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# THE LOTUS.

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# THE LOTUS. ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁ ❁

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## WHEN FANCY DREAMS A DREAM.

HENRY E. LOWER.

When Fancy dreams a dream and sees a haven  
Where Love may anchor his ethereal bark,  
And step upon a fairy-land all paven  
With violets and anemones—a park  
Where beauty reigns supreme, where love and life  
Are one;—when Fancy dreams and wakes to find  
The world neglectful, filled with selfish strife,  
Her sobbing plaints are like the doleful wind  
That weeps among the trees when summer dies.  
My fancy is myself; when I awake  
To find my dreams are only dreams, my sighs  
Reproach my trembling soul for its mistake.  
I brood on worldly ways until it seems  
That life and love are only one in dreams.

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## A LOVE-STORY OF THE ORIENT.

SUI SEEN FAR.



WO men were carrying a coffin slung with ropes to a pole. Within the coffin was the corpse of an old man sitting in an upright position—a cloth was bound around its head and a few straggling gray locks fluttered in the breeze; the eyes were closed; the expression on the face was that of calm contempt. Six shaven yellow-robed priests, crooning a monotonous death-chant, followed. This was in the heart of an Eastern forest.

The procession halted in front of a small building surrounded by cryptomeria; one of the priests swung open an iron door and disclosed to view a large oven; he muttered a few words and the men who carried the coffin thrust it into the oven and piled around it a quantity of wood. To this they set fire and closed the door.

The priests moved a short distance off and commenced chanting again. In about an hour's time the oven was opened and some ashes and unconsumed bones were raked out, placed in an earthen vessel, and carried away. The priests returned to their monastery, but as they left the spot where they had consigned their brother to ashes, one, almost a boy, said to the portly brother who walked beside him:

"I am filled with ardent curiosity concerning the life in the world of him who has at last attained to perfection. 'T is said you know his history."

"Hush! speak not so loud," admonished the portly one, "but to-night when all the rest are sleeping or praying, come you to my cell and I will tell you the life-story of Ku Lau.

A LOVE-  
STORY OF  
THE  
ORIENT.

The little cell in which the monk Tai Shun was supposed to fast and do penance presented an inviting appearance at the midnight hour. A dark red cloth was draped over the iron bars, and bowls of rice, minced pork, chicken, and two small jugs of samshu set on a little table caused the young priest to hesitate and look around in a scared way before entering.

Tai Shun motioned to a cushioned seat.

"I dare not," said Yenfoh, regarding with longing and yet frightened eyes the table. "Are we not taught that the consumption of anything that has had animal life is a sinful act and that he should abstain who hopes to sit upon a lotus flower when transmigration shall cease, gazing for all eternity upon Buddha?"

"My son," replied Tai Shun, "when you have lived a little longer, you will know that people seldom practice what they preach—besides, if we were actually to follow out the theory of abstaining from animal food, we should have to reject all sustenance whatsoever, for the water and vegetables which you have been taught to regard as proper food for those who desire to be pure, are full of living things."

Thus speaking, Tai Shun lifted with one hand his own chopsticks and with his other tendered a pair to Yenfoh, who finally yielded to temptation.

When the last tiny bowlful of samshu had been tested, Tai Shun said:

"Fifty years ago Ku Lau was one of the handsomest youths in Suchau, in the province of the Happy River, and Mae, the daughter of Wong T'sae, was above all the maidens the loveliest in the land of lovely women.

"How these two came to love one another I am unable to say, but this I know, when Ku Lau was sent to finish his studies at the Imperial College in Peking, he carried in his sleeve one of Mae's tiny golden shoes.

"Ku Lau's family were poor, but he was a remarkably clever youth and had earned his own college expenses. It was his ambition to gain the third literary degree, after which he hoped to be appointed a teacher in one of the schools in his own province and receive a salary.

"Mae's father was a wealthy merchant."

Here the old priest produced a small box, unlocked it, and took therefrom two letters, yellowed by age; the tracing of the characters on one was much finer than on the other, but both had evidently been written by persons skilled in the use of the hair pencil.

"These letters are one from Ku Lau to Mae and the other from Mae to Ku Lau," said Tai Shun.

"Where did you get them?" asked Yenfoh.

"This is Ku Lau's," went on Tai Shun, ignoring the question. "Now, listen," and taking up the epistle which bore the heaviest characters, he began:

"My dearest friend and my heart's love,—I hope your sweet and beautiful self is well in mind and body. I am

working hard and have many new and difficult branches of study to master, but if for a moment I lay down my book or pen or pencil, I see your face before me, giving me courage and hope. For your sake I rejoice in the thought of success; for your sake I dread failure.

"I often ask myself whether I deserve my fate. If, before I had met you, I had been married by my father to some girl chosen by him and to me unknown, to what a dull existence I should have been doomed! for there is no joy or life where there is no love, and there is no love in such marriages.

"It is love which causes the tender interest and sympathy between us two. Do I not find happiness in reading your letters, which tell us what you do, what you say, what you think—and am I not assured that it never wearies you to hear from me? That is love.

"I have now the happiness to inform you that the literary Chancellor has seen fit to single me out as one of the best competitors and I see that I rank high on the list which has been posted up of the comparative merits of the compositions. They also give me credit for writing four verses during the burning of the candle, which, indeed, I found an easy task, you being my inspiration.

"Some of the other students are sending in their cards as an expression of thanks to the high Mandarin who presided at the examination, but I shall not follow their example, for this Mandarin is a very ignorant man. I laugh in my sleeve when he pompously puts questions to me, knowing that he himself could not tell whether they are answered rightly or wrongly. He is said to have obtained his office by purchase.

"Do you remember me writing to you of one of my classmates, a very brilliant fellow named Wong Chow? He has been banished from College because it was discovered that his great-grandfather was a play actor. It seems that any one related to a person who has earned his living as an actor is not permitted to aspire for literary honors. I think such a rule is most unjust. Wong was the cleverest student in the College.

"I am tired of the "Five Classics" and the "Four Books." I wish so much importance were not given to these studies. I prefer mathematics, which branch of learning is little regarded by the teachers.

"However, I must do my best to please those in authority, for thus shall I hasten our union.

"Ah! Mae, will you not be proud when you behold your Ku Lau with the gold flowers in his hat and the red sash. 'T is then I shall kneel before my father and say: "Choose no wife for your son, for his heart has already chosen;" then you will approach, and your sweetness and gentleness will win my father and your father also to say: "Let it be as our children wish."

"And now with lingering pen I say farewell. Forever with you is the heart of your  
Ku Lau.

"P. S.—If you wish to see me now or at any time, send word by the carrier-dove and I will come. Do you want me? Say yes."



A LOVE-  
STORY OF  
THE  
ORIENT.

During the reading of this letter Yenfoh's youthful face had assumed a sad and earnest expression. Was he regretting a joy renounced before revealed?

"Would you care to hear the woman's letter?" enquired Tai Shun.

"Yes, ahl yes."

Then the old priest read:

"Beloved,—I am full of fears of I know not what. You will smile when you read this, but when the other day I found the leaves of the beautiful rose geranium you gave me becoming of an unpleasant hue and all the blossoms withering, I cried until sundown—my heart felt so heavy and sad.

"The owl, which our people call "the constable from the dark land," has also been giving warning of some approaching calamity. Last night I heard its cry, faint and indistinct as though afar off.

"Oh, hasten back to me, my dear one—I need your presence—without the warmth of your smile I cannot live. Do you think of me? The sing-song girls, they who laugh and dance and sing and paint their faces—do they ever cause you to forget your Mae. Sometimes I fear me that your heart may change and that another may be dearer than I have been. Let me hear at once if it be not even now so. Let me hear so I may die.

"But I am foolish and wicked to write thus—forgive me, forgive me.

"So you are meeting with success in your studies. I rejoice with you. Did I not always believe that you could achieve all that you attempted? How proud I am—how happy! I entreat you to remain at Pekin until the final examination. You must not think of leaving now. Such an act would be madness, and I should never forgive myself were I to stand in the way of your success. But I live in the thought of your return. What a day that will be! Oh, I think my heart will stop beating with rapture!

"A man who has had his ability recognized in a province not his own is always afterwards very highly appreciated and made much of by his own people. I have heard my father say so. He says also that a man may have the wisdom of a god, but until he proves it in a strange city his own people will regard him as a fool. Yes, you will rise to be a man of influence and honor, and you will be a just man and will not use your rank and power to oppress the people as father says so many officers do.

"Of myself, there is little to say. I walk with my mother and cousins in the morning; I sew and embroider in the afternoon, and Sung Sung tells me fairy tales, and sometimes my father makes me read some of the writings of Confutze. He wishes me to have more learning than my cousins, and though I have no taste for study, I will try to be a wise woman for your sake. Ah! for your sake, what would I not do?

Mae.

"It seems," continued Tai Shun, "that shortly after Mae sent this letter, her parents agreed with the parents of Ku Lau



to betroth their children—that is, the parents had decided to do what, unbeknown to them, the children had done for themselves.

“Mae was told by her father that he had betrothed her to a very worthy young man, and a letter was written to Ku Lau apprising him that a bride awaited his coming.

“Ku Lau received the tidings with a happy heart—he had been given the name of his prospective bride. Mae, who had only been told that she was to wed her father’s choice and who never dreamt that his choice would be her own, wept bitterly, and wrote a pitiful note telling her lover of her father’s wishes, and ending with ‘Oh, what shall I do?’

“Ku Lau, exulting in his knowledge and smiling whilst he wrote, answered: ‘Marry the man whom your father has chosen for you.’

“So it came to pass that the morning after her carrier-dove had fluttered with its message into Mae’s room, she was found dead. Her lover’s thoughtless jest had caused her to believe that he no longer loved her and was willing that she should be claimed by another.

“Her parents mourned and sent the news to Ku Lau. He returned home raving, and after the wildness of his grief had spent itself, a deep melancholy settled upon his mind; he gave up all his brilliant prospects and entered our monastery, where he has remained for half a century, spending his time almost entirely in his own cell.

“This is the story of Ku Lau, a priest of whom the Brotherhood is proud, for whilst the majority of us seek the seclusion of a monastery in order to avoid arrest and punishment for crimes or in consequence of adversity in business, Ku Lau banished himself voluntarily from a world which found no fault with him.”

“And he became a true priest of Buddha,” murmured Yenfoh dreamily—the samshu was beginning to affect him. “Through years of complete mental abstraction and yearning after perfection he was indeed purified from all human sentiments.”

“It is supposed so,” replied Tai Shun; “but sometimes whilst passing his way I have heard the whispered name of her who died, and have questioned, ‘Is his mind indeed given to Buddha, or can it be that he has sought the solitude of a cell in order to be able to think, undisturbed, on his lost love?’”

