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WHEN I WAS A BOY IN CHINA

YAN PHOU LEE

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BY
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BY
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WHEN I WAS A BOY IN CHINA

CHAPTER I

INFANCY

On a certain day in the year 1861, I was born. I cannot give you the exact date, because the Chinese year is different from the English year, and our months being lunar, that is, reckoned by the revolution of the moon around the earth, are consequently shorter than yours. We reckon time from the accessions of Emperors, and also by cycles of sixty years each. The year of my birth, 1861, was the first year of the Emperor Tung-che. We have twelve months ordinarily; and we say, instead of "January, February," etc., "Regular Moon, Second Moon, Third Moon," etc. Each third year is a leap year, and has an extra month so as to make each of the lunar years equal to a solar year. Accordingly, taking the English calendar as a standard, our New Year's Day varies. Therefore, although I am sure that I was born on the twenty-first day or the Second Moon in Chinese, I don't know my exact birthday in English; and consequently, living in America as I have for many years, I have been cheated of my birthday celebration.

Being born a boy, there was a deal of rejoicing in the family, and among numerous relatives. If I had happened to be a girl, it would have been very different; the reason for which I will tell in a chapter on "Girls of my Acquaintance." My aged grandfather smiled with satisfaction when the news reached him in Fungshun, three hundred miles away to the East, where he was holding office as Literary Sub-Chancellor. Congratulations poured in the shape of presents of rich cloths, jewelry and pigs' feet. These gifts came a month after my birth, which day is always celebrated as a christening-day is in England. On that day, which we call the "Completion of the Moon," my name was given to me. I started with the surname "Lee" which my family and clan possess in common; and to that "Yan Phou," which signifies "Wealth by Imperial Favor," was added—Lee Yan Phou. But I now arrange my name in accordance with American custom.

The names given on those occasions are not like your "Jack," "Harry," or "Dick," but are usually words chosen "from the dictionary" for their lucky import, or because they are supposed to possess the power of warding off evil influences in the child's horoscope. You should know that in China a baby's fortune is told almost as soon as he is born, the events of his life being foretold with surprising particularity.

In order to ward off malignant influences from the future of their child, rich people often spend great sums of money. To some deities, especially to the God of Longevity, vows are made, and promises of presents annually, if the god will protect baby and bring him through certain crises in his life; and thus, willing or unwilling, the idol is supposed bound to be the child's tutelary guardian. Also blind fortune-tellers are paid to intercede for the infant with their particular idol. If you were living in China, you would notice the strings of amulets which youngsters wear. They are sometimes made of gold and silver; but often these necklaces are composed of mere scraps of paper with talismanic characters penned by priests; they are supposed to be efficacious in scaring away evil spirits. The priests, fortune-tellers, lessees of temples, clairvoyants, and astrologers drive a flourishing trade in these mysterious wares. For these charms, and the friendliness of the idols being a matter of life or death, of future happiness or misery to the beloved child, of course the poor are just as eager to spend money in this way as the rich, and through baby's life they continue to pay annual installments of money for these things.

On my christening-day friends came to see me and to congratulate me family, and a feast was made in my honor. When the guests departed they carried each a slice of roast pork as a return-gift. Roast pig is the national festal dish in China, as you will learn. No occasion is complete without it, whether it be a religious festival, the worship of ancestors, a wedding, or a birthday celebration. One feature of my christening feast was that my mother was permitted to have all she wanted of pigs' feet and ginger pickled together. It is believed that baby's food will be more abundant if the mother eat plentifully of this delicacy.

From what I have since observed I suppose that as it was the winter season I was wrapped in "swaddling clothes;" and I think the layers of garments would have caused the death of any ordinary American baby. First came much underwear of cotton cloth; then a jacket; then another jacket; then a gown padded with cotton; then still another quilted coat of bright calico; and over all a bib. I wore a cap too, but no shoes until I was able to walk. My hair was shaved off except a small tuft, which was the beginning, the embryo, you may say, of the queue of the future.

Speaking of the winter season: The climate in the city of my nativity is like that of Canton which lies seventy-five miles to the north. Although no snow falls, and although ice is an unknown quantity there, yet the weather is sufficiently chilly to make a fire desirable. But Chinese houses, strangely enough I now think, are built for summer, and to counteract heat rather than to keep off cold; and no such furniture as a heating stove is known, neither furnaces, nor steam-heaters. So for warmth we resort to thick clothing, and all sleeves are cut long with that end in view. A funny consequence is that old and young look twice as big in winter as in summer.

As a baby I had my playthings—bells, rattles and other knick-knacks. But there is no such blessed thing as a cradle among the Chinese in which baby may be soothed and rocked to sleep, neither the healthful, separate "crib." I had to sleep with my mother; and I have not a doubt that I used to cry a deal because I felt too warm, for the bedclothes—which were plentiful and heavily padded—would sometimes cover me all up and make it difficult for me to breathe. I would be suffocated, smothered, and of course I would cry; and my mother would do everything except give me air and liberty; numberless were the medicines administered, for Chinese doctors pretend they can cure the crying of children at night. American mothers have no idea what impositions Chinese mothers suffer from physicians and sellers of charms, on account of their superstitious fears concerning the health and welfare of their children.

In the daytime I used to sit in a bamboo chair which had a board in front that slid back and forth and served both as a table to hold my playthings and a lock to keep me in my seat, for it came up to my waist, so it was not possible for me to leap out. In this stiff fixture I used to sit hours at a time and watch my mother spin flax.

Our Oriental tastes are too simple to contrive such luxuries as baby-carriages. We have instead our "carrying tie." This consists of a piece of thick cloth, about two feet square, lined inside, and embroidered outside with beautiful figures, and having four bands sewed on, one at each corner. To put me into this cloth carriage, the one who was to carry me, my mother or a servant would lean over; I was then laid on her back, the "carriage" thrown over me, and the upper bands tied around the bosom of the carrier, the lower ones around her waist. My legs, of course, dangled outside; but it was nevertheless a very comfortable seat for me, though I doubt if it were so pleasant for the one who lugged me about. The primary object of this contrivance was to get me to sleep, and many a fine nap I must have had in my “carriage.” If I persisted in keeping awake, my carrier would sing to me a lullaby which, being ordinary conversation put to music more or less tuneful, is hardly worth a translation.

My earliest recollections are of a sitting-room on the ground floor of my grandsire’s house, the right wing of which was assigned to my father at the time of his marriage. It was very long and narrow, with bare brick walls in which no windows opened upon the street; all the light and ventilation came through a long narrow opening in the roof. Rain came through too, as well as light and air, and had to be drained off.

The furniture of the room was simple; a bamboo sofa, a square table, a few stiff-backed chairs, three long and narrow benches and a couple of stools. This ascetic simplicity in furnishings may be noticed everywhere in China; nowhere are even the rich inclined to indulge in luxury to any extent.

I remember very well the comfortless Chinese bed. Boards took the place of springs, and benches supported these boards. In ours, surmounting all was a heavy canopy frame, which, when new, was evidently gilded and carved. By this frame was suspended mosquito nettings, an absolutely necessary arrangement. The ground was our floor, overlaid with bricks a foot square as carpet. No chimney was to be seen anywhere, no heating apparatus, hardly any ornaments. In summer these rooms were cool and comfortable; but the winter’s wind and cold rendered them cheerless.

There is only one event of my infant life worthy of record, the death of my adopted father. He was my father’s brother and had accompanied my grandfather to the city of his literary administration. He was but a youth of twenty-one, unmarried and studying for the public examinations. On his deathbed, he designated me as his adopted son and heir. My grandfather ratified the choice, so that without my consent I was transferred from my father’s hands into my uncle’s.

The mode of adoption is common. Usually the adopted son belongs to the same family or clan, but not always; in any case he has the rights, privileges and duties of a born son. Among the rights may be mentioned the inheriting of property, and among the duties the annual offerings at the family alter and the grave, and the daily burning of remembrance incense.

CHAPTER II

THE HOUSE AND HOUSEHOLD

Babyhood is the most enjoyable stage in the life of an Oriental. It is the only period when his wishes are regarded and when demonstrations of affection are shown him. The family regulations in China are such that so soon as a child begins to understand, he is not only taught to obey, but also loses his freedom of action; nor does he fully recover it till he is old and past the brief season of youthful enjoyment.

Every person in China is in strict subjection to somebody. The child is subject to his parents or guardian. They, in turn, are subject to their parents, who are liable to be called to account by the elders of the clan. The magistrate is considered the father of the people he rules over; and the Emperor stands in the same relation to his subjects as the father to his children. Women are subject to their fathers or husbands. All are subject to the national laws.

Accordingly obedience and respect, rather than affection, are required of the Chinese child. His home-life, therefore, is constrained, sober and dull. The boy attains to the ideal character only when he habitually checks his affectionate impulses, suppresses his emotions and is uniformly respectful to his superiors and uniformly dignified with his inferiors. Therefore the child is early taught to walk respectfully behind his superiors, to sit only when he is bidden, to speak only when questions are asked him, and to salute his superiors by the correct designations. It would be the height of impropriety for him to mention his father's name, or call his uncles and elder brothers by their names. (Children call their father "*A-dé*," or "*A-ye*," which corresponds to papa in English. Mamma in Chinese is "*A-ma*." The syllable *A* is prefixed for the sake of euphony or convenient pronunciation. In the same way, we say, "*A-suk*" for uncle, "*A-ko*" for elder brother, "*A-ka*" elder sister. Cousins on one's father's side are reckoned as brothers.) He must rise from his seat when they approach him. If he is taken to task for anything he has done, he must never contradict, never seek to explain. Such an offence is not easily forgiven and double punishment is likely to immediately overtake the offender. How often have I rued my imprudence in contradicting my parents, uncles or teachers! Often I was but simply trying to give the explanation of seemingly bad conduct. But the Chinese take no explanations from those subject to them. It is better for an accused son, pupil, or servant to suffer punishment in silence although he may be conscious of no wrong doing. This seems very unreasonable; and, in fact, it does foster sullenness and a spirit of rebellion which fear alone keeps under. But the Chinese deem this method absolutely necessary for the preservation of authority. In every household the rattan stick is always ready to the hand of the majestic wrath of outraged family law. It is not my intention to represent the Chinese as naturally cruel. They are not. They simply maintain family discipline by customs handed down from one generation to another. Fathers and teachers have undergone the same training. The customs of their ancestors enjoin it, the teachings of Confucius prescribe it, and the laws of the empire arm it with authority.

Indeed, among the lower and less educated classes, we find family discipline less strict than among the higher orders of our people. I happened to be born to the higher middle condition of life. There is no such thing as caste in China, in the sense that caste exists in India. In China, wealth, and literary and official honors ennoble a family and can lift it from a lower to a higher plane. The regulations and government of my family were as rigorous as possible. I lived the years of my childhood in a shrinking condition of mind. Like all youngsters, I wanted to shout, jump, run about, show my resentments, and my affections, give my animal spirits and affectionate impulses full play. But like a colt in training for the harness I was checked and curbed, my tongue was bridled, and my feet clogged, by fear of my elders. My father was a stern man as was his father before him. I remember him vividly by the beatings I got from him.

Yet he was truly good and kind.

Though the times when I required punishment were comparatively rare, I remember a constant sense of dread lest I should do something out of the way of a well-bred Chinese lad. The bamboo rod hung over my head like the sword of Damocles. My mother (who is still living) saved me from its blows many a time by giving me timely warning or by keeping my misdemeanors from my father's knowledge. But she was not so foolishly indulgent as to spare me when I truly deserved punishment.

Our immediate family consisted of my parents, a brother four years older than I, one two years younger, and myself. I had two sisters who had died before my birth; by the course of nature, let me add, for the horrible practice of female infanticide was in our part of the empire only heard of in stories, and not without a shudder.

I have previously said we occupied a part of my grandfather's house. The building had only one floor. The accompanying plan describes it:

"A" stands for those spaces over which the roof was open to the sky, and which corresponded to the *compluvium* in the dwellings of the Romans. There were five of them in our house. Through them came air, wind and rain. You may easily conjecture that such openings in Chinese houses must be favorite entrances and exits for burglars and thieves. At night there seems to be no protection against such gentry except the wakefulness and bravery of watchmen, who, by striking the hour of the night on a piece of bamboo in going the rounds, only warn the burglars to keep out of sight while they are near. The Chinese watchman serves the double purpose of a patrolman and a perambulating clock; and although clocks are in common use, my countrymen have not yet employed bells to toll the hour for the whole city.

If you examine the plan, you will see that there is only one regular entrance to the house. Having passed the door, you will be in the vestibule which opens to the large *compluvium* by three pairs of doors, all of which are thrown ajar on grand occasions; but ordinarily only a side pair are left open. Having passed them and descended by one step into the *compluvium*, you have a full view of the audience hall which is decorated and used on great occasions, as New Year's days, weddings, funerals, birthday celebrations, or for extraordinary events, as the reception of distinguished guests, etc. On either hand are the two wings, library, and men's living rooms. The only passage to the women's apartments is through this audience hall. On that side also are three pairs of doors, two of which are usually closed, only the pair on the extreme right being in daily use. A screen stands before this entrance; for the worst thing that can happen is to have male visitors look into the women's apartments and see the female members of the family. My grandmother occupied the chamber back of the ladies' parlor, for that is usually considered the best room on account of its central location. The left wing back was occupied by an uncle and his family. Behind this section of the house was the kitchen and chambers for servants and daughters of the house. The garden had a well, from which the women drew water. I trust I impress upon you that the house was divided into two portions; the front belonging to the men and the rear to the women. My grandfather's rule was that no lady of the family should pass the boundary line except on "occasions."

I make no mention of cellars because there were none. The house-walls were of slate-colored brick, the roof of tiles laid over slats and beams increasing in height from the vestibule to the garden. The rooms were lofty and airy, and but for storms and the winter’s wind would have been comfortable.

As I have before said, the house was plainly furnished. The audience hall was the festival room. A long table in the centre, with interesting vases and curios, stood behind a square one of mahogany. They were flanked by two rows of chairs of the same material, with tea-poys between that served to hold the teacups of guests. A couple of easy folding chairs lined with leather, stood in front. On the walls were watercolor paintings and scrolls.

CHAPTER III

CHINESE COOKERY

The housekeeping was likewise simple. My grandmother was the head of the family during her husband’s absence, and she had always the management of the minor affairs of the entire establishment. She it was who assigned the duties and superintended the work of the servants, and the employments of the daughters, and the daughters-in-law. We hired a cook, several maid servants and a man servant, so that there was never a need that the ladies of our family should soil their dainty hands or weary their delicate feet. My grandmother, however, had her own ideas about work, and used to arrange that her daughters should not be idle or ignorant.

The hour for rising was between six and seven A.M. The children of the household had to go to school at seven; and the men had business to attend to.

As soon as day dawned, the servants were stirring. They swept the brick floors, and having heated some water, they would go to wake their respective mistresses, placing the warmed water before them for the morning toilet. As each emerged from his or her slumber, greetings were scrupulously exchanged. We Chinese say, “Early morning!” instead of “Good morning!” The servants were then sent out to market to buy the materials for breakfast. Let us follow them.

After winding in and out through narrow streets flanked with blank walls, the monotony broken only by doorways, we come to the business portion of the city. We emerge into a scene of life and animation. Men and servant girls are either on their way to market or returning, carrying wicker baskets of eels, fish, pork, vegetables. Here are incense shops, butcher shops and grocery stores, fish stalls and vegetable stands. The stone pavement is slippery with mud. The din is deafening. The present stage in the development of trade in China does not admit of one price for one’s wares. The seller and buyer must wrangle for minutes over a few mills. Time is of no consideration. A man will go through and through the market, listening to what others are giving, pricing everything for himself, and at the same time beating the price down so low that the hawker will not agree to sell.

Our servants having, after much haggling, procured the wherewithal for breakfast, let us return to our kitchen and see the meal prepared. Your first exclamation is sure to be, “How smoky it is! Oh, stifling! Let us come away!” Well, this kitchen certainly is not so cozy and neat as American kitchens usually are. The smoke does not go out by chimney, but through the skylight and wherever it finds an outlet. The walls are black with the accumulation of years of soot. That large stove in the corner is built of brick. The smoke issues through an aperture in the back and curls upward through the opening into the clear sky. On the top of this stove is a large round iron spider about three feet in diameter. In this rice is cooking. Straw being cheaper, is burnt in this stove instead of wood, and some one is required to feed the fire constantly. Turning to the left, we see little clay stoves, on which food is frying in spiders, or boiling in earthen pots, over a wood fire. Grandmother and her daughters are superintending the various preparations. Vegetables are cut into bits and boiled with pork or mutton, making a soup. Greens are boiling. Fish is steaming, frying, or stewing with our without vegetables. Meat is cut fine; when the spider becomes heated lard is put in it, then pieces of onion, then the shred meat, and all is stirred till well embrowned; then turnips, potatoes, and sometimes other vegetables are added and, after boiling water is poured in, the whole is left to simmer and stew. All food, we observe, is cut in pieces before being cooked, or else before serving. For no knives, no forks are used.

At ten A.M. the tables are set; those for men either in the wings, or in their rooms; those for the women in their common sitting-room or parlor. Each table will seat eight persons. No table linen is used. Chopsticks and spoons are placed before each place. The food is brought in large bowls or plates. Rise is carried to the table in a wooden pail or wicker basket, form which it is served in small bowls. The servants summon the inmates to breakfast. The younger ones do not presume to sit till their elders are seated; then after making a show of asking permission to eat, when the elders gravely nod assent, the breakfast begins. Soup is taken first; then each person, holding the chopsticks in the right hand and the bowl of rice in the left, lifts his food to his mouth, pushes the lumps in with the sticks, alternating this motion with picking meat, fish or vegetables from the dishes which are common to all. One must take only from that side of the plate which is nearest to him, however. It is a breach of etiquette to reach over to the opposite side. When one finishes, he bids the rest to "eat leisurely," which is our mode of saying, "Excuse me!" The Chinese invariably wash their hands and faces after every meal.

Tea is drunk about the same time. It is taken without milk or sugar. Coffee is not common in China, and we are not accustomed to drink cold water. Tea is the national beverage and is taken to assuage thirst at all times and occasions as water is in America. At noon a lunch of cakes or pastry may be served. The majority of people are satisfied with two meals a day. Supper, or dinner, is served at five P.M.

In the interval between the two meals, the ladies of our family sewed, spun flax, embroidered or received company, that is, their lady friends who come in sedan-chairs, some to make short visits, some to spend the day. Guests were regaled at noon with confections and pastry, but tea was always presented to a guest soon after arrival. It would have been uncourteous to omit it. In the evening, after the lamps were lighted, the ladies, young and old, would sit down to a game of dominoes, tell stories, or gossip.

A peculiar feature in Chinese domestic arrangements is that when sons are married they continue to live with their parents, while daughters, when married, are expected to live with their husband's parents. Such an arrangement often causes a deal of trouble, and most of the domestic infelicity in Chinese home-life is ascribed to it. But the custom has been handed down from time immemorial, each succeeding generation being educated for it. It sometimes happens that the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law are suited to each other and live pleasantly together; but this presumes that both entertain exalted views of duty and are blessed with forbearing natures and yielding dispositions. The Chinese say that all depends on son and husband; if he be dutiful to his parents and strict in family discipline, he can prevent domestic broils; if he only shut his ear against the complaints of his wife, peace will be preserved. But the son and husband is apt to lean to one side or the other, so either harbors resentment towards his mother or acts unjustly towards his wife. The father usually steers clear of the trouble, though he sometimes acts as a peacemaker. Then again if the mother-in-law gets along well with one of her daughters-in-law, it is not certain that she can with the rest, or that the latter can get along peacefully with one another.

"Every family has a skeleton in the closet," it is said here in America. It is no less true of Chinese families.

My grandmother's was a character that inspired respect; so she had little trouble in the management of her large family. She had administrative talent of a high order, and therefore a fair share of household happiness fell to our lot.

CHAPTER IV

GAMES AND PASTIMES

The active sports of Chinese boys are few. There are hardly any sports, so-called, that develop the muscles and render a lad graceful and agile. The Chinese boy at sixteen is as grave and staid as an American grandfather; and if he happens to be married soon after, he throws aside most games as being childish. At the best, he has nothing corresponding to baseball, football, cricket, bicycle riding, skating, sliding or tennis. Nor is he fond of exerting himself. He would rather sit for hours talking and joking than waste time in running or jumping. He thinks it work if his play entails much perspiration. His elders, too, frown upon boisterous games. They approve quiet, meditative lads who are given to study.

But you must not suppose that the Chinese boy never plays at all. In spite of many obstacles, he proves that he is a boy still, and I will describe the outdoor amusements in which he does indulge.

Kite-flying is a national recreation. Young and old take part in it and it is not unusual to see a gray-haired man enjoying it in company with a ten year-old youngster. Kites are of all sizes. I have seen kites that were six or seven feet from wing to wing. The frame is made of bamboo slips which can be easily bent. Over this is pasted very stout rice paper, upon which strong figures are painted—sometimes the face of a man, sometimes a bird. On the larger kites a bow is fastened at the top, with a reed instead of a string, and when the wind blows upon this reed, a melodious sound will be heard through the air, that greatly delights everybody; it seems to the spectators a mysterious voice from a different sphere.

Kite-flying in America can be much improved. Kites should be constructed of the Chinese shape.

The rib that runs through both wings should bulge out so that the paper on both sides may cave in. This is for the purpose of catching and retaining the wind as well as of steadying the kite. To a kite of this shape a tail is needles.

To fly such a kite, the cord must be very strong, and often it requires two or three men to hold it. When it gets among the clouds, and the flyer's enthusiasm is at its boiling-point, a paper butterfly, beautifully colored, is fastened on the cord and the wind sends it up with a whizzing sound to the kite itself. But when it touches the kite, the butterfly's wings come together, and down it returns by its own weight, bringing a message from the skies, and its graceful approach is watched breathlessly.

The ninth day of the ninth month, which comes in October, is "Kites' Day." On that day it is the fashion to go up high hills and hold communion with heavenly zephyrs. Such a scene is inspiring. Men and boys, of all ranks, sizes and ages, are seen with cords in their hands, pulling, yanking and jerking, or letting loose, all sorts of agile rice paper monsters in the azure sky. The fun consists in the making the kites fight—in entangling them and cutting one another's strings by sudden jerks.

There is a story to account for the origin of the Kites' Day. Back in the origin of world's history, when Time was yet a boy, a man, while working in the field, was told by a passing stranger with an august mien, that a terrible plague was about to visit his house on the ninth day of the ninth month, and that the only way to escape was to hide in the high hill nearby. After giving this warning, the stranger disappeared mysteriously. This man, who was, by the way, a good man, went home, and getting his whole family together before the fatal day arrived, set out with them to the hill designated and remained there all day. To while away the time probably, his children flew kites. Hence the custom. After sunset, they went home and found that all their cattle, chickens and ducks had died. This proved that they themselves had been saved by the intervention of some deity. Ever since, people have made the day a national holiday.

Kicking the shuttlecock is a favorite outdoor amusement with both boys and gentlemen. The shuttlecock consists of a bunch of feathers stuck in small, round pieces of leather, or pasteboard, and tied together by a string. The game is to kick it when it is served to you and not allow it to drop on the ground. When one muffs, he has to serve someone else. From two to six persons can play. Skillful players will keep the shuttlecock above ground for some time. We also have something which is a feeble apology for the manly sport of baseball. A piece of snakeskin is wound around with yarn till it attains the size of a billiard ball. Boys in China toss it, or make it bound, as American boys do their rubber balls.

Penny-tossing, or rolling, carries out the idea of marbles. But it is not considered a nice game, and only bad boys indulge in it. Swimming is not popular, although many Chinese boys learn to swim.

Fishing means work with the Chinese. A man, or boy, goes a-fishing simply for the fish, and not for the fun; and I am of the opinion that my countrymen are right.

Of indoor games and pastimes there is only a small list. Since young ladies and gentlemen are not allowed, in China, to enjoy one another’s society, dancing is, of course, out of the question. A Chinese gentleman would consider it foolishness and an insensate waste of time to hop about and twirl around for a whole night. Amusements requiring so much exertion are not to his taste; and as for throwing his arm around a girl’s waste in the whirl of the waltz, a Chinese gentleman would not permit himself such an indecorum. Accordingly, gentlemen’s indoor pastimes are cricket-fighting and quail-fighting.

Cricket-fighting is sort of a passion, or craze, with some Chinese. In the cricket season, men and boys hunt for them by the wayside, or among thickets on the mountains. When caught they are fed and afterwards tested as to their fighting qualities. A good fighter will fetch quite a large sum.

Dominoes is a game played by men and women as well as children. It is different from the American game, being more like the card game of whist.

Guessing Pennies always furnishes much amusement to little boys and girls. Chinese coins are made of brass and copper, with a square hole in the middle for convenience in carrying. On one side is a legend in Chinese giving the name of the emperor’s reign and the words “*Tung-pao*,” i.e., *currency*. The game is to guess the name of the reign, when the coin is turned upside down. Another game is played around fruit stands; it is to guess the number of seeds in an orange. The loser pays for the orange while the winner eats it.

There are not many games in which boys and girls play together. If they do play together it is only when they are children, under ten or twelve. Growing-up girls will have nothing whatever to do with boys, though Chinese boys and girls are very sociable, each with friends of their own sex.

CHAPTER V

GIRLS OF MY ACQUAINTANCE

I still continually find false ideas in American concerning Chinese customs, manners and institutions. Small blame to the people at large, who have no means of learning the truth except through newspapers or accounts of travelers who do not understand what they see in passing through our country. From the time of Sir John Mandeville, travelers (with a few notable exceptions) have vied with each other in relating the most wonderful stories about our ancient empire. Accordingly, what I tell in this series of articles about Chinese customs, manners and institutions may often contradict general belief.

There is far less of truth told about the “fair section” of the Chinese people than of the sterner sex, because far less is known. What I myself propose to tell is chiefly derived from daily observation of the female members of my family and those of my kindred. Very distant relatives are recognized in China; a man prides himself upon the large number of his connections as well as upon the influence his family exert in the community on account of wealth or position. A “poor relation” there is treated with much more consideration and affection than in this country. Generosity towards that class of unfortunates is so common, and its practice is so strenuously insisted upon, in the moral code of the Chinese, that it almost ceases to be an individual virtue—it is a national virtue.

Of the numerous cousins, aunts and other fair relatives that fell to my earthly lot several lived in the same house with us, under the superintendence of my grandmother, as I have before said; there were two aunts who were then too young to marry, two aunts by marriage, and three young cousins in the house. Then on the same street dwelt about thirty or forty families, all related to us by blood, whose female members it was my privilege, as a relative and as a youngster, to see often. I assure you they comprised among them girls of all sorts of tempers and characters. The gentle, refined and modest stood side by side with the rough, uncultured and forward. There were good looking ones, and there were homely ones.

Let me add that these girls had not been “killed during their infancy.” I am indignant that there should be a popular belief in America that Chinese girls at their birth are generally put to death because they are not wanted by their parents. Nothing can be further from the truth. In a country like China, where women do not appear in public life, it must follow that sons are more to be desired, for the very good reason that family honor and glory depend on them and ancestral worship necessitates either the birth or adoption of sons to perpetuate it. I venture to say that in proportion to population and distribution of wealth that infanticide is as rare in China as it is in this country. Extremely poor people, finding it hard to keep even themselves alive, often prefer to “make way” with their babies rather than see them slowly starve to death. With them, girl babies are more often sacrificed because boys are readily adopted by rich and childless persons, while the female infants rarely can be thus provided for. But let it be understood that there are established in every good-sized town infant hospitals in which these waifs are kept and brought up with care by means of funds and furnished by good people. The same ceremonies of christening are observed with girl babies, and though relatives may growl, they nevertheless bring the customary presents of cloth, jewelry and pigs’ feet.

In spite of the restraint all Chinese children are subject to, we little boys and girls used to have good times together. Among the boys were two brothers of mine and a whole troop of cousins of whom five were about my age. We used to play cat's-cradle, puss-in-the-corner, jack-straws and jack-stones, the girls (all the way from four to eight years of age) taking as much interest in the games as we did. Of course at any time when the gentlemen of the family were present, we used to sit as quiet as mice and as demure as monks and nuns.

In those games which depend on dexterity and activity, we boys were winners; but when it came to games demanding skill, patience, quick wit and delicacy of touch, we were distanced by the girls.

Many a quarrel did we have as points of dispute came up; and often one of our set would not speak to another, or would even cut the whole of us for days together on account of some unfair play. Those little tiffs seemed to be of momentous importance then. But the boy whose heart swells with indignation at that which offends his sense of justice is likely to grow up a true man after all.

But our chief amusement and delight was to hear stories; especially those about fairies and ghosts. Oh! the blood-curdling stories that we were privileged to hear. They were enough to set anybody's teeth a-chattering and to stand his hair on end. They were always told in a low, sepulchral tone of voice, and the lamps were turned down, which very much heightened the artistic effect. We were also entertained with healthful anecdotes, such as scraps of history or biographical sketches of China's great men and famous women. But when we coaxed "real hard," we could generally get some one to tell us stories of goblins, imps that haunted the forests, specters that dwelt in old coffins, and witches and fairies that were good to those who pleased them. After listening to the glowing account of their antics and deeds, good or mischievous, it was useless to attempt making me go to bed alone or without a light. Even when some one accompanied me with a light, I never felt safe until I had covered my head with the bedclothes. That superstitious dread haunts me yet, especially when walking alone in the dark. I think it is impossible that I shall ever outgrow it.

When between six and eight years of age, my girl-cousins took that step which affected all their after-lives. At that age all well-born Chinese misses have their feet bound. It is a fashion they are obliged to follow. If they should not, they would not be recognized as ladies when they grow up, and they would become a disgrace to their families. Chinese aristocrats are as proud and jealous of their good name as the bluest-blooded of European nobles. Anything that lowers them in the eyes of their neighbors is carefully guarded against. Accordingly, only the daughters of poor and humble parents are permitted by society to retain the feet as nature bestowed them.

The process of binding is a gradual one. From first to last, bands are wound around the tender feet to prevent their growth; but at first shoes are worn nearly as large as the natural size; in a year or so the shoes will have to be smaller, and as the feet decrease in size till they attain to three or two and a half inches in length, so shoes are made to fit the lessened foot. But oh! the suffering that goes with it. This never has been exaggerated in any account. Many a time have I heard my cousins groan with pain as the tortures of binding were being undergone. Yet, strange to say, those girls would not have had exemption from the process, on any account. To be ranked as servants, working girls? Not they. The Chinese young lady chooses to be fashionable even though she undergo torture for several years and incur helplessness for life.

Don't imagine, however, that Chinese ladies are unable to move. They can, most of them, walk short distances. But it is true that the spirit is taken out of them by this species of suffering, and that they are oppressed by a sense of physical helplessness and dependence.

The work that little girls in China do is light. Trifling things about the cooking, such as shelling or peas or assorting of greens, were given over to my girl-cousins. Between meals, the little girls were taught to sew, embroider and to spin flax. They were never so happy as when a group of them sat together at work; one would tell a story, another would follow with a ballad, singing it with that peculiar plaintive tone which is considered a part of the ballad’s charm. My cousins were early taught to read and write, and in company with us boys, until they were eleven or twelve; then they were thought too old to be left in the society of boys very much; especially was it so after some strangers came to our school, which was established in the men’s living rooms.

In closing this chapter, I wish to call attention to the fact that Chinese girls—though you may think they lead a humdrum sort of life, though it be true that they are strangers to exciting gayeties enjoyed by American girls—are usually contented and think their lot a pleasant one. It is the custom, I am aware, to represent Chinese young ladies as languishing in their apartments and contemplating with tearful eyes the walls that confine them. To be sure, they do not have that excess of liberty by which some American girls are spoiled; yet they are not kept under lock and key. They have that liberty which is consistent with our ideas of propriety. They make visits, they call on their neighbors, they go to theatres, they see the sights, they witness boat-races and do many pleasant and social things besides. But whatever they do, there is always a limit—they are not permitted to acquaintance of young men. And when they are married, they are restricted to the society of their husbands. You perhaps think their existence a failure. They look upon the sort of life that American girls lead as very improper.

CHAPTER VI

SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL LIFE

Schools in China are usually kept by private gentlemen. The government provides for advanced scholars only. But since the one qualification for office is education, and the avenue to literary distinction and public honors lies through competitive examinations, the encouragement that the government extends to education and learning can be estimated only by that eager pursuit of knowledge which is common to all classes, and by the veneration in which scholars and scholarship are held.

Therefore it is not strange that schools are to be found everywhere, in small hamlets as in large towns, although the government appropriates no funds for the establishment of common schools; and although no such thing is known as “compulsory education,” there is a general desire, even among the poorest classes, to give their children “a little schooling.” Schools of their lower grades never boast more than one teacher each. The combination system of a head-master and several assistants does not work well in China. The schoolmaster in China must be absolute. He is the monarch of all he surveys; in his sphere there is none to dispute his rights. You can always point him out among a thousand by the scholar’s long gown, by his stern look, by his bent form, by his shoulders rounded by assiduous study. He is usually near-sighted, so that an immense pair of spectacles also marks him as a trainer of the mind. He generally is a gentleman who depends on his teaching to make both ends meet—his school is his own private enterprise—for no such thing exists in China as a “school-board” and if he be an elegant penman, he increases the weight of his purse by writing scrolls; if he be an artist, he paints pictures on fans. If he has not taken a degree, he is a perennial candidate for academic honors which the government only has a right to confer.

A tuition fee in China varies according to the ability and reputation of the teacher, from two dollars to twenty dollars a year. It varies also according to the age and advancement of the pupil. The older he be, the more he has to pay. The larger sum I have named is paid to private tutors. A private tutor is also usually invited to take his abode in the house of the wealthy pupil; and he is also permitted to admit a few outsiders. During festivals, and on great occasions, the teacher receives presents of money, as well as of eatables, from his pupils. And always he is treated with great honor by all, and especially by the parents of the pupils. For the future career of their children may, in one sense, be said to be in his hands.

One who teaches thirty or forty boys at an average tuition fee of four dollars, is doing tolerably well in China; for with the same amount he can buy five or six times as much of provisions or clothing as can be bought in America.

Schools usually open about three weeks after the New Year’s Day, and continue till the middle of the twelfth month with but a few holidays sprinkled in. However, if the teacher be a candidate for a literary degree, usually a vacation of about six weeks is enjoyed by the pupils in summer. During the New Year festival, a month is given over to fun and relaxation. Unlike the boys and girls of America, Chinese pupils have no Saturdays as holidays, no Sundays as rest-days. School is in session daily from six to ten A.M., at which time all go home to breakfast. At eleven A.M., all assemble again. At one P.M. a recess of about an hour is granted to the pupils to get lunch. From two P.M. to four is held the afternoon session. This of course is only approximate, as no teacher is bound to a fixed regularity. He is at liberty to regulate his hours as he chooses. At four P.M. the school closes for the day.

Schools are held either in a private house or in the hall of a temple. The ancestral temples which contain the tablets of deceased ancestors are usually selected for schools, because they are of no other use and because they are more or less secluded, and are generally spacious. In a large hall, open on one side towards a court, and having high ceilings supported by lofty pillars, besides the brick walls, you may see in the upper right-hand corner a square wooden table, behind which is the wooden chair; this is the throne of his majesty—the schoolmaster. On this table are placed the writing materials, consisting of brushes, India ink, and ink-wells made of slate. After pouring a little water in one of these wells, the cake of ink is rubbed in it until it reaches a certain thickness when the ink is ready to be used. The brushes are held as a painter's brushes are.

In conspicuous view are the articles for inflicting punishment; a wooden ruler to be applied to the head of the offender and sometimes to the hands, also a rattan stick for the body. Flogging with this stick is the heaviest punishment allowed; for slight offences the ruler is used upon the palms, and for reciting poorly—upon the head.

The room at large is occupied by the tables and stools of the pupils, chairs being reserved for superiors. The pupils sit facing the teacher, or at right angles to him. Their tables are oblong in form and if much used will show the carving habits and talents of their occupants. The pupils are all of one sex usually, for girls seldom attend other schools than those kept in the family, and then only up to eleven or twelve years of age. They are taught the same lessons as their brothers.

The boys range from the way of six or seven, up to sixteen or seventeen years of age, in an ordinary school; for there is no such thing as organizing them into classes and divisions; each one is studying for himself. Still there are schools in which all pupils are advanced; and there are others which have none but beginners. But they are rare.

I began to go to school at six. I studied first the three primers: the *Trimetrical Classic*, the *Thousand-words Classic*, and the *Incentive to Study*. They were in rhyme and metre, and you might think they were easy on that account. But no! they were hard. There being no alphabet in the Chinese language, each word had to be learned by itself. At first all that was required of me was to learn the name of the character, and to recognize it again. Writing was learned by copying from a form written y the teacher; the form being laid under the thing paper on which the copying was to be done. The thing I had to do was to make all the strokes exactly as the teacher had made them. It is a very tedious operation.

I finished the three primers in about a year, not knowing what I really was studying. The spoken language of China has outgrown the written; that is, we no longer speak as we write. The difference is like that between the English of today and that of Chaucer's time.

I then took up the *Great Learning*, written by a disciple of Confucius; and then the *Doctrine of Mean*, by the grandson of Confucius. These textbooks are rather hard to understand sometimes, even in the hands of older folks; for they are treatises on learning and philosophy. I then passed on to the *Life and Sayings of Confucius*, known as the *Confucian Analects* to the American scholars. These books were to be followed by the *Life and Sayings of Mencius*, and the *Five Kings*—five classics, consisting of books of history, divination, universal etiquette, odes and the *Spring and Autumn*, "a brief and abstract chronicle of the times" by Confucius.

I had to learn all my lessons by rote; commit them to memory for recitation the day following. We read from the top right-hand corner downwards, and then begin at the top with the next line, and so on. Moreover, we begin to read from what seems to you the end of the book. All studying must be done aloud. The louder you speak, or shriek, the more credit you get as a student. It is the only way by which Chinese teachers make sure that their pupils are not thinking of something else, or are not playing under the desks.

Now, let me take you into the school where I struggled with the Chinese written language for three years. Oh! those hard characters which refused to yield their meaning to me. But I gradually learned to make and to recognize their forms as well as their names. This school was in the ancestral hall of my clan and was like the one I have described. There were about a dozen of us youngsters placed for the time being under the absolute sway of an old gentleman of threescore-and-six. He had all the outward marks of a scholar; and in addition, he was cross-eyed, which fact threw an element of uncertainty into our schemes of fun. For we used to like to "get ahead" of the old gentleman, and there were a few of us always ready for any lark.

It is six o'clock A.M. All the boys are shouting at the top of their voices, at the fullest stretch of their lungs. Occasionally, one stops and talks to some one sitting near him. Two of the most careless ones are guessing pennies; and anon a dispute arises as to which of the two disputants writes a better hand. Here is one who thinks he knows his lesson and, having given his book to another, repeats it for a trial. All at once the talking, the playing, the shouting ceases. A bent form slowly comes up through the open court. The pupils rise to their feet. A simultaneous salutation issues from a dozen pairs of lips. All crying out, "*Lao Se*" (venerable teacher)! As he sits down, all follow his example. There is no roll-call. Then one takes his book up to the teacher's desk, turns his back to him and recites. But see, he soon hesitates; the teacher prompts him, with which he goes on smoothly to the last and returns to his seat with a look of satisfaction. A second one goes up, but poor fellow! he forgets three times; the teacher is out of patience with the third stumble, and down comes the ruler, whack! whack! upon the head. With one hand feeling the aching spot and the other carrying back his book, the discomfited youngster returns to his desk to re-con his lesson.

This continues until all have recited. As each one gets back to his seat, he takes his writing lesson. He must hold his brush in a certain position, vertically, and the tighter he holds it the more strength will appear in his handwriting. The schoolmaster makes a tour of inspection and sees that each writes correctly; writing is as great an art in China as painting and drawing are in other countries and good specimens of fine writing are valued as good paintings are here.

After the writing lesson it is time to dismiss school for breakfast. On re-assembling, the lesson for the next day is explained to each one separately. The teacher reads it over, and the pupil repeats it after him several times until he gets the majority of the words learned. He then returns to his desk and shouts anew to get the lesson fixed in his memory. The more advanced scholars are then favored with the expounding of Confucius's *Analects*, or some literary essay. After the teacher concludes, each is given a passage of the text to explain. In this way, the meaning of words and sentences is learned, and made familiar. The afternoon session is passed by the older pupils in writing compositions in prose or in verse, and by the younger in learning the next day's task.

This is the regular routine, the order of exercises in Chinese schools.

Grammar, as a science, is not taught, nor are the mathematics. Language and literature occupy the child's attention, as I have shown, for the first five or six years; afterwards essay-writing and poetry are added. For excellence in these two branches, public prizes are awarded by the resident Literary Sub-Chancellor. But public exhibitions and declamations are unknown, though Chinese fathers sometimes visit the schools. The relations of the sexes are such that a

Chinese mother never has the presumption to appear at the door of a schoolroom in order to acquaint herself with the progress of her child's education.

Parents furnish the textbooks as a rule. They are bound into volume, and printed usually with immovable type.

The pupils usually behave well. If not, the rattan stick comes promptly into use. Chinese teachers have a peculiar method of meting out punishment. I remember an episode in my school-life which illustrates this. One afternoon, when the old schoolmaster happened to be away longer than his wont after the noon recess, some of the boys began to "cut up." The fun reached its height in the exploding of some fire-crackers. As they went off, making the hall ring with the noise, the teacher came in, indignant, you may be sure. His defective eyes darted about and divided around to fix upon the culprit, but as he didn't happen to be in the line of their vision, the guilty boy stole back to his seat undetected. The old gentleman then seized the rattan and in a loud tone demanded who it was that had let off the crackers. And when nobody answered, what do you suppose he did? He flogged the whole crowd of us, saying that he was sure to get hold of the right one and that the rest deserved a whipping for not making the real offender known. Truly, the paths of Chinese learning in my day were beset with thorns and briers!

CHAPTER VII

RELIGIONS

In talking about religion in China, I need hardly remind you that Christianity is of recent introduction and that many things belonging to it, such as the Sabbath, churches, ministers, regular meetings for worship, are unknown to the great mass of the people. The Chinese do not divide the year into weeks, nor do they have Christmas or Easter. In the place of those Christian days they observe other festivals.

We have three systems of religion: Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism.

Confucianism, the religion taught by Confucius, a great philosopher who lived about five hundred years before the birth of Christ—is the religion of the Emperor, of the large body of officials, and of the educated classes generally. This system is mainly moral and practical, in opposition to the spiritual and the speculative. It teaches mankind to perform certain duties; for instance, to honor and serve one's parents, to be obedient and deferential towards one's elders, to be loyal to one's lawful sovereign and to live harmoniously with one's wife. These precepts are expanded and extended so that they are adapted to all the requirements of modern society. Confucius never taught the existence of God, for he felt that he did not know anything about Him nor did he advance any theories concerning heaven and hell. He simply taught men to love goodness for its own sake. But this lofty philosophy, however it might have suited the character of the philosopher and his personal disciples, never was popular in the sense that people generally accepted it and practiced it. Still the Chinese have a real reverence for Confucius and his precepts, and, excepting the few who are professed Buddhists and Taoists, will call themselves Confucianists, although they may not understand all that this master taught, and in spite of the fact they worship gods of other systems of religion. The gods of Confucianists, pure and simple, are heaven and earth, the spirits of the wind and the five great mountains, the household gods (answering to the Penates of the Romans) and one's ancestors.

Taoism was formerly a pure system of philosophy, but it by degrees sadly degenerated into a sect which borrowed its doctrines from Buddhism and Confucianism and has had engrafted upon it from time to time innumerable superstitions. The priests of the sect are men whose business is to impose on the people, and who make a living out of their superstitious fears. Thus, if a person falls sick, or is supposed to be possessed by an evil spirit, a Taoist priest is summoned to intercede for him and to offer up vows for his recovery. So also when a person dies, one of them rings a bell in front of the corpse, and, by mumbling a lot of gibberish, pretends to open the gate of the lower world for the departed soul to enter. A piece of silver is previously put in the mouth of the dead person to pay toll with. Almost everything imaginable is worshiped by the Taoists and those who believe in the efficacy of their intercessions. Everything has spirit or spiritual counterpart in the next world; and this spirit, according as it is propitiated by offerings, or offended by lack thereof will work good or evil to the man. There are gods of war, literature, wealth, and medicine; and there are the goddesses of married women and of seamen. These are a few of the nobler specimens of the idols which are worshiped. The fertile imagination of the Chinese fills every lake and river with spirits, every street and house with ghosts, and every wood and mountain with deities. They believe the next world to be a shadow of this; that the dead have everything in the world below which they had on earth—only these premises exist as shadows instead of substances.

Buddhism entered China about the time of Christ. One of the Emperors of the Han dynasty, having heard of the rise of a great sage in the West, sent an embassy to see him and to bring back his teachings. Doubtless the reputation of the marvelous Nazarene had been spread in the northern part of China by European and Arabian traders and had reached the ears of the Chinese monarch. The embassy set out on their long, tedious and perilous journey. But while passing near India, they heard of Buddha and his sublime teachings. They supposed him to be the sage they were seeking, and they turned aside into India. Buddha had by that time been absorbed in Nirvana—he was dead; and the embassadors contented themselves with carrying back his books to China. Under the lead of the emperor, Buddhism was accorded a cordial reception in the empire. But modern Buddhism is not what Buddha intended it to be. For instance, idolatry which he never taught, is practiced.

Buddhist priests and nuns live apart from other people in monasteries and nunneries. They wear a different costume, and have their heads entirely shaven. They live on a vegetable diet, and obtain their food by their chants, by singing masses and often by begging. People believe that wealth, happiness and longevity can be procured through them, and so, according to their means, they offer priests and nuns money with which to buy incense for Buddha and oil to burn in his lamps, also that a number of prayers shall be offered up in their behalf. Accordingly these priests and nuns are enabled to live a life of sloth. Sometimes, however, as if to break the monotony of their existence, they commit crimes which expose them to the vengeance of outraged law. The Buddhist monasteries and nunneries were formerly houses of refuge for a certain class of criminals. Those who went there and became professed Buddhists were exempt from punishment.

The educated classes despise both Taoists and Buddhists. Nevertheless in sickness, or in death, they patronize them. This shows that our religious instinct is so strong that a man will worship anything rather than nothing.

As I said, there is nothing in Chinese religions corresponding to the Christian Sabbath. In none of our festivals, holidays or anniversary celebrations, does the idea of rest enter. Instead of churches, we have temples which embody the highest architectural skill of the Chinese. They are built of brick, one story in height, oftentimes very spacious, comprising a series of buildings with alternate courts, and flanked by others designed as living-rooms, for the priests or nuns. The presiding idol is enshrined in the innermost hall, and dressed in real clothes fashioned in accordance with its character. There are usually placed in every temple a large number of idols inferior in power to the chief idol. Before the chief idol is burnt incense-sticks and candles and costly sandal-wood. Food is offered on stated days, as well as on ordinary days; the worshipers believe that the essence of the food is eaten by the spirit of the god and that the substance remains for their own enjoyment. From the fact that the devotees themselves eat the food offered to the idol, people reconcile economy with profuse expenditure, by pretending to be religious with the view to gratifying their own appetites. Idolatry in China is *not* founded on the belief that wood and stones and other inanimate objects are in themselves worthy of worship; but on account of the spirits which reside or take up their abode therein.

Thus the idolatry of the Chinese is superior to the brutal worship of India, and to the brutish worship of the Egyptians. But still it exerts a baneful influence on the minds and hearts of its subjects.

In considering all systems of idolatry and superstition, one significant fact stands prominent, *the utter neglect of religious training of the young*. China’s three great religions have nothing answering to the Christian Sunday school. Of course, boys and girls pick up some religious ideas in their intercourse with those about them. But nobody ever deliberately sits down to tell them of this god and that god, their origin, character and power. Only incidentally is such knowledge conveyed. There are many religious books; but from the difficulty of learning to read, they are necessarily sealed to the young mind. If the young are told to worship this idol and that idol, they never understand why and wherefore they should do this. In time they comprehend that they do it to obtain favor and to gain merit.

I well remember the first time I was led to a temple and there told to bend my knees to the idol decked out in a gorgeous robe, its face blackened by the smoke from the incense. On either side of the room stood four huge idols, with stern and forbidding faces. One of them was especially frightful. It was the God of Thunder represented by an image having the body of a man and the head of a highly caricatured rooster. This idol had a hammer in one hand and a large nail in the other, with which he is supposed to strike wicked persons. This god made such an impression on me that I had a horrible dream about it that very night. I saw him clad in fierceness; he moved his hands threateningly. Almost chocked with fright though I was, I managed to cry out and that awoke me.

On account of the conservative spirit of the Chinese, their traditions, the pure morals which Confucius taught, the peculiar school system, and the prejudices which they justly entertain against foreigners, the work of missionaries must progress slowly. Something *has* been done during the last fifty years. The land has been surveyed and its needs and capabilities made known.

CHAPTER VIII

CHINESE HOLIDAYS

It would be a matter of many chapters were I to describe all the holidays which we have in China. The bare enumeration of them would be as difficult as tedious. In point of fact we have almost as many holidays and festivals as there are days in the year. Each prominent idol has a birthday, also an anniversary of his death, both of which are celebrated. There are some—the Goddess of Mercy, for instance—who have half a dozen days sacred to them. There are a number of deities, great persons deified, that are common to the nation; while each city, town and hamlet, has numerous local deities who are its special protectors.

Extremely lucky it is for the aforesaid idols that their devotees are naturally fond of show, pageantry and display; otherwise, idolatry would have little to attract the multitude. As it is, millions of dollars are spent in these celebrations every year. At the dedication of a temple in Canton, two years ago, thirty thousand dollars were spent. As I was present at this really great exhibition, I can give you an idea of it. For a long time a committee of citizens had been collecting subscriptions from dwellers far and near; and weeks before the completion of the temple, a large pavilion was reared, the material of which was mainly bamboo in the form of poles, mattings and slips. Marvelous architectural results are attained by combining a few wooden pillars with the bamboo in various forms, and soon a light and airy structure looms up in the sky, which can be seen from a great distance. This pavilion is directly in front of the temple, while smaller ones are built in vacant lots near by, all connected with the main building by awnings pitched over the streets. There is a high tower in the middle of the great pavilion, on the ceiling of which curls a dragon of many colors, gleaming with innumerable spangles, through whose mouth a rope is dropped on which is suspended an immense chandelier. The latter is finely carved so far as the body, which is of wood, is concerned, and for brilliancy of coloring has no rival in China. It is octagonal and each side throws out four branches, which uphold kerosene lamps. The centres of each side are cut out, and glass inserted, behind which automatic figures are made to move by clockwork. The finest effects of this chandelier are of course obtained when the lamps are lighted. Suspended from the roof in other parts are chandeliers, less elaborate and smaller perhaps, but not less artistic and beautiful. Forests of pendants are attached to them, so that on all sides the light is reflected. Then, in the intervals between the chandeliers, hang oblong cases, all decorated with silks and satins, and finely carved, containing dolls, about two feet high, elegantly dressed in character, and grouped to represent historical scenes. These figures have machinery placed beneath them to make them shake their heads, or lift their hands, or sway their bodies, just as the role of each requires. There are also smaller cases in which are arranged tableaux from romance of which the Chinese are very fond. Sometimes, a comic tableau is given; for instance, in one case are shown a number of blind men fighting with bamboo sticks on the street, and as the blows are dealt *blindly* and in all directions (by means of the machinery), the crowd of spectators never fail to laugh.

Flowers of all the varieties which grow in the “Flowery Kingdom” form an important and pleasing feature of the entertainment. They are made into shapes of men or birds, and their delicious odors pervade the whole place. The walls of the different pavilions are gayly painted.

On them pictures in watercolors are hung, as well as scrolls bearing the writings of celebrated men. Under these are placed, in rows, fine flower pots crowned with the choicest flowers of the season. Dwarfed trees too are placed beside them.

There are platforms in every good-sized pavilion where the musicians sit and discourse music for the pleasure of a most attentive audience. There are drums, kettledrums, immense cymbals, gongs, cornets, flutes, castanets, two-stringed fiddles and I don't know what else besides, and when they are sounded together the effect is overwhelming on ears unaccustomed to such strange symphonies. The flutist first bows his flute, then the cornetist joins with his toot, and then the kettledrum man strikes up, which is a signal for the cymbals to clash and the gong to raise its hoarse cry, while the shrill fiddles may be distinguished in the din like the witches' voices above the storm in *Macbeth*.

Worse still follows, when the musicians turn from instrumental to vocal music, and one of them gives you a solo with that falsetto-pitch which is meant to imitate a female voice.

While the crowd of people are enjoying the different sights and sounds in the pavilions, inside the temple various ceremonies are going on. The temple itself, entirely new, is finely decorated with both permanent and temporary ornamentations. Among the first are frescos and wood-carvings and figures in bas-relief; among the second, banners, flower-baskets and pictures. Buddhist priests are praying to Buddha in the central hall, while in the back hall, where the shrine of the chief deity is situated, flocks of worshipers flit to and fro making offerings of food, lighting candles, and burning incense. There is no scene in China more animated. Everybody who has any religion in him comes to worship and to ask some favor of the god, and each person leaves more or less money with the keepers of the temple. In my native city festivals similar to this occur two or three times in the week in different parts of the town. Of course the schools are kept open on such festal days, otherwise little study could be accomplished. Schoolboys go to the shows in the evening and girls too sometimes go by themselves to enjoy the sights.

But there are holidays which may be called national, since they are observed all over the country.

First and most important are the New Year holidays, which are celebrated with as much éclat as unceasing firing of pyrotechnics, calls of ceremony and universal good-will and joy will contribute. Debts are paid up at the end of the year, and for the first week or two little or no business is transacted. Everyone gives himself up to jollity. Children, on such days, are surfeited with sweetmeats, and holes are made in their holiday clothes by burning fire-crackers. Largesses are bestowed upon both children and servants, while beggars are also remembered, so that this season is really the most joyous of the year—the time when charity is most charitable and benevolence assumes a more benevolent aspect.

Next, in order of time, comes the Feast of Lanterns. The main feature of this fête, as the name implies, is a procession with lanterns of all shapes and kinds. Soon after nightfall, men and boys get in line, each carrying upon a bamboo pole a great paper bird, or quadruped, or fish, inside of which candles are lit. Very fantastic shapes sometimes are seen, and mythological books are ransacked to procure strange creatures.

Imagine three or four hundred of these lanterns passing before you, all brilliant with rich colors. Sandal-wood is burnt in censers carried in small movable pavilions, while bands of music mingle their racket with the applause of the spectators and the jokes of the men in the procession.

Last of all an immense and terrible dragon about forty feet in length is borne along supported on bamboo poles by a dozen or twenty men.

There is another procession similar to this in the fourth month, only it takes place in the daytime instead of at night, and the large number and variety of lanterns are wanting.

In the fifth month are held the dragon-boat races. These boats are narrow and long, capable of holding about one hundred men sitting one behind the other. Each one carries a paddle, and the boat is so made that it can go just as well backwards as forwards. The direction devolves upon the men in the ends of the boat. In the centre the idol from whose ward or district the boat hails, sits enthroned with an immense umbrella of red silk to keep the sun from tanning his complexion. A band of music accompanies each boat. By its warlike clangor it encourages the racers, while its drum beats the time for the stroke. Banners are given after the race, as spoils of victory, to be placed in the temple of the patron deity. The scene on the rivers on such an occasion is very animated and the cheers of the spectators from the different districts attest their interest.

In the eighth month comes the Festival of the Moon, answering to the Harvest Festival in Western countries. What are called “moon-cakes” are sold at this season. If the year has been productive there will be a great deal of rejoicing. Presents are interchanged at this time as also at other festival season. As the moon becomes gradually full there appears in it to the Chinese eye a man who is climbing a tree. The full moon is greeted with much ceremony, and the night on which the luminary appears its brightest is passed in feasting and rejoicing.

CHAPTER IX

STORIES AND STORYTELLERS

The Chinese are passionately fond of stories and storytelling. On the public streets and squares, professional storytellers congregate from noon to midnight, going over the achievements of a hero or portraying the despair of a lover. They recite with a dramatic power not to be expected from their sluggish movements and stolid countenances.

All classes indulge in this favorite pastime. The dignified scholar relishes a good story as much as a child in the lap a fairy tale. Storybooks in the language can be counted by the tens of thousands. The subjects are historical or romantic; of war, of love, of magic and enchantment. Some of the legends are really beautiful and are as interesting as a good English novel. There is one book which is the unfailing delight of all classes; I mean the *History of the Three Kingdoms*. It is an historical novel in twenty volumes, illustrated with wood-cuts. For arrangement of details, delineation of character and elegance of diction, I have found few books in English its equal. It is, in one sense, an epic in prose. When a boy, I used to enjoy hearing passages of it read or explained.

Books of ballads are to be found in every household. Our ladies take great delight in learning to sing them to their own music, music which is not printed in the books, but suggests itself as they recite or sing. Ballad singers are found on all the public squares where they earn their living by passing around the basket at each crisis of the story. The spectators are eager to hear the rest, of course, and so will be more easily induced to pay.

There are no storybooks which children can read and enjoy, since it takes them so long to learn the characters. But picture books are sometimes given to children. Still they are not made specially for them as they are in this country; and colored pictures are too costly to be put into children's hands because they must be drawn by hand, painted by artists. So Chinese boys and girls lack those facilities for enjoyment in picture books which American and English children have in so great abundance.

To give an idea of the stories which are most eagerly listened to, let me tell you one myself which may be taken as a fair sample of the shorter ones. It has the advantage of being true and every whit reliable. For want of a more appropriate title, I will call it:

SOLD

My fellow-townsman Chang was a scholar, who, having obtained his M.A. degree, took up the profession of law, for his success in which he was disliked by his neighbors in Fragrant Hills. The time came when it behooved him to go to Peking for the purpose of passing examination for the doctor's degree. Accordingly, with three hundred dollars in his three trunks, many books and "skinning papers," he went to Canton to obtain documents of identification. Pending the issue of these, he stopped at an inn, resolved to set out to Peking by steamer as soon as possible. In the next room, separated from his simply by a wooden partition, lodged two gentlemen, who, by their Northern dialect, declared themselves strangers, and who appeared to be on the same errand as himself. He overheard them more than once quarrelling about a rich widow who had ended the prescribed twenty-seven months of mourning and was taking active measures to change her lonely condition. Filled with curiosity, Mr. Chang panted to know more; so dropping into their room one day, after duly introducing himself, he said, “For days I have heard you disputing over a marriage affair. Pray, will you enlighten my understanding by telling me the interesting facts in the case?”

“With pleasure, sir,” answered the elder of the two; “you see there lives near here a pretty widow whose husband, a trader from Kiang-si, had the bad taste to leave her an immense fortune at his death. Now, as she has no children, she is anxious to marry again. But she will marry none except a scholar of distinguished merit, a man of fine character and suitable age, money being evidently no object to her. When we learned that, we both wanted to offer ourselves and that explains why we have disturbed your serenity in such an unseemly manner. But yesterday we heard from a go-betweener that she had set her heart on marrying a native of this province. So we are out of the race.”

“Such a man,” said Chang, “is not hard to find. I know one now, not a *li* from here, who can fulfill these conditions. Do you think there is any chance for a worthless person like me?”

“You do yourself injustice,” said the younger man. “I am sure she ought to feel honored by an alliance with a scholar of your blooming talent. If you wish to try your luck, I can tell you where the go-betweener lives. Will you have the goodness to precede us?”

Arrived at the entrance of a cottage, the two took their leave. Mr. Change knocked at the door. It was opened by the matchmaker herself. She was a woman of the poorer class, dressed in homespun linen, having feet that had evidently borne the tortures of binding in vain, for they were still as large as Nature could have made them.

Mr. Chang stated the purpose of the visit; upon which the woman confirmed what he had heard, moreover, adding that the lady was fastidious and would want to see him before consenting to marry him. He agreed to reward the matchmaker richly in case of success. After appointing the next morning for the ordeal, he wended his way back to the inn, feeling decidedly elated with his diplomacy.

The next morning saw him dressed in his best silk gown and adorned with a beard trimmed for the occasion. The wily matchmaker was waiting for him, and soon started with him on their errand. A little after, they paused at the door of an elegant mansion, which by its size and decorations, gave evidence of the wealth and rank of its occupants.

A servant ushered them into the reception room and went in to announce their arrival. While waiting, Chang feasted his legal eyes on beautiful pictures, mahogany furniture and costly curios, while his ears were charmed with the musical “clink, clink, clink,” of the silver dollars which were being weighed in the next room. Servants flitted to and fro, carrying receipts or bags of money. Our lawyer’s heart ordinarily would have softened at the sight of money, but this occasion it fairly melted. His love for the pretty widow increased in warmth with every bag of money added to the pile.

In the midst of his enchanting reverie, the lady entered supported by two servants. He was more than surprised by her appearance. Her face was full and found and she had the daintiest little feet you ever saw. He had been led to expect good looks, but no beauty like this. Meeting his eye bent on her in admiration, she looked down in modesty, and, having presented him a cup of tea, she withdrew, not having uttered a word, according to etiquette.

The go-between followed her and after a little while, which seemed a cycle to the expectant lover, she reappeared, beaming with smiles, announcing their success. In a word, the lady was so pleased with Chang's appearance that she had decided to accept him. She begged him to move into her house that he might superintend the preparations for the wedding.

He readily assented; then hurried back to the hotel with a heart full of love for the beautiful widow and benevolent intent towards her silver dollars. To say that he trod on air is to speak within bounds. His soul was electrified with joy.

The hotel bill paid, his effects were carried "to his house." An elegant room was given him for his temporary occupancy. A delicate lunch of sweetmeats and pastry was served, after which the lady sent word to ask if he would condescend to buy a fan for her. It was only to be had in one place.

"Certainly," said Chang, and set out in search of the store. But it was a search for the "blessed isles." After beating around the dense city for some hours, he returned hungry and crestfallen.

But greater disasters awaited him. He found to his dismay the door of the house locked from the outside. "What does it mean?" he muttered. He knocked, pushed, kicked; but in vain. All was still within. Now thoroughly frightened, he inquired at a store opposite. "Why, sir, this house was rented together, with its furniture, by a family named Low. They moved off this afternoon. Nothing bad has happened, I hope?"

"No! no!" said Chang, his head all in a whirl, and staggered out. That night he spent at the old inn minus three trunks, three hundred dollars, many books and "skinning papers."

The next morning he found the two strangers. On seeing them, the potential energy of his pent-up rage became kinetic. He could have kicked the two M.A.'s ten feet with an initial velocity of one hundred and fifty pounds per second, but he did not, for he was a lawyer. So he gave vent to abusive epithets and terrific denunciation. They declared their innocence and advised him to open the flood-gates of his wrath upon the go-between.

Chang saw that he was only wasting words on them, so he went off to seek that worthy person, having no idea of finding her at home. But she was, much to his surprise, and coolly inquired how he liked his new home. "New home! You wretch! A fine match you have made for me! I will have you arrested. I will have you punished for conspiracy."

She asserted her innocence. Indeed "she hoped to be *thunder-struck* if she had done wrong in procuring for him a pretty wife and a big fortune."

Word ran high; neighbors rushed in, to whom both the belligerents appealed. Chang then began a recital of his wrong. He was interrupted by the matchmaker. "Oh, is that all!" she said, "why, now I remember that Lady Low said the other day—that her father was sick and she was liable to be summoned to his bedside at any time. If you wish it I'll take you to your father-in-law's; but I must have ten dollars for my trouble. As soon as you see her, you are to give me the money, do you promise?" Chang groaned assent, seeing no better mode of procedure.

She led him into the audience hall of a large house and pointed to an elegantly attired lady in the women's apartment. "There she is! See her?"

Sure enough, it was the modest Lady Low. Chang handed the matchmaker the money, with which she walked off. He hesitated what to do next. There was no servant near to whom he could speak. Just then the lady caught sight of him and smiled. Oh that smile! It was worthy of the Sirens. Just as he raised his hand out to beckon her, an old gentleman came out of an adjoining room. "What is this?" he cried. "Are you addressing my wife? Help! thieves! robbers! murder!"

Out rushed a troop of servants. Now fly! Chang, fly for your life! Yes, he flew, nor paused till he got to the inn where he learned that his neighbors had set sail. He also found the cunning matchmaker absent. Now realizing how completely he was sold, and that the offenders could not be punished, while he himself was liable to be arrested for trespassing in a man's house and attempting to destroy his domestic happiness, he sailed for Fragrant Hills in a state of mind far from tranquil.

The story got abroad and the whole town grinned from ear to ear, while even his own friends enjoyed his discomfiture.

CHAPTER X

HOW I WENT TO SHANGHAI

About forty years ago, there came to this country under the auspices of the Rev. Dr. Brown, an American missionary in China, a Chinese youth—who was destined to exert a potent influence on the future of the Chinese Empire. Many have heard of him or read about him; his name is Yung Wing. Inspired by a lofty ambition, he worked his way through preparatory school and college, graduating from Yale in 1854 with high honors.

He went back to China soon after his graduation and engaged in business in Shanghai. But business with the incidental pleasure of moneymaking, did not entirely absorb his attention. China was at that time having troublesome diplomatic negotiations with foreign powers, and was being taken advantage of right and left for want of men in office who understood the customs, the laws and the civilization of Western countries.

Dr. Wing, indignant at the wrongs which China had suffered and was suffering at the hands of so-called "Christian" and "enlightened" nations, sought for a remedy, and conceived a brilliant project of educating a number of Chinese boys in America for future service at the government expense.

He made his plans known to prominent Chinese officials. At first he met with no sympathy, no encouragement. Still, he persevered; and after twelve years of patient waiting and active labor, he succeeded in convincing two of the most powerful ministers at the court of Peking of the feasibility of his scheme. In consequence, an edict was issued by the emperor to enforce its execution.

A school was established at Shanghai to receive candidates, and announcement made that the government had appropriated a large sum of money to educate one hundred and twenty boys in America, who were to be sent in four detachments, in four successive years, beginning with 1872; and that a candidate, on his election after a term of probation at the school, should have the cadet's button and rank conferred on him; and that after fifteen years of residence in America, during which period the government promised to defray all expenses and exercise parental care over the youths, they were to return for entrance into its service.

Such an offer was un-heard of. People doubtless were dazzled by its splendor, as many as came in view of it. But as no newspapers existed there, excepting at Peking and some of the treaty ports, the news did not spread far. Only faint and vague rumors reached the inland towns. Hence, comparatively few candidates presented themselves and these hailed, for the most part, from the marine provinces. In fact, parents were not overeager to send their sons away so far, for so long a time, and to a land unknown to them, the inhabitants of which they heard and believed were barbarians.

A cousin of mine, however, who was in business then at Shanghai, thought differently; and was not deterred by any such considerations. He came home with glowing accounts of the new movement; and so painted the golden prospects of the successful candidate that he persuaded my mother to let me go. I was then twelve years old; my father had died three years before and my mother had assumed the sole charge of her three sons. But she was not going to force me to go, whether willing or unwilling; and so left the matter to me to decide.

I was more or less adventurous in disposition. A chance to see the world was just what I wanted. I said yes without hesitation. My mother, if she had any misgivings, wisely kept them to herself; and, like a brave woman who has resolved to deny herself for the good of her child, she set to work to prepare me for the journey to Shanghai.

For a whole month, I reveled at the sight of new clothes that were made for me. Friends and relations made presents of food for the voyage, sweetmeats predominating. At last, after bidding farewell to all my uncles, aunts and cousins, with others of my kith and kin, I paid my last respects to my mother in the conventional way. I did not embrace her and kiss her. O no! that would have been un-Chinese and undignified. What I actually did was to bow my head four times to the ground upon my knees. She tried to appear cheerful, but I could see that her eyes were moistened with tears. I did not think much of it then, but I remembered it in after-time. Ah! a mother's love is strong wherever it is found. She gave me some pocket-money and bade me be a good boy and write often.

With those words ringing in my ears and then memory of that sad face fresh in my mind, I walked briskly by the side of my cousin down to the wharf at which the junk was moored, which vessel, of a style well-known by picture to American boys and girls, was to carry us to Hong Kong, whence we expected to take steamer for Shanghai. We sailed down the narrow river with a stiff breeze in our favor, after offerings had been made to the river god, and the gong had announced to the world that "we were off."

The river was so serpentine with its numerous bends that the men often had to take a run on the banks to pull the boat along. The sun was just tinging the western cloud-castles with crimson and gold and as we went further and further from the town a panorama of great beauty passed before our eyes. Mountains and stream, and fields wavy with golden grain, and towering pagodas, all gemmed by the setting sun, composed this kaleidoscopic scene. But I had no heart to enjoy it. I was homesick for the first time in my life. A sense of solitude, of desolation—a feeling of loss possessed me—and I retired into the small cabin to weep unseen. Before long, a tossing of the boat announced the awful presence of the sea, and soon after I realized what seasickness meant.

We arrived at Hong Kong the next morning. It was a wonderful place to me. I never wearied with gazing at the vessels, which were of all sorts and all nationalities. The foreigners too were strange sights. How I stared at them and wondered how they could move with their "straight-jackets and tight pantaloons!"

I had an adventure which I can never forget. My cousin left me behind with friends while he went to the theatre. I inwardly rebelled at this treatment, and, against the advice of the people at the store where we stayed, set out in that strange place to find the theatre, taking the money which my mother had given me to buy a ticket. I walked quite a distance, stopping frequently to gaze at the show windows and at the foreigners, till I came upon one at last. Although I had seen theatrical performances before, I had never been in a permanent theatre, so I was determined to enjoy my new experience. But alas! no enjoyment came to me. I felt uneasy the whole time and looked over the auditory to see if my cousin was there. But he was nowhere to be seen. Scared and trembling for the consequences, I left the building before the grand climax when one hero was to distinguish himself by killing another and went my way back to the store. My cousin returned before long and, being informed of my escapade, gave me a sound whipping. In two days we went on board a steamer and arrived at Shanghai after a four days' journey from Hong Kong, without any incident or accident.

CHAPTER XI

HOW I PREPARED FOR AMERICA

On our arrival at Shanghai, my cousin took me to see our aunt whose husband was a compradôr in an American tea warehouse. A compradôr is usually found in every foreign *hong* or firm. He acts as interpreter and also as agent for the company. He has a corps of accountants called *shroffs*, assistants and workmen under him.

My uncle was rich and lived in a fine house built after European models. It was there that I first came in immediate contact with Western civilization. But it was a long time before I got used to those red-headed and tight-jacketed foreigners. “How can they walk or run?” I asked myself curiously contemplating their close and confining garments. The dress of foreign ladies was still another mystery to me. They shocked my sense of propriety also, by walking arm-in-arm with the men. “How peculiar their voices are! how screechy! how sharp!” Such were some of the thoughts I had about those peculiar people.

A few days after, I was taken to the Tung Min Kuen, or Government School, where I was destined to spend a whole year, preparatory to my American education. It was established by the government and was in charge of a commissioner, a deputy-commissioner, two teachers of Chinese, and two teachers of English. The building was quite spacious, consisting of two stories. The large schoolroom, library, dining rooms and kitchen occupied the first floor. The offices, reception room and dormitories were overhead. The square tables of the teachers of Chinese were placed at each end of the schoolroom; between them were oblong tables and stools of the pupils.

I was brought into the presence of the commissioners and teachers; and having performed my *kow-tow* to each, a seat was assigned me among my mates, who scanned me with a good deal of curiosity. It was afternoon, and the Chinese lessons were being recited. So while they looked at me through the corners of their eyes, they were also attending to their lessons with as much vim and voice as they could command. Soon recitations were over, not without one or two pupils being sent back to their seats to study their tasks over again, a few blows being administered to stimulate the intellect and quicken memory.

At half-past four o’clock, school was out and the boys, to the number of forty, went forth to play. They ran around, chased each other and wasted their cash on fruits and confections. I soon made acquaintance with some of them, but I did not experience any of the hazing and bullying to which new pupils in American and English schools are subject. I found that there were two parties among the boys. I joined one of them and had many friendly encounters with the rival party. As in America, we had a great deal of generous emulation, and consequently much boasting of the prizes and honors won by the rival societies. Our chief amusements were sight-seeing, shuttle-cock-kicking and penny-guessing.

Supper came at six when we had rice, meats and vegetables. Our faces invariably were washed after supper in warm water. This is customary. Then the lamps were lighted; and when the teachers came down, full forty pairs of lungs were at work with lessons of next day. At eight o’clock, one of the teachers read and explained a long extract from Chinese history, which, let me assure you, is replete with interest. At nine o’clock we were sent to our beds. Nothing ever happened of special interest. I remember that we used to talk till pretty late, and that some of the nights I spent there were not of the pleasantest kind because I was haunted by the fear of spirits.

After breakfast the following morning we assembled in the same schoolroom to study our English lessons. The teacher of this branch was a Chinese gentleman who learned his English at Hong Kong. The first thing to be done with me was to teach me the alphabet. When the teacher grew tired he set some advanced pupils to teach me. The letters sounded rather funny, I must say. It took me two days to learn them. The letter *R* was the hardest one to pronounce, but I soon learned to give it, with a peculiar roll of the tongue even. We were taught to read and write English and managed by means of primers and phrase-books to pick up a limited knowledge of the language. A year thus passed in study and pastime. Sundays were given to us to spend as holidays.

It was in the month of May when we were examined in our English studies and the best thirty were selected to go to America, their proficiency in Chinese, their general deportment and their record also being taken into account.

There was great rejoicing among our friends and kindred. For the cadet's gilt button and rank were conferred on us, which, like the first literary degree, was a step towards fortune, rank and influence. Large posters were posted up at the front doors of our homes, informing the world in gold characters of the great honor which had come to the family.

We paid visits of ceremony to the *Tautai*, chief officer of the department, and to the American consul-general, dressed in our official robes and carried in fine carriages. By the first part of June, we were ready for the ocean journey. We bade our friends farewell with due solemnity, for the thought that on our return after fifteen years of study abroad half of them might be dead, made us rather serious. But the sadness of parting was soon over and homesickness and dreariness took its place, as the steamer steamed out of the river and our native country grew indistinct in their twilight.

CHAPTER XII

FIRST EXPERIENCES IN AMERICA

After a stormy voyage of one week, with the usual accompaniment of seasickness, we landed at Yokohama, in the Country of the Rising Sun. For Japan means “sun-origin.” The Japanese claim to be descendants of the sun, instead of being an off-shoot of the Chinese race.

During the four days on shore we young Chinese saw many strange things; the most remarkable being the steam engine. We were told that those iron rails running parallel for a long distance were the “fire-car road.” I was wondering how a car could run on them, and driven by fire, too, as I understood it, when a locomotive whizzed by, screeching and ringing its bell. That was the first iron-horse we had ever seen, and it made a profound impression on us. We made a number of other remarkable and agreeable discoveries. We were delighted to learn that the Japanese studied the same books as we and worshiped our Confucius, and that we could converse with them in writing, pretty much as deaf and dumb people do. We learned that the way they lived and dressed was like that in vogue in the time of Confucius. Their mode of dressing their hair and their custom of sitting on mats laid on the floor is identical with ancient Chinese usage.

When our brief stay came to an end, we went aboard the steamer *City of Peking*, which reached San Francisco in nineteen days. Our journey across the Pacific was made in the halcyon weather. The ocean was as gentle as a lamb for the most part, although at times it acted in such a way as to suggest a raging lion.

San Francisco in 1873 was the paradise of the self-exiled Chinese. We boys who came to study under the auspices of the Chinese government and under the protection of the American eagle, were objects of some attention from the press. Many of its representatives came to interview us.

The city impressed my young imagination with its lofty buildings—their solidity and elegance. The depot with its trains running in and out was a great attraction. But the “modern conveniences” of gas and running water and electric bells and elevators were what excited wonder and stimulated investigation.

Nothing occurred on our Eastward journey to mar the enjoyment of our first ride on the steam cars—excepting a train robbery, a consequent smash-up of the engine, and the murder of the engineer. We were quietly looking out of the windows and gazing at the seemingly interminable prairies when the train suddenly bounded backward, then rushed forward a few feet, and, then meeting some resistance, started back again. Then all was confusion and terror. Pistol-shots could be made out above the cries of frightened passengers. Women shrieked and babies cried. Our party, teachers and pupils, jumped from our seats in dismay and looked out through the windows for more light on the subject. What we saw was enough to make our hair stand on end. Two ruffianly men held a revolver in each hand and seemed to be taking aim at us from the short distance of forty feet or thereabouts. Our teachers told us to crouch down for our lives. We obeyed with trembling and fear. Doubtless many prayers were most fervently offered to the gods of China at the time. Our teachers certainly prayed as they had never done before. One of them was overheard calling upon all the gods of the Chinese Pantheon to come and save him. In half an hour the agony and suspense were over. A brakeman rushed through with a lamp in his hand. He told us that the train had been robbed of its gold bricks, by five men, three of whom, dressed like Indians, rifled the baggage car while the others held the passengers at bay; that the engine was hopelessly wrecked, the engineer killed; that the robbers had escaped on horseback with their booty; and that men had been sent to the nearest telegraph station to “wire” for another engine and a supply of workmen. One phase of American civilization was thus indelibly fixed upon our minds.

We reached Springfield, Mass., in due time, where we were distributed among some of the best families in New England. As liberal provision having been made for our care by the Chinese government, there was no difficulty in finding nice people to undertake our “bringing-up,” although I now know that a philanthropic spirit must have inspired all who assumed the responsibility of our training and education. We were assigned two by two; and it was my good fortune to be put into the hands of a most motherly lady in Springfield. She came after us in a hack. As I was pointed out to her, she put her arms around me and kissed me. This made the rest of the boys laugh, and perhaps I got rather red in the face; however, I would say nothing to show my embarrassment. But that was the first kiss I ever had had since my infancy.

Our first appearance in an American household must have been a funny occurrence to its members. We were dressed in our full Chinese costume, consisting of cue, satin shoes, skull-cap, silk gown, loose jacket and white linen blouse. We were both thirteen years of age, but smaller than American boys at eleven.

Sunday came. After lunch, the lady and her son came up to our room to tell us to get ready to go to Sabbath school with them. We knew very little English at the time. The simplest Anglo-Saxon words were still but slightly known to us. We caught the word “school” only. We supposed that at last our ordeal in an American school was at hand. We each took a cloth-wrapper and began to tie up a pile of books with it, *à la Chinoise*, when our guardians, returning, made us understand by signs and otherwise that no books were needed.

Well, we four set out, passed Court Square, and walked up the steps of the First Church.

“It is a church,” said my companion in Chinese.

We were confirmed in our suspicions on peeking in and seeing the people rise to sing. “Church! church!” we muttered, and rushed from the edifice with all the speed we could command. We did not stop till we got into our room, while our American friends, surprised at this move on our part and failing to overtake us, went back to the church.

We learned English by object-lessons. At table we were always told the names of certain dishes, and then assured that if we could not remember the name we were not to partake of that article of food. Taught by this method, our progress was rapid and surprising.