

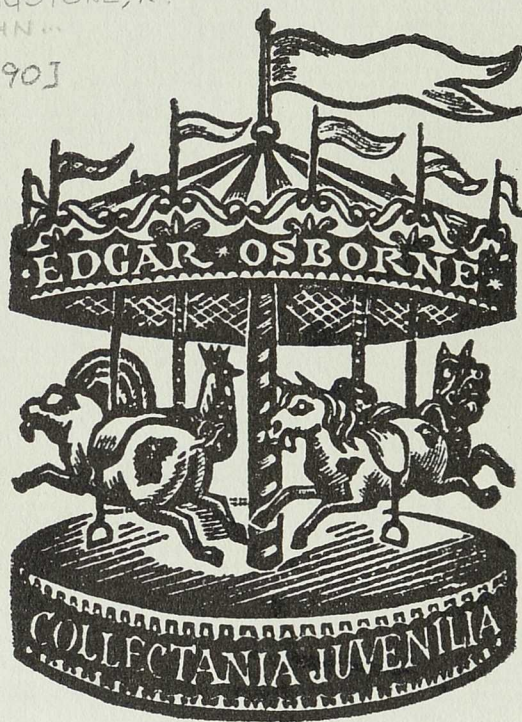
John Chinaman.

Description Versified by
Rowe Lingshane,
Author of "Verses of Country and Town,"
"Woodland and Dreamland" etc.



GRIFFITH FARRAN OKEDEN & WELSH
Newbery House,
CHARING CROSS ROAD, LONDON
And at Sydney.

P (100)
LINGSTONE, R.
JOHN
[1890]



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John Chinaman.







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Description Versified by

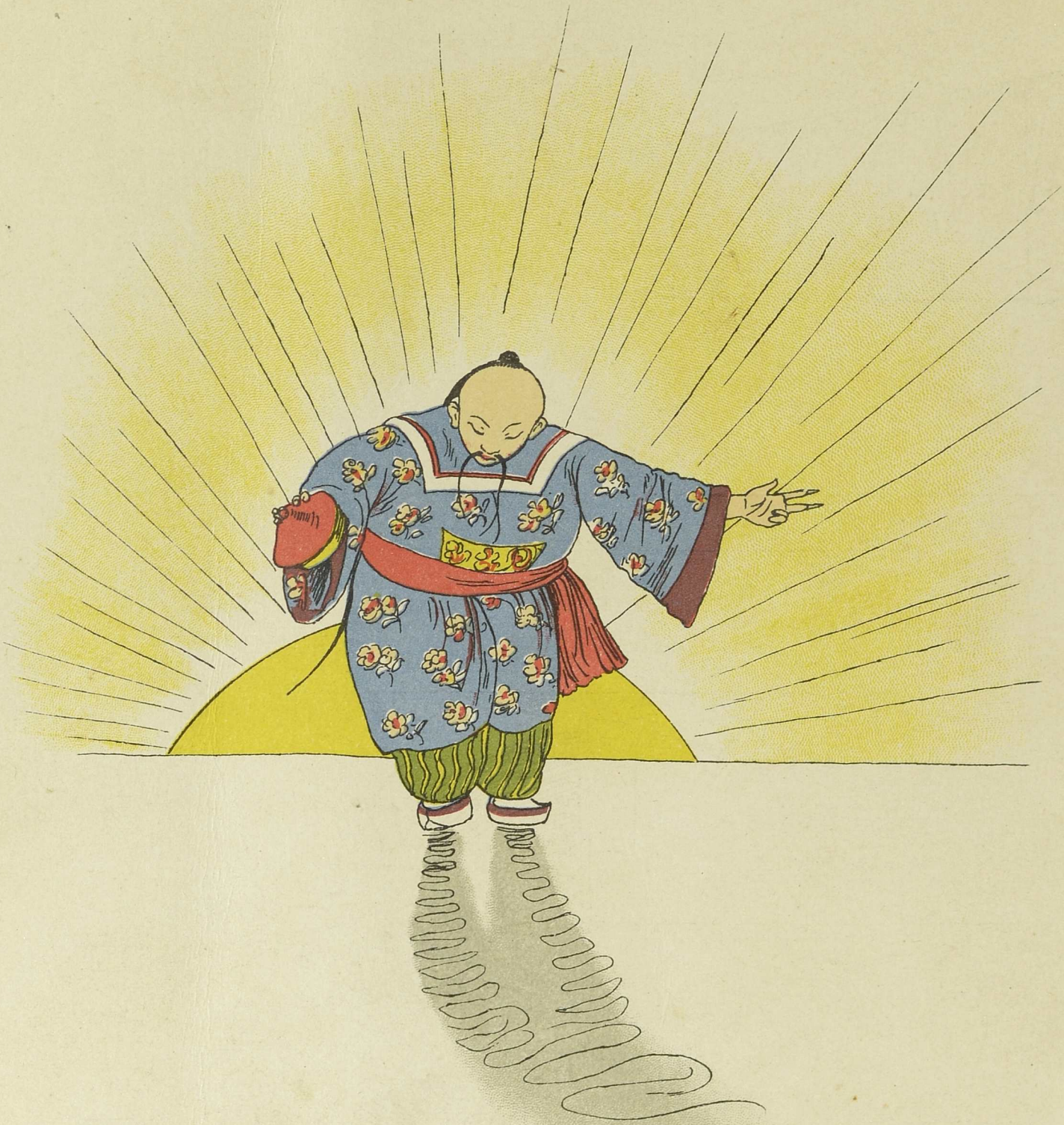
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[Printed in Germany.]




John Chinaman at Home.

BEYOND the sunrise, far away,
Lies the famed land of Old Cathay :
With seas, hills, walls, on every side,
Girt round; and stretching far and wide
There lives the fifth part of humanity ;
A life that seems to us insanity.
The oddest folk, judged by our rules,
A nation of astounding fools :
But, which is more ridiculous,
That's just the thing they say of us.



Here are described some striking
features,
And customs of these curious crea-
tures.

Their faces, yellow as a guinea,
Grin ever in a way unpleasant.
No nose have they, or scarcely any ;
Eye-slits, that slope to where it isn't ;
And shaven crowns, whence, in the wind,
A pigtail dangles down behind.
Their nails they longer grow, though
neater,
Than were the nails of Struwpeter.
Without a sunshade and a sword
They never take their walks abroad ;
Though, sooth to say, we cannot call
The gait they go a walk at all.
They shamle, slip, and prance along,
They amble, trip, and dance along,
With sugar-loaf-shaped hats, and shoes
Like boats, and clothes of many hues.



John Chinaman at Home—*contd.*

But, little readers, to my mind,
Still stranger are the womankind.
Tricked out are they in gorgeous wise,
Gay as a flock of butterflies.
Their hair into a hundred braids,
Is plaited on their little heads.

With tiny noses, eyebrows high,
And sloping eyes, they shuffle by.
Hobbling and tottering they go,
Because their tight shoes pinch
them so.

So small these shoes are made that
may be
They might be fitted on a baby.
Using a stick along they stumble :
Without it, standing still, they'd
tumble :

With it their tiny feet can toddle :
And like a swan on land they
waddle.

But never swan upon a stream
More gracefully could move than
they,
Above the waist, their light forms
sway,

As supple they as saplings seem.
They bow, they bend, and mince,
and smile,
Grimace, and fan themselves the
while ;

—For evermore they bear a fan,
Wherewith they cool their pretty
faces,

With many dainty airs and graces,
To captivate John Chinaman.



John Chinaman at Home—*continued.*

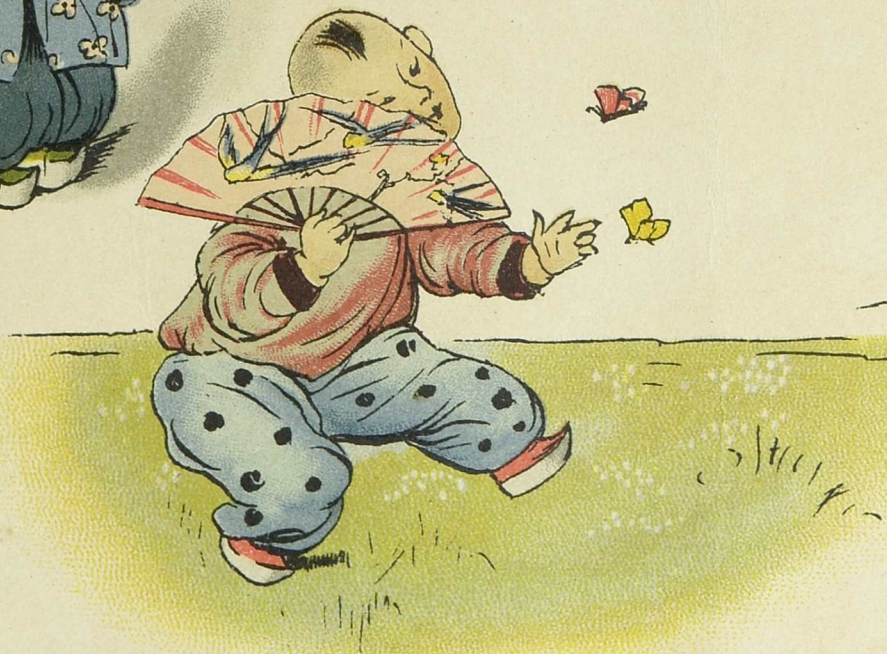
The children are as queer a sight,
Dressed like their father or their
mother,
—Each garment baggier than the
other.

Their faces all are powdered white.
Their heads are shorn, which
makes them seem
A size or two too big for them.

Each chubby little Chinaman
'Neath an umbrella goes, to shade
Himself. Each little China
maid
Holds in her dimpled fist a fan.



I've told you what the Chinese wear,
And what they're like. Now, if you care
To listen, I will make you stare
At what I saw when I was there.



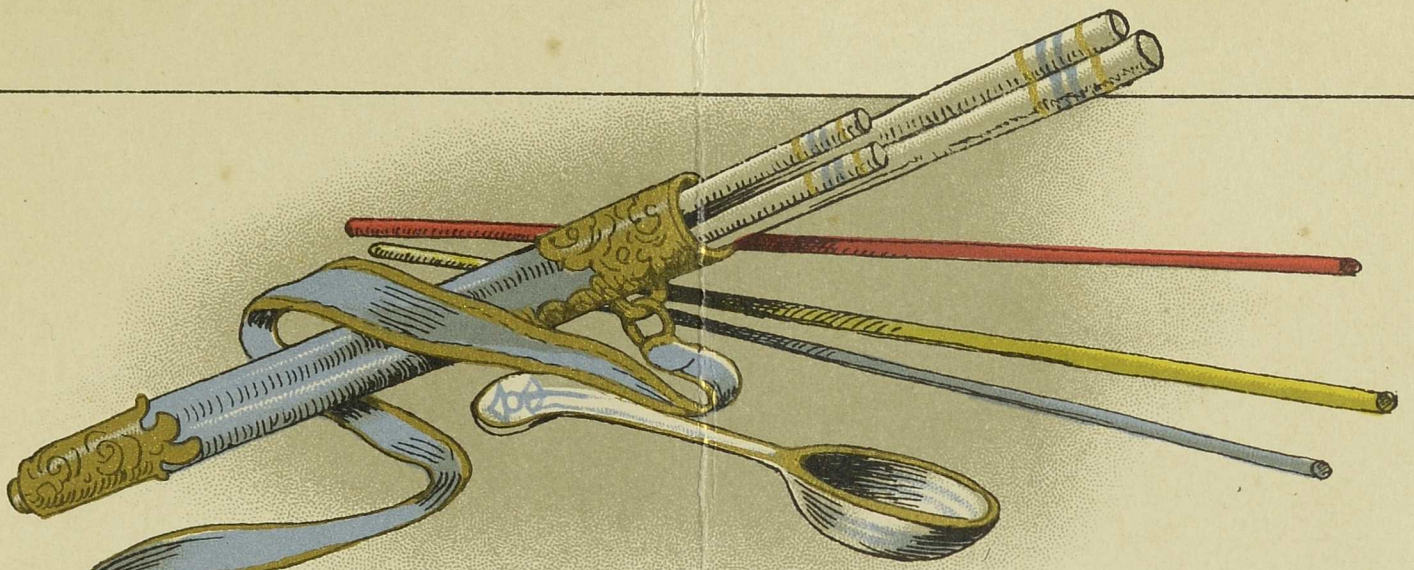
A Celestial Dinner.

A Chinaman who lived in style
Asked me to dinner with him, while
I lived there. Friends, if you'll believe me,
This was the dinner that he gave me.

The soups were numerous and fine:
I saw a rat's tail float in mine.

To draughts of wine we next were treated,
Poured out in little cups, and heated.
First of the wine drank every man,
And then the solid feast began.





A Celestial Dinner—*continued.*

At dinner, when you fall to work,
They give you neither knife nor fork ;
But, armed with little sticks, you dine,
—That gay with paint and lacquer shine.

More than enough there was to eat.

All, if you liked it, exquisite.

Patties of earthworms first were brought.

Shark-fins, as good as e'er were caught,

Came next, with shoots of bamboo green :

Leeches in jelly next were seen ;

Then a *compote* of caterpillar ;

Then, in a bowl of porcelain fine, a

Dish of boiled eggs, much liked in China,

—That had lain buried in a cellar

For years (I'm not a story-teller).

Roast crickets, perfect of their kind,

With gooseberry salad close behind,

Came next. They served to every guest.

—To crown the feast,—a swallow's nest,

Easy to eat, with thick sauce dressed

And, for a fillip after meat,

A cup of pig's lard hot and sweet.





Topsy Turvy.

In China all things, as a rule,
 Are to our thinking wonderful ;
 They nod their shaven heads to show
 That they intend to answer "No" ;

They shake them if it be a "Yes"

That they in dumb show would express.

When they would read a book, the place

Where they begin it, is the end.

From right to left their writers trace

Each line that is in China penned.

A topsy-turvy world indeed,

Where everything is on its head.

Instead of "How d'ye do?" they say

"I hope your skin acts well to-day."

In summer time the heat's so dreadful,

You'd think this greeting scarcely needful.

Their winter is so cold, however,

That thinking of it makes me shiver.

Far colder is it there than here,

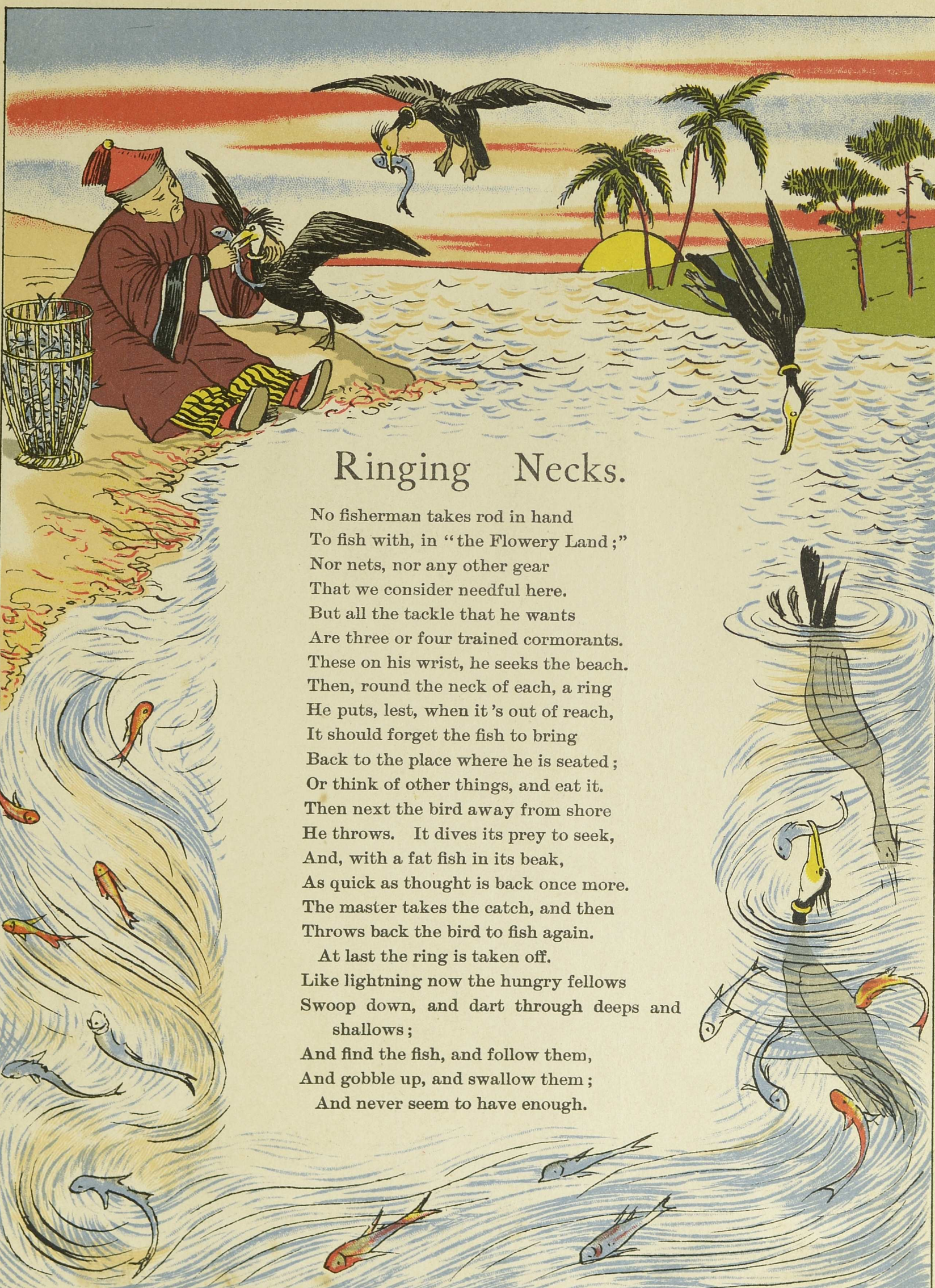
Yet summer clothes throughout the year

Are all they use : and, should it freeze,

They put on all they have of these :

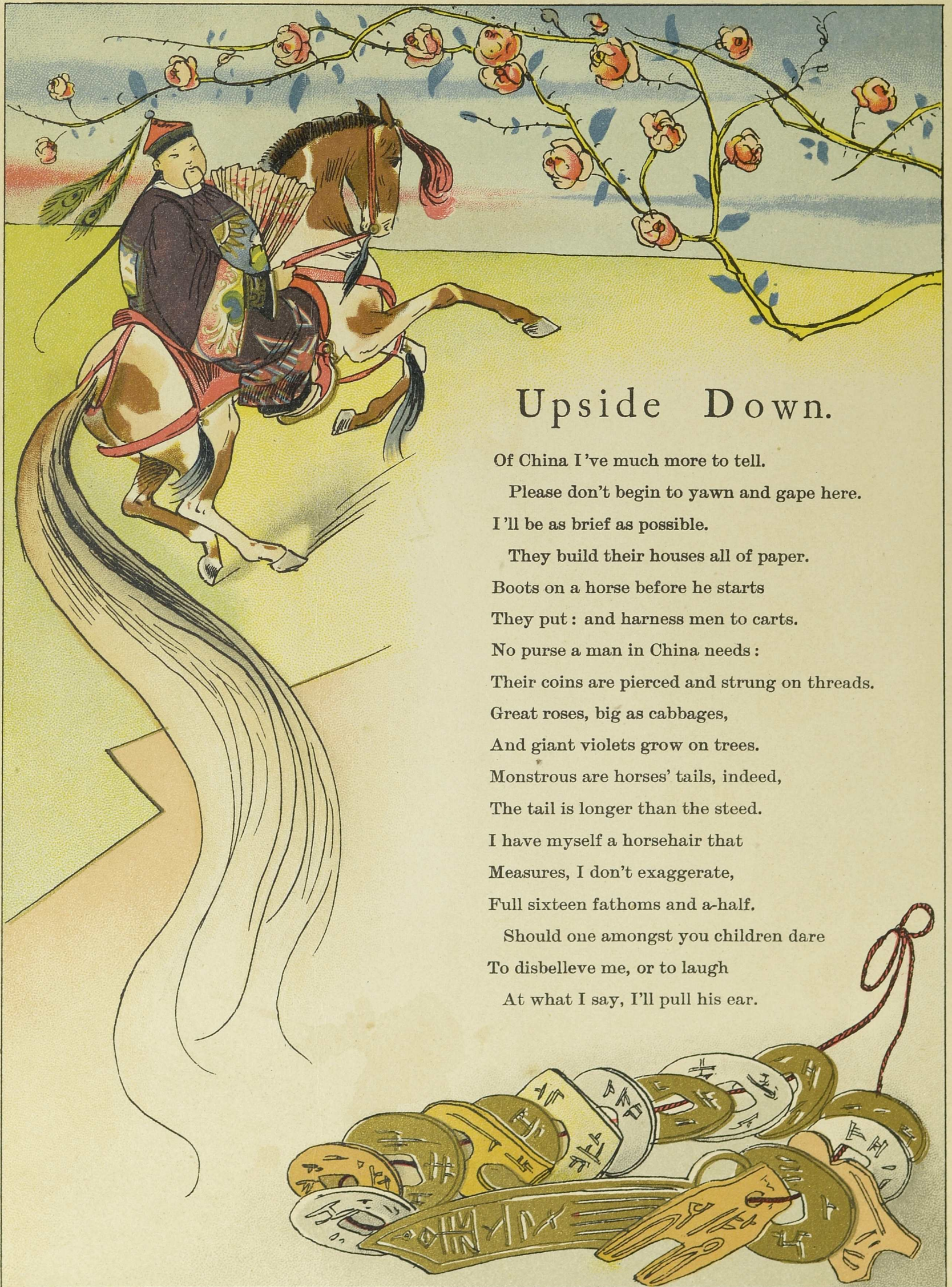
And often wear, I do declare,
 Nine baggy coats, and pairs of breeches,
 All most extensive garments, which is
 A sight to scare A Polar bear.





Ringing Necks.

No fisherman takes rod in hand
To fish with, in "the Flowery Land;"
Nor nets, nor any other gear
That we consider needful here.
But all the tackle that he wants
Are three or four trained cormorants.
These on his wrist, he seeks the beach.
Then, round the neck of each, a ring
He puts, lest, when it's out of reach,
It should forget the fish to bring
Back to the place where he is seated;
Or think of other things, and eat it.
Then next the bird away from shore
He throws. It dives its prey to seek,
And, with a fat fish in its beak,
As quick as thought is back once more.
The master takes the catch, and then
Throws back the bird to fish again.
At last the ring is taken off.
Like lightning now the hungry fellows
Swoop down, and dart through deeps and
shallows;
And find the fish, and follow them,
And gobble up, and swallow them;
And never seem to have enough.



Upside Down.

Of China I've much more to tell.

Please don't begin to yawn and gape here.

I'll be as brief as possible.

They build their houses all of paper.

Boots on a horse before he starts

They put : and harness men to carts.

No purse a man in China needs :

Their coins are pierced and strung on threads.

Great roses, big as cabbages,

And giant violets grow on trees.

Monstrous are horses' tails, indeed,

The tail is longer than the steed.

I have myself a horsehair that

Measures, I don't exaggerate,

Full sixteen fathoms and a-half.

Should one amongst you children dare

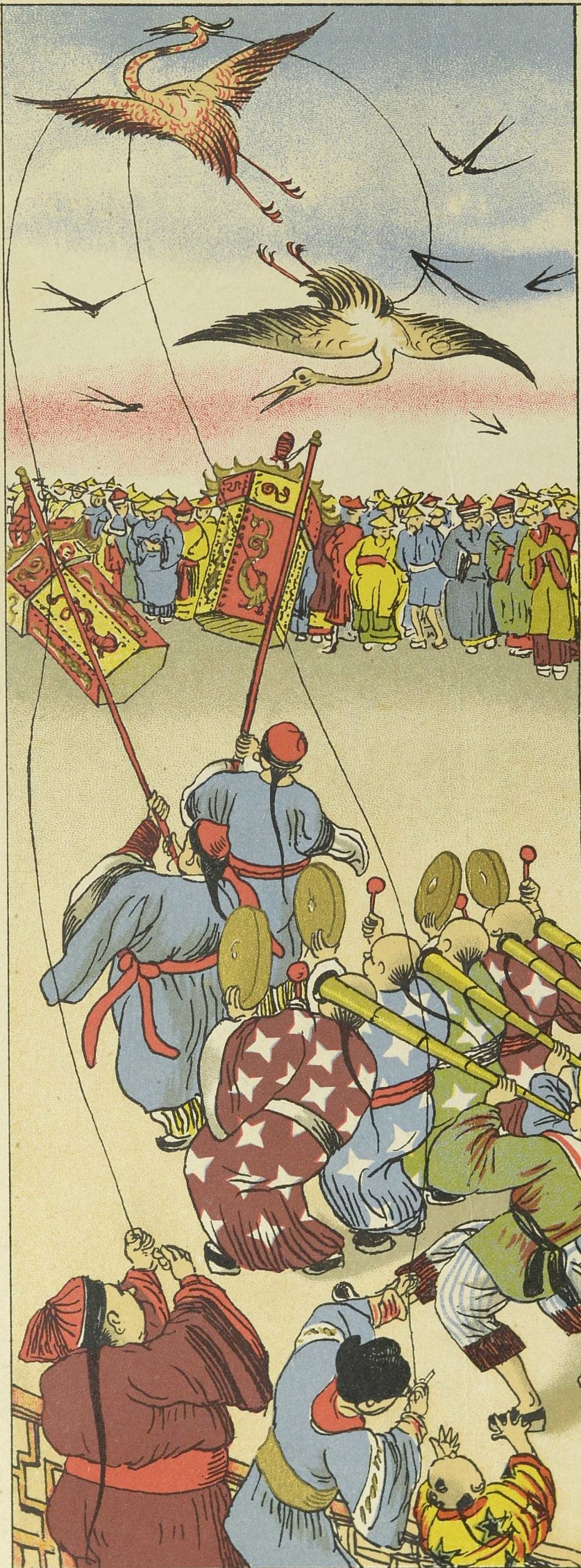
To disbelieve me, or to laugh

At what I say, I'll pull his ear.



The Dragon Feast.

There is a town there, I have seen it,
Not only painted white and grey :
The hundred thousand houses in it,
Are with as many colours gay :
—From roof to cellar ornamented,
Lacquered and polished, stained and painted :—
Gold signboards on the houses shine ;
And many-coloured frescoes fine.
The towers are made of porcelain :
Thousand of bells are hung in these :
And, day and night, and might and main,
They jingle-jangle in the breeze.



The Dragon Feast—*continued.*

Here, every year, they solemnize
The famous "Dragon-Feast." I've seen there
Such wonders pass before my eyes
As mock belief, unless you've been there.
On hundreds of hand wagons, drawn
By men, a frightful dragon's drawn.
With beaten drums, and clashing cymbals,
Where'er it comes, the firm earth trembles.
'Tis made of paper, painted crimson,
—A clumsier monster ne'er had limbs on :—
With hideous jaws, And teeth and claws ;
And wings, and things they mean for paws ;
And is the cause Of loud applause.
As through the crowded streets they go,
On big bamboos, the buglers blow.
With clashing cymbals, handbells ringing,
And drums enough to split your head,
And awful sounds that they call singing,
—A chorus that would wake the dead,—
Along they go. The people hustle,
Push, fight, crush, smite, rush, crowd, and jostle.

The Dragon Feast—*continued.*

Birds made of paper throng the
sky ;
Hérons, and giant swallows fly.
And as they hover, sink, and rise,
From many a glistening spark-
ling feather,
The broken sunlight flashing
flies,
And all the crowd hurrah to-
gether.



A Charming Entertainment.

Their prestidigitators
Astonish all spectators.
One man takes little balls, the size
Of peas, and with his sorceries,
—A little water o'er them sprinkling,—
He makes them fizz, and, in a twinkling,
They grow, while round him gape the bumpkins,
Until they are as big as pumpkins.

Or one will take A writhing snake,
And hold it to his face. It goes
In at his mouth, and out ('t would make
You all feel sick, To see the trick)
The creature wriggles at his nose.



Dignity.

A man—a mandarin of course,
—Clumsy and heavy as a sack—
Rides on his servant pick-a-back,
—As proud as though he rode a horse.



At sight of him, the people round
Fall down, and grovel on the ground :
And there they lie, such is the custom,
Until he's gone some distance past 'em.

Gaol Birds.

Here, when they catch a thief, they rig for him,
With bearing poles instead of wheels,
A kind of cage that's not too big for him :
Therein they shove him, neck and heels.



Through a stout collar at the top
His head is thrust, there must he stop,
Neck, legs, and body cramped and bent,
Till, to the place of punishment,
With jolts and jumps and jerks they bring him.
They drag him out ; then flat they fling him
Upon the ground,—half-dead with fright.
They hold him by the pigtail tight :
And, with a stout and supple cane,
They thrash him, till he howls again.



Tempting.

Should you be hungry, in the street
You'll find some nice roast rats to eat.
How good they smell. They lie and cook,

Like sausages. And like them look,
But for the ears and tails. To buy them
Folks crowd. I'm sure you long to try
them.



Attached Friends.

And now I'll tell you of a joke
That's popular with China-folk.
An urchin sees some people stand,
—Their backs towards him,—creeps up lightly;
And takes their pigtails in his hand,
And, in a hard knot, ties them tightly.
Then, while the lookers-on admire,
Suddenly shouts out, Fire! Fire! Fire!
At this, hot-foot the victims start,
But, ere they are two yards apart,
They reach the limit of their tether:
Back they are jerked, with cruel smart:
Back go their heads, they claw the air,
And tumble in the mud together.

And there they writhe, and scream, and swear,
—A pigtail snapping here and there.
And each with struggling limbs, belabours
His writhing, unoffending neighbours.
Round throng the crowd, With laughter loud.
To keep the peace, The stern police
Impartially their bamboos lay,
With sounding thwacks, Upon the shoulders,
And arms, and backs, Of all beholders,
Except the boy's, who runs away.



The Doctor.

Outside a Chinese surgery

A thousand plasters line the wall :

In millions there,—a sight to see,—

The gnats, and flies, and beetles crawl.

Within the learned doctor lives.

Bright pictures, on his signboards, show

His patients being cured, and so

Examples of his skill he gives,

To prove that of his art he's master ;

And draws a tooth, or spreads a plaster,

As fast as any man, or faster.

A Dragon-Ride.

Once, walking near a town, I found

A whirligig or merry-go-round.

An elephant you there could ride ;

Rhinoceros ; or dromedary ;

Or wooden dragon, made to carry

Folk in his mouth a fathom wide.

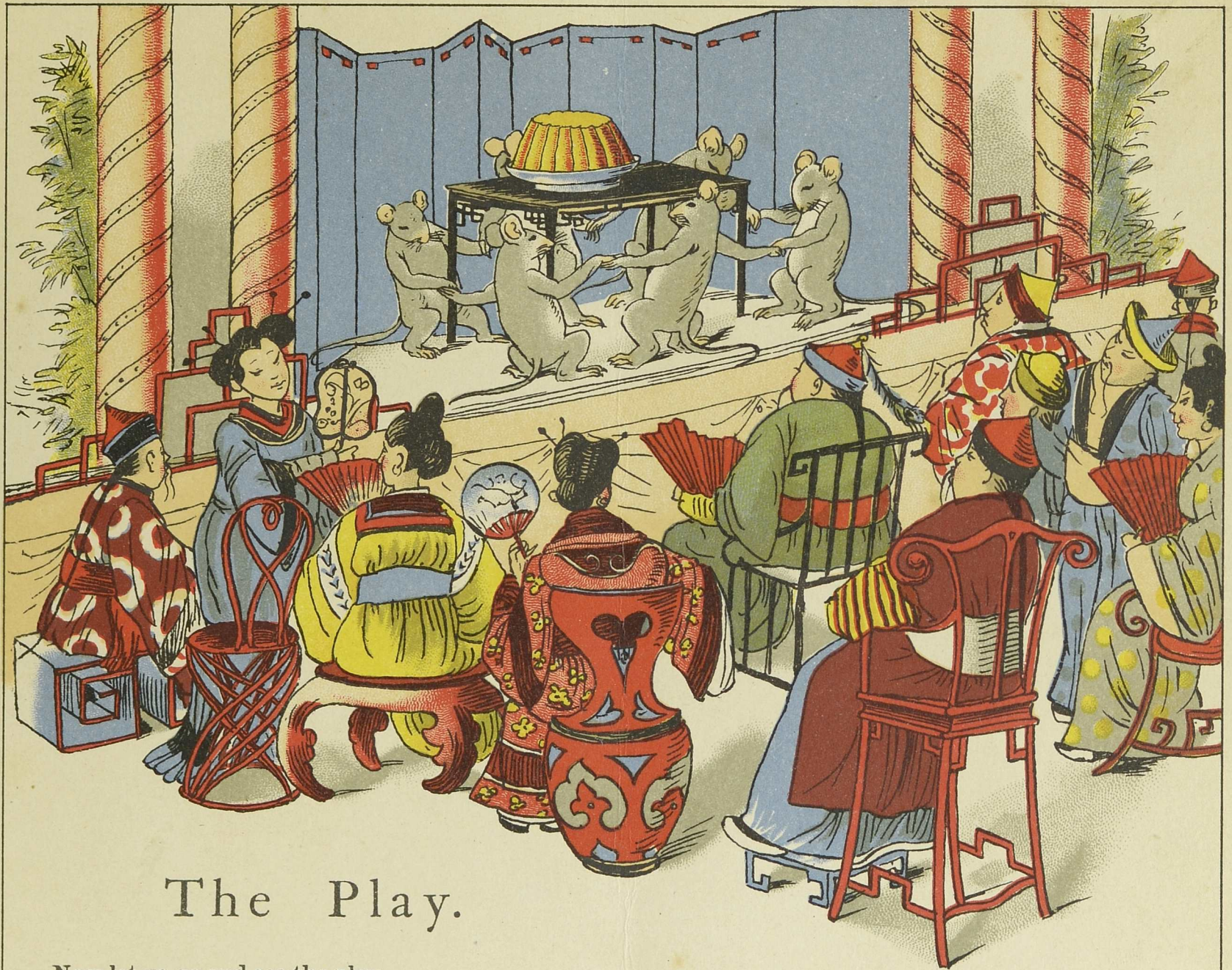
We like the dragon best by far.

We take our seats, and off we go :

The cymbals sound, the trumpets blow,

Cling, Clang, Crash, Bang, Tarantara !





The Play.

Now let us go and see the play,
 They 're going to perform to-day,
 —A piece that they "The Mouse-Trap" call.

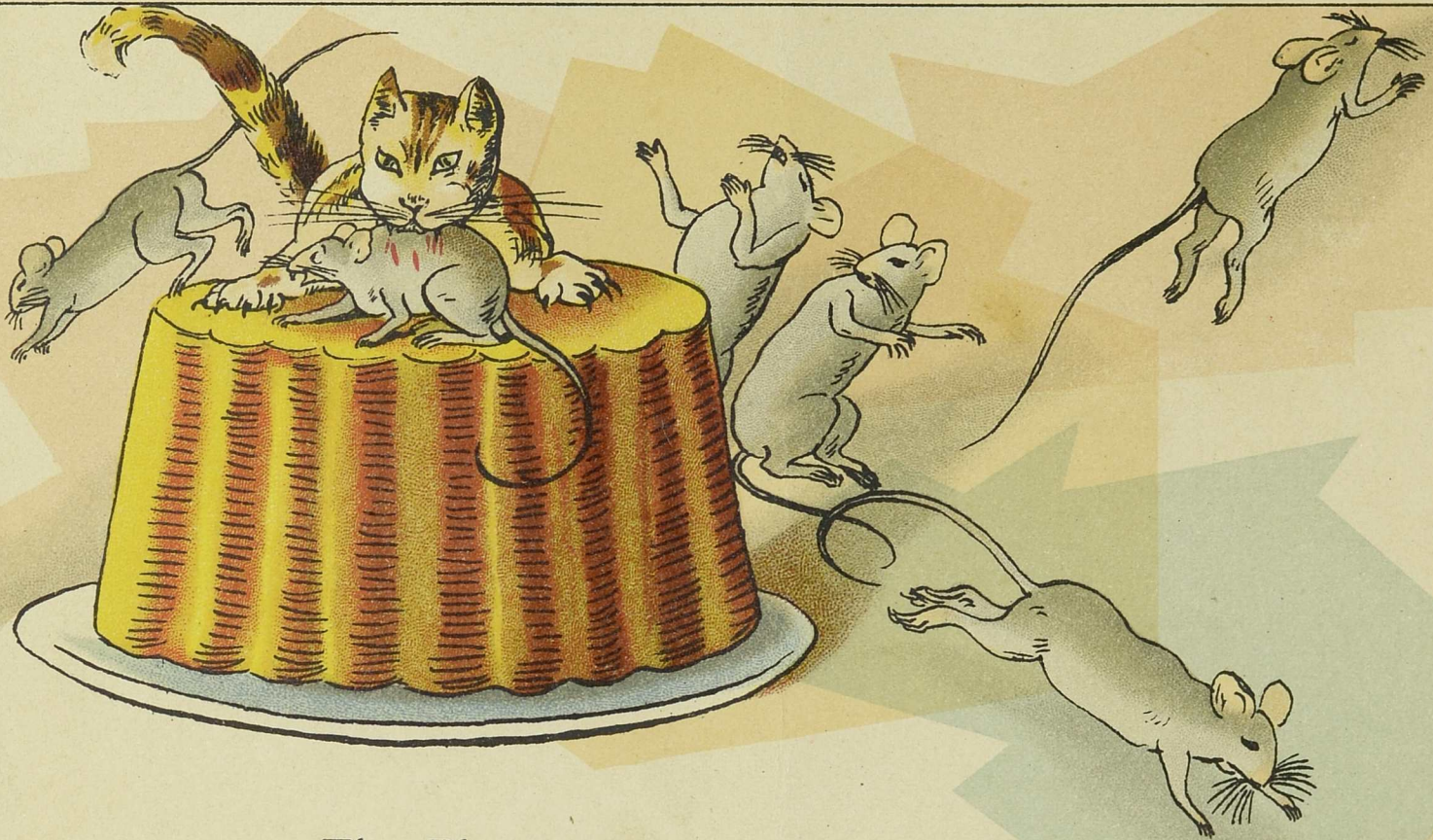
The theatre 's not far away,
 —A gaily decorated hall.
 The players all Are children small ;
 The acting very natural.

Six mice upon the stage are seen,
 Frisking about, with joyous mien.
 They 've found their way into the pantry ;
 And no one there to stop their entry.
 A cake upon the table stands.

They see it, and for joy they bound.
 They seize each other's paws, or hands :
 And, in a ring, they dance around
 The charming cake so nicely browned.
 Then fast as ever they are able,
 All greedily the feast to share,

They scramble up upon the table :
 They nibble here, they nibble there :
 But hard as rock they find the thing.
 Swift from the cake, with sudden spring.





The Play—*continued.*

Out bounds a cat,—a dreadful sight.
A moment, paralysed with fright
They stand stock still, then take to flight.
But all in vain, though winged with fear,
They rush, and double, spring, and hide :
For pussy maddens in the rear;
And with their blood the floor is dyed.

(Please to remember that the gore,
With which the floor is dabbled o'er,
Is currant juice, and nothing more,
From bladders, which the children bear,
Hidden beneath the skins they wear.)

The cat lies down to rest, and pur,
And lick her paws, and wash her fur :
And, 'mid applause that shakes the walls,
The play is o'er, the curtain falls.

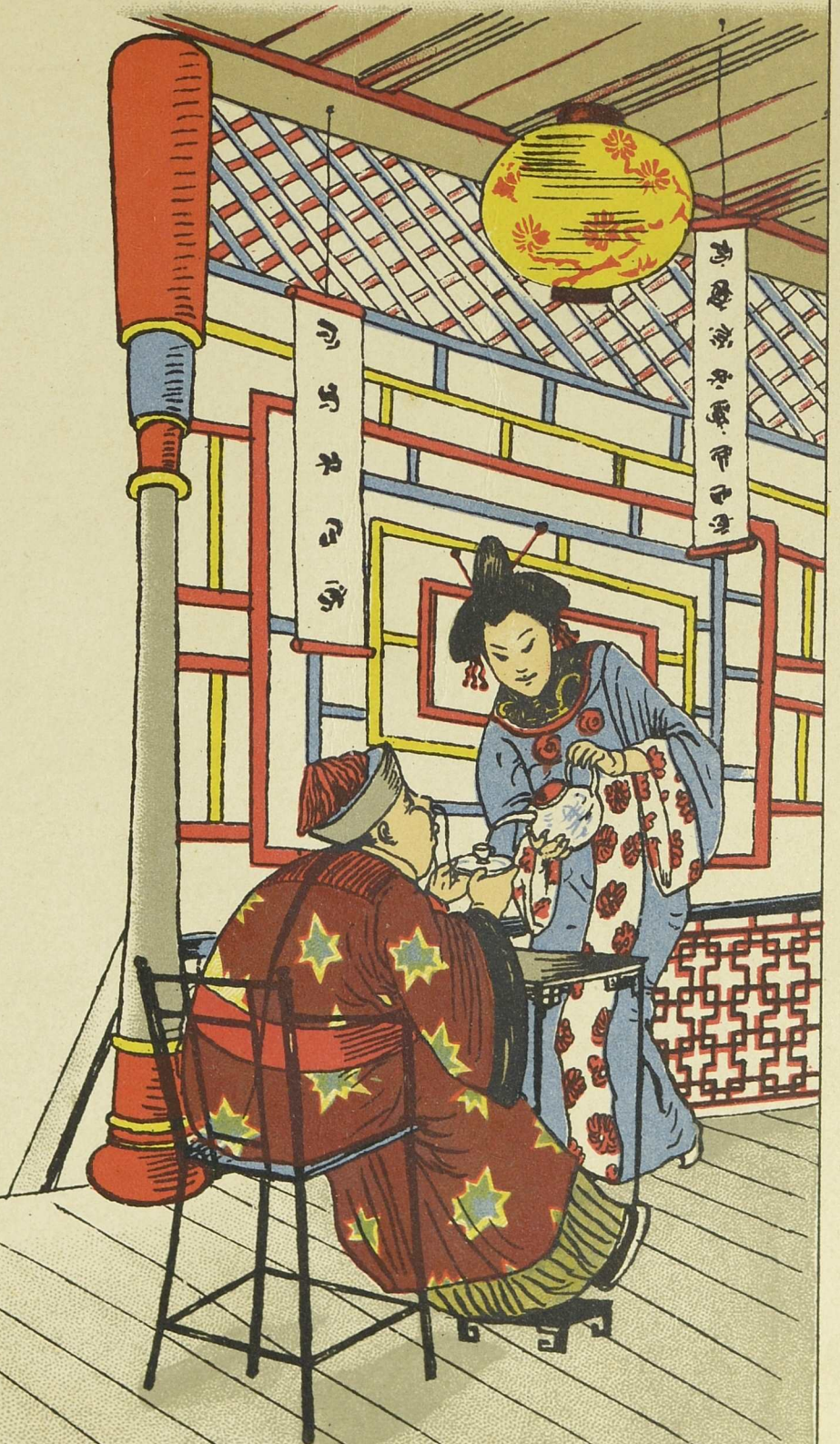




Revelry.

The tea-house is a sight to see
At dusk, there every man assembles,
After the labours of the day,
To rest, and wash fatigue away.
There pretty maidens serve the tea
In cups about the size of thimbles.
For this the reveller makes up
By reaching oft his thirtieth cup.
(I never swerve from truth a letter
To make the tales I tell seem better.)
Meanwhile, on all sides, people light
Their paper-lanterns everywhere :
Until the houses are as bright
As scenery at a theatre.
Of every colour, shape, and kind,
These lanterns dangle in the wind.
You'd see there, in a little while,
Dragons in hordes, And goats in herds,
Turtles and gourds, And flies and birds,
And butterflies Of monstrous size,
And here and there a crocodile.
Now to the river we will set off,
To see the folks their fireworks let off.

Bright serpents wriggle through the skies :
Gold showers descend : swift rockets rise :
The pin-wheels spin : the crackers rattle :
For hours goes on a water-battle.
In boats, all armed with little mortars,
Made in the shape of swans, or fish,
Dragons, or anything they wish, —
The people throng the sparkling waters ;
And pelt each other ; laugh ; and cheer ;
And shout, " till daylight doth appear."





In the Palace.

Right in the middle of the town
The palace stands. I'll show it you,
—A huge brick building, green, and blue :—
Where monstrous yellow dragons frown ;
Or grin red-mouthed, and show their charms.
A yellow dragon Snarls each flag on,
And is the emperor's coat of arms.
Upon the palace you will find
A hundred towers, of every kind,

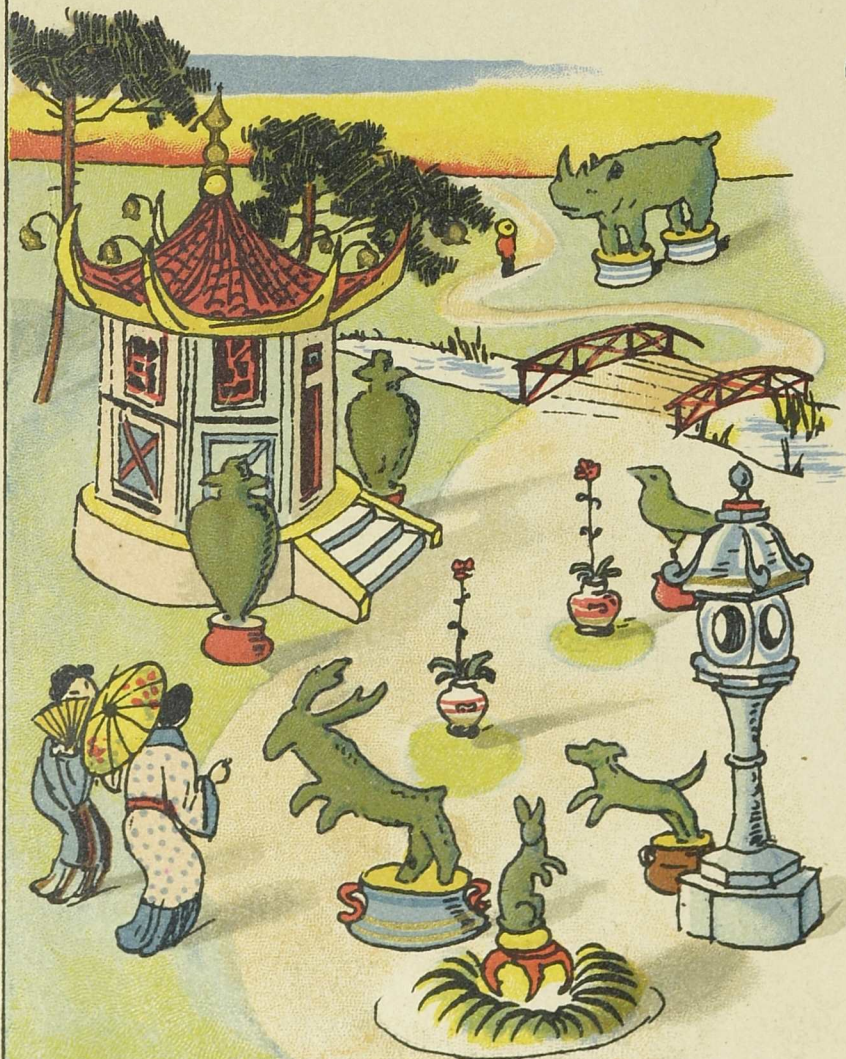
And colour too. And, high in air,
Sharp spires upon their tops they bear.
Each has a roof on every floor,
All peaked and curved and dotted o'er
With gold tiles, 'neath the noonday glare,
They glitter like a moidore.
Now *we* can go in anywhere.
The emperor will not order *us*
To execution to be led off.
Should any other stranger dare,
Without a pass, to enter there ;
Without remark, or further fuss,
They'd shove him out, and cut his head off.





In the Palace—
continued.

We pass three outer courts, before
We reach the inner palace door.
And, in the first of these three yards,
We see a regiment of guards.
A thousand number they or more.
A cloak of yellow, Striped with black,
Wears every fellow, On his back,
From which they're called "The Tiger Corps."
Lances they wield, Their foes to slay,
They never yield, Or, so they say,
Three hundred of "The Dragon Guards,"
In the next court a living seek,
By flourishing enormous swords,
Each crooked as a parrot's beak.



The fourth court. No, I beg your pardon,
I mean the third one, is a garden.
Rare plants there grow in vase and tub ;
And trees, so strange they make you rub
Your eyes, and hardly dare to trust 'em :
For, following the country custom,
These trees into all sorts of shapes
Are clipped. At bears the gazer gapes,
Rhinoceroses, and cassowaries,
Windmills, and toads, and dromedaries,
Tigers, and dragons, bats, and apes.
When through the garden we have past,
The inner gate we reach at last.
The state apartments first we'll visit :
Officials stand the way to show there,
To those that have a pass to go there.
They'll lead the way, we shall not miss it.

In the Palace—*continued.*

Here in the Throne-Room, round the throne,
Great lords stand waiting many a one,

—Princes or nobles at the least :

In yellow coats and trousers dressed.

The throne is yellow silk, and all

The chairs with yellow lacquer shine.

Yellow the hangings on the wall.

In yellow wait the footmen fine.

With yellow dusters, in the morning,

The housemaids dust, all others scorning.

This colour, let me tell you, none

May wear except the Court alone.

Should anybody else, by chance.

Of malice, or of ignorance,

Wear yellow ; for the first offence

They fine him five-and-twenty pence ;

But, if he should commit a second,

A capital offence it's reckoned.

Now two-and-thirty men bring in

The emperor's yellow palanquin.

All present, when the thing they see,

Fall down as flat as flat can be.

Nine times their foreheads on the ground,

They beat so hard you hear the sound.

There till the emperor descends

They wait, and then the grovelling ends.

“The Brother of the Sun and Moon”

Now sits upon his yellow throne.

Three boys three dishes bring that hold,

One, raven's feathers black as night ;

One, peacock's feathers green and gold ;

One, buttons green, red, blue, and white.

If any courtier can beguile

His gracious master of a smile,

He gets a button for his pains.

If he can make him laugh outright,

With joy, a peacock's feather bright,

He from the emperor obtains.

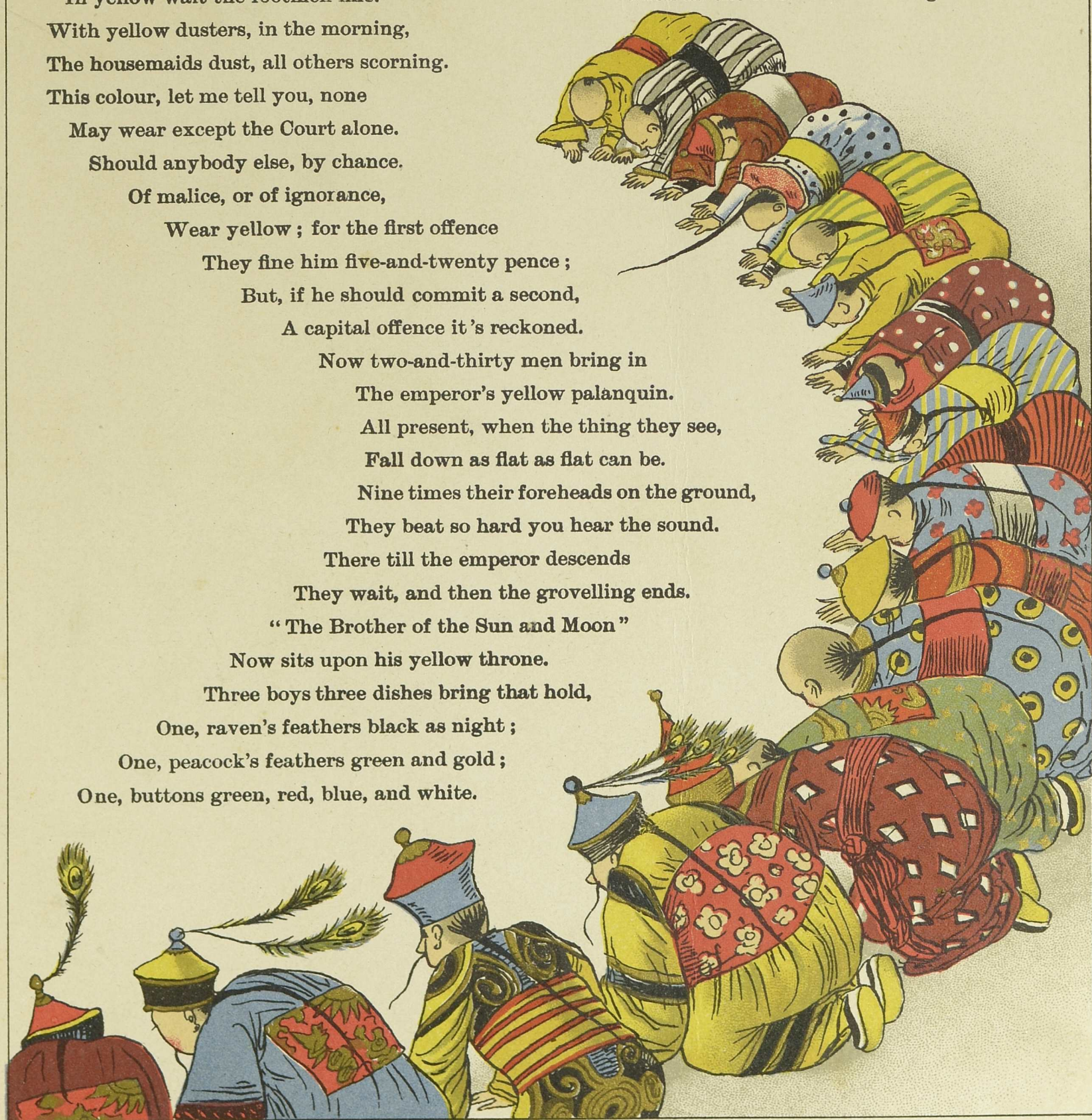
But he whose jests lack point, or brevity

Or smack of disrespect, or levity,

He, from his injured monarch gains,

In recompense, a raven's feather,

Then all the courtiers cower together.



In the Palace—*continued.*

Now all the Court assembled stand :
The emperor beckons with his hand.
At this, the Lord High Cellarer,
—Ah Sin, whose duty 'tis to keep hot
His Majesty's most noble tea-pot,—
And all the Court themselves bestir.
Ah Sin sends for the yellow tray,
—With him to see is to obey.
Into a yellow cup, upon
The yellow tray, the tea is poured :
And then, Ah Sin, when this is done,
Must pass it to a greater lord :
Then goes it to one still more great :
Then to a Minister of State :
And so, from hand to hand, 'tis past,
Till to Prince Ling it comes at last.
Now to the throne, with cup and tray,
Prince Ling goes crawling all the way ;
And, lying flat as flat can be,
Offers his emperor the tea :
Whose Highness deigns to take the cup,
And taste the tea, and drink it up.
Once more the cup is on the tray.
Prince Ling goes grovelling away.



'Tis past again from hand to hand
Of prince and mandarin, as they
Can claim precedence in the land :
Then to the Minister of State :
Then to the lord that's not so great :
And, safely to Ah Sin, at last,
—The Lord High Cellarer,—'tis past :
—Whose glorious privilege 'tis to keep hot
His Majesty's imperial tea-pot.
He cuts, to please his emperor,
A kind of caper on the floor :
But, in the middle of it, trips
Against a chair, his smiling ceases :
From off the tray the tea-cup slips,
And breaks into a hundred pieces.

Not daring to excuse his error,
He falls down flat, in mortal terror.
In vain the other courtiers try
To shun the outraged monarch's eye.
“The Brother of the Sun and Moon,”
All furious, is amongst them soon :
The dreaded raven's plume he sticks
In Ah Sin's hat: that culprit kicks,
With practised strength and skill : then, roundly,
At all the other courtiers swears :
He pulls their pigtails, beats them soundly ;
And from their hats the buttons tears :
Then, in a voice heard wide and far,
He thunders, Ho ! My Dragon Car.



Whiz! Whiz! Bang! Bang!

To-night the emperor, leaving higher works,
His wives to a display of fireworks
Will treat. The Court are all invited;
And all are here, and much delighted.
Soon in the garden dimly lit,
The monarch and his dames will sit.
Their chairs surround a place wherein
His throne stands, 'neath a baldaquin.

The show begins, in manner meet,
The moment that he takes his seat.
At once appears a vessel tall,
—Gorgeous and bright the darkness shows
her:

With masts, and sails, and flags, and all:
A million little flames compose her.
Never did stately ship before,
More proudly ride the billows o'er.
Bang! Bang resounds! She's seen no more.
At once above us, in the sky,
A thousand dragons hiss and fly,

Yellow, red-mouthed, and spitting fire,
—Snow-white, green, blue,—and soaring higher,
Together in the night expire.

A huge white elephant appears:
And, following her, five little dears,
—Five baby elephants—come after.

To see the monstrous mother waddle,
And after her her babies toddle,
The monarch shakes his sides with laughter;
And f'lips Glu Glu, in gracious wise,
—Who the delight is of his eyes,
—A compliment that all would prize.



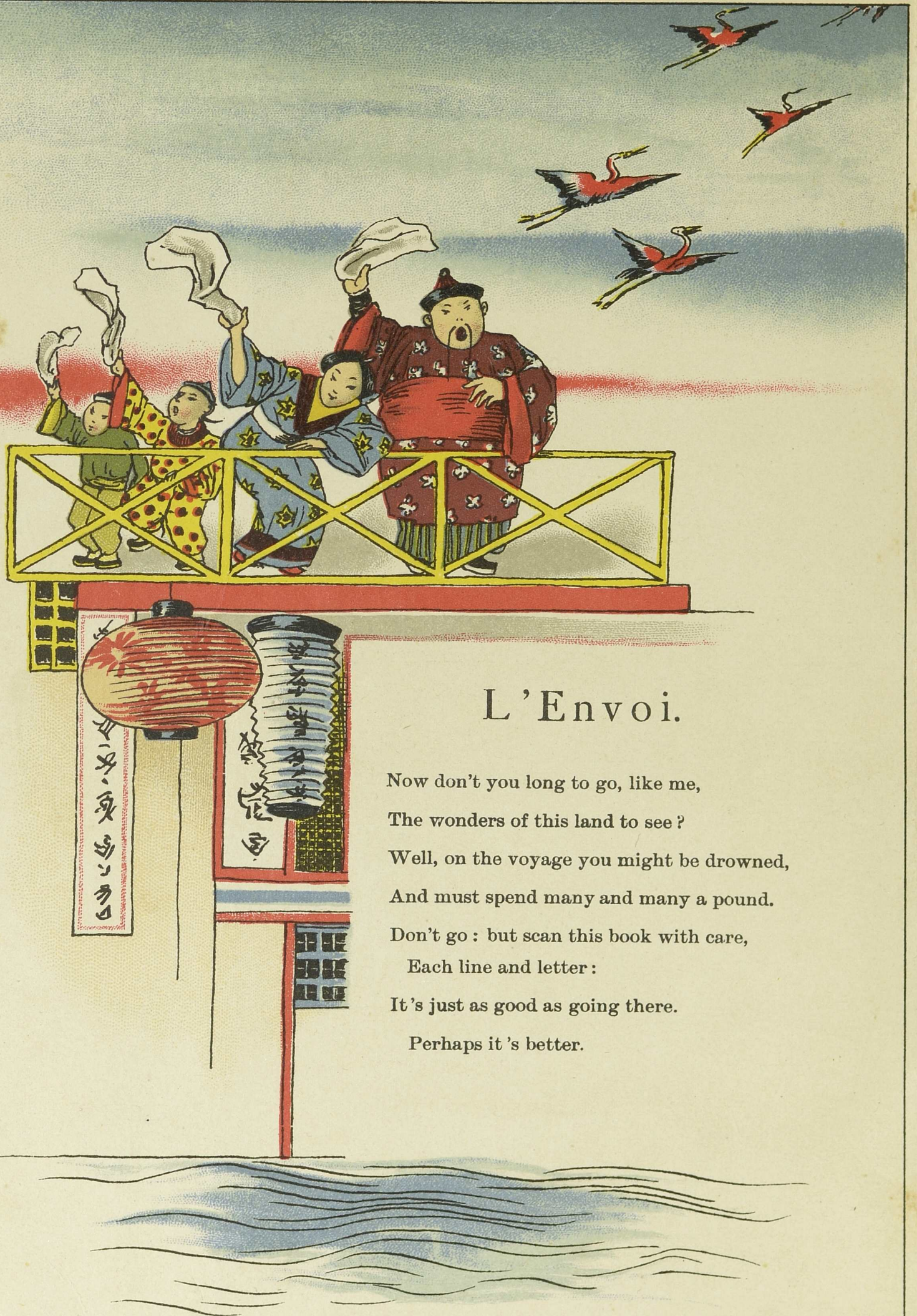


Whiz! Whiz! Bang! Bang!—*continued.*

After the elephants, is seen
 A monstrous reptile, coloured green ;
 That waves its tail, and moves its paws,
 And shows its teeth, and grisly jaws.
 A flock of swans all snow-white follows,
 And straight towards the beast ungainly,
 They swim, as though they all defied him :
 One after one the flock he swallows :
 But, through his green sides showing plainly,
 You see them swim about inside him.
 The emperor pinches, at the sight,

His gracious nose, with sheer delight :
 (This is a Chinese custom quite :)
 Then for the pyrotechnist calls.
 When on the ground the latter lies,
 The monarch's foot upon him falls,
 In gracious and approving wise.
 He gets, to everyone's surprise,
 A button blue of lordly size.
 To end with, salamanders fly,
 Fighting each other in the sky.
 They separate, they twine together,
 Rise, fall, and hither turn, and thither,
 Until they reach their short lives' tether,
 Then burst,—a case of wheels within wheels,—
 Into a hundred thousand pin-wheels.
 The emperor claps his hands. So ends
 His show : and ours, my little friends.





L'Envoi.

Now don't you long to go, like me,
The wonders of this land to see?
Well, on the voyage you might be drowned,
And must spend many and many a pound.
Don't go : but scan this book with care,
Each line and letter :
It's just as good as going there.
Perhaps it's better.







— R: —
— J: —
— 8 —