

**THE HOME OF THE
DRAGON; A
TONQUINESE IDYLL,
TOLD IN SEVEN CHAPTERS**

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The Home of the Dragon; A Tonquinese Idyll, Told in Seven Chapters by Anna Catharina

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ANNA CATHARINA

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ANNA CATHARINA

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A TONQUINESE IDYLL

TOLD IN SEVEN CHAPTERS



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To
MY HUSBAND.

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CONTENTS.



	PAGE
I. THOSE FERNS	29
II. A-QUAT'S WEDDING	47
III. THE RENDEZ-VOUS	76
IV. THIRA	102
V. THE RIVERSIDE PAGODA	137
VI. HAND-FED	159
VII. IN THE VILLAGE	193



INTRODUCTION.

IS there anything like the sunshine in the East? Anything like the sky, the sea, the people? Who that has been in the East can quite forget his first impressions?

Thirty-eight days, and I was cut adrift from all the prose of the old country—at least that is what I thought when I first put my foot on Tonquin soil, and breathed, with rapturous delight, the mystery-filled air of my new surroundings!

For the evening the cook had prepared a grand dinner. To be truthful, I was a little disappointed. It was not quite "*natif*" enough; I wanted every-

thing "*au naturel*,"—for *natif* was my great word then, and I had before me indistinct visions of birdsnest soup and fermented eggs and chopsticks.

How well I remember this first meal. I can see the flowers in the centre of the table now—big yellow double marigolds and little pink roses laid out in fanciful pattern round a sugar-loaf shape. When I pulled one of the flowers out I found that it had no stem, but was stuck into a mould of river mud! The table was laid very correctly; the two house-boys stood near the dresser, looking very decorative in their white clothes and black turbans. I found that instead of a napkin I had a pillowslip under my bread. It was delightful, so deliciously unexpected.

Then, let me see, we had oxtail soup, then fish, and the boy had put two red hibiscus blossoms where once had been the eyes. Then a dish of wild ducks, and roast chicken and salad.