



In Christmas-tide.

(By Emma Lente.)

Oh, did you hear glad bells ring out?
And did you hear the children shout
And see the garlands twined about?
The world forgets its woe and sin,
And decks itself without, within,
To hail the Merry Christmas in!

And happy voices chant and trill
The blessed message of good-will,
That cheers the hearts of millions still,
The world forgets its grief and pain,
Puts by its grasping after gain,
And longs for holier things again!

The Christmas Star.

How the Chinese Child Was Guided to Freedom.

(Jessie Juliet Knox, in the 'Tribune,' New York.)

Christmas Eve brought no happiness to Louey Ching. Nothing had ever brought any real happiness to her, for she was a little Chinese slave girl in the city of San Francisco and was not supposed to indulge in the infantile luxury known as happiness.

One need only to have glanced at the cruel face of the old highbinder who owned her, and the shrewd, shifting eyes to know that he would not willingly have conferred happiness upon any one. To him happiness meant the buying and selling of pretty little tea rose maidens and getting a good price for them.

So dazed was the little slave with the many undeserved beatings and cruel words she had received that she seemed to be conscious of only one thing, and that was that she longed to get away from it all. But how could she get away when the front door was always kept locked and the back door only led to some dark steps going up to the roof? It seemed to her the only way would be to go up and jump off the roof. She ran up the steps one day and peered over the edge of the flat roof, which had a railing round it, just to picture how it would be to jump off, but her lingering gaze brought into focus such a new earth that it seemed a pity to end it all when there was such a beautiful world as that below, if only she could get to it.

And now she dimly remembered of once hearing that there was a 'Melican joss' who would answer one's petitions when the idols failed.

Why had this idea never come into her mind before? She would appeal to this new 'joss,' and the sooner the better; so, lying flat on her little stomach, she cried aloud and said: 'Let me go into the new world! Let me not be beaten any more!' and after that she felt more content.

When she came downstairs and into the long, narrow Chinese room, with its meagre and dirty furnishings, she felt almost happy, for in her little heathen heart was the faith of a child.

It was growing dark. She must set fresh food before the Chinese gods and attend to her many duties, far too heavy for a child who at her age should be at play. She must—why, what was it that made her heart almost stop beating, her face grow pale and her eyes go wide with pleased surprise? She had stepped on something—it was that something which made her think that her prayer was going to be answered. It was the bunch of keys, which had never before to her knowledge left the keeping of the old highbinder who owned her. In her small hand she now held freedom.

He had gone and locked the door with the spring lock and had forgotten the keys. It was almost too good to be true. The door was locked and she had the key to that lock.

'Oh, thank you, thank you, beautiful God!' she hysterically repeated aloud, and realizing

she had not a moment to waste she cast a hurried glance at the room with its scanty furnishings and said: 'I hate you, prison walls! I hate you, ugly old god! I am never going to come again. I am going to find the beautiful new God who hears me when I talk to Him.'

So saying, she hastily singled out the right key, for she had taken careful note of it many times, and had hated the slender thing which had shut her away from happiness and the peace and freedom of childhood. Into the lock it went. O, joy! it turned as easily as if it were glad to set the tiny prisoner free.

There was not a moment to lose—the old man might return at any time. Trembling with fear, she crept like a hunted thing down the rickety, foul smelling stairway. A rat scurried under her feet, and she almost fainted with fright. She lived a lifetime until her sandalled feet touched the last step, and she emerged into the pure, untainted air of freedom. She could feel that there was something unusual in the air, but did not know it was Christmas Eve. It was all so bright and pretty, but she could not stop now to see it, for she realized that she must get out of the Chinese quarter or her cruel master might find her; so she kept straight on down one street, and walked and walked past gay Chinese shops, rich with Oriental treasures which appealed to the American people, and which would help to beautify many an American home on the morrow; past the joss temples and the huge joss lanterns, with their long, beckoning rays of light; past the shuttered and barred doors of underground homes, where she could catch glimpses of other poor slaves, and on—to something, she knew not what. The night wind was cold and she was tired, for she was not accustomed to walking in the streets.

She was out of Chinatown now, and instead of the smell of incense and opium something delightful assailed her nostrils. She looked up and saw that there were men on some of the street corners, and they were selling great bunches of violets, while from these violets came a delightful perfume. Glancing up at the sky she saw one great star larger than the rest. It seemed to invite her, and to lead her to something pleasant. 'Perhaps it is a lantern the new God has lighted for me,' she murmured. 'At any rate, I will let it guide me.'

And so the heathen child was led and guided by the Christmas star, and pretty soon through a huge window in a huge building she saw another star of light, and knew that she had been guided to this place.

She feared to go in, for she was only a little Chinese girl, who knew only a few words of the language of this strange people to whom the star was guiding her. Following the light, she entered a great building, into which the crowds of people were going, and oh, so many children.

'This must be heaven!' she murmured to herself. Surely it could be nothing else, she reflected, for the inside air was warm and full of delightful perfumes, and the velvet cushions seemed to embrace her tired body like the arms of love. Melodious sounds were coming from somewhere—she hadn't the least idea where. She was almost afraid to look up, for fear some one would beat her or put her out. The poor trembling child did not know it was the birthday of the 'Jesus Baby' those people were celebrating, and that the very spirit of the Christ Child was in the air, and that in the huge church into which she had strayed there would be nothing but love and tenderness for her. How could she know, when she had never known love and tenderness?

Finally she ventured to look up, and now, she was sure this must be heaven. She must be dead, after all.

Away in front of her was a big, big tree, all green and feathery looking. It seemed alive, and was covered with wonderful sparkles.

She knew! It was the 'tree of heaven.' She had heard of it before, and on its sway-