CHINATOWN BALLADS

WALLACE IRWIN

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CHINATOWN BALLADS

"Kep' old Wang on the anxious seat
And the slant-eyed dudes in a constant stir."

Chinatown Ballads

By

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"Love Sonnets of a Hoodlum"

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To the City of Dreams that has passed again
to the magic box of the Dreamer this collection
of rhymed memories is affectionately dedicated

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And the slant-eyed dudes in a constant stir." *Frontispiece*

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YOUNG MR. YAN

YOUNG MR. YAN

YU can take a Chink away from 'is hop,
'Is lanterns an' gals an' pigs an' chop,
Yu can dress 'im up in yer Christian clo'es,
Put texts in 'is head an' hymns in 'is nose,
But yu'll find, when he's actin' a dead straight part,
He's a Chinaman still in 'is yeller heart.

Lend me a dime, boss—thank yu kind.
Not for opium, d'yu mind,
But a man must eat. Yes, young Mr. Yan
Was raised by hand on the mission plan—
'Merican talk an' 'Merican dress.
Wore 'em proper? I should say yes.

Yan got anxious to be a toff,
So he took 'is blouse an' 'is pigtail off.
Wore pink cuffs an' purple ties,
English overcoats, gentlemen's size,
Ready-shine shoes like the 'ristocrats,
Auburn gloves an' Panama hats.

Wasn't a dude on the Frisco line
Had pants more creased or a coat more fine.
Often I seen him—whole she-bang—
Struttin' at night through the coolie gang
Where the punk-smoke blew from the joss-
house nigh
An' the little Chink fiddles squeaked long an'
high.

Yan's old man was a Canton Chink;
Stuck to 'is joss like meat an' drink.
Long silk skirt an' little black queue,
He prayed to 'is father—believed it, too—
So he didn't take stock in the mission school
An' spoke of 'is son as a "hip big fool."

Old man Yan kept a lottery-shack—
Restaurant front an' game out back,
Sat at 'is desk an' glared through 'is specs
At the guides an' the tourist rubbernecks,
As proud as a god an' rich as a Jew
(For reasons that him an' the Sargeant
knew).

The Chiny gals of the felt-shoe sort
Wasn't for young Mr. Yan, the sport.

He ran with a gal named Miss Ah Ti;
Shirt-waist lady with hair fluffed high
An' French-heeled shoes on 'er little feet—
Lived with white folks on Washington Street.

Civilized pair they was an' grand.
She played the pianna to beat the band
While Yan sang "Vilets" an' "Promus Me"
In a chop-suey tenor that reached high Z.
They spoke good English an' grammar, too,
'Most as proper as me an' you.

Old man Yan, when he heard the news,
He jumped plum out of 'is gunboat shoes,
For he'd bought Yan a wife in Chinytown—
Eight hundred dollars—fifty down
An' a hundred more for a marriage-feast.
It was disappointin' to say the least.

So he sent for 'is offspring after a while
An' yippi-ki-yi-ed in high old style,
But the boy got sassy an' said that they
Would skip an' git married in San José.
That was the night that the Yups broke out
For the highbinder killin' you read about.

It's a long tale, boss, how the row began
That set 'em to gunnin' for old man Yan.
They'd given the job to a moon-faced boy,
A genius for killin', named Ng Ah Poy,
Who went to the Clay Street lottery-shop
An' found the old gentleman smokin' 'is hop.

'Twas an easy job—jest a single shot
That tumbled the smoker out of 'is cot,
Where dead as a pig on the floor he lay—
Murderer, whisked by 'is friends away,
Sank like the ghost of a pipe-dream, down
Into the cellars of Chinytown.

Young Mr. Yan? When they come an' said
That the shake was up an' 'is dad was dead,
It was easy to see he had clean fergot
'Is ancestor worship an' all that rot—
Say, how can a Christian un'erstand
When a Chinaman smuggles a gun in 'is hand?

. . . . .

'Twas Waverley Place on a Sunday night.
As I talked with Kelley by yonder light
A bunch of coolies tumbled pellmell
Out of the Wong Fook fan-tan hell,

An' right in their midst came a short-haired swell
With a Christian hat an' a Christian shell.

Somp'n was doin'. The crowd closed thick
As the grip o' death. Then there barked out quick
The forty-eight calibre *bang—bang—bang!*
And a dead man tumbled out of the gang.
He was a innocent, moon-faced boy,
The genius for killin', named Ng Ah Poy.

The watchman's whistle piped over the square—
The cops came lopin' from everywhere;
Chinks began to scatter an' climb
Forty directions at a time,
Into the basements, into doors,
Into the stairways over stores.

Young Mr. Yan with 'is smokin' gun
Led the crowd in the general run.
See that joss-house? Turned up short
Into yon little, black, greasy court,
Where he sunk like the ghost of a pipe-dream, down
Into the cellars of Chinytown.

YOUNG MR. YAN

What has became of young Mr. Yan?
You can take a Chink away from 'is fan,
Away from 'is lotteries, fiddles, an' joss,
Yu can give 'is queue to the barber, boss;
But yu can't git down to the roots that start
Frum the yeller base of 'is yeller heart.

YUT HO

YUT HO

GHOSTS, yu ask, in Chinytown? Say,
ther ain't no moon to-night,
An' the alley here is dark—let's
move over to the light.
Did yu see 'er? No, the one wit' the blos-
som in 'er hair—
Kind o' sidle t'rough the crowd, kind o' fade
up yonder stair
Wit' 'er flat eyes showin' white, on 'er lips a
bloody stain—
Yes, I've been a-smokin' hop and the devil's
in me brain—
But the Chinee ghosts is out, and I seen 'er,
seen 'er plain!

. . . . .

'Twas a shadder? Yes, perhaps. I have
orfen seen 'em so,
And the little one that passed was the shad-
der of Yut Ho,
Her that was a Christian slave, daughter of
the merchant, Kwan,

Sam Yup boss, who ruled the roost till he
dropped 'is wealth at *fan*,
Died in pious peace and left 'is fat widow fer
to pay
Fer cold storage on 'is bones w'en they
shipped the box away
To be planted in the tombs w'ere 'is dads and
granddads lay.

Now the mother, Luey Sing, wit' 'er little
porky eyes
Figgered up the girl, Yut Ho, as a piece o'
merchandise,
Thinkin' how the cash on hand to be netted
on the same
Would pay off the honest debts Kwan had
left behind the game.
So she made a sing-song talk wit' the dealer,
Wong Tin Gay,
Till he promised on 'is joss he would call
around next day
Wit' a t'ousand dollars cash, jest to take the
girl away.

Yut Ho, squattin' in 'er room, seen the dealer
come, and heard
All the chin-chin down below—understood it
every word;

"Found a ladder to the ground w'ere
she glided down, then fleet
As a bird she sought the door o' the
Mission up the Street."

And she gathered what she owned in a green
silk handkerchief,
Raised the skylight of 'er room and crept
quiet as a thief
T'rough the frame, along the tiles, 'cross the
roof wit' padded feet,
Found a ladder to the ground w'ere she
glided down, then fleet
As a bird she sought the door o' the Mission
up the street.

So the Mission Lady came and she found 'er
at the door
Bobbin' like a j'inted doll till 'er *saam* sleeves
touched the floor,
Sayin' over as she dipped, like a lesson, very
slow,
All the English words she knew: "Melly
Clistmas—me Yut Ho."
Then her green silk handkerchief she untied
and brought to view
What she owned: a ring o' jade and a pitcher
fer *sam shu,*
And a little candy heart stamped in English,
"I Love You."

Well, the Lady understood and the Mission
took 'er in;

But the mother, Luey Sing, bein' old in years and sin,
Vowed to git 'er daughter back, even if she had to raise
All the Eight Immortal Ones and the High Six Companies,
So she offered Yung Ho-eng, blackmail expert, Hop Sing man,
Half the value of the girl if he'd smoke 'er up a plan,
Somp'n smooth—and that's the time that the tunnel-work began.

Two years passed, a deal o' time w'en a girl is seventeen
(Courtin' time fer any girl, be she yeller, white, or green);
So the Mission Lady looked fer a decent Chinee lad
As would take 'er to 'is home and as wouldn't treat 'er bad—
Two years! what the hell are *they* to the yeller race—as cold
As the idols that they feed wit' ther rice-cakes and ther gold
To appease ther wooden hearts, shriveled tight—and oh, how old!

YUT HO

Yut Ho, bein' trained and taught, was a-gittin' civilized,
Learnin' white folks' customs, too, in a manner Christianized,
Half-believed the Bible-talks and the pious hymns, I think
(Which is plenty more sincere than the average Christian Chink);
Called the Mission school 'er home, never pinin' fer the lack
Of 'er early heathen ways—always dreadin' to go back
To the slav'ry and the sin of 'er Bartlett Alley shack.

'Bout this time ther come a Chink to the Mission Sunday-school,
Pie-faced barber, name Min Hop, godly as the Golden Rule.
He was jest a pig-tailed saint—nothin' less—in all 'is acts,
Seemed to eat the very ink off the gospel books and tracts,
Talked religion t'rough 'is hat till 'is teachers felt so free
That they smiled a happy smile w'en he calls and says, says he,

" Me heep Clistian China boy—likee Yut Ho mally me."

Sure, the Mission Lady t'ought that Min Hop was jest the stuff—
Yut Ho also seen the boy and she liked 'im well enough,
Though she had 'er own mistrusts, fer she hesitated some
W'en he asked an early date fer the weddin'-day to come.
After that Min called wit' flowers Thursday evenin' onct a week,
Sat there purrin' like a cat, somp'n wonderful how meek,
Yut Ho doin' fancy-work, much too proper-like to speak.

No one knows how it occurred—it was jest the Chinee way—
Min the barber and Yut Ho left the Mission school one day.
Yes, I seen 'em hand in hand shufflin' on wit' padded feet
T'rough the little painted lane leadin' into Jackson Street,
Wit' her green silk handkerchief holdin' all the wealt' she knew—

Jest a finger-ring o' jade and a pitcher fer *sam shu*
And a little candy heart marked in English, "I Love You."

Bartlett Alley, number twelve—see the workin' of ther plan?—
Wit' a brace o' handy pals stood Ho-eng, the Hop Sing man,
Lookin' up and down the lane from the corner of 'is eye.
Min Hop, leadin' of the girl, nudged 'im soft as he went by,
And the shadders drew in close, choked 'er, dragged 'er up a stair—
Someone shuffled down the hall and an iron door banged in there—
Chinytown, a-passin' by, seen and smiled and didn't care.

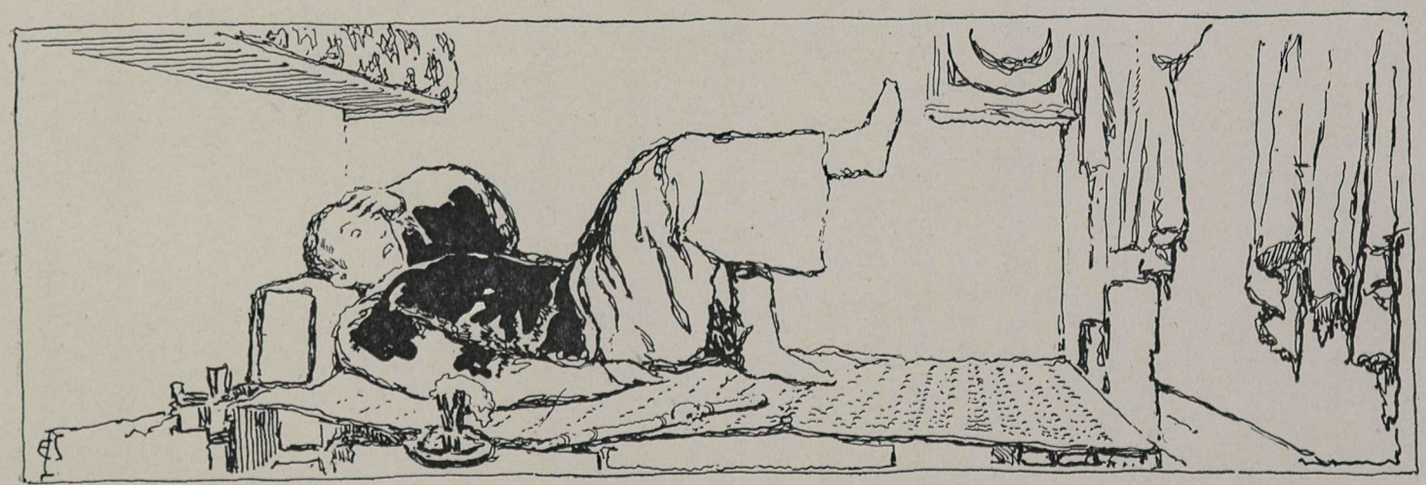
. . . . .

Bartlett Alley, number twelve—in a cellar-room behind
There's an opium-smokin' j'int buried where the cops can't find.
Yes, I've been there off and on—mostly *on* I guess, of late,
Fer the "black smoke" draws and draws till yu love the things yu hate;

Love the brown molasses string as yu pull it
frum the shell,
As it bulbs above the lamp wit' its sickish,
peanut smell
Till yu drink and drink the smoke, tastin'
heaven in its hell.

On a brown bench 'long o' mine, poppy-dead,
a smoker lay
Wit' 'is open eyes all glazed like the lacquer
on a tray.
At 'is desk ('way off it looked), the proprie-
tor, Ah Ying,
Sat a-countin' of 'is cash, passin' beads upon
a string;
Now the room seemed long and long, and
the light was like a spark;
Ying seemed threadin' colored stars on to
moonbeams t'rough the dark,
Catchin' comets by ther tails— Hello!
what's that racket?—hark!

In a room above me head I could hear a
moanin' high
Like a woman in distress callin' China-fash-
ion, "Ai-i-i-i!"
Full an hour it seemed to wail all around
me—then was still



"On a brown bench 'long o' mine, poppy dead, a smoker lay."

Till the silence creepin' in struck me clammy-
like and chill.
Som'ers in me dopy brain I could hear a
small voice say:
"That was *her,* and that was *her* that yu seen
'em steal to-day!"
Then the smoke clumb to me head and I
tumbled clean away.

. . . . .

W'en I woke and looked around, middle day-
light, gray and wide,
Filtered t'rough a greasy pane from a greasy
court outside.
Wit' the stale drug in me brain and me senses
all awhirl
Comes the memory of a sound—'twas the
night-cry of the girl
I had heard—then wit' the thrills, pins and
needles in me hair,
From the reekin' j'int I reeled, staggered to
the open air—
Bartlett Alley, number twelve, up the nar-
row, windin' stair.

Down the long, dark passage-way, gropin'
wit' me hands I steered
To a gratin' in the wall w'ere a square o'
lamplight leered.

Peepin' t'rough the prison-hole all the inside
room I seen:
China lilies in a bowl, teak-wood tables,
brown and clean,
Hangin' prayer-scrolls—as I looked a black
shadder seemed to fall
Stark and straight and human-like, up and
down across the wall—
(Shadders! ah, the shapes they take, and I
guess I've seen 'em all!)

Peerin' closer I could see to the beam above
me head
Yut Ho hangin' by 'er neck from 'er silken
waist-sash—dead.
Right before me near the lamp—could o'
touched 'em wit' me hand—
Was 'er green silk handkerchief spread out
careful on a stand
Where she'd laid wit' lovin' care all the
treasures that she knew—
Jest a finger-ring o' jade and a pitcher fer
sam shu
And a little candy heart stamped in English,
"I Love You."

. . . . .

Ghosts in Chinytown? O Gawd! if the risin'
spooks begin

Comin' in ther proper shapes wit' a ghost fer every sin,
What a beastly lot would swarm from the cellars over there,
Spotted, dragon-headed worms wit' ther queues o' human hair—
But *she* doesn't come that way when she flutters from the grave,
Fades and flickers like the breath of the little life she gave
As a heathen sacrifice with a Christian soul to save!

YOU SABE ME!

YOU SABE ME!

(The Refugee's Story.)

I

BELIEVE in Chinese Exclusion?
Well, maybe I did, before
The day of the Great Confusion
When the Quake in its wrath uptore
The roots of the town, and the Reaper
Mowed us with flame—then I saw
The faith of a Race that's deeper
Than any Exclusion Law.

Yes, I took in the politicians'
Rhetoric, buncombe, air,
Who, from their fat positions,
Mentioned "the white man's share,"
The white man's right to bully
The race with the braided queue—
Kick 'em from boat to alley,
Cheat 'em in bench and pew.

YOU SABE ME!

Bong was the name of our coolie;
Long-fingered Canton boy—
Went at his job with a truly
Pagan sort of a joy.
Serving-man, cook and waiter,
Roustabout, general slob—
That's what the Chinee-hater
Calls "taking a white man's job."

We lived in the Rincon section,
Alice, the Kid and I.
Bong was the Home Protection
And held his position high.
Gentle he was with the baby—
Never was cross or grim.
Used to explain, "Oh, maybe
I catchem lil' gal like him!"

When I left for the office early,
In the era before the Wreck,
After I'd kissed my girlie
And the Kid hung close to my neck,
Then I'd chuckle to Bong, "You Chinker,
Take care of 'em both, d'ye see?"
So the coolie would grin like a tinker
And answer, "You sabe me!"

Bong, though his head was level,
His conscience ironed to a gloss,
Rather worshipped the Devil
And sneered at the " Christian joss."
He learned from the heathen sages
A budget of useful lore,
And I found him investing his wages
In a Chinese general store.

Those years that I spent with Alice
On the hills of our merriment!
Every man's home was his palace,
(We're living now in a tent).
By the sweet bay we slumbered,
From the gay height looked down—
Who thought that our days were numbered
And hell was beneath the town?

II

I was away in Seattle.
  The earthquake rumbled through
Like the jar of a mighty battle—
  Then the news of the Horror grew.
"San Francisco is shaken—
  Half of the buildings down—
Dead from the ruins taken—
  Fire is sweeping the town!"

How I tore to the station,
  Drunk with a man's despair;
Chaos was on Creation—
  My wife and my child out there!
We squeezed in the trains like cattle
  Packed in the slaughter-stall;
And when we pulled out of Seattle
  The night was beginning to fall.

Travelling men and sailors,
  Millionaires, merchants, sports,
Two-penny clerks and tailors,
  Touts from the Coast resorts,

Spoke of their homes like brothers
  Bonded in grief—and when
I prayed, " God pity the mothers! "
  A gambler whispered, " Amen! "

Oakland! a pall of terror
  Blinded the sun on high—
The bay, like a broken mirror,
  Glared to the smoking sky.
Tattered and smoke-bedevilled
  Crowds upon crowds poured through,
Limping, insane, dishevelled—
  And the glare from the City grew.

III

Day was short. And the darkness
Out of the smoke clouds fell.
The Ferry spire stood black in the fire
Like a crag in the mouth of hell.
All night long swung the ferries,
Listed and cramped and crammed,
And all night long came the fleeing throng
Like the hosts of the haunted damned.

Twenty-four hours at the ferries
I searched the mad thousands through.
Haggard and wan I looked upon,
But never a face I knew.
Beggars, burdened with riches,
Muttered and toiled ahead—
I called aloud in the face of the crowd
Who looked with the eyes of the dead.

Then someone spoke from the thousands
With a voice that I seemed to know.
"They are safe back there on Union Square—
I saw them an hour ago.

They were warm and under cover,
Close to the Monument.
It wasn't so bad, for your Chinatown lad
Had stretched up a sheet like a tent.

"He had brought them food from the ruins,
And seemed to be keeping house.
Squat on his heels, he was cooking their meals—
The Kid was wrapped in his blouse.
His face was black from the burning,
But his grin it was good to see
When I called from the throng, 'Take care of 'em, Bong!'
And he answered, 'You sabe me!'"

This was my neighbor's story.
And well you may understand
How I could not speak till the tears from my cheek
Splashed over his outstretched hand;
And of all the pure, Christian blessings
Which pulpit and church employ,
I hope one sped to the pig-tailed head
Of my heathen Chinatown boy!

IV

One night more at the ferry.
I could see her—heaven be blessed!—
Out of the mob she came with a sob
And fainted away on my breast.
Bong sat near with the baby
Fast asleep on his knee,
And he said as he smiled and looked at the child,
"I fetchem—you sabe me!"

"HOW MUCHEE YOU PAY?"

"Beware! what proceeds from you will return to you again!"—*The Sayings of Meng Tsz'*.

"HOW MUCHEE YOU PAY?"

YU notice them carriages over the way
And the bang-gong yell inside?
They're buryin' old Lee Wo to-day
With a curse on 'is yeller hide.
They're scarin' the devil an' singein' 'is hairs
With the noise an' the smudge and the smell;
But ther scented smoke an' ther paper prayers
Can't keep old Lee from hell.

See them pale ghost-lanterns above the hacks
An' the white man's hearse at the door,
See the varnished pigs they carry in sacks
An' the funeral grub galore—
Ain't ther many a Christian flat on 'is bier
With a priest at 'is head an' feet
Jest as scart to go as the late Lee Wo
To the wrath of the Judgment Seat?

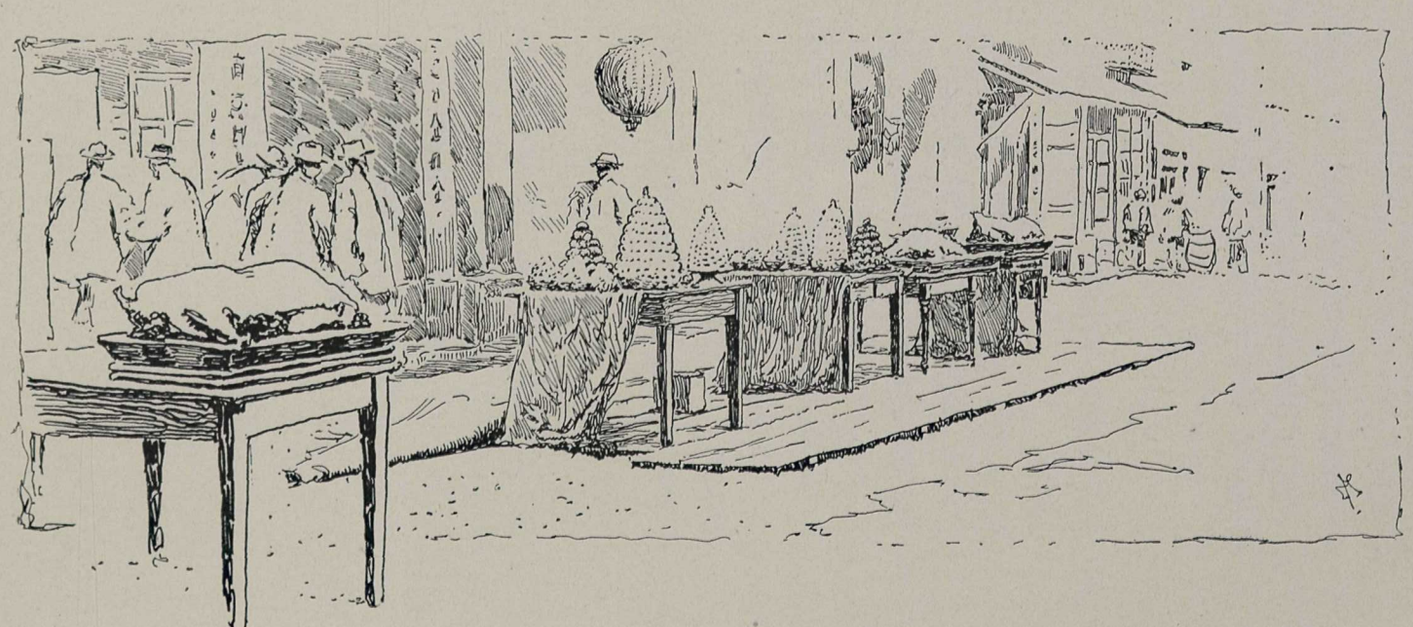
Lee, the Reformer—that he was—
An' a excellent business man;

"HOW MUCHEE YOU PAY?"

A cagey old cove on the opium laws
An' a fox at the game of *fan*.
He thought a lot, but 'is natur' was such
That he hadn't but little to say.
If yu wanted to buy and yu ast, "How much?"
He'd answer, "How muchee you pay?"

If a tourist looked in 'is little shop
At a jug that was wuth a dime,
"How muchee you pay?" old Lee would say,
And he'd bunco 'em half the time.
No tag nor nuthin' to show the price
Of the goods that yu bought from Lee.
'Twas a trick of the biz an' a hobby of his—
"How muchee you pay?" says he.

F'r instance, one mornin', 'is little gal
Was a-playin' around the store
When the gambler, Yok, an' a steady pal
Comes shufflin' through the door.
"How muchee?" says Yok as he points 'er out
In a offhand, Chinytown way.
It flabbered Lee Wo fer a minute or so,
Then he says, "How muchee you pay?"



"See the varnished pigs they carry in sacks
And the funeral grub galore."

He bought things cheap an' he sold 'em high—
'Twas the game an' he played it well.
As long as the world had somethin' to buy
Lee Wo had somethin' to sell.
He drove a bargain fer flesh an' blood
With a profit on all he sold,
Till it happened so (they are buryin' Wo),
That he traded 'is word fer gold.

Have yu heard of the Orient League of Reform
An' the pipe-dream they began,
A-smokin' together, to blow up a storm
Fer the Dowager Queen, Tsi An?
Ther was Charlie Chong an' Lee Bow Wong
An' the opium smuggler, Low,
Ther was Hong Ming Get, an' the day they met
They let in me friend, Lee Wo.

Yes, they let in me friend, Lee Wo, one night
When the Quarter was still as the grave,
When the shutters was closed an' the fog was white
An' the felt shoes slipped on the pave.

Then they whispered together, the League of Reform,
In a Mon Foy Restaurant room,
An' they made a pledge on a hatchet's edge
By ther fathers under the tomb.

Five thousand apiece was the price, some say,
Which they gave to the sacred bund:
But this I know—it was old Lee Wo
Who was chosen to keep the fund.
What the cash was there fer, I dunno,
And how it was spent, search me;
But the coin kept warm in the egg of reform
That was bein' hatched out by Lee.

Then the Consul heard of the League of Reform
(He was wise on the way to do),
So he cabled word of what he'd heard
Till the Chinese Government knew.
How d'yu s'pose the Consular spy
Had savvy enough to go
Neither to Chong nor to Lee Bow Wong
But straight to me friend, Lee Wo?

Lee was hittin' the hop that night
Under a black teak shelf,

"HOW MUCHEE YOU PAY?"

Noddin' asleep an' a-lookin' a heap
  Like the crockery god hisself,
When Hung Ah Ho, the Consular spy,
  Dropped in fer a friendly chat,
An' they gabbled, them two, an' they drank
    sam shu
  Till far into night they sat.

Hung he spoke of the Middle Land
  An' the danger of plots an' things,
An' the death of the feller that raised a hand
  Fer the murder of queens an' kings.
He could make it warm fer the League of
    Reform—
  Ther was certain names to say—
Perhaps Lee Wo might happen to know—
  Says Lee, "How muchee you pay?"

"How muchee you pay?" was all he ast,
  But it chanced in a week or so
That they collared Chong an' Lee Bow
    Wong
  An' Hong Ming Get an' Low.
Fraudulent sort, said the chiefs of the port
  Where the Consular word prevailed.
I was there the day they was taken away
  When the "City of Pekin" sailed.

They sailed like a bunch of brides, them Four,
Though they knowed that they went to death;
Then they thought of the traitor safe on the shore
An' they cursed 'im under ther breath.
So they uttered an oath that summoned both
The gods of ther hates an' fears—
Is ther anythin' worse than a Chinaman's curse
That lasts fer a million years?

. . . . .

It was Saturday night when Lee was took
(Jest hear how the mourners yell!)
With 'is sins at 'is throat he jabbered an' shook
As he looked in the eyes of hell.
Fer a ghostly Four comes up through the floor
An' all in a row they stands
As nice as they might, an' they bows polite
With ther bloody heads in ther hands.

Lee covered 'is face with 'is skinny arm,
But the eyes of 'is mind they seen

The heads of the friends he had brought to harm
At the sword of the Dowager Queen;
An' they come so close that 'is pigtail rose
An' 'is cork-colored face went gray.
But the lips of the dead they smiled an' said,
"Lee Wo, how muchee you pay?"

. . . . .

Hear the oboes shriek an' the fiddles squeak—
They're a-buryin' Lee to-day—
See the leaves they turn an' the prayers they burn
To shoo the devil away—
But them headless Four on the ghostly shore
Is a-waitin' to pay ther grudge
When the stark Lee Wo shall shiverin' go
To the court of 'is Mandarin Judge.

Heathen or Christian, what has he got
Fer the lives of 'is friends he sold,
Fer the child he gave to the lot of a slave
At the price of a gambler's gold?
Yet stripped to the soul of all that he stole
Ther's a bargain to drive to-day
When the Mandarin god shall ask with a nod,
"Lee Wo, how muchee you pay?"

THE RIVAL WIZARDS

A white man's luck's as he makes it,
And a nigger's luck's as he takes it;
But a Chinaman's luck is the Devil's own luck,
And it's thanks to the priest who fakes it.

Ballad of Portsmouth Square.

THE RIVAL WIZARDS

YOK Tu-ang, the good-luck doctor, is a-leavin' Chinytown.
He has boarded up his winders and 'is sign's a-comin' down,
He's a-walkin' to the station wit' 'is shiny black valise
And the beggars spit behind 'im and the slave-girls hiss like geese
While the coolies *muck-a-hi-lo* disrespectful-like, becuz
Yok Tu-ang, the good-luck doctor, ain't so pop'lar as he was.

And the devil-shop of Sang Ho, right acrost the lane from his,
That is likewise closed, (respectin' Sang Ho's fun'ral services)
Gee! I'm most afeared the bogies 'll be out to-night in mobs
Both them champyon devil-chasers bein' absent from ther jobs,

And the ghosts o' nine diseases will be howlin' down the street
Now them famous magic-merchants is removed from Dupont Street.

Seven years them wise old fellers kep' ther shops acrost the way,
Sold ther prayer-scrolls, done ther magic, baked ther sperit-cakes fer pay;
Seven years they watched each other t'rough ther dirty window-lights,
Each one hopin' to the other evil days and evil nights;
Seven years Sang Ho prayed faithful, wishin' Yok was done an' dead,
While Yok Tu-ang vowed misfortune on Sang Ho's old pig-tailed head.

Bein' wizards by perfession you'd a-thunk that suthin' dire
Would 'a' come o' them magicians w'en they started spittin' fire—
But ther didn't nothin' happen; and ther bizness thrived, each one
Gainin' daily reputation fer the wonders what he done,

Each one burnin' punk and candles, howlin', wavin' of 'is arms,
Givin' good advice on marriage, sellin' lanterns, shrouds an' charms.

If a burglar robbed a pawnshop someone sent fer Yok Tu-ang
Who would do 'is parlor magic jest to catch the robber gang.
First he'd call on all the devils an' the ghosts that cheat an' rob,
Then he'd draw a sperit-portrait o' the guy what done the job,
Then he'd sell 'is good-luck mottoes costin' fifty cents apiece—
If they didn't catch the burglar 'twas the fault o' the police.

Sang Ho's specialty was genii. If a Chink had fuzzy dreams,
If he suffered from the nightmare or woke up wit' grunts an' screams,
"Them," says Sang, "is evil genii what is troublin' of yer snore."
So he'd put up magic mirrors all around the bedroom door.
An' when wicked Mr. Genie come a-sneakin' t'rough the night,

Plunk! he'd catch 'im in a bottle an' he'd
drive the cork down tight.
Well, them rivals went on hatin' of each
other more an' more;
Sang was gittin' all the bizness an' it made
Yok Tu-ang sore.
Then one day ther came a crisis w'en the very
rich Poy Lo
Got took sudden wit' a headache, so he sent
fer old Sang Ho.
Gee! old Yok was mad as hornets, an' he
swore by every charm
In the shop of all the devils that he'd do 'is
rival harm.

Sang Ho visited 'is patient, looked quite satis-
fied an' said,
"Ther's three very purple genii now residin'
in yer head.
One's a seven-legged demon, one's a double-
faced *yau-kwei.**
One's a little shrimp-tailed devil what's
asleep behin' yer eye."
So he took three wide-mouthed bottles an' he
said three prayers polite—
Plunk! the fiends fell in the bottles an' he
drove the corks in tight.

**Yau-kwei*—evil genius.

So Sang Ho went home quite happy, feelin' proud about hisself,
Put them genii-laden bottles careful-like upon a shelf—
But old Yok acrost the alley seen 'im lay them bottles by
An' he said, "You bet I catch 'em!" an' he looked an' evil eye.

. . . . .

Late that night Yok picked a winder in the shop of old Sang Ho,
Found them bottles an' uncorked 'em an' let all the genii go!
With a cackle an' a clatter an' a gibber an' a scream
Flew them merry purple devils back to Poy Lo's troubled dream,
T'rough the gay an' painted alleys, past the dark an' deadly lanes,
Past the *pie gow* dens an' banquets, past the slaves in silken chains;
An' the seven-legged demon an' the double-faced *yau-kwei*
Crept in Poy Lo's ears and started all the pains behind 'is eye.

Well, when Sang woke up next mornin' and found out what Yok had done

He jest shrieked an' pulled 'is pig-tail like a
plum demented one,
An' he run across the alley to the shop o'
Yok an' yells,
"Ye have spoilt me reputation an' ye've
ruined all me spells—
But I've got one trick to play ye to git even
wit' yer spite—
Yu'll be marked as an assassin—which yu'll
be before the night!"

So Sang Ho he closed 'is bizness an' Sang Ho
he made 'is will
An' he hired eleven mourners an' a banquet
fit to kill,
An' he hired some gong-musicians, an' they
all got full o' hop
An' went screamin' in procession to Yok Tu-
ang's devil-shop
Where Sang Ho jumped to the doorway.
"Look, ye murderer!" he said,
Drank a bottleful o' acid, doubled up an'
tumbled dead.

An' the gang o' hired musicians raised a
daisy yell o' woe,
Banged their gongs an' wailed an' shouted,
"Yok Tu-ang has killed Sang Ho!"

"An' the slave girls from the alleys, an' the
coolies from the street
Shuffled up to the excitement on their padded
cat-like feet."

An' the slave-girls from the alleys an' the coolies from the street
Shuffled up to the excitement on their padded, cat-like feet,
Cussin' Yok an' pointin' at 'im; for they kinder seemed to know
That in some way, indirectly, he had murdered old Sang Ho.

Yok Tu-ang, the good-luck doctor, is a-leavin' Chinytown,
Fer 'is *yau-kwei's* up an' doin', but 'is *feng-shui's** rather down,
An' the very actors shun 'im since that luck-destroyin' night
When 'is rival on 'is doorstep came an' killed hisself fer spite.
No, the place wher Yok's a-goin' isn't known to the police,
But he's walkin' to'rd the station wit' 'is shiny black valise.

**Feng-shui*—good luck.

THE GREEN RAT

THE GREEN RAT

HEY, boss, quick! d'ye see 'im duck
Under the curb by Sun Mok's stall,
Long-tail, bead-eye rat—bad luck!
D'ye see 'is color? It's green, by all
That's dead! some Chinaman's time has struck
And the Plague's a-creepin' along the wall.

Call me "hop-head," dope-sick bum
If ye will—but I know that green is *green*
And the old Bubonic's bound to come
And set the Health Board sweepin' clean
To put the microbes under thumb
Wit' chloride o' lime and quarantine.

Somewheres up in the balconies
Priests are howlin' ther heathen songs,
Dippin' down on ther hands and knees,
Smudgin' incense and bangin' gongs
To fumigate the Devil and please
The Health Board. God, the dread o' the Tongs.

Somewheres down in the under side
  Tunnels and cellars and passageways,
Where the pig-tailed coolies sleep and hide
  And never see daylight days and days,
There the gray rats take what the gods provide—
  But the Green Rat takes what the Devil pays.

. . . . .

Old Wang Too in 'is fiftieth year
  Up and married a butterfly,
Girl o' the teahouse—case was clear,
  Wang Too bein' a soft old guy,
That the day o' ther marriage the joss went queer
  And the punk smoke got in the idol's eye.

Mrs. Wang, like a ruther neat
  Little wax doll, had a way wit' her.
Kep' old Wang on the anxious seat
  And the slant-eyed dudes in a constant stir,
When she pegged along on 'er bandaged feet,
  Off fer the Chinee Theater.

Poor old gent! he was human, I guess,
  Longed fer a wife instid of a toy;
But 'is joss was good to 'im, I cornfess
  And the ghosts of 'is grand-dads wished 'im joy,

"Chinytown babes, have ye seen 'em play
Here in the streets that has sickened men?"

(Thousand and one of 'em, more or less)
When the Firstborn squalled in 'is house
—a boy.

Little Wang Too in 'is grandma's lap
Growed and flourished a year or so,
Little blue coat and long-eared cap,
(Fixed so the Devil he wouldn't know
And bring the child to a strange mishap)
Old Wang smiled as he watched 'im grow.

(Chinytown babes, have ye seen 'em play
Here in the streets that has sickened men,
Jest as happy and jest as gay
As fairies dancin' on flowers—and then
Trottin' at night to ther beds, away
Under the reek o' some dragon's den?)

'Bout this time a bubonic scare
Started the Health Board lookin' wise.
Case reported off Portsmouth Square;
Lottery agent ups and dies,
Chinytown, tryin' to hush the affair,
Quietly buries the dead—and lies.

Old Wang Too one night, as he sat
Stringin' 'is cash beads back of a screen,
Suddently stopped and looked—what's that?
Sneakin' along a shelf he seen

The strangest, devilest lookin' rat—
And sure as yer eyes, it was green, *bright green!*

Jest a minute he fastened 'is stare
Straight on the eyes o' the old Wang Too,
Then scampered off with a pious air
Which might 'a' said, "And the next is you!"
And the Chinaman groaned as he fastened a prayer
Over the door—for he knew, he knew!

Somewheres up in the joss-house shrine
Priests was beggin' the Plague to go,
Firecrackers snappin' above the whine
O' the flutes' and the fiddles' tremulo.
(Wang, in 'is mind's eye, seen the line
O' the white-sheet mourners, filin' slow.)

So he called 'is wife to 'is side and said,
"The note o' the death-flute comes this way.
Sell my houses when I am dead
And sail to China wit' little Wang Gay
Wher honor in age may be on 'is head
Near the sacred tombs o' the ancient clay."

Then the Plague came in. And the Butterfly
Fluttered away from the shade o' doom
Leavin' the head of 'er house to lie
Fightin' wit' devils out o' the gloom
As the cords swelled thick on 'is throat and thigh
And the breath o' the fever sat in the room.

Yes, she fluttered away in 'er butterfly stealth
And went to the actor Hon Yin Moy,
An' they soon made way wit' the old man's wealth,
But they didn't include the little boy
As they sailed fer China in search of health—
Was she a mother? Nix, she was a toy!

. . . . .

One year more an' the Plague seemed t'rough.
Chinytown was the quietest yet;
Nothin' more than a murder or two
Over a Hip Sing fan-tan debt;
Fiddles still squeaked and the flutes still blew
In the balconies where the rich guys et.

Little Wang Gay in 'is grandma's lap
Lay a-listenin' to 'er croon,
Sinkin' halfways into a nap,
"Lotos Boat" and the "Princess Moon"
And the "Little Boy wit' the Dragon's Cap,"
In a sort of a die-away cat-call tune.

Till, tired o' singin', she fell asleep,
  Greasy an' wrinkled, the good ol' soul!
When suthin' jumped wit' a suddent leap
  Onto the table, out of a hole,
An' the big Green Rat, beginnin' to creep
  Nibbled rice from the baby's bowl.

Then the Plague come in from the damp an'
    reek
  Of the secret passages underground,
And he put 'is hands on the baby's cheek
  And the baby's eyes wit' the fever bound—
An' far an' faint ye could hear the shriek
  O' the joss-house fiddles, an evil sound.

THE CHAMBER OF TRANQUILLITY

THE CHAMBER OF TRANQUILLITY

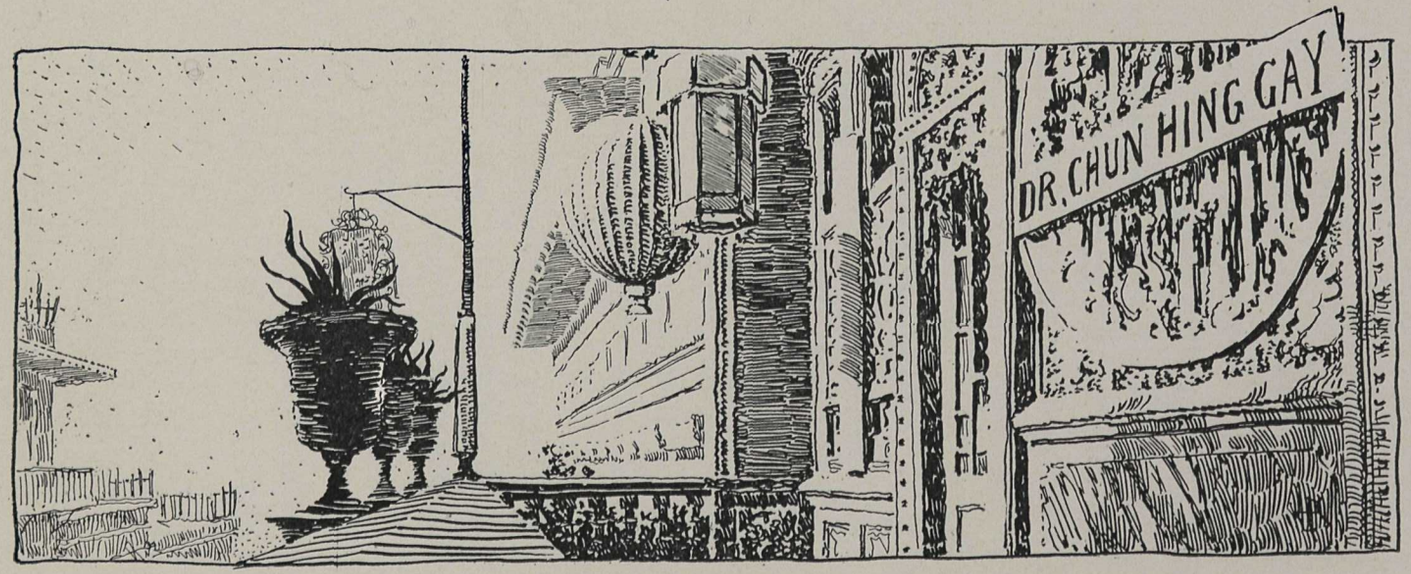
THIS here sounds a bit like Bluebeard
trotted out as sompin' new;
But it happened here in Chinytown
where half the lies is true—
Fer the Chink ain't skeert o' microbes, but
he's powerful shy o' elves,
And he keeps a stock o' devils packed in
boxes on 'is shelves;
And ther's fairy tales occurrin' in these alleys
day and night,
Where the heathen says, "No sabe!"—but
he's wise all right, all right.

See that green and yeller balcony up yonder
'crost the way,
Wit' the gilded sign in English painted, "Dr.
Chun Hing Gay"?
Every coolie 'round the Quarter knows the
Doctor by 'is name,
Fer he's made a bunch o' money and he's
made a pile o' fame;

And 'is cures has killed more *invalids* than
all the plagues combined—
W'ich is greatly to 'is credit and a blessin' of
its kind.

He was jest a Canton coolie six or seven
years ago,
Smuggled in from San Diego t'rough the leak
in Mexico—
Bossed a fruit ranch in Sonoma, bought a
China drug store cheap,
Came to 'Frisco wearin' spectacles and seemed
to know a heap.
Them there phoney-lookin' letters painted on
'is window say:
"From a chilblain to a cancer I can cure you
in a day."

Dr. Chun had one affliction, w'at he couldn't
kill or cure;
'Twas 'is wife, who was a vixen of the Tar-
tar brand fer sure—
Wasn't like the common yeller gal, too bash-
ful-like to speak,
Fer the Quarter knowed the danger-sign w'en
Mrs. Chun would squeak,
And w'en Sergeant Doyle heard windows
crash on Jackson Street he'd say:



"See that green and yeller balcony up yonder 'crost the way,
With the gilded sign in English, painted 'Dr. Chun Hing Gay.'"

"Oh, that's jest the dear ol' lady beatin' Dr. Chun Hing Gay."

Dr. Chun was a philosopher o' just and thoughtful mind;
W'en 'is herb-cure killed a patient he would say: "The gods is kind";
If 'is patient should recover he would say: "The gods give life"—
But he had a special maxim in referrin' to 'is wife.
W'en that lady wrecked the premises he'd murmur piously:
"Lo! the Wise Man loves 'is neighbors and preserves tranquillity."

One fine day w'en Chun was walkin' out a-lookin' rather scratched,
Wit' 'is pigtail half unbraided and 'is ear a trifle patched,
Old Wing Lee, the one-eyed goldsmith, says: "Yer joss is bad to-day—
Say, why don't ye git a wife that suits ye better, Chun Hing Gay?"
Chun, kow-towin', poked 'is fingers in 'is sleeves and says, says he:
"Rather seven hundred devils than another wife fer me!"

"Wise physician," leered the goldsmith,
"ye've been wed a dozen years—
Tell me, where's yer honored children fer yer labor and yer tears?
Many wives should be the portion of a wealthy man like you;
And perhaps, ye'll deign to look upon my little gal, Lun Su,
Fer 'er mouth is like a cherry and 'er foot is like a flower,
And a thousand 'Frisco dollars go to make 'er weddin'-dower."

"If I brought another woman to my house," says Dr. Chun,
"Say! My wife would vomit fireworks, like the Dragon of the Sun."
Wing Lee's one eye twinkled knowledgeful.
"Her sickness is a kind
What deserves a patent medicine that's soothin' to the mind,
What'll lay 'er calm and quiet like a lady ought to be—
Fer a Wise Man loves 'is neighbors—and preserves tranquillity."

And that very afternoon the Doc got busy in 'is shop.

'Round the walls was herbs and powders,
poison, sassafras, and hop,
Pickled toads and dried-up lizards, powdered
spiders, serpents' tails,
Ginseng—good fer rheumatism—mustard,
devil-weed, and snails;
And the Doc was shavin' roots and mixin'
powders wit' 'is knife—
He was fixin' up a medicine to pacify 'is wife.

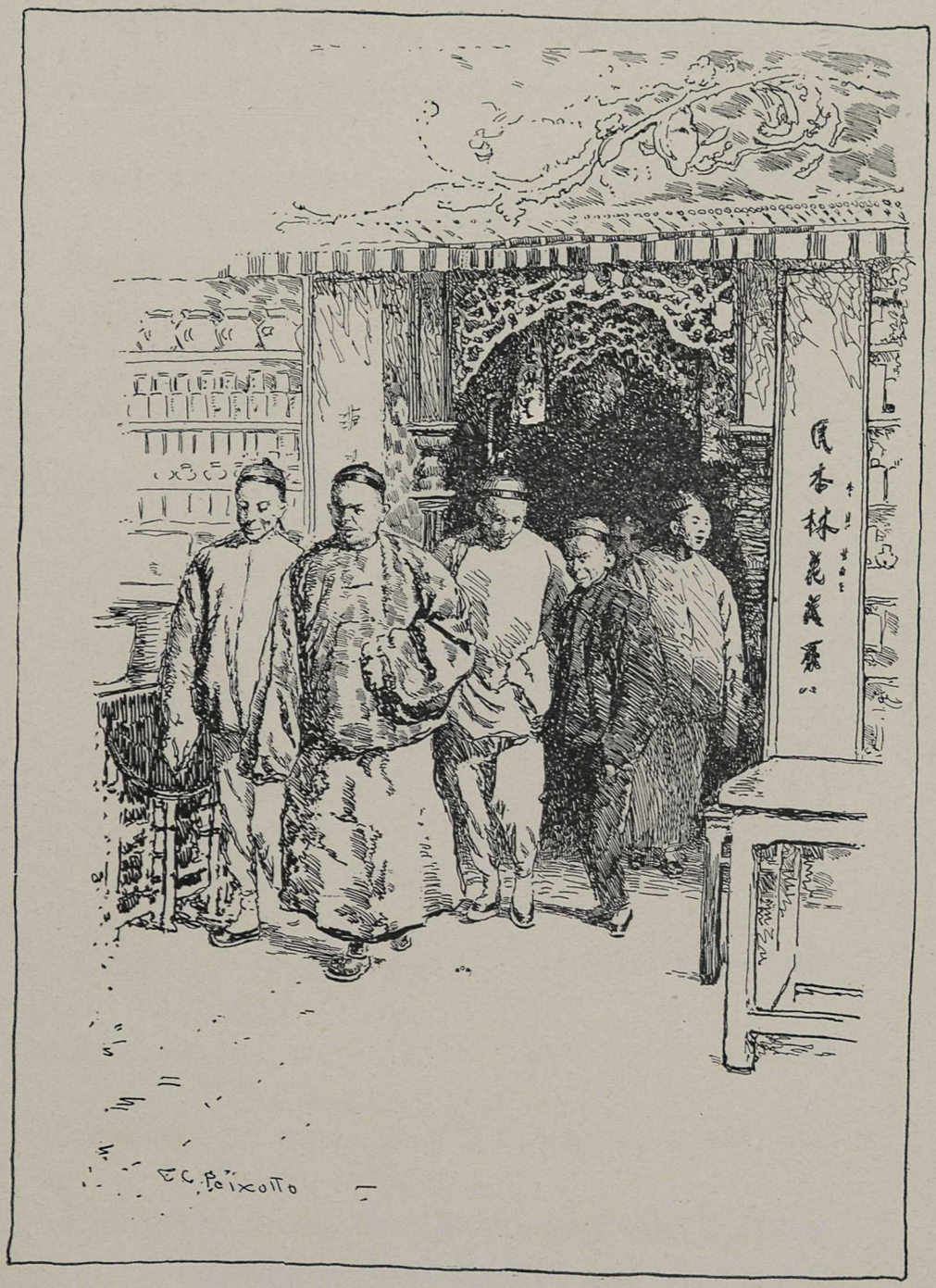
'Twasn't long before all Chinytown was
noticin' the change.
Dr. Chun Hing's house grew quiet—and the
fact alone was strange.
Mrs. Chun she lost ambition fer to racket and
to row,
And 'er eyes got dull and glassy and she didn't
like 'er *chow*.
Drunk wit' hop and shrunk and silly on 'er
dirty bench she lay,
Smoked 'er pipe and whispered nonsense to
the greasy walls all day.

Dr. Chun was quite attentive—he had medi-
cine to give—
Waited patient as an idol till she hadn't long
to live,

Then he signalled to the coolies that was
workin' in 'is pay,
And they rolled 'er in a blanket and they car-
ried 'er away;
Packed 'er down t'rough traps and cellars to
the narrow, wooden stair
Of the Chamber of Tranquillity. They
knocked and left 'er there.

What, the Chamber of Tranquillity—ain't
heard of it before?
It's kind o' death-bed annex to an undertaker's
store.
In the Quarter when a Chinaman's about to
pass away,
Then he isn't wanted 'round the house—it
brings bad luck, they say—
So they chuck 'im in this quiet cell to breathe
'is heathen last,
Where the undertaker's handy—and ther
ain't no questions ast.

Oh, the Chamber of Tranquillity is under-
ground and cold,
It hasn't got no windows and its walls is
cracked and old;
It hasn't got no pillows where a feeble head
kin lie—



"Say! the biggest bunch o' wickedness that ever walked in silk."

But a feller ain't pertickiller w'en he's about
to die.
And the prayer that speeds the dyin' in that
dark, ondecent shed
Is the pigtailed undertaker nailin' coffins over-
head.

All day long the dyin' woman lay a-moanin'
in the den.
Old Jim Mok, the undertaker, peeked in
silent now and then
Jest to see if it was ready. In the Moon
Flower restaurant
Dr. Chun, he gave a banquet which was all
that heart could want.
'Twas a feast fer gods and devils, the occa-
sion of 'is life,
To announce that Wing Lee's daughter was
to be 'is second wife.

Late and early came the swellest merchant-
kings o' Chinytown,
Red-hot, pigtailed sports, kow-towin' in ther
robes o' green and brown;
And as in and out they waddled wit' the
dignity o' beeves,
Ye could hear the gamblin'-money clinkin'
gently in ther sleeves.

Eyes like agates, cheeks like ivory, and smiles
as white as milk—
Say! the biggest bunch o' wickedness that ever
walked in silk!

All the tables was o' ebony, the chop-sticks
tipped wit' jade.
Chun was dressed in silk, embroidered, wit'
a tassel in 'is braid.
On the chairs was crimson cushions, in the
walls wuz gilded flowers,
And a gang o' hired musicians squeaked and
banged wit' all ther powers.
Forty merchants at the tables, and on stools
about the room
Forty little singin'-girls, as bright as parrots
in ther plume.

There was everythin' in eatables from puppy-
dog to rice;
Nanking eggs aged forty summers—which
the Chink considers nice—
Bamboo-sprouts and chop-chop vittles, China
pheasant from Shanghai,
Bird's-nest dope which sounds like puddin',
tastes like hell, and looks like pie.
And the fiddles squalled and quavered and
the gongs drowned out the strain.

And the Doctor smiled like Buddha as he
ordered more champagne.

Old Wing Lee, skin-full o' bubbles, sat acrost
from Dr. Chun,
And the two was swappin' maxims, stiff and
solemn, one by one.
"Sayin' nothin'," says the goldsmith, "is a
woman's rarest skill."
"Birds should sing," remarked the Doctor,
"but a woman should be still."
"He who slumbers," says the goldsmith,
"wit' an adder in 'is blouse
Is more happy than a husband wit' a wildcat
in 'is house."

Chun was thinkin' up an answer, w'en a coolie
shuffled in,
Came and stood beside the Doctor's chair and
pulled a yeller grin,
Then, a-leanin' confidential, closer to 'is ear
he said:
"Jim Mok sent me fer the money. She has
left the Chamber—dead."
Dr. Chun Hing Gay politely raised his glass
to old Wing Lee:
"Lo! the Wise Man loves 'is neighbors—
and preserves tranquillity."

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