

# Miss Chiao-No

By P'u Sung-ling

K'ung Hsüeh-li was a descendant of Confucius.<sup>1</sup> He was a man of considerable ability, and an excellent poet.<sup>2</sup> A fellow-student, to whom he was much attached, became magistrate at T'ien-t'ai, and sent for K'ung to join him. Unfortunately, just before K'ung arrived his friend died, and he found himself without the means of returning home; so he took up his abode in a Buddhist monastery, where he was employed in transcribing for the priests. Several hundred paces to the west of this monastery there was a house belonging to a Mr. Shan, a gentleman who had known better days, but who had spent all his money in a heavy law-suit; and then, as his family was a small one, had gone away to live in the country and left his house vacant. One day there was a heavy fall of snow which kept visitors away from the monastery; and K'ung, finding it dull, went out. As he was passing by the door of the house above-mentioned, a young man of very elegant appearance came forth, who, the moment he saw K'ung, ran up to him, and with a bow, entered into conversation, asking him to be pleased to walk in. K'ung was much taken with the young man, and followed him inside. The rooms were not particularly large, but adorned throughout with embroidered curtains, and from the walls hung scrolls and drawings by celebrated masters. On the table lay a book, the title of which was "Jottings from Paradise;" and turning over its leaves, K'ung found therein many strange things. He did not ask the young man his name, presuming that as he lived in the Shan family mansion, he was necessarily the owner of the place. The young man, however, inquired what he was doing in that part of the country, and expressed great sympathy with his misfortunes, recommending him to set about taking pupils. "Alas!" said K'ung, "who will play the Mæcenas to a distressed wayfarer like myself?" "If," replied the young man, "you would condescend so far, I for my part would gladly seek instruction at your hands." K'ung was much gratified at this, but said he dared not arrogate to himself the position of teacher, and begged merely to be considered as the young man's friend. He then asked him why the house had been shut up for so long; to which the young man replied, "This is the Shan family mansion. It has been closed all this time because of the owner's removal into the country. My surname is Huang-fu, and my home is in Shen-si; but as our house has been burnt down in a great fire, we have put up here for a while." Thus Mr. K'ung found out that his name was not Shan. That evening they spent in laughing and talking together, and K'ung remained there for the night. In the morning a lad came in to light the fire; and the young man, rising first, went into the private part of the house. Mr. K'ung was sitting up with the bed-clothes still huddled round him, when the lad looked in and said, "Master's coming!" So he jumped up with a start, and in came an old man with a silvery beard, who began to thank him, saying, "I am very much obliged to you for your condescension in becoming my son's tutor. At present 'he writes a villanous hand; and I can only hope you will not allow the ties of friendship to interfere with discipline.'" Thereupon, he presented Mr. K'ung with an embroidered suit of clothes, a sable

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<sup>1</sup> Lineal descendants of Confucius are to be found at this day living together as a clan, near their founder's mausoleum in Shantung. The head of the family is an hereditary *kung* or "duke," and each member enjoys a share of the revenues with which the family has been endowed, in well-merited recognition of the undying influence of China's greatest sage.

<sup>2</sup> More or less proficiency in the art of poetry is an absolutely essential qualification for all who present themselves at the great competitive tests by which successful candidates are admitted to Chinese official life.

hat, and a set of shoes and stockings; and when the latter had washed and dressed himself he called for wine and food. K'ung could not make out what the valances of the chairs and tables were made of: they were so very bright-coloured and dazzling. By-and-by, when the wine had circulated several times, the old gentleman picked up his walking-stick and took his leave. After breakfast the young man handed in his theme, which turned out to be written in an archaic style, and not at all after the modern fashion of essay-writing. K'ung asked him why he had done this, to which the young man replied that he did not contemplate competing at the public examinations. In the evening they had another drinking-bout, but it was agreed that there should be no more of it after that night. The young man then called the boy and told him to see if his father was asleep or not; adding, that if he was, he might quietly summon Miss Perfume. The boy went off, first taking a guitar out of a very pretty case; and in a few minutes in came a very nice-looking young girl. The young man bade her play the *Death of Shun*,<sup>3</sup> and seizing an ivory plectrum she swept the chords, pouring forth a vocal melody of exquisite sweetness and pathos. He then gave her a goblet of wine to drink, and it was midnight before they parted. Next morning they got up early and settled down to work. The young man proved an apt scholar: he could remember what he had once read, and at the end of two or three months had made astonishing progress. Then they agreed that every five days they would indulge in a symposium, and that Miss Perfume should always be of the party. One night when the wine had gone into K'ung's head, he seemed to be lost in a reverie whereupon his young friend, who knew what was the matter with him, said, "This girl was brought up by my father. I know you find it lonely, and I have long been looking out for a nice wife for you." "Let her only resemble Miss Perfume," said K'ung, "and she will do." "Your experience," said the young man, laughing, "is but limited, and, consequently, anything is a surprise to you. If Miss Perfume is your *beau ideal*, why it will not be difficult to satisfy you.

Some six months had passed away, when one day Mr. K'ung took it into his head that he would like to go out for a stroll in the country. The entrance, however, was carefully closed; and on asking the reason, the young man told him that his father wished to receive no guests for fear of causing interruption to his studies. So K'ung thought no more about it; and by-and-by, when the heat of summer came on, they moved their study to a pavilion in the garden. At this time Mr. K'ung had a swelling on the chest about as big as a peach, which, in a single night, increased to the size of a bowl. There he lay groaning with the pain, while his pupil waited upon him day and night. He slept badly and took hardly any food; and in a few days the place got so much worse that he could neither eat nor drink. The old gentleman also came in, and he and his son lamented over him together. Then the young man said, "I was thinking last night that my sister, Chiao-no, would be able to cure Mr. K'ung, and accordingly I sent over to my grandmother's asking her to come. She ought to be here by now." At that moment a servant entered and announced Miss Chiao-no, who had come with her cousin, having been at her aunt's house. Her father and brother ran out to meet her, and then brought her in to see Mr. K'ung. She was between thirteen and fourteen years old, and had beautiful eyes with a very intelligent expression in them, and a most graceful figure besides. No sooner had Mr. K'ung beheld this lovely creature than he quite forgot to groan, and began to brighten up. Meanwhile the young man was saying, "This

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<sup>3</sup> One of the two celebrated but legendary rulers of China in the golden ages of antiquity. Yao—who abdicated B.C. 2357—nominated as his successor a young and virtuous husbandman named Shun, giving him both his daughters in marriage. At the death of Shun, these ladies are said to have wept so much that their tears literally drenched the bamboos which grew beside their husband's grave; and the speckled bamboo is now commonly known as the bamboo of Shun's wives.

respected friend of mine is the same to me as a brother. Try, sister, to cure him.” Miss Chiao-no immediately dismissed her blushes, and rolling up her long sleeves approached the bed to feel his pulse.<sup>4</sup> As she was grasping his wrist, K‘ung became conscious of a perfume more delicate than that of the epidendrum; and then she laughed, saying, “This illness was to be expected; for the heart is touched. Though it is severe, a cure can be effected; but, as there is already a swelling, not without using the knife.” Then she drew from her arm a gold bracelet which she pressed down upon the suffering spot, until by degrees the swelling rose within the bracelet and overtopped it by an inch and more, the outlying parts that were inflamed also passing under, and thus very considerably reducing the extent of the tumour. With one hand she opened her robe and took out a knife with an edge as keen as paper, and pressing the bracelet down all the time with the other, proceeded to cut lightly round near the root of the swelling. The dark blood gushed forth, and stained the bed and the mat; but Mr. K‘ung was delighted to be near such a beauty,—not only felt no pain, but would willingly have continued the operation that she might sit by him a little longer. In a few moments the whole thing was removed, and looked like a growth which had been cut off a tree. Here Miss Chiao-no called for water to wash the wound, and from between her lips she took a red pill as big as a bullet, which she laid upon the flesh, and, after drawing the skin together, passed round and round the place. The first turn felt like the searing of a hot iron; the second like a gentle itching and at the third he experienced a sensation of lightness and coolness which penetrated into his very bones and marrow. The young lady then returned the pill to her mouth, and said, “He is cured,” hurrying away as fast as she could. Mr. K‘ung jumped up to thank her, and found that his complaint had quite disappeared. Her beauty, however, had made such an impression on him that his troubles were hardly at an end. From this moment he gave up his books, and took no interest in anything. This state of things was soon noticed by the young man, who said to him, “My brother, I have found a fine match for you.” “Who is it to be?” asked K‘ung. “Oh, one of the family,” replied his friend. Thereupon Mr. K‘ung remained some time lost in thought, and at length said, “Please don’t!” Then turning his face to the wall, he repeated these lines:—

Speak not of lakes and streams to him who once has seen the sea;  
The clouds that circle Wu’s peak are the only clouds for me.<sup>5</sup>

The young man guessed to whom he was alluding, and replied, “My father has a very high opinion of your talents, and would gladly receive you into the family, but that he has only one daughter, and she is much too young. My cousin, Ah-sung, however, is seventeen years old, and not at all a bad-looking girl. If you doubt my word, you can wait in the verandah until she takes her daily walk in the garden, and thus judge for yourself.” This Mr. K‘ung acceded to, and accordingly saw Miss Chiao-no come out with a lovely girl—her black eyebrows beautifully arched, and her tiny feet encased in phoenix-shaped shoes—as like one another as they well could be. He was of course delighted, and begged the young man to arrange all preliminaries; and the very next day his friend came to tell him that the affair was finally settled. A portion of the house was given up to the bride and bridegroom, and the marriage was celebrated with plenty of music and hosts of guests, more like a fairy wedding than anything else. Mr. K‘ung was very happy,

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<sup>4</sup> Volumes have been written by Chinese doctors on the subject of the pulse. They profess to distinguish as many as twenty-four different kinds, among which is one well known to our own practitioners—namely, the “thready” pulse; they, moreover, make a point of feeling the pulses of *both* wrists.

<sup>5</sup> By a famous poet, named Yuan Chên, A.D. 779-83.

and began to think that the position of Paradise had been wrongly laid down, until one day the young man came to him and said, "For the trouble you have been at in teaching me, I shall ever remain your debtor. At the present moment, the Shan family law-suit has been brought to a termination, and they wish to resume possession of their house immediately. We therefore propose returning to Shen-si, and as it is unlikely that you and I will ever meet again, I feel very sorrowful at the prospect of parting." Mr. K'ung replied that he would go too, but the young man advised him to return to his old home. This, he observed, was no easy matter; upon which the young man said, "Don't let that trouble you: I will see you safe there." By-and-by his father came in with Mr. K'ung's wife, and presented Mr. K'ung with one hundred ounces of gold; and then the young man gave the husband and wife each one of his hands to grasp, bidding them shut their eyes. The next instant they were floating away in the air, with the wind whizzing in their ears. In a little while he said, "You have arrived," and opening his eyes, K'ung beheld his former home. Then he knew that the young man was not a human being. Joyfully he knocked at the old door, and his mother was astonished to see him arrive with such a nice wife. They were all rejoicing together, when he turned round and found that his friend had disappeared. His wife attended on her mother-in-law with great devotion, and acquired a reputation both for virtue and beauty, which was spread round far and near. Some time passed away, and then Mr. K'ung took his doctor's degree, and was appointed Governor of the Gaol in Yen-ngan. He proceeded to his post with his wife only, the journey being too long for his mother, and by-and-by a son was born. Then he got into trouble by being too honest an official, and threw up his appointment; but had not the wherewithal to get home again. One day when out hunting he met a handsome young man riding on a nice horse, and seeing that he was staring very hard looked closely at him. It was young Huang-fu. So they drew bridle, and fell to laughing and crying by turns,—the young man then inviting K'ung to go along with him. They rode on together until they had reached a village thickly shaded with trees, so that the sun and sky were invisible overhead, and entered into a most elaborately-decorated mansion, such as might belong to an old-established family. K'ung asked after Miss Chiao-no, and heard that she was married; also that his own mother-in-law was dead, at which tidings he was greatly moved. Next day he went back and returned again with his wife. Chiao-no also joined them, and taking up K'ung's child, played with it, saying, "Your mother played us truant." Mr. K'ung did not forget to thank her for her former kindness to him, to which she replied, "You're a great man now. Though the wound has healed, haven't you forgotten the pain yet?" Her husband, too, came to pay his respects, returning with her on the following morning. One day the young Huang-fu seemed troubled in spirit, and said to Mr. K'ung, "A great calamity is impending. Can you help us?" Mr. K'ung did not know what he was alluding to, but readily promised his assistance. The young man then ran out and summoned the whole family to worship in the ancestral hall, at which Mr. K'ung was alarmed, and asked what it all meant. "You know," answered the young man, "I am not a man but a fox. To-day we shall be attacked by thunder;<sup>6</sup> and if only you will aid us in our trouble, we may still hope to escape. If you are unwilling, take your child and go, that you may not be involved with us." Mr. K'ung protested he would live or die with them, and so the young man placed him with a sword at the door, bidding him remain quiet there in spite of all the thunder. He did as he was told, and soon saw black clouds obscuring the light until it was all as dark as pitch. Looking round, he could see that the house had disappeared, and that its place was occupied by a huge mound and a

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<sup>6</sup> The Chinese believe that wicked people are struck by the God of Thunder, and killed in punishment for some hidden crime. They regard lightning merely as an arrangement with a mirror by which the God is enabled to see his victim.

bottomless pit. In the midst of his terror, a fearful peal was heard which shook the very hills, accompanied by a violent wind and driving rain. Old trees were torn up, and Mr. K'ung became both dazed and deaf. Yet he stood firm until he saw in a dense black column of smoke a horrid thing with a sharp beak and long claws, with which it snatched some one from the hole, and was disappearing up with the smoke. In an instant K'ung knew by her clothes and shoes that the victim was no other than Chiao-no, and instantly jumping up he struck the devil violently with his sword, and cut it down. Immediately the mountains were riven, and sharp peal of thunder laid K'ung dead upon the ground. Then the clouds cleared away, and Chiao-no gradually came round, to find K'ung dead at her feet. She burst out crying at the sight, and declared that she would not live since K'ung had died for her. K'ung's wife also came out, and they bore the body inside. Chiao-no then made Ah-sung hold her husband's head, while her brother prised open his teeth with a hair pin, and she, herself arranged his jaw. She next put a red pill into his mouth, and bending down breathed into him. The pill went along with the current of air, and presently there was a gurgle in his throat, and he came round. Seeing all the family about him, he was disturbed as if waking from a dream. However, they were all united together, and fear gave place to joy; but Mr. K'ung objected to live in that out-of-the-way place, and proposed that they should return with him to his native village. To this they were only too pleased to assent—all except Chiao-no; and when Mr. K'ung invited her husband, Mr Wu, as well, she said she feared her father and mother-in-law would not like to lose the children. They had tried all day to persuade her, but without success, when suddenly in rushed one of the Wu family's servants, dripping with perspiration and quite out of breath. They asked what was the matter, and the servant replied that the Wu family had been visited by a calamity on the very same day, and had every one perished. Chiao-no cried very bitterly at this and could not be comforted; but now there was nothing to prevent them from all returning together. Mr. K'ung went into the city for a few days on business, and then they set to work packing-up night and day. On arriving at their destination, separate apartments were allotted to young Mr. Huang-fu, and these he kept carefully shut up, only opening the door to Mr. K'ung and his wife.

Mr. K'ung amused himself with the young man and his sister Chiao-no, filling up the time with chess,<sup>7</sup> wine, conversation, and good cheer, as if they had been one family. His little boy, Huan, grew up to be a handsome young man, but with a touch of the fox in his composition; so that when he showed himself abroad, he was immediately recognised as the son of a fox.

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<sup>7</sup> Chinese "chess" is similar to, but not identical with, our game. The board is divided by a river, and the king is confined to a small square of moves on his own territory. The game *par excellence* in China is *wei-ch'i*, an account of which I contributed to the *Temple Bar* magazine for January, 1877.