T.K. 171

THE A.L

BRIGHT STORY READERS

HAMILTON ISLAND HIGH

STORIES FROM CHINA

Re-told by F. A. TAPSELL

No. 221

Grade 2

BOOKS IN THIS SERIES

Grade			
P	for ages 5 to 7	32	books
1	,, 6 to 8	67	,,
2	,, 7 to 9	69	,,
3	,, 8 to 10	70	,,
4	,, 9 to 11	40	,,
5	,, 10 to 12	37	,,
6	,, 11 to 14	34	,,
S	for Seniors	27	,,

Additions to the various Grades in preparation

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NAVIRUL ISLAM HIGH
Date 24 24
ERNAKULAM.

STORIES FROM CHINA

(Illustrations by Vernon Soper)

THE FOUNDLINGS

HALF-WAY up a steep river bank was a cave. It was so hidden by creepers and bushes that few knew of it, and so deep that no man had ever been able to find the end. Of those who had tried, the greater number had never been seen again.

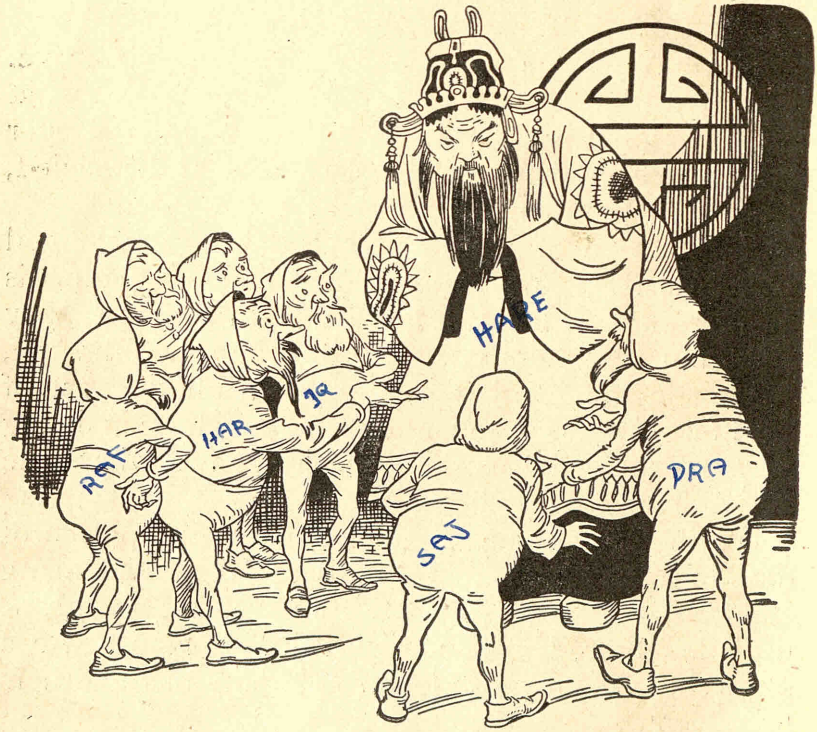
The reason of this was that the cave belonged to the fairies; and as soon as any man made his way far enough into the cave to find this out, they took him prisoner, changed him into a fairy elf, and made him work hard for them all the rest of his life. For, as I must tell you, no human being may return to the world, once he knows where the fairies live.

In the upper part of the cave was the palace of the king and queen of the fairies. They had many children, the youngest of whom was a very beautiful daughter, by name the Princess Nang. As a baby she was far more lovely than any of the others had been.

Perhaps it was because the fairies were jealous of the beautiful baby who had come among them—or it may have been that they really knew—but some of the wisest of those who lived in the cave said that the Princess Nang would bring evil to the

dwellers in this city of the fairies, if she were allowed to grow up.

They talked and talked about it, and put their



heads together and talked again ; and at last seven of the eldest fairies went to the king. They told him of evil things that would happen to himself, the queen and the royal children, until at last he was as eager as they were to get rid of the baby.

NURUL ISLAM HIGH SCHOOL
2424

A feast was held, at which the fairies all appeared in their brightest dresses ; and there was a great deal of singing and dancing, as if it were a time of great joy, instead of ringing, as it were, the death-knell of one poor little baby fairy. Then a procession was formed ; and the wee mite was carried in great state to the mouth of the cave, and thrown far out into the river which flowed beneath.

Now that this source of danger was gone from among them, the fairies went back to their singing and dancing with light hearts, and were happy once more ; for they thought that, by this time, the baby was surely drowned.

But the little baby was *not* dead. It had floated down the river on a mass of foam. On and on it was carried by the rushing water, away from the land of the fairies into the world of human beings.

At last, at a sharp bend in the river, it was washed ashore ; and there it lay, helpless and crying for food. Now, this part of the river bank was at the foot of the castle where dwelt the king of that country. It was a very hot night, so hot, indeed, that the king had not been able to sleep ; so, as soon as day broke, he rose from his bed and went down to the river to bathe.

Just as he was going to plunge into the water, he heard a sound that made him pause ; for it seemed to him like the crying of a child. For some moments he stayed to listen. Then, as he

heard no more, he plunged into the fresh, cool water, and swam for a while down the river; then idly floated, just paddling with one hand now and again so as to keep himself from sinking.

As he was lying thus, again came the sound of a baby's cries, this time nearer and clearer than before. With rapid strokes the king swam back to the shore, dressed, and made haste to the spot from which the cries seemed to come.

Guided by the sound, he very soon came to the place upon the river's bank where lay the tiny daughter of the king of the fairies—now no longer a fairy, but a human baby.

The king took her in his arms and hushed her cries; then he carried her back to the palace. On the way she smiled up into his face, and cooed so happily as she nestled in his arms, that the king made up his mind he would have her brought up as his daughter, for he had no children of his own.

And never did a little girl have a more happy life than the Princess Nang, in the palace of the king who had thus found her. She was petted and made much of by every one in the palace. She had servants at her beck and call; and almost every wish was granted before she had time to utter it.

Yet there was one thing the little princess lacked, and that was a playmate of her own age. This she longed for in secret; but she said no word, for she knew how much had already been given her.

But this, too, she was soon to have. Perhaps it was because she was the daughter of a fairy ; but it seemed as if her every wish was to be granted, and this is how it came about.

One day the king was taken ill. A doctor was sent for. Every one was running to and fro, some for one thing, and some for another, for they feared the king was going to die. There was much weeping and wailing, and the whole of the palace was filled with gloom.

In the midst of all the fuss and trouble, the little princess was, for a time, forgotten. For a long while she played alone in the palace ; then, tired of being indoors and by herself, she ran out into the the grounds of the palace, and chased the bees and the butterflies until she was quite a long way from home and far out into the jungle.

At last being very tired, she sat down to rest under a bamboo tree, and in less than five minutes she was fast asleep. How long she slept I do not know ; but when she awoke, it was to hear a voice calling, " Let me out ! Let me out ! "

Up jumped the little princess. She looked around and around, but could see no one. Yet the voice still kept calling, " Let me out ! Let me out ! " She searched among the bushes and in among the trees. No one was there ; but the cries went on. " Let me out ! Let me out ! " It was a boy's voice that called, and it sounded very

near ; yet, the princess could not tell from where it came.

She stood still and cried, " How can I let you out, when I do not know where you are ? "

" I am here, in the stem of the bamboo tree," said the voice, from within the very tree under which the princess had been resting.

Princess Nang stood for a moment and looked at the tree ; then she said, " I don't know how you got in there—and, what is more, I do not see how I am to get you out."

" If you don't get me out, I shall starve to death," said the voice ; and there was a little sob at the end of the words, that went to the heart of the princess. " You must go and find some men and tell them to cut down the tree."

So the princess ran to a woodcutter's cottage which stood not far off, and the woodcutter came with his axe and chopped down the tree. While he was doing it, the princess looked on, eager to see who would come out of the stem of the tree.

At length the last blow was struck, and the tree shivered and fell. Then from out of its great trunk crept a boy, not much bigger than the princess herself. Though he was ragged and dirty, he held his head high, as if he knew he was some one of importance in the world. The princess looked at him ; then said very shyly, " Who are you ? "

" I am a king's son," said the boy proudly.

" A band of robbers stole me from my father's palace ; and when they had taken my clothes and dressed me in these rags, they put me in the hollow of the tree, and left me there to die."

" If you are a prince, I am a princess ; so you need not be so proud of yourself," retorted the little girl, and turned away.

But the boy ran after her, and said, " I am very sorry. You see I did not know. Let us be friends."

" Yes, let us be friends," replied the princess ; for she remembered how much she had always wished for a friend of her own age. " Come, let us go and ask the king if you may live with us ; " and, with these words, she took his hand and led him into the palace.

As soon as the king was well enough to attend to the matter, the princess took her new friend in to see him. Being ready to grant any wish of the princess's, he said that the boy might live at the palace, and should be brought up as his own son.

So the prince and the princess became playmates and firm friends. They were both children of high spirits, and so had many a quarrel ; but they always made it up again very soon, and were afterwards the best of friends as before.

So the years passed on, and they grew from small children into big, and from boy and girl into youth and maiden. They still liked each other better than anyone else they had ever seen ; and

at last made up their minds to marry, so that they might be always together.

The king was glad when he heard this. He had come to be very fond of them both ; and, if they married, as they wished, he would lose neither, for they would go on living in the palace as before. So he said they should have the grandest wedding that had ever been seen in the land of China.

Every day merchants came to the palace, laden with bales of silk, satin and all kinds of rich stuffs, with which to make garments fit for a prince and a princess. Twenty-four new cooks were engaged to prepare the wedding feast ; and a new wing was built on to the palace, in which the prince and princess were to live when they were married.

At last came the day of the wedding. The feast was ready, and the guests had begun to arrive. The princess was being dressed in the wonderful new clothes which had been made for her. She was delighted with the little golden shoes, and the rich head-dress of silver and gold ; but when it came to the dress she was to wear, she found it was green instead of blue, and that it was not made to her liking.

" This is not as I ordered it to be," she cried, and flew into a great rage. With hasty hands she tore off the dress, and all the while she stormed at the handmaids who were waiting upon her. They showed her many other dresses, and tried to

persuade her to wear one of them ; but the princess refused them all.

By and by the prince came to see if she were ready. " No, I am not," she cried, " and if I cannot



DARUL ISLAM HIGH SCHOOL. ERNAKULAM. Date 24-8-56

have a dress I like, I will not be married at all. You can tell the king there will be no wedding to-day."

Then the prince began to fuss and fume. He tried to argue with the princess ; but she would not listen to his words ; and at last he, too, fell into a great rage.

Seeing that matters were going from bad to worse, one of the servants sent for the king. He came at once. When he heard the prince and the princess saying all kinds of angry things to each other, he cried, "What is all this about?" and placed himself between them.

The prince tried to tell the king *his* side of the quarrel, and the princess *hers*; but as they both talked at once, and as fast as they could get the words out of their mouths, he was just about as wise as before. Then he, also, began to get angry.

This made things worse than ever, for they al three now began to shout at each other. All at once in the midst of all the hubbub, there was a loud clap of thunder—so loud that it shook the walls of all the houses in the land.

As for the palace, with a great crash it fell to the level of the ground. Where it had stood, there arose three hills. One of these hills was the prince, another the princess, and the one that stood in the middle was the king.

The reason of this was that the fairies had heard them quarrelling; and to make sure that such disgraceful sounds should not be heard on the earth again, the king of the fairies had changed them into three hills, which, though they might be seen, would never be heard any more.

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THE FAIRY PEARLS

THERE was once a poor woman who had two sons. Her husband was dead, and she made a scanty living by selling healing drinks to sick people. These drinks she made out of herbs which she gathered in the fields around her little cottage, and others which her two sons picked for her among the mountains.

Some of these herbs were very scarce, and the boys would have to walk miles before they found a single plant, though they knew all the spots in which these precious herbs were to be found over a very large part of the mountains.

One day, the woman awoke the boys at dawn, saying, " You must get up early to-day, for I want you to gather some of the herb that grows only on the Yang-Se mountain ; and, as you know, that is three days' journey from here."

The boys sat up, and yawned, and stretched, for they were as yet but half-awake ; then they replied, " Yes, mother, we will go." And it was not very much later that they set out, each with some food tied up in a bag.

Off they went, and after three days of hard climbing they reached the spot where the herb grew.

Then their work began. They had to jump from rock to rock, and climb hither and thither,

that they might gather as much of the herb as possible. It was a shy grower, and hid itself away in many a nook and crevice among the rocks, so that it was not always easy to find. But at last a goodly heap was gathered, and the two lads sat down to tie it into bunches.

"Indeed, we have done a good day's work," said the elder of the two lads, as he packed the bunches into the sack they had brought with them, and found that it was nearly full.

"Yes, I am sure we deserve a good rest; then I suppose we must start on the journey home," replied the other.

For a time nothing else passed between the two lads; then the younger broke the silence by saying, "Why should we not camp here for the night and set out with the dawn? It wants but three hours to sunset now; so we should not be able to get very far."

Both were weary after their three days' climb, and a long night's rest would have been very nice; yet the elder brother replied, "No, I should not like to camp here for the night. They say the fairies haunt this place when the moon shines, and it is full moon to-night. We will rest for a little longer, if you like; but we must leave this spot before it grows dark."

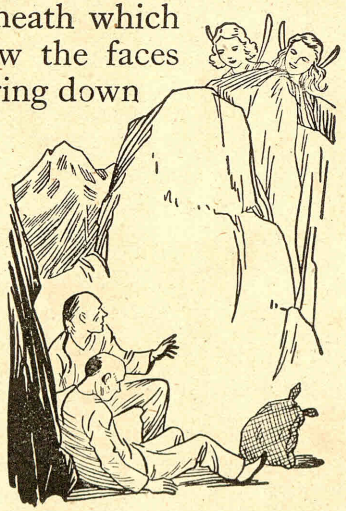
So the two brothers lay down once more to rest. They did not mean to sleep; but they were so

tired that, before they knew it, their eyes closed and they were both fast asleep.

For some hours they slept soundly enough; then the younger of the two awoke. He did not know what had roused him; but he felt as if someone, or something alive, were near. "It may be one of the wild beasts that live among the mountains," he thought, and raised himself gently upon his elbow to look around.

He saw that they must have been asleep for some hours, for the daylight had quite faded and the moon was high in the sky. By its light he gazed all around, but could see nothing moving; so he lay down to sleep again.

But just at that moment he heard a faint movement on the rocks, beneath which they lay. Looking up, he saw the faces of two beautiful maidens peering down at him, and heard the flutter of their white wings.



His brother still lay asleep by his side. He laid his hand upon his shoulder, and whispered, "Wake, brother! It is night, and the fairies are here. What shall we do?"

His brother was awake, and on the alert in an

instant. "Don't speak!" he said, "don't speak! But follow me." And, with these words, he began to creep from beneath the rock, ready to slip down the side of the mountain at the best speed they could make.

The younger brother started to follow in his track; but, before they had gone more than a few yards, there was the sound of the rustling of many wings, mingled with merry, silvery laughter. A moment later the two boys were hemmed in by a troop of fairy maidens, who joined hands and danced around them so fast that there was no chance of slipping in between them, and so escaping.

With looks of fear upon their faces, the lads stood helpless, in the middle of the fairy ring. They were afraid, because they had heard many stories of the wicked doings of the mountain fairies.

When the fairies saw that the boys were half-dead with fright, they but laughed the more; and one of them said, "What are you afraid of? We will do you no harm. Come with us across the bridge to fairyland, and we will show you many things."

"No, we must go home," said the elder of the two brothers. But the younger brother half wanted to go with the fairies instead. "Shall we go? They say they will not do us any harm," he whispered to his brother.

But the brother shook his head, and replied,

also in a whisper, "No, no! You must take no notice of what they say. Besides, there is no bridge.'

"But there *is*. See!" cried the younger brother; and, so saying, he pointed to a bridge of many colours which led from the summit of the mountain up into the clouds.

"You silly boy," said his brother, "that is nothing but a rainbow."

"No, no," cried the fairies, in a chorus, "you are wrong, and your brother is right. That is the bridge by which we pass from this world into fairyland. Come along."

Feeling he could no longer resist, the elder brother gave way; and, amid the company of laughing, dancing fairies, the boys crossed the rainbow bridge which leads from earth to fairyland.

When they arrived at the other end of the bridge, they came, indeed, to a land so beautiful that the younger boy whispered to his brother, "Are you not glad we came? There can surely be nothing to fear in such a place."

"Wait a little. Don't be too sure yet awhile," replied the elder, who was, as we have seen, the more cautious of the two brothers.

But it seemed after all as if he were wrong. The fairies did them no harm, so far as they knew; and the boys enjoyed their visit to the full. The fairies fed them with sweet foods, such as are not known upon earth. They clothed them, too, in

garments of all the colours of the rainbow; and they taught them to dance and sing, and to play the games that fairies play.

In fairyland there is no night; and so the boys lay down to sleep when they felt tired, and arose when they were rested. Neither are there any clocks or almanacs in fairyland, so that they had no idea how the hours and days were passing.

They were so happy that they heeded not the passing of time; and therefore hours, days, weeks, months, and even years went by unknown to them. Indeed, had you asked them, they would have said that but a few hours had passed since they crossed the rainbow bridge into fairyland.

But, one day, while they were playing among the rocks, the elder brother saw a plant of the very herb which they had come to the mountains to gather for their mother. He picked a sprig, looked at it hard and long, and then ran with it to his brother. "Brother," he cried, "do you remember that we came to the mountain to gather some of this herb for our mother? It is surely now time that we returned to her. She will be needing the bunches of herbs we have picked."

"Yes, and perhaps she will be missing us, and think we are lost, if we are too long away," replied the other.

So they went to the fairies, and said, "Friends, will you give us the sack of herbs that we gathered

on the mountain, before we came across the bridge into fairyland? For we must now return home to our mother."

"Oh, do not leave us yet," cried the fairy maidens. But this time they could not persuade the two lads to stay any longer; so they placed the sack upon the shoulders of the elder brother, and the two boys, having said good-bye, began to descend the steep mountain side.

In three days' time they came within sight of the little hut which was all the home they knew. "See!" said the younger of the two boys, "the fence of our garden is broken down, and half of it is gone."

"Aye," replied his brother, "I see that; and I see also that a part of the roof has fallen. Who can have done all this in the short time we have been away? Come, let us hasten in to mother. She will be able to tell us all about it."

They ran in at the door of the little house; and then they stood still, for they were afraid. By the stove was seated an old woman with snow-white hair and wrinkled skin. Her back was towards them, so that they could not see her face, nor could she see them. "Where is my mother?" asked the elder boy slowly.

"Whose voice is that?" said the old woman, her back still towards them. "It reminds me of the voice of one of my sons, who were lost on the

mountains many and many a year ago." Then she turned to see who had spoken.

As soon as she saw the two boys standing just within the door, she cried, "Aye, and it *is* my boys! What marvel is this, that they should return after all these weary years, looking no older than they did upon the day they went away!"

The boys ran forward, and the younger cried, "Mother, if our mother you really are, how comes it that you have aged so much in the few days we have been away?"

"What do you mean when you say 'a few days'?" she asked. "Twelve years to-day is it since last I looked upon your faces, or heard your voices calling me mother. Where have you been?"

Twelve years! The brothers looked at each other with confusion and shame upon their faces. Had the time which they had passed with the fairies, and which had seemed to them but a few hours, really been twelve long years—time enough for their mother to become feeble and old, instead of the hearty, bustling woman they could so well remember, as it were but yesterday?

"Oh. mother dear, we are sorry," they cried. "It was the fairies who kept us, and in fairyland there is no such thing as time."

"My sons, did I not warn you to beware of the fairies?" she said gently. "Tell me, did you gather the herbs, and what did you do with them?"

"Yes, mother," the elder replied. "We gathered a whole sack full; and, look, we have brought them home for you." Then he laid the sack at her feet.

"I fear they must be withered and dried up into nothing by this time," she said; but, to please her sons, she untied the mouth of the sack and looked in. Then she raised her head, and said to the elder one, "Did you say that in this sack were the herbs you gathered upon the Yang-Se mountain, my son?"

"Yes," he replied, "the special herb you needed and sent us to the mountains to gather. We found much of it among the rocks close to the summit of the mountain."

"You gathered herbs," she said, "yet this is what I find." And, having put her hand into the sack, she drew out a handful of the herbs, withered and dry; but nestling among the withered leaves were countless pearls of all sizes.

The lads gazed at the pearls with wonder. "Come, let us see if there are any more," they cried, and emptied the sack upon the floor. With the dried herbs there fell out hundreds and hundreds of pearls. The boys stood gazing at them, as they rolled upon the floor. At last the elder said, "The fairies must have put them there."



"Of course, that is it," cried the younger brother. "Mother dear, you shall be rich and cared for, all the rest of your life; and we will never leave you again."

The old woman was glad to think she would never have to work hard again; but she was still more glad that her sons had returned to her safe and sound, and pleased with their promise never to leave her any more.

THE GRATEFUL BEE

IN a little house, just outside a certain forest, there dwelt a young student. He lived quite alone, and spent his days in reading, watching the ways of nature in the woods about him, thinking wise thoughts, and then writing what he thought, that other people also might benefit by what he had learned.

One day, as he was watching some beetles digging a new home for themselves under the ground, he fell asleep; for he had sat up all the previous night writing, and was very weary. How long he slept he did not know; but all at once he was roused by a voice saying, "Save me! Oh, save me, I pray you!"

He started up and began to look around. He soon found whence the voice came; for behind a bush close by he saw a maiden crouching, and

there was terror in her eyes, while upon her cheeks were two big tears, just ready to fall. She was dressed as a little peasant girl.

Now, this student had lived in the wilds ever since he was a boy. He had seen so few people that he hardly knew what the men and women who lived in the world were like. He knew far more about birds and insects than he did about people; and the maiden who had called to him for help was so beautiful that he felt almost afraid, and did not know what to say to her.



But once more she began to cry out, "Man, save me! Come and show me where to hide, or I shall be lost!" Then, he ran to her side, and asked, "Why do you want to hide? Who is it you are afraid of?"

"Of the bad fairy, Chu-Choo. She will kill me if she sees me here," replied the maiden.

"Why should she want to kill you?"

"Well, you see, I am a princess; and one day there came a prince to my father, the king, and asked if he might marry me. This aroused the jealous anger of the Princess Chu-Choo, who, as I said, is really a wicked fairy. She wishes to marry

Prince Na-Wang herself, because he is very rich."

"And do you also wish to marry this rich prince?" asked the student.

"No, indeed I do not," replied the princess. "He is fat, and old, and so ugly that I would rather be poor all my life than marry him and his riches. But *please* hide me. Princess Chu-Choo is only a very little way behind, and may be here at any moment."

"Creep in here among these bushes, and maybe she will pass you by."

"No, no! She has such keen eyes that I feel sure she will see me there."

Then the student bethought him of the magic arts he had learned from his books. "Stay," he said, "I will change you into a bee, and then she will not know you, even if she should catch sight of you."

"Be quick, then," cried the princess, "for I hear her coming." And, even as she spoke, there was the sound of a rustling among the leaves.

"I wonder if the charm will work," thought the student; for though he had learned much magic from his books, he had never yet tried one of the spells upon a human being. But there was not a moment to lose; so he must now try, and take his chance as to the result.

He ran into the house and brought out with him a tiny bottle; then he sprinkled upon the princess seven drops out of it, saying as he did so, "Fly away,

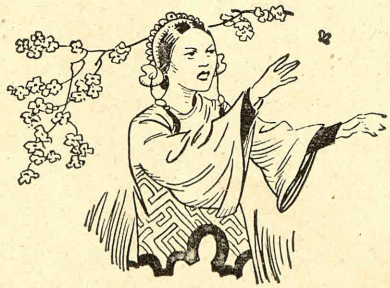
little bee, and when danger is past return to me, and once more you shall be a beautiful princess."

In a moment there was no princess, but a bee was buzzing around the student's head. Then off it flew and began to gather honey from a flower close by, just as the Princess Chu-Choo, panting and puffing, rushed up to where the student stood. "Have you seen anyone who looked like a princess pass this way?" she asked.

"No," he replied; for, as a matter of fact, the maiden who had come to him in her distress had looked more like a pretty little peasant girl than a princess.

"Yet she must have passed close by here, for I saw her when I was at the top of the hill. Surely you must have been asleep, not to have seen her," said Princess Chu-Choo, in angry tones.

"Perhaps so," replied the student. "Indeed I remember now that I did fall asleep, whilst I lay beneath yonder tree." And, all the time, a little bee was buzzing round the head of the angry princess. Once it even stung her.



"Bother that bee!" cried the princess. "If I could catch it, I would kill it." But by this time it had flown away.

Now, when the Princess Chu-Choo had a spite against anyone, or anything, she never forgot ; and so things looked black for the little bee. She had said she would kill it, and she meant to do so. She put forth her power as a fairy, and called to her aid ten of the fairy elves who were always at hand to do her bidding.

To these ten elves she said, " Go to all the spiders in the forest, and tell them to entice into their webs any bees that may fly their way."

The princess, whom the student had changed into a bee, was quite pleased to find she could fly. The first thing she did was to fly in at the window of his little house. For a while she buzzed around, looking at his books and pictures. On the table was a clean white writing slab, which as yet had nothing written upon it. After a moment's thought, the bee flew to the inkwell and dipped her legs well into the ink ; then she flew back to the writing slab, and upon its white surface traced the word GRATEFUL with the ink upon her feet. This done, she flew out of the house, and on and on for quite a long way.

It was just glorious to be able to fly like this. She fluttered from flower to flower, and from bush to bush, and had begun to think the life of a bee was very nice indeed, and that she would like to remain one for the rest of her life ; but she did not think this for very long. I will tell you why.

On the other side of a narrow path she saw a bush covered with flowers which were full of honey. Of course, she must go and taste the honey. Away she flew ; but across the path was a spider's web, stretched like a wall between her and the bush she wished to reach. How big it looked, and how strong the strands of which it was woven !

As she looked, the spider came out of his home in the middle of the web. " Well, little bee, and what do you think of my house ? " he asked.

" I think it is wonderful. You must be very clever to be able to make a web like that, all by yourself," replied the bee.

" It is better still inside. Come in and have a look at it," said the spider.

" I have not much time to spare before I return ; but I will come just a little way," said the bee, and flew into the web.

But, as soon as she was in among the strands of the spider's web, the bee found she could not get out. She was a prisoner. The more she fluttered and struggled, the worse she became entangled in its mesh. As soon as the spider saw she was safely caught, he went back to his cosy corner in the middle of the web, and was soon fast asleep, and dreaming of the reward the bad fairy would give him, when she knew he had caught a nice fat bee for her.

Now, as soon as the Princess Chu-Choo had gone

on in search of the princess, the student began to hunt about for the bee, that he might restore her to her own form. He looked among the bushes, and he peeped into flower after flower ; but no bee could he find, save one great fat bumble-bee, and he knew this could not be the princess.

Finding his search in vain, he went farther and farther into the forest, until at last he came to the spider's web stretched across the narrow path. There he saw a bee struggling hard to get free.

" Save me ! Save me once again ! " she cried, when she saw him.

The student tore the web apart and set the bee free ; then he spoke the words which would restore the princess to her own form. Once again, beautiful in her peasant's dress, she stood before him ; but, to his surprise, just as he was about to speak to her, she unfolded a pair of great brown wings and flew away out of sight over the tops of the trees. He had made some mistake with the magic spell, and had left her with the wings in her possession.

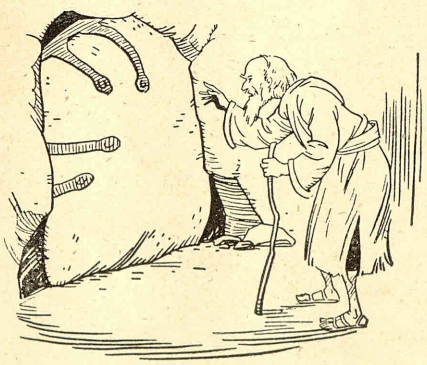
He never saw her again, or learnt what became of her ; but when he returned to his house, upon the white writing slab he saw, traced in uneven letters, the one word " GRATEFUL." It looked as if it had been done by some insect, after dipping into the ink ; which, as you know, was exactly what had happened.

THE MAGIC CAVE

IN a tiny house at the foot of some mountains in China lived Chang, a young herdsman. He had neither father nor mother; but his grandmother kept the house and cooked his meals for him.

One day, when Chang was driving his herd by a way he did not very often go, he saw a cave among the rocks. Over the entrance of the cave was a great stone door, which was now shut fast. Chang was still gazing at the cave, and wondering why it was he had not seen it before, when there came along an old man, very bent and very yellow.

The old man stopped at the entrance of the cave, and said, as if to the door, "Stone door, open! Kwei-Ku wishes to enter." He repeated this three times; and at the third time the door of the cave slid gently open, and the old man went in. Then the door slid to as gently and silently as it had opened.



Chang felt as if he could not leave the place until he had found out all about the cave. He waited to see what would happen next. A long time passed by, and still there was nothing but

the closed door to be seen ; but at last the door opened, and out came the old man, now seeming quite happy. " Stone door, shut ! Kwei-Ku departs," Chang heard him say. Then the door shut as before, and looked so thick and solid that the lad began to wonder if it would ever open again.

As soon as the old man was out of sight, he thought *he* would try what he could do with the door. He beat it with his fists and tried to shake it with all his might. But the door stood as firm as a rock, and it was now getting late ; so he had to drive his herd home, without knowing any more about the cave.

But he did not forget what he had seen. " To whom does the cave belong, and what is there inside ? " were questions Chang asked himself many times in the next few days.

At last he made up his mind he would try if the words which he had heard the old man use would open the door for him also. So, the very next day, he left his herd outside to feed, went up to the door, and said, " Stone door, open ! Chang wants to enter."

For some time he thought nothing at all was going to happen, for the door did not stir. Then he remembered that the old man had said the words three times ; so he said them twice more—and, at the last word of the third time, the door slid back, and the cave was open for him to enter.

He went in and found himself in a cave, lofty and and round, but quite bare, save for seven high round rocks, which stood, six of them round the wall of the cave, and the seventh in the middle. Was this all he had taken so much trouble to come and see? Chang felt it was hardly worth the trouble of getting the door to open, if there was nothing more to see than this. There must be something more.

But then, surely, the old man had not come merely to look at these seven rocks. What had he seen to make him look so happy when he came out, even though he had seemed sad before he went in at the door? No, there *must* be something more. Anyway, Chang thought he would have a good look round before he left.

He began to search in every corner, and behind every one of the six rocks that stood near the side of the cave. Last of all, he came to the seventh rock which stood by itself in the middle. As he drew near the rock, his foot slipped on a smooth round stone.

What was his surprise to find that, as his foot touched the stone, the seventh rock began to revolve! Round and round it spun, at first very slowly, then faster and faster, until it made Chang feel dizzy to watch; and, as it turned, it sank very slowly into the ground.

When the rock had sunk so low that it could not be seen above the ground, Chang went up to find out

what had become of it. It had left a great hole. He peered down into its depths; and now, in place of the rock, he saw a staircase winding round and round, and down and down, as far as the eye could reach.



"Ha! this must be where the old man went," thought Chang. "I, too, will go." And, with that, he climbed down and down the winding staircase, until his legs ached so much that he had to sit down and rest; yet still he had not come to the bottom.

He did not rest for long, for he was too eager to find out whither the steps might lead him. On and on he went, until, by and by, he came to a strong wooden door, bound with great iron clamps. It was shut, and had neither handle nor lock.

Chang banged it with his hands, and kicked it with his heavy boots ; but it would not open. So he tried it with the words, " Wooden door, open ! Chang wishes to enter." It opened, just as the stone door at the entrance to the cave had opened.

What did he see inside ? At first Chang himself hardly knew, for the dazzle of light from within the door almost blinded him. Although he knew he must be very far under the surface of the ground, the light was more brilliant than that of the sun at noon.

But when his eyes had become more used to the intense light, Chang gave a little gasp of wonder. Never in his life had he seen such a sight, not even in his dreams ! The walls of the cave were lined with gems that sparkled and glowed ; and the ceiling was formed of one huge crystal, which threw the most brilliant rays of light, of all colours, over every part of the cave.

The floor of the cave was of white marble ; and wherever the rays of light from the crystal above touched the white marble, a picture, more beautiful than any he had ever seen, appeared upon the floor. As the rays of light changed, so did the pictures, in such manner that it was just like a story book made up of the most beautiful pictures—a picture book, as it were, that never ended.

Chang gazed at it with delight. Moving from place to place, as the rays of light shifted and new

pictures were to be seen, he gazed and gazed until his eyes ached with looking at the bright colours. Then he wandered round the cave, and through a little passage at the end.

This led him into a garden, which was of such beauty that Chang began to feel as if he would like to stay there for ever and ever. He wandered in and out of the quaint, winding paths, and watched the fountains at play, and the birds and the butterflies flitting about among the gorgeous flowers; but, after a while, he began to feel pangs of hunger.

His hunger made him think of home and of his herd, which he had left feeding outside the cave. Were they still safe, he wondered, or had they perhaps strayed too far for him to be able to catch them up?

With hasty steps he made his way back to the cave of light, mounted the stairs, and said the magic words that would open the door of the cave; then he gave a sigh of relief. The patient cows were still feeding in the place where he had left them, and a few minutes later, he was driving his herd home along the well-known tracks.

That night, when the evening meal had been eaten, and Chang was lying idly before the stove, he told his grandmother all about the wonders of the cave. "Deary me, how much I should like to see the garden, and all those lovely pictures!" said the old woman, when Chang had come to the end of his story.

" And so you shall, grannie. I will take you there myself one fine day," replied the lad.

Two days later Chang kept his promise. He took the old lady to the cave, opened the door by means of the magic words, and helped her with great care down the steps that led to the cave of light.

She was quite as much pleased with the pictures as Chang had been ; yet when Chang took her from there into the garden beyond, I think she was still more delighted with its beauty and quaintness. Everything she saw semed more wonderful than the last. She wanted to linger to look at this and that so long, that at last Chang found he had left her behind.

He retraced his steps ; but, though he went all the way back by the same way as he had come, he could not see her. He called to her, but his voice was drowned by the singing of the birds and the splashing of the fountains.

Once more he went all through the garden, but in vain. When he did not find her, he thought she must have missed him and gone home ; so off he started and ran all the way back.

" Grannie ! Grannie ! " he called, as soon as he was inside the house ; but there was no reply. He hunted in every corner of the tiny house, and it did not take him long to make sure his grandmother was not there. He must have left her in the cave after all.

By now he had begun to feel really afraid as to what might have come to her. Running as fast as he could, he soon reached the cave, and said the magic words; but what was his dismay to find that the door did not now move in answer to them!

Almost frantic with fear, lest his grandmother should be shut up within the cave, he said the words again and again; but the door still remained fast. Then he beat it with his fists, and kicked it with his feet; and, at length, all of a sudden it opened.

Chang made ready to bolt into the cave; but stopped short at the sight of the old man whom he had seen before, and who now said, "Well, and what can I do for you? By the noise you make, one might think you were king of the land."

"I want to come in," replied Chang.

"And why, may I ask, do you wish to come into *my* cave?"

"Because I am afraid I left my grandmother in there, and she does not know the way to get out," said Chang.

"Ah! so you have been here before, have you?" remarked the old man.

"Yes, I have," muttered Chang. "But I did not do any harm. I only looked at the pictures and walked through the garden. Then, when I told my grannie about it, she wanted to come and see it

too ; so I came again to-day to bring her. Now I have come to fetch her home."

" Your grandmother will never go home again," said the old man. " I am the magician Yum-Yum, and I need her to take care of the cave in my absence, lest others should make their way in as you have done."

" Please, then, may I see her ? " asked Chang.

" No, but once a year I will allow you to enter the cave, and then you may see her if you wish."

Chang began to weep. " Please, *please*, let her come home with me," he said.

" That may not be," replied the magician.

" But does it not make her unhappy to stay here with you ? " asked the boy.

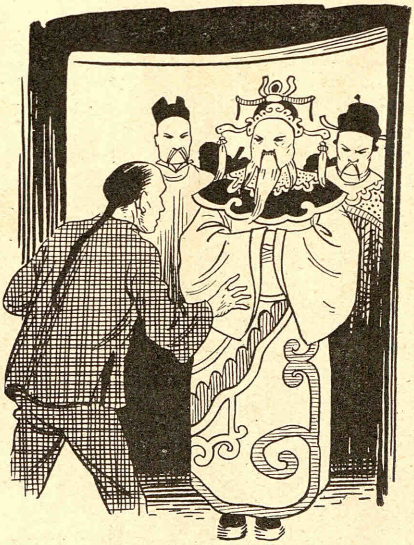
" No, she is willing to stay, and I will tell you why. It is because, as a reward, I have given my word that I will one day make a prince of your eldest son."

" A prince ! " cried Chang. " But how can that be ? For I am only a poor herdsman."

" Wait and see. I have spoken, and so it shall come to pass." And, with these words, the old man closed the door of the cave, and left Chang outside.

For a long time Chang missed his grandmother sorely. Once a year he went to the cave to see her ; but what was once a year, when he had been used to seeing her every day of his life ? He was so lonely that, by and by, he married the foster-daughter of a near neighbour.

No one knew who this young woman really was, or who were her parents; for she had been found as a wee baby, lying alone in the forest, and crying with hunger and cold. But she had grown up to be very beautiful, and so it was that Chang fell in love with her.



A year or so later, a little son was born to them and they were very happy in their little house at the foot of the mountains. But one day the king, with a train of nobles, came and knocked at the door of the hut. "I have come to find my daughter, for I am told she is here," said the king.

"I fear you must have made a mistake, for there is no one here save my wife and myself," replied Chang. But, as he spoke, his wife came to the door and the king saw her. "Ah!" he cried, "that is my daughter. I know her by the likeness to her mother. She was stolen from us when a baby; and until now we have never been able to find out where she was, or even if she was alive."

By a birthmark upon her right arm the king's

words were proved to be true. The wife of the poor herdsman was indeed the daughter of a king. Chang and his wife, and their little son also, went to live at the palace; and then it was that Chang remembered the words of the magician, that his eldest son should be a prince in the land of China.

A JUST REWARD

UP among the clouds lived the gods and goddesses of the Chinese people. One of these gods, whose name was Fo, had heard so much about the kindness of the people who lived upon the earth, that he thought he would like to go and see for himself if it were true.

So as to be able to reach the earth, he ordered a cloud, much as we should order a cab, and floated down to the land of China upon it. Before he started upon his quest, he disguised himself as an old beggar-man; then, hobbling along with the aid of a stick, he made his way to the nearest village.

At the first house he came to, he stopped and knocked at the door. To the woman who answered his summons, he said, "I am weary, and very cold and wet. Will you let me come in and rest for a little while?"

"Indeed I will! Come in," she cried, in cheery tones. So the old man went into the little house; and though the woman was but a poor seamstress,

she fed him with the best she had, and gave him a seat in the warmest corner of the room, close to the stove.

While he was eating, she saw that his coat was all in rags. "Give it to me, and I will mend it for you," she said. But, when she began to sew the rags together, she found the coat was so old that it fell into new holes as fast as she mended the old ones.

"It is no good trying to mend this," she cried at last. "I shall have to make you a new one." So, out of the cloth she had on hand, she cut out a coat for the old beggar-man and began to stitch away at it as fast as she could.

Her needle seemed to fly, as she put stitch after stitch into it; yet, when the daylight began to fade the coat was still far from ready to wear. "You will have to stay here for the night. I shall not be able to have your new coat ready before the morning. But, see, I will make you up a bed here, before the stove," she told him.

The old man said nothing; but, when it was ready, he lay down upon the bed and slept until the day broke.

All night long the woman worked; but it was morning before the last stitch was put into the coat, and she laid it by his side, ready for him to put on when he awoke. Then she placed a good meal before him, and said, "Eat and drink well; then

you will be able to go on your way, and the cold and the rain will not chill your poor old bones quite so much."

The old beggar-man thanked her, bade her "Good-day," and turned to go; but at the doorway he paused, and looking back, said, "That which you first begin to do after I leave, may you not cease doing until the sun has set." Then he went on his way.

The woman stood at the door to watch him out of sight; then she turned back into the house to begin her day's work. "I wonder how much cloth there is left after cutting out the old man's coat. I will make sure and see," she thought.

So, instead of beginning to clean the house and cook the morning meal as usual, she began to measure the cloth. "There is more left than I should have thought," she said to herself, as she measured and measured, yet still the bale of cloth had not come to an end.

By and by the room became piled up with great rolls of cloth; yet still the woman kept on measuring, for she could not stop, and there was ever more cloth to measure.

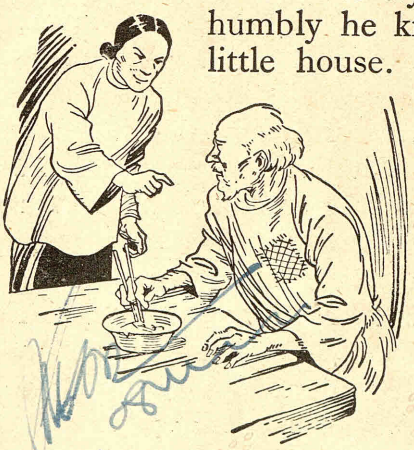
Hour after hour went by, and the room became so heaped up with the cloth that the woman had barely space in which to stand; but she kept on measuring and measuring, until the sun set and the day was done. Then the cloth at last came to an end.

The woman threw down the measure and ran out of the house to her next-door neighbour. "Come and see my cloth!" she cried. "I have so much that I shall be a rich woman for the rest of my life."

At first the neighbour could hardly believe her words; but when she saw the great bales of cloth piled high all round the room, she was filled with envy. "*Do* tell me how you came by it," she said.

When she had heard the story, she thought to herself, "Why should I not do the same, and so become as rich as my neighbour? It is not fair she should have so much, and I none."

So she kept a good look-out for the old beggar-man, and one day he came to her. As before, the beggar-man was really the god Fo, who had come to earth to try the hearts of men. Very humbly he knocked at the door of the little house. "I am faint and weary," he said. "May I come in and rest a little while?"



"Yes, come in," she replied. "You may rest here, and I will give you a meal besides. I always try to do what I can for those who are poorer than myself." Then she began to prepare a meal, not of

the best she had, as the other woman had done, but of the broken pieces that had been left over from her own meal. This she set before him.

While he was trying to eat the coarse, badly cooked food, she said, "I see your coat is very ragged. Let me mend it for you."

"If you will be so kind," he said, as he took it off, and handed it to her.

"This old man is easy enough to please," she thought, as she took the coat from him. "I really do not think I need go to all the trouble and expense of making him a new coat. I will mend some of the rags in this one. I believe that will please him just as well."

As the evening drew on, there arose a great storm of wind and rain. "You had better stay where you are. I will give you shelter for the night," said the woman. But, instead of making up a nice bed by the stove for the old man, she put him to sleep in an outhouse, with nothing but a hard mat to lie upon and no covering at all.

In the morning she said a great many nice things to him, as she bade him good-bye ; but she did not offer him any food to eat, so that he had to start on his way hungry. Yet, in spite of this, as he went out of the door, he turned to say, "That which you first begin to do after I leave, may you not cease doing until the sun has set."

The greedy woman thought she had been very

clever indeed; for she had given little, yet how much would she not receive! As soon as the old beggar-man was fairly out of the door, she ran to find her measure, that she might begin to measure her cloth as her neighbour had done.

Just at that moment the pig began to squeal. "Bother that pig! He wants some water and will squeal all day, if he does not get it. I suppose I had better give him a drink, before I begin to measure the cloth; for, once I start, I shall not be able to stop."

So she picked up a bucket and started to draw some water for the pig. But when once she began to draw the water, she found she could not leave off; so that, instead of measuring cloth, she had to keep on drawing water all day long. In a very little while the water had overflowed the bucket and run over on to the floor; the floor was flooded, and everything in the room began to float about.

Then the water ran out of the house and down the road. By and by it began to run into the houses of the people living near, and by noon every house in the little village was flooded.

First one, and then another, of the neighbours came to tell her that she really *must* leave off drawing any more water. Some pleaded with her, some scolded and raged; but of course it was all of no use, for she was not able to leave off.

Not until the last of the golden rim of the sun

sank behind the hills, did the woman drop the bucket, thankful that now she need draw no more water.

"There, you see I was right. You could leave off; it was only that you *would* not," said the policeman. "Now you just come with us to prison."

So to prison the woman had to go. It was twenty days before they let her out again; and, by the time she went home, she had learned that it is not always wise to be greedy or mean.

It is a very bater book

Dilek

DOLLS THAT SAVED AN EMPEROR

By G. WARD WILLIAMS

THE Chinese have always admired a great soldier, and a study of their history shows that soldiers have risen from the lowest ranks to the highest position in the land—that of Emperor of the great Chinese Empire.

Such a soldier lived two hundred years before Christ was born. His name was Ko Tsu, and he was greatly loved by his people, from the highest to the lowest. He was not only a famous soldier, fearless and wise, but he was of a kindly, generous disposition. Above all he was just ; he showed no favouritism, and granted reward only to those who deserved it.

Having once been a poor peasant boy himself, he took especial care of those born in poor homes. His soldiers were proud of him, and so great was his success and his generalship so well known, that it was often said that his army would follow him into the very jaws of the Great Dragon of China !

One day, however, it seemed as if Ko Tsu's wonderful career was to come to a sudden end.

After a brilliant campaign, the Emperor, attended by an unusually small escort, was nearing his high-walled capital when mounted scouts appeared, spurring on their tired horses, and on reaching the Emperor they announced the near approach of a large body of enemy troops, a force of the Hun army.

Even as these scouts delivered their warnings, a terrified crowd of refugees came running, crying "The Huns! The Huns are pursuing us!" and far away in the distance a great cloud of dust signalled the approach of a large army, moving very rapidly.

"All is lost! All is lost!" cried the terrified mob.

"Nay," said the Emperor, "all is not *yet* lost. Follow me," and he led them to the nearby city, with its lofty walls. Scarcely had they all entered, than the great gates were closed by the watchful guards. For the moment they were safe.

As night was now closing down the Emperor set the usual watch, choosing his sentinels himself, with his usual personal care for detail. He and his staff then withdrew to discuss further plans. Truly they were in peril. The Emperor and his small escort had far outdistanced his army, and his handful of veterans, however brave, could not defend the great city against the mighty and much dreaded Hun army.

The Emperor's bodyservant, a lad who was much devoted to his master, stood as usual behind Ko Tsu's chair at the head of the Council table. As the warriors turned down one suggestion after another, great gloom settled upon them. Now at last surely their fate was sealed, and before the morning broke, they would keep a grim appointment with death.

In this dread silence, the lad stooped down to his master and whispered in his ear. The general's

staff were amazed to see their lord smile and hear him answer, " Well, we can at least try it."

Night had fallen, an exceptionally dark night, and on the plain surrounding the city flamed the Huns' bonfires, ringing the city round with a wall of fire.

Within its high walls no one slept, and Palace and workshops were busy places.

Meanwhile the fierce Hun soldiers drank and sang noisy songs of victory, feeding the great bonfires until the flames roared up to Heaven.

At last their singing ended, and the bonfires died down, leaving only the usual watchfires alight, tended by alert watchmen. When dawn broke in a cloudless sky, the Huns' sentinels were surprised to hear no sign of life within the city. But upon the walls were figures quietly seated as if enjoying the beauty of the morning.

Scouts were sent to investigate and returned with almost unbelievable news, for " Great lord," said they, " upon the walls are a number of beautiful Chinese maidens, smiling and quite undisturbed by our near approach."

" Chinese maidens are brave, as all the world knows," said the Hun leader, " but to sit smiling upon the walls so near to the enemy is something quite outside any soldier's experience ! What does it mean ? "

Now the general's wife, who had accompanied

the Hun army, insisted on questioning the scouts herself, and she was moved to fierce jealousy by their account of the beauty of these Chinese maidens. She hurried along to her husband and urged him to order a withdrawal, and that speedily.

Said she: "These Chinese are devils, O lord. Who knows what wicked plot they have hatched to entice us within the city walls and then destroy us?" Solemnly she warned, "Beware, Sir General, beware!"

The Hun general, fearing a trap, and remembering the past successes of his crafty opponent, Ko Tsu, therefore ordered a withdrawal, but the soldiers murmured in cries of disappointment as they prepared to obey the order.

Long before the sun had reached its highest point, the Hun army had vanished, and Ko Tsu's scouts reported that they were already far away.

"Ha ha, ha ha, ha ha ha!" laughed the Emperor and his staff.

"Ha ha, ha ha, ha ha ha!" the very city walls rocked with the laughter of soldiers and the people.

"What a joke! What a great joke!" laughed everyone.

What caused this merriment you may ask?

Those Chinese maidens upon the city walls were dolls, in the most delightful dresses, with wonderfully painted faces, smiling happily, and with a roguish twinkle in their life-like eyes.

QUESTIONS

THE FOUNDLINGS

1 Why did the fairies wish to get rid of the Princess Nang ?

2 Tell me how the princess found a playmate.

3 For what reason were the king, the prince, and the princess turned into three hills ?

THE FAIRY PEARLS

1 For what purpose did the brothers set off to the Yang-Se mountain?

2 Why did the elder brother say they must not spend the night on the Yang-Se mountain ?

3 How was it that the boys were so many years before they returned home ?

4 Tell me what their mother found in the sack which they brought back with them.

THE GRATEFUL BEE

1 What was it of which the little princess was afraid ?

2 How did the princess thank the student for what he had done ?

THE MAGIC CAVE

1 Describe shortly what Chang saw in the magic cave.

2 What is the picture about on page 30 ?

3 Why was Chang's grandmother willing to remain in the cave ?

4 How was it that the magician's words about Chang's son came true ?

A JUST REWARD

1 How did the god Fo set out to test the hearts of people on the earth ?

2 What reward had the poor seamstress for her kindness ?

3 Tell me what you think about the second woman on whom Fo called.

DOLLS THAT SAVED AN EMPEROR

Explain in as few words as you can the bodyservant's plan that proved so successful.

ERNAKULAM

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