

**TI: A STORY OF SAN
FRANCISCO'S
CHINATOWN**

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Ti: A Story of San Francisco's Chinatown by Mary E. Bamford

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By MARY E. BAMFORD.

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CHAPTER I

THE "NEW WORDS."

T WAS low tide. Ti sat on a board at the end of the net-drying platform, and looked out beyond the mud flats of the bay. He could see his father's junk far on the water. The junk had



been away down the bay to San Francisco, and now was coming back, bringing a load of salt to be used in curing shrimps. Thousands of shrimps were caught and dried every year at this isolated California Chinese fishing-village where Ti lived.

There were large plank floors on which the shrimps were dried. Tons of shrimps were shipped across the ocean to China yearly.

His uncle, Lum Lee, hurried past to get some wood to be used as fuel in some of the processes of curing shrimps. As he ran by, he looked at Ti and observed that if the boy should fall off the board at the end of the net-drying platform, he would land in the mud-flat underneath.

"Do not fall," he called out in Chinese, as he ran.

But Ti felt entirely above such advice. Of course he could hold on! But what he could not do was to hurry the coming in of the tide, so that his father could bring the junk to the wharf. Ti particularly wanted the junk to hurry, because, when going away, his father had said that he would bring something from the great city for a present to his boy. And now, when the junk was returning and fairly in sight of the fishing-camp, the water near the shore line of the bay must go out and leave nothing but mud-flats! What junk could sail on a mud-flat? Ti did wish that the water would hurry coming in, so he could get his present!

What would it be? Would it be a toy

balloon, such as the American children intelligible to American as well as Chinese had sometimes? Or would it be some ears. Uncle Lum Lee had long since dis-
 rice cakes? Perhaps it would be a fish-bladder covered with feathers, for him to use in playing "tack yin." Or maybe it would be candy!

Ti clasped his little yellow hands ecstatically across his "shom," as the Chinese call the blouse.

But it does not do to clasp one's hands too suddenly when one is sitting on the end of a board in the air! Ti lost his balance, screamed, caught at the board, and fell over, down into the mud below! Oh, it was dreadful! His thick-soled shoes and blue trousers disappeared in the mud! The ends of his "shom" spread out over the mud, and he



"Do not fall," called Uncle Lum Lee.

appeared, but See Yow heard—old See Yow, who was going through the encampment to one of the buildings that had a shrine, such as a joss-house has. He was intending to put some incense sticks before the shrine, for he knew the proverb of his people, "In passing over the day in the usual way there are four ounces of sin." Yet his idea of "sin" was very different from the Christian idea. When he heard the scream he did not wait to go to the shrine, but hurriedly called to others near. There was a loud chattering, and at last little Ti was scooped out of the mud, as if he were a

screamed a scream that would have been new and valuable variety of clam. He



Chinese Fishing Hamlet.

left one thick-soled shoe buried far out of sight, and he was borne away by old See Yow to be cleaned up again.

While he scraped and comforted, the old man told Ti how convenient it would have been to-day, if he had been one of the feathered people, for then he could have flown, when he found himself dropping into the mud. See Yow really believed that there are feathered people somewhere in the world, for he had been taught so, when he was a boy long ago, by a man from Swatow in China.

"The feathered people are gentle, and they are covered with fluffy down, and have wings," said See Yow, "and they sing."

Ti listened and watched the scraping off of his shoe.

The old man kept on talking about the feathered people. "If one wishes to visit that nation, he must go far to the southeast and then inquire," he finished, in the words of the tale as he had learned them.

By this time Ti was quite as clean as he could be made in so short a time. See Yow was always a kind, lovable old man.

"When the junk comes in, I will give you a piece of the present my father brings me," said Ti gratefully.

Old See Yow smiled. "May the Five Blessings come upon you!" he answered affectionately. "Surely you were a child that neither learned to walk nor speak early nor had teeth early!"

Now as certain Chinese believe that a

child who does these things early has a bad disposition and will grow up unlovable, what See Yow said was very complimentary. And as the Chinese "Five Blessings" are health, riches, long life,



Old See Yow.

love of virtue, and a natural death, the old man wished the best things he knew for Ti. But to himself he smiled at little Ti's promise about the present, and thought, "Some presents will not bear dividing! It is but a child's promise. I shall have nothing."

But little Ti meant what he promised.

He would certainly give a piece of his present to kind old See Yow.

The little boy stayed with the shrimpererq till the slow waters of the bay climbed again over the mud-flats toward the fishing-hamlet. Then the men on the junk out in the bay hoisted sail, and slowly the junk came toward the shore. But about three hundred yards from the shore, it ran aground in the mud. Small boats began to ply between the junk and the shore, however, and on one of these boats came Ti's father. He had not left Ti's present on board the junk with the load of salt, either. The present was inside of the father's blouse.

How Ti gazed, as his father fumbled in his blouse and brought out his present! It was a pair of bright, pink, American stockings! Oh, they were so bright and pink and pretty! The boy was delighted. He had never had anything but common white stockings to show above his low, thick-soled shoes before. The new pink stockings were clocked with silk up their sides, and to little Ti they seemed very beautiful.

He smiled with happiness, for Chinese small people when "dressed up" like to wear pretty colors. Then suddenly he remembered something. Had he not said he would divide his present — whatever it should be — with old See Yow? The little lad's smile vanished. Must he give away half of his beautiful new pink pair of stockings? What good was half a pair of stockings?

But the boy's father was still fumbling in his blouse, and a moment later he brought out some Chinese candy. Putting this into Ti's hands, he brought out something else.

"I saw the teacher woman in the city," he told in Chinese, and she said, 'Here is something for little Ti! Tell him to fasten it up by a street door, so that all the fishing-people will see it!'"

But the father frowned a little, as he said this, though he handed Ti the teacher's gift, which was a piece of red paper on which were some Chinese words in black characters. Ti's father did not like the city teacher woman very well, yet he had brought the paper safely because he thought that the little boy might like its red color. The words on the red paper seemed strange to him. He did not know what they meant.

"I will give this red paper to See Yow," resolved Ti, taking the paper. "Then I shall not have to give him one of my pink stockings! He may have some of my candy, too."

He ran away to find See Yow. The kind old man admired the pink stockings, refused the candy, but took the red paper. He tried to read what was printed on it in Chinese characters, but he did not understand. He puzzled over it quite a while.

Ti stood by, watching. "What does it say?" he asked.

"They are new words," answered old See Yow.

He read them aloud slowly: "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

Ti did not know what they meant. The teacher woman in the great California city where he used to live several years ago had spoken to him once about Christ, but he was a very little fellow then, and now he did not remember much she had said. So he could not help See Yow to understand the words on the red paper.

"The teacher woman said to put the paper up by a door where everybody can see," stated Ti in Chinese.

So See Yow held the red paper and went along slowly to the hut where he and some other Chinamen lived. Above and beside the outside of the door were already pasted red or yellow papers with inscriptions that said various things in Chinese. One paper said: "May we never be without wisdom." Another paper read, "Good hope," and another, "Good will come to us," and another, "May heaven give happiness."

But none of them held any such words as the teacher woman's red paper that See Yow's wrinkled old hands pasted now among the other inscriptions.

Back and forth through the narrow, dirty little street that ran through the hamlet went the Chinese men and women and children. They were all so busy with the shrimp-curing and the fish-drying and the household work that they hardly looked at See Yow's red paper. Once in a while a man stopped to look, but he did

not know what the words meant. Some of the Chinamen who had once lived down in the city had heard of the Americans' Christ, but had not paid much attention. Many of the Chinese had lived in different fishing-villages for years, and had never had any one to teach them of Christ. See Yow had lived in California many years. He had wandered around through Chinese mining-camps and fishing-villages, but in the mining-camps there was no teaching of Chinese about Christ, and after all these years in a Christian land, the poor old man was in as dense ignorance of Christianity as when he came from his native land. This whole fishing-camp where he now lived knew little more of Christ than if it had been in China.

After seeing the paper pasted up by the door, Ti had run off with his own precious pink stockings. But old See Yow stood still and looked awhile at the red paper, and tried to think what the words meant. At last he shook his head slowly, saying as he turned away:

"They are new words. They are new words!"

Yet there those words of eighteen centuries stood on See Yow's shabby old outward wall, and hither and thither went the ignorant, hard-working Chinese people, who did not know the meaning of them.

