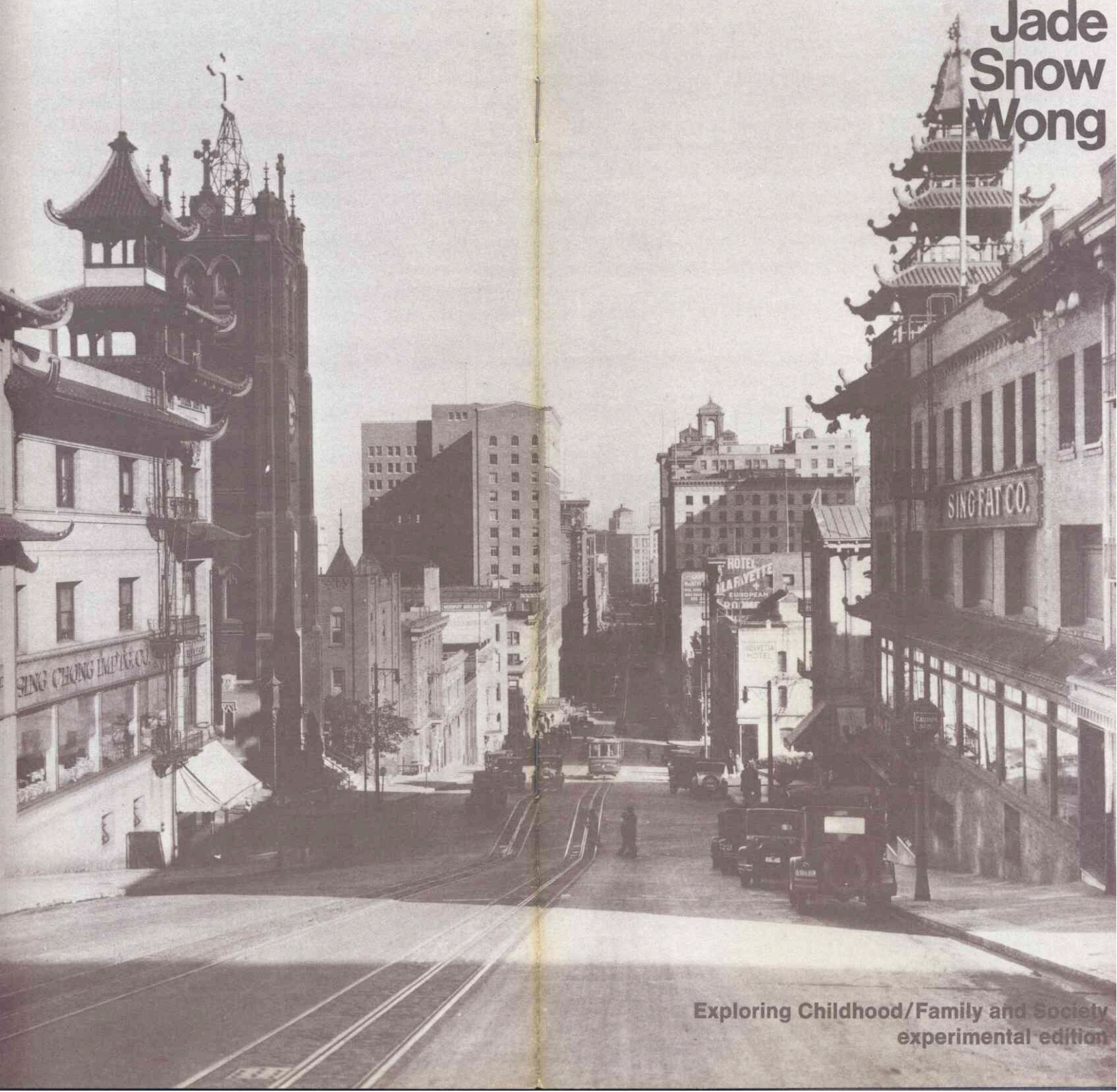


childhood  
memories  
of  
**Jade  
Snow  
Wong**



Exploring Childhood/Family and Society  
experimental edition

Each autobiography in this series presents one person's experience, lived and remembered in his or her own special way. While aspects of this person's life circumstances may be shared by others, each life is a unique combination of events, and should not be viewed as typical of any group.

Jade Snow Wong describes her early childhood in San Francisco in the 1920s.

*Jade Snow Wong's memories of growing up in San Francisco are deeply personal and full of rich details. She writes of this autobiography: "Included in this story are the significant episodes which, insofar as I can remember, shaped my life . . . . This story is written in the third person from Chinese habit . . . . In written Chinese the word "I" almost never appears, but is understood."*

*Jade Snow Wong grew up in a household where only Cantonese was spoken, bound to obey and respect her elders and her family's old world ways, even in the new world.*

## The World was New

Hugging the eastern slope of San Francisco's famous Nob Hill is one of the unique spots of this continent. A small, compact area overlooking the busy harbor at its feet, it extends only a few blocks in either direction. Above its narrow, congested streets, the chimes of beautiful Grace Cathedral ring out the quarter hours; and tourists and curio-seekers in a bare three minutes can stroll from the city's fashionable shopping district into the heart of Old China.

Chinatown in San Francisco teems with haunting memories, for it is wrapped in the atmosphere, customs, and manners of a land across the sea. The same Pacific Ocean laves the shores of both worlds, a tangible link between old and new, past and present, Orient and Occident.

To this China in the West, there came in the opening decade of this century a young Chinese with his wife and family. There they settled among the other Cantonese, and as the years slipped by, the couple established their place in the community.

I tell the story of their fifth daughter, Jade Snow, born to them in San Francisco.

Jade Snow Wong, *Fifth Chinese Daughter*. New York: Harper & Row, Publisher, 1950. Copyright 1945, 1948, 1950 by Jade Snow Wong. Reprinted by permission of the publisher.

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Until she was five years old, Jade Snow's world was almost wholly Chinese, for her world was her family, the Wongs. Life was secure but formal, sober but quietly happy, and the few problems she had were entirely concerned with what was proper or improper in the behavior of a little Chinese girl.

Even at this early age she had learned the meaning of discipline, without understanding the necessity for it. A little girl never questioned the commands of Mother and Father, unless prepared to receive painful consequences. She never addressed an older person by name—it was always Older Brother, Oldest Sister, Second Older Sister, Third Older Sister (she had died at one month without a name, but still she held a place in the family), and Fourth Older Sister. Only her mother and father, or their generation of uncles and aunts, addressed them as Blessing from Heaven, Jade Swallow, Jade Lotus, or Jade Ornament. In short, a little girl was never casual with her elders. Even in handing them something she must use both hands to signify that she paid them undivided attention.

Respect and order—these were the key words of life. It did not matter what were the thoughts of a little girl; she did not voice them. She assumed that her mother must love her, because Mother made her bright silk Chinese dresses for holiday wear, embroidered with gold threads and bright-colored beads, and washed her, and cleaned her white, buckled sandals. Father must love her, because he taught her her first lessons from Chinese books and put her high on his shoulders above the crowds so that she could watch from unobstructed heights the Lion Dances on the streets at Chinese New Year's; and sometimes he took her downtown with him on business errands to that outside foreign American world.

But in spite of her parents' love, she must

always be careful to do the proper thing. Failure to do so brought immediate and drastic punishment. Teaching and whipping were almost synonymous. Once, because in fun she had knocked Older Brother's hat off his head when she passed him on the stairs, Father whipped her with a bundle of tied cane; then he withdrew permission for her to go with Oldest Sister to visit the city zoo. Since she had never been to the zoo and had looked forward to this treat for a week, the disappointment and the shame hurt almost worse than the whipping.

Another time, when their neighbor's son spit on her as she was playing, she ran to tell Mother, who was sewing overalls in the factory which was also their home. Mother did not sympathize but reproved her, saying that she must have spit on her playmate first or he wouldn't have spit on her. She was told to bring a clothes hanger, and in front of all the other working women Mother spanked her. Again the shame was almost worse than the pain, and the pain was bad enough, for Mother usually spanked until the wooden hanger broke.

Thus, life was a constant puzzle. No one ever troubled to explain. Only through punishment did she learn that what was proper was right and what was improper was wrong.

At this time, Oldest Sister and Second Older Sister were already married, and Fourth Older Sister was living with Oldest Sister; Jade Snow scarcely knew them. At home, besides Jade Snow there were Father and Mother, Older Brother, who was about twelve, and three-year-old younger sister Jade Precious Stone.

Jade Precious Stone and Jade Snow were closest. They slept in the same room, dressed together, ate, played, cried, and got spanked together. They hardly ever disagreed. Jade Precious Stone was a delicate child, gentle

and quiet. Because she was younger, she addressed her sister as Older Sister Snow, and she was taught to respect her Fifth Older Sister's judgment on all things. That meant that Jade Snow was responsible for any trouble they got into together.

The Wongs lived at the back of their father's overall factory on Stockton between Clay and Sacramento streets. The factory-home was huge. To the right on the street floor was a room containing ten or more sewing machines of various kinds. Also on the street floor, to the left, was the office. A forty-inch-wide cutting table ran the length of the room to the kitchen and dining room at the rear. Beyond was a door leading to the bathroom, one of the few in Chinatown at that time equipped with running water. What fun the children had in that bathtub, which served also for washing the family clothes!

On the second floor were the finishing machines and more long cutting tables where women sat all day examining the finished overalls before folding and tying them into bundles of a dozen each. In front were the family sleeping rooms: one for Mother and Father, one for the two younger daughters, and another for Older Brother.

Home life and work life were therefore mixed together. In the morning, Father opened the factory doors while Mother prepared a breakfast consisting of rice, a green vegetable or soup, a meat or fish, and steamed salted dried fish from China. For the rest of the day Mother was at a machine except when she stopped to get the meals or to do other housework.

The Wong daughters and the children of the workers played hide-and-seek around the high bundles of blue denim, rode on the pushcarts used for loading overalls, climbed onto the cutting tables to talk to the women as they worked. It was the Wong girls' responsibility not to quarrel with the employees'

children, who were of guest status.

Instead of playing, Jade Snow often followed her father around as he saw to the placement and repair of the machines or the distribution of work. At first she asked questions, being curious. But her father did not like questions. He said that one was not supposed to talk when one was either eating or thinking, and when one was not eating, one should be thinking. Only when in bed did one neither eat nor think.

However, he seemed to understand a child's need to make noise. To satisfy this need constructively, he started to teach his daughter Chinese history. He would read aloud a sentence, "Wong Ti was the first king of China," and Jade Snow would repeat it after him word for word. So, while her father laid out material, or numbered and labeled the spools of thread, she would trail along near him, reciting the text over and over until she knew it without prompting.

It was not great fun to make a noise in this way, but Father said that all Chinese children in America should learn their ancestral language, and one did not dispute one's father if one were a dutiful little girl taught to act with propriety. From the first Chinese primer lessons of "Ding Dong; Ding Dong; the bell rushes me to attend school," and "Ding Dong; Ding Dong; the bell reminds me to leave school," Jade Snow was gradually advanced to "When Wellington was a boy he would not permit riders on horses to enter his father's fields of grain. . . ."

A primer lesson usually served as a text for a moral lesson too. Wellington, although a foreign Englishman, was an example of a small boy who followed absolutely the instructions of his father. He was told to guard the gate which opened into their grain fields, and he carried out the order to the point of defying a group of soldiers who wanted to take a short cut across these fields.

He stood his ground with such determination that the cavalry would have had to trample him before they could trample the grain crop. Of course Wellington won out. Thus, duty to one's father came before duty to one's army.

The children could play out-of-doors if they stayed within their own block and did not cross any streets. They wore dark-blue denim coveralls which Father's seamstresses made, with bright red belt bands and red facings on the sleeves and on the square necklines, and buttoned drop seats—a comfortable garment for climbing around. Sometimes they played in a nearby empty lot where it was interesting to explore all kinds of weeds and bugs. Only one other place in Jade Snow's early experience had any growing plants. That was the Presbyterian Home around the corner on Sacramento Street. She was told that women "in difficulties" sought refuge there, but curious stares yielded only disappointment, for the heavy red-brown brick building always stood in closed silence. Turning to go home she would pause to pick a little spray of yellow broom from its surrounding hedge and hold its delicate fragrance under her nose.

Her father and his bright red wheelbarrow provided Jade Snow with wonderful escapes to the world outside this block. While most Chinese women in San Francisco still had to conform to the Old-World custom of staying at home, her father believed that according to New-World Christian ideals women had a right to work to improve the economic status of their family. Because they couldn't come to the factory, Mr. Wong took their work to them, installed and maintained their sewing machines, taught them how to sew, and collected the finished overalls. On these trips, Jade Snow was his companion, for Younger Sister was still too small. When the wheelbarrow was loaded with materials, she had to run in quick little steps to keep up with her father's long strides, but after the wheelbarrow had delivered its burden she was

privileged to sit inside while he pushed it easily up and down, clackety-clack, over the cobblestone hills of San Francisco. Her father was so strong! Looking around at the world, Jade Snow felt a burst of pride as she saw other children's envious wonder. At such times, she was very happy to have been born her father's fifth daughter.

There were other times when he had to go downtown to see his jobber boss and took Jade Snow with him. There she saw a completely different world which filled her with shyness and wonder. Pretty, strangely dressed foreign ladies with brightly colored faces and curled hair smiled at her and tried to make her speak to them in their language. They sat behind machines that made a clattering noise as they punched out figures which were repeated several times over by means of sheets of black paper. Jade Snow was always given a piece of this magic paper to take home, and very often the jobber boss gave her a booklet of bright cloth samples and a shining new nickel besides.

The nickel was always spent immediately at the corner candy store, which offered a choice among an ice cream cone, a "popsicle," and chewy Chinese toasted dried beef. For a penny one could buy four little packs of hot red ginger or three salty preserved olives twisted in rice paper, which were imports from China.

Lacking money for treats, Jade Snow would hope that the ice delivery truck might happen to stop and the iceman drop a small piece of ice from the big leather bag on his back. If her eyes were sharp she could dart over, pick it up, run home to wash it under the faucet, and enjoy its cool smoothness, sucking it and rolling it around her mouth. But she must never take pieces from the back of the truck while the iceman was momentarily gone, as she often saw other children do. To do this would be stealing, and her father had taught her a

lesson in honesty she would never forget.

There had been an old, wrinkled, spectacled peddler, who was always a welcome visitor at the factory. Slovenly and with a white stubble which always needed shaving, he arrived carrying a big bundle whose contents varied from time to time. It might contain shoestrings, corsets, nightgowns, baby slippers, stockings, dish towels, or any number of miscellaneous things tempting to a woman.

Jade Snow had been aware of his visits ever since she could remember but had never paid much attention to his wares. Then one day the peddler's bundle revealed a riot of beautiful colors, for he was selling drapery samples. Jade Snow, hanging around her mother's skirt, gazed enraptured at the pretty posies on the chintz prints, shyly picked up a little square, and fingered it lovingly. The peddler called out, "Buy your girl a piece of material, ma'am. A penny is all I ask. I am almost giving it to her to play with, you can see. A penny, ma'am, a penny."

"Jade Snow, put that material back. Can't you see I am busy?"

Jade Snow looked wistfully at her mother, echoed her "No" by shaking her own head silently, and put the square of red and green back on the pile. Mother turned away, but the peddler followed, coaxing her to buy. Jade Snow looked at the square she had dropped. She wanted that colorful square for her very own! But she had no penny. Why couldn't she have it? She was going to have it. So she quickly leaned down, picked up the square again, hid it in her pocket, and ran off.

She found a box in a corner of the factory and sat there, looking at her piece of material, counting the number of blossoms on it, studying the colors. She twisted it, turned it around, and rubbed it against her cheek. She didn't know how long she sat there, but sud-

denly she was jolted out of her enchantment by her father's firm voice:

"So there you are hiding. Where did you get that material?"

"I found it."

"Do not lie to me. Where did you find it? Things like that do not grow around here."

"I found it from the peddler's bag!"

"You mean you stole it from the peddler's bag! For shame, that a small girl of mine should begin to steal. I must teach you a lesson you will never forget. You may begin now with a small square, but the next thing will be a whole bolt of material. Go immediately and sit on the front step of our doorway with the material held prominently in your hand, so that when the peddler returns for it, he will find you and take it back. And whatever he does for punishment, you will deserve it."

Not until then did Jade Snow realize that she had committed a sin. She soberly took the material and sat on the front step. There she sat for minutes and then for hours. She grew hot in the afternoon sun. People coming in and out of the factory would ask, "Jade Snow, what are you doing here?" And she would reply miserably, "I am waiting for a man to come back for this material which I took."

She lost her interest in the material and began to dislike it. As she grew more uncomfortable, she hated it. But still the peddler did not return. She imagined the awful things that might happen to her. Perhaps they would put her in jail! She was terrified. She wished that he would come and get it over with. The sun went down; the evening bay breezes began to chill her. She was getting hungry as well as thirsty and cold. The workers all went home. Then her father came to bolt the front door.

“Do you remember that you are never to steal or be dishonest in any way?”

Jade Snow hugged her knees and looked up at the tall figure standing over her. “Yes.”

“Very well, you may give the piece of material to me to put away until the next time the peddler visits our factory, and I shall return it to him.”

During these years, the one older person who seemed most understanding of a little girl's failure to do the proper thing was Mother's mother. Grandmother was little and stooped and always wore a loose black Chinese coat and trousers. Her hair was fastened into a knot at the back of her neck by a gold brooch set with pretty jade stones. Sometimes she tucked a narcissus or a tuberose blossom into the edges of this knot. If Grandmother happened to be visiting when Mother spanked Jade Snow, she would always snatch the child away and scold Mother instead. To Jade Snow it was remarkable that she should have such power, especially since Grandmother was frail while Mother was strong. Yet her intervention was only mildly disputed.

Sometimes, Jade Snow and her sister were privileged to visit Grandmother's home. This was one small room in an old, dark, run-down building two blocks from the Wongs. In the corner facing the door a large bed was screened off in Chinese fashion; that is, a bamboo frame had been erected four-posterwise, and draperies veiled it completely. The bed dominated the room, which also held a gas plate, a few chairs, a sewing machine, and an ancestral worship table. On the table, below the pictures or tablets bearing the names of Grandmother's forebears, were cups filled with wine, bowls of fruit and meat, and burning brown punk and red candles, arranged to feed and light their spirits, for Grandmother was not a Christian.

Whenever the sisters visited Grandmother, they knew that she would offer them a treat. On her window ledge she kept a glass jar filled with thick sweetened condensed milk. For child visitors she spread the sticky cream on thin salty soda crackers, as many as they wanted. Since their Chinese diet seldom included sweets, the children usually ate and ate. Sometimes Grandmother would offer instead dried lichees—that delicate-flavored fruit in its crisp, papery shell, which she kept in the sewing machine drawers. Or if she happened to be out of sweets, she would boil an egg for each visitor. But she always managed something.

There was one service Grandmother requested in return for all her kindnesses. She often asked Jade Snow and Jade Precious Stone to clench their fists and hammer her bent spine up and down. She said that the vibrations improved her circulation, that they were relaxing and felt good. Although the girls thought the exercise great fun, they found it hard to understand how their blows could make Grandmother feel better. They had tried the treatment on each other without experiencing any enjoyment....

## The World Grows

One day when the family was at dinner, father broke the habitual silence by announcing a new edict: “I have just learned that the American people commonly address their fathers informally as ‘Daddy’! The affectionate tone of this word pleases me. Hereafter, you children shall address me as ‘Daddy.’ ” No comment was required; the children mentally recorded this command.

When she was six, Jade Snow's world expanded beyond her family life. Daddy started her in an American public grade school. Before she left home, Daddy and Mother both

took her aside and gave her solemn instructions: "Jade Snow, at school a teacher will be in charge, who is as your mother or your father at home. She is supreme, and her position in all matters pertaining to your education is as indisputable as the decisions of your mother or father at home. Respect her accordingly."

Thus, Jade Snow accepted another authority in her life. The schoolteacher was a little Chinese lady dressed in foreign clothes. She spoke the foreign "English" language, although when necessary she could explain in Chinese to her pupils. However, she discouraged them from speaking their accustomed language.

Although Miss Chew had the authority of one's parents and occasionally scolded some pupil who overlooked this fact, she never spanked anybody! School life was comparatively simple, since for some hours each day Jade Snow became less actively concerned with what was proper or improper. In fact, she sometimes became actively concerned with what was really fun to do!

New games in the foreign language were learned—"Farmer in the Dell," "Go Walking Round the Valley," "London Bridge Is Falling Down." Instead of learning about the virtuous Wellington as a boy, Jade Snow memorized a poem about Jack and Jill who climbed a hill to get water but somehow lost it all.

Instead of opening on the left-hand side and reading from right to left in vertical rolls like Chinese books, the new books with gay, colored pictures opened on the right-hand side and were read horizontally from left to right.

One of the most memorable events occurred one afternoon when Miss Chew brought several cases of whipping cream to class.

Each pupil received a jar of cream fitted with a wooden disk on a stick. Miss Chew announced, "We are going to make butter."

Butter? Wasn't that what one bought at a store in a cube, wrapped with paper? Did one ever "make" it? Jade Snow remembered her mother's words, "Never question the actions of your teacher." So she followed instructions without asking any question.

After the cream had been churned for some time, sure enough, yellow flecks appeared, and then joined and thickened into a lump of butter! Jade Snow experienced a wonderful new feeling—the pride of personal creation. And when she smeared her own butter made with her own hands on the crackers Miss Chew provided, she thought that she had never tasted anything more delicious in all her life!

School brought new experiences with other Chinese children. During recess, Jade Snow learned to play hopscotch, and to memorize new Chinese and English rhymes which were chanted to find who should be "It" for games of hide-and-seek or tag.

To these pleasant experiences were added her first major problems with other children. There was the day, for instance, when a bigger girl hit her with her fists. In Jade Snow, pain was mingled with confusion. Girls never hit other girls. They might argue, take things away from another, but only little boys were expected to be rough enough for fist fights! At least, that was what Mother and Daddy had taught her. Nevertheless, Jade Snow's first impulse was to strike back. But she seemed to hear her mother's familiar reminder, "Even if another should strike you, you must not strike him, for then your guilt would be as great as his."

While Jade Snow controlled her fists, she burst into tears for relief and ran home.



Mama's explanation as she wiped her daughter's tears was that not all Chinese girls were brought up like herself, and some had little family training.

Attendance at an American school did not mean that Jade Snow's Chinese lessons ceased. Shortly after she had entered Miss Chew's class, Daddy told her:

"From this day until I see fit to place you in the Chinese evening school, I shall continue to give you half an hour Chinese instruction every morning before you go to the American public classes. Years ago, when your Oldest Sister Swallow was a child like you, the Chinese schools in Chinatown were not open to girls. Your sister rose daily at six in the morning, washed her face, combed her braids, and studied Chinese with me for an hour before breakfast. Now she knows enough Chinese to write a learned letter to China."

"Why were not the Chinese schools open to her?" Jade Snow asked wonderingly, as she laid out on their dining table her tablets, brush, inkpad, and first reader.

Daddy explained, "Many Chinese were very short-sighted. They felt that since their daughters would marry into a family of another name, they would not belong permanently in their own family clan. Therefore, they argued that it was not worth while to invest in their daughters' book education. But my answer was that since sons and their education are of primary importance, we must have intelligent mothers. If nobody educates his daughters, how can we have intelligent mothers for our sons? If we do not have a good family training, how can China be a strong nation?"

Daddy had forgotten his daughter and seemed to address a larger audience as he stared off into space.

"Confucius said, 'He who is filial toward

elders and fraternal toward brothers and is fond of offending his superiors is rare indeed; he who is not fond of offending his superiors and is fond of making revolutions has never been known.'

"So you see, the peace and stability of a nation depend upon the proper relationships established in the home; and to a great extent, the maintenance of proper relationships within the home depends on intelligent mothers. Now I do not want you ever to question why you should study Chinese," finished Daddy.

So they resumed their lesson. They opened the first reader, entitled *Instruction Book to Preserve the National Grammar for the Use of the First Grade*.

The first lesson taught: "One, Two, Three," but this gradually advanced to:

"Big and Little Sisters return home after school. Big Sister in her room teaches Little Sister to do women's work."

Many subjects were embraced in this primer, from lessons in nature to lessons in ethics. They varied from:

"In the little garden the flowers bloom gloriously. Butterflies come in pairs; they fly in coming and fly in going"; to the last lesson in the book, which was:

"Come, come, come. Come and read books. If you do not study your books, you will not know written words. If you do not know written words, you will have a life of sorrow."

This primer constituted only a portion of Jade Snow's lessons. For Daddy also had a book with illustrated lessons on the principles of correct calligraphy. One did not lay down just any stroke as one pleased. First, one must hold one's brush in exactly the correct position. Next, it was necessary

to proceed with each stroke in the proper order. Finally, the completed character should be correctly balanced in a square.

Daddy turned to the first page of the book, now golden brown with age. Its paper was thin, and its corners curled a little from frequent thumbing by Jade Snow's predecessors in learning. The right margin had been punched with holes about a half inch from the edge, and at two-inch intervals; the book was handbound with cord threaded through these holes. It had been printed in China with wood type, and the title was still quite legible, *The Practice of Writing Is in Fact Easy*.

The first page discussed the way to hold a brush correctly. The illustration showed that one's fingers should be curved in a continuous fluid line, with the brush held flexibly between the thumb and third finger, while the index and middle finger rested gently on it. In fact, it was much like holding a chopstick.

"When holding the brush, you must not pull your fingers tightly against your palm. Your fingers should be relaxed, curved outward with a hollow space between their graceful line and your palm," Daddy admonished.

Jade Snow corrected herself, but after a few strokes—there were her fingers, with brush clutched hard and tight against her palm again!

She swept a sidelong glance at Daddy. Without a word, he tore off a corner of the newspaper they had spread on the table under their work. He rolled up the paper into the size and shape of a walnut, stuffed the ball between his daughter's curved fingers and palm.

"Now begin again."

The newspaper ball really helped. Her fingers

just rested on it, and were blocked into the correct, curved position. Soon she was able to train her fingers to work freely, eliminating altogether the paper-ball crutch.

Daddy now introduced her to the second page, which concerned the correct procedure in forming a character. Each stroke of the one word which filled the entire page was labeled numerically to show which stroke should be brushed in first. The principle in brushing a character was that one always proceeded from top to bottom and worked from left to right.

Daddy emphasized, "Once you learn how to brush a character correctly and beautifully, it will always be yours, no matter how old you grow to be. You may not remember the pronunciation of a word, or the lines of a poem memorized, but you can never brush a character off-balance once you have learned to brush it right."

Thus, Jade Snow, with her brush held correctly, dipped its tip upon her inkpad and began the stroke to her first word, pronounced "wing," which means "forever" and looks like this:

A long time was spent on this word. It embodied the elementary stroke technique of starting her brush in a point at the tip, applying pressure for strength and stroke expansion, and then gradually decreasing the pressure toward the end of the stroke in order to end with the tip of the brush in a point again. The criteria for skilled calligraphy included not only proper placement of the strokes, but also "power," which was the soul of the character.

Jade Snow learned not only how to use her

brush; she was also taught how to care for it properly. She learned that in "opening" a stiff new brush, she should get a dish of cold water and slowly roll the point back and forth until the bird bristles fanned out freely. A brush should always be opened up to its base to get maximum action. After using ink, a brush must be rinsed gently again in water, and carefully recapped. Daddy always discarded the hollow bamboo casing, because it permitted a brush to dry hard and stiff. Instead, he used a brass casing, which would keep a brush flexible and damp until another day's brushing.

"Mama, how long do I still have to go to school?" seven-year-old Jade Snow asked one morning after summer vacation was over and she was preparing to return to the public grade school for the fall semester.

Mama was busy putting breakfast on the table. "You have just begun. After your sixth year at this school you are attending, there will be another six years at some other school farther away, where you will have to go by streetcar. After six years there, you will graduate from 'middle school.' Then some people are fortunate enough to have the opportunity to go to college, which continues for another four years."

Jade Snow started on her hot breakfast of fresh-cooked rice, boiled salt fish sprinkled with peanut oil and shredded ginger root, soup with mustard greens, and steamed preserved duck eggs with chopped pork. While she ate, she tried to digest the fact that she would have to spend practically all her life in school. Six and six and four more—a total schooling of sixteen years! She could not imagine what fourteen more years would be like.

Daddy, who concentrated on his Chinese newspapers at all meals, had the remarkable ability of knowing at the same time and in detail all that was said or done at the table. Now he looked up to add his comment:

"Some people who take up a profession study at college six or more years. But you are a girl, so you need not worry about that. It will not be necessary for you to go to college."

Jade Snow was relieved that she would only have to complete middle school.

The third grade offered her two new fields of exploration: painting and the "times tables." While Jade Snow had learned to handle the Chinese brush securely, Daddy had severely nipped her early efforts to draw pictures instead of square characters. "You can learn nothing from your own pictures," he had reprimanded. Now in the low-third grade she was encouraged to draw. She decided that the American school was going to be continuously different in more and more ways from Chinese studies and that there would be little point in wondering why. Even American brushes were different, with very long wooden handles, and short, stiff bristles. Painting was great fun, because no one told Jade Snow what to do or how to do it!

Their arithmetic lessons were on little cards neatly printed with various "times tables." Jade Snow found the figures of these cards interesting to learn and mastered all of them up to 12x12.

At the end of the semester the teacher showed Jade Snow that her report card bore the notation "Promoted from grade 3A to grade 4A." She had skipped a grade! She marched over to the new building with the 3B's and left her 3A friends behind. The teacher and her friends all seemed very much excited, and Jade Snow caught their excitement. Evidently, skipping a grade was not an ordinary accomplishment.

That afternoon, when Jade Snow returned home from school, she ran to Daddy happily and asked him to sign her report card. Daddy made his usual careful study of her grades and signed his usual painstaking signature in English.

"Daddy, did you notice that I have skipped a grade? I am going to a new building! I have been promoted two grades. Isn't it —"

Daddy quietly stopped the child's rush of excited words, "That is as it should be." That was all he said, with finality.

"Yes, Daddy," and Jade Snow suddenly lost her afternoon's excitement. She wandered off in search of Mother. Mother was putting buttons on some coveralls. She tried a new approach, "Mamma, I learned my lessons so well that I am promoted two grades, and now it will be only thirteen more years of school instead of thirteen and a half more years."

"What did your father say?" was Mother's only spoken reaction.

"He said, 'That is as it should be,' " Jade Snow replied, crushed.

"Your father was right," was all Mamma said, also with finality.

In 4A almost all the children were nearly nine years of age, while Jade Snow was barely eight. A year's difference meant that they talked about different things and acted differently. The main difference was that 4A was organized into two crowds, Mabel's and Jeanie's. Jade Snow went with Mabel's crowd. During recess they would cluster about Mabel, whispering, whispering about nothing in particular. The important thing, however, was to continue these whispers, because Jeanie's crowd always whispered around her. The very worst fate was to have your own crowd "mad" at you. Unswerving loyalty was demanded by both leaders, but one day Lily Lum in Mabel's crowd was seen on cordial terms with Jeanie herself! That would never do. Mabel singled Jade Snow out to give Lily the push which meant that they were "mad" at her. Jade Snow did not want to do this; after all, maybe their mothers were friends, or they might be neighbors, Lily

and Jeanie.

Mabel demanded the reason for Jade Snow's hesitation: "Are you afraid?"

"Oh, no . . ." How did Mama's instructions apply to this situation? "Oh, no . . . I am not afraid, but wouldn't it mean more if we all went together?"

This appealed to Mabel's imagination, and thus it was that during recess they twined their arms around each other and sailed up in a body to Lily to give her the push of defiance that would banish her from their crowd.

The introduction of a group standard which differed from her home teaching was perplexing to Jade Snow, but she concluded that it would be easier to conform to group action than to enter a one-voice argument against it....