

cold and keen. That seems silly to you, and quite the wrong way of putting things. And it seemed to him to be proved every spring that the trees caused his comfort and the gladness of the world. The first sign and promise of better days was when the trees came into leaf and life again. That happened long before the warm, bright weather came, and what appeared first in order of time would be taken by him as the cause of what followed. Since the trees began to live again before the sunshine came, he fancied that they were the cause of the lengthening of the day and the growing warmth. So men, some men, at least, used to think, for they worshipped trees as the great lords of life.

You think I am a long time in coming to the mistletoe. Have patience for half a minute. Savages believe that every living thing has a soul. Inside a man there is a little man; inside a beast is a little beast, the soul of each. When a man dies, they think that the little man has gone out of the man. And savages used to think that inside every tree was a little tree, its soul. Now imagine a savage out in the forest in the winter. The trees are leafless, all is bare and dreary. But he sees a green something in the distance. He hastens forward to know what it is. And it is a little, living tree on a dead one. What wonder is this? A tree high up above the ground not touching the soil at all. It is the only living thing in all the dead wilderness. What can it be but the soul of a tree—perhaps the soul of the lord of all the trees of the forest? He trembles with awe, and kneels down before it, praying it not to smite him with death for coming into its secret and sacred place. Then he goes to the men of his tribe and tells them that he has seen a tree-soul alive and beautiful in the loneliness of the forest depths. And after talking it over, they think it will please the tree-spirit if they bring it carefully to their camp.

It is well to keep up the old customs, it may remind us that our forefathers, when they were savage and ignorant, tried to find God. It may remind us of how Jesus told better things of God than our poor forefathers ever dreamed. After your mirth and laughter under the mistletoe bough, you may do a little thinking about the old meaning of it.—'Christian World.'

Ah Choy's First Christmas.

A Story of San Francisco's Chinatown.
(By Jessie Juliet Knox.)

Ah Choy did not know anything about Christmas. When she had lived in China, in the old happy days, she dimly remembered that her dear Mo Chun (mother) had mentioned such a time and that it had been something about the birthday of a little child, but that was far away and intangible, and had never counted in her life at all. She often wondered if there were anything good in the whole big world, but there was no one to say. There had been a time when she had known a mother's kiss, and been free to do as the heart of a child dictates, but the mother had died, and Ah Choy had been sold to a Chinese man and his wife who came to America and settled in Chinatown, San Francisco.

And now Ah Choy was out on the balcony of a dark tenement, next the roof.

'Oh, I am so lonely,' she murmured to herself, for to whom else could she address the remark? Her innocent heart longed for something—a mother's love, a kind word—someone who cared.

'Perhaps it is because I do not understand. Perhaps every one is lonely and unhappy. Oh, big joss (god) if you can hear a poor little Chinese slave please let me die! let me get away from it all!'

Far down on the narrow streets she could dimly watch the hurrying crowd.

The people looked as if they might be happy, and as if they might be free.

'I would like to be free,' she said, 'May be next time I will be; maybe—I cannot tell.'

The world of 'little China' was beautiful at night, when the shadows hid the unpleasant places, and the great lanterns of the joss glowed in rows on the flower-laden balconies, and in front of all the doors, whereon were inscribed happy greetings to all who entered. It looked so beautiful to one who only saw the surface, and knew nothing of the sad hearts and the bondage back of it all. It would not have seemed so perfect to one who had seen the pitiful little slave girls, doing the bidding of the hags who guarded them, and liable to a beating at any time, whether busy or idle.

'I do try so hard; I work all day. Why do they beat me?' the little one was saying, but no answer came.

It was Christmas Eve! She knew it this time, because she had heard her cruel master and mistress talking of it, but it was nothing to her, so why should she rejoice over the birthday of a little child of whom she knew nothing?

But as she sat thus thinking and talking to herself her mistress awakened from her opium stupor, and rushing out upon the balcony grasped her frail little arm and pulled it out of joint. She was more cruel than usual, for some reason. Perhaps she was afraid the little one would get some Christmas joy into her life; at any rate, the poor child went to her bed with bruised body and breaking heart. After every one was asleep she crept out of bed and felt around in the darkness for something which would put an end to this life of slavery and suffering. She had once heard of a slave girl committing suicide by drinking pow fah, a hair-dressing used by Chinese ladies; so why could she not do the same? There was no need for her to live—no one wanted her; she was only fit to be beaten. And who could tell? Perhaps in the next life she might be happy; might even be one of the pretty maidens in the moon, who were always making cakes for good children. At least it was worth trying, so the poor half-crazed thing crept to the jar of poison, and giving one last, long glance down at the lantern-hung streets, and then upward where the Christmas stars twinkled in the darkness, she gasped the jar and drained its contents.

'Now I will be free!' she gasped, but somehow her plan failed, for instead of going into oblivion she only grew deathly sick. Her master and mistress were aroused. As they did not wish to lose a valuable slave, they gave her a Chinese antidote, and saved her.

There must be a little bird hovering over Chinatown as well as other places, for the very next morning—Christmas morning, the news by some strange chance reached the ears of Miss Cameron, superintendent of the Chinese Mission Home. She was an angel of light to poor slave girls, and had many ways of finding out things.

So on this Christmas morning Miss Cameron, in company with a big policeman, and a Chinese girl who was the mission interpreter, started out on her errand of love and mercy.

A rescue in the vast Chinatown of San Francisco is no easy matter at any time, and always may mean death to the one who undertakes it. But Miss Cameron knew not the meaning of fear. Up the narrow, tortuous steps they climbed, through the half darkness. There was no light save that which came up through the street door. Almost any one would have been badly frightened, but these brave people went as calmly as if they were going to a tea party. They knew just where to go, for the little bird had told them, and at last reached the top story of the tenement house where lived little Ah Choy. Nothing could be seen but a

door, with a small grated opening therein.

The interpreter said in Chinese: 'We want to come in!'

Then the mistress opened a tiny crack in the door, so that she might hear more clearly, and that gave the rescuers just the chance they desired. Without any ceremony they all three pressed against the door and rushed in, searching hastily in every direction for the slave girl. Noise and confusion reigned. Everything was in an uproar, and all who lived in that part of the tenement seemed to be in the fight.

What chance could the poor child have with so many against her? There were low Chinese mutterings and imprecations. Fortunately Miss Cameron could not understand it all but the interpreter could, and her heart almost stood still, but she bravely called as loudly as she could, through all the din and confusion: 'Ah Choy! Ah Choy! 'ingau nay lie gow nay!' (We have come to save you!)

The joyous message had penetrated the mysteries of the place, and from a dark passage-way came the sound of an opening door, while from the doorway cautiously peeped the tousled head and pale sad face of the one they sought. The excitement now became intense.

'Little fool!' hissed the mistress, 'Don't you know they have come to kill you? Don't you know they will break your bones—and—'

But somehow the child's heart knew differently, and she looked intently at Miss Cameron, and saw real love shining from her eyes, as with outstretched arms she advanced toward the child.

Ah Yuen, the interpreter, had whispered: 'This must be the one for whom we seek,' and, without a moment's hesitation, the big policeman reached down tenderly, and catching the poor trembling one in his kind arms, started for the doorway. The heathen were beside themselves with rage. Should they stand calmly by, and see a three-thousand-dollar slave torn from their grasp? In their anger they tried to drag the child from his arms, but all to no avail. The officer was big and strong, and he was fighting for the right. With one mighty effort he released himself from the clutches of the many grasping yellow hands, and dashed out of the door, down the narrow steps, and out into God's pure air and freedom.

Ah Choy lay trembling in the protecting arms. The group were obliged to go first to the city prison, as the law required it. There were no dry eyes while the little one was telling her story, it being interpreted as she talked, and stopping every few moments to inquire of the interpreter 'Are you quite sure they will not beat me at the mission?'

On being assured many times that no beating awaited her, but only love, she said: 'Oh, take me there quickly, then, before they find me!'

At the mission there were mysterious doings. Delightful odors came from the vicinity of the kitchen, where Chinese girls were displaying all their skill in cookery. The door-bell was kept tingling constantly and strange packages of all shapes and sizes were smuggled into the house and slipped into a certain room the door of which had been locked for several days. No one but Miss Cameron and a favored few were allowed to enter this room.

Bright and early on Christmas morning, Ah Choy left the jail, and was taken safely in a carriage with the same big policeman and the interpreter to her new home. The horrors through which she had passed had so filled her childish mind with fear that she did not even dare open her eyes or see anything at all, until she felt herself enter a building, and heard a great door shut her in, but it seemed to her that even the closing door had a kindly sound.