

**A WILD ROSE.**

The first wild rose in wayside hedge  
This year I wandering see,  
I pluck, and send it as a pledge,  
My own Wild Rose, to thee.

For when my gaze first met thy gaze  
We were knee deep in June;  
The nights were only dreaming days,  
And all the hours in tune.

I found thee, like the eglantine,  
Sweet, simple and apart;  
And from that hour thy smile hath been  
The flower that scents my heart.

And ever since, when tendrils grace  
Young copse or withered boll  
With rosebuds, straight I see thy face,  
And gaze into thy soul.

A natural bud of love thou art,  
Where, gazing down, I view,  
Deep hidden in thy fragrant heart,  
A drop of heavenly dew.

Go, wild rose, to my Wild Rose dear;  
Bid her come swift and soon,  
Oh, would that she were always here!  
It then were always June.

—Alfred Austin in Washington Post.

**A-SUNG AND THE PIRATES**

A-sung was a Chinese boy who lived in the farming village of Woo-kuh, near the Choo-Keang or Pearl river, about fifteen miles below Canton. His father belonged to that highly esteemed class of Nung or farmers.

A-sung was one of the brightest scholars in the village school. But A-sung's father was poor and had many children, so he felt compelled to take his son from school to save the expense, and also that he might have his help in the paddy field.

A-sung was in a somewhat melancholy mood one bright afternoon as he sat beneath a clump of mulberry trees near the river. From his little knoll he could gaze over wide expanses of rice fields, and before him spread the broad surface of the river at Blenheim Beach.

A beautiful American bark lying at anchor half a mile away was the object of his earnest attention.

Suddenly there was a great puff of white smoke from her deck, followed by a heavy report. A-sung seemed to have been watching for this. He directed his gaze to a black speck a mile down the river, and saw the splashes as the shot struck near it and ricocheted on over the surface. The crew were practicing at the guns.

When the firing ceased a small boat left the bark, directed toward a point higher up the river, and he knew that some of the officers were coming ashore to take exercise on horseback, as was their custom. A-sung sprang up and started back to the village.

On his way he had to pass near a small fishing hamlet situated on an inlet of the river. He hurried along with some trepidation, for the inhabitants had a bad reputation. It was reported that they were addicted to smuggling and piracy in their swift boats, called "fast crabs." But he came to a sudden halt as loud, piteous screams came from one of the huts.

A huge, ugly Chinaman came out dragging a girl whom he was beating unmercifully with a thick piece of bamboo. He wore short, wide trousers, a dirty quilted blouse and a broad hat of bamboo strips. His feet were bare. He was a vicious looking ruffian. At last the girl broke away from him and ran swiftly toward A-sung, pursued by her tormentor.

The boy's first thought was to take to his heels, but he boldly waited till the fugitive reached him, when he grasped her waist and darted away behind an embankment into a patch of tall reeds, where they both lay panting until their pursuer gave up the search.

The girl was quite pretty, but ragged and covered with bruises. She was crying with pain and fright. A-sung's eyes filled with tears of sympathy.

"Was that your father?" he asked pityingly.

"No, venerable sir," sobbed the girl. "He bought me."

"Oh!" said A-sung, with contempt at the thought of helping a slave girl. But his better feelings prevailed. He felt in his pocket and drew out two pieces of cash and a ball.

"Take these," he said. "I'm sorry for you. Better wait till he goes to sleep before you go back." Then he rose and crept cautiously away so as not to attract attention. In a little while he reached the village.

As he approached he saw two foreigners on horseback in the street surrounded by more than 200 children, who were dancing about and shouting "Coo-chee! coo-chee!" (Throw cash). The grown people crowded the doorways enjoying the sport. The two men were laughing heartily, and scattering handfuls of copper cash to see the children scramble for it. When they had emptied their pockets they rode on, still laughing, and met A-sung. They were dressed in white linen, and one of them wore a Panama hat, the other a blue cap with a gold band. A-sung recognized them as officers of the bark.

"Say, Prescott," said the one with the hat, "there's a boy that would suit me. Speak to him."

They stopped, and Prescott addressed A-sung in Chinese.

"What is your name, boy?"

"A-sung, venerable sir," replied A-sung. "What is your name, venerable sir?" he added politely.

"Never mind," replied Prescott. "The venerable Lord Captain Denville wants a boy to serve him. Lead us to your father, and oppose not."

A-sung's eyes sparkled joyfully. Hastily he led the way along the granite paved street, and stopped before a low, neat house. Inscriptions on red paper and an urn for joss sticks were at the entrance. His father came to the door—a grave, dignified farmer. A-sung put his hands together and saluted him with deep respect and said:

"Venerable father, here is the venerable lord captain and the venerable lord 'Never Mind,' who want a boy to serve them."

Prescott restrained his desire to laugh at A-sung's mistake regarding his name, and briefly informed the farmer of Capt. Denville's wish to employ his son as cabin boy, for which he would pay him \$10 a month. After due consideration the farmer consented, and it was arranged that A-sung should come aboard the next day in the boat of the comprador—the man who supplied the ship with fresh provisions.

"Is A-sung a good boy," asked Capt. Denville.

"Him good boy now, bimeby no can tell," replied the farmer gravely.

The officers rode away, and his father said to A-sung: "Doubtless the gods thus show their favor. With the money thus gained from these barbarians you can resume your sublime studies, and my son shall yet bring honor to my old age."

The next day A-sung went on board the Harlequin. His father went with him and formally presented him to the captain.

"Him good boy now, bimeby no can tell," he repeated solemnly, as he took his departure with the comprador.

A-sung looked about with wonder. The deck was clean and white. Four cannons were mounted, black and threatening—two 9-pounder carronades on the quarter deck, a long 18-pounder pivot gun amidships and a 3-pounder pivot on the fore-castle. Swarthy, active sailors were at work on deck or in the rigging. They were all Manila men from the Philippine islands, who speak the Spanish language. The captain, his two mates and the clerk were the only white men on board.

A-sung was sent below to the Chinese steward to be instructed in his duties. When he came on deck again in the afternoon he beheld an animated scene. Two long, pull away boats were alongside the bark. They carried masts with matting sails, and besides pulled about twenty oars on each side. They were armed with gingsals fixed in swivels on the gunwale; these were Chinese firearms, carrying a large ball.

A number of Chinese of mercantile appearance were on deck earnestly conversing with Capt. Denville. A great many small chests of mango wood, covered with rawhide, were piled near by. One of these was open, and A-sung saw that the upper half of the chest was divided into twenty compartments, in each of which was a dark brown ball of peculiar appearance and smell. Evidently there was the same number of balls in the lower part of the chest.

A-sung soon found out that this was crude opium, and that the merchants were buying it. He was on an opium ship.

The purchasers paid for the drug sometimes with Spanish or Mexican dollars and sometimes with silver ingots called sycee. The coins had all been stamped over and over again with Chinese stamps until they were completely defaced. These were called "chop dollars." The value of both coins and sycee was ascertained by weight.

As the merchant paid the silver it was passed over to the "shroff," a grave, spectacled Chinaman, who sat at his table under the awning on the quarter deck, and with his brass balances carefully ascertained the value of it. He had need of care, for he was under heavy bonds for the correct performance of his duty.

After A-sung had been on board the Harlequin a week he was much puzzled at the difference in the behavior of these people who came to buy opium.

Some boats came in broad daylight and took the drug away openly, while others came stealthily at night, in haste and fear, and sometimes the ship's boat cautiously took away a chest or two up some less-frequented inlet, carefully avoiding the mandarin boats that patrolled the river.

A-sung asked the steward for an explanation of this difference, and learned that the exalted emperor at Peking objected to opium being imported into the land, and therefore it was sometimes

smuggled.

As for the boats that came openly he supposed that they found means "to cover up men's ears and eyes," meaning, perhaps, that they bribed the mandarins. This was in 1843, and the steward's explanation was probably correct.

A-sung was much interested in the boarding nettings, which were triced up every night from the rail to the rigging. These were for protection against night attacks by Chinese pirates, who were many and dangerous in those waters. But what excited his greatest interest was the practice at the big guns.

At first the loud reports nearly made him jump out of his blue and gold slippers, but he soon became accustomed to the noise. The cannons were touched off with a joss stick, in primitive fashion, and at night some of these were always kept burning near the mainmast in readiness for a sudden attack.

"Venerable young brother," said the steward one day to A-sung, "how many dollars' worth of opium do you think are in this barbarian ship?"

"Venerable elder brother, I do not know," replied A-sung.

"There are four hundreds of thousands," said the steward. "Verily it would be a rich prize for the pirates."

Two weeks after A-sung joined the Harlequin he asked the captain's permission to go and pay his respects to his father. Capt. Denville granted his request, and he went ashore in the comprador's boat. With a light heart he trudged away toward the village, where he was received with great joy by his father and by his young friends and schoolmates.

He spent a very happy day. All the children of the village were eagerly preparing for their "Lantern Feast," which was to take place that night. This is the children's festival in the spring, when they are allowed to have their own way in everything and indulge in merry-making to their hearts' content.

A-sung wished to stay ashore that night in order to take part in the festivities, but as Capt. Denville would expect him to come on board he resolved to go out to the ship with the comprador in the evening and ask leave of absence till the next day. So at evening he walked back to the landing.

On the way he saw two men approaching him, one of whom he thought was the ruffian who had beaten the slave girl. He was not sure of this, however, as this person took another path and soon disappeared.

The other man came on and met him. He was a portly, well dressed Chinaman, and saluted A-sung politely, with an engaging smile. He stopped and proceeded to address many flowery and flattering remarks to the boy, in the course of which he alluded to his connection with the Harlequin, claiming to be himself an old friend of Capt. Denville's.

Although A-sung was in a hurry he listened with pleasure to one who had evidently formed such a high opinion of him at sight, and he replied unsuspectingly to some adroit questions regarding the armament and regulations of the ship.

At last the stranger took leave of him, courteously wishing him abundant felicity and the highest honors and promotion. Then, as if with a sudden thought, he took from the breast of his rich overgarment a small bundle tied up in a silk handkerchief.

"Venerable younger brother," he said, "here are some excellent cheroots with which to regale the sailors and officials of the barbarian ship. They are especially choice for those who watch at night, as they will banish the god of drowsiness."

He gave the boy the bundle and again took polite leave. A-sung now hurried to the landing and got there just in time to go off with the comprador.

Capt. Denville kindly gave him permission to return to the "lantern feast" after he had performed a few duties, and by the time the comprador was ready to return the night watch was already on deck. Then A-sung happened to think of the cheroots. He ran below, untied the bundle and brought up a handful, which he distributed among the Manila sailors, with whom he was already a great favorite. Then he gave a couple to the second mate, who was the officer of the watch, and sprang into the boat.

When he reached the village the "lantern feast" was in full progress. The street was crowded with gayly dressed children carrying colored lanterns and forming in line for the procession.

In the midst of this joyful scene, when the merriment was at its height, a pale, ragged, muddy figure appeared at A-sung's side and touched his arm. He recognized the slave girl whom he had befriended. She was shivering with cold and fear.

"Come, venerable, sir," she said, "I must tell you something."

They retired a few steps, while the throng of children looked on with wonder.

"There is a fishing village fifteen le from here," continued the girl hurriedly, "and three big pirate boats go from there to attack the barbarian ship to-night. My master and the rest have gone to join them. I followed them. The pirates were beating the gongs and burning the joss papers to gain the favor of the gods. Do not use the cheroots the man gave you today; they are drugged with the smelting stuffs of thieves and robbers to make men sleep!"

A-sung gave a cry of astonishment and despair. For a moment he was stupefied; then he threw down his gay lantern, and darted away toward the boat landing at his greatest speed.

In a little while he had aroused the comprador and acquainted him with his fears. They hurriedly entered a small boat and pulled away for the Harlequin. As they neared the ship they distinctly heard the dip of the sweeps as the pirate boats approached. They had almost reached their prey.

A-sung clambered up the side and reached the deck with difficulty between the boarding nettings. There was no challenge. All was still on board. Several dark figures were stretched out on the deck forward.

He darted aft. The second mate was in a profound slumber, breathing heavily. He shook the officer, but found it impossible to awake him. The drugged cigars had done their work effectually. He glanced fearfully around. One of the pirate boats was close at hand, looming up darkly, propelled by a great number of oars. Wild with fright, A-sung rushed forward to the fore-castle screaming:

"Pirates! pirates! Ahoy, hi yi!"

The men on deck were all in a leaden slumber, but some of the watch had evidently sneaked below on finding that the mate had gone to sleep.

At A-sung's cries three sailors rushed on deck. Though confused, they comprehended in a moment the imminent danger, and sprang forward to the pivot gun amidships. By that time the pirate boat was almost alongside, and suddenly there burst from her crowded deck the most frightful din of gongs and savage yells, together with a fierce discharge of musketry and gingsals.

Several large, flaming missiles were thrown over the boarding nettings upon the deck. Three fell close to the pivot gun, where they lay blazing and smoking, emitting a most horrible and suffocating stench. Unable to endure it, the sailors were driven from the gun.

One of them ran aft to the cabin, shouting "Senor Captain! Ladrones! ladrones!" Another ran to the fore-castle to arouse his shipmates. The third stood as if paralyzed. Already the pirates were grappling the ship and preparing to pour on board.

At this perilous moment a desperate resolve inspired A-sung. Since he had caused this disaster he would at least do what he could to atone for it was his thought. He drew a deep breath, and as the captain and Prescott reached the deck they saw A-sung dash forward through the fumes of the burning "fire pots," seize a joss stick from the mainmast and touch off the long eighteen pounder. There was a stunning report. The pirate boat was wrapped in smoke, from which came fearful howls, screams, groans. The gun happened to be trained exactly upon the crowded deck of the pirate, and being double shotted with canister the effect of the discharge was terrible.

By this time the rest of the crew were on deck, and the carronade and the gun on the fore-castle were fired into the other pirate boats that were trying to get alongside, and the sailors gave them a volley of musketry. Prescott at the head of some of the most resolute men threw the blazing "fire pots" overboard, extinguished the flames, and then, reloading the eighteen pounder, poured another blast into the first boat, which was trying to get off, badly crippled.

Poor A-sung was picked up limp and senseless from the deck, where he had fallen suffocated after so bravely firing the gun. That one shot began the disastrous repulse of the pirates. It was some time before he was revived, and when he regained consciousness the battle was over.

When Capt. Denville heard the whole story, he highly praised A-sung for his prompt and courageous action, but also warned him against being deceived by shrewd rascals, no matter how fine their dress or how pleasing their manners.

The men who had been stupefied by the drugged cigars soon recovered, but the second mate never forgave the boy who had caused his discomfiture.

A-sung told the captain of the important service the slave girl had rendered, and expressed his fears for her fate if the pirates should suspect that she had betrayed them. So the next day Capt. Denville, A-sung and a party of armed sailors went to the fishing hamlet.

Denville reached the hotel first and burst in the door. They had evidently arrived just in time. The little slave

girl was dodging about the rear of the pursued by the big Chinese ruffian, who was slashing at her with a heavy scimitar.

The villain had been wounded in the attack on the ship. His jaw was bound up with a dirty bandage and he could barely limp about. This had enabled the child to escape his deadly blows, but as Denville entered he had penned her in a corner.

The captain drew his pistol, and compelled the pirate to drop his sword. He then sternly announced his intention of taking the slave girl away, and that little as the ruffian deserved if he would pay a reasonable price for her.

The pirate, scowling furiously from the bench where he had sunk, did not object to this, but coolly mentioned a most exorbitant price. Denville, without wasting words, placed one-tenth of the amount on the bench, and told the girl that she now belonged to him.

He then addressed the pirate again, and threatened him with the severest punishment if he ever followed or persecuted the girl. After this the party left the village, taking with them the little slave, who exhibited a joy that was really pathetic.

The girl, whose name was Le Won, was given her freedom and placed in the family of A-sung's father, where she would be kindly treated—Capt. Denville engaging to pay for her maintenance until she was married.

A-sung remained on board the Harlequin a year, during which time he made a voyage to India. Then he returned to his native village and resumed his studies of the Confucian classics—that road to honor and fame in the Flowery Land.—Charles E. Brimblecom in Youth's Companion.

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