THE MAKING OF GODS.

In India a carpenter will not leave his work at night without first making a little rude image of clay, something like a man or an animal, and setting it up to keep watch over his work through the night. In China they manufacture idol gods whenever they take a fancy to do so. The Chinese are very superstitious, and if anything happens which seems mysterious, or which they cannot understand, they think that there are "signs of the divinity" present. And their notion is that wherever these signs of divinity are they must make a temple, more or less elaborate, for the god who is near. A missionary in the province of Sz'chuen writes to *China's Millions* of two cases in which new gods were set up near his home. We copy his account here:

Some years ago a mandarin left Chen-tu to undertake official duties in a hill city, Lugan, in the north of this province, which I visited four years ago. One day his Excellency heard a bird chirping near the roadside. Calling his bearers to stop, he told one of his followers to see what bird it was. The bird was found trapped close by. Desiring to possess the bird, and being told what would be a fair price, the mandarin said to his men, 'Take that dry fish off the sedan-chair, put it under the trap, and we will take the bird and go.' This was accordingly done. By and by the trapper came along to seek for spoil, but instead of finding a bird, to his utter amazement there, right under the trap, lay a large dried fish. Consulting with his neighbors, they came to the conclusion that the spot had surely 'shown signs of divinity.' The fish was beyond doubt a god, and a shrine must be built, the occasion being an auspicious one for the locality. Ere long, accordingly, a new shrine, called the 'Dry Fish Temple,' was built, the fish god becoming eventually famous for its miraculous powers of healing various diseases, and the spot being visited by many worshippers from the district around.

"After five years the mandarin's term of office ended, and he was returning to Chan-tu to a new post, when one day, noticing the new shrine and struck by its name, he bade his chair-bearers put him down. Stepping out of his chair, the great man entered the temple, the priest in charge telling him all about the origin of the affair—of the dry fish found by the astonished trapper, the building of the temple, and of the now famous god. Thereupon the mandarin publicly told the truth about the matter, to the dismay of those who made money by the god. The story getting abroad, pilgrims ceased to visit the spot; the priest went elsewhere to seek a living; the temple fell into ruin and decay; and the god was soon no more."

A NEW STONE GOD IN CHEN-TU.

The same writer in *China's Millions* tells of other new gods:

"During the last twelve months a number of spots in and out of the city have 'shown signs of divinity,' and many new shrines have been built. I will give one instance of this god-making business on a street not far from where we live.

"For some years a stone dedicated to Mount T'ai—one of the famous pilgrim resorts in North China—had been standing naked and neglected against the street wall, worshipped by no one. Last winter, however, it suddenly became famous, having 'shown signs of divinity.' As a result, a temple which arches a wide road has been built, decorated with dozens of painted tablets, the gifts of grateful worshippers who have had, or were supposed to have had, answers to their petitions, and the fame of the shrine is increasing. You may ask the question, 'How did the neglected stone show signs of divinity?' A carpenter's apprentice, one evening last autumn, stole a piece of red muslin from a neighboring shrine. This he hung over the head of the neglected stone god. Above the god on the plastered wall the mischievous youth scribbled, 'Yiu k' iu pih yin,' a native saying equivalent to the text, 'Ask and it shall be given you.' The next day the story got abroad in the neighborhood that the old stone god had 'shown signs of divinity,' a most auspicious event. About a dozen householders formed into a committee, soliciting subscriptions to build the god a house to live in. Money was forthcoming, and soon the present well-appointed shrine was built. When finished it was formally thrown open, with feasting and merry-making. A Taoist priest opened the eyes of the god that he might see, his ear that he might hear, his nose that he might smell—all by chanting mystic prayers. This ceremony completed, the god is reckoned a full-fledged divinity, having the power to bestow or withhold blessings."

Do not such stories as these show us how much the Chinese need to be taught of the one living and true God?—*Day-spring.*

TOM'S BRIGHT IDEA.

A TRUE STORY.

By Florence B. Hallowell.

Ruby and Jenny were sitting on the old lounge in a corner of the sitting-room making clothes for their dolls, and their brother Tom, who was fourteen years old, sat in one of the open windows, dangling his feet outside and whistling. There was plenty of work he could have done had he chosen to do it. There was the calf to be fed, the door of the chicken-house to be closed for the night, the kindling to split, and half a dozen other little tasks that fell to his share regularly every evening.

But Tom—as was frequently the case—felt lazy, and so he sat in the window and whistled and kept his idle hands in his pockets, where he had three pennies, two stones, a jack-knife, a piece of string, a lead-pencil, several fish-hooks, a brass ring, five keys, and some other things too valuable to be kept anywhere except on his person.

'I should think you girls would be sick of sewing,' he remarked, as he finished his tune. 'You've been at it all this blessed afternoon.'

'We are going to stop very soon now,' rejoined Ruby. 'It's getting so dark in here we can hardly see.'

'As soon as I get these buttons sewed on I'm going to put up all my things, and go down cellar after some apples,' said little Jenny, as she threaded her needle, and picked up the big brass thimble that would fall off no matter how many rags she put in it to make it fit her small finger.

Tom, who had begun to whistle again, stopped suddenly, smiled broadly, and jumped down from the window, his eyes danced with mischief. An idea, which seemed to him very bright, had popped into his head. He went to the barn on a run; but he had no intention of feeding the calf or attending to his other duties there. Had he stopped to do so this story would never have been written.

The little girls finished their sewing and began to pack their doll clothes into a large pasteboard box.

'I wonder if Tom will ever make that bureau he promised us,' said Ruby.

'He says he never has time,' sighed little Jenny. 'He hardly ever uses his tools now.'

'I guess he could find time if he tried hard,' said Ruby. 'He has plenty of time to go fishing and train Bose to jump hurdles.'

'Let's beg him again when he comes in to supper,' suggested Jenny.

'All right. Now let's go after the apples. We'll have to take a candle, for the cellar's dark as pitch.'

They found a candle in the kitchen on the shelf over the sink. Ruby lighted it, and went down the cellar stairs first, Jenny following close behind.

At the foot of the stairs was a small hall with one door which opened into the cellar, and generally stood ajar. There was nothing in the hall except a large box full of excelsior in which a set of china had been packed.

The little girls had reached the foot of the stairway, and were about to cross the hall when they were startled by hearing a dismal groan, and the next instant a dark object with a great flapping of wings and hideous cries darted from under the stairway and rushed past into the cellar.

With an awful shriek that echoed through the whole house, Ruby turned and rushed up the cellar stairs, throwing the candle from her in her terror, and not noticing that it fell into the box of excelsior.

Poor little Jenny was too much terrified to utter a sound, and though she managed to crawl up the stairs to the kitchen she had hardly reached the door when she fell heavily to the floor in convulsions.

Mrs. Burch, startled by Ruby's screams came running from her bed-room in the second story, and the next moment had the unconscious child in her arms, while Ruby clung to her, sobbing and shrieking.

'Hi! hi!' cried Tom, dancing in. 'I gave you a good scare, didn't I, you sillies? You ought'—

He stopped abruptly, horrified by the look of agony on his mother's pale face, as she bent over the quivering little figure in her lap.

'Run for the doctor, quick, Tom,' she said hurriedly, 'Jenny has a spasm.'

Tom may live to be an old man, but he will never forget as long as there is breath in his body what he felt as he turned to obey his mother's order. For a moment he seemed paralyzed; there was a dull, heavy feeling about his head, and he was scarcely conscious of motion as he walked to the gate.

A buggy drawn by a stout gray horse went by just as he opened the gate. Everybody in the neighborhood knew Dr. Prewhitt's big gray horse, and Tom's heart gave a great bound.

'Doctor! Doctor Prewhitt,' he shouted at the top of his voice, and it was so strained and hoarse that it didn't seem like his own voice at all.

The doctor heard, looked back, and then turned the horse slowly around. Three minutes later he was out of the buggy, and hurrying along the little path that led around the house to the back door, his medicine case in his hand and Tom at his heels.

'Stop! what's that big light down there?' he asked, as they passed the cellar window. 'Good gracious, boy! Your cellar's on fire!'

Tom stood as if petrified, his eyes almost starting from his head.

'Quick! there's no time to be lost!' cried the doctor. 'Bring buckets,' and he dashed the medicine case into a flower-bed, and seizing a bucket of water that stood on a bench by the kitchen door, rushed down into the cellar through the trap door that stood open, Tom having neglected to close it when he had made his exit after carrying out that bright idea.

'Fire! fire!' screamed Tom as he ran into the kitchen after the buckets from the sink.

He could never remember very clearly all that took place during the next fifteen minutes. It was well that Doctor Prewhitt was there to help, or in a short time there would have been no house left. Tom worked like a Trojan carrying water from the well, and only the big box of excelsior and the cellar stairs were burned. But both the doctor and Tom were nearly choked by smoke before the flames were conquered, and they dared take a breathing spell.

But the doctor had Jenny to attend to, then, and it was almost an hour later before he thought it safe to leave her. She had passed from one convulsion into another, and Mrs. Burch was almost crazed with grief for her child and fright about the fire. The doctor had to give her some medicine, too, before he left.

Not until he had been gone some time, and Jenny was sleeping fitfully, did Mrs. Burch have time to ask any questions of Tom. Then she learned the whole story, for Tom was no coward and confessed his folly without making any excuses for himself except to say that he had frightened his twin sisters 'just for fun.'

'A piece of fun that might have cost us our home and Jenny's life, said Mrs. Burch severely. 'But I am not able to talk to you about it now.'

But Tom, too wretched to make any reply, went off to bed, wondering if his mother would ever love or trust him again: and thinking that he couldn't blame her much if she never did.

Jenny, though very weak and nervous the next morning, was able to be up; but it was a long, long time before she recovered fully from the fright she had received and nothing could induce her ever to enter the cellar again after dark.

Tom made what amends he could. He was handy with tools, and so was able to make a new flight of steps into the cellar; and he gave up teaching Bose to jump hurdles, and let the fish have a rest from hook and line while he fashioned a little bureau for Jenny's doll clothes.

She has it still, and sometimes when children admire it and ask her who made it, she tells them about her brother Tom's piece of fun, which was a lesson he never forgot, and which cured him of playing practical jokes for the rest of his life.—*Standard.*

SINGLE REFORMERS.

Some one has said: "Once in a while, when a great fortress is to be taken, God will bring out a great field-piece and rake all with the fiery hail of destruction. But common muskets do most of the hard fighting. It took only one Joshua, and the thousands of common troops under him, to break down the walls of cities, and, under the wrathful strokes, to make nations fly like sparks from the anvil. It took only one Luther for Germany, one Zwingli for Switzerland, one John Knox for Scotland, one Calvin for France, and one John Wesley for England."

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