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EDITORIAL AND BUSINESS OFFICES

1104 Castillejos, Quiapo, Manila
Telephone 2-21-31

A. V. H. HARTENDORP,
Editor and Business Manager

H. G. HORNBOSTEL,
Advertising and Circulation Manager

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Chinoiserie

By CLARK ASHTON SMITH

LING YANG, the poet, sits all day in his hut among the willows by the river-side, and dreams of the Lady Moy. Spring and the swallows have returned from the timeless isles of myrrh and amaranth, further than the flight of sails in the unknown south; the silver buds of the willow are breaking into gold; and reeds of vernal jade have begun to push their way among the brown and yellow rushes of yesteryear. But Ling Yang is heedless of the brightening azure, the light that lengthens; and he has no eye for the northward flight of the waterfowl, and the passing of the last clouds, that melt and vanish in the flames of an amber sunset. For him, there is no season save that moon of waning summer in which he first met the Lady Moy. But a sorrow deeper than the sorrow of autumn abides in his heart: for the heart of Moy is colder to him than the snows of great mountains above a tropic valley;

and all the songs he has made for her, the songs of the flute and the songs of the lute, have found no favor in her hearing.

LEAGUES away, in her pavilion of scarlet lacquer and ebony, the Lady Moy reclines on a couch of sapphire-colored silk. All day, through the gathering gold of the willow-foliage, she watches the placid lake, on whose surface the pale green lily-pads have begun to widen. Beside her, in a turquoise-studded binding, there lie the verses of the poet Ling Yung, who lived six centuries ago, and who sang in all his songs the praise of the Lady Loy, who disdained him. Moy has no need to peruse them any longer, for they live in her memory even as upon the written page. And, sighing, she dreams ever of the great poet Ling Yung, and of the melancholy romance that inspired his songs, and wonders enviously at the disdain of the Lady Loy.