

The Marriage of the Virgin Goddess

By P'u Sung-ling

At Kuei-chi there is a shrine to the Plum Virgin, who was formerly a young lady named Ma, and lived at Tung-wan. Her betrothed husband dying before the wedding, she swore she would never marry, and at thirty years of age she died. Her kinsfolk built a shrine to her memory, and gave her the title of the Plum Virgin. Some years afterwards, a Mr. Chin, on his way to the examination, happened to pass by the shrine; and entering in, he walked up and down thinking very much of the young lady in whose honour it had been erected. That night he dreamt that a servant came to summon him into the presence of the Goddess; and that, in obedience to her command, he went and found her waiting for him just outside the shrine. "I am deeply grateful to you, Sir," said the Goddess, on his approach, "for giving me so large a share of your thoughts; and I intend to repay you by becoming your humble handmaid." Mr. Chin bowed an assent; and then the Goddess escorted him back, saying, "When your place is ready, I will come and fetch you." On waking in the morning, Mr. Chin was not over-pleased with his dream; however, that very night every one of the villagers dreamt that the Goddess appeared and said she was going to marry Mr. Chin, bidding them at once prepare an image of him. This the village elders, out of respect for their Goddess, positively refused to do; until at length they all began to fall ill, and then they made a clay image of Mr. Chin, and placed it on the left of the Goddess. Mr. Chin now told his wife that the Plum Virgin had come for him; and, putting on his official cap and robes, he straightway died. Thereupon his wife was very angry; and, going to the shrine, she first abused the Goddess, and then, getting on the altar, slapped her face well. The Goddess is now called Chin's virgin wife.