

PRINCE CHAO KANG

A Royal Love Story of the Long Ago From the Flowery Kingdom.

About two thousand years before the birth of Christ, China was governed by the Emperor Yu, who from a very humble station had been raised to the throne for the great services he had rendered his country in draining the morasses and embanking the rivers, which had previously been accustomed to overflow their channels, and inundate the neighboring plains. Yu proved a great and glorious sovereign, and his descendants were for his sake much beloved by the people of China. They continued to reign for several generations, till at length a traitor named Han-sou rebelled against the Emperor Ti Siang, and, having defeated and slain him and all his faithful friends in a great battle, he marched to the capital, and barbarously massacred every member of the royal family, except the Empress Min, who fled to an obscure village among the mountains, where she gave birth to an infant prince, whom she named Chao Kang.

This tender babe was now the sole descendant of the venerated line of Yu, and though he was born in the lonely dwelling of a shepherd, his fond mother trusted that she would one day behold him seated on his father's throne, which was now usurped by the cruel traitor Han-sou. Chao Kang was a child of great beauty and extraordinary abilities, and the Empress Min was enabled to bestow upon him the blessings of a good education. She not only instructed him in all the learning of which she was mistress, but taught him many ingenious arts, such as were practised by persons of high rank in those days, especially that of painting in brilliant colors, insects, birds, flowers and figures. Chao Kang soon acquired such skill in these pleasing exercises, that he presently succeeded his royal mother in the force and correctness of his delineations, and learned to arrange his figures in groups, so as to illustrate the most striking passages in the history of his own country. His mother, better to conceal the quality of her royal son till such time as he should be of age to claim his rightful inheritance, caused him to keep the flocks of the old shepherd Nan-hi, who called the princely boy his grandson; but as it was well known that Nan-hi never had a child, and the beauty and noble spirit of Chao Kang attracted great attention, it began to be whispered abroad that he was of the family of the late sovereign.

The reports reached the ear of the jealous usurper Han-sou, and he, having reason to suspect the emperor's son and her child were in existence, sent persons to seize the boy and bring him before him, dead or alive.

The imperial widow was informed of this by a faithful friend in the capital, with whom she still kept up a correspondence, and, bidding the worthy shepherd Nan-hi a hasty farewell, she withdrew with her son into the neighboring province of Quantun, now called Canton, where, to avoid all suspicion, she placed the royal youth as under cook in the kitchen of the great mandarin, Hum. This situation was not exactly to the taste of Chao Kang; but he submitted to a good grace, and endeavored to fulfill the duties of his new calling with cheerfulness. His winning manners and amiable disposition soon endeared him to every person in the family of the mandarin; but, though he was engaged in menial offices, he did not allow his mind to stoop beneath the true dignity which the pursuits of learning and of virtue can confer upon the humblest stations in society. Chao Kang spent all his leisure time in study, or else in decorating the garden pagodas with painted flowers, birds, or groups of figures. These were so superior to anything that had been executed by the Chinese painters, that they attracted the attention of the only daughter of the mandarin, a young lady of great beauty, and of so amiable a disposition, that she was named Choo-lan, from the sweet flower that scents the most precious tea of China.

When Choo-lan inquired the name of the unknown person who had so greatly

embellished her favorite retreats, the gardener told her it was Chao Kang, the under-cook. The young lady was lost in astonishment at this information, and exclaimed that a youth who possessed of such rare talents was worthy to be employed in a more honorable vocation than the drudgery of a kitchen. And as the great national festival, the

less than two hundred millions of lanterns are annually exhibited at this splendid national festival. There is always great emulation among the higher orders and wealthy families, who shall exhibit the most magnificent lantern; and some of them are valued at no less than two thousand crowns each. Choo-lan was desirous of having a lantern ex-

which his royal father was defeated and slain. Then was represented the massacre of the imperial family, together with the escape and flight of the Empress Min, who was afterwards delineated, with her infant son at her breast, in the hut of the shepherd, Nan-hi. The imperial crown of China was shown as if suspended over the infant's head, and

ly of the great Yu, and his sovereign, and called his wondering daughter to follow his example, and offer her humble homage to the rightful Emperor of China; but this Chao Kang would not permit, saying: "He had always been accustomed to look upon Choo-lan as entitled to his deepest respect, and if ever he should regain the throne of his ancestors, he would make her his empress, provided she could only love him." Choo-lan then replied "that she loved him quite well enough to share his present fortunes, if her father would consent to her becoming his wife, and his royal mother would be content to receive her for a daughter." The consent of the empress Min was joyfully given, and the fair Choo-lan became the wife of the fugitive emperor. Meantime the exhibition of the lantern had caused a great sensation among the assembled multitude, as it made known to them the existence of a descendant of the great Yu. The mandarin had, however, prudently expunged those parts of the picture which revealed the present abode and occupation of a royal youth, lest it should expose him to the jealous rage of the usurper, Han-sou; and for the present he judged it best for him to remain concealed. After Choo Kang became the husband of his beloved daughter, the mandarin obtained for him a military command in a remote station, where he learned the art of war, and finally gained great reputation as a warrior; yet he was thirty years old before he could arrange his plans successfully, so as to assert his long dormant right to the throne of China. At length the moment came when the tyranny of the usurper Han-sou could no longer be endured; and the people of China, from the city to the plains, and from the mountain tops to the shores of the sea, called aloud for the last descendant of the great Yu to appear for their deliverance.

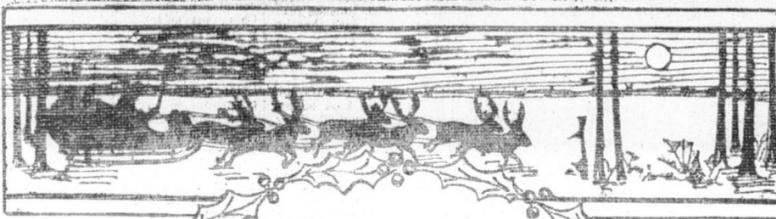
Chao Kang had long waited for this summons. He assembled his brave friends and three hundred valiant youths, the flower of his army, were commanded by Ti-chou, his eldest son by his beloved wife, Choo-lan, who had brought him a hopeful family of lovely children. The army of the usurper, Han-sou, was tenfold more numerous than that of the rightful sovereign, Chao Kang; but the race is not always to the swift, nor the battle to the strong.

Fixed with the thought of his father's wrongs, and eager to avenge the murder of his kindred, the young prince Ti-chou, calling upon the chosen band under his command to follow him, dashed into the very centre of Han-sou's army, and, while the hoary usurper was in the act of haranguing his troops, and charging them to give no quarter, he was seized in the strong grasp of Ti-chou, who, flinging him across his horse's neck, carried him off in that degrading position as a captive, amidst the triumphant acclamations of his brave followers.

Chao Kang and his troops then charged the adherents of the usurper, sword in hand, and they being thrown into a panic by the unexpected loss of their leader, flung down their arms, and on the very spot swore allegiance to the descendant of the great Yu.

As for the usurper, Han-sou, he was put to the death his crimes had so richly merited; and Chao Kang, with his mother, the widowed Empress Min, his faithful wife, Choo-lan, who had accompanied him in all his wanderings, and his blooming family, entered the capital, where he was crowned with the imperial diadem of China, amidst the shouts and rejoicings of the people.

—George Hawkesworth Armstrong.



feast of lanterns, was near at hand, she requested of the mandarin her father, that Chao Kang might be permitted to paint her lantern, for all the young people vied with each other on that occasion, to see who should display the most superb transparency of silk, or tissue paper, in the form of a lantern, lighted up with tapers within.

The feast of lanterns is celebrated on the fifteenth day of the first month, at which time the vast empire of China is so illuminated from one end to the other with these beautiful lanterns, which are suspended from the roof of every house, affixed to the doors, or carried about the streets on long poles in procession, to the extreme delight of the people. Great fancy is shown with regard to these lanterns; some are in the shape of fish of various colors, and some are circular like the moon, and others are formed to represent dragons and other fabulous monsters, celebrated in the Chinese mythology. It is said that not

quietly painted with historical designs, for her slaves, and the officers of her father's household, to carry in procession through the city; and she promised to reward Chao Kang with a chain of the purest gold for his neck, and a bracelet of pearls from her own arm, if he painted it to her satisfaction.

"The only reward I shall seek," replied the disguised prince, "will be the happiness of pleasing so kind a mistress."

The young lady repeated this courteous answer to her father; and the wise mandarin observed, "that such delicate feelings savored not of the employment of a turnspit; and that from all that had been reported to him of the wisdom, learning, and graceful manners of the youth, Chao Kang, he had little doubt of his being a person of noble birth."

Instructed by his mother, Chao Kang painted the story of his own misfortunes on the lantern of the fair Choo-lan; beginning with the fatal battle in

the false traitor and usurper, Han-sou, was represented seated on the throne, which was in a tottering position, while he was apparently giving orders to his officers for the murder of this last descendant of the royal line of Yu. Lastly, Chao Kang had delineated himself as engaged in his culinary occupation in the kitchen of the mandarin Hum, with the crown of China still suspended over him; and his mother in the habit of a widowed empress, with clasped hands, was seen imploring the mandarin and his gentle daughter in behalf of her son.

When this lantern was finished and lighted up, Choo-lan, full of delight, called her father to look upon it, before it was exhibited to the gaze of the assembled multitude. No sooner had the mandarin examined the pictorial history there represented in such lively colors, than he uttered an exclamation of astonishment, and prostrating himself before the young artist, he saluted him as the royal descendant of the revered fam-

Archie McGregor's Christmas Visit.

The snow lay curled in little drifts around the old farmhouse that nestled snugly at the foot of the hill, while the freshly fallen snow-flakes, resting tremulously on the evergreen, fell fluttering earthward, as the breeze stirred their branches, all indicating that the world was preparing comfortable winter quarters for the celebration of another Christmas Day.

On the road that came winding from the valley, past the house, up and away over the hills, a few passing sleigh bells broke the silence.

An old man, bent and worn more by the toil of earning a livelihood than by years, opened the door of the house, and looking observantly at the freighted clouds heavy with their overcharged burden, spoke with a prophetic voice to some one within.

"We are going to have some more snow to-night. To-morrow will be a real old-fashioned Christmas, such as we had years ago when we settled here first."

He closed the door and turning to the sweet faced white haired woman who was preparing supper, asked:

"How long is it, wife, since we came here?"

"Why, surely, you have not forgotten, John! It is thirty years next spring. We came here when we were married,

right into the heart of a forest to build a home, while—"

"A strange wedding trip," he interrupted humorously. "The young people nowadays take a very different one."

"But not a happier one than ours for our hearts were full of love and hope."

Her dark eyes glowed with the light of the love which had never dimmed since those youthful days.

"That's so, wife, and wasn't I proud of my bonnie bride? I thought a palace none too good, yet I had only a settler's hut to give her, but she made it paradise for me."

The expressive tenderness of his voice told her that the bent, white haired wife was infinitely dearer to him than the fair young bride of thirty years ago.

"I could not have done that, John," was her loving, earnest answer, "if your part had been neglected. You have always been a good husband to me. How proud I was of our little log house! It was our own, and it was home. We have had a long and happy life together. Of course there were sometimes dark and cloudy days, yet the sun of God's providence always shone through. We have had grief and loss—"

Her voice broke, and she looked through the window, and across the valley, as if the eyes of love could see, through the dark-

ening winter twilight, the white stones in the old churchyard that marked the resting place of two children God has given them to care and love a while, and then he had taken them to himself.

"Ay, wife," said the husband, as he furtively brushed away a tear with his coat sleeve. "But our little ones are safe. Their love blessed our lives, and they are waiting for us yonder, and remember, God left our Archie with us."

"Yes, and he's a good son. The house has been lonely since he went away. But we could not keep him in the home nest when his wings were ready for flight. Yet he did his duty by us, if ever a boy did."

All a fond mother's pride and love glowed in her face, and vibrated in her voice, yet there was a latent sadness in it. The tea kettle hummed its merry song, and the old grey cat purred in calm contentment on the rug before the fire. All within was cheerful and home like, yet something was missing, and the husband's words told what it was as he said, slowly:

"Do you know, wife, I kind of thought Archie would be home for Christmas. He has never spent one away from us yet. I feel lonesome thinking about him. I would give a good bit to see him sitting over there in his old place,

telling us about his doings in the city. He's a rare one to tell things is Archie. To hear his laugh makes my heart young. I seem to live my youth over again in him."

"We must not forget, John, that he's a married man now," said the wife, in a hard voice. "The old parents must take a second place. I seem to have lost him since he married. My heart feels sore towards the woman who has won him, and taken my boy from me."

Her voice broke in a sob, while the husband said sternly, yet consolingly:

"But, wife, Archie has too true a heart ever to forget us. Then, with a merry twinkle in his eye, "Did you consider my mother's feelings thirty years ago?"

"But that was different, John," she said, half apologetically.

"Not a bit of it," was the sturdy reply. "The same old story just repeats itself. Remember, wife, our capacity for loving is not limited. We may love in a different way without taking any of our affection from others who should have it. When I loved you I did not think less of my dear old mother. God bless her memory! Neither will Archie think less of us. I confess I would like to see him and his wife, for she must be a good woman, or

he would not love her so; yet wife, it you and I have to eat our Christmas dinner alone, it will only remind us of that first one we had here so long ago, when we had just each other."

"Yes, thank God, we still have each other," she breathed, with tender reverence. Then, after a short silence, she said, "I did some fixin' for to-morrow. I could not help it. It's a habit, I suppose. I got a turkey ready, and made Christmas cake, some mince pies, and pudding such as Archie used to like. Perhaps it was foolish of me to cook so much, and he not here to share it. I wonder if his wife can cook, and make the good old-fashioned things he likes so well?"

"Oh, well, if she doesn't, her new fangled dishes will taste as good to him as yours did to me when you first began housekeeping."

He knew how she missed her boy, and that it hurt her to know that another hand ministered to his wants. He felt how sore her heart was, and, hiding his own loneliness, he tried to comfort her.

"We must not be selfish, wife, for it is only natural that Archie should wish to spend the first Christmas since he's married with his wife. When the spring

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