



A CHINESE SHORT STORY FROM A CHINESE PEN

ILLUSTRATIONS BY CHARLES F. LESTER



WHEN I first come to America I not bring my wife with me. All the time I be in America when she not come I work hard, and I do pretty good business. I have fine store. I have two nice room behind store. I invite my friend come see me. I very

good time; smoke, play cards, have plenty to eat, and not no trouble. I never talk no

lady, but the lady come ask me to go to Sunday school.

My wife in China, she live with my parents. She very nice wife. I marry her one day before I come China. When I see her after I marry her, I say: "Now I go away, but you want come with me, I take you." She say: "You be young, but your parent, they be old. After they go way, I plenty time see you, but I never see them no more if I go away with you."

I say: "That be very proper. I be

young, and my parents be old. It is the old parents that must be looked after by the young wife."

So I come to America, and I try to make big fortune, but I make little one. The little fortune not so much account as the big fortune, but I content, because it be only the very foolish man who be not content with that much he has.

Fifteen years go by, and my wife she write to me that my parents they both die, so I send for my wife to come to me, for I not want go back to China for five, ten, fifteen more years. My friend, Hom Lock, he send for his wife same time.

One day my wife arrive, and so also the wife of Hom Lock, and so I go with Hom Lock to the station to get the women all right. The conductor, he put them off the car in good shape, and Hom Lock he walk up to my wife and he say, "I think you be my wife;" but I be more discreet, and I say to his wife, "What is the name of your husband?" and she answer me, "My husband's name, it is Hom Lock." So we fix thing all right, and my wife she look at me and she say she know me after she hear my name. We get fine carriage and we drive to the house. I talk much to Hom Lock, and Hom Lock talk much to me; but the women, they not say one word. I say, "That proper be-

haviour for the wife of Chinaman," and they not say one word more. When we get to my house, I take my wife from the carriage, but Hom Lock house be more far than mine, so he stay in carriage. My wife, she not move after I put her on the sidewalk, and when I say "Come on," she not "Come on." I look at her, and I see her eyes, they run after the carriage and the wife of Hom Lock, and the eyes of the wife of Hom Lock, they run back to where my wife be. When the carriage I no more can see I say again, "Come on," and my wife she speak this: "It is so long that I not see you that your body I not remember; but the body of my friend, Achuen, it has been with me for many days, and I feel now that she is gone as if it was a third arm that I had lost."

I say: "The spirit be more than the body. The husband be more than the friend."

She smile when I say that, and she come into the house. The first thing she see be the cat, and she be so please that she laugh. Then she look all over the place, and her eyes see everything—not one place they not see.

All the time she look at place I look at her, and I see that her eyes be long and black, her nose like the jadestone that is carved fine, her mouth same as the red vine leaf, her eyebrow arch, and her figure have the roundness of the moon. She be thirty years old, but she look not more twenty. I well satisfied with what I see, and I order for a big dinner to be brought in.

For one year my wife live with me in content, and I be comfortable. The cat it be content and comfortable too. It be very fine cat. It not eat fish or flesh that is gone, and it catch plenty little rat and mice.

The lady from the Sunday school she come teach my wife speak English more good I speak. My wife she very quick to learn all



It be very fine cat.



"I think you be my wife."

thing. Time go by. The lady from the Sunday school she bring more American lady see my wife, and they talk much. Sometime the wife of Hom Lock she come too, and sometime my wife go see her. One day I come in the house I hear six woman tongue run very fast. When the other woman go, I say to my wife that the silent tongue be more to be admired than the ever-wagging one. My wife, she answer: "What for then you wag yours?" I very much surprise, but I not say nothing to that, for it is not for the man who is respect worthy to argue with women or children; but I be much disquieted in mind, for I think the American woman, that the Sunday school teacher bring with her, talk much foolish talk that is not good for the Chinese woman to hear or keep behind her forehead. Before the American woman come to see my wife, my wife she take reproof quietly, and not answer back, and she obey me without ask question.

Then I think that perhaps it be my fault that my wife answer me not proper. Perhaps I not be reserve enough with her. I not be scholar, but I not be low-class Chinaman, and I learn in the book of Confucius that if you are familiar with women and servants they lose their humility.

The next day I say to my wife: "Put on your purple silk embroidered tunic. To-day you go out with me." My

wife, she say: "What place we go?" I say: "That no matter to you. Do what I speak to you." Then my wife she say: "You not tell me what place we go to, I not get ready." I take no notice that speech. I smoke my pipe with complacence. The woman feel more bad I not answer her than if I speak loud all the time. I wait for my wife to get dress, but she not get dress. She go out into the yard to get some wood to light fire. Soon she come back making loud noise, and there is some water on her head. She call with high voice: "Wing Sing, you go and beat man upstairs, he throw the water on my head." I say: "How I know the man upstairs throw the water on your head with intent?" She say again: "He threw the water on my head. Go beat him." I say: "I not can go beat him if I not know he throw the water on your head with intent. Perhaps it be accident."

Then my wife she scream, and she cry very loud, and she say I no courage, and call me the word "Coward," and talk much talk that I think the American woman put into her mind.

All the time the cat come rub its head on my foot and then on hers.

My wife tongue go on babbling foolishness, and I take my hat and I go out to have a game of cards with friend.

It is late when I get back, and all the place seem very still. Everywhere I look I not see my wife nor the cat. Long time I wait. I think I go see Hom Lock. Hom Lock he tell me his wife say that my wife go stay with American lady because my wife not think I treat her proper. I say: "What for my wife not think I treat her proper? I give her plenty to eat. I not no beat her." Hom Lock he shook his head, and he say: "The white woman not good friend for the Chinese woman. What she say to her make the wife insubordinate, and cause much trouble. I not let the American woman come to my house no more."

Hom Lock wife she say that my wife drive off in carriage with all her ring and her earrings, and the cat it sit beside her and wash it face.

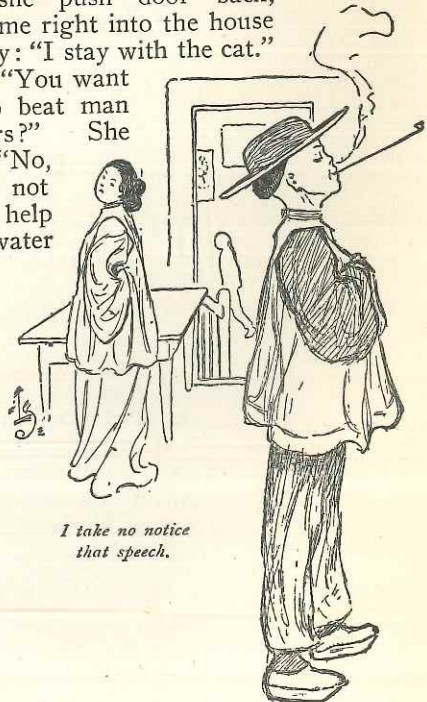
I say: "I be very sorry that the cat it go. It be much comfort to me."

The night and the next day it pass, and I not see my wife. Lee Chu make me big dinner, and I eat, but I not know the taste of what I eat. I not care go out. It become dark. I say to myself: "It be too bad that the cat is gone."

Many hours I reflect, and my heart it is so heavy that I not can walk, and I not can lift myself out of my chair till I hear something scratch, scratch, scratch. I open the door. It is the cat. I very glad. I shut the door. I sit down. The cat jump on my knee. I say: "The good cat, it always like the home."

The cat slip down on its feet, and it go to the chair my wife sit in and it rub its head against the leg, and it "Me-ow," "Me-ow," "Me-ow." It make much noise. I say, "The foolish cat," and I open the door to put it out. Then I see my wife stand outside, and she say: "I come for the cat. It not stay in the American lady house." I take fast hold of the cat, and I say: "You not can have the cat." She say: "It is too sad for me to be without the cat. You give it me." I say "No," and I begin close door. Then my wife she push door back, and come right into the house and say: "I stay with the cat."

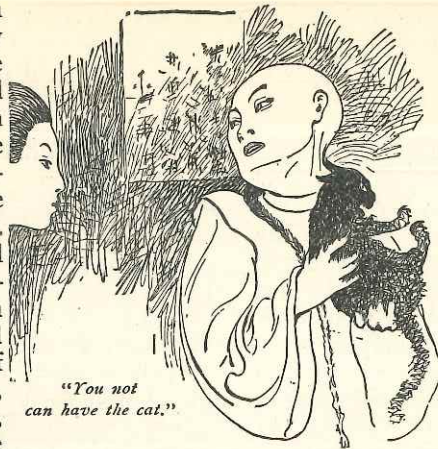
I say: "You want me go beat man upstairs?" She say: "No, for he not could help the water fall."



*I take no notice
that speech.*

This all happen long time ago. My wife never no more leave me again, and the American woman that come with the Sunday school teacher I never no more see her at my house. One day my wife tell me that the American woman teach her that the husband should take advice of wife for all things, and if he not do that, it be proper that the wife should leave him, and that the wife that obey the husband without ask question very foolish woman.

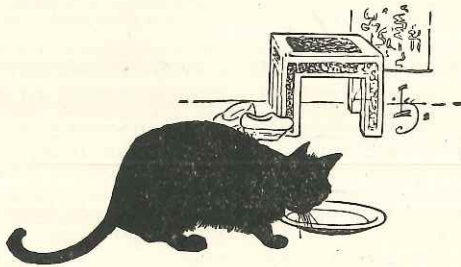
I say: "If the woman not obey the man, there be much confusion in the house, for when there are two together,



one must be head and one must be foot, and it is not for the woman to be head."

I ask my wife what the American woman say when she see that my wife leave me, and my wife say: "I think she think I too much trouble, and after I be in her house one night, she not speak same as she speak before. She tell me

that the wife should stay with the husband all the time. That made me feel too bad, and I say to her, 'I think I one big fool,' and the cat it run away and come to you, and I come get cat. I not leave cat any more."



THE BUTTERFLY

THE summer long a bright and careless rover,
A gay Bohemian of the world of flowers,
All reckless of a world bereft of clover,
Content, he danced away the hours.

A scorner of the drudging bee's employment,
A scoffer at the brown ant's thrifty zeal,
An idler, bent was he on mad enjoyment,
Imprudent of the future's woe or weal.

Ah, well-a-day, with rose and clover banished,
And blight of death upon each hectic leaf,
He who would sport away the summer vanished,
Dies starving on a chill sere autumn sheaf.

—Caroline Wetherell.