

The wealthy family that chose a beggar for a daughter-in-law.

Told by Yang Xiu-gong.

They tell a story that, once upon a time, there was a wealthy family which had an only son. The family, therefore, wanted to choose a very fine daughter-in-law, and they wanted to choose from a wealthy family. First they had to consult their horoscope to determine with whom it would be favourable to intermarry. This being the case the father went everywhere seeking people to consult. The people whom he consulted all said, "You must go and get the Chinese beggar girl who lives in your village". When they said this he was not at all happy, but on returning home the father had no alternative but to go and say to the beggar family, "We want to intermarry with you. We want your daughter as a wife for our son". The Chinese family said, "We will not give her to you. You are very rich and we have nothing. How can we give her to you?" The wealthy family said, "We do not want anything from you, only your daughter, and whatever happens we must have her". So presently the Chinese family gave her, and this wealthy family received the Chinese girl.

Not long afterwards a group of Chinese came to this family and saw that, at the back of the family house, there was a large rock. The group of Chinese offered a great deal of silver to buy the rock from the family. The family was not aware that there was anything valuable in the rock, so they thought, "They will give a lot of silver to buy the rock, better sell it to them". Having bought the rock the group of Chinese took fire to burn it. They burnt it for seven days and seven nights until everyone in the group of Chinese grew very drowsy, and all went off to sleep. The Chinese family's daughter-in-law who had recently been brought home was not yet asleep. She saw that everyone of the group of Chinese was sleeping. She also saw a red cockerel come out of the rock which the Chinese was burning. So the Chinese family's daughter-in-law ran and caught it, brought it back, and cooped it. When the Chinese men awoke the rock they had been burning had split open and there was nothing to be seen, so they had no alternative but to return home. The Chinese family looked after the cockerel, and wherever it left droppings they were all of silver, so the family became even wealthier than before.

By and by the father died and the husband said, "We are so wealthy but do nothing with it. It would be a good idea to take some of it for gambling". So every day the husband did nothing but gamble. However, there was never a day when he won anything. Thus with going and coming his father's silver store had none left. So he said to his wife, "It is because I married you that my household is getting poorer every day. From now on I do not want you". His wife said to him, "Very well, neither do I want anything of yours except only the white horse". His wife, having got the white horse, saddled it and left sitting on the horse's back. She said to the horse, "Horse! You are a stupid creature so you shall take me along. Whatever place we reach tonight that place shall be my home". So the horse started away. They went on all day until evening when they came to a very deep forest. They reached the middle of the forest where there was a Miao family living. This family was very poor indeed; they had on food at all. So, the next day the Miao folk said to the woman, "You must go now for we have nothing for you to eat. We are very poor". The woman said, "I am not going for I have come to be your daughter-in-law". The family said, "We cannot have you for you are the daughter of wealthy people!" The woman said, I will give you silver, so that you may go and buy

corn for us to eat". The woman took out some silver and the poor family's son, whose wife she was to become said, "At the foot of our cliff there is a great deal of that stuff! I used to play at building houses with it every day!" The woman said, "Then take me along to look". The Miao lad took the woman to look, and everywhere she saw silver. The lad and the woman returned and arranged everything. They brought in builders to build a house.

After a long time the lad wanted to celebrate his father's birthday, so people from all directions came to the family, and the family had to prepare a great deal of food. Many Chinese beggars came as well. They came wanting food from the family. Her husband, who of old did not want her, had now become a beggar, eating what he could get day by day. He came with the other beggars to the family. When it was time to distribute the food, they made the beggars sit down in a line. On the opening day, the former husband of the mistress of the house, now a beggar, sat at the end of the line. The servants who distributed the food began from the family's front door, distributing until they reached the man in front of the former husband of the mistress of the house, and then had none left. The servants said, "There is none left for today, come again tomorrow". The next day those who wanted food went again. The beggar who yesterday got none, went and sat down first of all, at the front door. Then the servants came again to distribute the food to them. They went to the far end of the line distributing as they came back. When they reached the person who yesterday got none, again they had none left, so he went away disappointed. Now it was the final day for those who came wanting food. Again that beggar came. He ran and sat down in the middle. The wealthy family again sent servants to distribute food to the beggars. When the servants arrived they said, "Both yesterday and the day before we distributed from one end only, but today we will distribute from both ends". So the servants distributed from both ends until they reached the Chinese man, and again there was none left. So the Chinese man could do nothing but weep bitterly because for three days he had got nothing to eat.

When the servants came and told the mistress of the house, she realised that it was her previous husband who before had not wanted her. So she bade the servants prepare a very good meal for him to eat, and made him rest there several days before sending him away. When he was going to leave, she sent the servants for five measures of corn to make food for the journey for the beggar to carry. She said, when you have got the corn ready let me have it to make up". So the servants prepared it and gave it to the mistress of the house to make up. She wrapped a piece of silver in every cake, and made a large number, which she gave to the beggar for food on his way. Before he left the mistress of the house said to him, "The cakes which I have made for you to take for your lunch, you must only eat in some place where there are no people about". The Chinese man left. He went on until he reached a river where the water was very high. Travellers could only get to the other side by boat. The beggar, having no money, gave a cake to the boatmen who realised at once that there was silver inside it. Accordingly, they gave him, in exchange for the cakes he was carrying, an even greater number of cakes, and so got all his silver.