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That Chinese Woman

THIS IS THE LIFE STORY of a Chinese courtesan who was so beautiful that she was a sensation in both Europe and Asia. Her name was Sai-chin-hua, and even as a little girl she astonished everyone with her loveliness. She became a favorite in the "flower boats," as the floating bordellos were called, and that led to her marrying a Chinese diplomat who took her to Berlin.

This was the period of Prussia's magnificence, and Sai was the talk of the capital. Teetering on her tiny bound feet, she captivated the whole diplomatic set; and while her husband buried himself in old books, she learned German, was fêted by the Empress, and had assignations in the Tiergarten. Her lover was none other than Count Waldersee, who later replaced Moltke as Chief of Staff.

After Sai and her husband returned to China, Sai had various changes of fortune, and perhaps the most extraordinary of these was her reunion with Waldersee. The count had been sent to Peking to protect German interests that were threatened by the Boxer Rebellion. Sai easily regained her influence over him and obtained concessions for her people. Even tiny children knew her name, and it was a common saying that Waldersee was acting Emperor and she was his Empress, for they were living together in the palace and making use of all the objects of imperial luxury, including the great Dragon Bed of the Dowager.

Exquisitely translated from the Chinese, this book has a quality that is rare, exotic, and delightful. While it is a true biography of an extraordinary woman, it is at the same time a glimpse into the Old China. Like an Oriental miniature, it is a scene from a world that is gone forever.

THAT CHINESE WOMAN



TRANSLATED FROM THE CHINESE
BY HENRY MC ALEAVY

Illustrations by Jeanyee Wong

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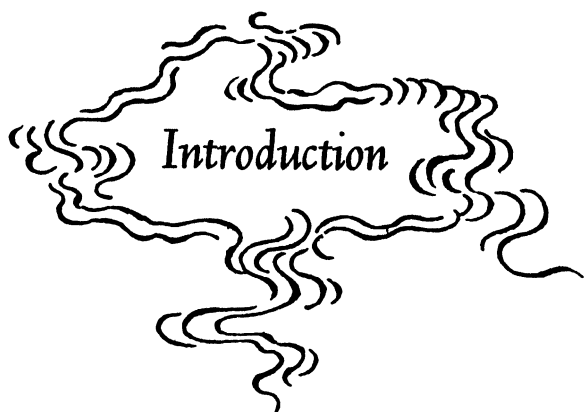
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Introduction

ONE RAW, WINTER AFTERNOON IN 1944 I was standing at the gate of the International Press Hostel in Chungking, where I had just been collecting the latest news of the Japanese advance into southwest China which for weeks had been filling the wartime capital with alarm and despondency. I had heard nothing to reassure me, and now, to make things worse, on setting out to return to my lodgings in the town, I noticed on the other side of the road a policeman, whose stare in my direction was to be attributed, I felt sure, to my freshly lighted cigarette. For the municipal authorities, in a fit of austerity, had decreed that the habit of smoking in the street, so obviously prejudicial to the vigorous conduct of the war, was no longer to be tolerated, and for a few days the prohibition was actually being enforced. However, provided I kept within the gate, I possessed some kind of immunity from interference, and it was while

I was standing there, defiantly puffing my "Cupid"—or was it a "Barking Dog"?—that I witnessed the scene which has fixed the occasion in my memory.

I saw coming toward me down the street a middle-aged woman in company with a girl of thirteen or fourteen. Something in their manner of walking aroused my attention, and as they came nearer I noticed that the older woman had got a vicious strangle hold on the red woolen muffler round her companion's neck and was dragging her along by main force. They were recognizably mother and daughter, and I wondered vaguely what mischief the child had been up to. Clearly, it was something out of the ordinary to have provoked her parent into such an exhibition. Then, as the couple passed me by, I heard the mother say, in the resentful accent of the town: "Wait till I get you home! Oh, just wait till I get you home, you little Sai-chin-hua!" A moment later they were lost to sight in the crowd, but I felt I already knew the cause of the family drama. The daughter, her curiosity no doubt inflamed by the gossip among her schoolmates about the dashing adventures to be had by girls who accepted rides in jeeps, had been trying to ogle foreign soldiers, only to be detected and carried off for punishment.

Sai-chin-hua! The sound of that name carried my memory back to the time and place I first heard it. It was in Peking, in the autumn of 1936. I had come out from England the year before to try and learn Chinese, and after a short period in the dormitory of Peking National University I was living with a Chinese family. One evening after supper, my host, Mr. Feng, happened to mention a new play which was attracting some attention.

"It's about Sai-chin-hua," he told me.

"About what?" I asked, with a blank look.

"Oh, come," said Mr. Feng. "You're not going to say you've never heard of Sai-chin-hua?"

Now of course that was just what I was going to say, and I added that my friend, having raised the subject, could hardly in decency refuse to give me enlightenment. Faced by such ignorance, Mr. Feng was clearly at a loss where to start, but it did not take him long to assemble his ideas—he was a born raconteur, that man—and in a few minutes, while the old trees of the courtyard stirred uneasily in the darkness and from the world outside came the sounds of the Peking night, I was listening to the story of the most notorious woman then alive in China.

For at that time Sai-chin-hua was still numbered among the inhabitants of Peking and I have often regretted, since, the indolence or shyness which stopped me, after I had heard the tale, from going one day to the house near the Bridge of Heaven where she was staying and asking if she would see me. In any case, I was not to be given the opportunity for long. Three months later, in December, 1936, Chiang Kai-shek was seized and held prisoner by mutinous troops in the ancient city of Sian, and for a while the attention of all of us was monopolized by this sensational occurrence. It was not until after the Generalissimo's release, safe and sound, on Christmas Day, that we turned from public affairs to the everyday world around us and learned, among other items of local news, that Sai-chin-hua had died, hideously old at sixty-two, in the poverty and squalor that had surrounded her for years.

The following summer, Peking fell to the Japanese, and the universities took refuge far away in the southwest. My days as a student were soon over, but, by a piece of good

fortune for which I can never be sufficiently grateful, I was offered employment in the service of the British government, which kept me in China until the end of 1950. Apart from three years in Chungking, my time was spent constantly in Shanghai, and before long I had succumbed to the fascination of that extraordinary place. And there, once more, I found myself pursued by the name of Sai-chin-hua.

This time it was in the summer of 1941. The work on which I was engaged was the dissemination of news about Britain to the Chinese press. Seen by its results today, the task was among the most futile ever undertaken by man, but it put me in the way of meeting some amusing people, to whose company I now look back with nostalgia. In particular, I remember a rather seedy journalist-cum-lawyer, whom I may call Mr. Wei, and who, for a consideration, used to help me in slipping an occasional item of propaganda into the columns of some newspaper. Apart from his use to me in my work, he was an inexhaustible mine of information concerning Shanghai life, and I rarely came away from meeting him without having learned something of interest.

"What do you think?" he said to me one day over lunch. "The other evening I ran into an old girl who used to know Sai-chin-hua when she was here in Shanghai! It's fantastic, isn't it?"

I pricked up my ears.

"Who is this woman?" I asked.

"God knows how one could describe her," said Wei. "But look, if you're not doing anything after lunch, why not come with me and see if we can't have a word with her? It's only round the corner from here."

An hour or so later we found ourselves in one of the

licensed houses at Eight Fairies' Bridge in the French Concession. I had occasionally been invited to dinner parties given by Chinese profiteers in the singsong establishments of Foochow Road, half a mile away in the International Settlement, where during the meal a girl was perched on a stool behind every guest, and the atmosphere still reminded one of Manchu Dynasty novels. But there was nothing of that here. The place was quite simply a brothel, and the inmates, still in disarray and with sleep in their eyes at two o'clock in the afternoon, clustered around to see what the wind had blown in.

Mr. Wei, who was clearly quite at home in these parts, at once assumed control of the situation and mentioned a name—I can no longer for the life of me remember what it was. There was a scurrying and a shouting, and within a couple of minutes there appeared a squat figure, dressed entirely in black—black gown and, underneath, a pair of black trousers gathered in at the ends to resemble elongated riding breeches—and walking with that deliberate titubation affected by Chinese women who combined easy virtue with bound feet. She must have been about sixty. Her face was heavy with waxlike fat, and she wheezed asthmatically at every breath. From her person and her clothes, stiff with grease stains, came the very fetor of decay.

Yes, she said, she had known Sai-chin-hua. When would that have been? Oh, a long time ago, before the Republic, in Manchu days. Of course, when she had first seen her it was only at a distance, because she herself was only a young girl of fifteen. That was in Foochow Road, she said, looking quizzically about the room. There was a snigger from the audience in the doorway. But that must have been when Kuang Hsü was emperor? Oh yes, but which year of Kuang

Hsü she didn't remember. Yes, certainly, it was before the Boxer Rising. Then, years afterwards, she had really got to know her. Kuang Hsü was dead then, she thought, and the child Emperor P'u Yi must have been ruling. At first Sai had been very distant—she was never very easy to get on with at the best of times—but when you gained her confidence she would talk for hours of her adventures in Europe, and of that foreigner Waldersee who had been so crazy about her.

"But why am I telling you all this?" said the old woman. "You people know more about Sai-chin-hua than we do."

"That's right" said Mr. Wei. "Mr. Ma heard all about Sai-chin-hua long before he came to China."

I can recall the scene now, the good-humoured, rather owlsh Mr. Wei, the old woman, legs crossed, on the edge of her chair, with one foot—and let it be said that it was a very neat little foot—nicely poised to receive any admiration that might be forthcoming, and the fringe of pretty, giggling faces in the door. It was at that moment, of all moments, that I chose to perpetrate the atrocity.

"Well, no," I said. "As a matter of fact I had never heard of her before I came to this country."

I had no sooner uttered the hateful words than I could have bitten off my tongue. Mr. Wei changed countenance and then looked away, while the old woman's expression was a mixture of incredulity and disillusion. The conversation broke down altogether and I was glad in a few minutes to take my leave.

In the years that have passed since then, there has been, throughout the western world, a great kindling of interest in everything that relates to China. It is all the more remarkable, therefore, that the strangest of all liaisons be-

tween a Chinese woman and a foreign man, which has furnished the theme for so much Chinese literature and has made the names of both parties household words from one end of China to the other, should still be unknown in Europe and America.

It has been translated from a *Life of Sai-chin-hua*, published in Shanghai in 1935, a year before her death. Of the author, who hides his identity under the pen name of "Drunken Whiskers," I have been able to discover nothing. He has in the main based his work on the autobiographical notes, dictated by Sai to Liu Pan-nung, a well-known man of letters, and published in 1934, but in places where these notes are inadequate or misleading he has drawn on other literary material and also, no doubt, on the recollections of Sai's former associates, many of whom were still alive at the time he wrote. The result is that he has composed the fullest account of her life that is to be found anywhere. But the story is so peculiar that the foreign reader may well feel he is entitled to ask how far it may be believed.

Count Waldersee was born in 1832, and after having distinguished himself in the wars of 1866 and of 1870 was in 1881 appointed Moltke's principal assistant in Berlin. In 1888, the year in which he is supposed to have met Sai for the first time, he succeeded to Moltke as Chief of the General Staff. In 1900, the Kaiser, enraged at the fact that Germany had not been represented in the allied armies that relieved the besieged legations in Peking, sent this distinguished soldier to China in command of a German expeditionary force and persuaded the other powers to accept him as Commander-in-Chief of all the allied troops operating against the insurgents. Little guessing the celebrity Waldersee was to create for himself, the Kaiser in a valedictory

message to his men enjoined them to see to it that "just as the Huns a thousand years ago, under the leadership of Attila, gained a reputation by virtue of which they still live in historical tradition, so may the name of Germany become known in such a manner in China that no Chinese will ever again dare to look askance at a German." Waldersee returned to Germany in 1901 and died in 1904.

The story of the romance between Waldersee and Sai falls into two episodes. The former concerns their liaison in Europe between 1888 and 1890, and the latter their life together in Peking in 1900 and 1901. The evidence for both appears to be exclusively Chinese, but in the two cases is widely different in its degree of credibility. The second episode was an open and notorious fact, common knowledge to the people of Peking, and related by a multitude of contemporary writers. Sai herself, in her published account, while, if anything, exaggerating the extent of her influence over Waldersee, maintained that she had never become his mistress. But her countrymen greeted this denial with ribald incredulity, and were not impressed by the couple's disparity of age. On the contrary, Waldersee at sixty-eight seems to have struck everybody as being a fine figure of a man.

But the real mystery of the affair concerns Sai's adventures in Germany. Had there in fact been anything between her and Waldersee in Berlin, and was their meeting in Peking in 1900 not a first encounter but a reunion of lovers? That indeed is a puzzle, and one which, at this time, is unlikely ever to be solved. Sai, who was much concerned to defend herself from any charge of unfaithfulness to her first husband, denied, when she came to dictate her own story to Mr. Liu, that she had ever met Waldersee in Ger-

many. However, a journalist, who edited the memoirs for publication in 1934, after Liu's untimely death, tells us that in an unguarded moment of conversation she let out not only that she had known Waldersee in Berlin but that she had been on very close terms with him even then. If this is true, it explains the remarkable favor with which Waldersee in 1900 treated her from the moment she was taken to his headquarters. Nor does there seem to be any doubt among the Chinese commentators that the pair were old friends. True, it is astonishing that a Chinese girl of fourteen should have become the mistress of a German soldier of fifty-six, and still more so, in view of the man's prominent place in society, that the business should have been managed without a scandal. It has been suggested by some writers that Sai might have been a year or two older than she made out, but most of those who knew her had no doubt that even at the age of fourteen such an intrigue would have been well within her capacity. A serious historian such as Mr. Ch'en Chieh in his *History of the Boxer Movement* (Shanghai, 1930) refers to the "adulterous intrigue" between Waldersee and Sai while the latter's husband was Chinese Minister in Berlin; and a standard Japanese work of reference, a *Who's Who of Chinese notabilities* called *Chūgoku Bunkakai Jimbutsu Sōkan* (1940), accepts as a fact that the couple began their relations in Europe. For such details as the description of the tête-à-tête in the park, our author is content to transmit the gossip of the Shanghai teahouses, and his suggestion that Waldersee had been in China in 1887 and had first caught sight of his mistress on the voyage home is certainly untrue.

There is another engaging problem connected with Sai's residence in Germany. The present book mentions an oc-

casion on which she was entertained by the Empress. Now Sai arrived in Berlin just before the death of old Kaiser William I, and it was during the short reign of Frederick III (between March and June, 1888) that she began to go out into Berlin society. Her imperial hostess was none other than the Empress Frederick, the eldest daughter of Queen Victoria. But it is generally believed in China that the friendship between the two women was far closer than our author suggests and that it was begun in very odd circumstances. Fact and fiction are inextricably mixed up in the story, but it has become so important a part of the Sai legend that it demands a few words to itself.

It appears that when Sai returned from Europe in 1890 she took with her, among other souvenirs of her visit, a photograph of herself with the Empress Frederick. For some reason, most probably because of Sai's own account of the circumstances in which it was made, this picture aroused very great curiosity and references to it turn up in the most unexpected places. Among the visitors to the Peking home of Sai and her husband in the early 1890's was a man named Tseng Meng-p'u who was later to turn Sai's life in Europe into the theme of a novel. This book, entitled *Nieh Hai Hua*, (*The Courtesan* is probably the best equivalent), which first appeared in 1906, is now recognized as one of the classics of Chinese literature. Its treatment of Sai is markedly hostile—years later Sai insisted that Tseng had offered himself to her as a lover and that this was his revenge for being rebuffed—but on every page the book reveals such an intimate acquaintance with the gossip of official circles it is hard not to suspect that the account it gives of the affair of the photograph was one circulated by Sai herself in the days when she knew the author in Peking.

Tseng tells us that Sai was much sought after by Berlin hostesses as an exotic curiosity and that in particular a certain Madame Weyer manifested a great interest in her. At first, Sai knew little of this lady whom she always met in places of entertainment, except that she understood her husband was a nobleman. Then one day Sai arranged to meet her friend at a restaurant in the Tiergarten. When she kept the appointment, Madame Weyer did not appear but instead sent an attendant to escort Sai to her house, which turned out to be a most palatial residence. Madame Weyer was waiting for her in the company of some fashionable young ladies and the party sat down to lunch. After the meal, Madame Weyer went to a piano and sang to her own accompaniment a lyric in honor of the beautiful Oriental woman who had come from the other end of the world to console her. Then, before Sai took her leave, a photographer who was in readiness took a picture of her and her hostess. The following day, at a reception, the Kaiser handed Sai a casket, saying it was a present from his wife, and opening it she found it contained a copy of the photograph taken the day before. Only then did Sai realize that the mysterious Madame Weyer was the Empress herself.

Regarding the Chinese part of Sai's life, there is little mystery, and her own statement agrees very closely with the account given in this book, except that she does not admit anything likely to cause her too much discredit. For example, she insists that she did not meet Sun San until after her first husband's death. Perhaps out of snobbery, she says nothing of her marriage to poor, humble Mr. Huang the railway man.

For some years before her death in 1936, Sai appears to have lived in the greatest poverty. In 1935, it was reported

in a Shanghai newspaper that she was anxious to take the body of her mother from Peking to the family burial place in Soochow, but did not have the fare for the journey. Neither the publication of her memoirs in 1934, nor the appearance in the last months of her life of two plays about her adventures in 1900 seems to have been of any financial benefit to her. However, it was known that a number of scholars, who were grateful to her for saving the bookshop quarter of Peking from being burned by foreign troops during the Boxer troubles, had clubbed together to give her a small allowance.

Sticklers for chronology, who may object to the statement that the Manchu Court in 1900 fled from Peking before the arrival of enemy troops, although in fact the legations had been relieved some hours earlier, must remember that the author is not concerned with the rescue of the foreigners but with the fall of the capital. As regards the peace negotiations, Chinese writers generally agree that Li Hung-chang made use of Sai's good offices. But although Li spent some weeks in Tientsin, he had already reached Peking in October, 1900, about the same time as Waldersee himself, and any contacts between him and Sai must have been established there and not, as the author suggests, while Li was still in Tientsin.

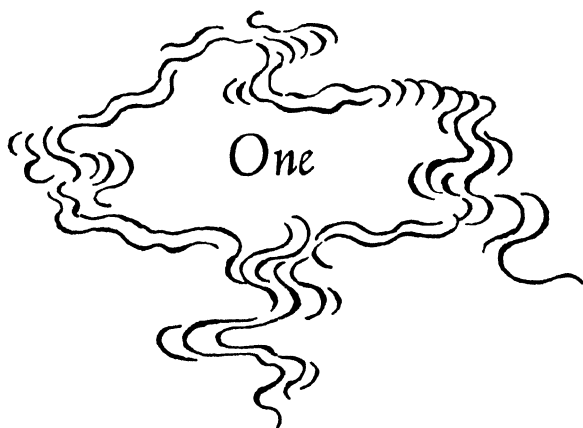


EVERY MAN has his own taste in women, and we Chinese are no exception to the rule. Some of us like little, plump, lively girls; others would rather have them tall and slender and elegant. But most of us in China have one preference in common: we have a weakness for youth, and if we had to describe our ideal of feminine beauty we should nearly all insist that it can be found only in girls of about twelve to twenty-three. Once a woman gets beyond that age she soon begins to lose her attraction for us. Indeed, the women most celebrated for their beauty in our old literature have as a rule died in the flower of their youth, and when you consider the wretched old age of so many once fashionable singing girls, you have to admit that for such women an early death is a blessing.

The heroine of my book is a striking example of this truth. Who of us has not heard of Sai-chin-hua, and of the great

mandarins and noblemen who loved her and made fools of themselves over her in the days of the Manchu Empire? Who would recognize her as she is today, an old woman in a Peking slum? Yet not long since she was the most talked-of woman in China. We all know of her love affair with Count Waldersee who was commander-in-chief of the allied troops at the time of the Boxer Rising. It was said in her defense that the imperial court had fled from Peking, and that it was only through Sai-chin-hua's influence with Waldersee that discipline was restored among the foreign soldiers, and the Chinese population spared from further rape and pillage. Her detractors, on the other hand, maintained that her conduct had brought disgrace on China.

For my part I have no patience with people who talk such nonsense. What was Sai-chin-hua but a singing girl, although she had for a time been the concubine of a diplomat? It is not such as she you have to blame for bringing shame to the country. Even the Boxers themselves, with all their atrocities, were no more than a set of dupes. It was the Manchu nobles, and great ministers, and the Empress Dowager, who encouraged the Boxers in their excesses, and then ran away to save their own skins—it was these people, and not poor Sai-chin-hua, who brought humiliation on China. If it had not been for them, the Boxers would not have murdered the German Minister and the Allied Expeditionary Force would not have come to Peking. As for the love affair between Sai-chin-hua and Waldersee, not only was it advantageous to China, but it was the sort of adventure that seems to be the predestined lot of such a woman. For Sai-chin-hua, we must remember, was in the true tradition of the Chinese singing girl, and it is futile to judge her by any other standard.



IN THE YEAR 1853, one of the wealthiest merchants in the city of Soochow, some fifty miles inland from Shanghai, was a man named Chao, who had a half share in a big pawnbroking business. He was not a native of the place, but, like many other pawnbrokers all over China, came from the province of Anhwei which lies two or three hundred miles further up the Yangtse River. It was not the custom for Anhwei people to bring their families with them when they set up business in other parts, and Mr. Chao lived in Soochow as a bachelor. However, in spite of the difficulty of traveling in those days, he managed to visit his home often enough to give his wife eight sons, the youngest of whom, at the time our story opens, was about twelve years old. Mr. Chao was devoted to his family, and with a prosperous business to support them they seemed not to have a care in the world.

This peaceful life was destroyed by an event none of them could have foreseen. There was always news of risings among the peasantry in remote country districts, and the outbreak of yet another revolt in the far south in the year 1850 did not arouse any interest among comfortable folk like the Chaos. Yet three years later these insurgents, who called themselves the Taipings, had reached the Yangtse and were sweeping down into eastern China.

The town where Mrs. Chao and her sons were living was directly in the path of the rebels, but these had advanced with such speed that it was not until the very last moment that she made up her mind to escape. By then all means of transport had been commandeered, and the family had to join the crowd of refugees who were making their way eastwards on foot. They had not gone very far when disaster came upon them. A bunch of Taiping skirmishers swept down on the fugitives and in the terror and confusion the Chaos were separated from one another. The mother managed to keep her youngest son with her as she fled, but she never set eyes on her other sons again.

After a terrible journey, the pair reached the city of Hangchow more dead than alive, and as Mrs. Chao had a few pieces of jewelry with her she was able to raise the money to buy passages for her son and herself by boat to Soochow. There she found her husband, whose grief at the loss of so many of his children was outweighed by his joy in recovering his wife and youngest son, for he had given all his family up for lost. Meanwhile, his own position was much altered for the worse. Soochow was held by Government forces, but the country round about was in a state of turmoil, and in these circumstances business was almost at a standstill.

However, the family remained for the next few years in Soochow, thinking themselves lucky to have escaped from the fighting which was waged interminably across eastern China, and looking forward to the days of peace. But in the year 1860 the final blow was given to their hopes. The rebels took Soochow, and you can well imagine that pawnshops were the first places they pillaged. The Chao themselves escaped with their lives, but although the Government forces soon recovered the city, Mr. Chao found that he had lost almost all his possessions. This blow completely broke him down, and by the time the rebellion was suppressed in 1864, he was on his deathbed.

The widow and son bore their misfortune well. Mrs. Chao had always had great skill as a needlewoman and before long she had enough customers to keep her busy. The relationship between mother and son was very touching. Eighth Brother—for that was the name he was always called by—was a perfect model of filial piety, and for that reason, and because of the high respect his mother's character had won for her, discreet inquiries began to be made from more than one quarter with a view to young Chao's marriage.

But in this matter, although it was high time that the young man should take a wife, Mrs. Chao showed an unexpected obstinacy. She declared that she would never sanction her son's marriage unless the bride not only came from a respectable family, but was also both pretty and a good housekeeper. She and her son might be poor, she said, but they had family traditions to keep up, and a young woman from a different background, who had not been taught how to behave to her mother-in-law and to her husband would cause nothing but misery in the house.

Now the odd thing is that Mrs. Chao's neighbors, so far from being offended by her attitude, respected her all the more. And the old saying, that nothing in the world is difficult if you really set your heart on it, in her case turned out to be true. One of the neighbors happened to have distant relatives with a very pretty daughter who were finding it difficult to marry her off suitably because of their lack of money. Apart from her good looks, the girl was of a very sweet disposition, and as her family had always been poor she had had to learn how to work in the house. In addition, she was remarkably skilled with her needle. The neighbor told Mrs. Chao about this young lady, keeping nothing back about the poverty of the family.

"Well," said Mrs. Chao, "I want my son to marry a wife, not a dowry. Not that I imagine a family with money would choose to give one of their daughters to us: if they did, she would probably be too grand to live with us contentedly. In any event, what has happened to us shows that if it is your destiny to be poor, you cannot do anything to avoid it. On the other hand, who knows but our fortunes may be prosperous again?" So the neighbor went and raised the matter with the family, and the match was so obviously suitable that in no time an engagement was made, and a little while afterwards the wedding took place.

The ceremony, of course, was not an elaborate one, but there was a small feast, and the bride was taken to her husband's house in the traditional red sedan chair accompanied by musicians. Mrs. Chao was so well thought of by her neighbors that they all sent presents, and helped her in every way they could. Then, when the bride had come to the house and the wedding ceremony was over, and she had

kotowed to her mother-in-law and to the tablets of her husband's ancestors, she withdrew to the bridal chamber followed by the guests who crowded around to have a closer look at her. The cloth which until then had covered her face was removed, and she had to undergo the stares of the company. There was at once a cry of admiration. "How lovely she is! What did Eighth Brother do in a previous existence to deserve such a beauty?" And they turned to congratulate Mrs. Chao, who had just followed them into the room. When Mrs. Chao looked at her daughter-in-law, she had to admit to herself that she had rarely seen a prettier girl—a face of the classical oval shape, fine eyebrows without a trace of pencil, lively eyes, small mouth, thin lips, with delicious little ears and a regular nose. Her hair was concealed by her bridal headdress, but the ringlets which were visible at the sides were full and glossy. As she was sitting on the edge of the bed, it was difficult to tell her height exactly, but she seemed beautifully proportioned, and of a full figure, though in no way overplump.

Mrs. Chao, whose one weakness was a craving to hear other people praise her family, was delighted at the impression her daughter-in-law's beauty had made on all the guests, but she said to herself that there was one other point of great importance which remained to be discovered. However, no sooner had this thought come into her mind, than all doubts were dispelled. As it happened, one of the women guests was a great busybody who had gone over to the side of the bed, and was stooping over the bride with such curiosity that the poor girl was quite out of countenance. Suddenly, this woman stretched out her hand and lifted up the bride's skirt to reveal the neatest little pair of

feet that you can imagine. It was only a moment's glimpse, for the girl immediately drew down her skirt again, but it was enough to set Mrs. Chao's mind at rest.

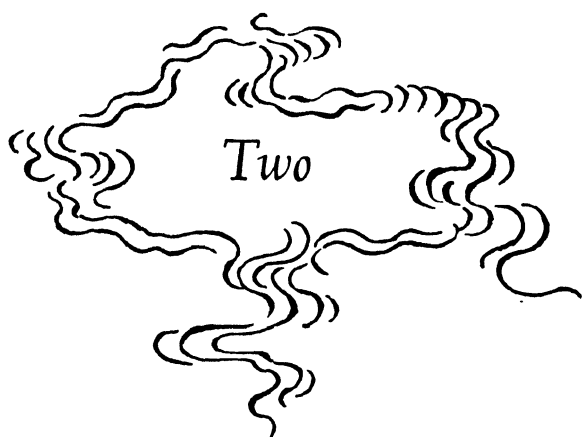
Today, when many Chinese girls walk on the streets without stockings and think nothing of letting men see their legs even to the thighs, it is hard to believe that not many years ago it was the rule that respectable women should "smile without showing their teeth and walk without showing their feet." And in those days men absolutely worshiped women's bound feet. Indeed, it would be embarrassing for me to repeat the praises of small feet to be found in our old writers. "Three-inch golden lotuses," "curved lotuses to fill a hand," "crescent moons"—such were the most temperate descriptions. It was desired that a girl's feet should be slender and tapering, and of course the more tightly they were bound, the more exquisitely she swayed when she walked. Men loved to watch this movement which poets have compared to that of willow trees in the wind. As to the bride's feet, the fact that so critical a judge as Mrs. Chao was satisfied with what she had seen of them, should convince us that they were all that could be desired, and indeed, although they may have exceeded the ideal three inches by the merest trifle, each of them would fit snugly into a man's hand, heel and all, and a very charming handful it would make, with the red satin shoe and coquettish sock.

When they had stared enough and drunk enough, the guests dispersed and the young couple were left alone together. I will allow you to imagine how they enjoyed their wedding night. And it was not long before Mrs. Chao discovered that in her daughter-in-law she had a real treasure: one who was not only beautiful but who also waited on her

mother-in-law and husband hand and foot and anticipated their slightest wants, doing all this both with love and intelligence. To increase their contentment, the following year Eighth Brother found employment as an assistant in a firm in the town, and although the salary was not very large, it made a welcome addition to their income. And as the young wife was also taking in needlework, the three of them began, in a modest way, to be quite comfortable.

In this manner, several years passed, and Mrs. Chao and her daughter-in-law grew always closer together. It hurt the older woman to see how her son's wife had to do all the menial tasks in the house, and as their circumstances started to improve she managed to save enough money to buy a young girl as a maidservant. This was a mere child, whose family—they lived just outside the city wall of Soochow—were so poor that they were glad to sell her, but she was able to do a good deal of the housework. However, the daughter-in-law did not use the leisure gained in this way to enjoy a rest, but merely devoted the time to taking in more needlework.

Now you would imagine that Mrs. Chao must have been well satisfied with the way things had turned out in the last few years. And so she was to a point, but there was one thing lacking to make her happy. In all the years since the marriage, there had been no sign of children, and, as the time passed, Mrs. Chao longed more and more to hold her son's child in her arms. The wife herself, on the other hand, did not seem to be unduly anxious for children, and, if the truth must be told, Mrs. Chao more than once was provoked into a display of bad temper. But her great recourse was to prayer.



IN HER RELIGIOUS BELIEFS, Mrs. Chao had been greatly influenced by her late husband, who—rather surprisingly for a businessman—was a most devout Buddhist. From the first days of their marriage, their house always had a porcelain figure of the Goddess Kuan-yin, and a picture of Maitreya Buddha. Twice a day without fail Mr. Chao used to wash his hands, light an incense stick, and go down on his knees to pray, and whenever he had any leisure time he would spend it in reciting a sutra. We may smile at all this as superstition, but at least it had kept him out of bad habits, and for this reason, and because she herself was naturally inclined to such beliefs, Mrs. Chao was soon as staunch a Buddhist as her husband. When she became a widow, and was living in a tiny house, she still insisted on boarding off a corner of one of the rooms to serve as a chapel. In it there was a statue of Kuan-yin as Goddess of Mercy with an in-

cense table in front of it, and Mrs. Chao was as regular in her devotions as her husband had been.

Naturally, then, it was to Kuan-yin that she turned in her longing for a grandson. But one day the thought struck her that the Kuan-yin to whom she was praying was Kuan-yin as Goddess of Mercy, who was not concerned with giving children. So the next time she visited the local temple, she bought another statue, that of Kuan-yin in white robes as Patroness of Childbirth, and in addition a picture of Chang the Immortal, the giver of children. She put the new statue in her little chapel, and gave the picture to her daughter-in-law telling her to hang it in her room, as Chang the Immortal would drive away the Celestial Hound which ate embryos and prevented women from having children. The young woman did this, and set a little table in front of the picture, and was as assiduous in her devotions to Chang the Immortal as her mother-in-law was in hers to Kuan-yin.

The place where Eighth Brother was working was not far away, but it was outside the city wall, and he usually slept there, coming home only when there was a holiday. Now it happened that at the New Year following the purchase of the statue and picture the business was closed for ten days, during which the young man stayed with his wife and mother. Most families are happy at such a time, and the young Chao were an exceptionally affectionate couple. The mother lectured them on her favorite subject, but they only smiled at her enthusiasm. But whether prayers had anything to do with the matter or not, a few weeks later the young wife noticed something very irregular in her condition.

She did not say a word, but when it got to the end of

the second month, and she began to feel listless, and inclined to nausea, and had no appetite for anything but sour-tasting foods, she knew what was the matter with herself. In those days nine out of ten married women would be shy of confessing their pregnancy, especially young women, for they knew the jokes that were sure to be made. So young Mrs. Chao waited for three months, and then her state could be concealed no longer. Her mother-in-law was beside herself with delight, and sent for Eighth Brother to come and hear the good news, while she herself set to work making baby clothes, and laying in everything necessary for the birth. Nor did she omit to thank Kuan-yin and Chang the Immortal for their help. The young wife, too, agreed that if she were to offer the best incense and fruit for the rest of her life, it would not be too good for such benefactors. And so the time went by, until the day came when the child was born. It was November 17, 1874. According to the strict ritual, old Mrs. Chao was not present at the birth, but left everything in the hands of the midwife and a friendly neighbor.

The child was a girl. This was a terrible blow to the young mother, who blamed herself for not praying hard enough. The women who were with her did their best to comfort her, and old Mrs. Chao came to the door of the room and with alarm in her voice begged her daughter-in-law not to hurt herself by fretting. "For how do you know," she said, "that the next time you won't have a boy? I always longed to have a daughter, yet my eight children were all sons, and I remember how miserable I used to feel. If I had had a daughter, she would have been married by this time, and how I should have loved to go out and visit her, instead of having to stay all the time inside these few broken-down rooms!"

In this way, young Mrs. Chao was encouraged to be more cheerful, and the neighbor carried the child to the door of the room to show it to its grandmother. "Look at her, Mrs. Chao!" she said. "Just mark my words, she will turn out to be the prettiest girl you ever saw!" The grandmother looked at the plump little face, and spoke a few words of admiration, but too many things needed her attention for her to stay long. One cannot help wondering what she and the others would have said if it could have been revealed to them that the child over which they were fussing was to become famous in the history of China. For the baby born that day into the Chao family was Sai-chin-hua.

The mother was consoled by old Mrs. Chao's kindly words and began to call to mind that her mother-in-law had often told her what a difference a daughter would have made to her own rather dull life. And any disappointment that might have still remained was soon dispersed by the charm of the child. The Lower Yangtse Valley is famous for its lovely women, but in all the region no town can vie with Soochow. Some people say it is because of the beautiful natural surroundings of the place, and its healthful air, and this seems as good an explanation as can be given of what is certainly a fact. But in Sai-chin-hua's case we must add the advantage she derived from her parents. I have said nothing so far in this respect about Eighth Brother, but it may be mentioned here that he had rather more than his share of good looks, and as we have seen, his wife was undoubtedly a very pretty woman.

The next few years passed uneventfully, and then, when Sai was five or six years old, her mother gave birth to a son. By that time the little girl was already giving signs that she was going to surpass her mother in beauty, and everyone

who saw her fell under the spell of her bright eyes and her graceful little body. And in particular it was a joy to hear in her mouth the soft dialect of Soochow, which sets off a pretty girl as no other speech does. Her grandmother idolized her, and indeed no child could have been better mannered in the house. But, although it may sound a strange thing to say, the more the old lady loved her, the more zealous she was in inflicting pain upon her. I am referring of course to the binding of the child's feet.

For old Mrs. Chao was already dreaming of the brilliant marriage her granddaughter would make one day, and she would have thought herself criminal if by any omission on her part she had spoiled the girl's chances of happiness. A pair of nicely-bound feet was indispensable to any girl who was to be socially acceptable. No beauty of face or figure could compensate for large feet, or rather for feet of natural size, for in those days fashion insisted that there should take place the most brutal and agonizing interference with the course of nature. The four small toes were crushed over into the sole of the foot and tightly bound in that position. You can imagine the pain from the joints and sinews which were strained into such an unnatural shape. The binding checked the flow of the blood, and this caused swelling and mortification. It seems barely credible that a little girl could endure such treatment. No wonder they had a proverb "for every pair of small feet in Soochow there is a jar of tears." And yet parents who loved their daughters so much that they had not the heart to strike them or even to scold them were capable of inflicting this torture on them.

As soon as her grandmother saw that Sai was old enough to start having her feet bound, she made inquiries everywhere to find someone who was skillful in the art. For

whether the final shape of the foot was good or bad depended entirely on the experience and technique of the binder, and old Mrs. Chao had no intention of entering on such an important affair at random. Finally she was able to meet a woman who was probably the most famous binder of feet in Soochow at that time, and who in consequence was nicknamed "Mrs. Golden-Lotus." Very many young ladies from the most prominent families had passed through her hands. The great secret of this cruel old wretch lay in determining from the natural shape of the foot what was the most suitable style into which to bind it; whether, for instance, it should be formed into a "new moon" or into a "bow." This was the woman who was engaged to handle Sai, and the poor child's sufferings began without delay.

In the first place, she found from the start that she could hardly bear to set foot to the ground and that the very most she could do in the matter of walking was to hobble a few steps on her heels. And her feet kept her day and night in a fever of pain. You could hardly recognize the playful, lively girl of a few weeks before. She did not dare to ease her feelings by weeping, for fear of arousing her grandmother's temper, but you could tell from her face what she was suffering. Her mother petted her and soothed her and told her every girl had to go through this ordeal and that before long her feet would be used to the binding and the pain would go away. "Just look at your mother's feet," she said. "Everybody says how nice they are, and yours will be even smaller. Between them and that pretty face of yours, no other girl will come up to you. You can see for yourself how nobody makes anything of girls with big feet, no matter how good-looking their faces may be. Be brave, because if you cry it will make your mother very sad."

Now the strange thing was that the little girl was easily persuaded by such talk to forget her pain, at least for the time being, and to think about how beautiful she was going to be. And in due course her feet were really formed into a most elegant shape—the “new moon”—and very attractive they were. To enhance her appearance, she was already wearing make-up, and in fact cosmetics of all kinds fascinated her more than anything else.

She had one other taste which in later years her family remembered as being a sign of her future career. She was in general not very particular about food, but there was one special dish, peculiar to her grandmother's native province of Anhwei, which she was always craving. This was rice cooked with spinach and lard, and the Anhwei name for it was “Senior Wrangler's Rice.” We must remember that all this happened at a time when the old system of state examinations was still flourishing, and the highest honor any man could dream of was to become a Senior Wrangler by getting first place in the highest examination. For this reason, the words Senior Wrangler were added to many names of things. Toy lamps were called “Senior Wrangler's Lamps”; there were “Senior Wrangler's Cakes” and “Senior Wrangler's Wine.” Even restaurants were often called “Senior Wrangler's Hotel.” Sai-chin-hua was so fond of “Senior Wrangler's Rice” that as soon as spinach came into season in the spring, her grandmother would be always making the dish for her.

One day Mrs. Golden-Lotus called to see old Mrs. Chao, and was pressed to stay to dinner as an honored guest of the family, who thought they owed her a great debt of gratitude for what she had done to the girl's feet. As it happened, “Senior Wrangler's Rice” was served that day, and

Mrs. Golden-Lotus, who had never eaten it before, asked what it was called. When she was told its name and how fond Sai was of it, she put down her chopsticks and turned to old Mrs. Chao. "But don't you see what this means?" she asked. "There can be absolutely no doubt that it is a sign that your granddaughter is going to marry a Senior Wrangler. Laugh if you wish, but here and now I tell you that there is a prosperous future before your family."

The girl's mother laughed. "Why," she said, "if it comes to that we have a Senior Wrangler here in Soochow all ready made. But surely you don't mean him? Mr. Hung Wen-ch'ing is already in his forties. Perhaps his son will become a Senior Wrangler like his father and then marry our little girl." "Well, that would not be so strange if it did happen," said Mrs. Golden-Lotus, and then the three women went on to talk of something else.

This chance remark made by Mrs. Golden-Lotus was not forgotten by Sai's family. Her mother was always teasing the child about it, and then the neighbors took up the story too, and before long Sai was being called Madame Senior Wrangler. Of course she already knew that Senior Wranglers were the most distinguished scholars in China, and she heard from her grandmother how the Emperor gave new Senior Wranglers a red robe embroidered in gold, and how they rode through the streets of Peking on a white horse, while young and old crowded to see them. She was told also of the important positions they were given, and she began to wonder whether it was possible for a girl to become a Senior Wrangler. If it was, she was determined to be one herself, so that she could have the chance of talking to the Empress Dowager. Great was her disappointment when her grandmother told her not to be a silly child, for

how could a girl be given such an honor? Yet who then could have foreseen that one day she would ride on a white horse not merely through the streets of Peking, but within the Forbidden City itself?



AS WE HAVE ALREADY HEARD, there was indeed a Senior Wrangler, and a very famous one, who was a native of Soochow. This was Hung Wen-ch'ing, the man whose name Sai's mother had mentioned to Mrs. Golden-Lotus. His ancestors had come, like the Chao family, from the province of Anhwei, but had long since settled in Soochow, where Hung Wen-ch'ing was known by name to everybody. The degree of Senior Wrangler had been conferred upon him in 1868, when he was twenty-eight, an age considered young for such an honor, because of the long series of examinations a candidate had to pass. He had had a brilliant official career both in Peking and in the provinces, but was by no means a prim-and-proper official. Indeed many stories of his love affairs were circulated in Peking, but this sort of reputation did him no harm, and many important men went out of their way to cultivate his friendship.

Now in the year 1884, Hung Wen-ch'ing's mother died, and in accordance with the law he was forced to give up an official position he was then holding in southwest China, in order to return to Soochow to observe the three years' period of mourning. In this way, fate decreed that the Senior Wrangler should live in the same town as the little girl whose name a family jest had coupled with his. He was forty-four and she was ten.

Sai was never happier than when a visitor came to the house. On such occasions she was really in her element. She would serve tea and make sure there was tobacco in the water-pipe and see to the guest's comfort in every way. And of course the guest would take notice of the pretty little girl and compliment the mother on having such a delightful child.

Meanwhile, now that Sai was of an age to make herself useful in the house, old Mrs. Chao thought there was no need for them to keep a maid any longer. However, as they had bought their amah when she was a child, the only decent way they could get rid of her was to marry her off, so they used the services of a matchmaker to find her a husband. The man whom the girl eventually married was named Chin. He lived not far away, and after her marriage the maid often came to pass the time of day with her old employers, who had been so kind to her. On one of these visits she was accompanied by her husband's sister, who lived with the newly married couple, and was known as Miss Chin, although it is not clear whether she was unmarried or a widow.

This woman, to tell the truth, was of very bad character, and she relied for her living chiefly on her industry in introducing lonely gentlemen to ladies who were willing to ac-

commodate them in their little whims and fancies. But in such a business she had to be well-spoken and agreeable, and in some way she won golden opinions from old Mrs. Chao and her daughter-in-law, who had no suspicion of her real character, and they pressed her to come again. It was not long before Miss Chin had noticed the little girl, who on her part thought this amiable lady was the most charming person she had ever seen and was soon trying to imitate her way of talking and carrying herself. In a short while Miss Chin had taken such a fancy to her young admirer that she had asked permission for Sai to come and see her sometimes at her house. During such visits, the two would often go about on excursions in the town, and it was very natural that the thought should come into Miss Chin's head that some of her wealthy clients would be very glad to have the chance of meeting her little friend. But clever as she was, it is doubtful if even she could have carried out any such scheme, had it not been for a great misfortune which happened soon after this to the Chao family.

Old Mrs. Chao, worn out with hard work and the child-bearing of her younger days, fell seriously ill, and for a time it looked as if she was going to die. It was nearly two months before she was on her feet again, and by then not only had the hard-earned family savings all been spent on doctors' bills and everything of value in the house been pawned, but poor Eighth Brother had run heavily into debt. He and his wife tried to keep this state of affairs a secret from the old woman, for fear she might worry herself ill again, but it was not possible to hide the truth for long, and although old Mrs. Chao avoided speaking of the subject, she brooded over it all the more. At least, you might think, their bad luck could go no further than this. But

scarcely was old Mrs. Chao up and about again, when Eighth Brother became ill. For a few days he tried to carry on with his work, but at last he could keep it up no longer and had to take to his bed. His mother scraped together a little money from somewhere and called a doctor, who asked, after examining the sick man, whether he had already been given any treatment. When he was told not, he expostulated with the two women and asked how they expected medicine to be of any use now, when the patient was about as sick as he could be? "You have let him get into such a condition that I don't think I can help him by myself," he said. "You must call another doctor to assist me, and perhaps the two of us may be able to save him."

You can imagine the effect of these words on the mother and daughter-in-law. They stared at each other for a while without saying anything. Then old Mrs. Chao said: "Oh doctor, I am sure you can help him! Please try and write a prescription for him! My daughter-in-law, her two children and myself are all depending on him! For the love of Buddha, save him!"

The doctor shook his head and was silent for a few minutes, scratching at his ear and rubbing his face. Then he said: "Very well, I shall write a prescription. If after taking the medicine his temperature falls a little, and his tongue becomes less coated, then there is still some hope. But if you still find this thick white coat on his tongue, or if he should get worse in any way, there is nothing I can do, and it is no use your sending for me again."

This doctor was the one who had just cured old Mrs. Chao, and the family trusted him completely. When the two women heard him talk like this, they were almost out of their minds. Still, they thought, there is a little hope, and

as soon as the doctor had written the prescription and left, they sent out for the medicine, stewed it up, and gave it to the sick man, praying all the time that they might see a change for the better. But nothing happened all night, and then, just as day was breaking, Eighth Brother went into a coma. The women were half crazy with anxiety, and pinched his buttocks and bit his heels until they had succeeded in bringing him back to some sort of consciousness, but even then he lay there staring in front of him, without recognizing anybody. Several other doctors were called, but they all declared they could do nothing. Old Mrs. Chao made vows to Buddha, and went to the temple of Kuan-yin for a holy prescription, which had no more effect than the one from the doctor. Eighth Brother continued in this state for five days, and then breathed his last.

He, at any rate, was out of his pain, but the misery and despair of his family were dreadful to see. To add to their troubles there was the cost of the funeral, but the Chaos were so much liked by everybody that their friends and neighbors opened their purses and in one way or another the money was found. Still, it was clear that the family could no longer maintain their present standard of living, modest as it was. The first step was to move into a smaller house. Fortunately, when they gave up their present house, old Mrs. Chao got back the deposit she had paid for the place years ago, and this was so much in excess of the deposit required for the new house that what remained was not only enough to repay their debts but also to leave a little in hand for their own use. Even so, you can imagine what poverty the four of them had to endure. It was this change in the family circumstances that determined the whole future course of Sai's life.

We have seen how all their friends and neighbors were grieved by their misfortunes. There was one person, however, who heard the news with very different feelings. This was Miss Chin. She had had her eyes on Sai for a long time, but while Eighth Brother was alive and the family was managing fairly comfortably it was utterly out of the question that they should consent to the little girl's being trained as a prostitute, and all that Miss Chin could do was to win the child's trust and to hope that sooner or later her chance would come. When the disaster happened, and she saw how poor the Chaos were, she thought her opportunity had arrived, as she could not believe that in such circumstances the family would resist for very long the temptation of profiting financially from Sai's pretty face. So without delay she took her sister-in-law, formerly the Chao's maid, into her confidence. This young woman, however, shook her head. "You don't know those two women as I do," she said. "They are the most strait-laced people I have ever met. Why, they are on the lookout all the time for fear the child will pick up any naughty words! Do you really think they will send her out to be a singing girl? And old Mrs. Chao has such a temper that I pity you if you mention anything of the sort to her. You would get the best cursing you have ever had in your life, and you would be lucky if you escaped without feeling her hands across your face. You will have to think of another way, if you don't want to be disappointed."

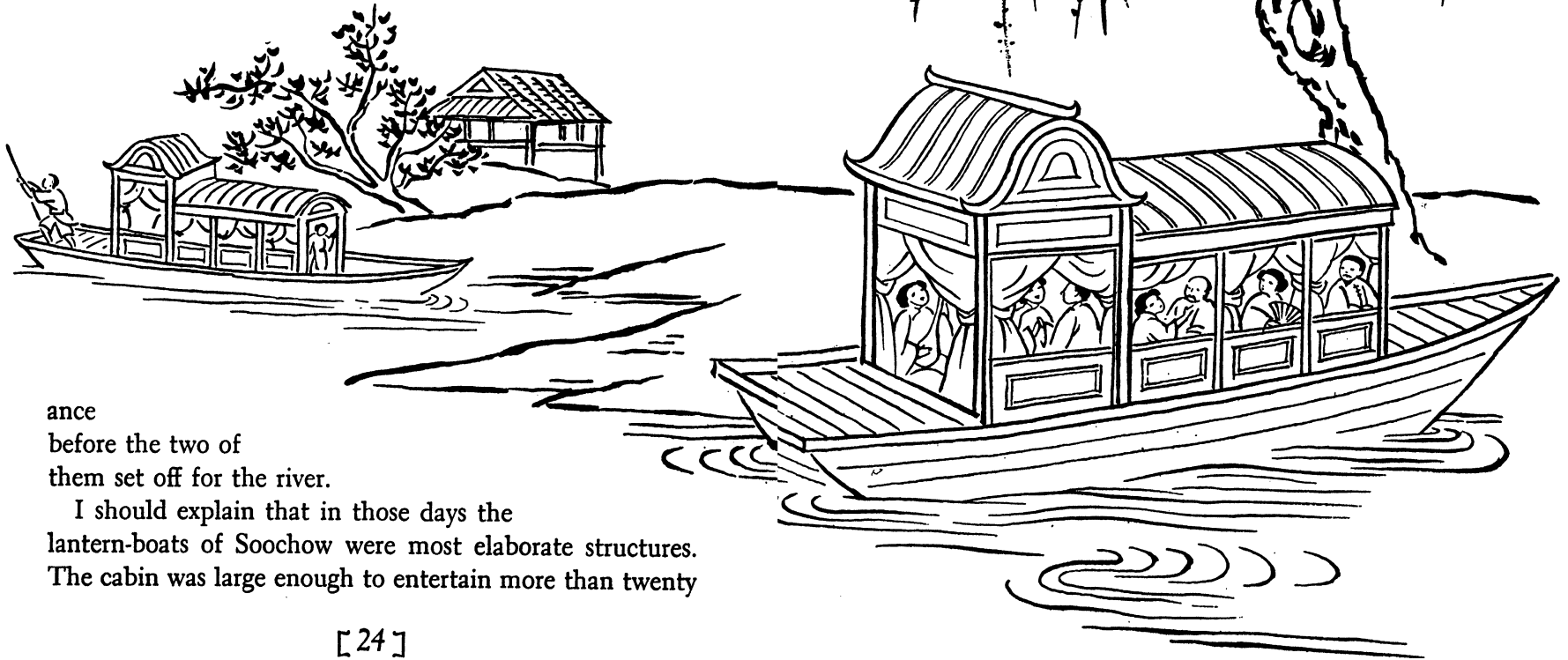
Now as a matter of fact Miss Chin was already well aware of the old lady's temper, and she was forced to admit the truth of what her sister-in-law said. Yet she had set her mind so much on this business that she could not give it up. At

last, after much thought, she hit upon a plan. This was, quite simply, not to bother her head about the two Chao women at all, but to get Sai out with her and then to introduce her to clients on the flower-boats without her family's knowing. No matter how precocious the child was, she would not at the time understand to what sort of place she had been taken, and she trusted Miss Chin so completely, that she would easily do what the latter asked. Then, if her mother and grandmother should learn the truth, the rice would already be cooked, as the saying goes, and it would be too late for them to mend the situation. After that, Miss Chin did not anticipate she would have much difficulty in persuading the two women to be sensible. If they did try to make trouble, she had enough protectors among the officials and gentry of Soochow to keep her safe. She told her sister-in-law what she had in her mind, and the latter agreed that the plan seemed a good one. They decided, then, to put it into execution.

First of all, Miss Chin prepared the ground by telling her clients about the delightful little girl she had met, and before very long these men were asking to have a look at the child for themselves. Miss Chin let them plead with her for a while, and at last consented to humor a group of her wealthier patrons by appointing a time for a meeting. The next step was to take Sai to the rendezvous, and Miss Chin managed this in the following way. The great center of attraction in Soochow was the river, and in the past when Miss Chin had taken Sai sight-seeing, the child had always been fascinated by the spectacle of the boats and the skill with which they were maneuvered by their oarsmen. Moored in the river too were the so-called lantern-boats and painted-

boats which were the resort of the singing girls and, without knowing what such places were, Sai had been pleased by the singing and flute music that came from them.

One fine spring day, Miss Chin's sister-in-law, the former maidservant, called at the Chaos' house to see if she could take Sai back with her to her home. She had chosen a time when old Mrs. Chao had gone to the temple for a Buddhist service, and the little girl was glad to go to her friend's house, and, still more, on arrival there, to meet Miss Chin, who asked her if she would like to go and watch the boats again? Of course Sai was eagerness itself, but Miss Chin first spent a while in touching up the child's appear-



ance
before the two of
them set off for the river.

I should explain that in those days the lantern-boats of Soochow were most elaborate structures. The cabin was large enough to entertain more than twenty

guests at dinner, and was fitted with opium couches and other furniture, made from redwood, sometimes inset with marble. The windows were of glass, and baskets of flowers gave a fragrance to the room. There were two classes of boat. In one, you merely hired the use of the boat and summoned your own singing girls from outside. In the other, which was much dearer, girls were provided with the boat. This latter class were called "flower-boats." The usual custom was for guests to go on board in the afternoon whereupon the boat would cast off and go to some agreeable place on the river.

When Miss Chin and Sai reached the riverbank at the spot where these lantern-boats were moored, some of the people on the boats pointed in their direction and appeared to be talking about them. Then, as they were passing a larger boat, a young man put his head out of one of the windows and waved to Miss Chin with a laugh. Sai thought to herself that Miss Chin must have a friend on the boat, and wondered whether they would have a chance of going on board. She had never been in such a place, and longed to know what such a boat was like inside. Sure enough, when Miss Chin had noticed that the young man was waving to her, she nodded and smiled back to him. Then she asked Sai, "Have you ever been on one of these boats? Would you like me to take you on board today?" This was just what the child was longing for. "Oh, Auntie," she said, "do you know the people on the boat? Just now a man was waving to you." Miss Chin smiled pleasantly, half at the girl's innocence, half at the success of her plan. Then, holding Sai by the hand, she walked across to where the boat was moored, and one of the boatmen stretched out a pole for them to lean on as they stepped on board.

Of course Miss Chin was quite at home in such surroundings and laughed and chatted with the people on the boat, while Sai stared about her open-eyed, and thought what a beautiful and wonderful place she had come to. There were a dozen or more guests in the cabin, some of them lying on couches smoking opium, others sitting at table drinking and playing the finger-game, or joking loudly among themselves. But in a moment all eyes were fixed on Sai, who was too much interested in the boat and its furnishings to notice the curiosity she was arousing. Then Miss Chin pulled at her sleeve and whispered, "Why don't you go and speak to the gentlemen? If you don't, they will be angry." With these words, Miss Chin took her across to the guests and started to tell her their names, Mr. Wu, Mr. P'an, Mr. Chang and so on, expecting she would greet each one as she heard his name. But the little girl just stared at all the strange faces and said nothing. The only men she had spoken to before had been relations of the family whom she had addressed as Uncle This or That, and she could not bring herself to call these people Mr. So-and-So. "What's the matter with you?" asked Miss Chin. "You have always plenty to say for yourself. If you don't speak to the gentlemen properly, they won't let you stay on the boat." But Sai only smiled and did not open her mouth.

One of the men, whose name Miss Chin had given as Mr. Shen, called out "Leave the child alone. Who cares what she says? Come, my dear, and sit over here next to me." Sai obeyed, and a waiter took her a cup of tea, with a cover on it. Then Mr. Shen started chatting to her, asking her all kinds of questions about herself, while the other gentlemen were saying what a pretty little thing she was. In this way, she soon felt quite at her ease. After some time,

Miss Chin beckoned her to leave, whereupon Mr. Shen took out five dollars and gave them to Miss Chin, who smiled and thanked him. Miss Chin put two dollars on Sai's saucer, and then led her away, after saying good-bye to the company. As they were leaving, all the waiters shouted: "Thank you, young lady," so loudly that the girl was quite startled. From there they went to another boat, and then to another, and in each the same ritual was repeated. Sai could not understand why the gentlemen gave money to Miss Chin, and still less why the waiters should thank her and not Miss Chin for the money that the latter put on the saucer. Indeed she was quite mystified by the whole business and never guessed for a moment that it was her own pretty face that had earned the money for Miss Chin, and so, indirectly, for the waiters too.

By this time, it was getting late, and Miss Chin decided she had better take Sai home. On the way the child started to ask questions about what they had been doing that afternoon, but by way of answer Miss Chin only laughed and inquired whether she had enjoyed herself? "Oh, yes," said Sai, "it was very nice, but there were too many people, so that I couldn't remember their names." "You must listen to me carefully," said Miss Chin, "and whenever I introduce you to a gentleman you must always call him by the name I tell you. If you don't, I shan't take you with me next time." At this, Sai promised she would pay more attention to the gentlemen's names. "One other thing," said Miss Chin—"you must not let your mother or grandmother know what we have been doing today. If they found out, they would never let you come out to play again. It doesn't make any difference to me, but remember that if you want to come with me on the boats again, you must

not say a word to anybody." Sai thought what fun she had had, and how kind all the strange gentlemen had been to her, and how they had said nice things about her. She felt she would like to go on the boats every day if she could. She did not understand why she must keep it a secret, but she knew her grandmother's temper well enough to realize that if the old lady did object to her going out to play like that, she would never be allowed to go again. So when she got home, she said she had spent the day at the house of their former maid.

This was Sai's first introduction to her future profession, and a very strange introduction it was, because the girl herself had not the slightest idea of what she was doing. But it had been a very profitable afternoon for Miss Chin, and there was every sign that there was plenty of more money to be made in the same way. Quite a few of her clients had now got their eyes on Sai, and whenever there was a big party one or other of the guests would send an urgent message asking to have the little girl's company. Of course, such requests could be met only from time to time, as Sai could not go out from home too often without arousing suspicion. So Miss Chin limited the girl's attendance to occasions when her presence was required by some really important man with plenty of money to spend. Even then Sai had to take her leave early, but she more than made up for the shortness of her stay. She had soon lost any awkwardness she may have had at first, and she would nestle up against a man in the most coaxing way in the world. Miss Chin had taught her how to speak to her clients, and above all not to tell them anything about her family.

Now it happened one day that one of the most important citizens of Soochow, a certain Mr. P'an, was giving a party,

and sent a pressing request to Miss Chin that he might enjoy the pleasure of Sai's company. What made this invitation the more striking was that the party was to be held on the most famous of all the flower boats, where there were four singing girls of such beauty that it was unheard of for anybody to summon other girls from outside. This fact alone shows what an impression Sai had made on Mr. P'an, and for this reason, and still more because of the client's wealth and influence, Miss Chin and her sister-in-law put their heads together to find a way of making sure they could get permission from the Chaos for Sai to come out with them. I need not tell you here how this was achieved, but at the appointed hour Miss Chin took the girl to the party.

The saloon of the boat was already full of guests, some gathered in groups chatting, others lying down to smoke opium. In the midst of them were the four singing girls belonging to the establishment. As soon as Miss Chin and Sai came on board there was a cry of "Here she is now" and all eyes were turned toward Sai, who blushed to see the attention she was arousing. Fortunately Miss Chin was at her side to give her support, and after she had greeted Mr. P'an, she plucked up courage to look around at the other guests. She smiled to those whom she knew, and Miss Chin told her the names of those whom she had not met before. There were however two gentlemen whom even Miss Chin did not recognize, and Mr. P'an himself made a special point of introducing Sai to them. They were both legal experts from the Governor's office, one being named Ho and the other Liu, and neither of them was accustomed to frequenting the flower-boats, which accounted for the fact that even so knowledgeable a woman as Miss Chin had not recognized them.

The conversation and the joking had stopped, and even the opium smokers had put down their pipes and were sitting up to look at Sai. Miss Chin picked up a stool, and put it beside Mr. P'an's chair, and Sai sat down. The four singing girls went about among the guests, filling tobacco-pipes and pouring out tea, but you could tell from the way they looked at Sai that they resented the comparisons they knew the guests were making between them and the newcomer. A few minutes ago they were the center of attention, but now this young girl had arrived on the scene, nobody was giving them a thought. Meanwhile one of the two lawyers, Mr. Ho, was looking hard at Sai, with an expression of great perplexity. "Surely," he asked, "this little girl lives in the Chou Family Lane? This is all very strange!"

The street mentioned by Mr. Ho was in fact the place where the Chaos had been living until the death of Eighth Brother, and you can well imagine the shock that these words gave to Miss Chin. "How on earth can the man have recognized her?" she wondered. But without betraying her confusion, she said: "You must be making a mistake, sir. The girl lives in a lane, certainly, but it is the Hsiao Family Lane, which is on the other side of the town from the Chou Family Lane." Mr. Ho, seeing that it was Miss Chin who answered him and not the girl herself, half guessed what was going on, but did not press his questions. Instead, he turned to Mr. P'an and said, "You know, the child is far too well behaved to have been born into this sort of life. I fancy she is from a comfortable family which has come down in the world and has been forced to put her into this business. I am sorry for the poor little thing." Mr. Ho thought he ought to say this to give Mr. P'an a hint that the girl had been inveigled by Miss Chin into carrying on such a trade, but he did not want to put a damper on the festivities by

speaking more plainly. Mr. P'an nodded his head but did not pay much attention to what his friend had said. Miss Chin, however, had heard Mr. Ho's words and was terribly alarmed. She thought of the old saying: "If you don't want people to know what you do, you had better not do it." Certainly, it seemed as if it was going to be impossible to conceal her own activities very much longer.

You will be wondering how it had come to pass that Mr. Ho recognized Sai, or at least knew her as a girl from the Chou Family Lane. It had happened in this way. Mr. Ho was not a native of Soochow, but having found a job in the Governor's office he had come to settle in the place with his wife and child, and by chance he had taken a house near the home of Eighth Brother's father-in-law. Soon afterwards one of his relatives was marrying off a daughter, and as the silk work of Soochow was very famous this man wrote to ask him to procure some embroidery for the girl's trousseau. Being strangers to the town, the Hos had no idea where to go for such a thing, but a Soochow woman whom they employed as a maid advised them to get Sai's mother to do the work for them, and they were so pleased with the samples she showed them that they gave her the order. When the work was finished and was delivered to the Hos, Sai had insisted on accompanying her mother to the lawyer's house, as it was only a stone's throw from there to the house of her mother's family, which she wanted to visit. Mr. Ho and his wife were struck by the child's good looks and exchanged a few words with her. Later, when the mother and daughter had left, the Hos heard from their maid what good hard-working people the Chaos were and how everybody thought highly of them. All this had occurred three years ago or more, and Sai had grown since

then, but Mr. Ho was sure he was not mistaken and that the little entertainer at the party was none other than the child from the Chou Family Lane.

While Miss Chin sat waiting with trepidation to hear what Mr. Ho would say next—because she was pretty sure by this time that he knew enough to spoil her little game—Sai continued to engross the attention of the company. She was quite well trained by now and snuggled up beside Mr. P'an, without neglecting to keep the other guests amused with her smiles and chatter. "You know, gentlemen," said Mr. P'an "one of these days no girl in Soochow will be able to hold a candle to this child!"

"Oh no, sir," cried Miss Chin, who thought she would put in a word at this point. "She is too young yet to know how to behave. You and the other gentlemen must have patience with her."

Mr. Ho put down his pipe. "I should think with you she will have all the training she needs," he said.

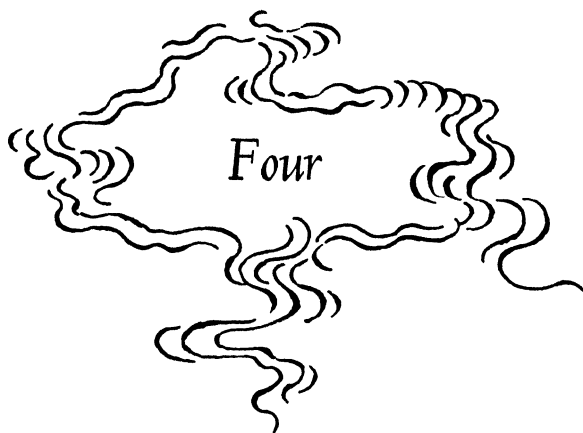
The other guests, who were rather amused to see the lawyer taking an interest in such matters, laughed at this retort, but Miss Chin, who guessed the meaning behind it, flushed to her very ears.

"You ought not to say such things, Mr. Ho," she said. "Most of these other gentlemen know me and I am sure they don't want to see me upset like this."

For the time, this answer stopped the matter from going further, and shortly afterwards the party took their places at table. Mr. P'an first drank a round of toasts with all the guests, and the four girls from the boat took it in turn to pour out the wine. Then Miss Chin pulled Sai's sleeve and whispered, "Now it's your turn to pour." It was the first time Sai had had to perform this duty, because on previous

occasions she had only visited the boats for brief periods and had left before dinner was served. Today, however, she was obliged to stay to do special honor to Mr. P'an. But she found no difficulty in imitating what the other girls had done, and went from guest to guest with the silver wine-pot in the most natural way in the world. Some of them pretended they didn't want to drink, just to have the pleasure of letting her persuade them. When she had made the round of the table she returned to her place beside Mr. P'an and listened to the other girls who were playing the lute and singing. Mr. P'an asked her if she could sing, and she said no, she could not, but she loved to hear others singing. "Oh, now, you ought to learn," said Mr. P'an, "and then you will really be a star." "No," said Mr. Ho, "it will be happier for her not to know everything."

By this time, Miss Chin thought they had stayed long enough, and after Sai had made one more round with the wine, they took their leave, not before Mr. P'an had given a handsome present to Miss Chin, who, as always, deposited a tip for the waiters in Sai's saucer. When the two of them reached the Chao house, Miss Chin excused herself for having kept the girl out so long, and no questions were asked.



WHEN Mr. Ho the lawyer went home that evening he had quite a story to tell his wife. "They often say that it is better for a girl not to be clever," he said, "but after today I think it is better for a girl not to be pretty, either." Mrs. Ho could not make out what her husband was talking about and it was only after a certain amount of questioning that he recovered his temper sufficiently to tell her what he had seen. "You remember that woman—Chao was her name, wasn't it?—who did the embroidery work for us, and that pretty daughter of hers? Do you know what has become of the child now? She is going round the brothels as a prostitute! That is what her good looks have done for her!"

At first Mrs. Ho was incredulous. "Surely not?" she said. "Why, the Chaos were always a very respectable family! And the girl is so young! I can't believe her mother can have allowed her to go into that sort of life."

Mr. Ho smiled. "That shows how little you know," he said. "It's not the first time I have seen such a thing happen, and it won't be the last! I tell you, today at the party Mr. P'an sent out for a girl, and when she came she was the Chao child. I recognized her with my own eyes. I admit I was astonished after what I have heard about her family, and I have been wondering whether somebody is playing a trick on them. Anyway, however that may be, there is no doubt that the girl is becoming a prostitute."

As ill luck would have it, the conversation was overheard by the maid, who, as we have seen, was a great friend of Sai's mother and her family. She was horrified at the news and thought that if it was true she had never heard of such an unnatural mother. But perhaps, after all, as Mr. Ho seemed to believe possible, somebody was playing a trick on the Chaos behind their back. In that case, whoever it was must be punished. "Now that I have heard this," she said to herself, "I won't rest until I have spoken to young Mrs. Chao's mother."

When people are getting on in years, they take things more to heart than in their younger days, and the maid was in two minds whether or not to go and tell her friend the news then and there. However, it was already late, and she did not relish the idea of getting the old lady out of bed with such a story. So she decided to put her visit off till the next day. She was in such a state of anger and excitement that she hardly slept, and as soon as it was light she rose and, after doing a few things about the house, picked up a basket and set off for the market as she did every morning. On her way she passed by her friend's house but it was plain that nobody was yet up, so she went to the market and bought what her mistress had ordered the night

before. In returning, she took the road by which she had come, and this time she found young Mrs. Chao's mother at the street door buying vegetables from a hawker, and she went across and spoke to her.

"My word, you are early!" the old lady said. "I thought I was out of bed early this morning, but you are already coming back from the market."

"You seem in a good humor," said the maid, pursing her lips. "I must tell you I was so upset by what I heard about your granddaughter that I didn't shut my eyes all night."

At these words, the old lady knew that she was going to hear something unpleasant.

"You will be tired standing out here," she said. "Let's go inside and sit down."

Without waiting to be asked twice, the maid went into the house, and when the old lady asked her what was the matter, she told her everything she had overheard the night before.

You can imagine what an effect the story had! Young Mrs. Chao's father, who had been dead for some years, had been a scholar, and his widow was proud of the prestige which this gave her in the eyes of her neighbors. When she heard that her own granddaughter was going the rounds of the brothels for all the world like a common prostitute, she went almost out of her mind.

The maid did not stay very long, as she had to get back to her work. When she had left, the old lady's first instinct was to hurry to confront her daughter with what she had just heard. But, angry as she was, she still had enough presence of mind to understand that this was not the best way of going about things. In the Chao house, the head of the family was old Mrs. Chao, and she would be merely an in-

truder. Clearly, the best plan was to summon her daughter to her own house, where she would have the right to treat her with the severity of a mother. As she had no servant of her own to use as a messenger, she asked a young girl who worked as a maid in a neighbor's house to go to the Hsiao Family Lane and ask her daughter to come at once, as she had something important to say to her.

When the messenger arrived, young Mrs. Chao had just finished the morning's housework and was sitting down to enjoy a cup of tea. She could not guess what was the matter, but assuming it must be something urgent, she told the servant to go back and say she would come without delay. She made herself tidy and went to tell her mother-in-law she was going out. As it happened, the old lady was busy reciting a sutra before the statue of Buddha, and young Mrs. Chao, who did not care to interrupt her in her devotions, stood waiting until she had finished. As a matter of fact, devout Buddhists think they are committing a sin if they break off the recital of a sutra, and if you try to speak to one of them at such a moment, all he will do will be to nod his head at you while he continues to recite his sacred text. No matter how urgent your business may be, you will not get a word out of him until he has finished his sutra. Young Mrs. Chao was well aware of this, as she was a practicing Buddhist herself. At last the sutra came to an end, and the old lady willingly gave permission to her daughter-in-law to go and see her mother. Sai stayed at home to keep her grandmother company.

As soon as the young woman entered her mother's house, she knew something was very wrong indeed. Usually her mother was the most easygoing of women, who could hardly be upset by anything, but today she was sitting alone, with

a terrible expression on her face. Indeed, the old lady was thinking of the filth and degradation that had been brought upon her and her family, and when she saw her daughter coming to greet her with a cheerful word and a smile, the effect was exactly as if you had thrown oil on a fire. She jumped to her feet and pointed at her daughter.

"You have the impudence to come here with a smile on your face, you shameless beast!" she shouted.

The poor young woman was dumfounded by such a reception. Her mother had used the word "shameless" and to her this meant only one thing. She knew that from the day she had become a widow she had done nothing to be ashamed of. Had anybody slandered her? If so, she would soon discover who was responsible. But seeing her mother in such a state, she fell on her knees and tears came to her eyes.

"What is this?" she said. "I have always done my best to be a good daughter to you, and to live in the way you have brought me up."

"You have indeed!" said her mother. "I suppose it was I who gave you the idea of turning your daughter into a prostitute? I must have become a bawd in my old age!"

"What are you saying, Mother?" cried the young woman.

"Oh, so you don't know?" said the mother. "Well, I'll tell you what I am saying. Your daughter is a prostitute. She was on the flower-boats yesterday."

These words came to young Mrs. Chao as a thunder-stroke. But the moment they had been spoken, the thought came into her mind that Sai had indeed been out the day before to visit their former servant and that she had been brought home unusually late by Miss Chin. And she remembered that such outings were occurring frequently.

Was it possible, monstrous though such an idea seemed, that the little girl was being used in some evil way of which she knew nothing? In great distress, she told her mother what had happened.

Now the old lady recalled that Mr. Ho was reported as saying he thought some trick was being played on the Chaos, and on hearing her daughter's story she became quieter, and raising the young woman to her feet she told her what the lawyer had said. Mother and daughter fell into each other's arms and were reconciled. But young Mrs. Chao was all anxiety to return home and get to the bottom of what had happened, so after a few minutes she took leave of her mother and hurried back to the Hsiao Family Lane.

Although Sai, at Miss Chin's request, had said nothing of what she had been doing during her outings, she was too innocent to understand what sort of places the flower-boats were and that it was disgraceful for her to have gone there, and after a few stern questions she told her mother everything that had happened. When young Mrs. Chao had heard the story, her first thought was of the shame brought upon her dead husband and all the Chao family and for a while she sat there in a daze. Meanwhile her mother-in-law had finished another set of Buddhist devotions, and not seeing Sai anywhere—for the child's mother had taken her aside into another room to question her—she started to call her name loudly. This roused young Mrs. Chao from her stupor, and she ran in and fell at the old lady's feet, accusing herself of being a bad mother and unfit to live and, in the manner of those days, asking her mother-in-law to put her to death. Old Mrs. Chao tried to induce her to rise from the floor, but she knelt there and poured out her story.

The old lady was of sterner stuff than her daughter-in-

law, and when the first shock of the discovery had passed, her thought was of revenge against Miss Chin.

"Such people must be cut off from the face of the earth," she said. "The Governor himself will see to this. How can he know that his own daughter will be safe from them?"

Young Mrs. Chao, on the other hand, turned her anger against her daughter.

"She must not be allowed to live, either!" she cried. "If she had not enjoyed it, she would never have gone with that woman!"

Suddenly, while the two of them were talking in this way, who should come to the house but Mrs. Golden-Lotus, the woman who years ago had bound Sai's feet. She stared to see the two women in tears and asked them why they were crying. Old Mrs. Chao was never one to hold anything back and she told the whole story.

"Well now," said Mrs. Golden-Lotus, "I may as well tell you that it is because of this business I have come to see you. There has been a rumor going round the town that your little girl has been visiting the flower-boats, but at first I did not believe such a thing was possible. Later, when I made inquiries, I found that it was true, but I knew you both too well to think that either of you could be responsible, and I was certain there was some mystery at the back of it. We have all been such friends that I felt I had to come and see you and find out what had really happened. But may I ask what you are thinking of doing about this woman Chin?"

"What a question to ask!" said old Mrs. Chao. "Of course we are going to go straight to the magistrate and charge her with seducing our child into prostitution. At the very least she will get a long term of imprisonment."

On hearing this, Mrs. Golden-Lotus nodded approvingly, but after thinking for a minute or two she began to look rather dubious.

"The woman is a low wretch," she said, "but perhaps you don't know she is hand in glove with some of the local gentlemen. If you accuse her, she will almost certainly get these people to drop a note privately to the magistrate, and nothing will be done. And even if men of their standing do not care to be mixed up in such a case, she is not without money, and you will find she will bribe her way out. It would have been different a few years ago when you were prosperous, but as things are now, although I don't want to dishearten you, I'm afraid you must not put much faith in the law."

These words brought the two women to their senses. They knew that what Mrs. Golden-Lotus had said was no more than the truth. In that case, if they went to law and failed, from their point of view things would be worse than ever, as they would have publicly acknowledged their disgrace to no avail, and would merely have made themselves look ridiculous. There is a proverb in Soochow: "If you stir up a privy with a bamboo pole, the more you stir, the more it stinks." Obviously they would have to act with care.

"You may be right," said the grandmother. "But I should rather die than see that beast escape scot-free. I shall try and kill her, or if I can't do that I shall kill myself in front of her house. She will find she cannot get away from me."

"She will never give you the chance of killing her," said Mrs. Golden-Lotus. "And as for suicide, of what good will that be to anyone? Then there is another point. What do you propose to do about the girl? The poor little thing didn't know the sort of place she had been taken to."

"All we can do about her," said the mother, "is to keep her inside the house and see in a year or two if any man who is not overparticular will do us the favor of taking her off our hands."

"You are making a terrible mistake, and being unfair to the girl at the same time," said Mrs. Golden-Lotus. "Leaving her looks out of the question. I well remember going to the temple one day with you"—she turned to the old lady—"and having the child's fortune told. Don't you recall the wonderful future it said was in store for her?"

"I remember those things well," said old Mrs. Chao, "but she is no longer the same girl. How can we hope that any good family will take a prostitute as a wife for one of their sons?"

"Let me tell you frankly," said Mrs. Golden-Lotus. "If the girl wants to make a good match, she is more likely to do so in the flower-boats than anywhere else. Many a girl has been taken into a rich family from those places, and I am sure that your child is prettier than any of them."

"You mean my girl ought to become a prostitute?" exclaimed the mother.

"I can see I have offended you," said Mrs. Golden-Lotus. "But you must look at things in the right way. All the girls who go to the flower-boats are not in the same class. And another point is: although you may not allow your child to go to such places any more, yet she will always have the name of having been there. There is no longer anything you can do about that. Quite frankly, why not allow her to go on as she has been doing, but on two strict conditions: first, that she should keep her virginity, and secondly that an attempt should be made to find a man of good position who will take her as his own for life? If she retains her

chastity, this should not be very difficult. In this way you would be providing for the girl's future, and, if you will forgive my saying so, you would be getting some benefit from her yourselves. You know very well the sort of people who go to the flower-boats—men of good families, or rich merchants—and if one of these takes a real fancy to a girl, her fortune is as good as made. Remember the old saying that the lotus grows from the mud, but all love its beauty."

The two Chao women received the advice in very different ways. The mother grew white with anger, and was clearly having great difficulty in restraining herself. The grandmother, on the other hand, had become more and more thoughtful. The fact was that, in spite of herself, old Mrs. Chao had been impressed by what Mrs. Golden-Lotus had said. More than anything else in the world she wanted a brilliant marriage for her granddaughter. Yet in spite of the girl's beauty, how was it possible in their walk of life that such a chance should come her way? In the flower-boats, on the other hand, she would meet all the leading officials and the richest merchants, and it was hard to believe that her good looks would not make some conquests among them. Of course, from every point of view it was essential she should remain a virgin, but this could easily be safeguarded.

"There is something in what you say," she replied. "But are you suggesting that we allow the Chin woman to escape unpunished?"

Young Mrs. Chao was astounded at her mother-in-law's change of tone and could restrain herself no longer.

"If you want my daughter to be a prostitute, you will have to kill me first!" she shouted.

Before Mrs. Golden-Lotus could say anything, the grand-

mother began very gently to tell her daughter-in-law all that was in her mind and gradually the young woman grew calmer. Then Mrs. Golden-Lotus took up her tale again.

"Your mother-in-law is a woman of experience, my dear," she said. "You would be wise to let yourself be guided by her. As to the woman Chin, of course I am not suggesting you should let her get away with what she has done. You should insist that she must pay you back for the damage she has caused you. In the first place, she must come here and kotow to you in apology. And then if your little girl should take up the profession, Miss Chin must provide her with all the clothes and other things she may need."

The old lady sighed, and Mrs. Golden-Lotus, thinking she had done enough for one day in that direction, turned the conversation to religion. Young Mrs. Chao, who still felt that she could restore her mother-in-law to a proper frame of mind after their visitor had left, listened patiently, and indeed not without some interest.

"That shrine of Kuan-yin in the Temple of the Western Garden outside the city wall is really extraordinary," said Mrs. Golden-Lotus. "The fortunes you are told there always come to pass. In autumn of last year I was very ill and any number of doctors gave me up. I have always been a great believer in Kuan-yin and I sent my son's wife to the shrine to get a fortune for me. Do you know what it said? 'Don't touch medicine: your sickness will get better by itself.' When I read this, my mind was at peace, and in a little while I recovered. The month before last, a neighbor of ours was a little out of sorts—nothing serious, just that he had no appetite. His wife had heard me talk about the shrine and she went to get a fortune for her husband. It read: 'No cure is possible.' And sure enough the poor man

got worse and died a few days ago. Yes, if anybody wants to know the future, he should go to ask Kuan-yin. By the way, now we happen to be talking about this, why don't you go and see what advice Kuan-yin will give you about your girl? If she says that the girl's fortune is such-and-such, then you may be sure nothing you can do will alter it one way or the other. You think that it is the woman Chin who has brought her into this trouble, but how do you know that all along it has not been her destiny that such a thing should happen to her?"

This suggestion excited the Chaos.

"Yes, yes," exclaimed the old lady, "I am sure that if we do what Kuan-yin tells us, we shall not go wrong."

Young Mrs. Chao said nothing, but as a pious Buddhist she felt confident that Kuan-yin would never advise them to send a child into such a life unless indeed such was the fate decreed for her, and then nothing that her mother-in-law or herself could do would prevent the destiny from coming to pass. So the two women made up their minds to abstain from meat and to go to the shrine of Kuan-yin to ask the Goddess to determine the matter for them. When this had been decided upon, Mrs. Golden-Lotus said good-bye, having in the short space of an hour fatally weakened all the most cherished prejudices of the Chao family.

You will be wondering how it happened that she made her visit at such an opportune moment, and I can tell you now, if indeed you have not already guessed, that she had been sent to the house by Miss Chin who had been worrying over what Mr. Ho the lawyer had said in the flower-boat the day before. Her original purpose was no more than to discover how much the Chaos knew and what steps they were likely to take, but finding the position things were in, she had used her own initiative, with the result that we

have seen. She had certainly every reason to be pleased with her morning's work.

The following day, equipped with incense sticks and other paraphernalia, old Mrs. Chao and her daughter-in-law set off to the shrine of Kuan-yin, having resolved to put the matter entirely in the hands of the Goddess. They lit their incense, and kneeling down kotowed many times in front of the statue. Then the old lady said "You are the girl's mother. It is your place to draw a fortune for her." An acolyte came forward carrying a cylindrical box full of fortunes. Young Mrs. Chao took it in her hands, and prayed to the Goddess, asking that if it was Sai-chin-hua's destiny to take up this life, the fortune should be marked with the word "high," and if not, with the character "low." She then lifted up the box and shook it violently backwards and forwards until a fortune fell out, whereupon she handed back the box, and kotowed three times before picking up the fortune from the ground. It was marked in clear characters "Number 25: high." The young woman looked at it dubiously for a minute or two, but at last acknowledged to herself that her daughter's fate was indeed decided. Meanwhile the acolyte selected the charm corresponding to the number and gave it to her. It was a printed slip, consisting of four lines of verse:

*The lotus has its roots in the mud,
But its graceful stem comes from the water and it shows
its precious face.
If it encounters one who appreciates it and takes it up
It will sway in the pure wind like a fairy on a jade terrace.*

The acolyte read out these verses and explained them, while the mother thought to herself that her daughter's

future must have been determined in a past life, and old Mrs. Chao recited a prayer. Then the mother, saying she would like to inquire about her daughter's chance of marriage, knelt down again and repeated the former procedure, but when she shook the box six or seven fortunes fell out together. To the superstitious this was a sign that the inquirer was insincere and that the Goddess was angry. Young Mrs. Chao remembered her moment of doubt just before and she kotowed vigorously and begged Kuan-yin's pardon. Then, without inquiring further, she and her mother-in-law left the temple and set off for home.

So the great decision was made. Yet neither of the two women understood what they should do in order to protect the girl's future. Old Mrs. Chao was very insistent that the whole purpose of the step they were taking was to find a good match for Sai, and that they should allow her only to attend parties to talk with gentlemen and pour out their wine, and even that not after a fixed hour in the evening. Furthermore, she proposed they should make it clear that they would never consent to the girl's becoming a concubine or going to live with a man in any capacity other than as a regular wife. As regards this second condition, the old lady betrayed very great ignorance of the world. That the family of a respectable girl should not allow her to become a concubine is understandable enough, but even the status of a concubine, such as it is, is infinitely superior to that of a female entertainer.

A few days later, Mrs. Golden-Lotus called again to inquire what they had decided to do. When she was told they had made up their minds to allow Sai to continue as she had begun, she said they were being very sensible and advised them not to keep the girl at home any longer. Old

Mrs. Chao confessed they were both totally ignorant of the best way to proceed and that they were thinking of asking for the help of their former maid, the woman who, as we have seen, was now married to Miss Chin's brother.

"That is an excellent plan," said Mrs. Golden-Lotus. "The woman is used to your ways, and must know all about this other business thanks to her sister-in-law. If I were you, I should make an arrangement with her by which she would work for you again, this time as the girl's personal attendant. In that way, you can be sure that nobody will take advantage of the child."

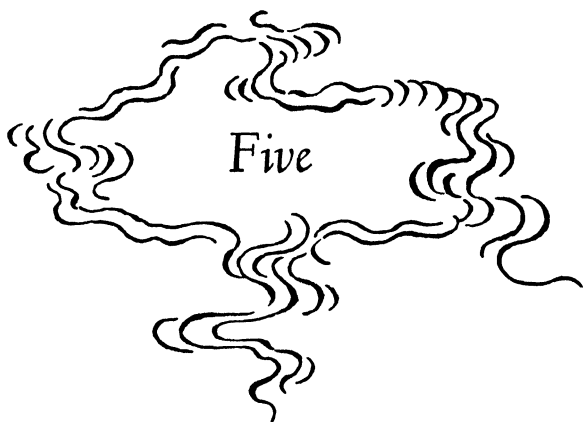
"That would be very good, if she will agree," said old Mrs. Chao. "The only difficulty is that she may have been frightened by all this unpleasantness and may not want to work for us. I wonder if you could possibly go and have a word with her? We are giving you a lot of trouble, but—who knows?—we may be able to repay you when our little girl makes a rich marriage."

If the old lady had only known, Mrs. Golden-Lotus had already planned everything in advance with the maid, but she laughed good-humoredly and promised to see what could be done. She was soon back again, this time with the maid following nervously behind her. As soon as they came through the door, Mrs. Golden-Lotus said to her companion, "Now go and kotow to these two ladies, and ask them to forgive you for all the trouble you have caused them!" The maid knelt and kotowed twice to each of her former employers, mumbling some words of apology as if she was really ashamed of what she had done. But women of that kind have faces as callous as the skin of one's heels, and then can spin a story with as little thought as you or I can break wind. As the Chaos were convinced that everything

that had happened had been decreed by fate, they were not disposed to be too severe with her, and contented themselves with a few words of reproach.

"At first she was afraid to come," said Mrs. Golden-Lotus, "because she was sure you would have her taken before the magistrate, but when I told her you had promised not to have her punished and that you were too generous to go back on your word, she finally plucked up courage to come back with me." Then, turning to the maid, "Now that these ladies have forgiven you," she said, "if you don't do everything you can to repay their kindness, you'll be worse than a beast."

The maid agreed eagerly, and with that the past was considered closed. The discussion then turned to the matter in hand, and in a short time an agreement had been reached on the fitting out of Sai for her profession and the renting of a house near the riverside at Storehouse Bridge Creek, where most of the girls lived. When you hear about the renting of a house, you will at once think of the elaborate furnishing that must have gone into it and you will ask where the Chao family could have found the money for such an undertaking. The truth is, however, that in those days the custom in such matters was different from what it is now, and girls like Sai, who retained their virginity, did not as a rule receive clients in their own place, but merely went out to entertain at parties either in the flower-boats or at private houses. Only very privileged clients were allowed to call on them, and for this reason it was not necessary to spend much on furnishing their homes.



SAI-CHIN-HUA had made so many friends on the flower-boats that when she formally set up in business she had a clientele already prepared. Her chief admirer was probably the Mr. P'an at whose party Mr. Ho the lawyer had recognized her, and it so happened that this Mr. P'an was a close friend of the Senior Wrangler Hung Wen-ch'ing, who, it will be remembered, had returned to Soochow to observe the period of mourning after the death of his mother. One day, Mr. Hung, who was utterly bored with staying at home and doing nothing, was visiting Mr. P'an's house together with some other friends and the conversation turned to the subject of girls.

"That reminds me," said Mr. P'an, to Hung Wen-ch'ing. "There's a little girl who is determined to get to know you, and the other day I promised I would introduce her to you. Now you're here, I'll send for her to come."

"My dear friend, you know that such a thing is out of the question," protested Hung. "It is all very well for you, but I am still in mourning, and it wouldn't do for tales to get round about me."

"Nonsense!" said P'an. "Who will know, except the few of us here? Even if any outsider did get to know, you are almost out of mourning by this time, and in any case it is I who am sending for the girl and not you."

So without listening to Hung's protests, P'an sent a messenger to Storehouse Bridge Creek, and in a little while Sai-chin-hua made her appearance.

All those present, except Hung Wen-ch'ing, were well known to her, and she greeted them one by one. When she came to Hung, she was just about to inquire his name, but before she could do so P'an said "I don't think you have met this gentleman? He is Mr. Hung, the famous Senior Wrangler. Now go and sit beside him like a good girl."

"Oh, Mr. Hung!" cried Sai, and before the words were out of her mouth she was thinking of the jokes that Mrs. Golden-Lotus and the neighbors used to make about her marriage to a Senior Wrangler. With all this in her head, she took a stool next to Hung's chair.

The party were playing mahjong, but as Hung was merely waiting to declare, he had an opportunity of taking stock of his neighbor. The more he looked at her, the more he said to himself that he had never seen such an attractive little thing before, and in these matters he was a man of very wide experience. For her part, the girl stole many a glance at him, when she imagined he wasn't looking, and she thought that although he was old, he had a very distinguished appearance, and seemed a very kind gentleman. While she was meditating in this way, she busied herself

filling the water-pipe and passing it round among the guests, for in those days, when cigarettes were still almost unknown in China, this was as important a part of a professional girl's duty as pouring out wine or entertaining the guests with song.

"I had often heard the name of Sai-chin-hua," said Hung to the others, "but I thought you were all exaggerating when you said she was so attractive. Now I have seen her, I must admit she more than comes up to her reputation. I could never have believed you have such good taste."

"It doesn't matter what we say," said one of the guests, a Mr. Shen. "It's your opinion that counts. If a Senior Wrangler takes a fancy to her, a girl's fortune is as good as made. Go on, man, don't pretend to be shy in front of your friends. Look my dear," making a face at the girl, "don't worry about us! It's Mr. Hung that needs your attention!"

Thus encouraged, Sai offered the pipe to Hung, and started to talk to him. In spite of the thirty years' difference in their ages, the pair of them were soon at their ease together, and before long she was telling him all about herself and how she came to take up such a life.

This was the first of many such meetings, because from that time on whenever Mr. P'an or any other friends asked Hung to come for a game of mahjong, they made a point of sending for Sai-chin-hua to keep him company. He would often say what a shame it was such a girl had gone into that life, and that he wondered whether some man would come along to take her out of it. Now and again one of his friends would ask him if he himself ever thought of making her his concubine, but at such a question Hung would smile and ask them if they believed the girl would like the prospect of being left a widow. "No," he used to

say, "I am going to find some way of helping the child without giving her a husband more than thirty years older than herself."

When his friends heard him say this, they would ask the girl whether she thought Hung was too old, and whether she would like to marry him? "Mr. Hung isn't old!" she would say, and although she would never answer the other question, her head was beginning to be full of daydreams about a wonderful life as the bride of a Senior Wrangler. Meanwhile, one or two of Hung's friends who knew of his family affairs began to press him quite seriously to take Sai-chin-hua into his house. Apart from his wife, he already had one concubine, but this woman was in such poor health that she was unable to give Hung the services he required, and by taking Sai as a second concubine he would be meeting a need at home. However, no matter what his friends said, Hung would not hear of such a thing, and the affair might have remained as it was indefinitely had not something happened to bring it to a head.

It must be confessed that Sai was these days seeing so much of Mr. Hung that she was becoming rather inattentive to her other clients. One day—it was in the hot weather and she was feeling out of sorts—a certain Mr. Wu, another of the notables of the town, was giving a party on one of the flower-boats and sent for her to come and entertain his guests. At first she did not want to go, but her maid, who knew that Mr. Wu was not a man it was wise to offend, persuaded her to put in an appearance. When she did arrive, the company could hardly help noticing the perfunctory way she was carrying out her duties. Even so, the occasion might have passed off without incident, if it had not been for the fact that Mr. Wu was drinking rather

more heavily than usual. In this state, he suddenly took offense at some short answer the girl gave him, and flung his wine cup from him to smash in pieces on the floor.

"How dare you, you slut?" he shouted. "Is this what a man gets for giving you his business? I'll teach you a lesson!"

He was making as if to strike her, but his guests came between them, and the girl's maid begged his pardon effusively. He sat down again reluctantly, but continued his abuse.

"She thinks she's too good for the likes of us," he said. "This is what that man Hung and his friends have done for her. If Hung wants her, let him marry her! If he doesn't, I'll give her some fun, just you wait!"

Seeing their host's temper, the guests thought it wiser to send the girl away, and soon afterwards the party broke up. It was the first time such a thing had happened to Sai and she was frightened out of her wits. Her maid, too, was very much alarmed by the threat in Mr. Wu's words, and warned the girl that it would be safer to avoid meeting him in future. Indeed for some time, Sai declined all invitations on the excuse that she was ill and, in order to avoid causing offense by a suspicion of favoritism, would not even go out to parties where Mr. Hung was present.

It was not long before Hung noticed her absence, and when he was told she was ill he was very much concerned and made inquiries about her condition. In this way he discovered what had happened. At first he treated the whole thing as a joke, and felt that Wu had just made a spectacle of himself as a drunken oaf. Mr. P'an and his other friends, however, looked at the matter differently.

"This man Wu is quite sure that you will never marry

the girl," they said. "He doesn't seem to have much respect for your courage. Some people would be glad to have the chance of making a fellow like that eat his words. If you did marry her, you would take it out of his power to bully her again."

Now try as he would, Hung could not help in his heart feeling that what his friends said might be right. It revolted him to know that such a harmless little thing had to endure treatment of that kind with no protection or means of redress, and after all that was no more than a foretaste of what she might expect in the near future. By marrying her, he could stop Wu once and for all. On the other hand, he knew full well what would be said about him behind his back if he did marry her. So the more his friends tried to persuade him, the more he hesitated. But his friends could read what was in his mind and, without telling him what they were doing, some of them went to Sai's house, partly to persuade her to come out again, partly to sound out her family on the subject of marriage.

At first old Mrs. Chao was struck by the ludicrous side of the business, and of course it was easy to laugh at the idea that a man not far off fifty should want to marry a girl of twelve. Then she remembered the family joke about Sai and a Senior Wrangler, and she began to think it was becoming true. But the proposal seemed to be out of the question. Both the girl's mother and herself had made a vow that they would never allow Sai to become any man's concubine, and in the case of Hung Wen-ch'ing, who had a wife and a concubine already, it was impossible that any other status should be offered to her. However, she could not very well risk offending some of the leading gentlemen of Soochow by an outright refusal. In this dilemma, she

thought the best thing to do was to bring forward a number of rather stiff conditions, with the idea that if the other party regarded them as excessive the proposal would be dropped and no harm would be done. If, however, they were acceptable, then her granddaughter would be settled for life, without any discredit to her family.

Hung's friends thought these conditions very severe, and indeed unacceptable. What the old lady demanded was that if Sai married Hung at all, she must be treated as a wife and not as a concubine. On the day of the wedding she must go to his house, dressed in a full bridal costume, in a red sedan chair accompanied by musicians and all the paraphernalia of Hung's official rank. She must not be required to kneel to Hung's first wife, but must be introduced to her on perfectly equal terms. Two of the leading personalities of Soochow must act as witnesses, and no point of ceremonial must be omitted. After the wedding, the girl must be allowed to visit her mother and grandmother without let or hindrance. As for the bride-gifts, the old lady said that she had no doubt that Mr. Hung would be as generous as befitted a gentleman of his station in life.

In spite of these excessive demands, Hung's friends were not unduly discouraged, as they guessed there was at least some room for bargaining, but they felt that at this stage Hung must be told of what they had been doing on his behalf. So they made a confession to him, saying that they had never met such an absurd old woman, who was quite willing to let her granddaughter go round the town as an entertainer, but would not hear of her becoming a perfectly respectable concubine. Mr. Hung was highly amused, and said they had only themselves to blame for incurring all this trouble.

"You know perfectly well that I can't marry the girl," he said. "But I'll tell you this. If I did marry her, I myself shouldn't want to make a concubine of her. My wife isn't jealous, and as far as that is concerned there would be no problem at all."

When his friends heard him say this, they felt sure that he had as good as made up his mind, and having got the main difficulty over they told him the rest of the old lady's demands.

"So she wants to make a regular bridegroom out of me, at my age?" he said with a laugh. "You have meant well in everything you have done, but I must ask you not to bother your heads any further. I have enough responsibilities on my shoulders already without taking on more."

These words, which to an outsider might have seemed discouraging, on the contrary absolutely convinced the matchmakers that Hung was as eager as themselves that the marriage should be brought about. However, for decency's sake, they had still to make a show of persuading him, and the best way seemed to be to tell him that having—unfortunately, as it now appeared—raised the matter with the girl's family, it was hard to drop the proposal and pretend it had never been made. "Besides," they said, "you yourself admit you would have no difficulty from your wife about the girl's status, and apart from that there is nothing in her family's demands that cannot easily be settled. Wouldn't it be better in every way to let us go on with the matter, now that we have begun it? You know that you can rely on us." So they argued, until at last Hung gave in, and allowed them to continue the negotiations.

Now, on the quiet, when old Mrs. Chao heard that her first demand had been conceded, she was at once surprised and delighted. So her granddaughter was going to marry a

Senior Wrangler after all! Of course Kuan-yin was right, and it was in the child's fate all along to go to the flower-boats, and enter this profession. If these things had not happened, she would never have met Mr. Hung. As for the other demands the old woman had made, of course they were only of secondary importance, now that the chief condition had been accepted, and she was in no mind to appear unreasonable when two of the leading gentlemen of the city were coming to her house as matchmakers. In these circumstances, it was not long before a full understanding had been reached. The main points agreed upon were as follows. Mr. Hung was to pay two thousand dollars' bride-money, and to provide a complete trousseau. There would be a bridal procession with music, but the bride would be carried in a green sedan chair instead of in the more formal red one. The Senior Wrangler's silk lanterns would be used, but not his complete paraphernalia. Sai would be called "Madame" and accorded the same status as Mr. Hung's first wife. Furthermore, no objection would be made to her visiting her own family whenever she wanted.

Winter was now drawing on, and Mr. Hung's idea was that the wedding should wait until the next year, when he would be out of mourning. His friends did not care very much for such delay, and suggested it was undesirable that the girl should be left to exercise her profession any longer and that all things considered the sooner she became his wife the better. Finally, as Hung was quite firm that he would not break the rules of mourning, it was decided that there should be a formal betrothal at once, that Sai should cease forthwith to carry on her business, and that the wedding should take place immediately after the lunar New Year.

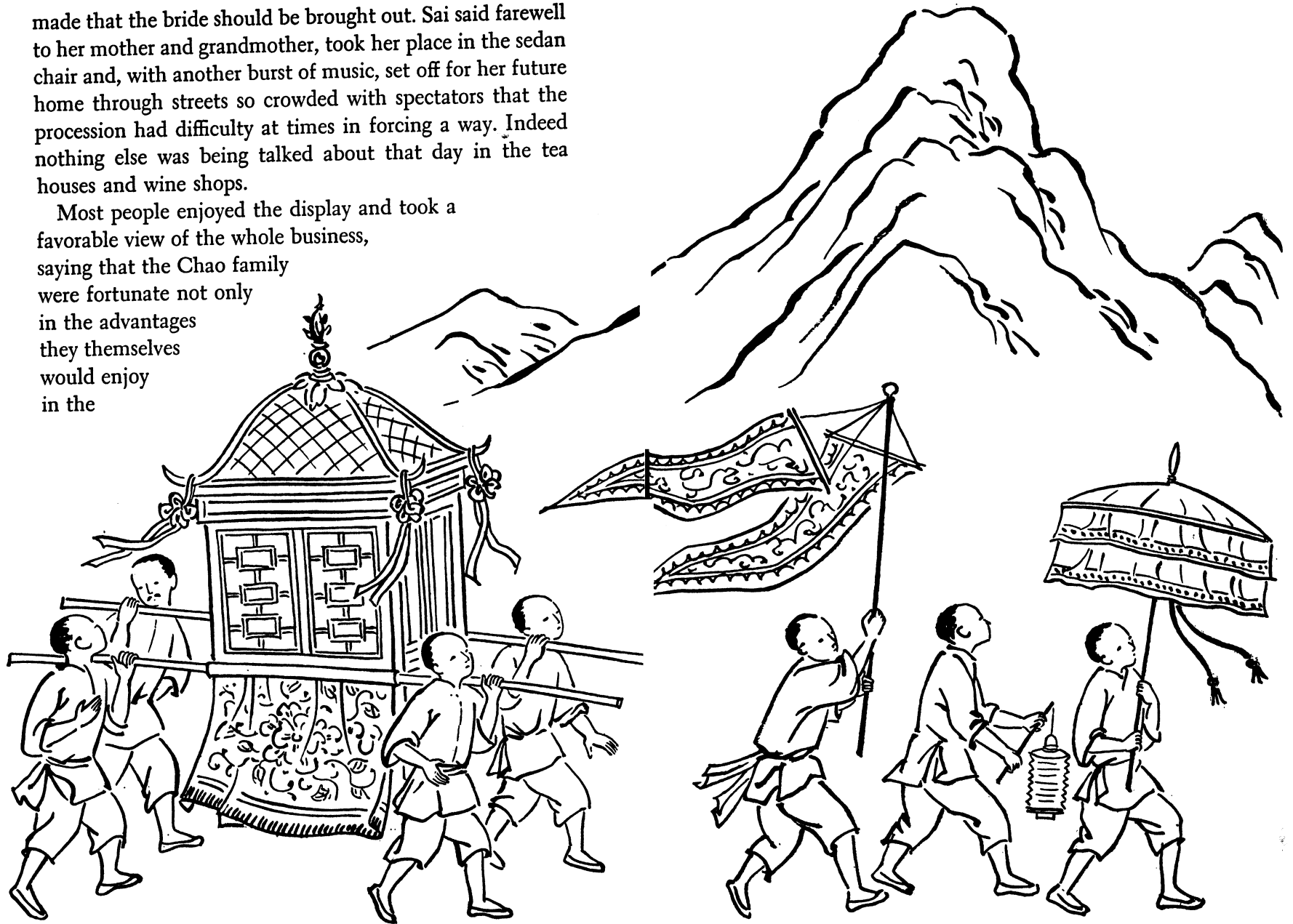
Before long, the whole of Soochow had heard the news, which was certainly of a kind to furnish material for gossip. But as soon as Sai had been betrothed, she stayed quietly at home as a respectable girl should and occupied herself with preparations for the wedding. Both her mother and grandmother could still hardly believe in her good-luck, and never wearied of giving thanks to Kuan-yin for Her assistance. There was no lack of friends and neighbors to offer congratulations, and among the very earliest callers were Miss Chin and Mrs. Golden-Lotus, both of whom were hoping that they might get some reward for the part they had played in bringing about such a happy result. Meanwhile, although Mr. Hung had undertaken to provide the girl's trousseau, old Mrs. Chao was far too proud to let it be said that her granddaughter had gone to her husband's house with nothing of her own, and she and her daughter-in-law set to work to give the girl a proper outfit. This was not so difficult, as they had managed to save a few hundred dollars from her earnings over the year or so she had been going to the flower-boats, and with the two thousand dollars of bride-money from Hung, they were not short of ready cash. Miss Chin and the maid were very assiduous in saving the old woman the trouble of doing the shopping herself, and it must be admitted they arranged everything so satisfactorily that she felt quite grateful to them, although she knew perfectly well they were making a handsome commission out of the whole business. Of course, Soochow was one of the best places in China for shopping of that kind, and Sai was equipped with everything a young bride would desire—toilet articles, clothes, bedding, the tub on which she would sit when she was giving birth, a wardrobe, and four leather trunks.

Between supervising all these arrangements and having serious talks with Sai about the duties of a wife, old Mrs. Chao hardly noticed time passing until the New Year was at hand. The Hung household was if anything even busier. Mr. Hung himself began by insisting that there should be no fuss or ostentation, but one in his position had a vast number of friends and acquaintances, and presents of all kinds kept pouring into the house, so that the poor man was at his wits' end how to find time to acknowledge them. Meanwhile, the house was being hung with lanterns and decorations, preparations were being made for a gargantuan wedding feast, and the bridal chamber was being put into readiness for the great occasion.

At last the day came. It was February 7, 1887. From an early hour the musicians assembled at the Hung house, and the street outside was crowded not only with the carriages of the guests but also with a multitude of loiterers who had come to stare at what was going on. Mr. Hung, in his official dress, was busily supervising all the arrangements. During the morning, the trousseau, with jewelry and other presents, was sent to the bride's house, and in return the Chao family sent the outfit they were giving to their daughter. Then, after lunch, the sedan chair was sent to carry back the bride. As previously agreed, it was not a red sedan chair, but a green upholstered one, used by Mr. Hung, with glass windows hung with silk curtains and with multi-colored silk ribbons fastened into balls at each corner. It was carried by four bearers. In front of it went the band, with flags and umbrellas, and silk lanterns special to Mr. Hung's office and to his degree of Senior Wrangler. In this order the procession made its way to the bride's house, where, with a great flourish of music, a formal request was

made that the bride should be brought out. Sai said farewell to her mother and grandmother, took her place in the sedan chair and, with another burst of music, set off for her future home through streets so crowded with spectators that the procession had difficulty at times in forcing a way. Indeed nothing else was being talked about that day in the tea houses and wine shops.

Most people enjoyed the display and took a favorable view of the whole business, saying that the Chao family were fortunate not only in the advantages they themselves would enjoy in the

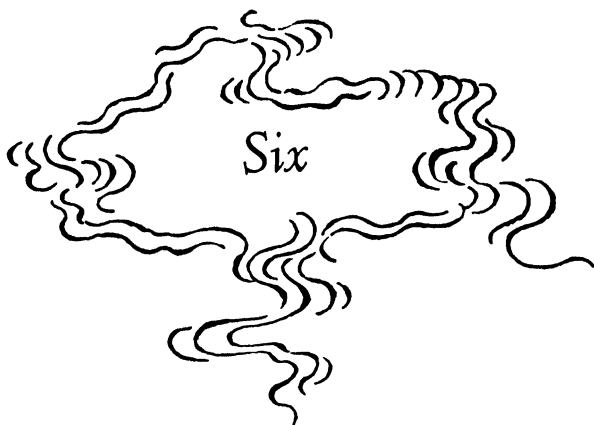


future, but also in the honor that they had brought to their dead ancestors. Nearly all the men thought that Mr. Hung was a lucky fellow to have taken up with such a desirable girl, but here and there a voice was raised to predict that the poor little thing would not have much fun with a husband of that age. And of course there were occasional kill-joys who thought it scandalous that a concubine—for in strict law that is all Sai-chin-hua was—should be taken to a man's house with more formality than many a regular wife, especially where the man was supposed by his position to set an example to the rest of the community. And the fact was, strictly speaking, that Hung was laying himself open to blame. Three months had still to go before he would be out of mourning and legally free to marry, and although in the case of an ordinary citizen nobody would take notice of such a trifle, a man in his position ought to have been more discreet. As we shall see, the point was noticed and remembered and was made use of against him in years to come.

When the bride arrived at her new home, the necessary ceremonies were performed in due order, and when all was done she was conducted to the bridal chamber, while Hung entertained his guests to dinner. The womenfolk of the household crowded to see the new arrival, and all of them, including Hung's first wife, had nothing but praise for her good looks. And later in the night, when the guests had left and Hung was alone with his bride for the first time, he thought, as he looked at her, that his enemies were welcome to say what they liked, so long as he had such a treasure to himself. Indeed, this new marriage seemed to have given him back something of his youth, and he was as happy

and light-hearted as he had been during his first honeymoon more than thirty years before.

You would have thought that all this would not have endeared Sai to the other wife, yet the girl was so extraordinarily sweet and respectful not only to Madame Hung, but also to the poor sickly concubine, that in no time at all the three of them were the best of friends, and the house was happier and more cheerful than it had been for many a year.



THIS PEACEFUL LIFE did not last very long. By the beginning of May, the three years' period of mourning had come to an end, and Hung lost no time in going to Peking and reporting for fresh employment. His first wife had no desire to make such a long journey, and the concubine was too sick to go. So of his three women, only Sai accompanied him to the capital. They hired a river-boat as far as Shanghai, where they boarded a steamer for Tientsin. The last stage of the journey, the ninety miles overland from Tientsin to Peking, was made pretty uncomfortably by mule cart, but it was soon over, and Hung, who knew Peking well, had no difficulty in renting a pleasant house for their stay. Then, once he had formally reported that he was out of mourning, there began an interminable round of visits and entertainments, exhausting work in the hot June weather.

The Empress Dowager, who had always liked Hung, was

told of his return and before long granted him an audience in which she spoke to him so kindly that everybody knew some good appointment would be coming his way. In fact he could not have timed his arrival in Peking more opportunely, for a number of diplomatic posts had fallen vacant, and although men had already been selected for London, Paris, and Tokyo, the Court was still looking round for the most suitable person to send as Minister to Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Holland. This sort of multiple appointment was very common in those days, and there was the keenest possible competition for the job. In due course it was announced that Hung Wen-ch'ing had been chosen to fill the post.

The moment the news was known Hung was overwhelmed with messages of congratulations and with invitations to parties. The appointment was for three years and nobody could doubt that when Hung returned to China from such an important mission he would be a great man at Court. Now was the time for all who hoped to enjoy his goodwill to establish contact with him, and Peking was full of men with an eye to the future. Fortunately, however, it was necessary for the new Minister to take up his duties as soon as possible, in order to relieve the present incumbent, and this saved Hung from having to undergo more than a week or ten days of official banqueting.

Meanwhile he had another piece of good fortune to celebrate. Just before his appointment was announced, Sai told him that she was pregnant. In these circumstances, Hung at first thought it was quite out of the question for her to accompany him, and began to make arrangements for her to stay in Soochow. However, he little understood the girl he was dealing with. She had absolutely made up her mind

that she would go to Europe. Hardly any Chinese women had made such a journey in those days, and she imagined to herself the enormous prestige she would enjoy on her return to China from three years' residence in foreign countries as the wife of the Chinese representative. Apart from this, to give her her due, she was fond of Hung and did not want to be without him for three years. So although he did his best to talk her out of it, by reminding her how seasick she had been already during the short voyage from Shanghai to Tientsin and pointing out how dangerous for the unborn child all the rolling and pitching of an ocean voyage would be, nothing would induce her to change her mind, and at last Hung gave up his arguments and agreed to take her with him.

They traveled back to Tientsin more comfortably than they had come, in a special boat flying a flag inscribed with Hung's title and mission, and at Tientsin they boarded a coastal steamer for Shanghai. Besides Hung and his wife, there were several counselors and interpreters and a few servants, and there was a nice distinction in their accommodation, Hung and Sai having a first-class cabin, while the diplomatic staff traveled second-class and the servants, third-class. It was at the height of summer and the heat was really dreadful. The very breeze, during the daytime, was like the air from an oven. Only when night fell did it become tolerable. Most of the time Hung stayed in his cabin, lying on his bunk and trying to read while Sai-chin-hua fanned him. When he grew weary of his book he would tell her stories about famous love affairs of history, or repeat what he had heard of the customs of foreign countries. Then when the sun had gone down they would stroll around the deck to take the air.

As soon as they reached Shanghai, they found a world of difference between their arrival now and their departure a couple of months earlier. Then only a few of Hung's best friends had seen them off. Now, when the ship was still approaching the dock, they saw there was a triumphal arcade erected on the jetty, and a swarm of carriages and sedan chairs, and as soon as she tied up and the gangway had been lowered a crowd of people rushed on board each with an official visiting card in his hand. Although taken by surprise, Hung realized in time what was happening, and had the presence of mind to send his staff to intercept them and ask them to come and see him later. At this, the local officials dispersed, and after a while Hung and his party went ashore, where two sedan chairs upholstered in green velvet were ready for him and his wife, and carriages waited for his staff. Hung got into the first chair, and as the woman attendants helped Sai into the chair behind, she was startled by an explosion followed by another and then another. A moment later, she saw the noise had come from firecrackers which had been discharged in formal welcome, but the shock was so unexpected that her heart was beating violently for some time after. Then with great importance the procession made its way through the streets to the Temple of the Queen of Heaven, which was assigned as the lodging place in Shanghai of Chinese diplomats who were going abroad. When they arrived there, once again there were three salvoes of firecrackers, followed by a burst of music from trumpets and drums.

Meanwhile the local officials, whose attempt to meet Hung on board the ship had been frustrated in the way we have seen, had gone from the quay to the temple and were waiting in the large hall. When they had learned from the

explosions of the firecrackers that the great man was at hand they hurried to the door and, forming two lines according to rank, stood to attention. Then as Hung appeared they bowed and raised both hands to their foreheads in salute. Hung walked between them, bowing from side to side in acknowledgment of their greeting. He did not stop to speak to anybody, but followed by Sai went at once to his personal apartments.

Sai-chin-hua retired with her maids, while Hung refreshed himself with a wash, and then examined the visiting cards which had been sent in. As the weather was so hot, he received only a few of the most important people that day, promising to have a word with the rest on some other occasion. All this will give you some idea of the fuss and ceremony of official life in those days. Hung was glad when the last of his visitors had left and he could have a bath and change his clothes. Then he rested a while, enjoying the cool while Sai fanned him. After that, he had a light dinner with a little wine, and so went to bed.

The month following was perhaps the busiest time of Hung's life. The first thing he had to do was to exchange visits with the foreign diplomatic and consular officials in Shanghai. When this was over and done with, he found he could not in decency decline the invitations from his many old friends and acquaintances. At the same time he had to make all kinds of preparations for his journey. Fortunately his first wife had joined him, and she knew his habits so well that she was able to provide for his comfort during his absence. Like most natives of Soochow, Hung was passionately interested in everything concerning food and drink, and in particular he was a great epicure of tea. In this respect Madame Hung made sure that he should be well

looked after, and brought enough of the finest Hangchow tea to last him for a year or more. Then there was the problem of Sai's personal maids. Madame Hung pointed out that such a young girl needed at least a couple of really trustworthy women. But this was more easily said than done. They would naturally have preferred to engage servants from Soochow, but none of the family amahs was willing to go abroad, nor did an inquiry at a Soochow employment agency produce any result. Madame Hung had the idea that she would have better luck in the foreign concession of Shanghai, where there were plenty of amahs who were used to foreigners and their ways. But she soon found that even women of that kind would not consent to go abroad unless they were paid exorbitant wages. Some of them demanded as much as eighty or a hundred dollars a month. At last Madame Hung found two suitable amahs whom she engaged at fifty dollars each per month, six months' wages being paid in advance. She was glad to have settled the problem, although at a cost far exceeding her anticipations, because such wages were equal to the salary of junior members of an embassy staff.

Back in Soochow, the two people most excited by these events were, of course, old Mrs. Chao and her daughter-in-law. The old woman in particular missed her granddaughter terribly, and had never had an easy day since Sai had left for Peking. Characteristically, she betrayed her loneliness by venting her ill-temper on girls in general, who, she said, were good for nothing to their own families once they had married. But when word came of Hung's appointment, the nature of which she did not at first understand, she exulted at the thought that her own little girl had brought such good luck to her husband, and went about daydreaming of

the brilliant future that lay in store for all of them. Then she was told that Hung had to go across the world to Europe and that Sai was going with him. At first she was too much overwhelmed to say anything, but sat all day long in a corner groaning to herself from time to time. After a while she became more reasonable, and declared that she must go to Shanghai to meet her granddaughter for what might be the last time in this world. Her daughter-in-law could not leave Soochow, as she had a young son to look after, so the old lady made the journey alone. She reached Shanghai about a week before Mr. Hung was to leave, and went directly to the Temple of the Queen of Heaven. Of course Sai on her part had never forgotten her own family and the grandmother to whom she had always been so close. But now her first duty was to her husband, and her wish was rather that the old lady had stayed comfortably at home, where there was the means to see she was properly cared for. But when the two met it was like old times again, and Sai begged her grandmother to stay with her in the temple. Old Mrs. Chao was too proud to want to run the risk of making herself a nuisance to the Hungs, so she took lodgings nearby, and visited her granddaughter every day until the time came for Hung to board the ship for Europe.

Their departure was even more formal than their arrival. Then Sai had been wearing ordinary dress, but on this occasion when she was carried through the streets to the jetty she had on the proper robe of a mandarin's wife. As, whatever Hung's private sentiments might be, she had absolutely no right to such official recognition, it is necessary to explain that the robe belonged to Madame Hung and had been given to her by that lady. It was a noble gesture, but, as Madame Hung said, Sai was in a sense going to represent

her abroad, and it might well be embarrassing for China if the story got around among the foreigners that Sai had in any way less than the status of a regular wife.

At last all farewells had been said, and the party—there were upwards of twenty of them—went on board the ship. It was a German vessel and Sai-chin-hua was delighted at the accommodation which had been allotted to her and her husband, especially when she compared it with the tiny cabin they had had to be content with on the coastal steamer. However, they had little time to look around their quarters, before there was a mighty banging of gongs, and a blowing on the siren, and the great ship began to move out into midstream. For an hour or so it made its way down the Whangpoo River, while Hung and Sai looked from their porthole at the flat Kiangsu countryside, and then, at Woosung, it steamed out into the Yangtse estuary toward the open sea.

The weather was fine and the sea calm, so, after they had taken stock of their surroundings and had admired all the arrangements for the comfort of the passengers—bathrooms, staterooms, and a large saloon equipped for concerts—it is not surprising that dinnertime found them agreeably hungry. Here, however, they were confronted with their first problem. Only European food was served on board, and for the time being the two Soochow cooks in their party were useless. They were of course quite unaccustomed to foreign ways of eating and what upset Hung even more than the unfamiliar diet was to see the array of knives and forks set out before them on the table. But in this matter, at least, he was determined to have his own way, and he sent for his ivory chopsticks and silver Chinese spoon. Nor did he do this merely out of his lack of familiarity with foreign ways.

The truth was that he was intensely conservative, and heartily despised Europeans and all their manners and customs. It seemed outrageous to him to be expected to use a knife and fork. Sai was at first just as nonplussed as Hung at the strangeness of the food, which seemed so nasty that it was only with a great effort that she managed to swallow a few mouthfuls, but she had none of her husband's prejudices and was anxious to learn all the mysteries of foreign etiquette.

"Of course we can do as we like while we're on the ship," she said, "but when we get to Europe we can't expect the foreigners to provide chopsticks for us whenever they ask us to dinner, and it would be rude to take our own chopsticks to other people's houses. We shall have to know how to use a knife and fork if we are not to look silly." As usual, Mr. Hung was forced to admit that she was right, and from that time on he began to make an effort to master the use of a knife and fork, and he soon found that after all these unwieldy-looking implements were not so difficult as he had supposed.

Meanwhile the sea, which had been so smooth when they set out, began to get rougher, and the ship pitched and rolled terribly. Hung himself, although far from comfortable, managed to keep on his feet, but Sai had to take to her bunk, where she lay miserably, unable to bear the thought of food or drink. Hung was very attentive and kind, and the thought of the position she would occupy in Europe helped to take her mind off her sickness. But, although after a few days her nausea became better, she still had no appetite for any of the ship's food, and longed for some of the dishes she used to enjoy at home. She was frail enough at the best of times, and now that she was with

child, Hung began to worry how long she could continue fasting without injuring her health. He thought there was one thing from the ship's kitchen that would do her good, and which she ought to be able to keep on her stomach, namely a cup of beef consommé, but a certain amount of stratagem was required to get her to take it, as she had made a vow in her childhood never to eat beef. However, Hung ordered some beef consommé to be brought to him in the cabin, and he then gave it to her himself, telling her that it was broth made from goose meat, and that it would do her all the good in the world. And indeed she found it perfectly delicious, and for a little while it was her chief nourishment.

The weather was still too rough for Hung to go on deck, so he spent most of his time in the cabin reading. You might imagine that a diplomat on his way to his post would be reading books on International Law or foreign affairs, but no such idea ever came into his head. The only subject that interested him was the history of the Mongol Dynasty, with special reference to Chinese Turkestan. In those days, it was not considered necessary by the Manchu Government that their representatives abroad should know a word of any foreign language or have any notion of European civilization. In fact, in China itself there was more than one Manchu in a responsible position who could not even read Chinese. Of course, here and there, there were Chinese diplomats who knew foreign languages, but they were few and far between. In these circumstances, all diplomatic negotiations were conducted through interpreters who were, in most cases, either themselves inefficient or in the pay of the foreign side, so that half the time the unfortunate Chinese representative found he had been bamboozled into

signing some agreement prejudicial to Chinese interests. The reason for this was, quite simply, that the Court of Peking felt it could appoint to senior diplomatic posts only men of high position in the Government service, and such men were invariably the products of the old-fashioned Chinese classical education. Men skilled in European languages had not, as a rule, been through this training, and were in consequence not given positions of trust.

As the days passed, Sai was able to venture from her cabin, and to take ordinary food. The voyage was now half over, and she was looking forward eagerly to leaving the ship. One day she and Hung had gone on deck to enjoy the air and, after looking for some time at the gulls that were following the ship, she said:

"That goose broth was very nice; it tasted quite different from chicken or duck. Do they keep live geese on board for the kitchen? It's just struck me that perhaps it wasn't goose at all, but that they might have caught some of those sea birds."

Hung smiled to himself, and although he had not intended to tell her of his trick, he thought that now she was in such good spirits it would do no harm to let her know the truth.

"You silly little thing!" he said. "Did you really think you were eating goose broth? If you did, you made a big mistake, because what you ate was made from that terrible beef you swore never to touch! Not only that, you have been having butter on your bread, and in your cakes."

Hung said this without thinking, but the words were no sooner out of his mouth, than Sai turned pale, and started to be sick on the spot. Hung supported her, and when the bout of vomiting had passed helped her back to the cabin.

When she had rested for a while, she managed to pull herself together and smile at Hung.

"What a thing to do!" she said. "You know my people have always been strict Buddhists, and for three generations not one of us has eaten beef, dog, or frogs. Why did you play such a trick on me? Now I have offended Buddha!"

"Yes, it was a trick," said Hung. "But I had to get you to eat."

Sai knew he had acted for her good, and forgave him, but her superstitious nature was shocked at what had happened, and from that time on not only did she not eat beef again, but she was exceptionally fastidious about the other food too, and inquired carefully whether any butter or milk had gone into the preparation of what she was eating. Hung found he was called upon more than once to reassure her that her scruples were unnecessary, but he had only himself to thank for all this trouble.

The voyage passed uneventfully. When it was fine, the pair of them strolled about the deck. Many of the foreign passengers knew Hung was the Chinese Minister, and went out of their way to show courtesy to him. He was polite to them in return, and sometimes talked to them through his interpreter about European habits and customs. Even in Chinese he was no linguist, and it was amusing to watch him as he held forth in the official Peking dialect, with a Soochow accent you could cut with a knife, and then listened gravely as his words were translated into German. Sai would stand eagerly beside him, paying such close attention that from the very start she was picking up common German words and expressions, with quite a good accent.

Most of the passengers were businessmen who had done well in the East. Besides these, there were a few diplomats

and military officers, whose mission, whatever it was, was certainly of no benefit to China. It was just at that time that the foreigners were entertaining the most grandiose designs in our direction, while the Manchu Government was giving them the run of the country to find out all they could. In spite of this, however, it was these diplomats and officers, rather than the businessmen, who got on close terms with Mr. Hung—so much so, in fact, that before long he was looking on some of them as his friends.

In this way, the latter part of the journey went by quickly enough, and before the Hungs quite knew where they were, they had arrived at the Chinese Legation in Berlin. This was a spacious three-storied building with a large garden, well planted with trees and bushes. At the back of the Legation there was a small canal suitable for boating. The charming surroundings of the place were explained by the fact that it had originally been the residence of a wealthy nobleman. Hung, Sai, and the two maids moved into the second floor, the rest of the staff occupied the first floor, while the ground floor was given over to offices and reception rooms.

For a few weeks after their arrival the Hungs were naturally very busy settling into their new house, added to which Hung had various courtesy calls to make on such men as Bismarck. Finally came the day when he presented his credentials to the Kaiser. The foreigners had not yet seen through the façade put up by the Manchu Government, and a Chinese envoy was still treated with great respect. But the ridiculous thing was that Hung was so totally ignorant of foreign customs that he considered he had scored a great victory for China by not kneeling and kotowing in front of the Kaiser, but merely giving a deep bow, and on

his return from the palace, it was some time before Sai had the chance of hearing about anything else but this diplomatic triumph. Hung was resolved to continue in the way he had begun, and he made it known to his staff that he would not in any circumstances allow them to put on European clothes. Indeed, the whole atmosphere inside the Legation was conservative to a degree, and to all intents and purposes they might as well have been living in China. Hung spent most of the time he was in the office reading Chinese history or practicing calligraphy.

Sai was not at her best as a companion just then. The strain of the journey, and the excitement of being in a strange country were beginning to tell on her, and although she was not the sort of girl to fancy herself as an invalid, she found between one thing and another, and in particular because of her pregnancy, that she had no energy left for anything. Then she developed a fever and had to take to her bed, and the next thing was that she had a miscarriage. Fortunately Hung, like many Chinese scholars of the time, had some idea of medicine, and had brought a good supply of Chinese drugs with him, and with the help of his treatment, she got over her trouble safely. For some time, she showed the signs of her illness, becoming very thin and miserable, but thanks to the provision they had made there was no lack of good Chinese food in the kitchen, and after a diet of birds'-nest soup and ginseng, the color began to come back into her cheeks again.

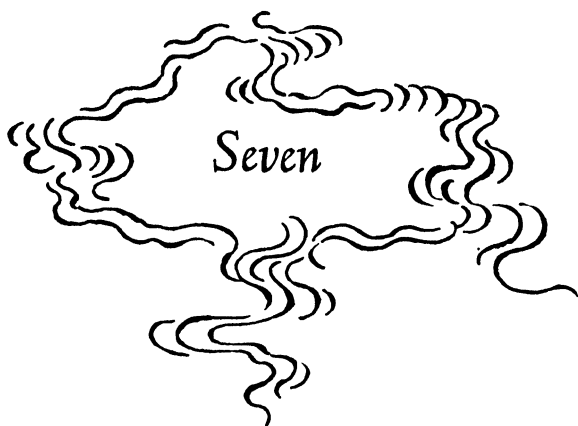
In China, there had always been plenty of things to arouse her interest, and lots of friends to talk to, and in comparison the Legation seemed a very dead place indeed. Her maids had little to say for themselves, and were not in any sense companions to her, and the strict etiquette of

the times forbade her to see much of the men on the staff. She would have liked to go out and have a look at Berlin, but her ignorance of the language made her nervous. In these circumstances, when she had sufficiently recovered from her illness, she made up her mind to learn German. At first, as might have been expected, Hung was absolutely against the idea, and said he could see no reason at all why any Chinese woman should waste her time in learning a foreign language, but at last he found he could not hold out against her pleading, and said he would give his consent if a suitable teacher could be found. There was an interpreter on the Legation staff, a man named Chin, whose German was quite fluent, and as he came from the same part of China as themselves, he would have made a good teacher. But Hung had all sorts of prejudices against such an arrangement. In the first place, he thought it improper Sai should be taught by a man, and in particular he objected to admitting one of his subordinates into such a relationship.

Finally it was decided that the best way to settle the problem was to employ some German maids, and in addition to engage a German lady to act as companion to Sai. There were plenty of applicants, because Hung was able to pay good money, and it sounded well to be able to say you were working in a foreign Legation, even in the Chinese Legation. The result was that four German maids were hired to join the staff, and a pleasant-looking young lady called Sophie agreed to work as German teacher and companion. Sai was eager and quick to learn, and now that she was surrounded all day long by women talking German, it was no time at all before she was able to join in conversation about everyday affairs. Hung himself was secretly

rather proud of her rapid progress, but to her face all he would say was that it was a pity she didn't spend her time learning the Chinese classics.

Up to now, she had hardly set foot outside the Legation, and as her German became steadily more fluent she delighted in listening to Sophie's stories about Berlin. What she heard excited her curiosity to such an extent that one day she suggested to Hung that she might be allowed to go out now and again to have a look at the city. After all, she said, in Germany ladies of the highest rank, even the Empress herself, could go out quite freely, and nobody thought anything of it. Indeed she pleaded so effectively that in spite of all his prejudices Hung said he would consider the matter. When he had confirmed from Mr. Chin the interpreter that it was quite true that nobody in Berlin would find it strange for a lady to make outings into the town, he began to think that perhaps it would do her good to enjoy a change of scene once in a while, especially since she had Sophie to keep her out of trouble. So surprisingly enough he gave his consent.



THE PLACE that pleased Sai most of all was the great Tiergarten, and she and Sophie formed the habit of going there regularly. Now in those days Europeans were not yet accustomed to seeing a Chinese man, let alone a Chinese woman, and the contrast between Sai and the German women with their blue eyes, fair hair, and prominent bosoms was so striking that she aroused great curiosity wherever she went, and as her carriage passed through the streets people could be seen pointing to her and telling one another to look at the wife of the Chinese Minister. Indeed it happened more than once that some impertinent fellow would run after her carriage, gaping at her. She pretended not to notice the sensation she was causing, but when Sophie told her that everybody in Berlin was saying what a beautiful woman she was, she began to go out even oftener. This was observed by the staff of the Legation, who did not

fail to talk about it between themselves, but Hung did not seem to notice anything out of the ordinary.

One day, Sai and Sophie were strolling in a secluded part of the Tiergarten, admiring the smoothness of the lawns, when they heard footsteps approaching from behind. Glancing round, they saw it was an officer who seemed to be attempting to catch up with them. For a moment they wondered whether they ought to turn off by a side path to get out of his way, but the man was walking so quickly that they had no time to escape. As he came towards them, Sai thought to herself that she had seen him somewhere before, but she could not say where. Whoever he was, she noticed that he was tall and very good-looking, with a trim waist and broad shoulders.

The officer stopped, as he drew abreast of them, clicked his heels together, and saluted. Taken by surprise, Sai bowed in return. The officer then addressed the ladies, but Sai was not able to understand more than a few words of what he said. Sophie however was by now well used to explaining things to her in simple language, and told her the gentleman had said he was a fellow passenger from the ship. Then she remembered that was where she had seen him, and indeed, unused to foreigners as she was, his appearance had quite caught her eye. The mystery was now explained, and while still feeling a little embarrassed, she started to talk with the officer, whose name she learned was Waldersee. In a few minutes, the German words were coming to her mouth readily enough, and she found she hardly needed the help of Sophie, and was thoroughly enjoying her conversation with the handsome soldier who was telling her how delighted he was at the good fortune which had taken him to the Tiergarten that day. When they

parted it was long past the usual hour for her return to the Legation, and Waldersee did not say goodbye until she had fixed a time for them to meet in the Tiergarten again. She said nothing of the encounter to Hung.

One day, not long after this, Hung was sitting in his study as usual, when an official communication was delivered to the Legation. After Mr. Chin the interpreter had translated it, Hung was surprised to learn that far from being concerned with political affairs it was an invitation from the Empress asking for the pleasure of his lady's company at a reception to be held in a couple of days' time.

The next two days were spent in making everything ready for the great occasion—Sai was of course going to wear the formal robes lent to her by Hung's first wife, and the whole Legation was turned inside out to provide all the accessory paraphernalia. On the day itself, having barely shut her eyes the whole night, she was up at daybreak, and reviewed the whole array of finery—the pearls for her hair, the various kinds of hairpins, the articles of underwear, the robes themselves, the silk stockings and embroidered shoes. By the time she had made a final selection of what to wear, it was already noon. After lunch, she bathed and had her hair set. Then began the great business of making-up. This had always been one of her chief interests in life, and even on an ordinary day she would spend a couple of hours at her toilet, so you can imagine the pains she took now. Before she had finished, Hung was becoming nervous and reminding her of the time. At last she was attired in all her finery, and then, just as the lamps were being lighted in the streets outside, an envoy from the palace came to summon her. With great dignity she came downstairs, took leave of Hung, and went out to her waiting carriage, in which she

took her place, accompanied by Sophie and the four German maids. Hung sent four members of his staff to follow in a second carriage, and the palace envoy went on ahead to lead the way. The cortege rolled through the crowded streets, with shop windows all blazing with lights, straight to the palace. Just as the carriages were stopping, the sound of a band could be heard. The four maids got out first and stood two on each side, holding Chinese lanterns. Then Sophie assisted Sai to alight, and the envoy, after making a bow of welcome, led the party into the palace.

The Empress had been told of her guest's arrival, and was waiting eagerly to see the oriental beauty of whom she had heard so much. First she saw the lanterns, and then behind them she caught sight of Sai. When the group reached the door of the room in which the Empress was, Sai paused for a moment to arrange her dress and then, leaving her attendants behind, went in alone. She had heard from Sophie what was required of her, and advancing towards the Empress she made three curtsies. Her Majesty smiled and bowed, and then came forward and offered her hand. Sai knew what an honor it was to shake hands with the Empress, and appreciated that she was being shown a special mark of favor. So she gave her tiny hand in return, and after the two women had exchanged a few words of greeting, the Empress led her to meet the rest of the company. Sai was completely at her ease, and although she could not understand all that was said to her, she managed to play her part without making any serious mistake, and the aristocratic ladies who clustered around to make her acquaintance were delighted with her grace and beauty. At that time there were many jokes being circulated in diplomatic circles about the wife of the Chinese Minister in Paris

who thought nothing of arranging her hair and stroking her feet in front of the most distinguished people. But anybody who might have been expecting Sai to behave in the same way was disappointed.

Soon afterward, the company went in to dinner, and the evening passed in the pleasantest way imaginable. At last the time arrived for Sai to take her leave, and the Empress accompanied her to the door of the palace and ordered that she should be escorted back to the Legation in the same manner as when she came. Only when the carriage started to roll away did Her Majesty re-enter the building.

There was great triumph in the Legation that night when Sai came back and told all that had happened at the party. She was quite beside herself with the excitement of it all, and Hung was hardly less delighted than she, when he heard of her success.

"Poor girl!" he said. "How dreadful for you to have to meet all those strange European women! I am sure I could not have done such a thing myself." And he felt prouder of her than ever, and from that time on controlled her activities even less than before.

The beauty from China was now famous in Berlin society, and the most fashionable hostesses vied with one another for her company. More and more she was seen at such functions as tea parties and balls. These latter occasions gave her the idea that she also would like to learn to dance, and she insisted that Sophie should teach her. Now the theory of the various steps was child's play to her, but when she tried to perform them she discovered that her tiny crescents of feet were not suitable for such a purpose. Merely to walk, she required the support of somebody's arm, and even then she was soon exhausted. When it came

to dancing, between the rapidity of the movements and the necessity of following her partner, after a few steps she was out of breath and had to stop. But she had set her mind so firmly on mastering the art that she forced herself to keep up her lessons.

One day she was practicing with Sophie when Hung came into the room, and the dance stopped abruptly. Hung was not pleased but he did not want to rebuke her. Instead, he sat down and said with a smile: "You little rascal, you are going from bad to worse! Why don't you learn something useful instead of taking up such an uncivilized business? Dancing may be fashionable here in Europe, but if you go into its origins you will find it is a low practice. Actually, it is a pastime of savages. In the mountains of Southern China, it is popular with the Miaos and the Lolos and the other aborigines, whose girls find themselves husbands in that way. The Europeans may be more advanced than the Miaos, but they are still not properly civilized or they would not have such a custom. You and I must never forget who we are and where we come from. Instead of copying the ways of these people, we ought to be setting them an example. I am not scolding you, because after all I don't suppose you understand the position, but from now on you must really stop this sort of thing."

Sai could tell from Hung's manner that this time he was seriously annoyed, and partly for this reason, and partly also because she had found dancing too hard, she never tried to practice it again. But she continued to go out as freely as before, and had a large circle of foreign friends, mostly women, of course, but also a few men, among whom was Waldersee. But Hung remained in ignorance of this acquaintance of hers.

As we have seen, Mr. Hung's mission was not limited to Germany, but extended also to Russia, Austria-Hungary and Holland. Obviously therefore he could not spend all his time in Berlin. Besides, just then, there was very little in the way of diplomatic business between China and Germany, and he found he had ample leisure on his hands. By rights, no doubt, he ought to have been collecting information on the German army, or on industry and commerce, but he was totally uninterested in such things, and any time he had free from the office he spent with his history books.

One day a Belgian named Guennyer who knew Chinese and who was employed by the Chinese Legation as a special interpreter, came to see Hung in the company of a bookseller who said he had a volume of maps he was willing to dispose of. When Hung examined the book he found it consisted of sixteen sectional maps of the Chinese-Russian frontier. The maps were all in manuscript, but were very detailed, and according to the bookseller the volume was the original draft, and a fair copy had been bought for a large sum by the Russian Government. Hung was delighted at the find, and at once agreed to buy the book for seven hundred pounds sterling. Of course he was unable to read the writing on the maps, and his staff was given the task of translating all the inscriptions into Chinese.

This incident served to remind Hung that it was time he put in an appearance in Russia, and he ordered that all arrangements should be made for the journey. He decided to leave two members of his staff behind in Berlin to look after the Legation. The rest, who were to go with him, included, besides his two Chinese interpreters, Monsieur Guennyer the Belgian. These gentlemen were to him as essential as guides to a blind man. Then there were the two

Soochow cooks. Hung had Chinese food at every meal in the Legation, and these two cooks, who had been appointed by the Chinese Government, were masters of the art. Even such things as German prawns, which taste absolutely loathsome when cooked in the European way, were transformed in their hands into a most appetizing dish. Indeed Hung did not know how he could live without the services of these geniuses. Besides the cooks, there was the young valet Ah Fu, who was a life-bondsman of Hung, and whom he used as a personal attendant.

Of course Sai was going to Russia too, and the question arose which maids she should take with her. After having become used to her German attendants, she found her Chinese amahs stupid and useless, and decided, as she was only going away for a short time, to leave them behind and to take just the German maids with her. These latter, unlike the servants at home in China, made no objections to accompanying their mistress abroad, and indeed showed the greatest pleasure at the prospect of making a trip to Russia.

At last, a suitable day was chosen for the journey, and Hung and his party left Berlin by train for St. Petersburg. On their arrival in the Russian capital, there was the usual round of official visits, which need not concern us here. But Hung, who was making the trip more in the nature of a holiday than anything else, soon discovered that he had come to Russia just at the moment when a really important matter was unexpectedly demanding his attention.

The fact was that the Kingdom of Korea had suddenly taken it into its head to send a diplomatic mission to Russia. Now according to normal practice such a step is taken only by an independent country. In the case of a protected country, the responsibility for all its foreign relations is

borne by the protecting power, and it does not itself despatch diplomatic missions abroad. If it does so, such a step is a declaration of its independence and may not be acquiesced in by the protecting power if this latter wishes to preserve the relationship. If we examine the history of Korea we find that in its origin it was an offshoot of Chinese civilization, and for two thousand years, since the Han dynasty, it was continually under Chinese protection, and for this reason, any question concerning Korean relations with Russia should have been dealt with through the Chinese Minister at St. Petersburg.

Such, then, was the situation which confronted Mr. Hung on his arrival in St. Petersburg. To give him his due he was up in arms in a moment. But his indignation was directed entirely against the Koreans for their impudence, as a tiny subordinate country, in proposing to send diplomats abroad without the permission of their suzerain. Of the Japanese intrigues that lay behind this action, and in particular of the fact that acquiescence in the step would be tantamount to conceding Korean independence, he had not the remotest comprehension; and for this we can hardly blame him, as few Chinese diplomats of the time would have understood the matter any better. But he sent a long cable to Peking without delay, asking for instructions, and suggesting that the Chinese Resident in Korea should check this impertinence. At the same time, he approached the Russian Government with a request that Russia should refuse to receive the Korean representatives. This was a perfectly justifiable step to take, but unfortunately he spoiled his case by not stating what would have been the proper reason for such a request, namely that Korea was not an independent coun-

try and was not therefore entitled to send out diplomatic representatives. Instead, he simply condemned the Koreans for their presumption, and in such terms that the Russians just treated the whole thing as a joke and did not give him a straight answer. This made him angrier still, and he sent more cables to Peking. For a long while there was no reply, and poor Hung, as he sat in his Legation and waited for news, spent most of his time cursing all Koreans and vowing that they would not get their own way so long as he was there to stop them.

Finally the Ministry of Foreign Affairs began to appreciate the difficulty of the situation. It was clear the Koreans could not be made to give way, and if any other man had been Minister at St. Petersburg he would have been told to keep his mouth shut and not make things worse. But Hung was a favorite of the Empress Dowager, and it was out of the question to treat him in such a way. So there was much deliberation on what was to be done.

At last Li Hung-chang himself came forward with a proposal which appeared sufficiently face-saving to be acceptable to both sides. It was that China should not oppose Korea's sending a mission abroad, but should suggest that the Koreans observe three conditions. In the first place when the Korean representatives arrived in a foreign country, they should, before doing anything else, go and report to the Chinese Legation. The Chinese representative should then accompany them on their first visit to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but in all subsequent activities they were to be free to do as they liked. The second condition was that at official functions, the Korean representative should come after the Chinese in order of precedence. Lastly, in

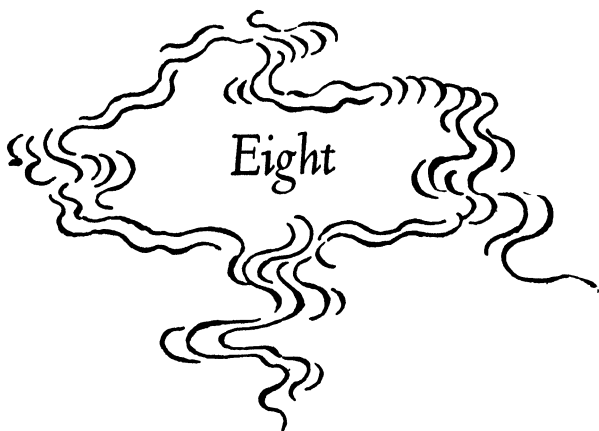
all matters of importance, the Korean representative should consult with the Chinese representative before taking any action.

When this proposal was transmitted to the Korean Government the latter accepted it at once, rather to the surprise of some of the Chinese who were half expecting difficulties to be made. But for the Korean purpose the great thing was to gain the right to have diplomatic representation abroad. The Chinese conditions were from this point of view almost irrelevant, and could be accepted, at any rate for the time being, without any inconvenience.

Leaving aside the way in which the problem had been settled, the mere fact that it was settled came as a great relief to Sai and the other members of the household. For weeks, Hung's temper had been a great trial to all around him. Now he was in a good humor again, and he was easily persuaded into making little excursions about St. Petersburg to see the various places of interest. Monsieur Guenyer, the Belgian interpreter, knew the city well, and proved himself invaluable as a guide.

Yet it must be confessed that, just as in Berlin, Hung saw very little in the Russian capital to impress him, and he was always glad to return from these outings to the peace of his study, where he worked every day on the new edition of the History of the Mongol Dynasty which he had determined was to be his *magnum opus*. He understood by now that there was much information on this topic contained in European books, and with the help of Guenyer he gathered together a collection of such works, and had all the relevant parts translated into Chinese, since he could not read the original languages himself. He was also greatly excited by his acquisition of the map we have mentioned

earlier and decided that he would edit it in Chinese and have it printed for presentation to the Emperor. Naturally the task of editing cost him and his staff a good deal of time and trouble, but it was a work in which he delighted, and it put him into the best of spirits. For this reason, Sai did everything to encourage him and to cause him to feel that he was making a great success of his mission to Europe.



WITH THE Korean business settled, Hung did not wish to stay too long in St. Petersburg, but decided to return to Berlin. In order to see more of Europe he took a circuitous route and spent a little time in London and Paris on the way. On arrival in Berlin he found a number of letters from China awaiting him, and among them he noticed one envelope marked with the name Chao of Soochow. Thinking it was merely an ordinary family letter from Sai's mother, he was in no particular hurry to open it, but when he did read it he was shocked to learn that old Mrs. Chao, after returning to Soochow from seeing off her granddaughter, had fretted so much that she had fallen sick and although everything possible had been done in the way of medical attention her condition was very grave indeed. The letter went on to say that the old woman was praying that she might see her granddaughter just once more.

Hung knew the strong attachment between Sai-chin-hua and her grandmother, and he was afraid if he told her what was in the letter she would herself become ill with grief and worry. Yet if he kept the news from her, and her grandmother should die, she would never forgive him the deception. For a long while he hesitated what to do, and then at last decided to let her know that the old lady was not very well, but without revealing the gravity of her position. This was all the easier because Sai-chin-hua could read only a few simple characters and was unable to make out the whole meaning of the letter. But merely to be told that her grandmother was rather poorly was quite enough to set her off into a storm of weeping, as if she had guessed the truth. Of course, until her marriage she had never been away from her grandmother, and the pair of them were as close to each other in feeling as two people can be. After her marriage, and especially since she had come out to Europe, she was always thinking of the old lady, and now the news of the latter's illness brought to her mind recollections of her childhood and of her grandmother's kindness, and she thought that she would never forgive herself if anything should happen to old Mrs. Chao while she was so far away. That reminded her of all the miles between Berlin and Soochow, and she sobbed more bitterly than ever.

Hung could not bear to see her in such a state, and he spoke soothingly to her until her weeping ceased, and, drying her tears, she turned to him and begged him to write to Soochow for more news. Without delay, he sat down at his desk and wrote a long letter and then read it out to her, before sending the valet Ah Fu to put it in the post. Even then, she did not remain comforted long, and with grief and worry she lost all appetite for food so that in a short

time she began to look very ill indeed. Hung became very much alarmed, especially as she was pregnant again for the second time and he was afraid that if she went on in this way she would injure her health. Apart from omitting no opportunity of showing his affection for her, he thought it might help to bring her to a more reasonable state of mind if he followed her example in the matter of food. So at their meals, whenever Sai sent her food or drink away untasted, Hung did the same. And the plan was successful.

There was something filial in Sai's attitude towards her husband—after all, at her age she could hardly help looking upon him as quite an elderly man, and he was, besides, far from strong—and even in the midst of her own grief it was too much for her to see him missing his food and to know he was doing it for her sake. So she made an effort to be cheerful and to take her meals regularly. In return, Hung, who had until now, to tell the truth, never been altogether comfortable in his mind about her excursions around the town, began to think that it was not good for her to sit moping in the house and was forever urging Sophie to take her out again as she had done in the past. So the Chinese beauty was once more to be seen in the Tiergarten and other parks where her presence had been missed for some months.

At this point, we must leave Sai and Hung for a while and take our story back to China. Old Mrs. Chao, after saying goodbye to her granddaughter, returned from Shanghai to Soochow by river boat, feeling more wretched and lonely than she had ever been in her life before. It was bad enough when Hung had taken the girl away to Peking, but that was nothing compared to this separation, where even

to get a reply to a letter would take three or four months. Apart from that, she wondered how her granddaughter would stand the sea voyage and the foreign climate, and feared that altogether it would be too much for the poor child to endure.

With all these anxieties, it was not long after her return home that she herself began for the first time to feel that she was an old woman and that she was very far from well. Fortunately after Sai's marriage, she and her daughter-in-law were no longer short of money as in the past, and there was no lack of good doctors in Soochow, whom the younger Mrs. Chao lost no time in asking to come and see the invalid. Naturally these gentlemen all agreed that the trouble was due to the patient's age, and that a good course of herbs would help to bring back her strength again. And indeed their remedies were not altogether without some effect in delaying the progress of the sickness. But of course they could not go to the root of the trouble. If only Sai could have returned to Soochow, the old lady would have been herself again in no time. But that was impossible, and as the months passed she became more frail and emaciated until she seemed to be hanging on to life by a thread.

In these circumstances the younger Mrs. Chao began to think that only supernatural aid would save her mother-in-law's life, and with this idea in her mind she went every day to the temple of the Goddess of Mercy and asked for a holy prescription which she gave to the old lady in place of doctor's medicine. And sure enough, the patient, much to the annoyance of the doctors, started to show signs of improvement. The reason for this, however, did not lie in any "holy prescription" but rather in the fact that one day,

just at that time, the head servant of the Hung family came to the house with a note written on behalf of Sai which Hung had enclosed in a letter to his own family.

The two women were overjoyed to have word at last, but as neither of them knew enough characters to be able to decipher the message, they asked their next door neighbor, a Mr. Li, to come and tell them what it said. When he read it out to them they were more delighted than ever, as it contained a full report of how Sai was living in Germany, and of how well she was feeling, and told them they must not worry on her account. Then it described how she had been received by the German Empress, and how kind the aristocratic German ladies were to her. Sai knew very well how snobbish her grandmother was, and that information of this kind was what would please her most. In short, with the excitement of the letter, and, as she imagined, the help of the "holy prescriptions" old Mrs. Chao so far shook off her illness that in a couple of weeks she was able to get out of bed and walk around leaning on a stick. Both she and her daughter-in-law attributed her recovery to the Goddess of Mercy, and as soon as she felt well enough she made up her mind to go to the temple and burn incense to express her thanks. Her daughter-in-law did her best to dissuade her from such an undertaking and offered to go in her place. But the old lady just laughed and said:

"There you go again! How can you expect me to agree to that? When I was too sick to move, the Goddess understood and was not offended that you should go and burn incense and get the holy prescriptions for me. But now that thanks to Her I am well again and eating and walking about, the least I can do is to show my sincerity by going to thank Her myself. If I sent you instead, while I took

things easy at home, of course She would be offended, and then how could we ever ask Her help again? Such a thing is out of the question!"

Seeing the old woman's obstinacy and that an outright resistance would be useless, the daughter-in-law tried to persuade her at least to wait for a little while until she was stronger. It did not matter so much when she should actually burn the incense, she told her, as that she should have a firm intention of doing so. But all her arguments fell on deaf ears, as old Mrs. Chao was confident that she was now as strong as ever, and was eager to go and fulfil her obligations to the Goddess. So very reluctantly the younger woman bought what was necessary in the way of incense and other offerings and hired a small sedan chair for the old lady to ride in. But much as she was opposed to the expedition, she could not have imagined its outcome would be actually fatal.

The truth was that old Mrs. Chao was still extremely feeble from her months of sickness and it was merely self-delusion that led her to believe that a couple of weeks' convalescence had restored her strength to what it had been. Although she was carried to the temple in a sedan chair, once there she had to burn incense and prostrate herself not only at the shrine of the Goddess but also at numerous other shrines and chapels which she did not wish to omit in her devotions. This was exhausting enough, but to make it worse there was a cold biting wind which seemed to pierce through her very bones. By the time she was halfway on the road, she realized she had undertaken something beyond her strength, but it was too late then to think of turning back, as even the suggestion of such a thing would have been the grossest affront to the dignity of the Goddess,

and it would have been useless to offer any further prayers for Her protection after such a display of insincerity. Indeed, at every temple in China you can see old ladies like grandmother Chao, who can hardly put one foot before the other, yet who struggle to perform their devotions. So she went through the whole ritual from beginning to end, leaving no shrine unvisited, and only then did she consent to go with the nun in attendance to rest herself in the guest room.

Seeing that the old lady had money to spend, this attendant, in the manner of monks and nuns everywhere, waited on her hand and foot and not content with serving the tea, which was the only refreshment normally offered to worshipers, ordered a special dish of noodles and vegetables from the kitchen. Old Mrs. Chao was glad to have an excuse for a longer rest in the guest room and when the noodles arrived she was feeling so hungry that she ate them with a surprising appetite. Then before she set off for home she left an offering of five dollars towards the cost of lamp oil for the shrines.

When she returned to the house, she was utterly exhausted and had to go to bed. The daughter-in-law did not think this was in any way unusual, in view of her exertions during the day, and was not alarmed at her condition. However, later in the evening, she heard groans coming from the old lady's room, and hurrying to see what was the matter, she found old Mrs. Chao lying in a kind of stupor out of which no amount of calling or shaking would arouse her, while her head was burning hot to the touch. Realizing that there was something seriously wrong, the daughter-in-law sent at once for a doctor. When the latter came and examined the sick woman, he shook his head and declared

that going into a cold wind immediately after an illness, and, to make things worse, catching a chill on a full stomach, had brought on this stupor and even if the patient was in the prime of life the case would be bad enough, but in an old person it was hopeless. Indeed he did not want even to make out a prescription, but he finally yielded to the daughter-in-law's entreaties and mentioned certain herbs that might be taken.

These at least had the effect of restoring the old lady to consciousness, but this time she herself knew that she was not long for this world. She gave instructions to her daughter-in-law about her funeral, and after doing that she had no thought for anything or anyone but her granddaughter. "A few days ago," she said, "I was certain I should live two or three years more till Mr. Hung came back and I could see my little girl again. But I see now that it is not to be." And she started to cry. Then she insisted that a letter should be written at once, and sent to the Hung family with a request they should forward it to Germany. This was the letter that was waiting in Berlin on Mr. Hung's return from St. Petersburg. But before Hung's reply reached Soochow, old Mrs. Chao was dead. If it was Sai's absence that caused her illness in the first place, at any rate she brought her death upon herself by her superstition. When the funeral was over the daughter-in-law, whom we may now call simply Mrs. Chao, got somebody to write another letter to Germany with the news.

It arrived just when Hung was beginning his second winter in Berlin. So far, apart from the negotiations about the Korean mission, he had done little of any significance except for the purchase of the map of the Chinese-Russian frontier, and in consequence he was determined to get as much

credit as possible out of this acquisition. He had all the explanatory text translated into Chinese and then he himself went over this version several times, until he was completely satisfied with it. Then he found a German printing house which undertook the task of printing the work, and when this had been done, he sent a number of copies to Peking, with a request that one of them should be submitted to the Emperor. You may be sure that none of the mandarins, or, for that matter, the Emperor himself, took the trouble to examine the map closely, but the mere fact that the work had been done at all was sufficient to increase Hung's prestige as an expert in foreign affairs, and when, not long after, it was decided to place a large order for arms with some European firm, it was Hung who was entrusted with the business. So far, for more than forty years, from the Opium War down to the latest conflict with France over Vietnam, the military history of China had consisted of a depressing series of defeats at the hands of foreigners, followed by the cession of territory, the payment of huge indemnities, and the signing of humiliating treaties. At last, on the principle of locking the door after the burglar has left, a few of the more intelligent of the princes and mandarins had come to realize that the Chinese army was hopelessly out of date and that a new military establishment was an absolute necessity. But the idea, which looked so fine on paper, was a good deal more difficult when it came to be put into practice, as may be gathered from some embarrassing passages of our national history.

At any rate, if there was to be a reform of the army, good weapons were the first necessity. To get these, however, it took a great deal of money, and although it cannot be said that the Chinese Government was without means, ultimate

authority was in the hands of the Empress Dowager. In order to satisfy the caprices of this creature, the princes and mandarins diverted a sum of thirty million dollars, which was intended for use of the navy, in order to rebuild the Summer Palace outside Peking. From their point of view, China was of less importance than the whims of a lustful woman. Naturally, then, the treasury was exhausted, and plans for the army had to be postponed, but when a limited sum became available it was decided it should be spent on arms without any further delay, and as at that time the fame of Germany as a manufacturer of such equipment was greater than that of any other country, it was not surprising that Hung's reputation as a man of affairs should have led the government to confide the transaction to his care.

It happened that the letter from Peking which instructed Hung to make this purchase of arms arrived in Berlin a few days before the news of old Mrs. Chao's death, and Hung was so determined to carry out such an important piece of business without interruption that for the time being he said nothing to Sai about her bereavement, knowing full well the trouble that such an announcement was bound to produce.

Now it might seem that the commission Hung had received was fairly straightforward, but it must be remembered that he was a man totally ignorant of all such matters. If he had been told to buy a Sung Dynasty edition of some Chinese book, he would have known exactly how to set about it, and you could have been sure that the price was reasonable and the book a genuine specimen. But as far as weapons of war were concerned he had hardly so much as seen any, let alone got any views on the respective

merits of one type over another. His ignorance was equally profound when it came to the matter of prices.

In these circumstances, it was natural he should fall back on Monsieur Guennyer, whom by this time he looked upon as an infallible guide to all things European. The latter gentleman assured Hung that nobody was better acquainted than himself with the proper way of handling such a business and that thanks to the large number of personal friends he had in German armament circles he could guarantee that Hung's commission would be executed satisfactorily. "In other matters," he said, "I should hesitate to put myself forward, but as to the purchase of arms, I can assure Your Excellency, without any wish to boast, that you can safely leave everything to me." Hung was delighted to hear this, and congratulated himself on having retained the services of such an invaluable adviser. It was true that Monsieur Guennyer's fees were somewhat high, but that was a trifle when compared to the great advantages the Chinese Legation derived from his assistance.

Hung would have been a good deal less pleased with himself if he had known that his foreign counselor was as regards armaments almost as much of an ignoramus as himself, and that his story of having friends among German arms dealers was a complete myth. But the Belgian had seen there was money to be made, and already knew from experience that Hung and his entourage were children when it came to dealing with foreigners. So he thought there was no harm in doing a little boasting on his own account, and was delighted to find how readily Hung listened to him.

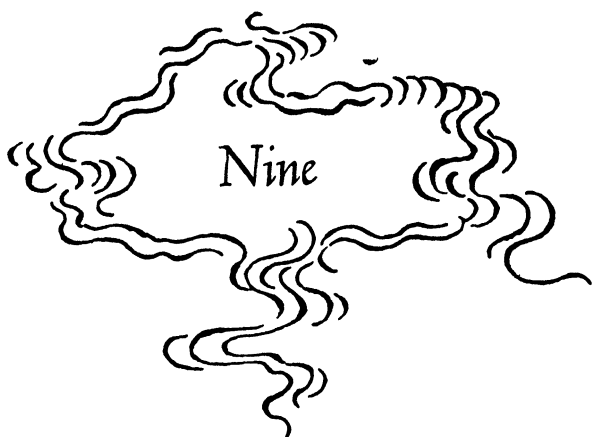
When he had received the commission, the question remained how to set about carrying it out. It happened that

he had a friend who was a wholesale merchant of hardware, and he thought the best thing to do was to take this man into his confidence and ask his help. Now among his friend's business acquaintances there was a man named Jacke who dealt in arms in a small way, and to whom he obtained an introduction without difficulty. It did not take Guennyer and Jacke very long to come to terms about the percentage of the profit which would be conceded to the former, and when this important point and some other details were settled to their joint satisfaction, the Belgian returned to the Legation and reported to Hung that he had made contact with one of the leading German arms dealers. Hung was reassured to discover that his confidence in Guennyer's efficiency had been justified and fixed a time the following afternoon when Jacke should come to the Legation for an interview. At the hour appointed, Guennyer introduced Jacke to Hung, and the dealer, coming to business without delay, produced a list of various types of arms and ammunition with the prices indicated. In addition, he had brought with him two or three types of rifles, as samples of what he could supply. Hung decided that in such a serious transaction, a certain amount of deliberation was called for, and after a general discussion, it was agreed that Jacke should leave the samples and the list for Hung's consideration. After the dealer had gone, Hung gave instructions that the list should be translated into Chinese, and when this was done he went through it carefully. But even so, he was not very much wiser than he had been at first, and he soon found that he needed Guennyer's assistance if he was to derive any information from the document. The Belgian gave as his opinion that certain of the weapons on the list were precisely what the Chinese army

needed, but that the prices demanded were a good deal too high, and he suggested in each case a price which should be proposed as a counteroffer. Hung jotted down these details and expressed warm approval of his adviser's caution. The poor man had no suspicion that the whole thing was a put-up job between the two foreigners, and that the prices marked on the list were so exorbitant that even when Guennyer had made a show of cutting them down they still remained far in excess of the current rate. As to the quality of the weapons, it is true to say that nothing really up-to-date was included in the list at all, but by prior arrangement Guennyer drew Hung's attention to certain categories, of which Jacke had a large supply on hand, and told him these were of the very latest design. Hung listened with owlish gravity to the Belgian's explanations and took notes for his own reference. Then, feeling he was sufficiently acquainted with the situation to be able to meet Jacke on equal terms, he instructed Guennyer to make another appointment with the dealer.

The negotiations dragged on for several meetings, but the result was that a substantial order was made at a price somewhere between that originally asked by Jacke and that suggested to Hung by Guennyer. As this latter was already well in excess of what was fair it will be easily imagined what a bad bargain the whole thing was to the Chinese. An agreement was signed specifying the date by which the shipment would be delivered by a German vessel at Tientsin. Guennyer was well pleased with his windfall, and Jacke was delighted to have cleared his stock. The only sufferer was the Chinese Government, which had acquired a lot of out-of-date weapons nobody else would have. As for Hung, the poor old bookworm was convinced that he had proved to

Peking what a capable man of affairs he was, and he entertained the most extravagant dreams concerning his future career. Indeed, he was so much elated by his success that he had no time to observe certain other transactions which were going on under his very nose, and which were already the common talk of all his staff.



YOU WILL NOT HAVE FORGOTTEN Waldersee and his meeting with Sai in the Tiergarten. After their conversation that day, the German had to admit to himself that the young Chinese girl had a strange sort of attraction for him which he was conscious of in no other woman. He knew that he would have to proceed carefully. With his official connections, it was not difficult for him to obtain an introduction to the Chinese Minister, and in this way he was able to attend an occasional function at the Legation, but on such occasions, because of Chinese etiquette, either Sai did not appear at all or if she did it was not possible for him to have more than a formal word with her. However, he made it his business to put himself in her way whenever she was to be seen, and in particular he was always careful to be in the Tiergarten and the other parks at such times as he had learned she would be likely to be enjoying her

little outings. It was second nature to Sai to exert all her charms on any man who was in her company, and before long Waldersee was head over heels in love with her.

At first, Sophie invariably accompanied her mistress when she went out, but after a while Sai felt sufficiently at home in Berlin to go out alone. But her comings and goings were observed by someone in her household whose interest in her movements she had never suspected. This was, of all people, the valet Ah Fu, whose name has already cropped up in our story from time to time. Young as he was, he was a great rascal, and in particular he was acutely conscious of the physical charms of his young mistress. Indeed, the thought had more than once occurred to him that it would not be unheard of if such a sprightly girl, tied as she was to a somewhat decrepit husband, should turn her eyes towards a personable young manservant. However, he had not dared to make any advances in that direction, as he had no confidence that he would not be ignominiously rebuffed, with disastrous consequences for his own skin. But all the time, he was watching patiently to see if any chance should offer itself, and in this way he noticed before anybody else the increasing frequency of Sai's solitary excursions into the town.

Ah Fu, who was always vain of his appearance, had succumbed to the temptation of acquiring a suit of European clothes, in which he would from time to time make surreptitious expeditions out of doors. This foreign dress altered his appearance so much, that, at least when seen from a distance it was very hard to tell who he was. By this time Ah Fu himself had found that the dress was a very effective disguise, and he made up his mind to take advantage of it in order to spy on Sai's movements. He did this so assidu-

ously that it was not long before he discovered that she was in the habit of strolling round the parks in the company of a foreign man, who gave the impression of having a rendezvous with her. For a while, Ah Fu was unable to do more than observe the pair from a long way off, but at last he decided to bring matters to a head. A certain park in particular was the favorite place for these encounters, and the couple would sit and talk in a discreet summerhouse out of the way of passers-by.

One day, having gathered that his mistress was preparing to go out, and having assured himself that his own absence was unlikely to be noticed, Ah Fu changed into his European clothes and sneaking out of the Legation hurried to the park in question, where he concealed himself in a strategic position among the shrubbery. It was still early in the year, and there were very few visitors about. He had not long to wait before he heard a cab draw up outside the gate, and he told himself that he was not going to be disappointed. Sure enough, after an interval, there was a sound of footsteps and voices, and peeping out from behind the bushes, he could see Sai-chin-hua and the foreigner approaching. They passed near to his hiding place and made their way to their usual spot, where they disappeared from view. Whatever was the subject of their conversation, it was evidently of a nature to amuse them, for they were laughing and talking in the best of spirits. Then the talk ceased and there was a silence which lasted for some time. At last their conversation began again, but Ah Fu, who found his situation very provoking, thought he detected an alteration in their voices. Telling himself that he had waited too long already, and that if he delayed any further it might be too late, he came out from the bushes and started to walk

toward the summerhouse where he could still hear the couple talking.

Sai was not too engrossed in her interview to notice that someone was approaching, and when the newcomer came into view and she saw, instead of a foreign passer-by, a Chinese who was obviously making his way to the summerhouse, she got into a panic and began to have visions of what would happen if Hung should learn of her escapade. However, in a moment she had recovered her self-control. Then she saw it was Ah Fu, and, for no reason that she could explain, something of her apprehension left her. By this time, the valet was already standing before her. "Ah, here you are, Madam," he said with a smile. "His Excellency requires your presence at the Legation. I have been searching for you high and low, but something told me you might have come here to enjoy the view." Sai flushed deeply, and tried to find something to say. Meanwhile Waldersee, guessing that the newcomer must be from the Legation, found his own position so embarrassing that he rose, and with a bow and a brief word of farewell, retired from the scene.

"Ah Fu, do you know why His Excellency sent for me?" Sai inquired.

"Madam, how should I know?" answered the valet smoothly. "But if you were to look for him, I could imagine what it would be for."

Now Sai-chin-hua was no fool and from these words, and the tone in which they were spoken, she began to guess there was something peculiar in the valet's coming after her in this way.

"This is no time for nonsense," she said. "Did His Excellency send for me or not?"

There was no mistaking the leer on the servant's face.

"During the daytime His Excellency has his old books to amuse him," he replied. "I don't suppose he has given you a thought, Madam. Now I am quite different. When I saw you go out alone, I could not rest in my mind, for fear you should be insulted by some foreigners, and I followed you to make sure you came to no harm. As for what I told you about His Excellency's having sent for you, I just made it up on the spur of the moment. After all, as I said before, why should he be wanting you at this time of day?"

Sai now had little doubt what was in Ah Fu's mind. She also detected the menace that lay behind his words. Quite clearly, he knew all about her friendship with Waldersee, and if she did not humor him he would have no hesitation in denouncing her to Hung. Yet she resolved to have one try at intimidating him, before she reconciled herself to the necessity of buying his silence. So she looked at him sternly and said: "Are you out of your senses? If you utter another word of that sort again, I shall tell His Excellency and I can assure you that when he has done with you your mouth will not be in a state to say anything at all for some time to come."

She had hardly finished speaking, when Ah Fu burst out laughing.

"You are quite right, Madam," he said. "If you make a complaint about me to His Excellency, he will certainly come down on me with a vengeance. But in that case I am sure you will understand I couldn't keep silent any longer about what I have seen just now, and I really don't think His Excellency will be very pleased with you. I hope you will not do anything you will be sorry for."

Sai could see there was no way of overawing him but she

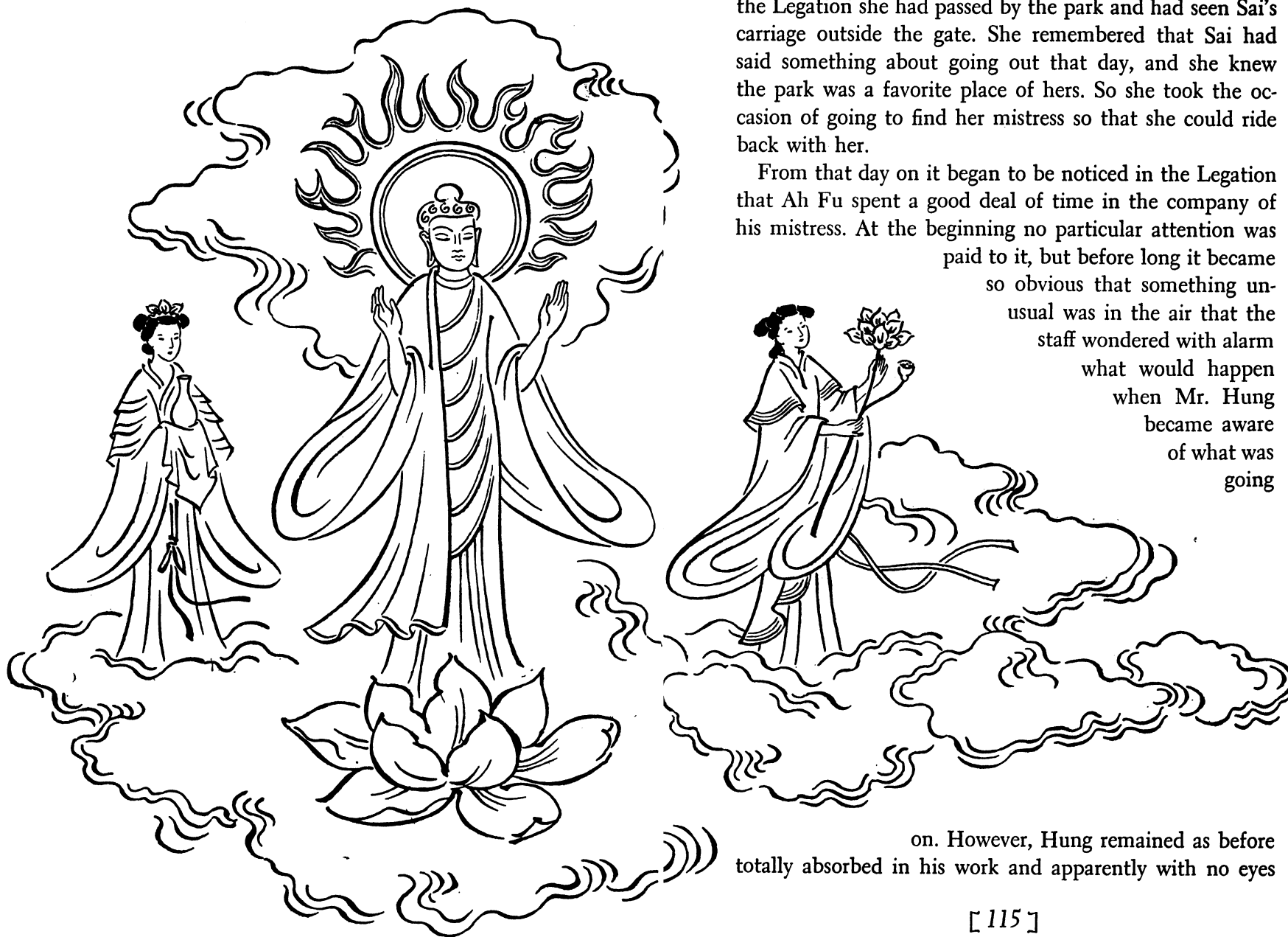
tried not to show any concern. "What is all this?" she said. "What did you see just now that I should want you to keep it a secret?" Then she smiled, half involuntarily. "Well," she said, "perhaps I was a little careless." Seeing her smile, Ah Fu thought his chance had come to press his attack further. The place was quite deserted and he was not one to forego such an opportunity. Till then he had been standing, but now he sat down beside her and sank his face on her shoulder. "Why do you keep on pretending?" he said. "I saw what you were doing. Why can't you be kind to me in the same way?"

Sai had not expected this boldness from him, and she at once attempted to rise to her feet. But he was holding her fast, with one arm around her shoulders and the other across her breast.

"Are you mad?" she exclaimed. "Somebody will see us! Let me go at once!" Then, as he showed no sign of obeying her, "Very well, later," she said, "but now let me go!"

Ah Fu was still so excited, now that he had his hands on her, that all her appeals fell on deaf ears. At last, "Listen," she said. "There's somebody coming!" He took away his hands, and sat listening. Sure enough, there was a sound of footsteps approaching, and with surprising speed Ah Fu darted away up one of the paths in the bushes. Sai stood up, and arranged her hair. Then she stepped outside to see who was coming.

It was no other than Sophie, her German companion, and you can imagine that Sai-chin-hua was very glad to see her. However, it was not a specially strange coincidence that she should have arrived on the scene in that way. She had taken a few hours' leave of absence in order to visit her family, who were living in Berlin, and on the way back to



the Legation she had passed by the park and had seen Sai's carriage outside the gate. She remembered that Sai had said something about going out that day, and she knew the park was a favorite place of hers. So she took the occasion of going to find her mistress so that she could ride back with her.

From that day on it began to be noticed in the Legation that Ah Fu spent a good deal of time in the company of his mistress. At the beginning no particular attention was paid to it, but before long it became so obvious that something unusual was in the air that the staff wondered with alarm what would happen when Mr. Hung became aware of what was going

on. However, Hung remained as before totally absorbed in his work and apparently with no eyes

for anything around him. Nor did any of the staff have the courage to draw attention to the matter, for fear of bringing disaster on their own heads. As for Sai, she began to show signs of a change of character, and became more and more self-willed and careless of other people. Indeed it would not be too much to say that Mr. Hung was sometimes almost afraid of her. In any case, he could not find it in his heart to keep her cooped up all day long in the Legation like a bird in a cage, and for this reason also he did not try to interfere with her comings and goings, although he had no idea of what she was doing. At length, however, even the easygoing Mr. Hung began to think that her pregnancy had advanced so far that it was no longer seemly for her to go out in society, especially as care had to be taken to avoid a repetition of the miscarriage of last time. So with great gentleness and good humor he urged her to take things more quietly. At the same time he made an effort to find leisure from his studies so that he could keep her company. But to tell the truth, these well-meant attentions proved a little irksome to Sai, who had begun to grow accustomed to the freedom she had been enjoying. However, she could hardly invent any reason for protesting. Of course Ah Fu, who now found himself almost totally deprived of his pastime, felt very resentful, but had to keep his anger to himself.

One afternoon Sai was sitting in her room feeling so bored and miserable that she started to cry. Hung happened to come in just then and in some surprise asked her what was the matter. How was she to tell him what she was thinking? But she had to say something and between her sobs she began to tell him the first story that came into her head.

"Oh, I was thinking about last night," she said, turning

to him with the tears running down her cheeks. "I had a very bad dream. I'm sure something has happened to my grandmother!"

Fully believing her, Hung pressed her for details.

"I dreamt I was at home with my mother in Soochow," she said. "My grandmother was very ill indeed, and the doctors had all shaken their heads and told us there was nothing they could do. We were in a terrible state, and my mother and I were praying to Buddha all day long. And then, my grandmother little by little started to get better until at last she was strong enough to set off to the South Sea to thank Buddha for her recovery. Mother and I went with her in a big roomy boat. I seem to remember we passed through the most beautiful scenery until we reached a holy mountain with great forests of purple bamboos where fairy birds were flying about in the air. The three of us kotowed and then we heard fairy music coming out of the sky and we knew Buddha was going to appear. We raised our heads and up in the clouds there was a tall figure wearing a white robe and standing on a lotus. On His left, there was an immortal holding a lotus flower, and on His right stood the Dragon Maiden holding a vase. All of them had very kind faces. We kotowed again, and Grandmother gave thanks to Buddha for His mercy. Buddha said: 'All your family has served Me with rare devotion for many years, and now in return I am going to give you a lotus.' With these words He took the flower from the hands of the immortal and threw it toward Grandmother who stood up and was reaching out to catch it, when it fell at her feet. She started back so as not to profane it, but somehow she accidentally trod on it, and then she and the flower together rose into the air and in a moment she was standing beside Buddha, and

waving to us as if she wanted to tell us to return. Then she followed Buddha away into the clouds. Mother and I did not know what to do, and while we were still standing there, a sort of whirlwind of sand and pebbles swept around us so that I had to shut my eyes. It was some time before the storm subsided and when I could open my eyes again there was no sign of the holy mountain or of my mother, but instead I was with you in a steamship at sea. Then a siren blew, and I rubbed my eyes and found it was all a dream and I was lying peacefully beside you in bed. But don't you think it shows there is no hope of Grandmother's getting well?"

Now Hung had known for some time that Sai-chin-hua's grandmother was dead, but because of her condition he had been afraid to break the news to her. For this reason, he believed every word he had been told, especially as the story seemed to tally with the information he had received of the old woman's fatal excursion to the temple and he marveled that so young a girl should be granted a supernatural revelation of that kind. How good and pure she must be, he thought, and while he sighed to himself at the old woman's death, a smile of pride and happiness came across his face. Sai meanwhile was looking out of the corner of her eye to see how Hung would take the story, and was rather mystified by his reaction to it.

Just then the door opened, and a man's head came into the room and, on seeing Hung's back, immediately withdrew, so quickly that even Sai who was facing the door had only just time to catch a glimpse of it. But this was quite enough to make her agitated, and it was fortunate that Hung was too deep in thought to take any notice. She sat and watched him for a while and then he gave another sigh.

"How strange!" he said. "It shows we have these ties with

our own flesh and blood, so that when their time comes, we are given a warning of it. How else could the dream have corresponded so exactly?"

He spoke these words to himself, in a manner that was barely audible, but they were loud enough to be heard by Sai who immediately grasped their significance. But how could the story she had just made up have anything to do with her flesh and blood, and what did Hung mean when he said it corresponded to something? Had anything really happened to her grandmother? Without waiting for Hung to continue, she asked him what he was talking about. When Hung realized he had given himself away, he could have bitten his tongue off, but it was now too late to conceal the news any longer.

"I was only saying that you must have been very close to your grandmother to have had this dream," he replied, doing his best to smile.

"No, no!" she cried. "You mentioned that something corresponded, what did you mean by that? I am sure you know something!"

"You are a clever girl," said Hung. "Yes, you have guessed correctly! Well, there is no harm now in letting you know, but you must try not to be too much upset."

At these words, Sai knew that her grandmother was no longer alive. She felt sick at heart, and the tears welled into her eyes, but she insisted that Hung should tell her everything. When he had finished, he attempted to comfort her, but suddenly she turned up her eyes, and fell against his chest in a faint. He pinched her upper lip to revive her, and shouted for the amahs. The next moment, Ah Fu came into the room, clasped his hands respectfully, and asked what was the matter.

Hung stared at him.

"What are you doing here?" he demanded. "Where are those damned amahs? Go and tell them to come at once!"

Ah Fu disappeared and Hung proceeded to rub Sai's chest until the amahs came with hot water, and between them they brought her back to consciousness. But no sooner had she come round than she started beating her breast and kicking her heels. Then she pointed to Hung.

"Oh, how could you bear to do such a thing?" she cried. "You knew all the time my grandmother was dead, and you deliberately kept it from me. It was because I followed you that I was separated from her and could not go to her bedside when she was sick, or to her funeral when she died. If you had not kept the news from me I could at least have put on mourning for her, but all the while you have allowed me to go about in ordinary clothes. Why did you do this to me?"

Poor Hung was completely nonplussed by all this. In front of the servants he could not bring himself to caress her or use love talk to her.

"The dead cannot be brought back to life," he said. "Remember what you saw in the dream! Your grandmother went up to heaven. Few people have so good a death. It is not right for you to feel so sad."

With this he took her into his arms and let her weep against his chest. The amahs, now their mistress had recovered and there was nothing for them to do, were sensible enough not to stand there like dummies but took the first opportunity of slipping away. Hung, seeing he and Sai were alone, patted her affectionately, and then took out a handkerchief and dried her tears.

"I know it was wrong," he whispered, "but I did it because I love you. You are delicate enough at the best of

times, and now you are going to have a baby, I thought you could not bear to hear such sad news. Then also I had been ordered by the government to arrange all that business of buying guns for the army and I simply had no time to keep you company. So I decided to wait for a while before letting you know. Until today I did not seem to have any opportunity of breaking it to you. Now just listen to me. I am not a young man and my health is not very good. Even if we are happy and cheerful, our time together cannot be very long. But if you go on like this, you might as well tell me to end my days at once. My dear child, try and make the best of things as they are, and live with me comfortably, and when the time comes I shall see that you are well provided for and that you will not have to regret having wasted half your life on an old man."

He gave a sigh, as if moved by his own words, and Sai felt a pang of remorse at his sincerity, and burst out crying again, until at last she was soothed by his caresses. Then an amah brought some more hot water and towels and she washed the tear stains from her face. Meanwhile Hung went off and prepared some ginseng soup and served it to her himself, to the secret amusement of the amahs.

For some time after that, Sai did not use make-up or wear gay-colored clothes. But the change only went to reveal her beauty in another light. She looked just as elegant in her new simplicity as she had in the most elaborate gowns, and Hung loved her all the more. Meanwhile, on her part she often thought of what Hung had said about his intentions to provide for her, and the prospect made her feel comfortable in her mind. So she was content to stay quietly at home without any more bickering until at last the time came for her child to be born.

Hung spared no expense to see that she should be as comfortable as possible and one of the best doctors in Berlin was engaged to take charge of her. This time everything went off without mishap, and in due course she gave birth to a daughter, whom Hung named Te-kuan from Te, the Chinese word for Germany. All those who saw the child remarked how plump she was and admired her white skin, to the delight of Hung who was as proud of his new daughter as if he had never had a child before, although at home in China he had a grandson who was already attending school.

As a rule people try to see in a child a resemblance to one of its parents, but it would have been hard to notice any way in which Te-kuan looked either like Hung or like her mother. In such cases, the people of Soochow have an unkind old saying which goes: "It's not like its father, it's not like its mother, but it's like Chang the Carpenter from next door." If we applied this to poor little Te-kuan, whom should we put in the place of Chang the Carpenter? No doubt my readers are intelligent enough to supply the answer for themselves, so I need not pursue the matter any further.

One day, Sai was nursing Te-kuan, and Sophie was standing beside her. For no reason in particular Sai said: "Sophie, do you think the baby looks like me?" Sophie shook her head and smiled, without answering.

"Does she look like Mr. Hung, then?" asked Sai.

"Oh, no," said Sophie, again shaking her head.

Just then Hung came into the room and seeing the pair of them in conversation asked what they were talking about. Sai laughed and said: "I was asking Sophie whom she thinks the baby has taken after, but she doesn't seem

to feel it looks like either of us. Surely she doesn't mean it looks like Chang the Carpenter?"

Hung was not in the least shocked by this remark, but clapped his hands and laughed.

"What does Sophie know?" he said. "Of course the child takes after me."

Sai pursed her lips and looked at Hung and then at Te-kuan.

"You can't be serious?" she said. "You never looked like that."

"So you think I'm joking?" laughed Hung. "I know I am a scruffy old man these days, and that's why you can't notice any resemblance, but if you could see me as I was thirty years ago when I was still a handsome young fellow you would have no doubt where Te-kuan gets her good looks from."

Sai merely laughed outright at this foolishness but it was just one example of the way Hung doted on the child, in whom he could see no fault at all.

From then on the days were not so lonely in the Legation, and the time passed so quickly that before they realized, Hung's three year term of office had come to an end and they had to set about preparing for their journey home. The Belgian interpreter, Guennyer, as well as Sophie and the German maids, were all paid off, and places were booked on a steamer back to Shanghai. Hung was busy making his official visits of farewell, and Sai had to take leave of many friends she had made during her stay, until at last the day came for them to say goodbye to Berlin.

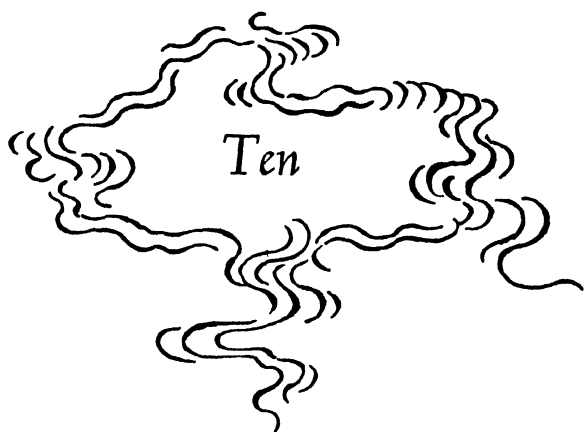
There was quite a gathering at the station to see them off, Waldersee being conspicuous in the crowd. Hung took everything as a matter of course, and did not notice how

downcast Sai appeared to be. Only Ah Fu guessed how she was feeling.

"Yes, you foreign devil," he thought to himself. "You would like to be coming with us, wouldn't you?" And while Waldersee stood there waving, Ah Fu glared at him so balefully that it was surprising nobody paid any attention.

Hung was glad to be on his way back to China, especially since he believed he had acquitted himself so well in his post that he was bound to be well rewarded by the Court. What gave him most satisfaction, and what he thought would most certainly establish his reputation among his colleagues as an expert on foreign affairs, was his edition of the map of the Chinese-Russian frontier. Indeed, he was so well pleased with himself that at times Sai thought he must be a little cracked. Still, she let him have his say and when he became a bore she turned for company to Te-kuan.

They had good weather all the way and were much more comfortable than on their outward trip. But as they traveled back by the same route they had taken in coming, the sights of the voyage were already familiar to them and there is no need for me to go into any long description. I ought to mention however, that certain writers have given scandalous accounts of Sai's conduct on the ship, which I prefer not to repeat. The truth is that when an old man insists on marrying a young girl he must expect to find her difficult to keep in order. In particular when the girl, like Sai, has been a professional entertainer, it is hardly surprising if she should give grounds for a few spicy stories.



THEIR JOURNEY was soon over and they found themselves once more back in Shanghai. A few local mandarins came to the jetty to meet them and Hung learned that his old quarters in the Temple of the Queen of Heaven had been occupied by another diplomat, a certain Mr. Li who was returning from an Embassy to Japan. But the Civil Governor of Shanghai had been informed by Peking of the date of Hung's arrival and had arranged accommodation for him in the Bureau of Foreign Affairs. So having told his servants to bring on his luggage after him, Hung with Sai-chin-hua and Te-kuan went ashore, where they found the Civil Governor had provided a coach and two horses to transport them to their temporary residence, which they reached after a short drive.

By a coincidence, just at that time quite a number of senior officials who were prominent in foreign affairs found

themselves in Shanghai. Apart from Mr. Li, who as we have said had been Minister to Japan, there were such people as Mr. Hsieh, who had just been appointed as Minister to London. Hung went to pay his respects to these gentlemen, all old friends of his, and Mr. Hsieh lost no time in giving a dinner party in a well-known restaurant, with the intention both of welcoming Hung on his return and of taking advantage of the presence of so many diplomats in the city to have a thorough discussion of the political situation and of China's foreign relations. The idea would have been an excellent one, had it not been for the fact that of the guests invited only one or two at the most had any real understanding of what was going on in the outside world, and the exchange of views proved futile in the extreme.

Hung, happening to be sitting next to Mr. Li, turned to him politely. "I believe that the Japanese greatly admire Chinese literature and have made large collections of our old books," he said. "Apparently they want to take China as their model. Having spent three years there, you must be well-informed about all that."

Mr. Li laughed heartily.

"Well, of course the Japanese belong to the same race as ourselves," he replied, "and it is only natural they should admire our literature and collect our books. But I shouldn't go so far as to say they are taking us as their model. You know, there have been enormous changes in Japan since the Emperor Meiji came to the throne. In particular, their army is now quite formidable. My personal opinion is that they have their eye on Korea, and that we must be on the lookout for trouble in that quarter."

Hearing Korea mentioned, Hung was delighted to have an opportunity of blowing his own trumpet.

"Quite so," he said. "As a matter of fact I had already noticed that. Indeed that was why I made such a point of resisting the attempt by the Koreans a couple of years ago to send a diplomatic mission to Russia."

He made this remark in the full confidence that Mr. Li and all the other guests would greet it with words of approval. Instead, much to his surprise, Mr. Li glanced around and began to talk of something else, while Mr. Hsieh broke in with an anecdote about Peking society. For a minute or two Hung wondered what was the matter, and when he began to pay attention again, Mr. Hsieh was holding forth on the Chinese navy.

"If we want a strong China," Mr. Hsieh was saying, "we can't do without a proper military establishment. The crying need of the moment is a powerful navy. Naturally the Court knows this, and has established a Naval Ministry under Li Hung-chang, with Admiral Ting in charge of training. We all expect wonders from such men, but after all what can they do when the funds that ought to be allotted to them have constantly to be diverted to other uses? As things are, it seems hopeless for us to try and establish ourselves on terms of parity with other countries." There was a murmur of assent round the table, and soon everybody was giving his views on naval matters and Hung had to resign himself to seeing his pet topic abandoned for the evening.

It was no accident that Mr. Li and the others had changed the subject. Indeed, Mr. Li was perfectly well acquainted with everything that had passed in the matter of the Korean delegation. But at the time, as Minister to Japan, he had felt that the whole affair was outside his official competence. There was a saying among the mandarins in those days

that you should sweep the snow from your own door and not concern yourself with the frost on your neighbor's tiles, and it well represented the reluctance to stir up any sort of trouble which was so characteristic of all Chinese officials. When it was known that Hung had taken it upon himself to make a stand, nobody else was willing to risk his own future by getting involved in something which did not concern him. So naturally the topic was embarrassing, and not one that Mr. Li cared to hear discussed, while Mr. Hsieh, who was afraid that some unpleasantness might arise, was only too anxious to lead the conversation elsewhere, and thought that the navy offered as innocuous a subject as any.

The truth was that these men, in common with the rest of their class, found it impossible ever to come to grips with what was really important. The great ministers at Court were either their former teachers or their old friends, and the habits of a lifetime prevented them from committing the indiscretion of frankly expressing their opinion. Even in their talk about the navy, they were far away from the facts. The mere mention of such people as Li Hung-chang and Admiral Ting as being in charge of the organization was quite sufficient to stop their mouths from any criticism of the Naval Ministry itself, the obvious failure of which was attributed to lack of funds. Yet everybody ought to have known that it was nothing more than an administrative scrap heap, consisting for the most part of Manchus—imperial kinsmen or nobles—who relied on the merits of their ancestors and their own titles to find a comfortable job. To such people, the creation of a Naval Ministry seemed specially designed for their benefit. It was, of course, excusable that none of them should know anything about naval matters, as they had never had the opportunity of

gaining such experience. But as Manchus they might at least have been expected to have had a little military training. In fact, however, opium pipes were the weapons they knew best, and the only battles they had ever fought were those of the bedroom. These were the people who cluttered up the Naval Ministry. But, it may be objected, the minister in charge was Li Hung-chang, who was the most able administrator of his time. Why didn't he clean up the mess? The answer is that although for the sake of appearance the Empress Dowager had had to give him the post, she was far too jealous to let him exercise any real control, and the affairs of the Ministry were really in the hands of a Manchu nobleman, who saw very effectively to the comfort of his fellow Manchus, while Li Hung-chang like a sensible man did not stir up trouble for himself by interfering. In this way, the Naval Ministry, from its very inception, was as rotten as it could possibly be. If you add to this the fact that Admiral Ting, who was in charge of the practical training of the navy, was noted more as a hanger-on of Li Hung-chang than for competence in his profession you will understand why in a few years' time we suffered such a total defeat at the hands of the Japanese.

But I have allowed myself to digress too far from Mr. Hung and his affairs. The dinner given by Mr. Hsieh, although a failure as far as political discussion was concerned, was in other respects quite enjoyable, and was the first of several such parties by means of which the mandarins whiled away their time in Shanghai.

One day, Hung was attending a dinner given by another colleague, and was settling down to enjoy himself when to his surprise his old retainer Sheng appeared on the scene with a telegram which he said had just arrived from Peking.

On hearing this, everybody knew at once that the message must contain word of a fresh appointment and started to congratulate Hung without waiting to discover what it was. Rather flustered, Hung tore open the envelope and took out the telegram, but as like all telegrams in Chinese, the words were indicated by numbers he had to leave the table and consult the cipher book to discover what it said. The result was well worth his trouble. The cable was from a friend in Peking to announce that Hung had been appointed Senior Vice-President of the Board of War, with a concurrent post in the Foreign Office. There was a great sensation when Hung told the company his news and the rest of the evening was taken up by felicitations on his success.

There was no longer any reason for Hung to stay in Shanghai, and he set about making preparations to leave for Peking. Meanwhile Madame Hung had come up from Soochow to welcome him, and it was decided that she and the rest of the family should accompany him to the north. They all went together by ship as far as Tientsin, and then, as Hung was in a hurry to reach the capital, he decided to go on ahead overland leaving his wife and Sai to follow more comfortably by river along with the luggage.

For his journey, Hung hired a mule cart and set off in the company of Sheng and Ah Fu. They made slow progress over the bad roads, and by the time they reached the little town of Hosiwu the sun was already setting. While they were still half a mile or so from the town, Hung sent his old retainer on ahead to reserve accommodation in one of the inns, but when they got to the place there was no sign of him. Meanwhile servants and porters from the various inns and rest-houses came out at the sound of the cart to induce the travelers to put up at their establishments, but Hung

did not like the look of any of them and ordered the driver to keep straight on. At last, almost at the other end of the town, Hung noticed a clean and orderly-looking place, with a spacious courtyard, and without waiting for Sheng to return he ordered the driver to stop. Seeing customers at his gate, the innkeeper came hurrying out to greet them, and led the way inside, but they had not taken more than a few steps into the courtyard when who should run out from the house but Sheng himself, cursing for all he was worth.

"We'll see if you can get away with this!" he was shouting. "You'll be singing another tune when I tell my master about you!"

Noticing Hung in the courtyard, he stopped in his tracks. Hung looked at him in surprise, for he had never seen the old fellow so upset.

"What have you been up to, Sheng?" he asked. "Who's that you're having a row with?"

Sheng clasped his hands respectfully.

"I have been carrying out Your Excellency's orders," he said. "I went to several inns and didn't find any of them suitable. Then I saw this place and, thinking it looked better than the rest, I came in and asked if they had any rooms vacant. The manager said they had, so I arranged for you to be given the best apartment in the east wing. Just then, a rude young gentleman came out and said the apartment was reserved for him and that he wouldn't let anybody else have it. I tried to reason with him, but he talked like a wild man and threatened he would have me tied up. He told me that even if I were the retainer of a prince and not—saving your presence—the servant of a petty mandarin he would have me tied up without thinking twice about it. I didn't

want to make any trouble, so I was coming out to tell Your Excellency what had happened when I met you like this."

Hung motioned Sheng to stand aside and turning to the innkeeper asked if any other rooms were available. "If you have anything vacant, we shall make do here for tonight," he said. "If not, we shall go somewhere else."

"We have a side room," said the man doubtfully, "but I'm afraid it may not be good enough for you."

"Never mind," said Hung. "If it is clean, it will do well enough. But tell me, who is the man that used such language to my servant? Do I know him?"

"Oh, yes," replied the innkeeper. "That's young Mr. Chang. His father is Vice-President of the Board of Revenue and a member of the Foreign Office. The old man is a great favorite of the Empress Dowager and the son thinks that because of this he can behave more or less as he likes."

Hung nodded, and without asking any more questions followed the innkeeper towards his quarters.

Young Mr. Chang was still out on the steps talking angrily with another man.

"I wonder whose servant that impudent bastard was?" he was saying. "If it hadn't been for you I should have given him the thrashing of his life."

The other man who seemed a little older laughed deprecatingly. "You mustn't waste your time getting angry with such people," he said. "I fancy they must be provincials making their first visit to Peking. That would explain why the fellow didn't know you. Otherwise, he wouldn't have dared to be so impudent."

While they were speaking, Hung came round the corner and saw the pair of them. Looking at the younger man full in the face, he clasped his hands and said, "Mr. Chang!

What an unexpected meeting! I have not seen you for a long time!"

The young man stared for a moment, and then his face broke into a smile.

"Mr. Hung, of all people," he exclaimed, returning the salute. "Do come into the apartment here."

"Oh, that wouldn't do at all," said Hung. "I must not take your accommodation. The side room will suit me perfectly well. But I'll come back later and have a chat." With this, Hung went off to his room, where Sheng and Ah Fu set out his things.

It will be worth while for me to tell you a few words about the men he had just met. Chang was the son of Chang Yin-huan who, as the innkeeper had said, was one of the most influential men in Peking, and who had reached his position by his assiduity in courting his superiors. For instance, having heard that the Empress Dowager was fond of horses and dogs, he spent a good deal of his leisure time searching out fine animals to present to her. In this way he had won her favor and she had put great trust in him. Of course, people sneered at him behind his back, but to his face nobody ventured to be anything but deferential. And out of his influence at Court he became a very wealthy man, as many people asked him for favors and none came with empty hands. He had an understanding with the Grand Eunuch Li Lien-ying and the two of them were hand-in-glove in the sale of honors and official posts, the traffic in which was at its height at that time. It was no wonder that Chang the son, knowing his father's power, thought he had nothing to fear from anyone. He had bought himself an official post but the pickings were too good in Peking for him to want to pursue a career in the

provinces and for most of the time he acted as his father's contact man with mandarins who had come to the capital to seek appointments. At the moment, he had just been paying a visit to Tientsin with a commission to buy foreign goods and on the way back he had chanced to make the acquaintance of his companion.

This latter was a man named Lu, the son of a very rich family of Shantung. Although he had never shown any inclination for study, he had set his heart on becoming a mandarin, and by contributing lavishly to the Shantung Flood Relief Fund he had gained a sinecure similar to that of young Chang. He was now on his way to Peking where he hoped by sufficient bribery to obtain a fat appointment. He was bored with his own company, and, happening to stop at the same inn as Chang and having learned from the servants who his fellow traveler was, he lost no time in introducing himself. Chang made no difficulty about receiving him, as indeed such contacts fell within the scope of his regular activities, and the two continued their journey together, and in this manner they encountered Hung. Now Hung had always been on most friendly terms with Chang Yin-huan, so much so that it was Chang he had asked to submit his frontier map to the Court, and it could have been expected that the friendship would be shared by Chang's son. The latter, however, had other ideas, and, as we shall see, the unlucky consequences of this chance meeting were to dog Hung for the rest of his life.

Having rested and taken supper Hung decided he would keep his promise and stroll across to young Chang's quarters for a chat. It was only a matter of crossing the courtyard to the other side of the inn and he did not bother to take a servant with him. When he arrived at the suite he

found the middle room by the door was silent and in darkness, but from a room at the side came the gleam of a lamp and the sound of voices. Hung stepped into the middle room and was about to call out to those within when he overheard something which caused him to remain silent.

"You'll do what you can for me with your father, won't you?" said a voice. "If it comes off you'll see I shan't forget you."

"Don't worry," came the answer, "my father is great friends with old Li Lien-ying and between them they can get the Empress Dowager to do anything they want. If you're willing to pay, Li Lien-ying will pull all the strings for you. Actually, if you wanted, you could get something even better than the job in the Customs."

It was the mention of Li Lien-ying, the Grand Eunuch, which had stopped Hung from calling out, but now having heard what he had, he found himself in a quandary. If he went forward and revealed his presence, he would certainly arouse the suspicion in their minds that he had been listening to their secret. On the other hand, if he slipped out again without a word, he might be seen by one of the servants, which would be even worse. In this dilemma, he decided that after all he had better let them know he was there and he coughed and called out: "Are you there, Mr. Chang! Have you finished supper?"

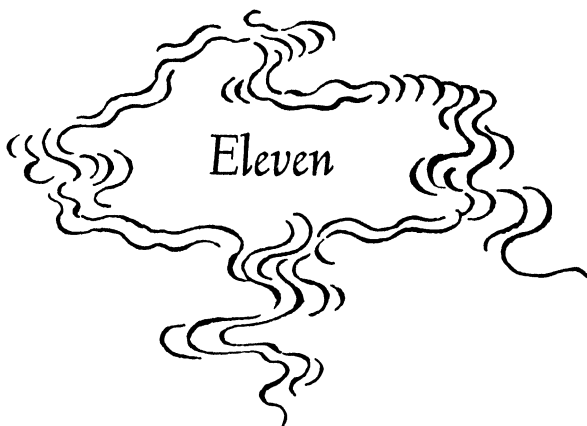
Chang was startled to hear Hung's voice, and the first thought that came into his head was that his secrets must have been overheard. In fact, there was no need for him to be unduly anxious, because although Hung disapproved of the things he had learned he was not one to go out of his way to do a man an injury. But Chang, who judged other people by himself, found it impossible not to believe that

Hung would make use of anything he might have discovered.

At Hung's call, the two men came out to greet him and brought him inside to sit on the stove-couch with them. Chang shouted for a servant and when the man came cursed him as a lazy scoundrel for allowing the visitor to enter unannounced. The man thought the cursing was undeserved, as he had been particularly instructed to keep out of the way while the two were having their talk, but he kept his resentment to himself and went to bring tea.

Hung chatted with Chang for a while about nothing in particular, and was also very affable to Lu. The latter, knowing who Hung was, addressed him with the greatest respect. But Hung could tell from Chang's manner that he was ill at ease, and knew there was something on his mind. So he thought he had better not stay too long and as soon as an opportunity came he took his leave.

Hung rose early the next morning, but Chang and Lu were even earlier and had already left the inn. After breakfast he continued his journey and reached Peking without further incident. One of his friends, knowing that when his mission abroad had ended, he was sure to be stationed in the capital, had found a house for him in Silk Hat Lane and when informed of the date of his departure from Shanghai had seen that it was furnished and made ready to live in. So immediately on his arrival he had a place of his own to go to.



FOR THE NEXT FEW DAYS Hung was busily occupied in looking up his friends. Then the imperial rescript was issued confirming his new appointment and, having to go to the Palace for audience according to custom, he took the opportunity of presenting to the Empress Dowager a number of valuable gifts he had brought from Germany. Among these the one that most took her fancy was a model steamboat capable of seating five or six people. It was the first of its kind ever seen in China, and she had it put on the lake in the Summer Palace.

In his concurrent post at the Foreign Office Hung was delighted to have as a colleague his friend Chang Yin-huan between whom and himself he was confident there could never arise any misunderstanding. And indeed from Mr. Chang's manner it was impossible to detect that there was any change in his old cordiality. Yet already, without

Hung's suspecting it, his friend's mind had been poisoned against him. For as soon as Chang the younger had returned to Peking he had told his father a most lying account of his meeting with Hung in the inn, not saying a word of the conversation which he suspected Hung of having overheard, but distorting the incident of his quarrel with the servant, who he said had been encouraged by Hung to utter all kinds of insults against himself and his father. Indeed, according to him, so far from checking his servant, Hung had added some particularly wounding remarks of his own. All this fabrication was believed by Chang Yin-huan who said to himself that Hung's success in his official career must have gone to his head so much that he had forgotten he owed his very appointment in the Foreign Office to Chang's efforts on his behalf. Sooner or later, he thought, the ungrateful rascal will be made to understand whom he has to deal with. Meanwhile however, he took care not to give any sign of his true feelings to poor Hung, who had not the slightest notion that anything had changed between them.

Not long afterwards it happened that Chang was commissioned to go and inspect some work that was being done on the Imperial tombs, and in consequence had to be absent from the office, the routine work of which normally all passed through his hands. In a few days there was quite an accumulation of papers on his desk, but, knowing what sort of man he was, nobody ventured to touch them. At last however, Hung could stand it no longer and confident that Chang would not resent the assistance of an old friend he took it upon himself to deal with the papers. When after a fortnight or so Chang returned to the office he found to his astonishment that nothing was awaiting his attention and he inquired what had happened. Hung

confessed that he had ventured to deal with the business in his absence, and Chang was at once all politeness and thanked him for his trouble. His true sentiments however were very different and in his heart he loathed Hung as an upstart who was omitting no opportunity of displaying his superior abilities. From that time on, he made up his mind that an occasion must be found to ruin Hung and he began to search around systematically for any weapon he might use for this purpose.

There is an old Chinese saying that whereas you will never have two pieces of good luck at the same time, one misfortune, on the other hand, never comes without another. The truth of this was now to be shown in the case of Mr. Hung who, in addition to having incurred the secret enmity of Chang at the office, was to have his domestic happiness ruined in such a way that when the two evils assailed him together they were to deprive him of life itself. As we have seen, his family followed him to Peking, and at first all was peace and harmony in the household. Madame Hung was a very kind, placid sort of woman and as Sai used all her arts to win her good graces, the two of them were fast friends. It was not long, however, before Madame Hung began to notice something which could not fail to make her rather uncomfortable, namely the lack of formality in Sai's attitude to Ah Fu. Sai was by nature the sort of girl who finds it difficult to adhere to rules of behavior, and her stay in Europe, where she had had plenty of opportunity to observe the comparative freedom in the social relations between men and women, had led her to be even more careless of the Chinese proprieties. Ah Fu, having been brought up as Hung's personal valet, and being quite a clever young man, knew well enough what be-

havior was expected of him, but in spite of this it often happened that he and Sai were to be found laughing and talking by themselves in a corner. At last Madame Hung could no longer restrain her conservative instincts, and she let Sai know that this sort of conduct was most undesirable, but far from following this good advice, Sai shrugged the matter off and started to describe how ladies behaved in Europe. At this, Madame Hung, gentle as she was, really did lose her temper.

"We are not Europeans," she said. "We are Chinese and living in China. Even foreigners when they come here have to respect our customs. Do you mean to tell me that we have to copy these barbarous manners?"

Sai could find no answer to this, and Madame Hung began to feel a little sorry for having spoken so severely. Her husband, after all, thought the world of the girl, and would perhaps not be well pleased to hear that she had been rebuked. If a quarrel came of it, everybody would think she herself was jealous of Sai, and that would be more embarrassing than ever. So she did not pursue the matter further, although now and again she would drop a hint to Hung that Sai was after all still only a very young girl and it did not look quite right for Ah Fu to be coming and going so freely. Hung just listened with a smile and did nothing, but when it was too late he was to be sorry for not having followed his wife's advice.

One evening, Hung had a few colleagues to his house for dinner, and as the conversation was more interesting than usual, the party did not break up until nearly one o'clock. After seeing his guests off, Hung made his way to the inner apartments of the house, and called Sai by name several times. There was no reply, and deciding she must be

asleep he walked along the verandah towards her bedroom. It was very dark but suddenly he thought he saw a shadowy form creeping away round the corner of the building. He was on the point of calling out to ask who was there, but, thinking better of it, he checked himself and then went slowly to Sai's room. She was in bed, the lower part of her body under the quilt, while above she was wearing a vest without sleeves and cut low at the back. At the sight of her, Hung was moved, as always, and thought to himself what a lovely creature she was. She had her face to the wall, and he did not believe she was asleep, but without disturbing her he undressed for bed, turning over in his mind as he did so what Madame Hung had said about Sai and Ah Fu.

"Ah, well," he thought, "it was my fate to meet her and I shall never part with her now." Then he climbed into bed, and Sai as if awakened by the intrusion turned towards him in the way he knew so well.

All was quiet for a couple of days and then one afternoon as Sai was sitting by herself in her room, her personal maid, a young girl called Kuei, came running all agog with excitement.

"Oh, Madam," she cried. "Something terrible has happened. The master has given Ah Fu a thrashing and has ordered him to be turned out of the house, I don't know what for. If you hurry, you'll be in time to speak for him."

Immediately with the shock of the news, which was terrible, Sai understood the position and that much as she would miss Ah Fu there was nothing she could do. With remarkable presence of mind, she assumed an air of sternness and told Kuei very sharply that what the master might decide to do with Ah Fu was no concern of hers, and in confusion the maid giggled and ran out.

But what had happened? The valet had been reared from childhood as Hung's personal servant, and his master had always treated him well and made much of him, but now not only had he thrashed him, which might be understandable, but he had expelled him from the house. What had the young fellow done?

That day, Hung had come back from the office and in accordance with his custom had gone to the study to change his clothes. Ah Fu was waiting on him as usual, and Hung had complained that his hat was thick with dust, and told him to clean it. Ah Fu had often done this before, and without paying any particular attention he had taken a red coral button from the hat, and was about to put it on one side, when all of a sudden he fancied he heard Sai's voice calling to him, and stood there listening. He did not hear the voice again, but while he was waiting intently he forgot what he was supposed to be doing and let the coral button fall to the floor, where it split in pieces on the brickwork. Now in those days mandarins guarded their hat buttons as they would their very life, and to break one was regarded as an absolutely certain presage of dismissal from office. After all his years in a mandarin's household, Ah Fu knew this as well as anybody, and when he saw what he had done he was scared out of his wits. Hung heard the sound, and turning round saw his button in pieces on the floor. Hardly conscious of what he was doing he sprang forward and gave Ah Fu two resounding buffets on the ear. Then while the wretched valet was trying to stammer out some words of explanation, Hung seized a riding whip and began to lash him unmercifully.

"What were you thinking about, you bastard?" he

shouted. "You seem moonstruck on something. I tell you I'll have your life for smashing that button of mine!"

Up went the whip again, and a fresh torrent of stripes descended on Ah Fu's shoulders. The old retainer Sheng, hearing the sound of blows and curses from the study, came to see what was going on, and finding Ah Fu in trouble, he smiled to himself with satisfaction.

You were too high and mighty to mix with the rest of us when you were the favorite, he thought. You little knew then you would come to this.

Such were Sheng's real sentiments, but for decency's sake he had to make a pretense of interceding on Ah Fu's behalf. Just at that moment, in came Madame Hung.

"What has put you in such a state?" she asked her husband. "It's not worth while getting yourself upset over that fellow. I've noticed that he has been acting queerly during the last few days, wandering around the house like a man in a dream. It's no use hitting him, he's too thick-skinned to feel much pain, and he'll soon be just as bad as ever. If you take my advice, you'll get rid of him altogether, bag and baggage."

Hung listened to what his wife had to say, and nodded in approval. Turning to Sheng, he told him to see that Ah Fu was put out of the house at once and his things with him, and that he must on no account be allowed to remain a moment longer than was necessary. Sheng obeyed the order with alacrity, and led Ah Fu off to collect his belongings and get himself and them out of the house. Shortly afterwards, he came back to the study to report that Hung's commands had been carried out and then hunted round among the hat boxes until he had found a spare button

to replace the one that had been smashed. The affair was then considered closed.

The fact was that Hung had been thinking all the time of the strange shadow he fancied he had seen a couple of nights earlier. Naturally there was nobody he cared to confide in, and indeed he was like the dumb man in the Chinese saying, who takes medicine but can't tell anyone how bitter it is, but now that Ah Fu had provided him with an opportunity for venting the resentment that had been simmering inside of him, he felt himself master in his own house again. Even so, the mishap to the button continued to throw a gloom over his mind and although Madame Hung did her best to console him, she, as a woman, was far more superstitious than her husband, and her cheerful words could not conceal the anxiety she was feeling.

Meanwhile Sai had her own reasons for being unhappy, as she was well aware that Ah Fu's dismissal was in a way directed against herself. Apart from that, she missed the young man's company, and without him life in the household began to be intolerably dull. At last, she made up her mind she would endure the tedium no longer but would find some other way of amusing herself, and Peking was full of opportunities. It seemed very natural that a young woman like Sai should want to visit the theater and neither Hung, whom she could always twist round her little finger, nor Madame Hung, who was essentially rather a weak woman, put any obstacle in her way when she announced one day that she was thinking of going to see a play. But this was only the beginning and before long Sai was taking advantage of the liberty allowed to her to spend more and more of her time frequenting the theaters.

Among the actors who were famous at that time in

Peking, there was one named Sun San. This man had been trained from childhood as an acrobat, and because of his extraordinary agility he was nicknamed Sun the Monkey. From that he graduated to playing small parts on the stage, but before long he had taken the fancy of one or two Manchu noblemen, and their patronage had brought him such success that at the time we are speaking of he was one of the best known performers of military roles. The old Chinese saying tells us that lust follows a full belly, and the adulation of Sun's gentlemen admirers did not prevent his thoughts from turning frequently in the direction of the ladies. Nor had he far to look. There was always somebody's wife or concubine who was anxious for the favors of such a hero, provided that the affair could be managed discreetly. In what circumstances Sai made his acquaintance we do not know, but we may suppose that he caught her eye one day when he was on the stage, and the green-rooms of Peking were not managed in such a way as to keep out love messages from admirers of either sex. So Sai's theatergoing provided her with a lover, and as she was never the girl to do things by halves and, thanks to Hung's generosity, had always more than enough money to spare, she arranged that Sun should rent a quiet apartment in the theater quarter which they could use for their assignations and so not expose her to the risk of discovery.

For the time being, the only result of Sai's intrigue as far as Hung was concerned was to increase his domestic felicity. Not only did Sai behave more dutifully than she had ever done before, carrying out his slightest wish as if it were a command, but also, what was especially flattering, hardly a day passed that she did not show a need for his marital attentions, and you can well imagine that she had her own

way of inducing him to fall in with her desires. Unfortunately, however, delightful as this second honeymoon was, Hung was now getting into his fifties and after a while began to show the effect of such exertions. The Chinese pharmacopoeia is well stocked with restoratives in that line, and Hung, who had dabbled in medicine, did his best to supply the deficiency of nature, but he found nothing that did him any lasting service. Meanwhile, he was feeling every symptom of being worse for wear—dizziness, spots before the eyes, buzzing in the ears, backache, a coated tongue, and feverish sweats. At last he became so poorly that there was nothing for it but to take sick leave from the office and send for a doctor who gave him a prescription and advised a period of absolute rest and quiet. Of course he himself was perfectly well aware of the nature of his complaint, and he resolved, for the time being at any rate, to resist any further temptation.

When the news got abroad that Hung was ill, his friends came to pay their respects, but Madame Hung was very firm in not permitting any of them to disturb him, and gave strict orders to the servants to explain courteously to all callers that Mr. Hung was not well enough to receive visitors. One day, a certain Mr. Wang came to the house and Sheng, following his mistress's instructions, made the usual polite excuses.

"My good man," said Mr. Wang, tapping his foot impatiently, "do you imagine I have come to inquire about your master's health? Go to Mr. Hung at once and tell him I am here on a matter of the greatest importance to him personally."

Sheng, seeing from the visitor's manner that whatever his business was it must be of unusual urgency, hurried

to tell Madame Hung what the caller had said, and she in turn went to consult her husband. Hung was just awake from his afternoon nap.

"Who is it you say wants to see me?" he asked. "Wang? He's a very old friend. By all means bring him in, especially as he seems to have something important to tell me."

Sheng hastened away and in a minute or two ushered Mr. Wang into the room. The two men greeted each other cordially, and then after Hung had answered Wang's inquiries about his health, he asked what his friend had come to tell him, and the latter lost no time in beating about the bush.

"I have just this minute heard a most serious piece of news," he said. "There is a move on foot to have you impeached. The charge against you is a very grave one, and, unless we take steps without delay, it will be too late to help matters."

These words struck a chill into Hung's heart, and for a moment or two all he could do was to stare blankly at his visitor.

"Impeached?" he said at last, incredulously. "How is that possible? What conceivable reason is there why anybody should try to do such a thing to me?"

"That is just it," said Wang. "If there was no reason for it, we should have nothing to fear, but unfortunately there appears to be very solid grounds for such an action. My dear Hung, what possessed you to have that damned map of yours printed—I mean that map of our frontier with Russia that you found in Europe? The whole thing must have been a trap set for you by the foreigners, and you fell right into it! The fact is that although you had it published and presented it to the Court, none of us here in Peking

paid any special attention to it, but now what do you think? The Russians are demanding a revision of the frontier and are using your map as evidence that their claims are already accepted in China!"

"My map?" repeated Hung, like a man in a dream. "What harm can my map have done?"

"I'm afraid you are soon going to find out," said Wang. "And there are other shocks in store for you as well. Do you know who is the prime instigator of this move to get you impeached?"

"How can I guess?" said Hung, shaking his head. "Since I have been in Peking I have never had the slightest quarrel with any of our colleagues. Tell me who it is."

Wang lowered his voice and uttered the name, "Chang Yin-huan."

Hung changed color. "Chang?" he cried. "So it is he? I see it all now! But what is your advice? What must I do for the best?"

"There is only one thing to be done," said Wang. "We must rally all our friends behind you. You can trust me to do all I can, and although I can't pretend that the situation is not serious you will find plenty of support in the right places. Meanwhile, we must not waste time groaning over what is past. I am going straight away to get things started, and as soon as I have anything to report I shall let you know." And with this, Mr. Wang took his leave.

To us who know the inside story of the ill-feeling that Chang Yin-huan had conceived against Hung, the news of his part in the conspiracy will not have come as a surprise. However, it is necessary to explain certain other developments that had taken place since we last had word of him. It will be remembered that young Chang had undertaken

to get a post in the Customs for his fellow-traveller Lu. But after returning to Peking, he made the acquaintance of another mandarin, a good deal richer than Lu, who was after the same job, and when he and his father had put their heads together, they decided to drop Lu's candidature and intrigue on behalf of the wealthier client. For once however their schemes went astray. Lu, finding himself abandoned, went elsewhere and managed to discover another avenue of preferment leading to one of the Imperial concubines. Here his bribes were so effective that when the list of appointments was published it was found that Lu had prevailed over his rival and had been given the post in the Customs. The Changs were bitterly mortified by this defeat, which was as humiliating as it was unexpected. Young Chang in particular, could not rest until he had discovered to his own satisfaction who was responsible, for he could not believe that Lu was clever enough to have found alternative contacts unaided, and utterly without justification he got it into his head that the villain of the piece must be Hung. His father listened to his suspicions approvingly, as they tallied with his own ideas, and decided that no time must be lost in striking back at this busybody who, not content with showing that Chang's presence was not indispensable in the office, was now injuring him in his purse.

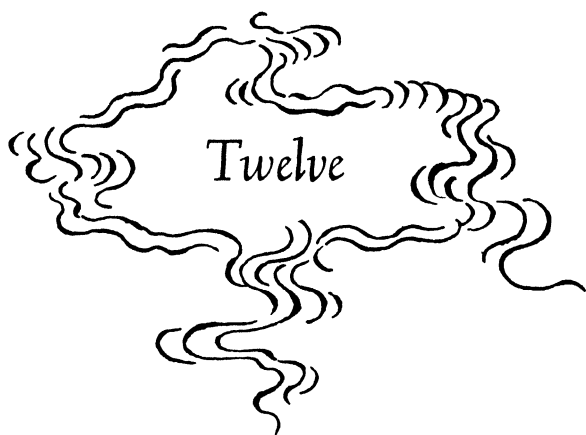
Just about the time that Hung had asked for sick leave, the British Minister in Peking informed the Chinese Government that the Russians were using a Chinese map of the Turkestan frontier to support their claims to certain disputed territory. The map in question was that acquired by Hung in Europe and edited by him in Chinese. Naturally, as the map was of Russian origin, the demarcation of the

frontier was according to Russian notions, and did not represent Hung's personal opinions, nor could he have been expected to foresee that it would be made use of in this way. But when Chang heard the news and examined the map closely—which he now did for the first time—he saw at once that a deadly weapon had been put into his hands. He conferred with one of the Censors, who was an intimate friend of his, and persuaded him to draw up a petition for Hung's impeachment. The map formed the basis of the first charge, but there were several other accusations. Briefly, these were that Hung had bought military supplies of the most inferior quality and had made a false report of the cost to enable himself to retain a large profit, that he had married a concubine while he was still in mourning for his mother, and that during his mission to Europe he had allowed his concubine to wear the official robes of a regular wife and had encouraged her generally to behave in a manner injurious to the dignity of a representative of China.

These charges were serious, and if it had been a question of any other man than Hung there is no doubt he would at the very least have been dismissed from office and very likely arrested. But luckily Hung had won the favor of the Empress Dowager who knew perfectly well that as regards the real substance of the impeachment, namely the map and the military supplies, Hung had acted throughout in good faith and any mistakes he might have committed were due to the dishonesty of others. She also knew that the impeachment itself was the result of private enmity. For these reasons she did not want Hung to come to any harm, and without her approval no matter how hard Chang pressed the attack the attempted impeachment could not achieve its object. To cut a long story short, an Imperial

Commissioner, who was appointed to conduct the frontier negotiations, was able to report that the territory indicated on the map as being on the Russian side of the line had been effectively occupied by the Russians for many years and all Hung had done had been to draw attention to the *de facto* state of affairs. The report completely cleared Hung from any suspicion of having been suborned into recognizing the loss of Chinese territory. As to the other accusations, all Hung's friends rallied loyally to his support, and between their help and the benevolence of the Empress Dowager, the attempt to ruin him came to nothing, and he emerged from the ordeal with his official position unimpaired.

It was a great victory, certainly, but by the time it had been achieved Hung was no longer in a state to enjoy it. The attack upon him had been so vindictive and unscrupulous that, coming as it did at a time when his health was already showing signs of breaking down, it prostrated him utterly, and not even his vindication could repair the damage. He struggled on for a little while, trying hard to regain his strength, but the shock and anxiety had been too much for him, and in October, 1893, he died at the age of fifty-three.



IN THOSE DAYS, it was the invariable rule that when a man of Hung's rank came to die, his concubines should not remarry but should stay in his family and remain faithful to his memory. Especially was this so when a man had given to a concubine the marks of favor that Hung had given to Sai-chin-hua. But from the start Madame Hung felt that it was utterly out of the question that Sai should be expected to observe this custom. Like a sensible woman she realized that although for a woman of her own age honorable widowhood was easy to bear, it was always a cruel deprivation to force a young girl to remain dead to the world, and in the case of one of Sai's temperament and background such a demand would be altogether unreasonable. As soon as she could decently do so, she sounded out Sai's feelings, while at the same time letting the girl know in the kindest manner possible that nobody in the Hung

family would stand in her way if she desired to go out once more into the world. She was surprised and, to tell the truth, more than a little disconcerted to discover that Sai had no intention whatever of quitting the household, but on the contrary seemed to regard it as her duty to pass the rest of her life as a widow.

There were two reasons for her attitude. In the first place, she had been genuinely shocked and distressed by Hung's death, and her immediate reaction, in which her own guilty conscience had its share, was to declare her wish to remain loyal to the memory of one who had been so good to her. Quite apart from this, there was also a very practical motive to induce her to stay where she was. Hung had always promised to see that she was provided for and indeed had gone so far as to specify a sum of fifty thousand dollars which he had said would be hers when anything should happen to him, but there was no sign yet that this money was to be forthcoming, and she was already far too experienced a young woman to relish the prospect of going out to make her own way in the world without adequate financial means. So from every point of view the best course seemed to be not to alter her condition. Yet it was not long before the claims of nature made themselves heard and within three months of Hung's death Sai had resumed her clandestine visits to the apartment near the theater quarter.

In the case of a man so much in the limelight as Sun San it was very difficult to conceal his affairs from public knowledge. Even during Hung's lifetime tongues had started to wag about the identity of the woman who was engrossing Sun's attention to the exclusion of all others, and now the affair was resumed the talk began again, and

reached the ears of Hung's friends and ultimately of Madame Hung herself. At first the good lady tried to expostulate with Sai on the gossip she was causing by coming and going so freely in the town, but Sai replied that she could be loyal to her husband's memory without staying as a prisoner in the house. Indeed, she added, she could just as well maintain her widowhood living with her own people, and if her presence was inconvenient to Madame Hung she would be very willing to take her leave as soon as she had received the money which by right should be hers. In this dilemma, Madame Hung sought the advice of two of her husband's closest friends, and without any hesitation these gentlemen expressed the opinion that the first opportunity should be taken of getting Sai-chin-hua out of the Hung household. They urged however that it would not be seemly for her to be allowed to remain in Peking, where she had caused enough scandal already by her rumored liaison with Sun San, and where, if she should be forced later on to take up her old profession, the insult to her husband's memory would be especially shameful. As she had herself suggested that she should return to her own people, why not let her do so? With regard to the money she claimed, it was only right that she should keep all the gifts that Hung had made to her, and between cash and jewelry these already amounted to a considerable sum. But in the matter of the fifty thousand dollars, there was no evidence whatever, apart from her unsupported word, that Hung had made such a promise, and in no circumstances should the demand be accepted.

Madame Hung agreed that this advice was reasonable, and she and the two gentlemen called Sai before them and informed her very seriously of the decision they had

reached, namely that if she severed her connection with the Hungs and rejoined her own family in the south, with the promise not to return for the time being to Peking she should be allowed to keep and take with her all the cash and jewelry which Hung had given to her, but must abandon all further claims on the Hung family.

At first the idea that she must give up hope of the fifty thousand dollars was a bitter pill for Sai to swallow, but she realized she had no evidence to substantiate her claim and the two important mandarins whom Madame Hung had requested to deliver the ultimatum were not men who could be resisted with impunity. And it was true that the gifts already made to her were adequate for all her reasonable needs if she could take them with her. Added to this, she felt sure she could prevail on Sun San to try his fortune with her in the south. So after due reflection, she told Madame Hung and the two advisers that she felt able to agree to the terms they had proposed.

Meanwhile, arrangements had at length been made to transfer Hung's body to Soochow for burial with his ancestors, and Sai accompanied the cortege, which completed the journey without incident. Then, on arrival in Soochow, she said goodbye to the Hung family and to her daughter Te-kuan, whom she was leaving with them, and went to live with her own mother. Mrs. Chao was overjoyed to have Sai with her again, in such prosperous circumstances, and looked forward to the comfortable life that the two of them would henceforward enjoy together. They would never again be in want, and if after a while Sai thought she would like to marry, she ought to have no difficulty in finding a good respectable husband to make her happy. Poor Mrs. Chao! She little knew what sort of

daughter she had, or she would not have indulged in these daydreams. The only thing Sai had in her mind was how soon she could induce Sun San to come down and join her.

You have heard so much of this Sun San and of his power over women that it is only fair I should tell you you would have had a shock if you had seen him. He was an ugly great brute of a fellow, with a face covered by the marks of smallpox, and extremely stupid into the bargain, but whatever the reason—and you will probably have little difficulty in imagining what it was—Sai was by now his devoted slave and was sending letter after letter to urge him to leave Peking and come to the south. For his own part, Sun San had not started his affair with Sai merely to enjoy her youth and beauty, although these qualities were also a consideration, but chiefly with a view to the financial advantage he saw he would derive from it. So when he reflected that his mistress was on her own and free from any restraint by her husband's family and, according to her letters, wanted nothing better than to share her fortune with him, he began to think he would be a fool to miss such an opportunity. Having made up his mind on this, he took leave of his old associates in Peking and found his way down to Soochow, where Sai gave him a rapturous welcome.

Infatuated as Sai was, however, she realized that Soochow was too small to hold her and Sun on the one hand, and the Hung family on the other, and she lost no time in looking round for some other place to live. For this purpose, Shanghai was the obvious choice, as Sun enthusiastically agreed, and the pair of them went there to have a look around and see what sort of accommodation they

could find. Here luck was in their way, because almost at once they came across a fine large house to let, in a lane off Kiukiang Road in the International Settlement and Sai rented it on the spot. A good deal of other expenditure was necessary, on furniture and servants, but Sai begrudged nothing to make sure that all was as it should be. Indeed, when they settled into the place, you would have taken them for a rich merchant or official, and his lady. Sai's mother, having found by now that it was not she but her daughter who made all the decisions, came to Shanghai with them, and for some time they all lived together happily enough. But after a while it became clear that they could not go on as they were, with money going out and none coming in, and Mrs. Chao began to pester her daughter with admonitions about the necessity of looking to the future. Sai agreed that a change of some kind was necessary, and one day she took the matter up seriously with Sun.

He did not seem very much concerned. "My dear," he said, "a girl like you, in Shanghai of all places, has nothing to worry about. Why, haven't you eyes in your head? Do you mean to tell me you've never noticed how well the girls are doing out here? Take that woman Lin Tai-yü, for instance. She's in clover, if you like. Believe me, that's the line of country for you to follow!"

Although by this time, Sai was well aware of Sun's character, this cool advice took her by surprise.

"What sort of a pimp are you?" she said. "Would you really like to see your own woman being used by other men?" And she was genuinely shocked that anybody could imagine a woman who had been not so long since the first

lady of a legation could now become a Shanghai prostitute.

Sun clapped his hands and laughed to see how angry she was.

"You've being a little too quick," he replied. "Who said anything about your being used by other men? Do you think that's the only thing you're good for?"

At last Sai understood what he meant, and in spite of herself she could not help laughing.

"You don't want to be a pimp," she said. "But you propose to make me a bawd! Well, we are getting on, certainly!"

"My dear girl, people don't use words like 'bawd' any more," said Sun. "'Madame' sounds much better and would be just your style."

Now that the suggestion had been made, the more Sai thought about it the more reasonable she had to admit it appeared. But if she proposed to act on it there was no time to lose. Sun San had been quite right when he said that the singing girls had a very flourishing business in Shanghai. But in the higher reaches of the profession, to which alone Sai's pride would allow her to direct her activities, the competition was intense, and such women as Lin Tai-yü, who had been mentioned by Sun San and whose name is famous in the history of Shanghai, were able to maintain their eminence only by entertaining their clients in surroundings of the utmost luxury. It was necessary before anything else could be thought of, that Sai's house should be furnished with comparable refinement if she was to enter the lists with any chance of success. So once she had made up her mind, she sold her jewels to the value of several thousand dollars and applied the money to preparing her house for its new function. Clocks, mirrors, golden waterpipes,

carved redwood beds, couches inlaid with ivory, these were some of the furnishings she thought necessary, and before they were installed, the rooms were decorated with flowered European wallpaper.

Only then did she turn to the question of girls. She was in no hurry to make her choice, but looked around very carefully to find the sort of person she wanted. At last, two in particular took her fancy. They were both young and exceptionally pretty, and what was equally important, both of them had been brought up in the profession, and it was not necessary to waste time in training them. For in the great majority of cases a girl learns the art of pleasing men more from experience than from any natural faculty, and without this art the loveliest girl in China would be a failure as a courtesan.

At length everything was ready and having, with the help of the astrologers, chosen a lucky day, Sai hung up outside the door two tablets with the names of her girls—they were called Yüeh Chüan and Su Chüan respectively—and opened her house to business. On the first day, the girls' old clients got together and gave a party, which turned out to be quite a celebration, and gradually after that new faces began to appear until there could be no doubt that the venture was proving a success.

At first Sai was very resolute in not receiving any guests herself, but kept well in the background, watching to see that everything was going as it should. Before long, however, it became known who she was, and from then on she had no peace. Not a day passed without visitors coming to the place and demanding to see her, and finally she had to admit to herself that if she was to stay in this profession at all she would have to enter it completely. Otherwise

annoyance would be caused to clients and the business of the house would fall off. The decision was all the easier to take because many of the regular visitors were highly-placed mandarins and rich gentlemen, who had very great influence locally and whom on that account she was especially anxious not to offend. However, she was determined to preserve a sharp distinction between herself and the girls and for that reason she made a rule that on Saturdays and Sundays she would receive approved visitors in her own room, but would not entertain on any other days. Nor would she in any circumstances accept an invitation to go outside the house.

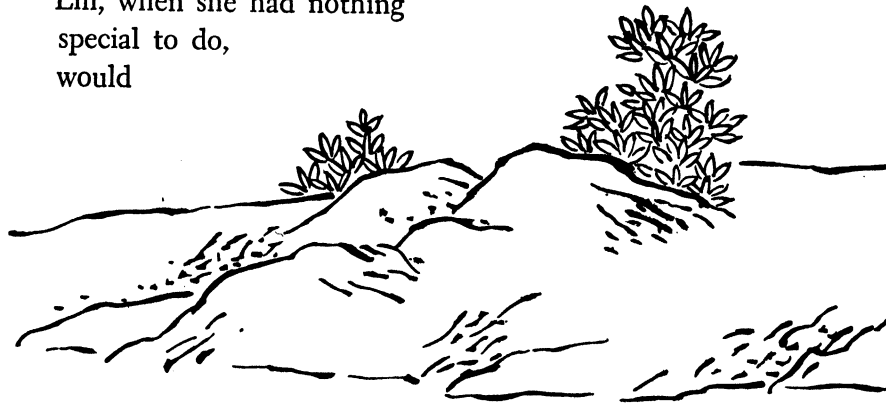
These strict regulations were something new in the sing-song houses of Shanghai, and you might have thought they would have irritated the patrons. On the contrary, however, the fashionable gentlemen who were anxious to be entertained by the widow of a great official, so far from being offended, were delighted by this fastidiousness, which made them all the more assiduous in their attendance at the permitted times. Indeed, every Saturday and Sunday, the lane outside the house buzzed with unaccustomed activity as carriage after carriage drove up with visitors of distinction. But this popularity created a new problem for Sai. As her visitors were coming on the same days, she found it practically impossible to make time for all of them, and it was unwise to give the impression of preferring one to the other. Obviously the easiest way out of this difficulty was to make herself available throughout the week like the two girls, and this she finally decided to do. From then on, a third tablet, this time carrying her own name, was suspended over the door.

In this way, Sai came back to her old profession, but for

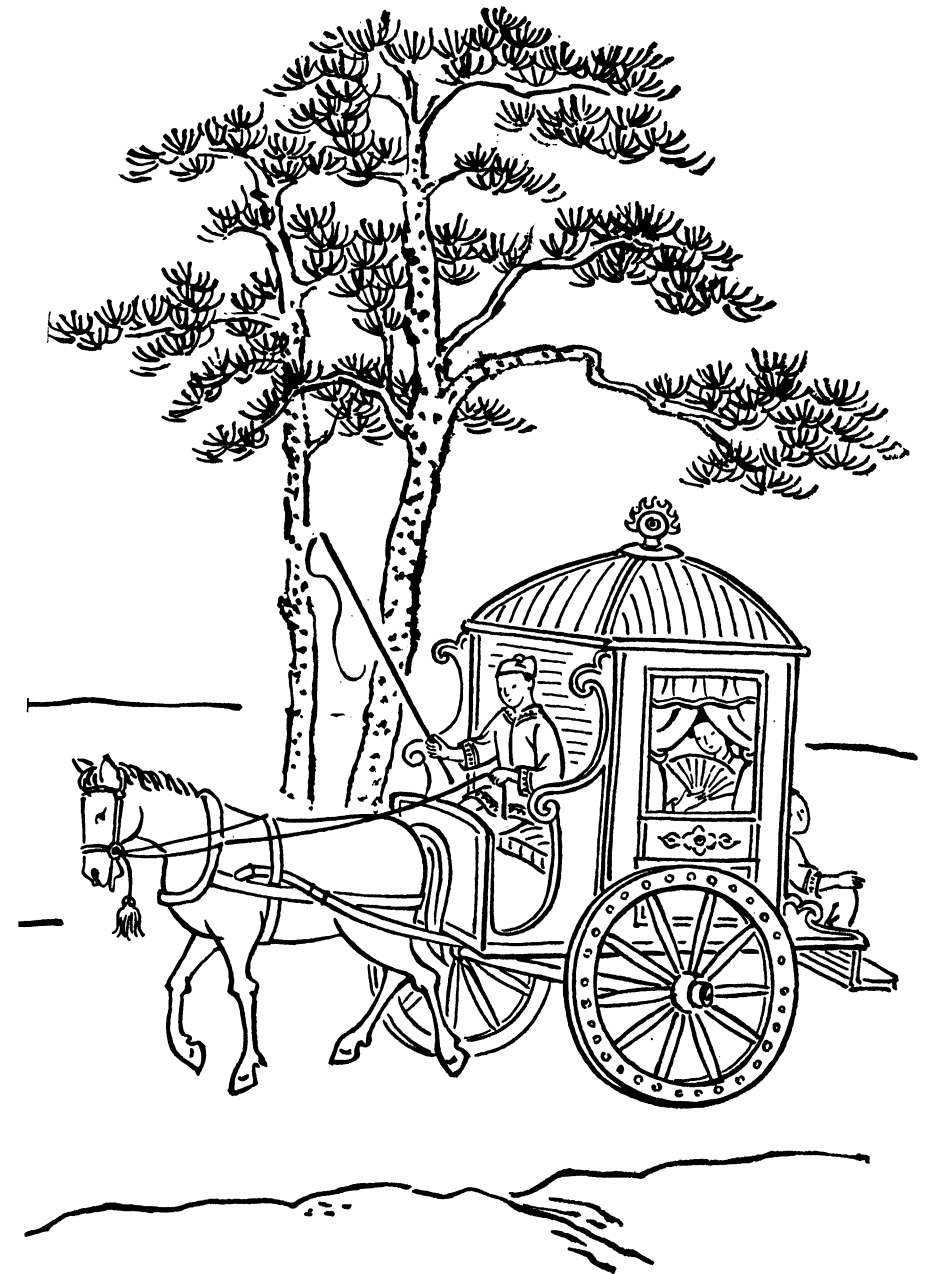
her there was no preliminary period during which she was waiting for fame and success. Right from the start, her antecedents placed her in the very first rank of Shanghai courtesans, so that her name was at once mentioned on equal terms with that of the great Lin Tai-yü herself. In one respect she stole a march over her distinguished rival. It was still the custom at that time that, whenever a singing girl went out to attend a patron, she rode in a sedan chair carried by two bearers, while an amah walked behind. The sedan chairs used on such occasion were richly ornamented and beautiful to look at, but far too old-fashioned to suit Sai, who spent a few hundred dollars to equip herself with a horse and carriage in which she attended all engagements. It was a fine sight to see her progress through the streets. The horse was a beautiful creature, pure white in color, and the groom was a handsome young fellow clothed in an elegant livery. A maid always accompanied Sai inside the carriage, while a male attendant traveled behind on the footboard. Anybody who was not in the secret would have taken her for the lady of some high official, out for a spin to enjoy the fresh air. Nor was the carriage her only symbol of luxury. Cigarettes were still not in general use among Chinese, and one of the main duties of a singing girl was to offer her patrons the comfort of smoking a water-pipe. Up to then, these were generally of brass, but Lin Tai-yü and some other leaders of the demimonde displayed their superior refinement by using pipes of silver. Even this was not good enough for Sai-chin-hua, who insisted that the pipes in her establishment should be of gold, with accessories of jade and coral. But as soon as she had set the example, it had, of course, to be followed by her rivals, and Lin Tai-yü

and the other courtesans of the top class were themselves soon riding in carriages to meet their patrons, and using nothing but gold pipes, while silver pipes declined into mere commonplace articles, and brass pipes absolutely vanished from fashionable society altogether.

At first, Sai had no personal acquaintances among the other ladies of the town, but from being invited to parties where other entertainers were also in attendance, she was soon on familiar terms with many of her colleagues. Even Lin Tai-yü herself, normally so jealous of her own prestige that she pretended to look down on everybody else, thought it wiser to cultivate her friendship and the pair of them became inseparable companions, and addressed each other as sisters. Miss Lin, when she had nothing special to do, would



often call at Sai's place to while away the time chatting on one subject or another and Sai never bothered to conceal the secrets of her ménage, even if it were possible for her to do so, because she and Sun San were by this time like a regular married couple.



One day, Miss Lin took it into her head to tease Sai about her attachment to Sun. "Do you know," she said, "for the life of me I can't understand what you see in a fellow like that. As if his pockmarks weren't bad enough, he's as vulgar and stupid as a man can be. Yet you seem devoted to him. It's a mystery to me."

Sai happened to be in good spirits and these remarks sent her into a fit of laughter.

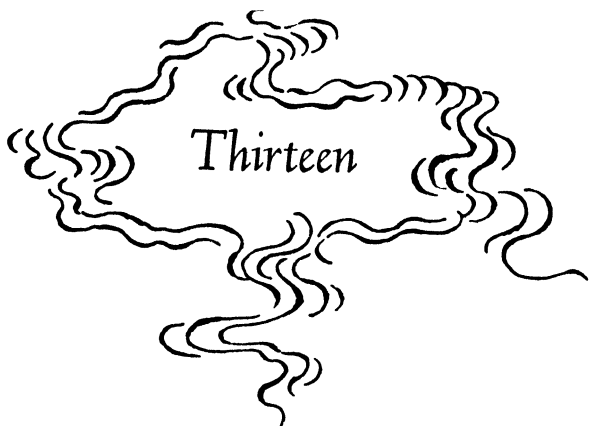
"The trouble with you is," she said, "you have no idea how to pick a man. You are welcome to your pretty namby-pambies, if that's what takes your fancy. I want something else." And with this, she came and whispered in Miss Lin's ears. On hearing the revelation, whatever it was, Lin Tai-yü's expression would have been a good subject for an artist. First she giggled at what Sai was telling her, and then a look of incredulity came over her face, while, in spite of herself and no doubt for the first time for years, she actually blushed.

From that day on, whenever Sun met Miss Lin—and he was often at home with Sai when she called—he noticed that she would look at him in a peculiar way, the significance of which he was not slow to understand, and which reminded him of the old days in Peking, when he was accustomed to such glances. Although he was very comfortable with Sai, there were times when he felt rather bored, and he was flattered and excited he had aroused the interest of another woman, especially when that woman was Lin Tai-yü. So when Miss Lin gave him hints that she would like to have the opportunity of cultivating his acquaintance more closely—and such hints were conveyed in a manner that for coquettish seduction no other woman in Shanghai could rival—he was all eagerness for

the adventure. Both of them were clever and discreet enough to give no clue to Sai of what was going on, and even if she did get to know, it would have been nothing new to Miss Lin to have to deal with a jealous woman. But the intrigue was discovered in another quarter, with consequences that Sun San could not have foreseen.

Lin Tai-yü had never been one to stint herself of romance, and if I had to give a list of all her fancy men—actors, grooms, and the like—it would take up the rest of this book. But only one of these need concern us here, the latest of her lovers before she took up with Sun. This was an actor, known everywhere for some reason by the nickname of Number Thirteen, a handsome fellow and not without talent on the stage, whose head had been completely turned when for a time Lin Tai-yü had become infatuated with him, and had shown her feelings in the way of her kind, namely by renting boxes at all his performances, and sending her servants behind the stage with presents. Number Thirteen not only preened himself on his conquest but was sufficiently self-confident to imagine that from then on all his financial worries were at an end. Certainly, Lin Tai-yü was as generous as he could wish, and, what is more, her favor toward him continued for a longer period than had been the case of any of her lovers before. Indeed, at the time she turned to Sun San, her affair with Number Thirteen had lasted for more than six months, which for her constituted a record. However, once she had commenced her new intrigue, she had to admit to herself that in comparison with Sun San, poor Number Thirteen notwithstanding his good looks had almost no charm for her at all, and in spite of her efforts to conceal her change of feeling—for apart from anything else she

wished to keep her new affair a secret—it was not many weeks before the supplanted lover began to realize that something was decidedly wrong and that his mistress's coolness, which he had at first been inclined to set down to his own suspicious fancy, was very much a fact. The only question was, who was the man who had replaced him, and this Number Thirteen set himself to discover. He was soon to be given the opportunity of solving the riddle.



LIN TAI-YÜ had among her servants an amah called Ah Mao, who was so exceedingly clumsy in everything she put her hand to that it is rather a mystery why Miss Lin kept her in her service at all. One day this woman was brushing her mistress's hair and with typical awkwardness she dropped and smashed a certain small mirror. Normally the incident would have been of no special importance, but as it happened the glass was a present from Sun San, and although it was of no great value Lin Tai-yü prized it on account of the giver. When she saw it lying in pieces on the floor, she completely lost her temper and half stunned the unfortunate amah with two mighty boxes on the ear. Naturally, Ah Mao resented this punishment for what had after all been merely an accident, but having her livelihood to think of she could not afford to make any protest. None

the less, she did not forget the humiliation and brooded over the idea of revenge.

Although Miss Lin did everything possible to conceal her intrigue with Sun, she could not hide the affair from the inquisitive eyes of her personal maids, and Ah Maq decided that if she could draw Number Thirteen's attention to the way he was being made a fool of he could be relied upon to make such trouble for her mistress, that the boxes on the ear would be amply repaid. However it was by no means easy for her to convey the information, as she had no opportunity of speaking to him in private. All she could do was to put on a knowing leer whenever he came to the house, but as he had no idea what she meant, it only made him think she must be rather weak in the head. By and by, however, when his suspicion of Miss Lin was already aroused he began to notice the way in which Ah Mao was looking at him and to wonder whether she knew something of what was going on behind his back. It was impossible to question the maid in front of her mistress, but one day he waited near the house until he had seen Lin Tai-yü leave and then he went in and had a frank talk. This was of course the very chance Ah Mao had been longing for and she seized it eagerly. The words poured out of her mouth like floodwater through a break in a dike. She revealed all she knew, and the story lost nothing in the telling. Long before she had finished, she had infuriated Number Thirteen and made him resolve that Sun San would have cause to regret the betrayal of one whom he should have considered as a colleague. For in fact both men were old acquaintances, having seen a good deal of each other in Peking a few years earlier. At that time, Number Thirteen played a very subordinate role

to Sun San, but since he had established himself in Shanghai he had built up his local popularity, and by now he had more useful connections in the underworld of the foreign concessions than his successful rival, who was still a comparative newcomer to the place.

If he had been acquainted with the old Chinese books on the art of war, Number Thirteen would have been pleased to observe that his appraisal of the situation was in full accordance with one of their basic doctrines, namely that if a general wishes to be victorious he must know the true circumstances both of himself and of his opponents. But one consideration was of special importance to him: at all costs he did not want it generally known that his revenge had been inspired by the loss of his mistress, as in that way too much ridicule would accrue to himself. To do anything at all, however, he needed help, and to obtain this he had to take some of his associates into his confidence. One of these rascals, known as Soochow Lad from his place of origin, had no difficulty in contriving a plan of campaign.

"With this Sai-chin-hua woman of his, Sun is sure to be able to put his hands on plenty of ready money," he said, "especially now that their house is doing such a roaring business. Why don't you ask him for a good round loan, say of three thousand dollars? Who knows, perhaps he's not such a bad fellow at heart after all, and he may be glad to have the chance of doing a good turn for an old friend. If he does give you the money, it might not be a bad idea for you to let things stand for a while, and then later perhaps we can think of something else. But if he gives you the cold shoulder, well, in that case, myself and the boys can pay him a little visit and remind him of a few things he may have forgotten. Everybody will believe

we've just taught him to be a little more generous, and I don't suppose anything of the other affair will come out."

The scheme seemed an excellent one, and the next day Number Thirteen asked Sun San to step out to a tea-house as he had something to discuss with him. After chatting for a little while about nothing in particular, he got down to the matter in hand.

"You know, Sun," he said, "since I came down to Shanghai, I can't complain that things have gone too badly. The people here seem to like my acting, and the audiences are usually good. But when you come to a strange place, you have all kinds of expenses you don't have to meet at home. You know what sort of fellow I am, I've never been one for watching my money too carefully, and as soon as I have earned anything, it has been spent before I knew I had it. I've never saved a copper in my life. Well, to cut a long story short, just at the moment I find I am in a bit of a fix. I have had to get some new clothes and other things for the stage, and frankly I don't know how I am going to pay for them. That's why I thought of you. I am always hearing how well things have turned out for you, and as we come from the same place and used to see such a lot of each other in the old days, I took the liberty of asking you to come and have a chat to see if you could possibly manage to lend me three thousand dollars to tide things over. I'll be able to repay you as soon as I get back to Tientsin. If you can help an old friend this once, I shall never forget you!"

When Sun San heard these words, he felt as if someone had dashed a ladle of cold water in his face. To say he was astonished would be putting it too mildly. It was true he had known the man fairly well in the course of his

profession, but they had never remotely been what could be called friends. And three thousand dollars! The sum was enormous, and he was baffled to discover how Number Thirteen could ever have had the effrontery to ask for it. The fact was, hard as it may be to credit, that Sun had no suspicion that he had come between Miss Lin and the other man, and, being in ignorance of this, the whole transaction was a total mystery to him.

"I should be only too glad if I could lend you this money," he said. "But I'm afraid whoever told you about my circumstances has been misleading you. You see, I stayed here for quite a while without any engagement until, when my money was running short, I put what little was left into opening that damned house, and at the moment absolutely everything we get out of it is already spoken for in order to pay our debts. But look, I'll tell you what I'll do. I can let you have three hundred dollars. I'll send somebody with the money straight away. I'm sure you will understand I'm trying to do my best."

He gave a friendly smile, and indeed in any other circumstances Number Thirteen would have been the first to admit that the offer was a generous one. But Sun San was not just being a fool. He had no idea what lay behind the request, but that there was something behind it he was quite certain, and he guessed also that Number Thirteen must by this time have enough friends in the rougher classes of Shanghai society to make it inadvisable to offend him. For this reason, he thought it worth while to keep him happy for the time being until he himself found out what was going on and made plans accordingly. To his surprise, however, on hearing the offer, Number Thirteen changed his expression.

"Perhaps you don't quite understand, Mr. Sun," he said with a sneer. "This is not a question of buying vegetables for my dinner. If you value our friendship, then you will do what I ask. If not, then I shall have to try and get help elsewhere. All I want is a frank answer. I hate all these lukewarm excuses."

At this, Sun realized that the matter was more serious than he had thought, but he was not one to let himself be intimidated.

"Very well," he said. "Since that is how you feel, you had better take your friendship somewhere else. I find it a little beyond my means."

Number Thirteen stood up and walked to the door.

"You have said all I wanted to hear," he shouted. "Sooner or later I'll get even with you, just wait and see!"

When he had gone, Soochow Lad, who had been sitting near-by during the conversation, turned and spoke to Sun.

"Excuse me, Mr. Sun," he said. "But people like you and me must always watch their step, and never do anything too hastily. Why do you think Number Thirteen came to see you and nobody else for the three thousand dollars? It's rather odd, isn't it? If I were you I should think it over carefully. After all, what's the use of stirring up trouble? No good can come of it."

Sun knew well that Soochow Lad must be hand in glove with Number Thirteen, but decided to keep him talking to see if he could find out what was going on.

"Well, yes," he said with a laugh. "But how am I to guess what all this is about without being told?"

"As a matter of fact I did hear a bit of a rumor myself," said Soochow Lad, "but it's not the sort of thing one likes

to talk about. Look, Mr. Sun, you're a smart man and you know well enough what you've been doing without being reminded by me."

Sun was beginning to have an inkling of what was meant, but, without letting on, he assumed an air of surprise.

"If you are talking about that house I've opened, I can't see what it has to do with Number Thirteen," he said.

Soochow Lad looked around the room and when he was satisfied nobody was within earshot he spoke again in a low voice.

"There's no need for you to pretend to be so innocent," he said. "Why couldn't you be satisfied with your rich widow instead of going out of your way to steal Number Thirteen's woman? Or do you mean to tell me you didn't know about him and Lin Tai-yü? Anyway, he has found out about it, and that's why he is asking you for all that money. You can't expect him to swallow such an insult for less!"

"I don't know where you have got all this rubbish from," said Sun with a laugh. "But I can assure you I've taken no woman of his. If I have, let him prove it. If he imagines I am fool enough to let myself be blackmailed by such a cheap trick, he little knows the man he is dealing with. If he hadn't tried to use this monkey business with me, I shouldn't have minded putting my hand into my purse, as after all I used to know him in the old days, but now I have heard this, I am not going to let people think there is anything in his story by giving him any help at all."

Seeing from Sun's attitude that there was no hope of getting anything out of him, Soochow Lad did not waste his time further, and after talking for a few minutes about

other things, he took his leave, and went off to inflame Number Thirteen even more by telling him what Sun had said.

Action of some kind was now obviously called for, and Number Thirteen held a council of war with Soochow Lad and his gang to decide what to do next. They were for the most part a bunch of ruffians who had taken refuge from the Chinese authorities in the foreign settlements, and violence was the only method they would think of to achieve their purpose. First of all a number of the party were given the job of watching Sun's movements so that the time and place of any punitive action could be chosen with the greatest chance of being effective. However, this was by no means an easy matter. Sun was aware, from what Soochow Lad had told him, of the danger he was in, and for a time he exercised the greatest prudence in everything he did. But as the weeks went by without any sign of trouble he began to relax his precautions.

One day, he went out to pay a call on a friend who was living not far from the Bund, on the border between the International Settlement and the French Concession. The conversation was unusually interesting and when Sun set out for home, darkness had fallen. He had not very far to go, but he engaged a rickshaw, and had reached a point about halfway to his house when a group of men—there must have been about a dozen of them—came out from the darkness and stopped the vehicle from going further. Without a word they dragged Sun from his seat and commenced to beat him and kick him unmercifully. Taken by surprise, and completely outnumbered, he found that the agility he used to exhibit in combats on the stage was of little avail

to him now under the blows that rained upon him from all sides, and he was quick-witted enough to realize that his best chance of escaping lightly was to offer no resistance. He fell to the ground and lay there without a sound, in spite of the pain he was suffering, and after a minute or two his assailants, seeing him so quiet, thought he must have fainted, and desisted from the attack. Before they left, one of them said, "He has had a good enough hiding for today, but he must be a tough fellow—I don't hear a groan out of him."

"He'll need to be tough if he wants to stay in Shanghai," said another voice. "This is just a warning. Next time he'll be given the full treatment and that will be the end of him."

In spite of his injuries, Sun had all his faculties about him, and he heard everything that had passed. When the gang had departed, he struggled to his feet, and walked a few steps, calling for a rickshaw, because, as you might expect, his first rickshawman had taken to his heels when the trouble started, and a few minutes later he arrived home in Kinkiang Road. Sai was out in attendance at some party, so he warmed a little wine, and mixing some herbal powder in it, he drank the concoction and went straight to bed. Actors and the like always have these remedies at hand to save them the trouble of calling a doctor and many of the recipes are far from ineffective. As he lay there he thought of the words he had just heard, and wondered what was to be done. Shanghai had become very dear to him, especially now that he had Lin Tai-yü as his mistress, but no precautions could in the long run save him from the revenge which Number Thirteen was clearly determined to have.

What it amounted to was that he would have to choose between death in Shanghai and life elsewhere.

While all this was passing through his mind, Sai returned to the house, and learning of Sun's state came hurrying to see him, and find out what had happened. He had an explanation all ready for her.

"A man like myself is bound to get into a fight once in a while," he told her. "But this time the trouble was none of my making. I have been very careful to avoid having rows with anybody here in Shanghai. I'm afraid you're to blame for what happened tonight."

"I am to blame?" said Sai, mystified, as she sat down on the edge of the bed. "How have I got dragged into such a thing?"

"Well," said Sun, "a couple of days ago I was told to be on my guard because a certain man who is related to your husband's family has been going around saying that he would teach me a lesson for helping you to run this house. Apparently, he thinks it an insult to himself and the rest of the Hungs. I didn't take the warning seriously, and tonight a bunch of gangsters caught me unprepared and beat me up. When they left me, they told me that if we didn't get out of Shanghai, they would do in the pair of us. I believe they are serious, and that we shall have to go somewhere else."

Sun deserved credit for his power of invention, for he could hardly have thought of a story more likely to serve his purpose. He knew that only a serious personal threat would persuade Sai to give up her establishment just when it was beginning to do so nicely, and by making himself out to be the victim of the Hungs, he found it even easier to get Sai to listen to him. Indeed, his tale seemed perfectly

reasonable to her, and so far from any suspicion, she had a kind of guilty feeling that she had brought all this trouble on poor Sun by attaching herself to him.

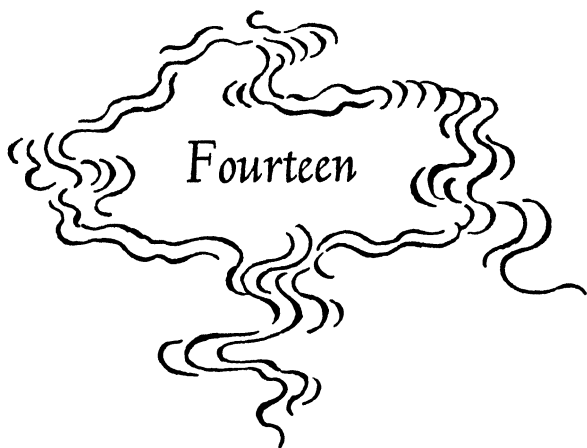
Meanwhile Sun proceeded to give her his advice.

"It's a pity about the house, of course," he said. "But apart from the danger to ourselves, there are a hundred ways in which these people can interfere with our business. That is the trouble with being here in the south, where I have no friends to help me. Why can't we set ourselves up in some other place? Once we leave Shanghai this Hung man will call it quits, I am sure."

"You don't know these people as I do," said Sai. "They'll follow us everywhere, and the same thing will happen all over again."

"If we were in the north," said Sun, "there is nothing I should like better than to see them try their tricks. My friends would give them something they were not bargaining for."

The discussion could only end in one way, and it was agreed they should transfer their activities to Tientsin. The house in Shanghai was of course given up, but its inmates who by now in addition to Yüeh Chüan and Su Chüan, included three of four young trainees of promise, accompanied their mistress to the north. It was a sad day, early in 1898, when the tablets were taken down from over the door, and the heavier furniture was sent to be auctioned, but at least Sai knew she could start again in Tientsin without having to search for personnel. And Number Thirteen, on hearing his enemy was retiring from the scene, did not prosecute his vendetta any further.



IN TIENTSIN, because of the expense of setting up in new quarters, the party arranged to stay for a time in a house managed by a certain Miss Kao. Sai herself of course was the chief attraction because there was already quite a legend about her in these parts and now her return to the north after an absence of four or five years provoked the greatest curiosity. Tientsin could not be compared to Shanghai, but even so it was quite a large port, and, because of its proximity to Peking, it was an important administrative center. So there was no lack of merchants and officials in the place with money to spend on boys and singing girls, and it soon became essential for any man of gallantry to be able to say he had access to Sai-chin-hua's company. Meanwhile she and Sun were looking about for a place of their own and in a month or two, greatly to Miss Kao's regret, they moved out with their girls to form a separate establishment, which they named the Chin Hua Troupe.

Sai was well aware that the prosperity of her business would arouse jealousy among her competitors, and in spite of Sun's assurance that he had enough useful connections to safeguard her from the danger of reprisals, her experience in Shanghai had taught her that he was not to be altogether depended upon if an emergency should come. Clearly she would be more secure if she could enlist the support of one or two really influential mandarins, and this is exactly what she set about doing. Among her patrons there was one man in particular who stood out above all the rest. To begin with, he was a Manchu bannerman, which in those days was still a great recommendation in the eyes of the Court. But whereas Manchus as a rule were hopelessly corrupt and inefficient, Li-shan, for such was his name, would have made his way in the world even if he had not enjoyed the advantage of his race. When he met Sai for the first time, he had come to Tientsin to hold a high post in the military administration, and he at once fell under the spell of the lively little southern woman, who could enchant any man once she had set her mind to it. Nor was Li-shan the only Manchu who sought her favors, and not in vain, for Sai-chin-hua decided that after all it was among the members of the imperial race that she was most likely to find men who would be able to protect her. It was at this time that she adopted the change of attire for which she became celebrated. Girls of her class invariably wore a short jacket with trousers, but she assumed a style of her own, consisting of a long gown with a sleeveless coat, very much in the masculine fashion. Indeed if you put her among a group of the male effeminates who were so much in vogue among the Manchus she would have passed without remark. The style caught on, and it is from that date that we find certain

singing girls wearing men's clothes. Naturally all this excited a good deal of comment. Old-fashioned people were scandalized to see Sai in this costume in company with imperial noblemen and declared that such perverse conduct could only portend the ruin of the dynasty.

These predictions of disaster were not without more solid foundation. Much had happened in the few years since Hung's death. The year 1894 saw the disastrous war with Japan, in the course of which Admiral Ting clownishly led his navy, the state of which was a national disgrace, to complete destruction at the hands of the enemy, and tried to redeem his good name by suicide. On land, our armies shared the same fate. The result of the war was that China was completely prostrate at the foreigners' mercy.

At such a time, it might have been expected that a feeling of anger would spread through the country, from the Court downward, together with a firm resolve to be revenged. For such a purpose, fundamental changes in the national policy did not admit of delay. The Emperor, Kuang Hsü, was a man of good sense who listened with approval to the councils of reformers like K'ang Yu-wei and Liang Ch'i-ch'ao, but he was of fatally weak disposition, and was unable to act decisively. All effective power was in the hands of the Empress Dowager who thwarted the Emperor's every move. Realizing this, and seeing that no hope of a national revival was possible until the authority of the Dowager was curbed, the reformers secretly organized a so-called "Emperor's Party" and prepared a *coup d'état* to remove the Dowager and her faction from power and to introduce a constitution under the Emperor. Unfortunately the plan was discovered and the Dowager, half crazy with rage, put the Emperor under strict surveillance and issued orders for

the arrest of the reformers. K'ang and Liang, the leaders, were warned by a friendly official and managed to make their escape, but their most important followers were mercilessly put to death and their corpses exhibited in the streets of Peking. From then on the Emperor was held as a prisoner, while the Dowager and her favorites flaunted their undisputed control of government. It was just then that Sai began to go about in her novel attire, and we cannot wonder that old-fashioned people recalled the proverb about the hen's crowing to announce the dawn, and felt that the order of nature was being monstrously reversed, not only in the Palace but even among the singing girls.

While these exciting events were taking place, Li-shan happened to be transferred to the Board of Revenue, and soon afterwards, the President of the Board having been dismissed on suspicion of his sympathy with the reformers, Li-shan was promoted to the vacancy. Of course, he was overjoyed at this good fortune, and as his mother's birthday was approaching he decided to celebrate the occasion with a grand entertainment. Sai took the opportunity of coming to Peking ostensibly to bring some presents to the old lady, who was so delighted by her unusual visitor that she pressed Sai to stay in the capital where she could see more of her. Li-shan himself, recognizing that he could no longer go to Tientsin as frequently as he would like, added his voice to that of his mother and Sai was so flattered at her reception by this great Manchu family that she decided she could hardly with a good grace deny their request. Once she had agreed, Li-shan found a nice house for her in the Tartar City and sent one of his men to escort her whole troupe from Tientsin.

On their opening day, Li-shan was host at an elaborate

party and the place was crowded with Manchu noblemen and important mandarins. Sai went from table to table like a butterfly among the flowers, but many of the guests were strangers to her and she would have felt rather awkward if it had not been for Li-shan and one of his friends, a man named Lu Yu-fang, who was indefatigable in making introductions and breaking the ice generally. At length the guests left in the best of humor at their entertainment, but Li-shan asked Lu to stay behind with him, and Sai, after expressing the warmest gratitude to them both, sat with them while they talked, and listened with great amusement to Lu's fund of stories.

"Although it was I who persuaded Sai to stay in Peking," said Li-shan after a while, "I am still a bit worried about her prospects of business, as she knows so few people here. And if I am the only one to give parties, in the way I did today, it will look rather bad. I wonder if you could help out by introducing a few people yourself. You will oblige me very much if you do."

"It is very kind of you, gentlemen," said Sai, "but it is true I know hardly anybody here. Do say you will help, Mr. Lu!"

"Gently, gently!" said Lu with a smile. "If I gave parties for you, it would look rather queer, wouldn't it? After all, it is perfectly right and proper for Li-shan to do so, as the two of you are old friends. But for an outsider like myself to play host like that, even if Li-shan here wasn't jealous, would still make people talk. We shall have to find some reason why I should take an interest in you."

"Look," said Sai-chin-hua. "I've just thought of something. Why can't I become your sworn sister? That would

make a sufficient reason. But perhaps you think I'm not good enough?" And she went into a peal of laughter.

Lu clapped his hands in delight. "What a splendid idea!" he exclaimed. "But I still don't fancy the brother and sister business. Why don't we become sworn brothers? That would sound much better. What do you say? If you agree, I'll send out the invitations tomorrow and we can have the ceremony the next day."

Li-shan thought his friend was joking, but to his surprise Lu told the amah to fetch a sheet of red paper, a writing brush and an inkstone, and then began to take down notes of the exact time of Sai-chin-hua's birth according to the correct astrological procedure.

"What on earth are you doing?" laughed Li-shan. "Do you mean to say you are in earnest about all this? If the pair of you want to be brothers, then from now on you can call Sai younger brother, and she can call you elder brother. There's no need to take all this trouble."

"No, I'm not going to have that," said Lu. "Either I do this thing in proper form or I don't do it at all."

At this, Sai herself, who had been bewildered by Lu's antics, thought it time to protest.

"I was only joking, Mr. Lu," she said. "How could I think of asking you to go through with such a thing? Please don't embarrass me by taking it seriously."

"Ah, so you're giving up already?" said Lu. "But you can't get out of it so easily as that!"

Li-shan knew his friend's character well enough to understand that the novelty of the proposal had tickled his fancy and that he would not rest until he had his way.

"Well, it looks as if you'll have to go through with it," he

said to Sai. "In any case, a woman like you, with experience of foreign countries, won't be too shy. Tell him everything he wants to know about your horoscope, and tomorrow he can draw up the certificate of brotherhood."

Sai did as she was told, and when Lu had copied all the particulars he folded the paper and put it in his pocket. Then, as it was quite late, he took his leave, having made an appointment for the day after next.

When Lu's friends received, as they did next day, a formal notification of his intention to take Sai as his sworn brother, their astonishment may be imagined, and indeed a large section of Peking society could talk of nothing else. On the day after that, a large crowd assembled at Sai's house, where they found everything ready and in order for the bizarre ceremony. Sai herself was in masculine dress, and when all the guests had arrived she and Lu exchanged certificates of brotherhood before a small altar table and declared that henceforward Sai stood in the relation of younger brother to Lu. Then the pact was celebrated by a drinking party during which the expression "Young Mr. Sai," used by one of the servants, was taken up hilariously by the guests and in a short time was heard from one end of Peking to the other.

Sai had been in Peking for about a year when the government decreed that singing girls should not be allowed to maintain their establishments within the Tartar City, and in spite of the efforts of her friends on her behalf she found that no exception could be made in her case and that if she wished to remain in the capital she would be obliged to move into the gay quarter in the Chinese City. Feeling that she would lose status by having herself classed with such riffraff, she took her troupe back once more to Tien-

tsin. This happened during the winter of 1899-1900, and she little suspected the fantastic adventure that awaited her a few months later.

As we have seen, the Emperor was at this time held virtually a prisoner, while all power was in the hands of the Empress Dowager. The corruption of the Court, where nobody could get a bearing unless he had greased the palm of Li Lien-ying the Grand Eunuch, was now quite without bounds, and with such an example before them it is not to be wondered at that the Manchu grandees, some of whom, in spite of the titles they held, were almost illiterate, should consider the pleasures of the table or the pursuit of attractive boys and girls more important than the management of public affairs. Even in times of peace such an administration could not continue long without disaster. When China was encompassed with powerful neighbors, all eagerly waiting for the chance to strike, the Dowager's mode of government was nothing short of national suicide.

For many years in the earlier part of the dynasty, public order in north China had been greatly disturbed by the activities of various secret societies, whose beliefs were bound up with magical practices and who at that time had sworn to overthrow Manchu rule. These dangerous enthusiasts had at last been forcibly suppressed but their doctrines continued to be cultivated in secret and now at the turn of the century the movement had sprung into new life. Its leaders, however, had had the good sense to divert their hatred from the Manchus to the foreigners—an easy transformation, as there was widespread loathing of the devils from beyond the sea—and they proclaimed their loyalty to the reigning dynasty. The beliefs of these people sprang from the most degraded forms of superstition. In particular

they encouraged their followers into thinking that the magical formulas they employed could ward off all harm from enemies' bullets. While they were still not confident enough to declare their aims openly, they had masked their real purpose behind the exercise of such practices as Chinese shadow boxing, and for that reason they acquired the name of "Boxers" by which later they became known to the world. As time went on and their adherents became more numerous, they began to test the attitude of the authorities, and when they were sure they had won the sympathy of a few powerful officials, they openly exhibited themselves as an organized force under a banner inscribed with the slogan "Support the Dynasty, destroy the foreigners."

That a movement with such an ostensible purpose, however tumultuous it might be, should have aroused secret approval in Court circles is perhaps not surprising. The really astonishing thing is that any men in a position of authority, even men as ignorant as the Manchu grandees, should for one moment have placed any credence in the Boxers' claims to invulnerability. The mass of the people, of course, detested the foreigners and were only deterred from violence against them by fear of the barbarians' guns. Once this fear had been removed there was no reason why their hatred should not be given free play, and in this respect the Boxers' technique had attracted many converts. But what are we to say of such a man as Yü-lu, who as Governor General of the Metropolitan Province held one of the most important posts in the Empire? When the Boxer movement had spread to Tientsin, he sent for their leader, who was so excited by the affability shown to him that he made the most extravagant claims about his supernatural powers, and for fear he might not be believed offered to give a demonstra-

tion there and then. What precisely took place is not known but the story current at the time—and, fantastic as it was, the subsequent conduct of Yü-lu lent some degree of credibility to it—was that a number of enthusiasts recited their ritual incantations and passed into a sort of trance. While they were in this state, the guards hacked and stabbed at them with as little effect as if their bodies had been made of stone. Then when the test was over the Boxers were brought out of their trance and retired without the least trace of harm. Totally convinced by what he had seen, Yü-lu assured the leader of his full support and told him to continue the work of organization, in preparation for the day of reckoning with the foreigners, while he himself promised to petition the Empress Dowager to give official recognition to the Boxers and regular commissions to their leaders.

It is no wonder that every rascal in Tientsin and for miles around hurried to join a movement which seemed to have such a splendid future before it. In no time at all the place was infested with thousands of Boxers, all easily distinguishable by their peculiar costume. They wore a red turban and a short coat with an amulet on the front and the back. Round the waist they fastened a long red sash, and their cloth shoes were of a special fashion. They were armed with spears or swords decorated with a red streamer. Besides the men, there was also a brigade of female Boxers known as the Red Lanterns with a woman called the Holy Mother at their head. Their uniform consisted of a red jacket and trousers, and they wore their hair coiled into a topknot. In the daytime they carried red fans, and at night they went about with red lanterns, from which they got their name. They were not armed but the story was that so long as they

had their fans or their lanterns with them they were able to fly through the air.

Yü-lu kept his word and ordered his staff to draft a memorial to the Empress Dowager, telling her in confidence what he had just seen and stating his opinion that the Boxers had some supernatural powers behind them. The Empress Dowager herself was notoriously superstitious and had good reason to hate all foreigners, so she did not hesitate to issue a rescript in which she expressed her appreciation of the Boxers' loyalty in the most gracious terms, and directed the Governor General Yü-lu to extend his protection to such devoted subjects and in particular to confirm the Grand Master (as the leader was called) and the Holy Mother in their positions of authority, and to promise ample honors and rewards for their future services.

On receipt of this mark of imperial approval, the zeal of the fanatics exceeded all bounds. The first thing they did was to announce that they would not tolerate the use of foreign goods by any of their countrymen. Of course, to render such a prohibition effectual it was necessary that all shops and private houses should be searched and this the Boxers proceeded to do. It was a great opportunity for plunder and it was taken advantage of very thoroughly. The unfortunate citizens found they had no means of redress and the wisest of them submitted quietly. Those who were foolish enough to protest were immediately denounced as being in sympathy with the foreigners and were lucky if they were not killed on the spot, or, at the very least, if their houses were not burned down. By such means, the once peaceful and prosperous city of Tientsin became a place of terror.

Meanwhile the Boxers had extended themselves to Pe-

king, where they adopted similar methods. As the news became worse, and every day stories came in of the sacking of Christian missions and of murderous attacks on Westerners, the foreign representatives in the capital became seriously alarmed and urged the Chinese government to take action to suppress the disorder, failing which the foreign powers would send troops to protect the legations. The Chinese Foreign Office was in a quandary how to meet these demands and tried to put off any decision from day to day.

Among the foreign diplomats none was more forthright in his attitude than the German Minister, Baron von Ketteler. One day, he was on his way to the Foreign Office when at a spot just outside the Legation Quarter he encountered a gang of Boxers, who, seeing a foreigner in a sedan chair, did not stop to inquire who he was—not, in any case, that the fact of his being German Minister would have restrained them—but immediately surrounded him with shouts of “Kill the devil!” The unfortunate man had no time to escape and was savagely killed by the mob, who cut off his head and stuck it on a spear, little realizing the price China would have to pay for that day’s work.



WHILE THESE EVENTS were happening in the capital, the situation in Tientsin had come to a head and at length the Boxers made an outright attack on the foreign settlements, only to meet with a resistance stronger than they had bargained for. However for a time the position of the areas under foreign control looked so serious that Chinese residents as far as possible tried to escape into the interior. These unfortunate people were the true sufferers from the excesses of the Boxers, because the latter would only permit them to pass through their lines when they had stripped them of everything they were carrying, so when the refugees succeeded in reaching a place of safety they were totally destitute.

As we have seen, Sai had returned to Tientsin with her troupe some months earlier, and had been living in the French Concession while the Boxers were establishing them-

selves in the Chinese city and the surrounding country. Fortunately, as it turned out, some of Sun San's friends in the underworld had taken the opportunity of joining the movement for the sake of plunder, and through these people they were kept informed of what was passing. At length they heard that an attack on the foreign districts was imminent, and Sun used his friends' influence to get a card from one of the Boxer leaders, and, with this as a safe conduct, escaped with Sai and the girls across the country to the town of Tungchow, at the end of the Grand Canal, a few miles east of Peking. Before their flight they had sold their furniture for what it would fetch and they had enough money on them to live quietly in Tungchow through the summer, thankful to be away from the fighting and listening to the news as it reached them. In this way they learned of the siege of the foreign legations in Peking, and then of the arrival of foreign reinforcements in Tientsin and of the total defeat of the Boxers in that city.

To the ordinary people, who had heard so much of the Boxer's invincibility, the news of their collapse before the foreign guns, against which all their charms and amulets had afforded no protection, came in the first place as an enormous shock. But they had no time to feel any relief that they were free from the depredations of those fanatics who had been exacting tribute from them for so many months, because immediately afterwards came word that the foreigners had completely occupied Tientsin and that as far as plunder was concerned their soldiers were even more ruthless than the Boxers. Another wave of refugees moved across the countryside, this time in flight from the foreigners, and as Tungchow seemed no longer a safe refuge, Sun and Sai decided they had better make their way

to Peking itself. They managed to hire a mule cart, though at an outrageous charge, and they set off out of the town. They had not gone far however when they came in sight of a picket of soldiers who were questioning travelers and helping themselves to articles of value, while they used their riding whips against those who protested.

Seeing this, their driver refused to go any further, and at last it was decided that the girl should remain in lodgings at Tungchow with the heavy luggage, while Sun and Sai concealed the jewelry on their persons in the hope that they would pass unnoticed in the crowd of pedestrians and be able to continue their journey on foot. For a time, everything went well. They passed the picket unmolested and went on in the direction of Peking. But they had not walked more than a mile or two when Sai was already in agony from her bound feet which were totally unaccustomed to such exercise. At last she had to rest, and she sat at the side of the road sweating and panting, while she stared miserably at the group of refugees in whose company they had come so far and who were now pressing ahead out of sight. After a while, she and Sun were about to continue their journey, when a party of soldiers came on the scene and noticing the two of them were well dressed, searched them so thoroughly that all the jewelry they were carrying was soon seized and confiscated. Then the men went off without so much as looking back at them.

They were now without a copper piece between them, and Sai began to cry and lament that it was useless to go further, and it was better to die on the spot, but Sun tried to put heart into her by telling her that, once they were in Peking, Li-shan and her other friends would never let her starve. Sai refused to listen to him and was still sobbing

when from a distance there came the sound of horses approaching in their direction. It was a detachment of cavalry, and their first thought was that the foreigners had caught up with them at last. However as the first riders came nearer, it could be seen they were Chinese and in a moment or two they arrived and pulled up to look at the two travelers. One of them, who appeared to be in command, seeing Sai in tears asked what they were doing, and Sun, encouraged by his manner, which was not unkind, threw himself on his knees and told their story.

"Very well," said the officer. "We are on our way to Peking too. Can the woman ride?"

While Sun was hesitating how to reply, Sai called out, "Yes, I can ride," although in fact she had never been on a horse. The rest of the soldiers were now at hand, and the officer ordered one of the men to bring up a spare horse which he told Sun to mount and then to carry Sai in front of him.

The sky had been overcast for some time, and rain was now starting to fall, but the party pressed on with no thought of taking shelter until in the evening they came to a village not far from the city wall. All the doors were shut and not a soul was in sight. The reason was that a few days earlier the place had been raided more than once and the greater part of the inhabitants had fled to the hills. But at last they found a house where there was an old woman who was able to give them some tea and rice gruel. Then as the soldiers were anxious to get to Peking the same night, they went on through the rain, but Sun and Sai were so exhausted that they slept in the old woman's house and set out again on foot early the next morning.

Once more there was a crowd of refugees in the road and

according to them the news was even graver. So in spite of all her pain, Sai hobbled on until in the afternoon they found themselves under the great wall of Peking, outside the gate at the southeastern corner. Here however they encountered a bitter disappointment. The gate was shut. At this, Sai was again plunged into despair, and even Sun himself was at a loss what to do next. Fortunately, however, some more soldiers arrived at the gate, also wishing to enter the city, and they banged and shouted until a man came on to the wall and told them that a gate on the southern side was still open. Thereupon without wasting a moment, Sun and Sai followed the course of the wall until at last, just as night was beginning to fall, they reached the gate in question and were allowed into the city. They were now in such a state that they could hardly move a yard further, and they sat down on the step of a barber's shop, where Sai gave way to her misery by a storm of weeping. Some bystanders gathered around to inquire about conditions on the road and after answering their questions, Sun told them that his wife was unable to go any further and asked if one of them would be kind enough to put them up for the night. An old man agreed to give them shelter and taking them to his house, which was just round the corner, provided them with something to eat.

When they had satisfied their hunger, their host asked them if they had anywhere to go.

"We have plenty of friends here," said Sai. "But in the first place we are going to see His Excellency Li-shan."

The old man gave a start of surprise. "His Excellency who?" he asked.

"His Excellency Li-shan, President of the Board of Revenue," said Sai.

The old man gave a groan. "I am sorry to have to tell you this," he said, "but only this very morning, your friend was beheaded. We all know he was a loyal gentleman and was doing what he thought best for the country."

Sai-chin-hua gave a cry of horror, and for a time was unable to speak. Then there came into her mind a picture of Li-shan as she always remembered him, gay and generous, and at the thought that she would never see him again, she wept as if her heart would break. It was a long while before she could bring herself to ask the old man what had happened.

Even while the Court was at its most corrupt there were certain men in high office who were intelligent enough to perceive that the frenzy of the Boxers, unless checked in time, would inevitably lead their country into disaster. They felt bound to submit their views to the Throne, but the Empress Dowager was too besotted to listen to them. As things went from bad to worse, and in particular after the murder of the German Minister, these men, of whom Li-shan was one of the most conspicuous, came forward again and petitioned the Dowager to decree the suppression of the Boxers, and to apologize to the foreign powers in order to avoid armed conflict, but this good advice was not only rejected but even earned a rebuke for its authors. Nevertheless, when the news reached Peking of the allied offensive at Tientsin, Li-shan and his friends were rash enough to address yet another memorial to the Dowager, begging her to use government troops to suppress the Boxers, to punish those responsible for disorder, and to send an envoy to negotiate an armistice with the foreigners. Even at this late hour, the Dowager persisted in her crazy policy and was so furious at this continued opposition that she ordered

the petitioners to be arrested on a charge of conspiring with foreign enemies and to be put to death without further ado.

This was the story that Sai heard from the old man, and later in the night as she lay there while Sun was asleep her thoughts turned from the fate of her lover to her own predicament. Where in the world was she to go? At last an idea came to her. She remembered the old retainer Sheng, who had accompanied her husband and herself to Germany and whom she had not seen for more than six years. After Hung's death, when the family returned to south China, Sheng had remained behind in Peking, which was his native city, and Sai was able to recall where he had said he was going to live. It was near the Palace of Prince Ting, and early the next morning, having thanked their kind host for his hospitality, she and Sun hired a hand cart to bring them to the place.

Sheng was at home and after recovering from his surprise at seeing them, he listened to their story sympathetically enough, and ended by offering them a room in his house. This was generous of him, because he was a poor man and with the scarcity of food two more mouths created a serious problem. However they got along as well as they could, and, if the truth must be told, when the looting of rice shops began, Sheng and Sun took a hand in the proceedings and brought back quite a supply.

By that time, the sound of the foreigners' guns was plainly audible, and the population was in great alarm. The only thing that reassured them a little was the fact that the Court was still within the city, from which they deduced that the situation was not absolutely desperate. However, when at last it was reported that the Emperor and the Dowager had fled from Peking, the panic could no longer be suppressed,

and from then until the arrival of the foreign army the confusion was indescribable. The handful of officials that remained at their posts had no means of keeping order in face of the ruffians who were anxious to exploit the situation. Then when the foreigners were under the walls of the city there happened something so ridiculous that it will hardly be believed. The Boxers, finding they were getting the worse of the conflict, decided that the foreigners' success must itself be due to some powerful magic and, in accordance with an old Chinese superstition, they attempted to defeat these hostile influences by exhibiting objects of an unclean and disgusting nature. With this purpose, the city walls were festooned with commodes, chamber pots, cloths that had bound women's feet, and sanitary towels stained with menses. Oddly enough, perhaps because the foreigners were perplexed by the meaning of this gesture, the firing seemed for a time to die down and people began to think that perhaps there was something in Chinese magic after all. But the respite did not last long, and when the foreign assault came the Boxers were the first to give up hope and pulling off their badges and amulets they fled for their lives, leaving the government troops to put up what resistance they could. But the latter had little heart for the fight and once the enemy had forced a way inside the walls, the Chinese soldiers were in the main only anxious to throw down their arms and disappear from the scene.

The invaders were not inclined to show mercy and as to them one Chinese looked much like another they took everybody they met to be a Boxer and therefore a proper object of slaughter. Soon corpses were piled everywhere, nearly all of citizens, because those responsible for the disorders had already taken good care to hide themselves out

of the way. The worst of the officials had fled and of the few men of honor who stayed behind most were glad to escape from the sight of their country's disgrace by taking their own lives.

Such was the fate of Peking in those August days of 1900 and even after the first horror of the foreign occupation had passed there seemed to be nothing the people could look forward to without despair. As the weeks went by, it might have been expected that some measure of discipline would be restored among the enemy troops, but in their conduct towards the Chinese they seemed not to be under any restraint whatever. At length it was announced that a Commander-in-Chief had been appointed for all the occupying forces, but any hope that this news might have inspired was soon destroyed when it was learned that the new commander was a German. For, after the murder of their Minister, it was the Germans more than any other nation who were determined that China should pay for the misdeeds of the Boxers. In due course the commander arrived in Peking and took up his quarters in the Forbidden City, but no sign was visible of any improvement of discipline.

During this time Sai and Sun San had been living in Sheng's house, and rarely venturing to go out of doors. Late one night when they were all in bed, they were awakened by the tramp of leather boots and the sound of foreign voices, and they realized to their alarm that some of the enemy troops were coming down the street. Sai said a prayer that they might pass by without any trouble but instead they came straight to Sheng's house and thundered on the door. Both Sun and Sheng were far too terrified to open, but Sai knew that if the foreigners wanted to be admitted they would start smashing the door down. The one thing

she prayed for now was that the visitors might be Germans, so that she could understand what they said and try and humor them. If not, there was nothing for it but to leave everything to fate. Having made up her mind what to do, she lighted a lamp and told Sheng to go and let the foreigners in and she would talk to them. At first Sheng refused, but as the knocking grew louder, he followed her advice and went to open the door while Sai followed him into the hall with a candlestick.

Three foreigners entered, and to her relief Sai saw they were all German soldiers, one of them being a noncommissioned officer. She bowed and greeted them in German, asking them to sit down. The three men had come with nothing good in their minds, but they were so completely dumfounded by this reception that all they could do was to obey the invitation and take seats, while they stared at Sai without saying a word. At last however when they had recovered a little from their shock and had listened to her talk—she was speaking pretty fluently—one of them, realizing she must be no ordinary woman, said to her quite politely that he expected she must have been to Germany sometime. Of course Sai eagerly took advantage of this opening and began to tell them about her life in Berlin and to mention the names of the people she used to know. When she spoke of Waldersee, the noncommissioned officer jumped to his feet.

“But this is most extraordinary, Madame,” he said, in tones of great respect. “You say you are actually a friend of Count Waldersee? Don’t you know that he is here in Peking at this moment? He is the new Commander-in-Chief, and he is living in the Imperial Palace. We must tell him of this at once, and I am sure he will want to see you without delay.” Thereupon he said something to the others

and the three of them saluted and left the house in haste.

Sheng shut the door behind them and Sun San came out from where he had been hiding and the pair of them began to congratulate Sai on her success in getting rid of the intruders. But she was not listening to them.

"Is it possible," she said as if to herself, "that after all these years he has now come to Peking? Those soldiers said he was the Commander-in-Chief. Oh, if it is only true, all our worries are at an end."

Sun had no idea what she was talking about.

"You can never tell with these foreigners," he said. "I shouldn't expect too much, if I were you."

"Oh, but you don't understand," said Sai-chin-hua. "Years ago, when I was in Germany, I used to know a man named Waldersee who was an officer in the army. We were great friends, he and I, in those days. Now they just told me that he is here in Peking as Commander-in-Chief. When I meet him, I am sure he will listen to everything I say. Just wait and see!"

The night was far advanced before they returned to bed, and Sai herself was unable to shut her eyes again. As soon as it was light she got up, and without delay started to attend to her toilet, combing her hair and binding her feet with the greatest care. But she was sadly lacking in clothes and jewelry, and when she looked at herself in the glass and thought of the way she used to dress in the old days she began to cry. But it was no use regretting the past, and when she looked in the glass again she said to herself that in a way perhaps a simple dress suited her as well as more ornate costume. So she took courage and waited to see what the day would bring.



THE MORNING WENT BY without word, and it was not until they had finished their midday meal that they heard the sound of hooves and of wheels approaching from the distance, and stopping at the door. Knowing that the summons she was expecting had arrived, Sai told Sheng to go and open the door, and a moment later, the noise of his boots echoing through the house, there entered the non-commissioned officer of the night before. He saluted Sai politely, and told her Field Marshal Waldersee had ordered him to escort her to headquarters and that a carriage was ready at the door. This was what Sai had been waiting to hear, and after thanking the man for his trouble, and taking leave of Sun and Sheng, she followed her visitor outside, where he helped her into the carriage.

They drove directly into the Forbidden City. Here her escort assisted her to alight and led her into one of the

palace buildings. Waldersee must have been expecting her eagerly, for he came to meet her with a look of great pleasure and took her hand in his.

"I could not believe my ears when I heard the news this morning," he exclaimed. "Of course the soldiers had got everything muddled up, but I was sure it must be you, although it seemed too good to be true. But you must tell me all about yourself."

They went and sat down, and while they talked Waldersee noticed that although Sai was just as beautiful as ever, her dress was rather shabby, and he thought that she must have come down in the world. As discreetly as he could, he turned the conversation to her present circumstances, and Sai was unable to restrain her tears at his kind inquiries. She put a handkerchief to her eyes, and sat there feeling ashamed of herself for making such a scene. But when Waldersee came and sat beside her and tried to console her she plucked up courage again and related what had happened to her since they last met.

She had so much to tell him that darkness had fallen long before she had finished her story. Waldersee kept her to dinner and during the meal she made bold to complain to him about the conduct of his troops.

"I am afraid I never get to hear of these things," he said. "But don't be afraid to speak as freely as you like."

"The Boxers did terrible things, I know," she said. "However at this moment I can assure you there is hardly one of them left inside the city, as those who were not killed in the fighting made their escape long ago. But your soldiers don't seem to understand this, and the moment they fancy there is something suspicious about one of the ordinary citizens, they insist he must be a Boxer, and kill him then

and there. Nobody knows how many innocent people have lost their lives in this way. Of course, it's hard to blame the men for being angry, but they are taking their revenge on the same harmless people who were themselves being murdered by the Boxers a month or two ago. Surely you Westerners who are so proud of your civilization ought to show us an example of humanity? Perhaps it is wrong of me to speak like this, but you told me to say what was in my mind. Please promise me you will think about it!"

Waldersee flushed and looked uncomfortable. "I have many things needing my attention," he said. "And there are soldiers from every country under the sun. I am quite sure many of them must be thoroughly bad. But I am glad you have spoken to me so frankly, and I shall take steps to see this sort of conduct is stopped."

Sai felt relieved at the way her complaint had been received, and went on to talk of other things. At last it was time for her to go, and Waldersee called to the guards and seemed to give them an order, for in a few minutes they came in carrying a couple of trunks.

"Here are a few odds and ends you may find useful," he said. "And don't forget, if you should ever be short of anything, don't hesitate to come to me!"

To Sai in her circumstances a gift of any sort was as welcome as a fire in a snowstorm, and she accepted the present gratefully. The soldiers carried out the boxes, and Waldersee gallantly offered her his arm as far as her carriage and made an appointment to see her again.

As soon as she returned to Sheng's house, her first thought was to open the boxes and see what they contained. One was full of silken robes of the most beautiful workmanship, the other held upwards of a thousand silver dollars. You

can imagine the sensation this aroused in the household, and the eagerness with which Sheng and Sun listened to her account of her meeting with Waldersee. When she told how the Commander-in-Chief had promised to enforce better discipline among his soldiers, Sun beamed with pride, and said, "That's our young Mr. Sai for you! Bravo!"

As it turned out, his admiration was fully justified, because within the next few days a remarkable transformation was observed in the conduct of the foreign troops. From then on they began to go about the town in an orderly manner. Looting became a thing of the past, and murder and arson were no longer heard of. The citizens of Peking, after their long terror, began to breathe again.

Hardly a day passed without the arrival of the carriage to take Sai to the Forbidden City, and it was clear that Waldersee preferred her company to that of anybody else. Before long even these daily interviews were not enough for him, and he had installed her in his quarters in the palace. Nor was he ashamed to let the world know of his attachment to this Chinese woman. He persuaded her to take lessons in riding, and when she had gained enough confidence in this art, the pair of them would go out on horseback through the streets, and a very fine couple they made.

It was only to be expected that the affair would attract public attention, and indeed the citizens of Peking were soon talking of little else. Of course, all sorts of opinions were expressed. Some held that Sai was a real Chinese heroine who had sacrificed herself to placate the foreign conqueror, and that it was entirely to her that her countrymen owed their new security of life and property. Others pre-

tended to be outraged to see a Chinese woman so shamelessly prostituting herself to a barbarian. Others again believed that it was considerations of vanity more than anything else that led her to associate with Waldersee. But it could hardly be denied that, disreputable as her past undoubtedly had been, her influence now was ameliorating the condition of the people of Peking, and if anybody wanted to preach about the disgrace to the national honor it was more reasonable to blame the Empress Dowager, who had brought about all the misery in the first place, than poor Sai who was doing harm to nobody.

Although order had now been restored, shops and markets had not yet reopened. The looting and burning had destroyed a vast amount of stock, and traders were still too much afraid of the foreigners to venture into business. This created a great hardship for the people, and even the foreigners were beginning to feel the difficulty of importing all their provisions, and were soon likely to be facing a shortage. Waldersee seeing day after day the streets of closed shops felt that no time should be lost in getting the food supply functioning again, and he could think of no better way of putting his views to the Chinese than through Sai's mediation. At first the whole idea seemed so preposterous to her that she refused to listen to it, but Waldersee insisted and at last she agreed to see what she could do. Accompanied by some German soldiers, she and Sun San went the rounds of the principal dealers in foodstuffs and explained there was no longer the slightest danger of looting, and that the foreign authorities were very anxious to buy provisions themselves and would pay well. In the event of any trouble, she said, they had only to come and see her, and she would

guarantee that their complaints would be satisfied immediately. She asked the merchants to think over her suggestion and get in touch with her.

This straightforward approach was well adapted to please the shopkeepers, who felt they could trust Sai to honor her pledges, and were well aware of her influence with the Commander-in-Chief. Besides, the prospect of substantial orders was especially alluring after so many months without trade. The very next day, therefore, a few of the more venturesome merchants were already going round to have a word with Sun San to let him know that they were favorably disposed towards doing business. Sai passed on their offer to the foreigners who made out lists of the supplies required and Waldersee arranged that flags should be distributed to mark the goods in transport and prevent any molestation by the troops. The transaction was accomplished without incident and the tradesmen were gratified to find themselves paid promptly and in full, which, they were obliged to confess, was more than they could have expected if they were dealing with the Chinese Army. From then on the merchant community had nothing but good to say about Sai, to whom they were indebted for the very comfortable profit they were making, and the foreign officers on their part felt that they could rely on her in their dealings with the Chinese. Even the tiny children knew her name, and it was a common saying that Waldersee was acting Emperor and she was his Empress, as they were living together in the palace, and making use of all the objects of imperial luxury, even to the great Dragon Bed of the Dowager.

One day Sai had gone out by herself for a ride through the streets, when she came across a group of Chinese who

had been pressed by the foreign soldiers into doing coolie labor. Among these she recognized some men who were obviously scholars or officials and who were performing their tasks so ineptly that the foreigners were out of temper and were striking them about the shoulders with whips. Unable to endure this sight, she at once rode up to the spot and interceded with the soldiers, who by this time all knew her well, and rather than face the risk of getting into trouble with the Commander-in-Chief they released the mandarins, who invoked blessings on Sai for their deliverance. However their prayers were answered that night in a very peculiar manner.

It happened that Sai in order to transact some of her affairs more easily had been sleeping for several nights at Sheng's house and Waldersee had been so impatient that he had sent word that he wanted her to return and keep him company that very day. When she went to the palace in the evening, the Commander-in-Chief was in a sentimental mood and declared that her short absence had afflicted him so much that her return demanded a special celebration. So he called for champagne and insisted that she must drink with him. In spite of her life as a singing girl, she was not used to wine, but she could not refuse such an invitation and she drank far more than she had intended. The champagne went to her head, and by the time supper was over she was quite drunk. To a Chinese there is nothing more enchanting than the sight of a pretty woman under the influence of wine and even one so alien to our traditions as Waldersee, when he saw the slight flush on her cheeks and the charming disorder of her tresses, could not help thinking what a provoking picture she made. He went and sat beside her and stroked her hair until she

looked at him out of the corner of her eye and gave him a smile of which by now he well understood the meaning.

Sai slept deeply that night but her repose was broken by a loud and sudden noise, and opening her eyes she saw a red glare and a cloud of smoke. The apartment was on fire. She and Waldersee got out of the great bed and threw on their clothes. The guards were aroused and did their best to extinguish the flames but they were without proper equipment and the fire soon had taken hold of the building. Reinforcements worked all night but it was not until well into the following morning that the conflagration was suppressed, and by that time the quarters in which Sai and Waldersee had been living were completely gutted. To this day nobody knows what caused the fire.

While these events were taking place in Peking, the Court had found refuge at Sian in northwestern China. The Empress Dowager had at last understood where her policy had brought the country, but it was useless to regret the past. For the present there seemed to be no alternative but ask the foreigners for terms. As imperial emissary to conduct these delicate negotiations, Li Hung-chang was the obvious choice. His first step was to request an armistice and then to open talks at Tientsin to discuss conditions for peace. But these discussions dragged on interminably. The façade China had been presenting to the world was now utterly battered down and the foreigners, flushed with victory and with their troops occupying the Chinese capital, at first proposed conditions of intolerable severity. The Germans were the sternest of all, as was only natural, and apart from the punishment of the princes and high officials who were involved they spoke freely of making the Dowager personally suffer for the murder of their Minister, and

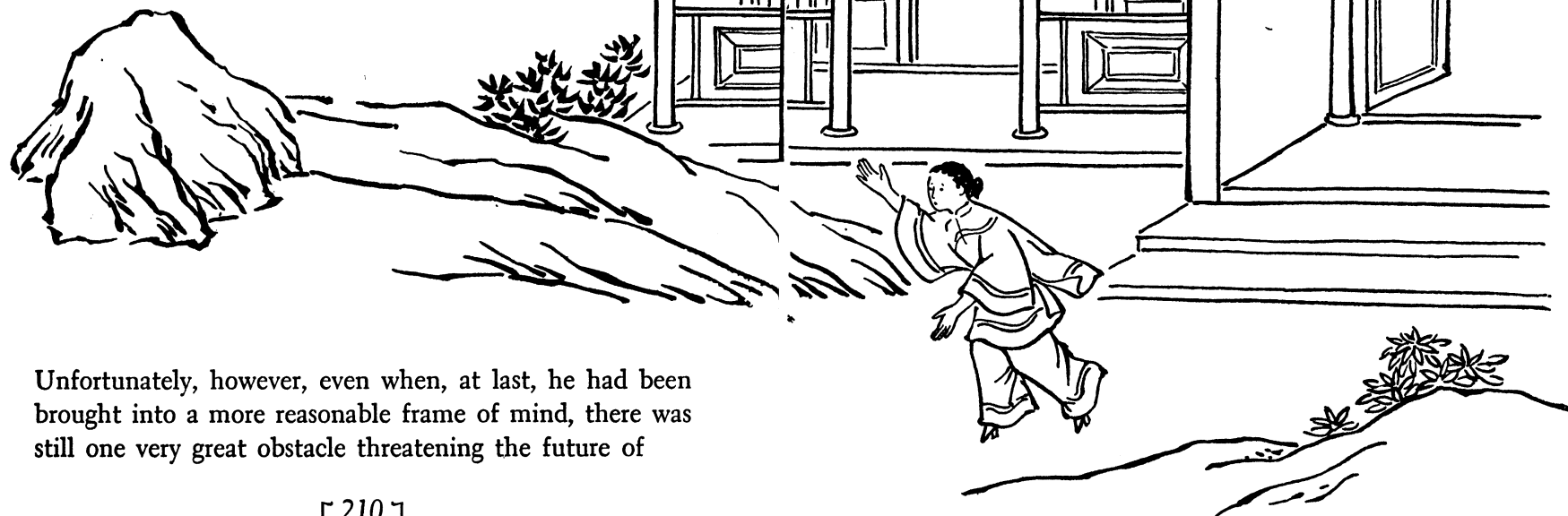
of insisting that the Emperor should apologize to the widow. All this was in addition to heavy indemnities in cash. In spite of his reputation as a negotiator, Li Hung-chang felt himself at his wits' end, as no subject of the Dynasty could contemplate discussing conditions which required the personal humiliation of the Emperor and Dowager. The stalemate had reached its worst just at the time when the romance of Sai and Waldersee was making all Peking buzz with gossip, and even in Tientsin Li Hung-chang knew very well by report what was happening.

At last seeing the negotiations were on the point of breaking down, thanks to German intransigence, Li, who was determined at all costs to accomplish his mission, had the desperate idea of turning to Sai for help. It was impossible for him to approach her in person, but in Peking there was a high official named Ch'en Pi who was one of his trusted intimates and who he felt sure was the man best fitted for the role of go-between. He summoned Ch'en to Tientsin, and no sooner had he mentioned what was in his mind than to his delight Ch'en accepted the task eagerly and told him that he himself was one of the mandarins liberated by Sai's intercession from the labor gang. This fact in itself gave him a very good reason for seeking an interview to offer her his thanks, after which he turned conversation to the difficulty Li Hung-chang was experiencing in the peace negotiations. There was no need for Ch'en to say any more about the purpose of his visit, as Sai had already divined it.

"Your Excellency has come to me to speak on behalf of Lord Li?" she said. "Very well! I have never refused to do anything that lay in my power. But it is hard to tell how this affair will turn, and I must make it clear that I cannot be held responsible for the outcome."

Ch'en felt that with Sai's collaboration things were no longer hopeless, and he encouraged her to use her best efforts. In fact, however, his exhortations were quite unnecessary. Once Sai-chin-hua had made a promise she left nothing undone to carry it out, and the idea that by her influence with Waldersee she could accomplish a task beyond the powers of Li Hung-chang himself was just the sort of thing to tickle her vanity.

At first the Commander-in-Chief would listen to nothing she had to say. His mind was made up, and he was naturally a very obstinate man. But Sai had methods of diplomacy more effective than those available to Li Hung-chang and of a kind to which Waldersee was particularly susceptible.



Unfortunately, however, even when, at last, he had been brought into a more reasonable frame of mind, there was still one very great obstacle threatening the future of

peace negotiations. This was the attitude of the Baroness von Ketteler, widow of the murdered Minister, whose personal demand for severity towards the Empress Dowager could not, in the circumstances, decently be ignored. While the Baroness persisted in her claims, as Waldersee explained to Sai, it was not possible to offer easier terms to the Chinese. At length, as this stalemate continued, Sai made up her mind that the only way out was for her to try and persuade the Baroness herself.

Waldersee was rather dubious when she asked him to arrange the interview, but the Baroness made no difficulty about seeing her and their conversation was not at all unfriendly. Naturally Sai was very cautious in the way she led the talk round to the real object of her visit, but when she had done so the Baroness repeated with an air of quiet determination that she would not rest until the Empress Dowager had paid the penalty for her crimes.

"But surely, Baroness," said Sai, "you will agree that neither the Emperor nor the Dowager had any hand in the death of your husband? The criminals were the Boxers, who were either killed or, if still at large, are being pursued like hunted animals. The princes and officials who directly conspired with them lost their lives in the fighting or were put to death afterwards, and there are many other culprits whom the Emperor has agreed to punish according to their deserts. Surely you can set your mind at rest and be assured that your husband is being fully avenged? I think it is time now for all of us, both Germans and Chinese, to look to the future, so that the relations between our countries may be as friendly as they used to be in the old days."

"My poor husband wanted nothing better than to see our countries at peace," said the Baroness. "But am I to

allow his death to pass so easily as that? Leaving aside the Dowager, do you really expect me to be satisfied as long as the Emperor does not come to apologize to me in person?"

While she was listening to the Baroness's reply, Sai had an idea. What put it into her head, she could not tell, but it was nothing less than a stroke of genius.

"You have lived for quite a while in Peking, Baroness," she said. "You must have gone around the town sightseeing, I expect? In that case you can hardly have failed to notice monumental arches at many of the street corners. Do you know what these stand for?"

The Baroness was much surprised at the sudden change of subject and gave her a puzzled look.

"If you study Chinese history," said Sai, "you will find that this has always been our way of commemorating great and good people. In Europe you erect statues with the same idea. In China, arches are even more important than your monuments in the West, because it is necessary to have special permission from the Emperor to put them up at all. From the Chinese point of view, nothing will vindicate the memory of your husband more than the erection of a beautiful arch at the place where he lost his life, with an inscription by the Emperor himself to say that the Baron sacrificed himself for the sake of Germany. In this way, your husband's name would not only be inscribed in the history of your own country but would be remembered forever in China. Wouldn't you prefer to see his heroism celebrated in this way?"

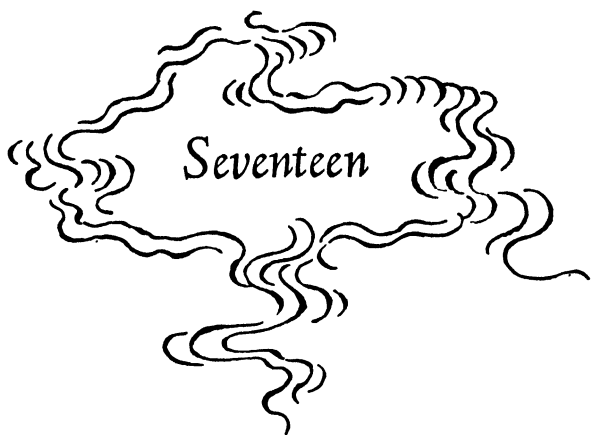
Sai could see that she had made an impression on the Baroness. Of course the latter still hesitated for a while, because it was a bitter pill for her to swallow that the Manchu Court should get off so lightly. But the more she

thought of Sai's suggestion, the more satisfactory it appeared that the name of von Ketteler should be permanently commemorated in this way. So before Sai took her leave, the Baroness had already more or less given in to her proposal, and feeling very much elated by her success she went to report to Waldersee who said that if such a compromise was acceptable to the Baroness he could see no objection to it.

This was no doubt the most remarkable episode in Sai-chin-hua's career. She had, indeed, been living in the manner of an Empress and all that was wanting to her dignity was to be approached for help by such a man as Li Hung-chang. This had now come to pass, and thanks to her influence and benevolence Li's request had been granted, and an obstacle which defied all his statesmanship had been removed from his path. She had good reason to feel proud, but her triumph was double-sided because her success only speeded the day when all her power and glory must come to an end. Now that the Germans were no longer pressing for vengeance against the Empress Dowager, the peace talks, which on that account had been hanging fire, reopened in a more hopeful atmosphere. Of course there was still much to be settled, and the absence of the Court in Sian made the progress of the negotiations all the slower. On the other hand, the Dowager was anxious to see the foreign troops withdraw, so that she could return to Peking, and severe as the terms of peace were, there was no longer any threat to her person, and in comparison with that awful possibility mere financial indemnities seemed of little importance. The memorial arch was erected on the spot where von Ketteler had met his death, with an inscription in the Emperor's name expressing the most profound regret for

the murder, and an Imperial Prince was sent to apologize personally to the Kaiser. The peace protocol was signed in September 1901.

Before that happened, Waldersee had already left for home. Both he and Sai understood that their reunion, which had come about in so strange a fashion, could not be of long duration, but when the parting came it was a sad one on both sides, for they knew they would never meet again. For a year or two Sai exchanged an occasional letter with her lover, and then in 1904 the news came that he was dead.



WHEN THE COURT RETURNED TO Peking in January, 1902, it might have been expected that some reward would be given to Sai in recompense for her services, which, as regards both the Emperor and the Dowager, had been of the greatest value. But now the trouble was over, it was felt in high places that dependence on such a one had been degrading and had better be forgotten. So once more she had to start life afresh, and there was only one profession open to her. It was a great descent from her prestige of a few months earlier when she had lived in the Forbidden City and had ridden proudly through the streets at Waldersee's side, but she bore the change with equanimity and whereas only two years previously she had felt it beneath her dignity to set up business in the gay quarter of the Chinese City, she now recognized that she must be content to live in the

same manner as her colleagues and set about to find rooms in the part of the town assigned to those like herself. Fortunately she had profited by her association with Waldersee to become moderately rich, and she was able to find the money to rent very good premises in the notorious Shensi Lane. Before deciding to take the place she consulted one of the best known geomancers in Peking, an acknowledged expert in all that appertained to the lucky or unlucky qualities of houses, and he pointed out, as soon as he had set eyes on the building, that it was roughly in the shape of a tortoise—in China the symbol of panders—and was accordingly an ideal establishment for her purpose. This seemed reasonable enough, and she agreed to take a lease without more ado. Most of her old troupe whom she had left behind at Tungchow had by now been dispersed but she had no difficulty in finding girls to take their place, and before long, with Sun San in the background to give her moral support when necessary, she was doing a thriving business. The years passed quickly and the house seemed to answer in every way to the geomancer's predictions. However, in spite of all his science, there was some evil influence lurking in the background, too obscure at the time for him to detect, but at last asserting itself with such malignity that it brought Sai to utter ruin.

Towards the end of 1907 a certain middleman, who trafficked in such wares, told her that a poor family in the country had a very pretty daughter, whom they were thinking of selling into service to a teahouse or the like, and inquired whether Sai would be interested in buying the girl for herself. As it happened the establishment was rather in need of a new face, but Sai did not allow herself to appear overeager and merely asked about the girl's looks, and when

the broker, in the manner of his kind, began to go into rhapsodies, told him to stop talking nonsense.

"I'm willing to have a look at her," she said, "but I may as well tell you that unless she is something really out of the ordinary you're wasting your own time as well as mine."

The man was quite satisfied, and took his leave in the best of humor, to return soon afterwards with the girl of whom he had been speaking. By her appearance she was, as he had said, fresh from the country, in the poorest of clothes and with her hair arranged in the rustic style, but Sai noticed other points of more importance, the fine white skin, the oval face, the small mouth, the high nose and the expressive eyes. There was no doubt at all that she could be transformed into a most valuable addition to the troupe, and Sai made up her mind to have her. First of all, of course, there was the ritual of bargaining to be gone through, but at last it was agreed that the price should be one thousand dollars plus two hundred dollars for the middleman. The transaction was completed without delay, and the vendors signed a deed of sale to certify that they irrevocably transferred to Sai all their rights in the girl.

The affair had been contrived so skillfully that Sai had not the slightest suspicion that she had been duped. But, as the truth must be told, the girl, far from coming directly out of a poor but respectable family, as Sai believed, had been working for a considerable time in a low teahouse, where she was called Little Wu. One of the customers had taken a great fancy to her, and finding that his affection was returned offered to buy her for eight hundred dollars. The madame of the place insisted that she would not take less than a thousand, and at last the customer was so enraged at her obstinacy that he was ill-advised enough to go around

telling his friends that if he was thwarted much longer he would get Little Wu to run away with him without paying anything. He was the sort of man who would not think twice about doing such a thing, and when his threat was reported to the madame she decided to take the first opportunity of getting the girl off her hands before it was too late.

Naturally the deception could not be hidden forever, but when Sai discovered the truth there was nothing she could do. In any case, she had become the owner of a very pretty girl who she was fairly confident would soon earn for her more than the price she had paid. It seemed desirable that the newcomer should have a fresh start to her career, and as a first step to this end Sai changed her name from Little Wu to Phoenix Bell, and then set her to work.

Now, on the quiet, Phoenix Bell was very much addicted to opium, and of course in such a profession she easily found the means of satisfying her craving. Whenever a guest came to a girl's room, opium of the finest quality was available on call without restriction as to amount, and Phoenix Bell took advantage of this facility to draw a ration for every customer, although in many cases the man did not require it. For a time nobody paid much attention but at last visitors started to complain that the girl was more eager to settle down with the opium pipe than to wait upon them properly, and they stopped engaging her services. This was too much for Sai to endure. It was bad enough that she had spent twelve hundred dollars to buy Phoenix Bell under false pretenses, but that the girl should turn out to be good for nothing but smoking opium at Sai's expense was adding insult to injury. Sai had always found it hard to keep her feelings under control, and now, faced with this situation, hardly a day passed without her flying into a rage and

cursing and beating Phoenix Bell unmercifully, until the wretched girl, between the disappointment of being taken away from her lover and the misery of her present surroundings, made up her mind to put an end to her life. So one day, while Sai and the others were too busy entertaining at a party which a customer was giving to his friends to pay attention to what she was doing, she mixed a stiff dose of raw opium in some rice wine and having drunk it lay down on her bed. It was not until late in the night after the guests had left, that Sai called to mind that she had not seen Phoenix Bell all afternoon, and she told one of the other girls to go and find out what she was doing. The girl went to Phoenix Bell's room and found her lying on the bed fully dressed, with such flushed cheeks and protruding eyes that it was plain at once that something was wrong. She was conscious, however, and when she saw her companion enter the room her eyes filled with tears but when questioned she only shook her head without saying a word. The other girl saw there was nothing for it but to tell Sai, and as soon as the latter had seen Phoenix Bell's condition she knew she must have taken poison of some kind, and very likely, from the symptoms, raw opium. The only chance of saving her was to give her an emetic, and without delay she was forced to swallow a large quantity of soapy water which induced her to vomit. But thanks to the action of the wine, the effect of the drug had already been transmitted to the vital organs too powerfully for any remedies to be of avail, and at noon the following day poor Phoenix Bell died.

Of course the death had to be reported to the authorities and Sai sent a message to the police office of the quarter requesting that someone should be sent to inspect the body and certify the decease. She had no reason to expect any

particular trouble in the matter. However, the hangers-on, who infest all such establishments in the hope of odd jobs, had already spread sinister rumors about the death and the quarter was alive with stories, some of which came to the ears of the madame of the teahouse where Phoenix Bell, or Little Wu as she then was, had been employed. This woman's one desire was that she herself shouldn't incur any blame in the affair, so she went to the police and stated that a girl whom sometime ago she had sold to Sai-chin-hua in good health and condition had died mysteriously in Sai's house. By this time the police were half convinced that there was something wrong, and they sent an expert to conduct a strict investigation. This man reported that there was no doubt that death was due to poisoning and in these circumstances the police had no alternative but to take Sai into custody. She went readily enough to the local police office as she fully expected that after a few inquiries she would be at liberty to return home but to her dismay she was told that she was to be taken for questioning to the Board of Punishment. This was indeed ominous news, the more so because the official in charge of the Board, a man named Sun, was a close friend of the Hung family and had always resented her mode of life, in particular her liaison with Waldersee, as an insult to the memory of his old colleague. Sai was well aware of his enmity but so far she had given him no opportunity of satisfying it. Now, however, she was to be delivered into his hands.

When she arrived at the Board of Punishment, it happened that Mr. Sun had gone with the Court to the Summer Palace and in his absence his subordinates did not care to assume the responsibility of a case of possible homicide. So pending his return, it was decided that Sai should be

committed to the prison attached to the Board. As a rule in such circumstances prisoners were put into fetters, but as Sai was known to some of the officials they made an exception in her favor, and she suffered nothing worse than simple confinement. She was allowed to send out freely to buy whatever she wanted, and the warders were soon at her beck and call. Indeed their indulgence went so far as to allow her to enjoy the use of opium. But in spite of such privileged treatment, she was now greatly concerned at her position and looked forward with dismay to Mr. Sun's return to the office.

The news of her imprisonment had created an enormous sensation in Peking, where as a subject of conversation it completely vanquished such topics as the arrest of various anti-Manchu revolutionaries which had taken place about the same time. The general feeling was that she was in too serious a scrape for her friends to protect her, and that when the case got under way certain of her associates would find themselves involved. The man who listened to these stories with the greatest uneasiness was of course Sun San. He had come to depend on Sai for his living and thanks to her influential connections he had looked forward to a comfortable future for them both. Now, however, something had clearly gone wrong. If Sai's friends had proved unable to save her from being imprisoned, what protection could he expect for himself when, as seemed likely, the attention of the police should be directed towards him? The Chinese saying has it that of the thirty-six different methods of avoiding disaster the best is to run away from it, and the sound sense of this adage had never appealed to Sun San with greater force than it did now. So very discreetly he packed whatever articles of value were ready to hand, and

without a word to anybody slipped away to Dairen in Manchuria, leaving the troupe to fend for itself. The girls were not slow to follow his example, and then last of all the amahs and coolies took their turn at plundering the house before disappearing from the scene. By then, only a few sticks of furniture remained of all the elaborate trappings, and the desolation of the place was enough to depress anyone who saw it.

Meanwhile Sai had found as her companion in prison a woman already known to her by name. This was a strange being called the Little Terror whose fierce temper and bodily strength made her the dread of the Peking underworld, where she lived by plundering the various gangsters and ruffians of all kinds who infested the place, but who were too much in awe of Little Terror to defend themselves against her depredations. She seemed to delight in setting all conventions at defiance and one of her favorite amusements was to force her way into male bathhouses, take off every stitch of clothing and in this state of nudity enter the common bathing pool. All the men would run away in alarm leaving the place at her disposal, and she would take her time and enjoy a luxurious bath. Nor, when she left, would she ever think of observing the formality of paying.

Little Terror was still only a young woman and, what was remarkable in that society, she retained her chastity with the utmost strictness. She lived at home with her mother, stepfather and two elder sisters. It was a vicious household and both her sisters had been debauched by their stepfather. Then their mother fell ill and went to stay with her own family, and the stepfather one night, thinking he would make free with Little Terror, went and scratched at the door of her room. Little Terror suddenly threw open

the door and gave him a kick in the private parts with such violence that the wretched man collapsed and died. Seeing what had happened she went herself to the Board of Punishment and made a full confession, in consequence of which the authorities took her into custody while they made up their minds what should be done in her case. It was in this way she came to be in the prison at the same time as Sai-chin-hua, and strangely enough the two women took an immediate liking to each other. Sai invited Little Terror to share her opium and the pair of them spent hours every day chatting over a friendly pipe. With such a companion, Sai found her incarceration passing quite agreeably, and it did not seem very long before Mr. Sun was back from the Summer Palace and free to handle her case.

Sai answered all questions truthfully enough and at length even Mr. Sun had to admit there was little prospect that he could establish her responsibility for the death of the girl. So he made up his mind that the most effective way for him to hurt her was to order she should be sent back to her native place, namely Soochow, so that all the facts in her case should be examined by the District Court.

Before leaving Peking she was permitted to make a visit to her house, in company with a magistrate's runner, and when she saw the changes that had occurred in her absence, and the bare rooms that awaited her she nearly collapsed with the shock. However she pulled herself together, and going into what had been her private room she examined one of the walls and from a secret hiding place where it had been concealed she drew out a box of jewelry. This, which amounted in value to several thousand dollars, was all that was left of the savings of half a lifetime. Her chief emotion was one of anger against those who had robbed her and of

frustration at the fact that she was not at liberty to seek revenge.

On the journey back to Soochow, although she was technically a prisoner, the constable who was in charge of her treated her with the greatest consideration and was far more of a companion than a jailer. From Peking they went by mule cart to Tientsin, then by sea to Shanghai and finally by river steamer to Soochow. Of course, in spite of the man's kindness, she was reminded at every step of the old days twenty years before when she and Hung had travelled so proudly together from Peking to begin their journey to Europe. No wonder that in spite of all her attempts at self-control she broke down more than once at the thought of her present shameful position. When they arrived at their destination, the constable delivered Sai to the custody of the magistrate together with the documents in the case, and then the good-natured fellow said good-bye to his prisoner and returned to Peking.

Fortunately she was not confined in jail for very long, as the special nature of the case made the magistrate anxious to deal with it without more delay than was necessary. However, everybody in the district had heard of the circumstances in which their famous townswoman had come back among them once more, and when the day for the hearing was fixed—namely August 3, 1908—the excitement was intense and it was agreed it was an occasion that occurred only once in a century and was therefore on no account to be missed. On the morning itself, the crowd outside the court was enormous, and the authorities were so alarmed by the multitude that they took the strictest precautions to ensure that no person whose presence was not essential to the case should be allowed into the building. But no efforts

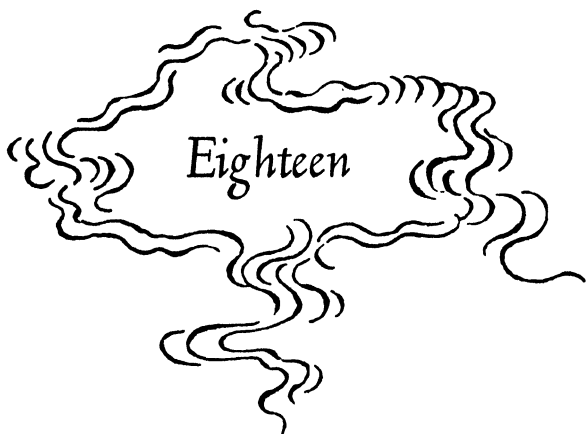
could succeed in dispersing the crowd in the street, who were determined that if they could not watch what was passing in court they would at least catch a glimpse of the accused.

It was getting on toward noon, when a great roar announced the arrival of Sai-chin-hua accompanied by a wardress and escorted by a party of magistrates' runners. For a minute or two people jostled each other for a look at her, and she showed great distress at the gloating curiosity of which she was the object. Then she was hustled through the gateway, and shortly afterwards with much banging of gongs the magistrates of two neighboring districts, who were to assist their brother of Soochow in his deliberations, arrived in their sedan chairs. For a little while the three learned gentlemen chatted together in private, and then, with much important shouting for silence by their subordinates, they took their places at the official table and Sai was ordered to kneel before them.

A few months earlier, local officials such as they would scarcely have had the effrontery to compete with their betters for the favors of Sai and her troupe, but now she was obliged to submit meekly to their questions. These, however, were by no means so inquisitorial as she had expected. First came the routine interrogation to establish her identity, that is to say by questions about her name, age, place of origin, and so on. Only when all this had been properly taken down did the court turn to the charge against her, and the hearing amounted to little more than a recapitulation of what had been said already before Mr. Sun in Peking. She was allowed to make a full statement in her own words of what had taken place. After that a certain number of questions was asked, all of which she was able to answer without embarrassment and with an appearance

of truth. Finally, when a couple of hours had been taken up by these proceedings, the court adjourned and the magistrates drew up their report for Peking, while Sai, pending the outcome, was taken back to jail.

To anybody familiar with the normal workings of a Chinese court, it would have been quite plain that extraordinary leniency was being shown in this case. And the reason was not very hard to guess. Sai's friends had been taken off their guard by the suddenness of what had happened, and by the awkward persistence of Mr. Sun. But in due course they had started to pull the necessary strings, and by this time the magistrate of Soochow and his two colleagues had been made to see that it was in their own interest to deal very lightly with the prisoner. As for Mr. Sun, he had at least succeeded in having Sai expelled from Peking in disgrace, and he told himself that he could not fairly be expected to do more for the vindication of his friend's honor. All that remained was that an appearance should be given of having investigated the charge impartially, and this the magistrates proceeded to do in their report. Without positively clearing Sai of all suspicion, they gave it as their opinion that there was not enough proof to establish that she had provoked Phoenix Bell into taking her own life, but that no doubt her treatment of the girl was not without some blame. These findings were about as vague as it was possible for them to be, and when they were received in Peking, Sai's protectors were able to make representations that in the circumstances she had been sufficiently punished for any way in which she might have misbehaved and that the fairest thing to do in all the circumstances was to release her from custody forthwith. This was accordingly done and the case was considered at an end.



AFTER SHE HAD BEEN SET AT LIBERTY, Sai realized that it would be impossible for her to stay in Soochow, and as for Peking and the north the prospects were hardly more encouraging. Shanghai alone seemed to offer a place of refuge, and she and her mother made their way there without delay. This time they took a house in Hankow Road in the International Settlement, but made no attempt to form a troupe of girls. Instead, they maintained all the appearance of a private house, and merely put at their door a simple name plate reading "Residence of the Sai family from Peking." Naturally, this was in itself a sufficient indication for anyone in the know, and callers with wealth or position to recommend them found nothing to complain of in their reception. Sai, however, was determined to keep her activities as discreet as possible. She did not pay tax or have her establishment registered, and she made it a rule

never to accept invitations to entertain at parties. In this way she hoped that she might avoid the trouble that until then had dogged her steps so persistently. Yet when all was said and done, her circumstances were of a kind to make her think with concern about the future. She was now nearly thirty-five, and if she wanted to settle down she had not very much time left to do so. Before long, she found herself looking around very seriously among her circle of acquaintances in the hope of finding some man who would take her as a permanent companion.

Her choice fell at last on a person of rather different type from what might have been expected. He was a man named Huang, who came from near Shanghai and who held a position in the offices of the Shanghai-Nanking Railway, which had been opened in 1908. His salary was quite modest, but as he had no wife or dependents to support he managed to live fairly comfortably. He was taken to Sai's place from time to time by some friends to play mahjong and from the first he had made no attempt to conceal his admiration for the hostess. Sai on her part was very much attracted by his friendly and warm-hearted ways, and having made inquiries about his circumstances, she one day very frankly told him what was in her mind. Of course he was extremely flattered by the suggestion, but his first reaction was that it was out of the question to expect a woman like Sai, who had become accustomed to a free-and-easy life, to settle down happily on such a limited income as his. At last, however, his hesitation was overcome by her persistence and he agreed to take her as his wife. The marriage took place towards the end of 1909, and of course Sai gave up all her professional activities and devoted herself entirely to her new role as housewife. For a couple of years their life was as

tranquil and happy as anyone could have wished. It is true that Sai found she had to watch the household accounts more carefully than she was accustomed, but for the first time for many years she enjoyed a feeling of security, and could look forward to growing old without dread of loneliness. It seemed a modest ambition enough, and both she and her husband were so much withdrawn from public affairs that they felt they had little to fear from whatever political changes might come to pass.

That changes of some sort were approaching was clear to almost everybody. In 1908, both the Emperor Kuang Hsü and the Empress Dowager had died, and the new Emperor of China was a child named P'u Yi. Throughout the country the feeling against the Manchu rulers was intense, and the party of revolution was active everywhere. The Court tried a policy of repression which proved to be beyond its powers. Fifty years earlier, the Dynasty had been rescued from the Taipings by the support of loyal Chinese but there were no longer any of these to rely on. Then in October 1911 came a full-scale rising in Central China, and in despair the Manchus turned to the one man they thought capable of being their saviour. This was Yuan Shih-k'ai, who was given command of the Northern Army. But Yuan was no fool and had no inclination to sacrifice his career in any quixotic gesture of loyalty to the ruling house. At first he alleged illness as an excuse for doing nothing, and when at length he did move his troops to the south, it was to take the first opportunity of suspending hostilities and negotiating with the rebels, while he exerted pressure on the Court to agree to the young Emperor's abdication. As a result, a Republic was proclaimed on New Year's Day, 1912,

and after 267 years of alien government, China was once again ruled by Chinese.

The consequences of this change made themselves felt in many unexpected ways. There was all at once a great reshuffle of personnel in government departments and the like, and most unjustly, poor harmless Mr. Huang found that his services were no longer required by the railway company. He had depended entirely on this post for his living, and now, in the Chinese phrase, his rice bowl was lying smashed in pieces before his face. His grief and despair at the news were terrible to see, and then he collapsed utterly and took to his bed. Nothing could be done for him; he had simply lost all wish to live; and in a matter of weeks he was dead.

Sai-chin-hua was now in her thirty-eighth year, which in China at that time meant she was well advanced into middle age. She had nothing to live on but her savings, and these, as she foresaw, would be soon gone unless she had some other source of income. So once more the sign of the Sai family from Peking went up at her door. However, her old admirers had by now mostly retired from the scene, and those of them who still happened to be left in Shanghai had lost touch with her during her marriage. In any case, men in China, even more than elsewhere, love youth in a woman, and for all her skill at make-up she could not hide her age successfully enough to make many people anxious to spend money for the sake of her company. A few old friends, when they heard what she was doing, came round occasionally, more out of a sense of loyalty than for any other reason, but the contrast with former days was so striking that even Sai, who was never one to abandon hope

easily, began to lose faith in herself. To make things worse, she was well aware her plight had excited ridicule among her rivals and that at many of the gay parties, in resorts where years ago she outshone all competition but to which she was no longer invited, the guests were laughing over their cups at the stories that were being told about her. Yet, in any event, these ill-natured jokes had the effect of arousing sympathy in one man's heart.

In the political confusion of that time, Shanghai with its foreign concessions became more than ever a place of refuge for disgruntled politicians and men of letters who were beginning to understand that all their hopes of reform and progress were being frustrated by the forces of reaction headed by Yuan Shih-k'ai. These people were of every conceivable type, but they all had one failing in common. They were without exception very partial to feminine society and their favorite meeting place was the houses of the singing girls. Indeed the gay world of Shanghai was more flourishing then it had been for years and the intrigues and adventures of which it was the scene would take far too long to discuss here.

One of these political refugees was a man named Hsü Kuang-pi. He came from the inland province of Kiangsi and according to the stories that were circulated about him he had taken part in a conspiracy against Yuan shih-k'ai of which the provincial authorities got wind, and learning they were on the point of being arrested he and his associates had escaped to Shanghai to wait for a more favorable opportunity. Meanwhile, in the intervals of plotting, he consoled himself with a young lady called Phoenix Pavilion, who was not so successful in her profession that she could afford to reject the advances of a man of such prestige as

Mr. Hsü, in spite of his setback, undoubtedly was. Among his closest friends was a certain Wei Ssu-ling, who had been head of the Bureau of Civil Affairs in the Kiangsi Provincial Government, a post from which he had been obliged to resign when it came out he had had some knowledge of Hsü's conspiracy. Mr. Wei also very naturally came to Shanghai, and when Hsü heard of his friend's arrival he would not be satisfied until he had given a party in his honor. The place of this celebration was of course Phoenix Pavilion's house, and all the guests were Kiangsi people and old comrades, so that there was a total absence of formality. Everybody sent out for his best girl, everybody, that is to say, except the guest of honor, whose first visit to Shanghai this was and who accordingly was as yet without any acquaintances in the demimonde. But he had no intention of being left out of the fun, and he asked Hsü to introduce a companion.

"Well now," said Hsü. "It won't do to get just anybody for a fellow like you. You've got your future to think of. I'll tell you what! If you fancy going in for the diplomatic service, I can introduce the very woman for you."

Apparently the idea amused him, for he laughed so much that Wei could get no sense out of him, and he turned to Phoenix Pavilion who was pouring out the wine.

"Perhaps you know what Hsü is talking about?" he said. "I suppose I'm dense, but I can't understand the joke."

"Oh, he's just teasing you," laughed the girl. And she told him about Sai-chin-hua and of the way she was trying to earn her living again. Of course Wei knew Sai by name, and he listened to the story with interest.

"So that's why you're laughing," he said. "Let me tell you that she may be no chicken but I'm sure that there is more in her than in the lot of you put together. I think it's a

splendid idea." And he took a brush and began to write one of the slips used for summoning singing girls.

"No, no!" said Hsü. "It's no use doing that. She just lets people call on her, but she has a rule never to go out. If you're serious I'll take you round to her place on our way home."

With this, he himself wrote a slip inviting a girl called Peony Boat, or some such name, to come and keep Wei company, and in a few minutes the party was in full swing. It was well after eleven o'clock before they all took their leave, but in spite of the lateness of the hour, Wei was so insistent on being taken to Sai's place that Hsü had no alternative but to keep his word.

Sai was on her own when they arrived at the house, and although obviously very much taken by surprise, went out of her way to be charming to the pair of them, and especially to Wei, who she soon discovered was the instigator of the visit. But it was plain to anyone that her circumstances were as forlorn as they could well be, and Wei, who had a strong element of sentimentality in his character, began to think, as he sat watching her, of her extraordinary career and to compare the way she had come down in the world with his own failure as a politician. Sai sensed his sympathy, and opened her heart to him as she had not done to anybody since her poor railwayman had died.

From that time on, whenever Wei desired a change from the eternal round of mahjong and drinking in the company of Hsü and the others, he would go to call on Sai in whose house he was soon thoroughly at home. Naturally he had made use of his position in the Kiangsi provincial government to acquire a comfortable fortune, and he was not one to treat a woman shabbily. So the connection made a great

improvement in Sai's circumstances, and what was perhaps even more acceptable to her self-esteem, she began to feel she was re-entering a world from which she had been excluded. For Hsü and the rest, who had at first taken Wei's interest in her as a joke, had now come to realize that the pair of them were well suited for each other, and were doing their best to further the affair by their encouragement, and by letting it be known that they liked nothing better than a dinner party at Sai's place. In this way it came to pass before long that carriages were seen once more outside her door in the evening.

But Wei was after all a politician, and, attached as he had become to Shanghai, he was none the less chafing for an opportunity to emerge from his retirement and go back into public life. Outside in the world great events were taking place. The European War broke out in 1914, but China was so harassed by her own problem that at first all she could do was to maintain an impotent neutrality and await the outcome of the struggle. In domestic affairs the ambitions of Yuan Shih-k'ai dominated the scene. Owing his position as President to the revolution, he had turned savagely on those who maintained their republican ideals and was preparing a throne for himself by attempting to crush all opposition. But in spite of the assassination of several of their leaders, the republican parties closed their ranks to resist the threat of a new dynasty, and nobody was more active among the anti-Yuan forces than Mr. Wei. Most of the time he was absent on missions in various parts of the country, but when he was in Shanghai he lived openly at Sai's house and did not try to conceal the relationship between them, a relationship which became all the closer as the time left for them to enjoy each other's company was

so unpredictable. Now and then, indeed, the idea came to Sai's mind that perhaps it was not entirely out of the question for her and Wei to settle down permanently, but the thought of her age prevented her from hinting at any such possibility. If she had only known, the same notion had occurred to Wei, but in his case he was so heavily committed to his political activity that he felt he could not at such a time undertake any more responsibilities. So the two of them continued together, happily enough, and waited to see what the future had in store.

At length, at the end of 1915, matters came to a head. Yuan Shih-k'ai proclaimed his intention to ascend the throne in the New Year, but, wily though he was, he soon discovered that he had sadly underrated the strength of his opponents. The southwest rose in arms against the usurper, the movement swept through the whole country, and after only eighty days, the would-be Emperor was hurled from power, to die of fury and resentment a few months later.

With Yuan's disappearance from the scene, a new era seemed to have arrived. His opponents, so long in obscurity, came out to enjoy their reward. All kinds of posts, civil and military, were there to be taken by those who could claim to deserve them, and Mr. Wei found himself elected a member of the National Assembly. Of course he was very glad to be back once more in official life, and above all to have a regular appointment which relieved him from the necessity of wandering at large over the country as he had been doing for the last year or two. However, Peking, where he would now have to live, was much too far from Shanghai for him to be able to visit Sai regularly, and for this reason, after he had gone up to the capital to acquaint himself with the state of affairs, he wrote to her to suggest that she should

give up her house in Shanghai and come to join him in the north. Sai replied by return that nothing would suit her better, whereupon Wei, in high spirits that things were going so smoothly, took time off from his official duties to come down to Shanghai to escort her and her mother on their way. Their journey, however, was much easier than it had been in the past, thanks to the construction of railways, and the three of them went to Nanking by train, crossed the Yangtse by ferryboat, and then traveled the rest of the distance by train once more.

In this way, Sai came back to Peking after an absence of nearly ten years, and although her fortunes had now changed so unexpectedly for the better, the sight of the familiar streets and buildings brought back sad memories of the old days and reminded her that not many years remained for the enjoyment of her new-found happiness. But such gloomy forebodings were soon dispelled when she learned of the arrangements that had been made for her comfort. The moment it had been confirmed she was to come to Peking, Wei had taken a fine house in Cherry Street, and had furnished it so lavishly that even a more exacting woman than Sai would have had nothing but good to say of it.

The President of China, not content with trying to put the internal situation in order, had taken the unexpected step in 1917 of bringing the country into the war on the side of the Allies. He had been induced to do this by his advisers who assured him that now the United States had joined in the struggle the defeat of Germany was only a matter of time and that it was imperative China should be represented on the winning side at the Peace Conference. However, reasonable as this attitude was, it excited a good

deal of opposition throughout the country, and the common people of Peking, especially, were filled with alarm to hear that the terrible Germans were their enemies once more. What if things went wrong, they asked, and Germany after all got the better of the Allies? Where would China be then? And they told one another stories of the horrors of the Boxer days and of what they had suffered under the Germans, and wondered, if they had to live through such times again, whether another Sai-chin-hua would come forward to intercede for them. If the truth must be told, Sai herself was not without some forebodings regarding the outcome of the war, but the interest of her new life did not allow her much time to worry over such things.

At the beginning of 1918, Wei had occasion to pay a visit of two or three months to Shanghai, and he took Sai with him for company. He was now quite a personality and a good deal of his time was spent in receiving visits from people who had stayed aloof from him in former days but were now anxious to curry favor with him. As a welcome change from such society, he was glad to find Hsü Kuang-pi and some others of his old friends were still living in Shanghai, and in their company he was able to get some needed hours of relaxation. Almost the first thing Hsü asked him on meeting was whether Sai was with him, and on being told that she was he said he was very glad to hear it.

"I've often wondered how the two of you have been going on," he said. "One thing rather intrigues me: how do you pass off your relationship in Peking?"

"I can't say I have ever given the question much thought," replied Wei. "But I am sure you have some advice to offer me."

"I'm not joking," said Hsü. "Surely you can see for your-

self that it will do you no good to get the reputation of living openly with a mistress. I can't understand why you don't make her position respectable."

"What, a red sedan chair and all the rest of it at our age?" laughed Hsü. "Have some common sense!"

"Who is talking about red sedan chairs?" said Hsü. "There would be nothing out of place in a modern European-style wedding, and in my opinion it would be the most sensible thing you could do."

At the time, Hsü was obviously speaking in jest, and Wei did not take the matter seriously, but not long afterwards rumors started to go around among their friends that Wei and Sai were going to marry. These stories, which were all traceable to Hsü's gossip, were accepted without question, and people began to offer Wei their felicitations and to inquire when the event was to take place. Of course Wei denied that he was contemplating such a step, but he could see that his denials were not believed. This was bad enough among friends, but in due course the report came to the ears of the political hangers-on who were dogging Wei's footsteps in the hope of gaining a little advancement for themselves, and these latter lost no time in trying to ingratiate themselves by sending him wedding presents. When things had gone so far, Wei felt obliged to reveal the situation to Sai, and ask her advice. Whatever they said to each other during that talk, the result was that at the end of it they had decided to marry. It was in this way that Sai-chin-hua's most cherished hope was fulfilled.

When his mind was made up, Wei called on Hsü and told him that since his machinations had succeeded it was only fair that he should have the trouble of looking after the arrangements. The task was perfectly suited to a busy-

body like Hsü, and in no time at all a day was fixed for the ceremony—June 20, 1918—and cards were sent out accordingly. Hsü insisted that in token of her changed life the name of Sai-chin-hua must not appear on any of the documents or notices, and that the bride must use her original family name of Chao together with an entirely new personal name, for which he suggested “Ling-fei,” or “Spirit-flight” would be very proper. The idea that he should be marrying a Miss Chao Ling-fei tickled Wei’s fancy, and he made no objection to the proposal, which was in any case no more than a matter of form.

The wedding took place in a hotel called the New Shanghai, and various of Wei’s friends assumed responsibility for the proceedings by acting as witnesses or ushers. On the day, the hall of the hotel was festooned with scrolls of felicitation and Wei attended in good time to receive the guests. Then, about three in the afternoon the noise of a brass band was heard approaching along the street, and this was the signal to the company that the bride’s carriage was at hand.

Sai-chin-hua entered the hall to a burst of applause, and she and Wei took their places at the direction of the Master of Ceremonies. It was more than thirty years since as a young girl she had gone to Hung’s house, and the difference between the two occasions was so great that instead of listening to the words of the ceremony her mind wandered back to that day so long ago when she had ridden in the big sedan chair with its green velvet upholstery, and men carrying silken lanterns had escorted her through the streets of Soochow. She was half smiling to herself when she realized with a start that the Master of Ceremonies was telling her and Wei to bow to each other and to the company. The

formalities were simple enough, but the occasion was not complete without a speech from Hsü, who was in his most comical vein, and it was nearly five o'clock before all was over.

The nuptial pair were led by the ushers to a room appointed as the bridal chamber, and then after a short rest, Wei went down to join his guests at a banquet that had been laid in the dining room. But the company insisted that Sai-chin-hua herself must come and preside over the wine cups, and in such an atmosphere any trace of formality which might have remained from the afternoon's ceremony quickly disappeared. As the evening wore on, the guests sent out for singing girls to assist the conviviality, and it was after one o'clock before the party dispersed. Having by this time had more than enough of the hotel, Wei and Sai did not make use of the bridal chamber but returned the same night to their lodgings.

Such were the circumstances of this strange marriage—strange because at the time it took place, as Sai-chin-hua was well aware, Wei had already a regular wife, not to speak of a concubine, in his old home in Kiangsi Province, and in spite of all the ceremonial Sai's standing in the Wei family was no more than that of an additional concubine. But she put all this out of her mind, and said to herself that she was now settled for life as a respectable married woman.

Wei's business in the south detained him longer than he had expected and it was not until the spring of 1919 that he and Sai returned to Peking. By that time the war had ended and China, as one of the Allies, had the satisfaction of being represented at the Versailles Peace Conference. In these circumstances both the government and the pub-

lic generally felt that the continued existence of the archway commemorating the murder of Baron von Ketteler by the Boxers was an unnecessary affront to Chinese self-respect, and it was resolved that it should be taken down. As a fitting revenge, it was re-erected in the Peking Central Park, and in place of the old humiliating inscription a tablet was affixed to it in celebration of the defeat of Germany. Everybody agreed that something important had been achieved by this act, and the President decided that the occasion should be marked by suitable pomp. All people of note in the capital were asked to attend the unveiling of the monument in its new home, and the President personally intervened to make sure that Sai-chin-hua received a card of invitation. Her history was well known, and throughout the ceremony all eyes were upon her. But even the most hostile critic had to admit that there was nothing in her manner to remind one of her disreputable past. On the contrary she was very quiet yet perfectly at ease and she bowed to those she wished to greet with the courtesy of a great lady. The big surprise was at the end, when the President asked her to come on to the platform and say a few words. She showed a proper modesty before she accepted the invitation, but at last she allowed herself to be persuaded and the assembled guests listened with rapt attention as she described her meeting with the Baron's widow and with what difficulty she had placated the German woman's demand for revenge. Yet after all, she said, the monument was a reminder of China's humiliation, and she had never brought herself to think of it without shame. Today, when she was witnessing its conversion into a trophy of national victory, was the happiest occasion of her life, and she hoped that from now on all such relics of China's

misfortunes would be given a similar metamorphosis. When she had done, the audience applauded warmly as she left the platform.

That day was the supreme moment of Sai-chin-hua's career, and it might have been better for her if she had not long survived it. A year or two more of quiet domesticity were all that remained to her before Wei's death which occurred unexpectedly in 1922. When he was gone, the resentment of his legitimate wife and family, kept under control during his lifetime, turned against Sai with such violence, that even at the funeral she was not spared from insulting references to her past, and, no longer having the heart to fight her enemies, it was with relief that when all was over she took her mother and a faithful maidservant and retired into obscurity. Throughout her life she had never been one to save money, and her circumstances were not prosperous. For this reason, she moved into a wretched house in the most sordid quarter of Peking, not far from the Bridge of Heaven, where the poorest jugglers and mountebanks try to eke out a living by competing with the public execution ground nearby in offering entertainment to the riffraff of the city. Against such a background, not inappropriately, we take our leave of her.

