, to the mother, the dearest of things in all the big world.

Without stopping to change her house-ropes she rushed down the street, and to the store of her husband, Sing Kee. He was just going down into the cellar after some tubs of preserved ginger, when he was startled by seeing his wife appear before him. The cat, that had always been loved and petted by little Sing Ho, lay sunning itself at the entrance, and Sing Kee looked up with a very serious face, for he knew that no little matter would bring his wife thus unexpectedly to his place of business. She surely would not be going on the street the day before the New Year.

"What's the matter?" he asked in Chinese. She could hardly reply for the wild throbbing of her tender heart.

"My baby—my precious pearl—he lost! I no can find him; he gone—I no know where."

And then she hid her face in her trembling brown hands and wept in the wildest grief. The poor father was terrified, for he knew what a big place Chinatown was, and how easily a little child could be lost or stolen, or hidden away, and no one would ever see it again. He knew the underground passages and dark opium dens which were thick around them, and his heart almost broke as he listened to her story. She had little to tell. It was only that he had wanted to take a walk, and she had told him he must not go, believing that he would obey her, as he always had.

They started through the streets now, in search of him, their eager eyes gazing in all directions. Two of his little playmates stood on a doorstep, and they inquired of them if they had seen him. Yes, they had seen him early in the afternoon. He had passed them, carrying his umbrella.

The distracted parents searched until the dark night fell and the great dragon lanterns were lighted in the balcony of the joss house near by.

The joss house!—there was an idea! Why had they not thought of it before? They would go there at once, and supplicate the god, that they might find their baby. They ascended the long flights of stairs until they were right in the room with the joss. There were little bowls of ashes full of punks, to be burned before the god, and the odor of incense filled the air as they lighted them and waved them before the joss.

Sing Kee threw many of the little carved prayer-sticks into the air, too, and when they fell, looked at them eagerly, evidently seeing something about them which pleased him, for he smiled, and said to the timid little mother: "They say we find him to-morrow—we go home now."

They went home, but it was not home to-night without the dear little round, saucy face on the hard pillow, the patter of the little sandalled feet on the floors, and the click of the little chopsticks. There was no sleep for them that night. They had told the Chinatown police of their loss, but no clue had yet been reported.

Early next morning they started out again, on their weary search. It was the first day of the New Year, but they had not dreamed they would celebrate it in this way, as with heavy hearts they picked their way through the narrow streets, glancing in every direction, and up at the flower-laden balconies, with the candles burning for the joss.

Meanwhile the little Sing Ho had stood in fright, and looked around him, in the darkness of the hallway. Where

were the pretty ladies? Had he only dreamed he saw them?

Suddenly he heard a high-pitched but sweet voice somewhere above him, saying: "Where are you, little boy? Come up the other stairs."

The other stairs? where were they? He had supposed that he was at the top now, but on looking around he saw still another flight of steps, and gladly running to them he started on upward again, as fast as his tired little legs could carry him. When he reached the top, some one opened a door, cautiously, and calling out "*Yap loi le!*" (Come in!) reached out a beautiful jewelled hand, and drew him softly within the room.

Oh, how lovely it all was! There was a chatter of women's voices in high-bred, nasal tones, and the room was warm, and smelled of incense. One very pretty little lady drew him to her as tenderly as a mother, and said to him in the sweetest tones: "Do not fear, little one! I will find *mo chun* for you. Where do you live?"

"Why, I live with *mo chun* and *ho chun*," he said.

"Where do they live?" she inquired.

"I no know—they live at my home—and *mo chun* she make me velly pretty blouse."

Poor little boy! so he could not give them any clue, then, by which they might find his parents. Well, they would have to wait, and do the best they could under the circumstances. They tried to make him forget his sorrow for a while, and showed him many wonderful things. In the centre of the room was a table, all arranged for the New Year, and on it were great bowls of China lilies, and Chinese lemons and oranges. Then there was a polished tray, holding all kinds of candy and nuts. The windows were a perfect mass of lily and almond blossom, and peacock's feathers were everywhere staring, with their green eyes. Outside was the balcony, from which the ladies had first spoken to the little lost boy, and on it were many big dragon lanterns, whose soft light fell upon the flowers, and made it look like fairyland.

They served tea out on the balcony, and gave Sing Ho the dearest little cup, and cakes, and plenty of watermelon seed to nibble at, and everything that he loved, except—his dear mama. When the breezes began to blow too roughly and sway the dragon lanterns, they decided to put the little stranger to bed. This was the worst moment of all. How could he go to bed without his dear mother's kiss? Oh, how his lonely little heart ached and ached, and he just had to let the big tears come, and roll down his cheeks. He didn't want to be rude to the pretty lady, but—there was no one like his *mo chun*. Finally he did go to sleep, though, and when he awoke it was the first day of the New Year.

He was waited upon like a little king, with a big bowl of rice and ivory chopsticks, nice hot tea, and little almond cakes—everything that one could wish, but—it did not take the ache out of his heart. After breakfast he and the beautiful lady went



His own beautiful mo chun

out on the balcony, and sat there for hours, looking down at the crowd.

The streets were thronged now, and there was an incessant noise of fireworks. The New Year had begun in earnest. The lady was going to take him for a walk that afternoon, but they would sit on the balcony now, and watch the crowds beneath. There were so many children, and all dressed in their richest robes. It made the heart of little Sing Ho ache to see the richly embroidered blouses, so like his own, and if he had not been naughty and run away he might even now be walking along down there, wearing the blouse, and holding the hand of his own beautiful *mo chun*.

His own beautiful *mo chun*?—Why—why—he rubbed his eyes and stared down into the street. Was he dreaming?

"*Mo chun! Mo chun!*" he screamed, in his shrill baby voice; for down on the street beneath the balcony hurried a pale but pretty little Chinese woman, her searching gaze going in every direction.

"It is my *mo chun*! Stop!" he cried; and the Chinese lady on the balcony threw down her painted fan and hit the little mother of Sing Ho right on the head. Glancing upward in surprise, the mother looked straight into the eyes of her precious pearl, her little Sing Ho! Oh, the rapture and the mother-love that shone in her face now! How the light

came back into her eyes, and the red lips smiled, and the red rose bloomed in her cheeks as she reached out her arms to the balcony and sobbed: "*Hai tong! hai tong* (baby! baby)!"

The father, who had gone on in front of her, Chinese fashion, was called back, and together they ascended the same steps which had so frightened their baby boy. As it was the New Year week it was perfectly proper that they should both enter the rooms of the Chinese ladies, and what a happy time that was!

Every one soon became acquainted, through the medium of a little child, and very soon they were all having a New Year's cup of tea and other dainties, and were laughing and chatting away as if they had known each other always.

When they went home Sing Ho was given so many beautiful things that his little arms were full, and *ho chun* said as they entered the door of their own home: "I knew we would find him, because the prayer-sticks said so."

THE SLAVE-GIRL'S THANKSGIVING

IT was Thanksgiving Eve; but of this fact Pao Chu was entirely ignorant, for how could she know anything of Thanksgiving, or of giving thanks, when she was only a little Chinese slave, and had never been out of her prison in Chinatown?

Quong Lee, the president of the Quong Duck Tong, a highbinder society, was her owner, and she supposed that everybody was like him, and that there was no goodness or happiness in all the world. All the world to Pao Chu meant just the limited area she could see from her iron-barred window—about one foot square. And yes—on one occasion the old hag who guarded her had fallen into a deep opium sleep, and Pao Chu had slipped out on the tiny, flower-decked balcony, and, leaning far over, had gazed with pathetic eagerness down at the swarming crowd of Chinamen below. Her name meant "precious pearl," but she could see no reason for such a meaning, unless—yes, it must be because she would bring a big price when she was sold again. She had overheard Quong Lee talking to the old hag Suey Gong one night when they had thought she slept, and he had said then that one of his highbinder friends had offered him three thousand dollars for Pao Chu, but he was not going to sell her yet, as he thought he could get five thousand soon, for she was growing more beautiful every day. But the poor little pearl paid dearly for that one little tantalizing glimpse of the Chinese world. It happened to be the night of a Chinese celebration,—the "Moon Festival,"—and the light from the great dragon lanterns swaying above her shone full upon her pretty face. Many glanced upward, and were startled by the lovely apparition. Her face was full of Oriental witchery, and the tender young soul of her shone out in the great velvet eyes, and the pretty mouth glowed like a scarlet rose, while her hair shone in the mystical fairy light of the lanterns.

But alas for Pao Chu, the pure pearl in the mire! As she gazed down at the moving merry crowd, her whole soul in her eyes, and living a whole life in that one moment, two passed beneath the balcony—a fateful two; one the highbinder friend of her master, who saw her face, and forever after wished to gain possession of it for his own, and the other her master, Quong Lee, the great and high—Quong Lee, the demon and arch-fiend. At first he was amazed at the transformation that happiness had made in her face, and then—with one bound he was up the stairs. The poor little slave-girl stood transfixed with horror. She called hysterically on the little squatty god in the corner, but the god stolidly refused to listen,—indeed he always had refused. She could not recall a time when he had ever listened; and now her master strode furiously into the room, and grasped the poor trembling child with his great murderous hands. He shook her violently, and hurled at her all the Chinese profanity at his command. He beat her so that she almost died, and she would so much rather have really died, but he would not kill the goose that laid the golden eggs. Oh, no! this little bit of stubborn womanhood would fill his purse with gold some day, and so—he must not go too far. He must not cripple or maim her or she would be a drug on the market. He would simply beat her and starve her for a few days, and bestow upon her every vile epithet in his category.

He then dragged the old Suey Gong from her hard couch and gave her a beating. Her brain was so deadened with opium that she could not understand why she was being beaten; but then it did not matter why, she had often been beaten, and there must be a reason for it. She would have liked to know, of course, but then it was a woman's place to be beaten, as the *yen*, or female principle, was the source of all evil, and must be chastised whenever the male principle should see fit to do so.

From that time on there was no more freedom for the little slave. No fresh air save that which came through the tiny lattice; no glimpse of any human being save the old hag and the highbinder. Nothing to do but just to sit and make cigarettes all day, for her master to sell, and to talk to the old Suey Gong.

It was two years since her fateful visit to the balcony, and the girl was talking in her innocent way to the old woman.

"Suey Gong! do you know when I be sold? Will the new master beat me evly day? What kind of a life will it be? Tell me!" These, and many other questions, but to none of them could the old woman reply. If she had known the answers she would not have dared.

"I no *sabe* (understand) anything," she said, "I only know China girl neveh be happy. Bad spirits allee timee stay with her. She must allee timee play (pray) to the gods; she must work for man, he must beat her; she neveh be flee (free). She have heap plenty bad time here; I no know why; I no can tell."

"But why should I play to god when he neveh hear? Listen! listen!—Suey Gong! I no play to Chinese god any more. Afteth this I play—I play to—'Melican god. Then we see!"

The old woman held up her hands in horror. The American spirit had surely gotten into this bit of Chinese girlhood. O that she had never told this girl about the American god! It was too late now, though, for Pao Chu with clasped hands was saying:

"Oh, heap good 'Melican joss! Listen to a poor slave-girl's prayer! My master he beat me evly day; I no can tell why. I tly to be good, but he allee time beat me and starve me; I so unhappy. Oh, good 'Melican god, if you can hear me, set me flee (free)!"

This innocent petition was enough to have brought tears to the eyes of even the little clay god, but he was not moved. Old Suey Gong was so terrified for fear the girl's prayer would bring down the whole horde of evil spirits upon them that she in feverish haste set to work to light fresh incense sticks before the joss, and to set fresh bowls of

food and tea before him. All this happened on Thanksgiving Eve, though there was nothing at all in the slave-girl's life for which she could be thankful, even if she had known it was Thanksgiving.

But wait!—there *was* something, for old Suey Gong was telling her that the master had received an important telegram from some member of the Quong Duck Tong, which had called him out of the city, and he would not be able to return for two whole days,—two days without being beaten! Perhaps already the 'Melican god had heard. If she could only gain the consent of the old woman she might once more venture on the forbidden balcony. The fates were kind and the opium goddess filled the old woman's brain with dreams, and held down her eyelids. She slept, but the little girl did not. Garbed in pale lavender silk, she stole noiselessly out on the forbidden balcony. Her slim brown fingers lovingly caressed the Chinese lilies wrapped in red paper to scare away the bad spirits. Just now the bad spirits were not on duty, luckily for the little Chinese maiden. The tang of the sea air was so refreshing to her starved senses. She could look down to-night without fear, for her master would not come to-night, and in a childish, unformed way she breathed a blessing on the unknown highbinder who had sent the message, and although she did not know it was Thanksgiving Eve, a prayer of thanks to the unknown, intangible power who had given her this moment's freedom went up from her innocent heart.

Everywhere down the streets of "Little China" the big lanterns glowed and swung in the fresh night air. A bell pealed out on the silence, and seemed to speak of peace, and of something different from the life she knew.

Suddenly her eye fell upon some one who did not wear the accustomed queue and blouse,—a big, strong American man with a kind face stood looking up at her. He wore a blue suit and brass buttons, and on his coat gleamed a great shining star. While he gazed upward at the girl a carriage rattled over the cobble-stones and stopped right under the balcony.

And now the big man was saying—could it be that he was speaking to her?—Hello, little one! Would you like to celebrate Che San Yet?" She knew that meant thanksgiving, but the Chinese Thanksgiving did not come until February, and she could not imagine what he meant.

He resumed: "Come with me, you poor little slave, and I will take you to a good, kind home, where they will never beat you, and you will be free."

Free? She could not take in the meaning of the word. She could not even dream what it must be to be free. "Oh, no! I velly much 'flaid bad spirit catch me; I no can come; you down so low, and I up so high."

But just then the carriage door opened, and a woman's sweet face looked out, and a woman held out motherly arms of love toward the high balcony and its lonely occupant.

And old Suey Gong still slept.

A sweet voice called up: "Come and live with me, dear; I will always be kind."

Pao Chu's eyes filled with tears. It was the first time in all her life that any one had ever spoken a kind word to her. Before she could reply, the big policeman, who had some way slipped in through the rear, had taken her trembling little form in his strong arms, and hurrying down, placed her in the carriage, where she was clasped in the tender arms of Miss Cameron, Superintendent of the Chinese Rescue Mission.

She could not understand yet that she was free; but when she awoke on Thanksgiving morning and saw all the happy Chinese girl faces around her, and at the bountiful Thanksgiving table was made to understand the reason of it all, she then realized the true meaning of Thanksgiving, and said: "It would neveh have happened if I had not played to the good 'Melican God."

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