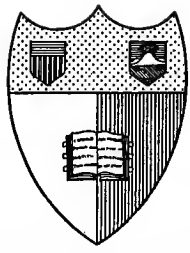
ASIA

NEW, EMPEROR AND SLAVE

BY KATHLEEN GRAY NELSON



HOME USE RULES

All Books subject to Recall

All borrowers must register in the library to borrow books for home use.

All books must be returned at end of college year for inspection and repairs.

Limited books must be returned within the four week limit and not renewed.

Students must return all books before leaving town. Officers should arrange for the return of books wanted during their absence from town.

Volumes of periodicals and of pamphlets are held in the library as much as possible. For special purposes they are given out for a limited time.

Borrowers should not use their library privileges for the benefit of other persons.

Books of special value and gift books, when the giver wishes it, are not allowed to circulate.

Readers are asked to report all cases of books marked or mutilated.

Do not deface books by marks and writing.

Frontispiece. THE BIRTHDAY PRESENT. Page 190.

TUEN, SLAVE AND EMPRESS

BY

KATHLEEN GRAY NELSON

ILLUSTRATIONS BY WILLIAM M. CARY

TUEN AT WORK ON THE TUNIC.—*Page* 65

NEW YORK

COPYRIGHT BY

E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY

31 WEST TWENTY-THIRD STREET

1898

PREFACE.

THIS story is founded upon facts in the life of the Empress-dowager of China, the mother of the present Emperor.

She was sold as a slave by her father to a renowned government official, who after a few years adopted her as his daughter, and afterwards presented her to the Emperor.

The Emperor was altogether charmed with the gift. In a few years the slave girl became the wife of the Emperor, second in rank only to the Empress. From this time she was a power at the Imperial Court. Her administrative ability in governmental affairs became invaluable to the Emperor.

After the death of the Empress, and the death of the Emperor and eldest son, she became Empress-dowager of China, and reigned as regent during the minority of her son, who is the present Emperor of China, now about twenty-four years of age.

Bishop Galloway tells us this wonderful woman's sixtieth birthday, celebrated last year, "was to have been the greatest event in Chinese history for a century or more." The war, however, prevented this display. He says, too: "It is significant that in this country, in which women are at a discount, are secluded and kept in ignorance, are protested against at birth, and regarded as a calamity in youth, the ruling spirit in all national affairs is a woman."

ILLUSTRATIONS.

TUEN, SLAVE AND EMPRESS.

CHAPTER I.

THE sun had set in the land where the dragon reigns, and darkness and silence and rest and sleep, the ministers of the night, waited to come to their own. But their presence was not needed in the eastern portion of the province of Hunan, for a wonderful stillness hung over all the barren landscape, and there was no sign of life. On the banks of the streams the patient buffalo no longer went his ceaseless rounds, working the pumps that sent water over the thirsty earth; the shrill cries of the boatmen that were wont to echo on the river were hushed; not even

a bird crossed the quiet sky; and where the waving rice-fields had once stretched out proud and green under the summer sun, was now but a lonely waste that gave no hope of harvest, for man and beast had either perished or fled. The great Tai-ping rebellion had stirred this peaceful country to its very centre, and war and war's grim follower, famine, had swept through this once fertile province, and naught was left to tell of what had been, save a few scattered ruins.

Suddenly, against the purplish shadows of the distant mountains, a little group could be seen moving slowly along, the only living things in all this vast solitude. On they came over the parched levels, but the man who was leading the way walked with bowed head, as one that saw not, but only went forward because he must. He was small in stature, and thin and lithe, while his complexion showed through its dark, the pallor of the student.

NIU TSANG AND FAMILY. Page 2.

His face was of the Oriental type peculiar to the Chinese Empire, and his carefully braided cue also indicated his nationality. He had dark, sloping eyes that you might have thought sleepy if you had not seen them light up as he talked, his forehead was low and broad, his mouth large, and most amiable in its expression, and when the long sleeves of his tunic fell back, they disclosed soft, delicate hands, unused to toil. His costume consisted of an outer tunic of worn and faded silk, girded at the waist with a sash, from which hung a bag containing flint and steel for lighting his pipe, a soiled pouch that had once held tobacco, but was now empty, another bag for his pipe, and a satin case shaped like the sheath for a short sword, from which protruded nothing more formidable, however, than the handle of a fan. His loose pantaloons, dust-stained and frayed, were met below the knees by cloth stockings, once white, but now dyed

with mud, and his shoes of embroidered felt, the toes of which curled up in a curious fashion, showed many gaping holes. Upon his head he wore a cone-shaped hat of bamboo, the peak at the top adorned with a blue button from which fell a blue silk fringe, and his tunic being cut low at the neck and buttoned diagonally across his breast, left exposed his slender bronzed neck.

He was followed by a woman whose dress was similar to his own, and also much the worse for wear, who led by the hand a little boy about four years old, while on her other side was a daughter, now almost as tall as her mother.

But as the father walked slowly, even majestically, at the head of his little family, bearing on a pole thrown across his shoulders, all his worldly goods, there was an independence in his carriage, a pride in his mien, that told of better days not yet forgotten, and made the evident

poverty of his appearance seem of but little moment.

A learned man once advanced the theory that in the olden days the children of Abraham and Keturah, driven forth by unkind kinsmen, wandered on until they reached the Flowery Kingdom, and there the family of the old patriarch multiplied as the stars of heaven, as the sand upon the sea-shore, and became a mighty nation. But the centuries came and went in silence, and man kept no record of their flight; and of the early settlers of this, one of the first countries inhabited by human beings, history can tell us nothing. The sons of Han have lived their lives calmly, borrowing nothing from other nations, asking nothing of the outside world, caring naught for what lay beyond their vast borders, and change has been an unknown word in their shut-in kingdom. Progress, the daring child of modern times, has not found entrance

there, and the Niu Tsang of to-day, leading his family through the forsaken country, was but a repetition of his long dead forefathers. That was the reason why, even now, as he toiled wearily along, his mind left the scenes of the present, so full of sorrow and suffering, and dwelt in placid contemplation on the events of the past. He was musing on the wisdom of the sages, on the maxims of Confucius, when, chancing to raise his head, he saw in the distance the dim outlines of a building.

"It is the temple of Buddha," he cried, joyfully, turning to his wife. "There we shall find food and shelter for the night."

She made a gesture of assent, but her pale lips framed no word, and they pressed hurriedly forward. When they came nearer the temple, he noticed the traces of many footsteps, as if a great throng had entered there, but the same mysterious silence reigned everywhere. There

was no murmur of voices raised in chants of praise, no priests waiting at the entrance, no din of gongs and drums, not even a sound from the consecrated animals that had once waited within the enclosure in pampered stupidity for release from their beastly forms. Bewildered, oppressed by a nameless fear, Niu Tsang ran past the open portal, and there he stopped, dismayed at the scene before him, for the rebels, drunk with success, had in their wild zeal turned against the dumb gods of the land, and wrought havoc in the temple. Gilded and painted fragments of helpless idols strewed the floor, the great stone altar, carved in writhing dragons, had been broken into many pieces, and incense vases of priceless porcelain, candlesticks of richest cloisonné, tables of carved ebony, stands of polished jade, and rosaries torn from the hands of frightened priests, had been ruthlessly destroyed, and now lay in great

heaps of rubbish. The guardians of the temple had fled before the wrath of the rebel reformers, and the dead gods were left alone in their temple. Niu Tsang made his way sadly through these ruins of the once beautiful structure, and came at last into the dismantled court where his wife and children were already awaiting him. She had taken the boy in her lap and was tenderly stroking his little wan face, while the girl, her eyes filled with unshed tears, squatted beside her. A head of Buddha that had been broken off and rudely tossed into the court, lay near by, watching them with the same queer smile it had once bestowed upon its worshippers. The father made a gesture of despair.

"All is ruin—all is lost—and desolation is spread over the land," he said despairingly. "Nothing is left here."

The boy in his mother's lap moved restlessly about and uttered a low moan,

"Is there no rice, father?" he cried plaintively.

"None, my son," Niu answered with a sigh. "I have searched the temple, only to find it bare. You must wait."

His wife's mouth trembled pitifully as she listened, and noticing this he said to her:

"We must endure as best we can. Night now overshadows us, and there is no human habitation in sight. We must rest here until the dawn and then hurry on, hoping ere the day is done to find food for all. If our strength fail we can but die," he added in a lower tone, as if speaking to himself, but the woman heard it and looked up.

"I am very tired now," she murmured, "and the pangs of hunger torment me. All that I had to eat to-day I gave to the children."

"I know," Niu said. "I too am hungry, but there is no help for it." So saying

he sat down; but the girl, despite her weariness, built a pedestal out of the fragments around her, upon which she gently placed the head of her dishonored Buddha, for she was a most devout little heathen, and then she crept quietly back into the temple.

CHAPTER II.

AS Niu Tsang sat with his head bowed upon his breast, lost in painful thoughts, and the woman closed her eyes and leaned against the temple wall that she might better rest, a shadow darkened the entrance, and caused them to spring hastily to their feet. In place of fierce soldiers, however, intent upon pillage or even murder, Niu to his surprise saw a solitary stranger, without weapon of any kind, eyeing them curiously. The newcomer even smiled at their evident dismay, and coming forward saluted them after the fashion of the country, bowing and gravely shaking his own hands.

"Be not alarmed, my friend," he said reassuringly to Niu. "I am like yourself, a belated traveller, and even now my

boat waits for me at the river bank. But as I had never passed this way before, though often had I heard of the splendid temple of many gods, I seized this opportunity to visit it."

As he spoke he looked around him, while a peculiar, half-quizzical expression lurked at the corners of his mouth.

"Behold it," Niu Tsang answered, making an expressive gesture. Then he went on passionately, his anger increasing at every word:

"The barbarians from beyond the sea could not have been more wicked than these rebels who have dared the vengeance of the gods. Traitors that they are! May none be left to bury them, no, not one to offer incense to their spirits. May they perish miserably, their graves forever unknown, their ghosts forever homeless."

"The ruin is indeed great," the stranger said calmly. "Were the gods deaf to

their prayers, that they should thus destroy them?"

"I know not," Niu said shortly, seating himself.

Seeing that his companion did not intend to speak further, but was eyeing him suspiciously, the newcomer continued:

"You seem travel-stained and weary, honored sir, as one who had journeyed from afar. May I ask whither you are bound, that you traverse this bleak plain?"

"To Lu Chang, foreign brother," was the courteous though terse reply.

At the title "foreign brother" the stranger started perceptibly, but he looked fearlessly at Niu from behind the great blue goggles that concealed his eyes, and went on in the same even tone:

"You have a long and tiresome pilgrimage, and the way is dangerous, for robbers and stray soldiers lurk around after the army has passed. It will there-

fore behoove you to be careful, lest you and yours fall by the wayside," and he glanced toward the woman, who stood apart, her back turned to them.

"When Ten Wang* has decreed a man to die at the third watch, no power will detain him until the fifth," Niu quoted, sagely.

"You have spoken wisely, my brother," the stranger answered, "yet it were better not to tempt destiny. And now, the night comes on, and I must hasten lest I run into the very dangers of which I warn you."

Then, as if attracted by a certain pinched look on the face of the child that slept on the ground near where he stood, he said, quickly:

"I have provisions, and to spare, in this hamper," pointing to a large basket that he had set down when he first saw Niu, "and in the morning I will reach my

* The god of fate.

destination. Will you not accept it, and thereby lighten a traveller's load?"

At his words the woman turned toward him with an exclamation of delight, and her husband's face lost the look it had worn during the interview, as he now attempted to speak. The stranger did not wait for the grateful thanks that rushed to their lips, but went hastily into the temple, and there he found a girl with patient, solemn eyes, seated among the ruins of her gods. As he entered, he saw that with her ragged dress she was wiping the dirt from the scarred and grimacing goddess of mercy, and he stopped to watch her. Frightened at his appearance, she arose and stood waiting for him to pass, but he said sadly:

"Your gods, my child, are but wood and stone, and cannot hear your prayers. The one true God lives in Heaven, watching over you, and loving you, and there is no other God but Him."

Awed by his strange words, yet understanding them not, she gazed at him in silence, and, moved by a sudden impulse, he laid his hand tenderly on her head.

"May the God of love and peace bring you at last to His kingdom," he murmured, and was gone.

Perhaps, had he known that this quiet girl was destined to be one of the great women of the world, at whose slightest word, millions, even hundreds of millions, of loyal subjects would bow the knee, he would have spoken longer with her, but this he never knew.

It was not until they had eaten with all the zest that hunger gives of the provisions left them by the stranger, that the girl raised her eyes to the calm blue heavens above her, now dotted with countless glowing stars, and said, abruptly :

"Father, the stranger told me, in the temple, about one true God, who is alive, and who lives up there. What did he

mean? I never heard before of Him, and I have worshipped many gods."

Niu Tsang nodded quickly at this confirmation of his suspicions.

"It is as I thought," he said. "Although that traveller wore the honorable costume of our country, and spoke to us in our own tongue, yet methinks he was not one of us, but a barbarian from beyond the sea."

The girl shuddered.

"And he talked to me!" she cried in horror. "I never dreamed that he was a foreign devil."

"Be he what he may, he was most kind to us," her father reminded her, "for his food was not polluted."

"But what god is this that he worships?" she asked.

"He spoke of the Jesus doctrine, of which, perhaps, he is a teacher," her father answered in the tone of one who had finished the conversation.

"But who is Jesus?" the curious child persisted.

"He is the god of barbarians and devils, Tuen," her father said sternly. "He is not so wise as Confucius, nor so great as Buddha, else you would have heard of him long ago."

"And yet he called him a God of Love," she went on musingly, not heeding her father's frown. "Is there a God of Love?"

"No," Niu Tsang said shortly. "All the gods hate the children of men, but because we offer prayers and incense they sometimes listen to us."

Tuen said nothing more, but that night from her bed in the open court she looked up at the silver river* winding among the golden stars, and wondered what god it was who lived so far away you could only dimly see his lamps shining through the blue, and she felt she would like to

* Chinese name for Milky Way.

know if all the gods really hated her, and if so, what she had done to make them angry. Thus musing she fell asleep, and in the many strange events that soon crowded into her little life and filled it to overflowing, she forgot all about the stranger and his God.

CHAPTER III.

"Diseases may be cured, but not destiny."
Chinese Proverb.

MANY conflicting emotions have torn the heart of poor little Tuen since she sat among the fallen idols in the lonely temple, and she has learned that life may be a hateful thing, even to the young. After long weeks of privation and hopelessness, after the bitter disappointment of finding that even in the great city of Lu Chang food and clothing were not for those who could not buy, she realized suddenly with that exaltation of martyrdom that comes to strong women in all climes and in all ages, that she must be the sacrifice offered for the happiness of her dear ones.

So one day she went to the despairing Niu Tsang and said quietly:

"Father, do not longer grieve. I have found a way out of all our trouble."

He looked at her in amazement, and she went on quickly:

"I am young and strong, but, alas! a useless burden to you. I have thought about it for long, and yesterday when I heard it said on the street that many strings of cash are paid for girls like me, I knew I could be the one to save you. If you can only sell me to some great mandarin, the price will be enough to enable you to go back to the home of our ancestors, there to pass your days in peace."

"Never!" her father cried vehemently. "You do not know what you are talking about. Sell you to be a slave, you in whose veins flows the blood of the unconquerable Tartars, whose people have been mandarins and rulers,—sell you to some

despot master? By the memory of Confucius, never!"

"Do not answer me to-day, father," she said slowly, knowing that the pangs of hunger which would come with the morrow were stronger than love or pride or any other human feeling. "Only think it over, and remember that I must work anyway, and a woman's lot is ever hard. 'T is so ordained by the gods. Consider well before you refuse to procure comfort for all by such simple means."

Niu Tsang shook his head with stern determination, for although it is not a Chinese custom to care for the girls of the household, in the long days he and Tuen had journeyed together he had become deeply attached to his wise little daughter, and he was most unwilling to part with her. But he weighed well her words, and goaded on by cruel shameless hunger, that remembers neither blood nor conscience, he at last consented to her plan.

"The iron hand of poverty crushes the spirit of the proudest," he murmured sadly.

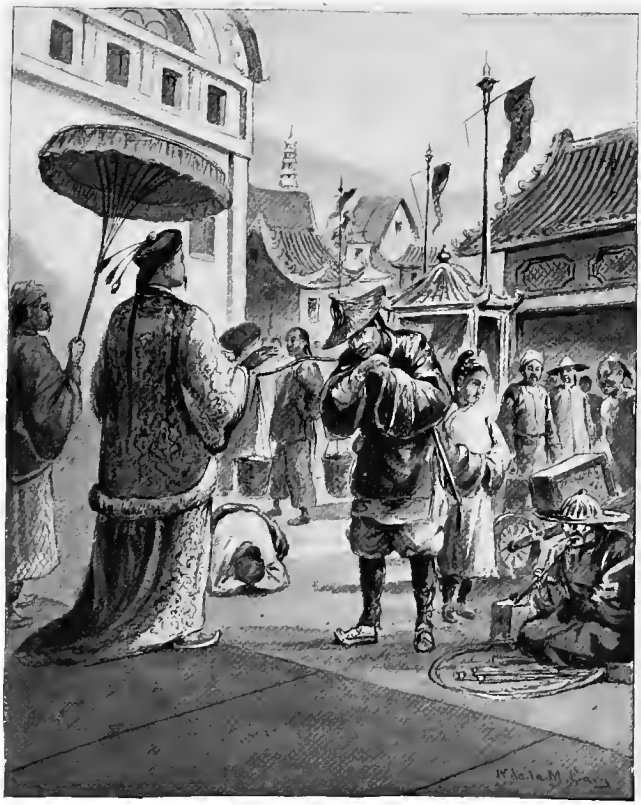
It so happened that on the third morning after Tuen had talked with him, the Viceroy of the province, seated in a sedan borne by eight attendants, for the number of these chair-bearers is a sign of official rank, came to the Ching-hwang-miau (City Guardian's Temple) to worship. Now in front of this temple was always a numerous gathering, composed of venders of different wares, idlers, and beggars, and among this throng stood Niu Tsang and his family. Too proud to descend to the level of a common beggar, and unable to find work, he now waited for a fitting opportunity to dispose of Tuen, since that seemed the only means left by which he could repair his fallen fortunes. As the Viceroy, alighting from his chair, entered the portal, Tuen crept closer to her father and whispered: "Offer me to him when he comes out. He is a

great man, with much money, and doubtless has many slaves."

A glow of hope kindled in the eyes of Niu, although he sighed heavily, and leaving the mother and her baby at a little distance he took Tuen and went up opposite the entrance. It seemed hours to the waiting girl, so intense was her anxiety, before the Viceroy appeared, though in reality his devotions were very short. When he saw that she and her father barred the way to his sedan he made an imperious gesture for them to stand aside, but Niu Tsang saluted him humbly, but did not move. There was even a quiet dignity about him that did not escape the Viceroy, as he said in a trembling voice:

"I crave your forgiveness, oh illustrious sir, but I have a most beautiful possession —all unworthy that I am—and as poverty presses hard upon me I now offer it to you."

"And what is it?" the Viceroy ques-



THE VICEROY AND NIU TSANG. Page 24.

tioned impatiently, yet attracted by something in the manner of the man before him.

"Behold it," Niu answered, taking Tuen by the hand and drawing her from behind him, where she had hitherto stood unnoticed.

Her appearance it must be confessed was not attractive, for her loose outer robe was soiled and frayed, and the petticoat hanging below it was in tatters. Her face, which under other circumstances would doubtless have been round and plump, was now pinched and worn, and her lips were almost bloodless. A mass of uncombed hair hung to her waist, a faint pink flush, born of excitement, burned through the olive of her cheeks, and her little mouth quivered piteously as she waited with downcast eyes the verdict of this august personage.

"Beautiful, did you say?" the Viceroy questioned, with a sarcastic inflection in

his voice that stung the sensitive Tuen to the quick, and caused her to raise her soft, solemn eyes to him with a pleading, half-reproachful look, while the flush on her cheeks deepened to crimson.

"Umh—she is not ugly," he said with sudden condescension. "And now tell me of her age, her home, and what she can do,—then will we talk of the price."

"She is no beggar maid," her father answered, lifting his head, "for I, her father, belong to the literati in my own province, and her people have ever been great ones. But alas! the wild rebellion swept through our land, and we saw our home in ruins, our all destroyed. Starvation must be our lot if we stayed there, so I started for Lu Chang, bringing my family, hoping here to find work. But I have failed, and Tuen is now my only hope. She is young and strong and fair, a valuable possession to the one who buys her. She is also wise and good, of most

amiable disposition, and quick in learning woman's work, for her hands are deft and her mind alert. Because such girls are rare and cannot be often bought, the price for her is no petty sum," Niu concluded, anxious now to drive a good bargain.

After much haggling the amount was at last agreed upon, and Tuen listening wondered that so many strings of cash should be paid for a useless girl. "Far, far more than I am worth," she told herself with deep humility.

"Bring her to my yâmen * to-morrow at midday," the Viceroy said as he got into his sedan, "and the money will then be paid you."

Tuen gazed after him as one fascinated. To her excited imagination he looked as stern and pitiless as the gods she had worshipped in her far-away home, and the splendor of his appearance had awed her. Her father was divided between grief at

* The official residence of a Viceroy.

her fate, and the joy at the thought of the great wealth that would be his on the morrow, for the sum agreed upon was enough to make him comfortable the remainder of his life in that land where necessities cost but little and luxuries are almost unknown.

The family of Niu Tsang spent that night in the open space in front of the temple, and scarce had Tuen fallen asleep when she was awakened by a great commotion. She heard loud cries in the street, mingled with the incessant beating of drums and cymbals, and moving lights and grotesque figures were all around her. Springing to her feet she uttered a piercing shriek, for her first thought was that the Viceroy had come for her.

"Don't let him have me—don't let him have me," she screamed wildly.

"Hush!" her father commanded. "Do you not see that this is the procession of the Rain Dragons? The drought has

been very long, and the people try to please the gods, so that we may have cooling showers."

Tuen rubbed her eyes, and slipping close to her mother watched eagerly the strange gathering that now came in sight. In front was a surging crowd, uttering cries of delight, and behind came a throng of men bearing aloft huge, hideous dragons. The heads of these serpents were made of thin paper with lights inside, and their eyes were red as fire, while their wide-open mouths gaped hungrily. Their bodies were made of semi-transparent cloth over hoops of bamboo, and men walked underneath holding them high in the air with sticks which they so moved that the dragons made their way along in undulating heaps, much to the delight of the populace. But Tuen viewed it all very seriously.

"Will the dragons let it rain now, father?" she inquired anxiously.

"Oh, I suppose so," he answered carelessly. "They will if they are ready to, and if they are not—well, it will still be dry. And now, Tuen, you must go to sleep again, for the Viceroy will not want a blinking, stupid girl. He will say that I cheated him."

"Did you, father?" she questioned fearfully, but her father only chuckled and said nothing, and poor Tuen had a new thought to torment her.

With all these things on her mind it was long before she could go to sleep, and when her weary eyes could keep open no longer, she was pursued in her dreams by a horrible dragon with yawning, cruel mouth, and gleaming eyes, and when helplessly she sank down before this awful object,—lo! it turned into the Viceroy.

The dream was not reassuring, and when the morrow came she could not forget it.

CHAPTER IV.

LONG before the sun was up Tuen and her mother were huddled together, talking in low tones about the wealth Niu would receive from the Viceroy, and Tuen ever found herself planning what they would do when they went back to their native town, and then she would suddenly remember that she would not be with them, and a great lump would come up into her throat and choke her. And it was small wonder that she felt she would gladly starve with them rather than pay such a terrible price for bread.

All the morning they squatted forlornly before the temple, hungry and desolate and sorrowful, and when at last Niu Tsang arose, and Tuen knew that the awful mo-

ment when she must leave them forever had come, she felt as if she should surely die. Her mother caressed her, crying in a hopeless, patient way, but she managed to whisper encouragingly :

"After all, you will be better off," and Tuen answered bravely : "All of us will, I hope, be better off, mother. At least we shall not die of hunger."

"No, and nothing could be worse than that," her mother said with a shudder, for she was even now weak and well-nigh exhausted.

"You will never again want for food, mother," Tuen repeated, finding her only consolation in this knowledge. "Never again be hungry, and after a while my brother will grow up and marry a wife to wait on you. But mother, mother, I will not be there, never, never, never," and Tuen rocked herself to and fro and moaned.

"It is true," her mother answered, "but

to live in the house of a Viceroy is not an unpleasant prospect, for it must be very splendid there." Thus did these two poor ones try to comfort each other.

"I will try to make the best of it, and maybe the gods will have pity on me," Tuen finally said, and with a last embrace of her mother, a last, long look at her baby brother, she followed her father, and she held her head very high, and did not dare to look back at them, lest her courage fail her.

Niu Tsang was also grief-stricken and spoke but little as they made their way through the narrow, crowded streets, where the throng ever pressed and jostled in good-natured confusion. At last they stopped in front of a high wall, more pretentious than any they had yet seen. Upon the lintels of the door, which was cut in the centre of the wall, were imposing boards with curious red letters upon them announcing the literary rank of the

owner, while from the eaves hung lanterns inscribed with his name and rank.

"It is the Viceroy's yâmen," her father said briefly. "Let us enter."

The gate-keeper, nodding contemptuously to them as he noticed the poverty of their appearance, allowed them to pass when Niu stated that he had an appointment with the Viceroy, and as this outer door, upon which was carved the protecting gods, closed behind them, Tuen felt that she had in truth passed the gates of doom. Nevertheless as they entered the small space within the doorway, guarded on each side by great stone lions, she forced back the tears that almost blinded her, and looked curiously at this ogre palace that was henceforth to be her home. To the left was the shrine of the gods of the threshold, where a bowl of ashes showed that incense sticks had lately burned, and on the right, behind bright red boards ornamented with gilt lettering,

were several sedan chairs. As they went behind the screen that separated this entranceway from the inner buildings they found themselves in a paved court where flowers bloomed in fancy jars, and rows of ornamental shrubbery outlined the walk. Here they were met by a porter, more supercilious in manner than the gatekeeper, and it was only after a prolonged argument, for he liked not to admit such unprepossessing individuals, that he finally conducted them to the main hall, where the Viceroy received his guests and transacted all business. At one end of this apartment was an altar dedicated to the household spirits, and upon it were incense vases and tall candlesticks of wrought brass in which red wax candles were burning, while on the wall hung gay banners and scrolls of white satin, inscribed with the maxims of Confucius. Small tables were arranged around the room, with two chairs at each one, where tea and tobacco

were served to callers, and at the end of the hall near the altar was a square couch filled with silken pillows, and upon this the magistrate half reclined, book in hand. He was clad in a flowing blue tunic, over which were scattered crimson flowers, and upon the breast was embroidered a great golden lily, its centre a lustrous pearl. His loose pantaloons were met below the knees by stockings of white silk, and his thick-soled shoes were made of yellow silk. Upon his head was a red satin cap, adorned at the top with a crimson button, an insignia of his high rank, while from the silken girdle around his waist hung his tobacco pouch, pipe case, bag for flint and steel, and two purses of loosely braided tinsel cord, in which huge gold watches were plainly visible. His wide sleeves were much longer than his arms, and shaped like a horseshoe at the hand, and his girdle was fastened with a clasp of highly polished jade. Before him was a low stand of

ebony, upon which were writing materials, consisting of a pencil made of soft, fine hair, delicately pointed at the end, a bit of India ink, and a small stone where it could be rubbed smooth.

Tuen had a confused idea of these surroundings, although her eyes seemed fixed upon the tiled floor, and her heart was beating so loudly that she could but wonder if the Viceroy heard it.

"Ah, you have come," he said, hardly looking up from the book he was reading, and taking no notice of Niu Tsang's polite greetings. "'T is to be hoped the girl will prove not a mere idle consumer of rice, for I have paid a good price for her."

"Not so much as she is worth," her father replied quickly. "She is wonderfully smart, considering that she had the misfortune to be born a female."

"Girls are always useless," the Viceroy answered, pursing up his lips knowingly

"and the gods in punishment send us many."

"It is indeed so," Niu readily agreed. "They are a crop that never fails. The land teems with them, and there seems no prospect of decrease."

"And yet I have burdened myself with another," the Viceroy said regretfully.

"If your illustrious highness," Niu commenced, when the Viceroy interrupted him.

"The trade is made," he said shortly. "It only remains for the coin to be counted."

Then he signed for a servant to approach.

"Take the girl to Wang," he commanded.

Tuen uttered a little gasp but did not move, and her father, seeing her agitation, said tenderly:

"Go, my daughter, and may all the gods protect you."

Tuen followed the attendant, her form shaking with suppressed sobs, and he led the way from the main hall into a second court, larger and more beautiful than the the first. A gnarled and twisted evergreen, simulating a canopy, stood in the centre of this court, and underneath its thick branches was a little pool, encircled by moss-covered rocks, and filled with brilliant gold-fish. The walk was formed of many-colored pebbles, laid in unique designs, but Tuen did not have time to decipher them for she was hurried on into a luxurious apartment, where bright-colored lanterns of horn and oiled silk, decorated with long red tassels, hung from the joists, and on the walls were pen-and ink-sketches of landscapes, and paper panels bearing the ornamental autographs of friends—for with the Chinese, fine writing is a great accomplishment. The bedstead was of ebony, carved in fruits and flowers, and from the tester hung draperies of

flowered silk. Beside it was a massive chair of the same costly wood, the arms ending in dragon's claws; and rich porcelain vases, taller than Tuen, stood upon the floor, while in one corner was a handsome pearl-inlaid bookcase. Tuen had now dried her eyes and was looking in wondering amazement at this fairy-land she had entered, and as they went out through the leaf-shaped door, hung with silken curtains, and through a narrow corridor lighted by means of a window made of small panes of oyster-shell, she uttered an exclamation of delight at the beautiful scene before her. They were now in a spacious court, where lilies, peonies, geraniums, and many flowers she had never seen before bloomed in odd-shaped jardinières. In the centre was a miniature lake where the rich green leaves of the lotus lay upon the still water, and here and there a pink bud peeped out from its cool hiding-place. Shrubs cut in the shape

of inviting benches or cosy chairs invited the weary to rest, while the light fell dimly through a roof of oyster-shells upon this lovely spot. A polished stone table stood on the bank of the lake, with chairs around it—for here the Viceroy often came to drink his tea—and hanging from the branches of trees were cages of chirping goldfinch. Tuen could but wish she might stay here a little while, but her guide was anxious to be rid of her and went quickly on. They now entered another bedroom, not less magnificent than the one she had lately seen, where the air was heavy with the perfume of incense that burned in a copper tripod, and passing out at a door, this time shaped like an urn, she was led through many other corridors and apartments, until at last they came to the last court of all, where, surrounded by earthen tubs and buckets, two women were washing clothes, chattering constantly the while. A little apart from them stood an elderly woman

with a shrewd, pleasant face, who seemed to be overlooking the others.

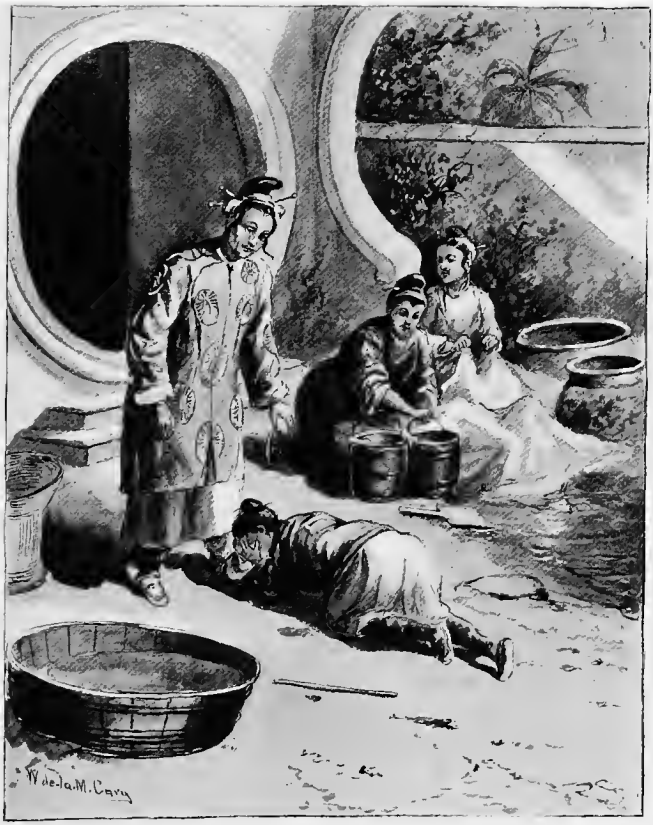
"The Viceroy sent her to you," the servant who was with Tuen said to the older woman, pointing with one finger to the shrinking girl behind him.

At his words the women looked up from their work with evident curiosity, for there was but little break in the monotony of their lives, and this newcomer was therefore interesting. The one to whom he spoke came forward that she might better examine her charge.

"Where did he get her?" she inquired, regarding Tuen with something like disfavor in her keen eyes.

"Bought her," was the man's laconic answer. "From the ragman it appears," he also volunteered; and then with a shrug of his shoulders he went away.

"He was cheated if he paid much. Don't you say so, Wang?" one of the women said with a laugh that was not unkind.



TUEN AND WANG. Page 43.

A feeling of such utter, overpowering loneliness swept over Tuen as she stood undergoing their scrutiny that all at once she slipped down on the muddy ground and fell to weeping violently.

"A cry-baby," one of them muttered contemptuously, returning to her work.

"Poor child," the one called Wang murmured, perhaps remembering the day when she had been bought by the Viceroy; and she went over to the prostrate figure.

"O come, there's nothing to cry about," she said pleasantly. "You are in great good-fortune to have such an illustrious and wealthy gentleman as the Viceroy to buy you. It's not every girl has such a master."

"No indeed," replied the younger of the other two women. "Why he never beats us at all."

Encouraged by these cheerful remarks Tuen's sobs grew less, and she surrepti-

tiously dried her eyes on the skirt of her jacket.

"You look like a lazy thing," the woman who had called her a cry-baby, said spitefully. "Get up from there and draw me a bucket of water."

"You must not scold the child, Zau," Wang interposed. "She is only a bit homesick, now."

Zau muttered something to herself as Tuen took the bucket and went over to the middle of the court, where a stone with a small hole in the top covered the well.

While she was at her task the women whispered among themselves and nodded toward her, but when she returned Wang only said:

"Come with me and I will get you some better clothes. Then I will take you to see the wife of the Viceroy."

CHAPTER V.

ON the day that Tuen arrived at the yâmen, the wife of the Viceroy came out into the court to take her airing, and because her poor little feet were so small they would not bear her weight, a maid walked on each side to support her. Even then she tottered helplessly, and was glad to sit down in a chair beside the lily pool. She was low and plump, with a wealth of glossy black hair arranged high on her head, and adorned with many fancy pins, while across her forehead was a pointed band embroidered in gold and pearls, getting gradually narrower toward the back, where it was fastened with a jewelled brooch. Her sloping eyebrows, shaped like a crescent moon, were heavily

pencilled, her olive complexion was lightened by a generous supply of powder, and her cheeks and lips and even her little round chin had been touched with vermilion. The costume she wore was not less striking than was her appearance, consisting of a long outer robe of pink crêpe, embroidered in blue and red flowers with golden centres, with here and there a spray of green leaves, and on her breast was the yellow lily, the same as the one the Viceroy wore. From beneath this robe came a plaited petticoat of pale green silk, and with every step the folds opened and closed, showing the pink lining. Her chubby feet were encased in diminutive shoes of red satin, heavily worked in gilt thread, from her ears hung two pairs of long, swinging ear-rings, and upon her arms were gold and silver bracelets, from one of which hung an amulet of jade to ward off evil spirits. The long sleeves of her tunic covered her hands,

for in China it is immodest for a woman to expose her hands or wrists, or any part of her body.

Despite the gorgeousness of her apparel there was nothing haughty in the bearing of this great lady, and although her countenance was destitute of that intellectuality that brightens the faces of the women of the western world, her expression was one of extreme amiability.

"Can you tell me nothing that will interest me? Have you not some news of what goes on in the city?" she asked, turning to one of the maids; but hardly had she finished speaking when Wang appeared, followed by the timid Tuen.

"Ah, here is the little slave of whom I have heard!" she exclaimed, seeing their approach. "Bring her here, Wang."

Tuen made her salutations humbly, and waited with hands clasped in front of her for the verdict of her new mistress. Thanks to the kindly ministrations of

Wang, her face was now clean, her hair neatly braided, and her old worn-out garments replaced by new ones.

The Viceroy's lady examined her critically, even approvingly, as she said: "I am glad she has such big feet. She can the better work. Only ladies of high rank should bind their feet—it is foolishness in servants."

Tuen looked from her own brown, shapely feet to the clumsy ones of her mistress, and was silent, though it must be confessed she thought the Viceroy's wife had the very loveliest feet she had ever seen.

"Can you do anything?" the lady next questioned; and Tuen managed to stammer that she knew how to embroider, and to cook some dishes that were esteemed dainties in the province of Hunan, from whence she came. But her new mistress seemed astonished at the enumeration of these accomplishments, and said coldly.

"We have those who are well trained to do such work for us. If you are quick to learn, Wang will teach you other things, and if you are stupid and bad,"—here she frowned and shook her head, "why, we will sell you again."

"Sell who again?" cried a shrill voice, and Tuen jumped and looked hastily behind her to see from whence it came.

The Viceroy's wife, with her maids supporting her, quickly rose to her feet, and with many low bows offered the vacant chair to an old, withered woman, most magnificently attired, who emerged from one of the corridors. This elderly female scorned the proffered seat, and glared irately around her.

"Who is this creature?" she screamed, pointing her long, bony finger at Tuen, who now became conscious of a wild desire to fly.

"It is a slave my husband has bought

to-day, mother," the Viceroy's lady said in a humble, almost pleading voice.

"Your husband has bought!" exclaimed the old lady in a tone of withering scorn. "You mean my son has bought, do you not? And how dare you speak of selling her? You! Umh! I will box your ears if I hear any more such saucy talk."

"Indeed, indeed I did not mean to be disrespectful to your worshipful highness," the wife of the Viceroy murmured. But the mother-in-law was not so readily appeased.

"You, who must worship me while I am alive, and when I am dead do homage before my tablet, to sit and tell me what you will do with mine and my son's possessions! The impudence of it! You need a good beating right now," and she glared fiercely at the trembling wife. "As for that girl," nodding toward Tuen, "I like her looks, and if it pleases me I will take her for my maid."

This prospect was far from pleasing to the unhappy little slave girl, but having delivered this threat the autocrat of the household hobbled away, still scolding beneath her breath. No wonder that the wife of the Viceroy drew a long sigh of relief as she saw the figure of her mother-in-law disappear, and she quite complacently settled herself in her chair and smoothed out the folds of her robe as if nothing had happened. Such scenes as these were of frequent occurrence in this aristocratic yâmen, for by the laws of the land the son's wife must be subject to his parents, and yield them obedience in all things. If she failed in this, her life became a burden dreadful to be borne, for a Chinese mother-in-law is often a thing of terror, and besides it was a satisfactory ground for divorce for the husband to say that his wife was not obedient to his mother. The reign of the mother-in-law thus became a thing not curable, and

therefore to be endured with all the patience possible under the circumstances. The wife of the Viceroy possessed a large supply of this valuable article,—patience —and bore in silence the many taunts of her mother-in-law; and now with her serenity unruffled she again addressed Tuen.

"You spoke of the province of Hunan. That must be a long way from here, as I never heard of it before."

"It *is* very far," Tuen answered, thinking of the weary weeks they had journeyed through the country. Then she added proudly:

"My father is even now returning there, but I shall never go back."

"Of course not," her mistress replied. "Why should you, when you have food and clothes here? Is not that enough?"

Tuen was saved the necessity of a reply, for the Viceroy now appeared on the scene fanning himself violently with a great gauze fan. For a moment he did

not recognize Tuen, so marked was the change in her appearance, and he inquired abruptly, not noticing the others :

"What is your name ?"

"Tuen, oh great and honored sir," she replied in a trembling voice, bowing to the ground, for she stood in deep awe of this powerful magistrate.

"She is the slave you bought this morning," Wang interposed, and at this the Viceroy pursed up his lips in astonishment. Again he looked at Tuen closely, then turning to his wife said :

"She is young, and has an intelligent look. I am glad I bought her, for there is something in her manner I like, and I am sure she will be useful."

"Her face belies her," his lady put in, "for she seems very stupid."

"At any rate she is n't ugly," he rejoined, and at this remark his wife threw back her head quickly, and darted an angry glance at Tuen.

"I don't see any beauty," she replied coldly. "Ugh, how scrawny she is!" with a satisfied glance at her own plump person.

"Take her away," he said shortly to Wang, then addressed his wife in the same tones of displeasure.

"As for you, come with me to the Hall of my Ancestors to worship," and he led the way to a small building, shaped like a summer-house, standing at the far end of the court. The floor of this little edifice was of tiling, and the wood-work was fancifully carved and decorated, while many lanterns hung within. At the rear was an altar of costly jade, before which incense was now burning, and upon it stood five wooden tablets about twelve inches long and three broad, bearing the name and the date of death of his ancestors. The Viceroy and his wife prostrated themselves before this altar, knocking their heads nine times upon the floor, as their lips moved in prayer.

These rites finished, he burned a quantity of gilt paper in the bowl placed before the tablets for that purpose, and returned with his wife to the court, where tea was served. As he sipped this invigorating beverage, the Viceroy dismissed the servants, and when alone with his wife returned to the former topic of conversation.

"The girl I have bought is no common creature," he informed her, "but of good parentage. I desire peace in my family, and for that reason I shall take no other wives, but see to it that this Tuen is treated well. She might be taught to wait upon you."

"I have maids enough," she answered, "and I do not need this one. Let her work with the other kitchen slaves; that is the place for her." For she had not yet forgiven him for saying that Tuen was not ugly.

"Very well," he replied indifferently. "But she looked like a smart girl."

"She is but a stupid child yet," his wife said, now somewhat conciliated. "She may improve when she has lived with us awhile, but she has much to learn."

CHAPTER VI.

THE next morning Tuen commenced her simple round of duties, in which she was instructed by the women of the inner court. At first her work was only to draw water, help with the washing and do the drudgery, and her lot was often hard, but it did not escape the watchful Wang that she was quick and willing, so one day she said to her:

"Tuen, there is much spinning to be done, and if your fingers are very nimble I will teach you to manage the wheel. But mind you, if you are all thumbs you will have to stay where you are."

So that was the way it came about that Tuen was soon seated at the little spinning-wheel, with its three spindles, pulling

out interminable lengths of cotton thread from the fleecy rolls in her hand, and above the soft, insistent buzzing of the wheel she could hear the voices of the others as they talked among themselves. She listened attentively to all they said, as she worked, with both feet, the treadle of her singing wheel, and her face was flushed with pride at the importance of her new position. She sat silent, never once raising her eyes from her work, but in all the Flowery Kingdom there was not that day a prouder girl, and she felt so grateful to Wang that when dark came, and she had to put up her work, she could not help from giving her a good hug.

"I like this so much better than the kitchen labor," she whispered, "and I intend to work harder than I ever did in all my life. Only let me stay here, dear Wang."

And when Wang promised, she went to sleep so happy.

Thus the weeks went by, and Tuen's face grew full, and her arms round and plump, and she forgot all about what it was to be hungry, and was quite satisfied. She still often thought about her dear ones, but she no longer wept to see them as she had once done, and in place of crying because she would never live with them again, she commenced to think of them as so rich and fine in their own home, and all because of her.

Once as they all sat spinning, a young woman said dolefully :

"Oh how I wish I had little feet! Every one knows that I am but a common laborer as soon as they see me coming."

"The Viceroy's wife has such pretty ones," Wang answered. "They are not more than two inches long."

"Such feet are not for the poor like us," sighed the first speaker. "Why, mine must be over ten inches long. I don't suppose any one will ever marry me."

"Just look what long ones Tuen has and be consoled," another said laughingly. "Surely, the child's growth has been in one direction only."

"She had better bind a piece of cloth tight around them every night, so they wont grow while she is asleep," someone suggested.

"I don't want little feet," Tuen answered, for the first time taking part in the conversation. "I am a Tartar, and they never bind their feet. My mother told me so."

"What stupidity!" said the woman nearest Tuen contemptuously.

"No it is not stupidity," the girl replied firmly. "My father was a very learned man—he belonged to the literati—" looking proudly around her to see the effect of this announcement, "and he said the custom of binding the feet became the fashion because an Empress was once born with club feet, and then all the offi-

cers of the court wrapped up their daughters so that the poor Empress would not feel bad when she looked at her own.

"Your father must be very smart to tell you such a likely tale as that," one of her companions retorted sarcastically. "It 's a wonder he did not become a story-teller upon the street, for surely all would have flocked to listen to him."

"I once heard the Viceroy tell the mistress that the men of the country originated the idea of binding the women's feet, so they would not go gadding about," Wang interposed. "It truly is a good way to keep them at home."

"I bound the feet of my little girl," said one of the women, "and oh, how she did cry. But I did n't mind that, for I was determined that when she grew up she should have a husband, and no man wants a woman with big feet. And it 's better never to be born than to be born a girl, any way, and it 's also better to have

never been born than not to have a husband. She would not sleep at night, but lay sobbing that they hurt her so, and begging me to take the bandage off. Of course I did not listen to her, and had she lived her feet would have been as small perhaps as those of the Viceroy's wife; but when she died every one said I ought to be glad to get rid of a girl, and that there would be one mouth less to feed."

"Were you glad?" asked Tuen.

The woman shook her head.

"No," she said. "I loved her if she was a girl."

"My father and my mother both loved me," Tuen told them with a sigh, "and they would not have sold me if they had not been hungry. Then they did not want to do it, but I made them."

"And you are a lot better off," Wang said.

"I would have rather been poor all my

life and stayed with them," was Tuen's answer.

"She is a strange child," one of them whispered to her neighbor. "She says such very stupid things."

"Talking of story-tellers," cried one of them, "reminds me that once on the Festival of the Dead as I went to the hills to worship at the grave of my husband's ancestors, I heard a man tell such a wonderful story. If I had had any cash I would have given it to him. It was all about a great lady whose husband pretended to be dead and afterwards came back to life and cut her head off. He said he knew a great many delightful tales that he had read in books, and I would have loved to listen to him all day, but my husband said a woman could not understand such things."

"Oh I would love to read," Tuen breathed eagerly, and the women laughed at this speech and said she was truly

foolish. Tuen blushed and hung her head, and after this she was silent.

. . . . . .

A year had passed since Tuen came to live at the Viceroy's yâmen, and in that time she had grown taller, fairer, and now was budding into womanhood, or at least so it was considered in that land, where girls of twelve years old are thought mature enough to marry. She had become a great favorite with every one in the palace on account of her amiable disposition and kindness to every one, and even the Viceroy's wife had forgotten her former prejudice and took a kindly interest in her. Wang, seeing that her fingers were nimble and her hand steady, had long ago promoted her to a place before the embroidery frame, and was delighted to see how skilful the girl was with the needle. She taught Tuen to embroider on delicate silks and crêpes the most beautiful flowers in nature's garden,

and many strange creeping things that were said to live at the bottom of the sea and turn yellow if the sun shone on them, so they must always be worked in glittering gilt thread, bright as the sunshine. And such charming colors as she day by day painted in with her needle! No wonder that finally she made many garments for little Tung-li, the only child of the proud Viceroy, and gorgeous robes they were to behold. At last Wang's pride in her pupil caused her to suggest that Tuen should make a tunic for the Viceroy as a present on the coming New Year, for it is the Chinese custom to exchange gifts at that season. So Tuen went to work on a piece of lustrous purple satin, and scattered over it half-open pink buds, and crimson blossoms, and yellow flowers strung together with gold thread, and upon the breast of it she worked the golden lily. Very proud was she of her handiwork when the last stitch had been

taken and she held it up before Wang's admiring gaze, and truly it was a robe fit to be worn by the Emperor himself.

"How can I ever repay you, dear Wang," Tuen cried, "for teaching me to do this? If it only brings me favor with the Viceroy I shall be so happy!"

And Wang, not understanding the secret Tuen had locked within her heart, answered half laughing, but perhaps with a grain of seriousness under the jest:

"By having me for your maid, little one, when you become a great lady."

"Indeed, indeed I will," the girl answered heartily, "and for even more than my maid. You shall be my friend, my mother."

And this promise she did not forget.

CHAPTER VII.

ONE who has never been in China on New Year's Day cannot understand the indescribable joy with which the teeming population of this vast Empire lays aside its never-finished work, and clad in new garments, goes out to welcome the incoming year. Deprived of the seventh day of rest, with no holidays, feast days, or fast days, to take them away from the monotony of toil for a little breathing space, it is not to be wondered at that, when this festive season comes, and for the first and last time during the year all shops are closed, all business stopped, the whole country seems mad with delight. Weeks before the arrival of this great day the streets are filled

with little stands where bright colored papers, flowers, incense, candles, and all the various articles suitable to the occasion, are sold. Then, too, this is the time for the universal washing of persons and things, and although the land is not noted for cleanliness, during this festival dirt is in disfavor.

At the residence of the Viceroy everything presented a gala appearance. After cleaning and scrubbing in every available place, the house had been purified by prayers and ceremonies and incense, and when New Year's eve came nothing was lacking save the final decorations. Without the populace thronged the streets, and their loud shouts and beating of gongs and drums, and the popping of innumerable fire-crackers made a deafening din. People stood at their gateways busily employed in pasting strips of red paper entreating the five blessings, or bearing congratulatory mottoes, upon the

lintels of their doors, and from every conceivable place fluttered narrow papers bearing the word *Fuh* (happiness).

Tuen was in a state of pleasurable excitement as she ran about the yâmen giving a touch here and there to the preparations, for on New Year's night no one could think of sleeping. The shrine of the household gods had been decorated with great porcelain vases filled with the dainty blossoms of the narcissus, and enormous red candles, gaily painted, burned there; in the corridors hung scrolls of silk and satin upon which were inscribed maxims and propitiatory sentences, and all the various apartments were garnished with fruits and flowers, while upon the walls were garlands of *kin hwa*, or golden flowers, made of tinselled brass and looped with long streamers of red and gold paper.

Tuen had taken a perfumed bath in in which had been steeped the leaves of the fragrant hoang py, and arrayed her-

self in her new apparel, the gift of the Viceroy to all his servants. As she listened to the never-ending popping of the fire-crackers, and the bursting of the Roman-candles and sky-rockets, her eyes fairly shone, and her heart fluttered joyously. Then she remembered the gift she had made for the Viceroy, and she fell to wondering what he would think of it. Already she had taken it to his wife to give to him, and she amused herself by trying to think of the words he would say when first he beheld it. He was going to the temple early in the morning to worship—that she knew. Would he wear it there? Would he be pleased? Would he speak to her? Or would he not appreciate the many weeks she had toiled over it, putting in the most exquisite touches, and the daintiest stitches, and blending shade in shade with perfect art, and merely consider it the work of a slave, who did it because she was ordered? This

thought was bitter, for her work had been sweetened, it is true, by her grateful remembrance of his kindness to her, but still she had another plan in her active little brain, and if he did not marvel at the exceeding beauty of the garment, and speak to her in person of her skilful needle-work, she would never again have a chance to beg of him this one great favor. And she wanted it so very much that she could never rest satisfied until she had prayed him to grant it. She seemed doomed to disappointment, for in the early dawn of the new-born year the Viceroy, clad in gorgeous costume, and wearing, it is true, the tunic Tuen had made him, started to the temple, carrying with him the little Tung-li, whose fifth birthday he this day celebrated. Tuen heard from Wang that he had gone but he sent her no message, and hope died in her breast.

"He thought not of the slave girl who

wrought it," she murmured sadly to Wang. "He knew that you gave me the material and told me to make it, and he don't think anything of it." And that worthy domestic was also greatly cast down, for she wanted to see Tuen advance in her master's favor, and had contrived many things for that very end.

Meanwhile the sedan containing the Viceroy was being rapidly borne through the street, while behind came another chair containing his little heir. It looked as if the weary, stolid, poorly clad people that usually thronged the thoroughfare, had in the past night been touched by the wand of a genius, and lo! what a wonderful transformation there was this morning. Each one now was clad in new garments, and the faces of all were wreathed in smiles, and every one was happy. The gate-ways, covered with red and gold paper, presented a most picturesque appearance, although alas! upon many was

the fatal blue strip, telling the passers by that within the past year death had invaded that household. Upon stalls, and baskets, and barrels, and in every nook and corner prayers to the different gods were pasted; actors and jugglers entertained those who would stop to look at them, and reaped a plentiful harvest of coins; the brilliantly costumed crowd moved along in the soft morning light like the figures in a kaleidoscope, and when friend met friend what a struggle there was to see who should excel in politeness, and bow most humbly, while the cordial greeting: "*Kungli! Kungli!*" (I wish you joy! I wish you joy!) was heard on every side. Reaching the temple the Viceroy conducted his son within, and behind them came servants bearing gilt and silver paper, printed prayers, and bowls containing rice, fruits, meats, vegetables, and libations. The priests, arrayed in blue and yellow robes, stopped their prostrations

when they saw this distinguished party approaching, and one, who was the leader, stepped forward, and commenced to chant a prayer consisting of frequent repetitions, in a high, nasal voice, the attendants joining in the chorus, and beating with much vehemence upon the drums and gongs. All now bowed before the great bronze image of the god they worshipped, the mother god, as she was called, the priests making many genuflections.

Tung-li looked gravely at these elaborate ceremonies, and quite forgot to say the prayer he had been taught, but perhaps that did not matter. Then the priests arose to their feet, and, still chanting, one of them went out at the side door of the temple and returned carrying a live cock in his hand, while behind him came another priest rolling a small barrel open at both ends. The voices of the priests who had remained now rose higher and higher, and amid the clash of gongs and

cymbals, the rolling of drums, and the ringing of bells, the cock was several times passed through the open barrel. Thus did the priests entreat the gods that Tung-li might go through life and escape its dangers and trials, even as the cock had passed through the barrel and received no hurt. This done, amid the burning of prayers and papers and incense, the offering of the provisions brought, and the din of musical instruments, the Viceroy retired from the temple, well satisfied with his morning's devotions.

Poor Tung-li was so tired that he went fast asleep on the way home, and never even heard the fire-crackers that were popping all around him, nor the glad shouts of the boys who played on the streets, and pitied him because he was rich and must be shut up in a sedan.

CHAPTER VIII.

"THE Viceroy has sent for you," was the message that caused Tuen to leap to her feet with a cry of joy.

"He has returned from the temple and is in the audience hall, where he has been receiving calls from all the high authorities of the city. Now he is alone, and wishes to speak with you," the servant further volunteered. Tuen did not wait to hear more, but hastened to obey the summons, though she paused outside of the Viceroy's door for a few minutes in order to calm herself, for she was quite breathless. Then she slipped in, and saw him sitting before a table, wearing the superb tunic she had made, and clad in robes of more gorgeous splendor than

she had ever seen him wear. "*Kungli! Kungli!* Oh, great and glorious one!" she murmured low, saluting him, and then with a proud flush upon her face she listened to his words of praise.

Now it so happened that on this auspicious occasion the Viceroy was in a most gracious mood. He had received many magnificent offerings from his people, a bevy of his friends had called to wish him happiness, and said many flattering things. On the table before him was a great heap of large red cards containing good wishes for his continued prosperity, and the Viceroy felt that he had just cause to feel satisfied, for surely he was favored by the gods. When he had complimented Tuen upon the beauty of her needle-work, not forgetting to praise her faithfulness and her industry, he added kindly:

"What would you like me to give you, as a reward for your work, Tuen?" She

made no answer, for although she had expected this question, and had long ago decided upon the very words she would say in reply, now that the time had come her lips were dumb.

"Speak! What is it?" he insisted, but still she hesitated.

He looked at her half-impatiently, and then he saw her round, rosy face, her lustrous, pleading eyes, and her trembling little mouth, and, his humor changing, he smiled encouragingly.

Tuen, seeing this, threw herself at his feet and cried out impetuously:

"O wisest and best among men, I would like to learn to read."

"What?" he ejaculated so sharply that her new-found courage instantly deserted her, and she hid her face, and wondered at her own audacity.

In truth the Viceroy was not so much displeased as he was astonished, for he had never dreamed of such a strange

"I WOULD LIKE TO LEARN TO READ." Page 78.

request, and could hardly believe his ears.

"You, a girl, learn to read!" he finally exclaimed contemptuously. "What nonsense! You could n't learn if you tried. You haven't sense enough."

"Indeed, I think I have," she said in a tearful voice, "and I do so want to know about things."

"There is no one to teach you," he answered shortly. "Go back to your sewing, your gossip among the women, and know that it was for that you were made, else had you been born a man."

"I can't help what I was born," she sobbed. "The gods made me a woman, and I just have to make the best of it."

"Umph!" the magistrate grunted, watching her keenly from beneath his drooping lids, and something told Tuen that her reply had pleased him, so now she arose to her feet, and entreated softly:

"Be not angry with Tuen. Remember

you told her to make her wish known to you, and this was the one, the only desire of her heart. Everything else that she could want you have given her."

"Your request has been most strange," he replied, somewhat mollified; and noticing this difference in his tone she persisted.

"If the master is great the servant should also aspire, that he may be worthy to serve such a master. (For this was a speech she had heard her father make, and had remembered.) Is not that true, O wise ruler of the province of Kiangsi?"

"Truly for a woman she has some wit," he told himself; and after considering a moment he said to her:

"Answer me three questions, and if your words are wise your request shall be granted."

"I will try," she replied quietly, but she grew very pale.

"Well, first, why do you wish to learn

to read?" he inquired, assuming a judicial air, and Tuen felt that he was laughing at her, but that knowledge only made her the more determined to gain her point.

"That I may be wise, and therefore good, and being both of these the better able to serve the Viceroy," she answered with a low bow.

He nodded his head approvingly.

"I would let all of my servants learn if they would make that use of it," he said. "For one that knows nothing your answer is not altogether foolish. Now tell me what gods are the most to be feared?"

"It would seem to me—perhaps because I am a woman—that it is the household gods who are the most to be dreaded," she said hesitatingly.

"Why?" he questioned.

"Because both man and woman must needs live in the house, and if peace and prosperity reign there they will have hap-

piness. If not, all is confusion and terror."

But as she spoke she watched him fearfully, as if half afraid he would be offended.

But he answered: "Your reason is good, for peace in the house is indeed the greatest blessing. Now one more question and I am done. Of all living creatures which would you like to be?"

"A man, Oh, learned sir," she said promptly, "since he alone of all creatures has been given wisdom. And if further choice were given me I would like to be the Viceroy of Kiangsi, since he is the wisest and best of men."

"Well said, well said," he exclaimed; for, like some other great ones of whom we have heard, he was not averse to flattery. And thus on him did Tuen use some of that diplomacy for which she one day would be celebrated.

"You have spoken wisely," he contin-

ued, "and if there can be found in Lu Chang one who will teach you, by the gods you shall learn to read. I, the Viceroy, have said it."

Uttering many profuse thanks Tuen prostrated herself before him, for in this land where females were ofttimes drowned like kittens at their birth, or if allowed to live, despised and beaten, sold as mere chattels, or even killed if disobedient to the husband's parents, the patience of the Viceroy was indeed marvellous, and the permission she had wrested from him was much to be wondered at.

As soon as she had left his presence she ran to find Wang, and throwing herself in the arms of this faithful friend she sobbed:

"Oh, Wang, Wang, I am to be taught to read. The Viceroy has said it."

"Taught to read?" Wang repeated blankly.

"Yes, to read," Tuen cried. "I begged

it of him, and at first he would not, and then he finally consented, and oh, Wang, I feel as if I should die for joy."

"I am sure I don't know what you want to read for," said the puzzled Wang, "but I do know that there is not another master in all China who would have granted such a favor to a slave. You are a lucky girl to have been bought by him, for he is the kindest man in the land. Any one else would have beaten you for asking such a thing. You had better pray to the gods every day that you shall always belong to him."

CHAPTER IX.

BY the time the festival of Pai-shan came—the day when all go to worship at the graves of their ancestors—Tuen had already commenced to struggle with the queer, sprawling hieroglyphics that fill the Chinese books, and she was so proud and happy that she could think of nothing else. The Viceroy was going in state to honor his forefathers, riding in his sedan, and followed by a long retinue of servants, and Tuen, Wang and Ta-ta had been allowed, as a special favor, to join this procession. As they left the yâmen Tuen was telling them of the wonderful characters she was trying to understand, and of the delight of learning about them, and Ta-ta laughed good-naturedly.

"It was very silly of you to beg such a favor of the Viceroy," she said. "Who ever heard of a woman who could read, or who even wanted to? Why did you not ask him for a silk dress, or for a pair of gold ear-rings? That would have been much more sensible."

"I did n't want anything in the world but to be learned like a man," Tuen announced, "and I will be too, even if I am a woman"; and she set her lips firmly together.

"I never knew of a girl being allowed to study before," Wang said. "The Viceroy is truly a wonderful man."

"Women are not born to be happy any where," Ta-ta remarked. "Tuen will find that out some day."

"Well, the consolation is that we don't have to be women always," Wang said philosophically. "Buddha said that we who, while on earth, were obedient to our husband and his relatives, would some

day come back to earth a man. That is something to look forward to. Yesterday I went to the temple and carried the money I had saved and gave it to the priest, that he might pay the toll for me at the bridge that leads to the spirit-land; and I also gave him the fee for the ferryman, and a lot of cash for that greedy one that rows the dragon-boat across the lake of blood. Now I have nothing to fear."

"No, you can kill yourself any day," Ta-ta whispered enviously.

While they talked they were making their way through the babbling throng that filled the streets, and as they were but seldom allowed to leave the Viceroy's residence they were looking about them with the keenest pleasure. Hanging from the low tiled roofs of the houses were branches of willow, the mourning tree of the dead, and a vast concourse of people in holiday attire were either going or returning from

the "worship at the hills"; for on this day all the population steal a few hours from the daily routine of drudgery, and go to render homage to the spirits of their dead. Their gods were shadowy and unreal, perhaps had no existence save in the imagination of the priests, but their own dear ones they knew lived and went away. Why might not their souls, wandering in the unknown, look back to earth and listen to the prayers of mortals? So they reasoned, and this was why that on this sunny spring day the hills where the dead slept were thronged with the living. An endless procession passed in and out of the gates of the city, the square battlements and watch-towers were deserted, and upon the great stone bridge that spanned the water, the throng surged ever backward and forward. Little groups were gathered around many of the graves, busily sweeping and repairing them; the smoke of incense curled upward on every

side, and prayers arose, not for the repose of the dead, but for the welfare of the living; while strips of gay paper fluttering around some of the headstones told that here the usual rites had been performed and the family had gone home to enjoy the social feast with which the holiday closes. Before one of the tombs, far more pretentious than any of its neighbors, the Viceroy stopped and alighted from his sedan.

His forefather had evidently been some high mandarin, for a stone wall surrounded a large, horse-shoe shaped enclosure, and in this teeming land, where earth was so precious that only a little portion could be allotted to a few of the living, it was a sign of great wealth to have so much space for an ancestor. Standing at the entrance to this grave were two stone horses, saddled and bridled, ready to bear the spirit on its journey in the other world, and a little

distance away two rudely sculptured lions kept watch over the tomb. At the end of the enclosure and opposite the entrance, was the tablet bearing the name of the departed, and before this the Viceroy knelt down. First he offered the five-fold sacrifice, consisting of a fowl, a fish, a pig, a bird, and a goose, with many prostrations and petitions, then he placed before the tablet five plates filled with fruit, and five cups of wine. This done, he lit the incense sticks, and knocking his head nine times upon the ground, prayed for the three great blessings,—riches, honor, and long life. Rising, he fastened long streamers of red and white paper at the back of the wall, holding it in place by the customary three pieces of turf, and again entered his sedan. His servants meanwhile carefully packed the offerings of fruit, meats, and wine in the baskets to take home, for they were far too frugal to permit such things to go to

waste, and that very night these same provisions would be served at the Viceroy's table.

As the high magistrate and his attendants wended their way home, Ta-ta who had been quiet for some time, turned to Tuen with a friendly piece of advice.

"You had better put all this nonsense about books, and being learned like a man, out of your little head, else no man will want to marry you, and you must remember that you are getting old enough now to think about having a mother-in-law."

"I don't want one ever," Tuen declared. I would much rather just belong to the Viceroy always."

"How stupid you are," Ta-ta said impatiently. "Of course you must be sold to someone. I never knew a woman over fifteen who did not have a mother-in-law."

But Tuen cried pleadingly to Wang:

"Oh, don't let them sell me again. Indeed, indeed, I don't want to have any other master."

"I am afraid someone will see you and want to marry you, and if they offer him a good price the Viceroy will not be a fool and refuse it," Wang said sadly. "You are getting to be a woman now, and you are good to look at, and for that reason someone is sure to want you."

This prospect filled Tuen with dismay, and that night she cried herself to sleep.

CHAPTER X.

BUT as months went by and she heard of no one having offered to purchase her, Tuen forgot her fears, and came to think that she would always live in the yâmen. It was now winter, and throughout the length and breadth of the vast Empire preparations were being made for the annual holiday. Before the festal day arrived, however, the home of the Viceroy became a house of mourning, for the little Tung-li lay dead. Despite prayers and amulets, the propitious words of the soothsayers, and the conjurations of the priests, "he had gone to wander among the genii," still wearing locked around his neck the string of coins it had been fondly hoped would lock him fast to

life. Clad in shimmering satin and embroidered crêpe, a fan in one hand and in the other a printed prayer, he lay all cold and calm upon the floor, and in the roof above him was a gaping hole made to allow the spirits inhabiting his body to escape, and through it had crept a wandering moonbeam that fell upon his placid face, and gave him the look of one who slept. Near him was a table filled with every delicacy to tempt the palate, that they who watched and mourned might also feast, and upon it burned incense and candles, filling the room with pungent smoke. In an adjoining room twelve priests bowed before an image made of brass, the god of the lower regions. This mocking thing they supplicated squatted solemnly upon a golden cloth strewn with rice, while the kneeling priests chanted prayers for the dead, and beat upon drums and cymbals, while above it all could be heard the shrill wailing of the women wait-

ing in the corridors. The Viceroy, clothed in spotless white (for that is the mourning color of the country), sat beside the body of his son, his expression one of profound grief. He had been so proud of this boy, his son and heir, and he had fondly thought that when he went away to join his fathers, Tung-li would be left to tend his grave and worship his tablet. Now he was left alone in his old age.

So, amid the noise made by the priests, and the shrill cries of the women, and the silent grief of the Viceroy, the night passed, and in the time that intervened between this and the last funeral rites, geomancers were kept busy finding a suitable resting place for the body, lest it be buried in an unlucky spot.

Although it is not customary to have any elaborate ceremonies when children die, the Viceroy had determined that Tung-li should be buried with all the honors befitting his high rank, and for

that reason the funeral procession was a most imposing one.

The body was put in a coffin of thick wood, ornamented with many gilt figures, and then placed in a richly decked gilt pavilion, covered with a canopy of bright colored silk. Thus, as if going to a festival was Tung-li borne through the city and to the hills beyond. Before him went an attendant, scattering paper money along the way to buy the good will of the wicked spirits who are doomed to wander over the earth and make mischief wherever they go, and behind him came the bearers of gay standards, fluttering banners and gilded figures, and the sacrifices to be offered at the grave. These were in turn followed by a long line of priests, while close behind the coffin were the mourners, clothed in white, their cries of anguish rising above the clamorous discord of the gongs and cymbals, while every now and then could be

heard the reverberating notes of the drum as three loud taps were sounded upon it.

Human nature is the same wherever you find it—in the East and in the West —and love for those who are near to us is strong in the breast of high and low, the ignorant and degraded and the wealthy aristocrat. No matter what the nationality of the Viceroy he was a father, and as he saw his only child given to the earth, amid the firing of crackers, the sound of music and the smoke of incense, bitter was his sorrow. Then libations were poured out, and clothes, houses, money, and horses, made of paper, were burned, that Tung-li might not be lacking in worldly goods in that strange land to which he had gone, for they believed that by a kind of miracle these paper articles would in the spirit world become in very truth the things they represented, and they wanted to supply Tung-li with many pos-

sessions. Having thus started him on his long journey with all the wealth and pomp befitting the son of a great Viceroy, they left him.

That night Tuen carried tea to her master, and despite his sorrow he noticed how fair she was, and with what swiftness and grace she moved about. It did not escape him, either, that her eyes were red from weeping, for she had dearly loved the sedate little Tung-li, and of his dead son he now spoke to her. Her answers greatly surprised him, and after he had talked to her for several minutes an idea suddenly came to him, and he arose and went to find his wife.

"Dismiss your maids. I wish to speak to you," he said to that astonished lady, who sat weeping in helpless sorrow. Wondering at his manner, and at what she saw in his face, she complied, and as soon as they were alone he commenced to talk of Tuen.

"She is a remarkable girl," he announced decisively, "and I have come to tell you that I have resolved to adopt her."

She uttered a cry of amazement.

"Adopt Tuen?" she breathed.

"Yes, why not?" he answered. "She is beautiful and modest, and her apt replies are marvellous. We are childless, and she will be an ornament to any home. I will arrange a great marriage for her."

"Oh, very well," his wife said indifferently. "I never saw anything at all unusual about her, but I suppose she is as desirable as any other girl." Here she commenced to weep again, as she thought of the dead Tung-li, and even the Viceroy said with a sigh:

"Of course she can never take the place of a son, for she will soon marry and belong to her husband's parents, but still she is intelligent and pretty. We can take her now, and later I will look around for the son of a relative to adopt."

"I don't want any one but my own Tung-li," sobbed the poor lady of the Viceroy; and because he disliked to see a woman cry, and always tried to escape from any domestic unpleasantness, the Viceroy went back to his audience hall in haste, and sent for Tuen.

When he told her that she was henceforth to be his daughter, the little slave girl of Hunan could scarcely believe her ears, and stood staring at him as one stricken dumb. All at once she understood this great good fortune that had come to her, and with a cry of joy she threw herself at his feet, and embraced him ecstatically.

"Oh, I will try to be so good—Oh, I will try to be so good," she said over and over; and she sobbed for very gladness.

The Viceroy pulled himself away from her feeling distinctly aggrieved, for it seemed that he could not escape weeping

females—the one thing he particularly detested.

But when Tuen stood up before him, her eyes shining all the brighter for her tears, and her face radiant with joy, he forgave her for her sobs, and said pompously :

"You must be worthy of me, Tuen. You have proved that even a female can by her own industry exalt herself, and now I shall expect much of you."

And Tuen told herself that he should not be disappointed.

CHAPTER XI.

NOW followed the happiest time Tuen had ever known, and as the daughter of the Viceroy she became at once a person of importance. It was such a new, such a delightful sensation to be waited on and noticed and obeyed by the slaves that it took her a good many weeks to get used to it all. The Viceroy in turn, was well pleased with his new daughter, and although she was very fair, with tender, melting almond eyes, and midnight tresses, it was not her beauty so much as her wisdom that delighted him ; and when he looked at her he recalled the words of Niu Tsang : " Although she is fair to look upon, and strong with the strength of youth, yet is her intellect, that lamp

that so seldom illumes the head of woman, her greatest possession."

"He spoke truly," the Viceroy would murmur, "and only the son of a mandarin shall have her in marriage."

And then he would sigh to think that even now it was time to betroth her. But while he pondered over these things he received news from Peking that completely banished all thoughts of Tuen from his mind, and forever changed the current of her life. Now the Viceroy stood high in imperial favor on account of many valuable services, and for his zeal in checking the famous rebellion, and he had several times been advanced in rank by his sovereign. But he had just received tidings that a new and a higher decoration had been conferred upon him, and he sought for some costly gift to lay at the feet of that august and jealous ruler who calls himself the Son of Heaven. For every mark of favor received from

the Emperor's hands the subject is expected to send some valuable present as a token of gratitude, and the Viceroy had already presented so many gifts that he was at loss what to send. He searched the province for some treasure that would be worthy the acceptance of a monarch, and had brought before him all the richest wares of the land, but he found nothing to satisfy his fastidious taste. Beset by these perplexities, he determined to give a great feast and invite all the learned and influential men of the city, with the hope that some of them would know of a curio or article of vertu that he might be able to procure. Accordingly crimson tickets were sent out to all the high officials of Lu Chang, requesting them to bestow "the illumination of their presence" on a given night the following week, and a theatrical troupe was engaged to give a performance on that occasion, for with the Chinese the theatre may al-

most be considered the national amusement, so great is the fondness of all classes for this form of diversion.

When the appointed evening arrived a distinguished assembly was gathered in the audience hall at the Viceroy's yâmen, at one end of which a stage had been erected. The Viceroy and his guest of the highest rank—the governor-general of a neighboring province—occupied a table placed on a slightly elevated platform, while the other guests were arranged in two rows on each side of the room, seated two at a table. When all had assembled, the Viceroy stood up and drank the health of his friends from a small gilt cup shaped like a Grecian urn, then amid the sound of gong and bell the first course was placed upon the tables, and the feast commenced. First, salted relishes were served in dainty porcelain saucers, and then came that greatest delicacy to Chinese epicures, bird-nest soup, accompanied by pigeons'

eggs and soy, while hot wine was poured for all from silver tankards in the hands of obsequious servants. These were followed by fish, game, and poultry, cut fine and made into stews, which the company very dexterously managed by means of their silver-tipped ivory chop-sticks.

In the meantime the players, clad in brilliant costumes, tell the story of a beautiful wife of a former Emperor, who was demanded as a tribute by the Tartar Khan. The Emperor is in despair, for his country is weak and not prepared to go to war with this formidable chieftain, and so dearly does he love his charming wife that he cannot consent to part with her. At last he is forced to yield. The music swells louder and louder as the moment arrives for the last farewell between the Emperor and his beloved. The guests look up from the bowls of shark-fins before them and nod approvingly,

and even the Viceroy's countenance expresses his pleasure at the scene.

Now a savory dish composed of the sinews of deer was brought in, followed by bowls of rice. The music sinks to a low, reverberating wail as the Princess tragically exclaims:

"What place is this?"

For she is on her way to the home of the hostile Khan—the price of peace.

And when the Khan had answered her:

"It is the river of the Black Dragon, the frontier between the Tartar boundaries and those of China. This southern shore is the Emperor's—on the northern side commences our Tartar dominion," the Princess said calmly:

"Great King, I take a cup of wine and pour a libation towards the south, a final adieu to the Emperor."

And as she finishes this rite she adds:

"Sovereign of Han, this life is finished, —I await thee in the next."

With these words upon her lips she casts herself in the dark, turgid waters of the Black Dragon, and is never seen again by mortal eyes.

As this climax is reached the rice is removed and the tables strewn with flowers, and from amid this mass of loveliness peep out sweetmeats and confections of every kind, intermixed with the fragrant citron or Buddha's hand, of which, while growing, the skin is cut into strips, each forming an end like fingers, while golden oranges, grapes, and monstrous, yet unpalatable, pears strew the board. This course completed the banquet, and the servants came in bringing tea, while on the stage the Emperor wailed the loss of his beautiful love in agonizing strains.

As they chatted merrily and sipped their tea, the Viceroy broached the subject that lay nearest his heart, but he found to his dismay that none of his friends were able to help him. One and all they shook

their heads after he had enumerated the choice articles he had already examined.

"There is nothing richer in the Empire," the governor-general said decisively.

"But it will be an insult to my Emperor to send him a gift that is excelled by something I have already presented," the Viceroy cried despairingly. "Can no one help me out of this unfortunate difficulty?"

All were for a time silent, then Wo Ting, a mandarin and a man of much wisdom, said sententiously:

"The Viceroy of Kiang-si is said to have lately found a lovely daughter. Let him draw his inspiration from the play we have just seen."

The Viceroy looked at him in puzzled wonder, and as the meaning of the strange words dawned upon him he exclaimed in amazement:

"Send Tuen to the Emperor!"

Wo Ting made a sign of assent, and someone else remarked:

"Why not? 'T is no small honor to be the handmaid of the Son of Heaven, the greatest king upon earth. Find yourself a son, and let the girl go."

"I do not wish to part with her, not just yet," the Viceroy said slowly.

"She will go away sooner or later to the household of her husband," the governor-general told him. "After all it is the same thing, for in either case she is lost to you. It is only a son who is a joy forever."

"True! True!" cried a dozen voices. "What matters a girl?"

"I will consider the question, my friends," the Viceroy said. "She is indeed beautiful and wise and good—my dearest treasure—and a fitting recompense for any honor. She is worthy the acceptance of the greatest of monarchs."

So saying he turned again to the stage

and listened to the lamentations of the grief-stricken Emperor, and the fate of Tuen was not further discussed that night.

But Wo Ting remarked in a low tone to his neighbor:

"I should very much like to see that girl. It is whispered that he bought her for a slave, but that she turned out to be so uncommonly wise that he found a teacher for her, and she has been learning to read. After he found what a wonder she was, since she was also pretty, he adopted her. He is a very rich man, and doubtless he would provide well for her if he gave her in marriage. I have a son about her age, and I had been thinking of sending one of the match-makers to arrange matters with him, and get her for my son. But of course if she goes to the Emperor that settles it. If he does not send her—and I think he is loath to start her on such a long journey—I may decide to take her for my daughter-in-law. It

would n't be a bad plan," and he scratched his chin reflectively.

But Tuen was sweetly sleeping, and dreaming of the day when she would be a wise woman who could read, and she did not know that her fate hung in the balance. And even if she had known she would have been powerless to change it.

CHAPTER XII.

IT was the afternoon after the feast. The Viceroy sipped his tea meditatively in his favorite court, and occasionally fanned himself in a mechanical way, but his thoughts were evidently elsewhere. The goldfinch above his head hopped about and chirped loudly to him, begging for some rice, but he heeded it not, and a little lizard crept across the walk, eyeing him furtively, and then scampered away among the grasses on the bank of the lake, but it need not have feared him to-day. Drip, drip, drip, fell the drops from the fountain in a minor monotone, and in the calm water of the lake the fish darted like flames of fire, and poppy petals dropped silently to the ground.

Behind the Viceroy's chair a slave stood dozing.

"Tell my daughter to come here," his master said suddenly; and the slave eyed him stupidly for a moment, and then hastened off to do his bidding. But when Tuen came he did not speak for some time, and seemed casting about in his mind for the best way to begin. Then he cleared his throat importantly.

"I have something to say to you," he remarked, watching her closely from the corners of his eyes.

She waited but did not answer, and he went on:

"I have a new honor in store for you." Having delivered himself of this announcement he examined his long, pointed nails critically, and satisfied that they were scrupulous in appearance, he commenced to drum idly on the table. All this time Tuen was standing breathless

before him, fearing something, yet she knew not what.

"You see His Most Mighty and Gracious Majesty, the Ever Wise and Ever Perfect Son of Heaven has lately condescended to honor my unworthy self," he volunteered affably, and all the capitals were expressed in his voice as he spoke of his sovereign. "I have sought everywhere in the province for a gift to send in return that would be worthy of his acceptance, and last night I gave a feast that I might ask of others, perhaps wiser than I am. Then it was that the learned Wo Ting suggested that I should give *you* to him—an admirable idea, Tuen."

Poor Tuen had been listening in wondering horror, and she now gave a gasp, but he did not appear to notice this.

"You will get ready to go to Peking to be a handmaid to our mighty king." With wild cries Tuen knelt before the Viceroy, the tears streaming down her

face. "Oh do not send me away," she pleaded. "I will be so good—I will work for you as a slave all my life—only let me stay here."

The Viceroy arched his brows.

"What a fuss to make about nothing!" he commented. "You ought to be proud to be sent. I fear after all you are more foolish than other women."

But Tuen did not care how silly he thought her, if she could only beg him out of this awful plan. Just when she was so happy must it all come to an end? Was she again to be sent forth, alone and friendless, among strangers? Oh, it was too horrible! And it seemed so useless! She was satisfied, why not let her stay where she was? Some of this she managed to tell the Viceroy between her sobs, but he listened impatiently.

"There is no cause for such sorrow, I tell you," he repeated. "Great is the Emperor, and his riches like the ever-

flowing waters. There is no end to them. His palace, I have heard, is of gold and gems; there is nothing like it in all the world."

But this picture brought no consolation to Tuen. She only moaned and cried and begged to stay where she was.

"Is it that you are angry with me?" she asked. "Do I no longer please you, that you want to get rid of me?"

"No, Tuen," he answered, "it is only that I do not know what else to send my Emperor, and I dare not risk his displeasure. But neither will he thank me to send him an unwilling girl, so dry your eyes."

"Then it would be a great favor to you if I went and looked happy?" she inquired in a curiously strained voice.

"So I have told you," he said wearily, for he detested scenes most cordially, and was anxious to bring this one to a close.

Then it was that the little slave girl showed the greatness of her nature, for she wiped away her tears and rose to her feet. Standing before him she said slowly:

"You have been very good to me. I have not forgotten that. If I can now do you a kindness, and thus repay you for all you have done for me—I will go, but I go with a heavy heart."

"Well, it is settled, and you have acted as a dutiful daughter should," he said, drawing a long breath of relief. "I will at once make ready for your departure."

"Must I go so soon?" she said pleadingly.

"At once," he answered decisively.

Again the tears welled up in the eyes of Tuen, and try as she would she could not keep them back:

"Oh, it is so hard to leave all my dear friends!" she moaned. "And Wang, who has been so good to me—" She could go no further.

"Wang can go with you," he said. "You must have servants, as befits your rank, for you are now the daughter of the Viceroy of Kiang-si."

"Oh, I am so glad I can have Wang!" she cried, and this was the only gleam of joy in the blackness of her despair.

CHAPTER XIII.

TUEN went about as one in a dream after her interview with the Viceroy, but she uttered no complaint. She had decided to go willingly, even cheerfully, on account of the many favors she had received from her benefactor, since she knew that he wished her to go, and day by day she nerved herself to the ordeal. Knowing that she was helpless, she accepted her fate in silence, and gradually she became more resigned. Girls in China are not allowed to have a voice in such matters,—that she knew, and after all she had always been most fortunate. Then she had heard that the faithful Wang would accompany her, and that Ta-ta, whom she loved dearly, would go

as her maid, and she was pleased with this arrangement. She had learned, too, that she was to go in great state. A barge was even now being fitted up for her convenience, and she would have not only Wang and Ta-ta, but other servants to wait upon her, and the blind old story-teller, Szu, would be sent along that he might beguile the weariness of the journey, which would last three months. The entire trip would be made by water, first through unimportant streams, then into the Yang-tse-kiang, and on through the Grand Canal.

The time that intervened before her departure was filled with bustle and confusion, and she hardly had a moment to think about the future, even if she had wanted to. There were many things to be arranged when one went on such a long trip, and Tuen must also be provided with handsome costumes, suitable to be worn at court. She could not re-

press exclamations of delight when she saw all the beautiful things that were designed for her, and she commenced to feel that she had not been very badly treated by the gods.

The morning appointed for her to set out dawned fair and pleasant, but all night she had lain awake and thought about her journey, for she had been too excited to sleep. When she was ready to leave and there was no excuse for longer delaying, all the servants of the yâmen pressed around her to say good-bye, and the Viceroy and his wife looked very sad, for in their way they were quite fond of their pretty adopted daughter. Tuen was as one stunned by a sudden blow. She neither wept nor said a word, but when the last adieus were over and she was safely ensconced in her little apartment on the barge, she covered her head with the silken cover of her couch and wailed aloud. But one cannot cry

always, and after the first paroxysm of grief had passed she wiped her eyes, that were now red and swollen, and looked curiously about her. There was nothing interesting in the narrow room, with its cot and bamboo pillow,—the only other furniture a low stool and many cushions, —but from without came noises of every description, forming an indescribable din. Rising from the floor where she had thrown herself, she pressed her face against the tiny window of painted gauze, and gazed with eager interest at the scene on the busy water. What a great, hurrying world it was! And how full of struggling, shouting people! She even experienced a thrill of enjoyment of her novel surroundings. Barges, junks, pleasure-boats, passage-boats, floating homes, freight-boats, sculls and river crafts of every description passed each other in an endless procession. Women in flowing blue robes, their hair adorned with flowers

and glittering pins, rowed many of the heavy boats, their armlets and anklets clinking musically with every motion. Now a tankia glided by, with only a bamboo canopy as protection from rain and sun and cold, the mother at the helm, while around her clustered happy children who had never known any other home than this little "egg house." For so great is the population of China that many families live in boats upon the rivers, and have but little knowledge of mother earth, as they but seldom feel the ground beneath their feet. Tuen looked with delight at the many phases of life that surged around her as unceasingly as the ripples of the water, and then passed away. Now she shuddered as a clumsy lighter, used for loading and unloading coal, bore down upon her on its way to the distant ocean, and again she laughed to see the dainty flower-boat with its intricate wood-carving, bright lanterns,

flags and strips of gay-colored paper floating from the side, dart past her. When Wang entered she turned to her with her eyes shining with excitement.

"Did you ever dream there were so many boats and so many people in the world, Wang?" she cried.

Wang smiled and shook her head.

"You had better come outside with me, where you can see it all," she said, and to this Tuen gladly assented.

When on deck, protected from the glare of the sun by the bamboo covering, she clapped her hands ecstatically, and ran about the boat, peering out first on one side and then on the other. From the room within, it had all worn a misty look, as if it were some panorama passing before her, but now the full reality and intensity of it burst upon her, and she straightway forgot that she was Tuen, forgot the little details, the hopes, fears, sorrows, and memories that were

part of her own existence alone, and only felt that she was one of this vast multitude, and her identity seemed to merge into and be lost in the mass of humanity that surrounded her. And once having done this, she forgot to grieve.

Some children in a tankia close to her smiled at her gravely, while the father hung paper prayers upon the prow, and the mother, with strong, even strokes, guided the boat toward the shallows. The clamor of shrill voices, so intermingled that hardly a word was distinguishable, formed a not unpleasing medley of sounds, and it rang into Tuen's ears until she was fairly deafened.

"Is there no danger that where there are so many crafts some may be run into and sunk?" she finally asked, as the boats thickened and there seemed not an inch of water left.

"The rowers are skilful. I have heard that accidents do not often happen,"

Wang said, but scarce had she finished speaking, when a war-junk that was coming in an opposite direction, bore down upon them. Threatening cannons peered from the port-holes, and on its gaudy red and yellow sides were shields upon which were painted fierce tigers, more terrible to look at than any god to whom she had ever prayed. She caught her breath quickly, and clung to Wang.

"We shall be killed!" she cried, and Wang was so terror-stricken that she could not answer. The sailors on Tuen's boat uttered loud, warning shouts, and pulled away lustily, and the men on the war-junk, seeing that the barge was directly in their path, rowed valiantly. But the water was so crowded that there was very little room to turn, and for an instant, there seemed no chance of escape. Just when destruction appeared certain, and Wang covered her face to shut out the awful sight, the cumbrous vessel

veered to one side, and they were left unharmed.

"It was a narrow escape," the man at the helm of Tuen's boat said, nodding toward the junk that now lay on their left. "I thought we should all be killed," and the rowers hurled loud imprecations at the junk, and Ta-ta shook her fist at them, and while engaged in this, also thanked the gods for her safety.

"It is time for rice," Wang said, after they had watched the junk well on its way. "Let us go in now."

Tuen was very glad to follow her, for her heart was still beating quickly, and her cheeks were pale. The danger through which they had passed had, for a time at least, robbed river-life of its fascination for her.

That night she dreamed of boats, boats, boats, as she heard the innumerable stream of them go gliding by, and the great, round eyes on the prows of all

seemed to be watching her angrily through the darkness. She drew a long sigh of relief when she awoke and found that they had at last stopped, and as she listened, afraid to go to sleep again, the incessant noise gradually hushed, and all became as still as in the yâmen of the Viceroy.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE barge that bore Tuen to Peking proceeded slowly on its way, for why should one economize time or labor in a country where there are more hands than work for them to do? The novelty of the trip kept her well amused, and she cared not how long they drifted idly on, for the present was very satisfactory to her. After they had passed through the beautiful Lake Poyana, sleeping like an inland sea cradled by the encircling mountains, they entered the vast Yang-tse-kiang, that ever ebbed and flowed in calm strength, as it swept on to where it was lost in the vaster waters of the ocean. No wonder Tuen was enchanted with the sights that greeted her. Around her was

ever the same endless throng, in its struggle for existence, and if she tired of this epitome of human life, she had but to raise her eyes to the hills beyond, dotted with the innumerable graves of the dead, to see the end of it all, though, as she was not a philosopher, she doubtless did not think about it in this way. Graceful pagodas, with bells and glittering ornaments swinging from the corners of the curving, many-storied roofs, stood out here and there like solitary beacons, although they lit no way. Along the river banks were fertile plains, converted into regularly laid out fields and gardens, that for thousands of years had yielded a full harvest from their inexhaustible richness, and numerous cottages, some with tiled roofs shining in the sunlight, others with only a covering of straw, diversified the landscape. Sometimes they threaded their way among barren islands that rose like mammoths of the deep, and again passed walled cities

where the river lapped hungrily against its boundaries, or they loitered beside little white towns embowered in green. Oftimes Szu whiled away the hours by telling her the glorious history of this, her native land, for he loved to dilate on the importance of the Flowery Kingdom. In fact he believed it to be the garden spot of the world, and as he had never been anywhere else, we must pardon his vanity. "We are the greatest and wisest nation in the world," he would tell Tuen pompously. "We are the most learned and prosperous of all people, and we have the oldest and the highest civilization. We have borrowed no foreign inventions or arts, we have not asked them to frame the laws to govern us nor to solve our difficulties. All we have ever asked of any of them is—let us alone. We are not like the barbarians—always quarrelling and fighting, and running about the earth. History tells that we have always been a

civilized, peaceful race. Our language is our own, our literature has not sought for themes or inspiration in other climes, our institutions are the outcome of our own wisdom, and our land provides everything that is necessary for her children. We are the one independent nation. Confucius, the wisest of all men, left us our code of morals, and the Son of Heaven rules over us. Our kingdom contains one third of the population of the whole earth, and nearly every one of the inventions that these barbarians think they discovered they find have been in use by us long before they were a nation. Who was it that discovered the compass? We did. Who first made porcelain? We did. Who made paper first? We did. These barbarians who sail up to our ports, with great guns on their vessels, would never have had any gun-powder for their guns if it had not been for us. Of course since you have been learning to read you have

found out that we it was who invented printing, and made it possible for every one to have books. Nowhere can be found so many and such great cities as we have, and not only the land but the waters are covered with our towns. I wish we could shut ourselves off, as once we were, and never see another barbarian. But alas, we cannot, for they cannot get along without us."

Thus Szu, puffed up with pride, instructed Tuen in the facts of Chinese history, and she drank in every word he said eagerly. Truly it was wonderful! And as he perceived her intense interest, Szu talked more and more of these things, though he omitted to tell her that his nation was the most egotistical one in all the world, but perhaps he did not know this. Again he would tell of the ancient kings, and of the great Kublai Khan, who reigned in the Golden Age of China.

"Those were happy times," he would

say with a sigh. "We will never see the like again. When the New Year came then all his subjects gave him rich presents, not only of gold and silver and precious stones and fine cloths, but also five thousand camels, one hundred thousand white horses, and five thousand elephants, covered with cloths of silk and gold, and each beast had on its back a box filled with vessels of gold and silver. When they passed before the most holy Emperor, they formed the most brilliant spectacle ever seen by the eyes of man."

Tuen gasped as she tried to picture in her imagination this most gorgeous sight, and looking at Szu with eyes filled with amazement, she asked, timidly:

"Is that all indeed the very truth?"

"The truth?" he cried, indignantly. "Do you dare to question the accounts of our great historians—you, a foolish girl? It has all come down to us just as I have related it to you, and no one, not even

the barbarians, have doubted it. If you think Szu but a romancer, he will remain silent."

"Oh, no, no," she entreated, "indeed I did not mean that! It was so marvellous that I would like to hear more about this same great one."

Somewhat pacified, and anxious to talk on such an interesting subject, Szu said:

"Perhaps you would not believe it, either, were I to recount how, then, no one in all the land was hungry, and yet it is a fact, for the Kublai Khan gave of his great wealth to his people. Whenever the crops were injured, he demanded no taxes, and when rice was scarce, he sold it for one fourth the regular price out of his own storehouse. And if any families had no food to eat, he caused provision to be given them, and rice was not refused at court throughout the whole year to any that came to beg for it. Think of no one ever starving to death then! It

was the strangest thing that ever men heard of. Not only did the Kublai Khan feed his subjects, but he had countless public looms that were running all the time, where garments were woven and given to the poor, so that none could say that they were hungry or cold."

"I would have liked to be alive then," Tuen said, wistfully, and in this they all agreed with her.

"There has never been such another ruler in any land," Szu told her. "The whole world has heard of him, and marvelled at his greatness and his goodness."

At this, Tuen sighed, for she had just been wishing that the august one to whom she went had been rich and kind like the Khan. But she did not think much about him, for no one could tell her anything, and so she could only wait.

CHAPTER XV.

ONE day when the sun was hot and she was tired, Tuen said to Szu impatiently:

"Don't you know anything except about the old kings and their wars?"

Now Szu, although he was old and blind and feeble, was well endowed with tact and quickness, and after revolving the question in his mind, he answered graciously:

"There are two stories that I have not yet told you, and they might be of interest to you, since they are of women, and of women, too, who dwelt within the Forbidden City."

"Let me hear them," Tuen said list-

lessly. "I did not know there were any stories about women. I thought they were all about men."

"There have been females—though their number is few—whose names the bards have perpetuated," the old man replied.

"You may commence," Tuen interrupted, her curiosity aroused.

Seating himself on the deck of the boat, and folding his hands, his head thrown back and his sightless eyes seeming to gaze before him, Szu began in a monotonous, sing-song voice, that yet was clear and soft:

"It happened many years, aye, many centuries, ago—this strange event that I tell to you now as but a passing tale. And yet the fame of this woman will endure forever, though all things else belonging to that far-away time have perished. At this remote period of which I speak Kaou-tsung, the second Emperor of the

Tang dynasty, was seated upon the throne. Great was the prosperity of the Empire, and rumors of its glories and of its wonders spread to the outer regions, and ambassadors came from Nepaul, Persia, and even from a far-away dominion called Rome, to pay tribute to the Son of Heaven. He had magnificent palaces and stately temples, and he numbered his warriors by thousands. Then, as it has ever been, for we are the one nation favored by the gods, we were civilized and wise, and all other people came to learn of us, even as it is to this very day. Kaoutsung built canals and cities, following the example of his illustrious father, and bestowed peace and plenty on all his subjects, but still he was not content. He had women from the various provinces to while away his tedious hours, but they were all alike stupid and silly, and he found no pleasure with them.

"'Surely in my kingdom there lives one

female who combines both wisdom and beauty,' he exclaimed one day, and after due deliberation he sent forth his minister to seek for a woman who was both wise and pretty. When he heard of the mission entrusted to him the minister sighed and shook his head.

"'Your quest is vain,' he told his sovereign. 'There lives not such a being. All women are but foolish creatures, and those endowed with beauty are the most foolish of all. They wear their gifts upon the outside, and within them there is naught.'

"'Presume not to argue with me,' Kaoutsung cried angrily, 'but go and do as I have commanded.'

"Now, this minister was most skilful with the pencil, and the Emperor instructed him to traverse the length and breadth of his vast possessions, letting it be known everywhere that he sought the fairest and the wisest in the land to be the

bride of the king, and whenever he found one who appeared to possess these necessary qualifications, he was to make a picture of her. When his quest was ended, he was to return to the court, bringing with him these likenesses of the fair maidens of the land, and the Emperor would select the one that pleased him best. But when the minister was gone he saw in this a chance to enrich himself, and as all women were desirous of being the chosen one he drew not any who did not give him costly offerings. The Emperor, waiting in his palace, knew not of this, and was most impatient for his return. In the meantime, some one brought news to the court of the surpassing loveliness of a girl named Woo How, who was a daughter of a cultivator of the soil. When he heard the reports of the wonderful beauty of this maiden the Emperor sent a courier in great haste after his minister, bearing the message :

"'Return not without the likeness of Woo How.'

"The minister forthwith went in search of this beauteous one, and when he found her she was fairer than any woman he had ever seen, and conducted herself in a modest way, yielding ready answers to all his questions. But alas, the father was very poor, and could not pay the price demanded by the mercenary minister, therefore this unworthy servant of a generous king drew a picture of exceeding ugliness, and under it he wrote the name of Woo How, for he was determined that no one should be Empress who did not first buy his favor. At last this scheming official—Maou-yen-show by name—came back to court, bringing with him a collection of pictures of the so-called beauties of the land, who had paid him well to be their ambassador. The Emperor examined them critically.

"'This one pleases me not. Her nose

is too long,' he said, casting aside the first one.

"'And this one is ugly enough to scare the dragon away,' he exclaimed when he saw the second.

"'This one's mouth is all askew,' was his comment on the third, and so he ran through the whole list, finding none that pleased him.

"'I might as well send a blind man to pick out a beautiful female as this stolid Maou-yen-show,' he cried angrily, when he had finished. 'Truly he knows not the difference between a woman and a demon.'

"But the minister bowing obsequiously insisted that these were indeed the most beautiful in the land.

"'Then I want none of them,' his sovereign replied, 'for an uglier lot I never beheld.'

"After this Kaou-tsung made no further attempt to find himself a fitting bride, but

was immersed in the affairs of state. One day, however, as he rode forth, surrounded by his troops, to take his annual hunt, he saw beside the road a young girl of such wondrous loveliness that he could not take his eyes from her face.

"'Bring her to me,' he ordered his attendants, as she, not knowing that it was the Emperor and his suite, but thinking that it was only some great mandarin, would have passed on.

"When the soldiers approached her, saying at the same time, 'The Emperor who waits yonder has sent for you,' she was greatly terrified. Her face turned very white, and her knees trembled so that she could hardly stand, for she knew not what was about to befall her.

"When she had prostrated herself before Kaou-tsung he ordered all his attendants to withdraw to a little distance and there remain until he summoned them, for he wished to speak, unheard by others, to

this fair maiden. When they were alone he said kindly:

"'Rise, most beautiful one, for I desire to look at you.'

"Blushing at his words, she raised her face but remained upon her knees.

"'Verily the sun seemed hid when I saw not your eyes,' Kaou-tsung continued, for he was much impressed with her beauty.

"Seeing that she did not speak, but only blushed the more, he asked:

"'What is your name?'

"'Woo How,' she murmured, all abashed.

"'What!' cried the astonished Emperor; 'not Woo How, the daughter of one Tai-ting?'

"'The very same,' she answered, not knowing why he was amazed.

"'But the picture Maou-yen-show brought to me?' he questioned, in great perplexity.

"'Ah, I had not the treasures to give

him and he would not make it,' she answered sadly.

"At this a light suddenly broke upon Kaou-tsung, and he saw the perfidy of the minister he had trusted.

"'Rise, most beautiful one in all the land,' he cried to her, 'for you shall be the bride of the Emperor. At last have I found the creature I sought.' Thus in spite of treachery did the gods bring it to pass that Woo How became the Empress, for what Tên Wang decrees must be, no matter how we strive against it."

"That was indeed a charming story," Tuen cried enthusiastically, as the old man paused. "It is the nicest one I ever heard."

"It is not yet finished," Szu said quickly. "It were but a broken thread if I left it there."

"Oh, tell it all to me," she cried eagerly. "I would never tire of listening about her."

Szu nodded his head complacently and cleared his throat. Then he went on:

"The happy Kaou-tsung forgot about the hunt, and returned at once to his imperial palace, carrying Woo How with him. It was so ordained that Maou-yen-show was not of the party that attended the Emperor that day, and knew nothing of his meeting with Woo How. Immediately upon his arrival at court Kaou-tsung gave the following order:

"'Keeper of the Yellow Gate, bring us that picture that we may view it.'

"Looking from it to the charming original before him he exclaimed feelingly:

"'Ah, how he has dimmed the purity of the gem, bright as the waves in autumn!'

"Then turning to the attendant he said:

"'Transmit our pleasure to the officer of the guard to behead Maou-yen-show and report to us his execution.'"

CHAPTER XVI.

"THE rascal, it was just what he deserved," Wang cried hotly, and Tuen, her eyes shining like stars, said softly :

"It seems almost too wonderful to be true."

"Stranger things happen than have ever been told," Szu replied. "The affairs of life are past finding out, and who Tên Wang leads must follow, whether he will or not."

"This Woo How was very lucky," Tuen murmured. "She must have been loved by the gods."

"Ah, I have not yet done speaking of her," Szu answered. "Much yet remains."

"How can there be anything to tell after she was married?" Tuen inquired incredulously.

"There comes the amazing part," Szu acknowledged. "It happened just as the Emperor had wished, that his bride proved as wise as she was beautiful, and soon she was not only beloved, but feared by every one. In court circles you will find out for yourself that an ounce of fear is worth a pound of love. When the lovely Woo How discovered this truth she became a power in the land—but not until then. As she grew older her beauty decreased, it is true, but her power increased, and on the death of the Emperor it was this same Woo How who set aside his lawful successor and became the Empress and sole ruler of this great country."

"It is but a play you are repeating to me," Tuen cried scornfully. "It was not and could not be."

"Youth does not know all things," the

old story-teller answered in an offended tone. "A few gems of thought, a few pearls of knowledge are reserved for age. That is its compensation. I have repeated to you the true account of Woo How. That she lived and reigned and died Confucius has told, therefore I would believe it though the daughters of a thousand Viceroys should dispute it."

"Then I was mistaken about it being only a tale if you learned it from the Sacred Books, Szu," Tuen answered. "But since I know that, I like it all the better. Now let us hear what else befell this most fortunate one."

"Perhaps it would not interest you," he said somewhat sullenly. "Sufficient be it that being of a strong mind she had long controlled her husband, and even before his death she it was who in truth ruled the land. When she had seated herself upon the throne she was so well versed in the affairs of state that she

governed with much discretion and ability."

Here the garrulity of the old man gained the mastery over his anger, and he went on in his usual rapid, animated way :

" Great was Woo How of the dynasty of Tang. She sent her powerful armies out to battle, and the enemies fled before them like the birds before the storm. The proud Thibetans ran like the deer, leaving behind the unnumbered dead. Thick fell the arrows around them ! Loud sounded the gongs of the hosts ! Shrill was the battle-cry and loud the shouts of victory !

" And none could stand before the warriors of Woo How. Their journey was marked by the flames of burning towns, captives followed behind them, their groanings shaking the earth, when back to the court came the army of Woo How. Then she marshalled them again, and

sent them forth against the rebellious Khitans, and again did they return with conquering footsteps, bringing vast treasures and slaves, that reached on, on, like the waves of the ocean. Peace reigned after this, and prosperity walked abroad, and after twenty-two glorious years Woo How drove the fairy chariot and went the long journey."

When he finished speaking, Wang was loud in her praises of the pleasing narrative, but Tuen locked her hands around her knees and sat silent, looking out over the throng of boats around her. Szu waited expectantly for some remarks and some questions from her, but when she did not speak, he lit his pipe and smoked away vigorously.

The afternoon was now drawing to a close. A blue haze crept over the distant landscape and smoothed out all ugliness, and made the scene soft and pleasing, and even the incessant cries of the boatmen

sounded less shrill. Tuen got up and walked about on the cramped deck, for she was weary with long sitting, but she was blind and deaf to all that went on. Wang was trying to engage Szu in conversation, but he only pulled his bamboo cap farther over his staring eyes, and did not answer, and finally, she gave up in despair and went within. After a while, Tuen came back and, squatting down on a silken cushion beside Szu, said :

" Could a woman have done what that Woo How did ? "

He removed the pipe from his mouth, and turned his face toward her.

" The sages have told you so," he replied, shortly.

" I know that," she said, impatiently, " but what I mean is, could it ever happen again ? "

He screwed up his mouth, and repressed a smile.

" As long as women are born it could

happen, I suppose, and there is as yet no dearth of females."

"You are laughing at me!" she cried, flushing angrily. "I asked you a civil question. Why should you make sport of me?"

Now he smiled, openly, at her evident vexation, but he said, gravely:

"If you are born great, you will be great, no matter if you be man or woman, no matter when you live or where, but the great ones of earth are few and far between. Some who were not born great, have, by hard work and much patience, attained to it. But a woman is usually a stupid thing, and her head is much too light for climbing."

"If she were very wise, could she have power, even in the Forbidden City?" Tuen persisted.

He nodded.

"If she were very wise, she would have power, it makes no difference where she

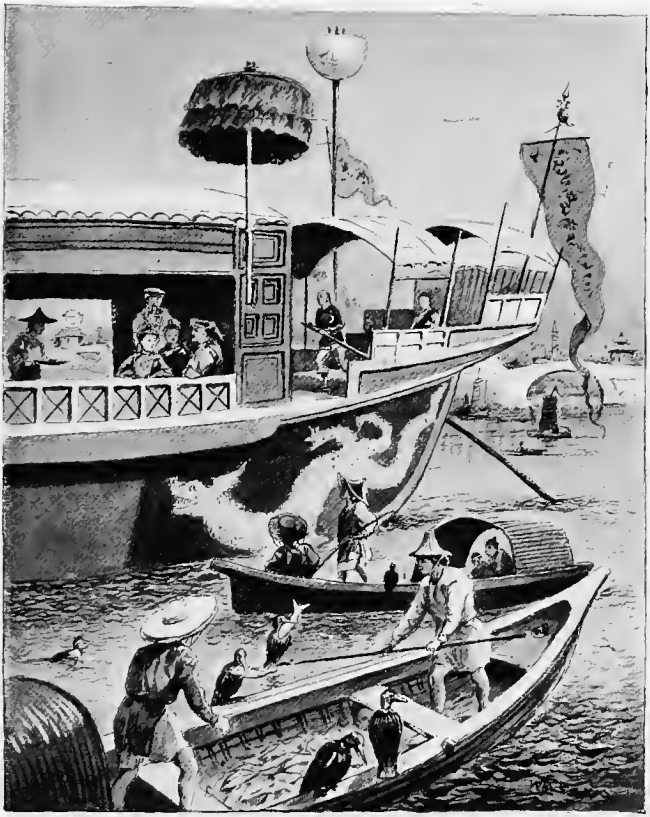
lived. Even on a desert island she would have power over the wild beasts, for knowledge is power the world over. It is because females do not possess it that they are weak and of little repute. When they become wise they will rule the earth, for a man is but clay in the hands of a skilful woman. She pats him into whatever shape she wants him."

"I would like to be wise and great," Tuen said, with a sigh.

CHAPTER XVII.

FOR several days after she had listened to the story of Woo How, Tuen maintained an unwonted gravity, and was so absorbed in her own thoughts that she paid but little attention to anything around her. "The poor child is home-sick," Wang muttered, as she watched her, but the girl gave no indication of the cause of her new mood. Perhaps she could not if she had tried. Their progress along the Yang-tse-Kiang was slow, and she had much time for meditation. There was a certain sameness about the scenery, a monotony about the river-life, and she could almost fancy that it was the same people, passing and repassing every day. Sometimes she would hear a boat-

man singing some familiar air that would carry her back all the many long miles that separated her from that other life, that other Tuen, who was now almost a stranger to her, and she would unconsciously sigh, but she wept no more. The mystic future, heretofore a blank, seemed now full of untold possibilities, and her active mind drew many alluring pictures of what it might be. Unknown to herself, she was merging from a dreaming girl to a clear-headed, determined woman, a woman of a strong personality, whose influence would be felt in the world. After all, it is some mere chance that holds a mirror before us and shows us what we are and what we might be, and to Tuen this vision had come before it was too late. From this time she would press forward with that unfailing courage and persistence whose reward is success. The most diverting sight to her was the fisherman with his cormorants,



THE SAIL UP THE RIVER. Page 159.

and these she never tired of watching. With many a hoarse squawk, the well-trained birds would dive for their prey, while their masters shouted cheeringly at them, and happy the bird that came up with a fish in his mouth. He was pulled into the boat, the iron ring that had prevented him from feasting upon his prey was removed from his neck, and a generous handful of bean-curd rewarded his industry. It was amusing to Tuen to see the excited interest these black-winged birds betrayed in their own performance, and with what alacrity they went about their task.

"See, Wang, even a bird can do something!" she cried, one day, as they passed a flock of these unique fishermen.

Before Wang had time to answer, there was a splashing sound near by, and to her horror, Tuen saw the head of a man appear above the water and then disappear. Although many had witnessed the accident, and it was now evident that the man

could not swim, no one betrayed any excitement, or made any move toward his rescue. Such is the apathy manifested by these strange people toward the suffering of others—greatly the result of the peculiar laws of the country—that they simply watched, with idle curiosity, for his reappearance, with no thought of offering succor. Tuen was always quick to act, and in this emergency her wits did not desert her. Calling aloud to the sailors: "Cash —many strings of cash—to the one that rescues him," she ran to the side of the vessel.

Seeing that no one moved she cried, angrily:

"What, is the reward not great enough? See this ring," holding up a shining circlet set with an exquisite stone; "this will I give to the one who will save him."

At her words, a lad who had been listening to her with a wondering expression, as if suddenly dazed, sprang quickly

overboard and dived for the drowning man. It was so long before he came to the surface that Tuen, to whom every second seemed an hour, began to fear that she had been the cause of a double tragedy, and almost repented of her hasty act. She gave a gasp of relief when he reappeared, holding fast a struggling body, and when they had both been pulled into her boat, she sank down, trembling violently. It turned out that neither was the worse for his plunge beneath the muddy water, and a sun-bath would soon remove all trace of the accident.

When the rescuer stood before her, Tuen said, reprovingly:

"You have done well, but why must you be bought before you would help the drowning man?"

"It is not well to be mixed up in such a case," was his answer. "It might have been said that it was I who killed him, and we who are wise and desire to live

long in the land keep our hands off our neighbors."

She uttered an impatient exclamation.

"I do not understand your reasoning."

"Neither do the mandarins," he assured her, "when we are hauled up before them. For that reason they chop off our heads, as that is the easiest way of settling the difficulty. If he had been drowned, there would have been a report that I had been the cause of it, and as he could not have thanked me for my officiousness, and as I could not have proved that he drowned by himself, since I went to help him——" he shrugged his shoulders expressively.

Tuen knit her brows in a puzzled frown, for she knew nothing about the law, but she said, indifferently:

"Well, it does not matter, since the man is still alive. Here is the ring I promised you, and the cash shall be counted out at once. Wang, go with him."

But the boy stood staring at her, as if loath to leave, and such unusual lack of appreciation of cash struck Tuen as marvellous. What a strange creature he was not to be in a hurry for his money! She looked at him attentively, and she saw that he was short and very slender, with a bright, intelligent face, but his water-soaked garments were of the coarse blue cloth worn by the lower class, and his occupation was evidently that of a common sailor. Still looking at him, she said, slowly:

"Take the ring, and perhaps sometime it will serve you well, for none can tell what may be."

The boy bowed gravely, still apparently fascinated by her youth and beauty. Perhaps it was the admiration she read in his face, perhaps but an impulse that caused Tuen to ask abruptly:

"What is your name?"

"Chang-li," he answered, with another

bow, for he had evidently become impressed with the superiority of this young girl.

"You may go," she said, with sudden dignity, waving her hand in dismissal. "I will remember it."

The boy turned reluctantly away, and as he did so, he did not place the ring upon his finger, but hid it in his bosom. And when he heard that this lovely creature was the daughter of a Viceroy who went as a present to the Emperor, he wondered at her graciousness, and carefully treasured the ring, although he was offered much money for it, and he was very poor.

And one day, many years after, when a proclamation was issued, commanding one Chang-li, who had been given a ring as a reward for rescuing a drowning man from the river, to come to court and present this ring, he had cause to be glad that he had treasured it.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE calm monotony of Tuen's life continued uninterrupted after the episode with the sailor. She would talk with Wang for hours, of the kind friends she had left in the Viceroy's yâmen, and again of that secluded court to which she went, concerning which many marvellous stories were told throughout the land; and at other times she would sit spellbound for half a day, listening to the long-spun-out stories of blind Szu. They were now in the Imperial Canal, that stupendous monument of man's ingenuity, for on account of the work and the time required to complete them, it and the Great Wall stand unrivalled by any effort of man in any other part of the

world. The waters of the canal were clearer than those of the great river they had left, but there was the same press of boats, their number greatly augmented by the many grain-junks that bear the tribute of rice to Peking. It was also a thrilling experience to Tuen to see the boats pass the sluices, where the waters raged as if waiting for something to suck down into their turbulent depths. The small boats darted through the openings without hindrance, but the larger ones must get through by a tedious and somewhat dangerous process, and often it would make Tuen shudder to watch them. The cumbrous barges would first be dragged forward slowly, by means of ropes attached to large windlasses and worked from the bank, while against the sides of the pier were arranged cushions of rope to lighten any shock received. Thus were the boats carefully let over, so that they could proceed on their way. When they

reached the temple of the Dragon King, who is the special ruler of the waters, the loud firing of crackers came from all the boats, while libations were poured out, and many strings of gilt paper burned in honor of this terrible god of the waters. Tuen, who was by nature most devout, and stood in wholesome fear of the gods, took great pleasure in these ceremonies, and lit incense sticks until the huge porcelain bowl she had selected for this purpose was filled with ashes. Satisfied with her devotions, she made herself comfortable on many cushions and sent for Szu to attend her at once. When he had seated himself, and she waited for him to begin, he pursed up his mouth reflectively, and then smiled. Perhaps because still somewhat offended by her doubts of the truthfulness of the narrative of Woo How, or perchance because he wished her to know that few women had been both wise and good, he said in a half-scornful way :

"There is another female whose name is written in history. Would you like to hear of her?"

"Very much," Tuen answered, quickly. "Wang, put him in that shady corner, where the sun will not touch him, and Ta-ta, if you can remain quiet, you too may stay and listen."

"No one else has any chance to talk when Szu is around," Ta-ta grumbled.

The old story-teller turned his face toward her, and asked, scornfully:

"Who would listen to the babble of a woman? None but a fool, if there were others talking."

"I am waiting on you," Tuen interposed, knowing by experience that when Szu and Ta-ta commenced an interchange of courtesies, the tongues of both were loosed in a startling manner.

Szu cleared his throat impressively, and began his narrative by saying:

"There are no stories worth the tell-

ing save those found in the books of the sages, for it is only the ancients who possessed all goodness and learning. Therefore when we of this later day wish to know anything we must turn to them. They have left us all that is necessary for us to know, and their maxims are the perfect rule of life."

Having delivered himself of this preamble, he continued :

"To-day will I tell you the story of Ta-ke the wife of Chow, in proof that one woman can ruin a nation. It is said that she was beautiful, and certain it is that the Emperor loved her well, but it is, alas ! true that her heart was base. He built for her a palace, more beautiful than any ever seen before. It was all of gold and silver and ivory, and the roof was bright as the sun. He placed within it rich carvings, and porcelains of queerest shapes, and the most wonderful flowers in all the earth. And those who

made the works of art to adorn her palace were killed, that the secret might die with them. And women worked from moon to moon, embroidering the hangings for this stately home erected to please the fancy of Ta-ke, and the looms throughout the Empire were busy weaving rich stuffs for her apparel. The choice fruits of the land were brought to tempt her palate, the daintiest dishes served on golden platters were put before her, and the sound of music was never hushed in the palace. With all these things to give her happiness, this, the most favored of females, was not satisfied, and her cruel nature would not be lulled to sleep. She loved to see the torture applied to those who had done no crime, and she laughed and turned away from the prayers that were addressed to her by the poor and the oppressed of the kingdom. And Chow, because he listened to her, was likewise cruel and vile.

What can the people hope when they have such rulers? They could only endure and wait. At last the venerable uncle of this misguided Emperor spoke boldly to him of his evil ways, that he, being warned, might not continue in his baseness, and he told him how the subjects cried out in their just anger against him. Very wroth was Chow with his aged relative, and, going to Ta-ke, he repeated to her the words of reproof to which he had been forced to listen. When he had finished she only laughed in a mocking way.

"'True he is wondrous wise,' she cried. 'His heart must be made in a different pattern from that of his countrymen, to hold so much knowledge. Methinks I should like to have it cut from his body that I might gaze upon it and see wherein the heart of a sage differs from that of other men.'

"'And you shall see it before the sun

sets,' the besotted sovereign cried, and turning to an attendant he gave orders that at once the heart of this good man should be brought to Ta-ke. These and many other wicked things she did, until the people scarce could breathe, so full were they of hate of her. Then a deliverer was found, and the brave Woo Wang came to save the country. With the noise of drum, and amid the swift-falling arrows that carried death where'er they fell, he marched on the resplendent capital of Chow, and the down-trodden people ran forward to welcome him and gladly followed him, until his hosts were far-extending as the clouds. When Chow heard this he went out to marshal his armies that he might repulse these valiant men, but not one was found to wield the bow and arrow in behalf of his Emperor, for all were making ready to greet the good Woo Wang. Already he heard the tramp of the oncoming

throng and the victorious shouting of the warriors, and knew his doom had come, for none would strike a blow to save this tyrant. Quickly he went to the inner room of his palace, arrayed himself in his most magnificent apparel, and donned his tunic of golden brocade, as if to give audience to some mighty prince, and making himself a throne of his most costly possessions he mounted it, and with his own hand touched it with a torch. So perished Chow, and thus was destroyed that most magnificent palace, the wonder of the land. Ta-ke watched him calmly as he made these final preparations, and she shed no tears, for her heart was busy forming a plan where by she might save herself from the wrath of Woo Wang. When she saw the flames burst forth, she ran with all the haste that terror lends away from the fatal spot, and even as she ran she met the great Woo Wang coming with his

soldiers to take possession of the palace, and she cast herself at his feet.

"'It is the hated Empress,' the people cried angrily, groaning as they spoke, and when he heard this Woo Wang waited not, but with his own hand severed the head of the base Ta-ke from her body, that she might not longer live to curse the land; and all the multitude raised a loud shout of joy."

"That's a very ugly tale," Ta-ta exclaimed, stifling a yawn as she spoke. "It was nothing but kill—kill—kill."

"You gave us the best first," Wang said, as she rose to go, but Tuen made no comment of any kind. Side by side she stored these two stories in her mind, and never did she forget them.

CHAPTER XIX.

Stately her person, tall and fair,
Clad in her robes embroidered and plain
Fingers as softest buds that grow,
Skin as an unguent firm and white,
Neck as the tree worm's breed,
Mantis front and the silk moth's brow,
Dimples playing in witching smile,
Beautiful eyes, so dark and bright!
Stately in person, proud and free,
Screened by her plumes, then to court comes she.

Chinese Song.

ALL things, even a journey from Lu Chang to Peking, must end some day, and Tuen's heart was leaping wildly, when after the long, tedious months upon the water she at last found herself seated in a sedan, entering the great outer wall of the capital city. Mechanically she kept repeating Szu's parting words: "A wise man adapts himself to circumstances as water shapes itself to the vessel that

contains it," but she merely did this because she must do something to keep her courage up, and not because she found any wisdom or any consolation in the proverb.

As in all places in China she saw a multitude of people about her, through which the chair bearers made their way with loud cries of *Lai! Lai!* (Clear the way! Clear the way!) Now they met some high mandarin, surrounded by numerous attendants, who looked haughtily out from his sedan window at the mass of humanity about him, and next would come a bride in her gilded chair, hung with garlands of flowers, while behind her followed relations, attendants and servants bearing the wedding gifts, and beating loud tom-toms, and above the sound of kettle-drum and fire-crackers resounded the wild wailing of the bride who went to the husband she had never seen. Elaborately carved portals, on

whose top the dragon writhed in many a curve, spanned the wide streets; stores filled with tempting wares opened before the passers-by, their tall signs gay with bright-colored letters and hung with fluttering flags; and quaint little houses, painted in blue and green and gold, almost toppled over each other in the struggle for space. The streets were the home of a mighty throng. The Mohammedan, conspicuous in his red cap, touched elbows with the strongly marked Hebrew; the money-seller, with his long string of cash, weighed cautiously the coins brought him to change; the barber deftly shaved the head of his customer who was perched on a three-legged stool, in constant danger of being jostled by a hurried pedestrian; the cook took the long pole from his shoulders, and unloading the utensils from his movable kitchen, prepared food to tempt the lookers-on; the cobbler squatted by the wayside mending shoes;

fortune-tellers waited for the curious; the dentist, with his necklace of shining teeth as proof of skill and customers, importuned the sufferers; the travelling blacksmith, with his implements beside him, solicited trade; jugglers performed various feats in return for the coins thrown them and delighted an ever-changing audience; and book-sellers, tinkers, druggists, musicians, razor-grinders, and pedlers of every description, cried out their wares as they went on their endless peregrinations. Wheel-barrows filled with vegetables and dromedaries bearing coal from Tartary were followed by a funeral procession, the mourners, arrayed in pure white, walking behind the gayly painted casket; and so the great population, shouting, laughing, gesticulating, surged and swelled, and the round of life was ever the same.

Tuen was very glad when she had made her way through all this din and tumult

and come to the second wall, the wall of the imperial city, where the yellow-tiled roofs shone like gold in the sunshine. In the distance could be seen King Shan, the Artificial Mountain, its five summits topped with beautiful pavilions. Trees of every kind clustered at its base, while through the foliage, now rich in autumn colors, glistened the water of a silvery lake, and the gleaming roof of the Temple of Great Happiness. Tuen had only a confused idea of this beautiful panorama, for now they had reached the third wall which encircles the Prohibited City—the home of the Son of Heaven. She had often heard how all within this closely guarded enclosure was gold and silver, so brilliant and so gorgeous that it dazzled the beholder, and her little bias eyes were open very wide behind the curtains of her sedan as she peeped cautiously out. The guards in the tower above the Meridian Gate hastened to open it on her approach,

for her sedan was hung with yellow, the imperial color. She was borne over pleasant streams, spanned with bridges of sculptured marble, through courts where fountains played and flowers bloomed, and through splendid gilded corridors. Gate after gate of elaborately carved marble opened as if by magic at her approach and then quickly closed again, for she who enters here goes out no more. The magnificent Gate of Extensive Peace shut with a loud clang behind her, but she heard it not, for now she was being carried through beautiful walks with stately bronze figures on either side, past temples and pavilions and palaces, even past that most sacred and superb of all the buildings, the Tranquil Palace, with its tower of burnished copper adorned with images that seemed made of gold. Tuen had never pictured anything so lovely, so enchanting. The Viceroy's yâmen dwindled into insignificance before all this grandeur,

and she felt like a veritable beggar maid brought to a king. And just as she was beginning to think that it must all be some enchanted dream from which she would soon awake, the chair-bearers stopped in front of the Palace of Earth's Repose, which is the royal harem, and the last gate closed between her and all the world.

News travels very slowly through all the many gates that guard the Emperor from his subjects, and what goes on in the Forbidden City is a secret to the rest of the Empire. But sometimes, even from that jealously watched home of royalty, rumors creep abroad, and are whispered from mouth to mouth, for gossip will not be quiet, even though you cut out its tongue. Someway it became noised abroad after a while that Tuen, the maiden from Lu Chang, was the favorite wife of the Emperor, and second only to the Empress herself. Then nothing more was known until it was announced that

the Empress was dead, and after a while through the many gates crept the news that Tuen had become the royal consort.

Again there was silence, then at last the Emperor was gathered to his fathers, and Tuen, the little slave girl, during the infancy of her son, became Empress of all China, and ruler over one third of the population of the world. Thus does Fate shift the figures in the game of life.

CHAPTER XX.

IT was a crisp, chill November afternoon, with just a hint of frost in the air that made it bracing. Milky clouds dimmed the intense blue of the heavens, an occasional gust of wind tore off bright-hued leaves from the trees and tossed them gayly about, and already the grass was turning brown. But in the imperial Flower Garden there was as yet no sign of fading flowers or winter bareness, and as the Empress Tuen came out into it, attended by richly apparelled ladies of the court, and followed by slaves and eunuchs, she saw only a scene of beauty. She too was in the autumn of life now. Her eyes no longer sparkled with the fire of youth, her cheeks, once pink as a lotus bloom,

were now marked by the cruel furrows of time, and her figure had lost its girlish grace many a year ago, for to-day was her sixtieth birthday. The day was to have been celebrated throughout the Empire with a lavish magnificence that would render it the greatest event in Chinese history for many centuries, for her loyal subjects had planned to render fitting honor to this remarkable woman. The streets for ten miles were to have been covered with rich carpets and decorated with lamps and pictures, and the rarest wares — porcelains, bronzes, jade, and silver—were to have been arranged along this gorgeous avenue. But the inglorious war with Japan had so heavily taxed the people that, at the request of the Empress, these elaborate preparations had been abandoned, though many costly presents had been sent her from every province. Now, weary of gifts and adulation, she wished to be alone, to rest for

a time from the affairs of state. With a gesture all the attendants were dismissed, and she sat down in the massive stone chair on the bank of the placid Lake of Dreams. There was no more beautiful spot to be found in all the land than this Flower Garden where the Empress, when she tired of her gilded prison, came for a breath of outer air. It was adorned with graceful pavilions, temples, groves, and lakes, and many Emperors had exhausted the skill and ingenuity of the landscape gardeners of the realm in an endeavor to make this little park enchanting enough to beguile away the tedium of the days of "Heaven's Consort," as the Empress was styled. Flowers of every hue bloomed here; sparkling streams dashed down the sides of artificial mountains and wound like a silver ribbon among the flowers, their waters spanned here and there by quaintly carved marble bridges; the musical splashing of the fountains could

be heard through the stillness; half hid away under moss-covered rocks were dark, quiet pools where the lilies loved to bloom; stone grottoes nestled among the trees and overhanging vines, and shrubs cut into likenesses of lions, tigers, giraffes, elephants, and horses, grew beside the walks. In the distance the gilded roof of the Hall of Perfect Peace shone like a beacon, and the sun touched the burnished tower before the Tranquil Palace and transformed it into a pillar of fire, and then fell upon the top of the marble Gate of Extensive Peace, and lo, it seemed made of pearl and ivory. But to-day the Empress paid but slight attention to these glories of the capital, for her mind was filled with painful thoughts. Day by day dire reports came from the scene of war of the havoc wrought among her soldiers, and disgraceful accounts of defeat that made her blood boil. She had prayed unto the gods and offered

sacrifices unto them, and for many days she had burned incense on the altar of the God of War, but alas! the gods were deaf, and ruin threatened her kingdom. Her son, the Emperor, was weak and characterless, and for a long time she had been the true head of the vast Empire. In executive ability and knowledge of statecraft foreigners had compared her to Catherine the Great of Russia, for her wisdom and keen insight into governmental affairs had been talked of in every court in Europe. Greater than Emperor and cabinet officers, shrewder than even Li Hung Chang, was this old Empress, who had placed crowns on several brows, and who was the creator of viceroys and state policy. Neither had she forgotten from whence she came, or neglected to reward any who had served her well. In the first hour of her independence and power she caused search to be made for her father and mother, only to learn that they had

been long dead, but upon her brother she had heaped the most distinguished honors. Nor had she failed to compensate the Viceroy of Lu Chang for all his kindness to her, and all over the land the story-tellers loved to relate the wonderful history of Tuen, the little slave girl, who was now their beloved Empress.

But now as she sat alone in the garden she was very sorrowful. She had hoped that Li Hung Chang would be able to stir up the patriotism of her subjects and inflame them with martial ardor, but he had been powerless to avert the shame of defeat—defeat at the hands of a little patriotic, plucky nation that she could have put in one of her provinces—a defeat that was the saddest blot on the annals of her people. Oh, it was infamous! She clenched her hands until her many rings cut into the tender flesh, as she inwardly chafed and raged at her own helplessness. Her meditations were at

last interrupted by the approach of a eunuch, and she threw back her head and regarded him angrily, impatient that he should have dared to intrude on her solitude. Three times did he humbly bow, then, kneeling before her, knock his head nine times upon the ground before he spoke.

"A gift has arrived for the Empress and awaits her acceptance."

She motioned him haughtily away, but his curiosity was so much excited that he still further dared the royal displeasure.

"It is a very strange thing," he ventured. "Nothing like it has ever been sent before, for it is said to come from the barbarians here who teach the 'Jesus doctrine.'"

"Let it be brought to me here," she said listlessly, although she arched her brows in amazement.

Quickly he went away, and in his stead

came the ladies of the court, bearing a teak-wood box. At a sign from the Empress it was opened and disclosed a beautifully wrought silver casket. With her own hand she raised the lid of this casket, wondering what jewel or article of priceless value these strangers had sent her, while the ladies of the court peeped eagerly over her shoulders. But what she saw when the lid fell back was a book, whose covers were of solid silver embossed in bamboo designs, while in one corner in shining letters of gold were the strange words: "Complete New Testament," and in the centre of this remarkable book was a plate of gold upon which was engraved: "Scriptures for the Salvation of the World."

Then she looked again at the casket, and on the lid she read that this book was a present from the Christian women of China, and she marvelled greatly, but she said nothing.

Thus was the Holy Bible placed even on the Dragon's Throne, and then once again the gates of the Forbidden City closed, and all was silence.

END.