

Appendix A: Edith Maude Eaton/ Sui Sin Far as a Professional Writer

1. From Sui Sin Far, "Leaves from the Mental Portfolio of an Eurasian," *The Independent* (1909)

[In this candid, formally innovative memoir, Eaton/Far describes her formation as a writer, a feminist, and an advocate for the overseas Chinese by foregrounding her position as an interstitial "connecting link" between cultures and races. "Leaves" conveys how much geographical and social mobility mattered to Far's intellectual development. Her travels between Chinese and Anglo-American settlements throughout Canada, the US, and Jamaica—as well as her imaginative (as well as outwardly imposed) relationship to China—enabled Far to develop cosmopolitan views about the Chinese diaspora by drawing connections between different local events. "Leaves" also shows how important sentimentalism, Christian, and Confucian discourses were to Far's sense of herself as her "unusually large" heart, her suffering under "the cross of the Eurasian," and her Confucian sincerity combined to bolster her sympathetic defense of Chinese migrants in the Americas.]

When I look back over the years I see myself, a little child of scarcely four years of age, walking in front of my nurse, in a green English lane, and listening to her tell another of her kind that my mother is Chinese. "Oh Lord!" exclaims the informed. She turns around and scans me curiously from head to foot. Then the two women whisper together. Tho the word "Chinese" conveys very little meaning to my mind, I feel that they are talking about my father and mother and my heart swells with indignation. When we reach home I rush to my mother and try to tell her what I have heard. I am a young child. I fail to make myself intelligible. My mother does not understand, and when the nurse declares to her, "Little Miss Sui is a story-teller," my mother slaps me.

Many a long year has past over my head since that day—the day on which I first learned I was something different and apart from other children, but tho my mother has forgotten it, I have not.

I see myself again, a few years older. I am playing with another child in a garden. A girl passes by outside the gate. "Mamie," she cries to my companion. "I wouldn't speak to Sui if I were you. Her mamma is Chinese."

"I don't care," answers the little one beside me. And then to me, "Even if your mamma is Chinese, I like you better than I like Annie."
"But I don't like you," I answer, turning my back on her. It is my first conscious lie.

I am at a children's party, given by the wife of an Indian officer whose children were schoolfellows of mine. I am only six years of age, but have attended a private school for over a year, and have already learned that China is a heathen country, being civilized by England. However, for the time being, I am a merry romping child. There are quite a number of grown people present. One, a white haired old man, has his attention called to me by the hostess. He adjusts his eyeglasses and surveys me critically. "Ah, indeed!" he exclaims. "Who would have thought it at first glance. Yet now I see the difference between her and other children. What a peculiar coloring! Her mother's eyes and hair and her father's features, I presume. Very interesting little creature!"

I had been called from play for the purpose of inspection. I do not return to it. For the rest of the evening I hide myself behind a hall door and refuse to show myself until it is time to go home.

My parents have come to America. We are in Hudson City, N. Y., and we are very poor. I am out with my brother, who is ten months older than myself. We pass a Chinese store, the door of which is open. "Look!" says Charlie. "Those men in there are Chinese!" Eagerly I gaze into the long low room. With the exception of my mother, who is English bred with English ways and manner of dress, I have never seen a Chinese person. The two men within the store are uncouth specimens of their race, dressed in working blouses and pantaloons with queues hanging down their backs. I recoil with a sense of shock.

"Oh, Charlie," I cry. "Are we like that?"

"Well, we're Chinese, and they're Chinese, too, so we must be!" returns my seven-year-old brother.

"Of course you are," puts in a boy who has followed us down the street, and who lives near us and has seen my mother: "Chinky, Chinky, Chinaman, yellow-face, pig-tail, rat-eater." A number of other boys and several little girls join in with him.

"Better than you," shouts my brother, facing the crowd. He is younger and smaller than any there, and I am even more insignificant than he; but my spirit revives.

"I'd rather be Chinese than anything else in the world," I scream.

They pull my hair, they tear my clothes, they scratch my face, and all but lame my brother; but the white blood in our veins fights valiantly for the Chinese half of us. When it is all over, exhausted and bedraggled, we crawl home, and report to our mother that we have "won the battle."

"Are you sure?" asks my mother doubtfully.

"Of course. They ran from us. They were frightened," returns my brother.

My mother smiles with satisfaction.

"Do you hear?" she asks my father.

"Umm," he observes, raising his eyes from his paper for an instant. My childish instinct, however, tells me that he is more interested than he appears to be.

It is tea time, but I cannot eat. Unobserved I crawl away. I do not sleep that night. I am too excited and I ache all over. Our opponents had been so very much stronger and bigger than we. Toward morning, however, I fall into a doze from which I awake myself, shouting:

"Sound the battle cry;

See the foe is nigh."¹

My mother believes in sending us to Sunday school. She has been brought up in a Presbyterian college.

The scene of my life shifts to Eastern Canada. The sleigh which has carried us from the station stops in front of a little French Canadian hotel. Immediately we are surrounded by a number of villagers, who stare curiously at my mother as my father assists her to alight from the sleigh. Their curiosity, however, is tempered with kindness, as they watch, one after another, the little black heads of my brothers and sisters and myself emerge out of the buffalo robe, which is part of the sleigh's outfit. There are six of us, four girls and two boys; the eldest, my brother, being only seven years of age. My father and mother are still in their twenties. "Les pauvres enfants,"² the inhabitants murmur, as they help to carry us into the hotel. Then in lower tones: "Chinoise, Chinoise."

For some time after our arrival, whenever we children are sent for a walk, our footsteps are dogged by a number of young French and English Canadians, who amuse themselves with speculations as to whether, we being Chinese, are susceptible to pinches and hair pulling, while older persons pause and gaze upon us, very much in the same way that I have seen people gaze upon strange animals in a menagerie. Now and then we are stopt and plied with questions as to what we eat and drink, how we go to sleep, if my mother understands what my father says to her, if we sit on chairs or squat on floors, etc., etc.

There are many pitched battles, of course, and we seldom leave the house without being armed for conflict. My mother takes a great inter-

1 First lines of a hymn by William Sherman written in 1869.

2 "The poor children" (French).

est in our battles, and usually cheers us on, tho I doubt whether she understands the depth of the troubled waters thru which her little children wade. As to my father, peace is his motto, and he deems it wisest to be blind and deaf to many things.

School days are short, but memorable. I am in the same class with my brother, my sister next to me in the class below. The little girl whose desk my sister shares shrinks close against the wall as my sister takes her place. In a little while she raises her hand.

"Please, teacher!"

"Yes, Annie."

"May I change my seat?"

"No, you may not!"

The little girl sobs. "Why should I have to sit beside a——"

Happily my sister does not seem to hear, and before long the two little girls become great friends. I have many such experiences.

My brother is remarkably bright; my sister next to me has a wonderful head for figures, and when only eight years of age helps my father with his night work accounts. My parents compare her with me. She is of sturdier build than I, and, as my father says, "Always has her wits about her." He thinks her more like my mother, who is very bright and interested in every little detail of practical life. My father tells me that I will never make half the woman that my mother is or that my sister will be. I am not as strong as my sisters, which makes me feel somewhat ashamed, for I am the eldest little girl, and more is expected of me. I have no organic disease, but the strength of my feelings seems to take from me the strength of my body. I am prostrated at times with attacks of nervous sickness. The doctor says that my heart is unusually large; but in the light of the present I know that the cross of the Eurasian bore too heavily upon my childish shoulders. I usually hide my weakness from the family until I cannot stand. I do not understand myself, and I have an idea that the others will despise me for not being as strong as they. Therefore, I like to wander away alone, either by the river or in the bush. The green fields and flowing water have a charm for me. At the age of seven, as it is today, a bird on the wing is my emblem of happiness.

I have come from a race on my mother's side which is said to be the most stolid and insensible to feeling of all races, yet I look back over the years and see myself so keenly alive to every shade of sorrow and suffering that it is almost a pain to live.

If there is any trouble in the house in the way of a difference between my father and mother, or if any child is punished, how I suffer! And when harmony is restored, heaven seems to be around me. I can be sad, but I can also be glad. My mother's screams of agony when a baby is born almost drive me wild, and long after her pangs

have subsided I feel them in my own body. Sometimes it is a week before I can get to sleep after such an experience.

A debt owing by my father fills me with shame. I feel like a criminal when I pass the creditor's door. I am only ten years old. And all the while the question of nationality perplexes my little brain. Why are we what we are? I and my brothers and sisters. Why did God make us to be hooted and stared at? Papa is English, mamma is Chinese. Why couldn't we have been either one thing or the other? Why is my mother's race despised? I look into the faces of my father and mother. Is she not every bit as dear and good as he? Why? Why? She sings us the songs she learned at her English school. She tells us tales of China. Tho a child when she left her native land she remembers it well, and I am never tired of listening to the story of how she was stolen from her home. She tells us over and over again of her meeting with my father in Shanghai and the romance of their marriage. Why? Why?

I do not confide in my father and mother. They would not understand. How could they? He is English, she is Chinese. I am different to both of them—a stranger, tho their own child. "What are we?" I ask my brother. "It doesn't matter, sissy," he responds. But it does. I love poetry, particularly heroic pieces. I also love fairy tales. Stories of everyday life do not appeal to me. I dream dreams of being great and noble; my sisters and brothers also. I glory in the idea of dying at the stake and a great genie arising from the flames and declaring to those who have scorned us: "Behold, how great and glorious and noble are the Chinese people!"

My sisters are apprenticed to a dressmaker; my brother is entered in an office. I tramp around and sell my father's pictures, also some lace which I make myself. My nationality, if I had only known it at that time, helps to make sales. The ladies who are my customers call me "The Little Chinese Lace Girl." But it is a dangerous life for a very young girl. I come near to "mysteriously disappearing" many a time. The greatest temptation was in the thought of getting far away from where I was known, to where no mocking cries of "Chinese!" "Chinese!" could reach.

Whenever I have the opportunity I steal away to the library and read every book I can find on China and the Chinese. I learn that China is the oldest civilized nation on the face of the earth and a few other things. At eighteen years of age what troubles me is not that I am what I am, but that others are ignorant of my superiority. I am small, but my feelings are big—and great is my vanity.

My sisters attend dancing classes, for which they pay their own fees. In spite of covert smiles and sneers, they are glad to meet and mingle with other young folk. They are not sensitive in the sense that I am. And yet they understand. One of them tells me that she overheard a

young man say to another that he would rather marry a pig than a girl with Chinese blood in her veins.

In course of time I too learn shorthand and take a position in an office. Like my sister, I teach myself, but, unlike my sister, I have neither the perseverance nor the ability to perfect myself. Besides, to a temperament like mine, it is torture to spend the hours in transcribing other people's thoughts. Therefore, altho I can always earn a moderately good salary, I do not distinguish myself in the business world as does she.

When I have been working for some years I open an office of my own. The local papers patronize me and give me a number of assignments, including most of the local Chinese reporting. I meet many Chinese persons, and when they get into trouble am often called upon to fight their battles in the papers. This I enjoy. My heart leaps for joy when I read one day an article signed by a New York Chinese in which he declares "The Chinese in America owe an everlasting debt of gratitude to Sui Sin Far for the bold stand she has taken in their defense."

The Chinaman who wrote the article seeks me out and calls upon me. He is a clever and witty man, a graduate of one of the American colleges and as well a Chinese scholar. I learn that he has an American wife and several children. I am very much interested in these children, and when I meet them my heart throbs in sympathetic tune with the tales they relate of their experiences as Eurasians. "Why did papa and mamma born us?" asks one. Why?

I also meet other Chinese men who compare favorably with the white men of my acquaintance in mind and heart qualities. Some of them are quite handsome. They have not as finely cut noses and as well developed chins as the white men, but they have smoother skins and their expression is more serene; their hands are better shaped and their voices softer.

Some little Chinese women whom I interview are very anxious to know whether I would marry a Chinaman. I do not answer No. They clap their hands delightedly, and assure me that the Chinese are much the finest and best of all men. They are, however, a little doubtful as to whether one could be persuaded to care for me, full-blooded Chinese people having a prejudice against the half white.

Fundamentally, I muse, people are all the same. My mother's race is as prejudiced as my father's. Only when the whole world becomes as one family will human beings be able to see clearly and hear distinctly. I believe that some day a great part of the world will be Eurasian. I cheer myself with the thought that I am but a pioneer. A pioneer should glory in suffering.

"You were walking with a Chinaman yesterday," accuses an acquaintance.

"Yes, what of it?"

"You ought not to. It isn't right."

"Not right to walk with one of my mother's people? Oh, indeed! I cannot reconcile his notion of righteousness with my own."

I am living in a little town away off on the north shore of a big lake. Next to me at the dinner table is the man for whom I work as a stenographer. There are also a couple of business men, a young girl and her mother.

Some one makes a remark about the cars full of Chinamen that past that morning. A transcontinental railway runs thru the town.

My employer shakes his rugged head. "Somehow or other," says he, "I cannot reconcile myself to the thought that the Chinese are humans like ourselves. They may have immortal souls, but their faces seem to be so utterly devoid of expression that I cannot help but doubt."

"Souls," echoes the town clerk. "Their bodies are enough for me. A Chinaman is, in my eyes, more repulsive than a nigger."

"They always give me such a creepy feeling," puts in the young girl with a laugh.

"I wouldn't have one in my house," declares my landlady.

"Now, the Japanese are different altogether. There is something bright and likeable about those men," continues Mr. K.

A miserable, cowardly feeling keeps me silent. I am in a Middle West town. If I declare what I am, every person in the place will hear about it the next day. The population is in the main made up of working folks with strong prejudices against my mother's countrymen. The prospect before me is not an enviable one—if I speak. I have no longer an ambition to die at the stake for the sake of demonstrating the greatness and nobleness of the Chinese people.

Mr. K turns to me with a kindly smile.

"What makes Miss Far so quiet?" he asks.

"I don't suppose she finds the 'washee washee men' particularly interesting subjects of conversation," volunteers the young manager of the local bank.

With a great effort I raise my eyes from my plate. "Mr. K., I say, addressing my employer, "the Chinese people may have no souls, no expression on their faces, be altogether beyond the pale of civilization, but whatever they are, I want you to understand that I am—I am a Chinese."

There is silence in the room for a few minutes. Then Mr. K. pushes back his plate and standing up beside me, says:

"I should not have spoken as I did. I know nothing whatever about the Chinese. It was pure prejudice. Forgive me!"

I admire Mr. K.'s moral courage in apologizing to me; he is a conscientious Christian man, but I do not remain much longer in the little town.

I am under a tropic sky,¹ meeting frequently and conversing with persons who are almost as high up in the world as birth, education and money can set them. The environment is peculiar, for I am also surrounded by a race of people, the reputed descendants of Ham, the son of Noah, whose offspring, it was prophesied, should be the servants of the sons of Shem and Japheth.² As I am a descendant, according to the Bible, of both Shem and Japheth, I have a perfect right to set my heel upon the Ham people; but tho I see others around me following out the Bible suggestion, it is not in my nature to be arrogant to any but those who seek to impress me with their superiority, which the poor black maid who has been assigned to me by the hotel certainly does not. My employer's wife takes me to task for this. "It is unnecessary," she says, "to thank a black person for a service."

The novelty of life in the West Indian island is not without its charm. The surroundings, people, manner of living, are so entirely different from what I have been accustomed to up North that I feel as if I were "born again." Mixing with people of fashion, and yet not of them, I am not of sufficient importance to create comment or curiosity. I am busy nearly all day and often well into the night. It is not monotonous work, but it is certainly strenuous. The planters and business men of the island take me as a matter of course and treat me with kindly courtesy. Occasionally an Englishman will warn me against the "brown boys" of the island, little dreaming that I too am of the "brown people" of the earth.

When it begins to be whispered about the place that I am not all white, some of the "sporty" people seek my acquaintance. I am small and look much younger than my years. When, however, they discover that I am a very serious and sober-minded spinster indeed, they retire quite gracefully, leaving me a few amusing reflections.

1 Edith Eaton worked as a reporter in Jamaica in 1896-97.

2 On the curse of Ham and the enslavement of his children to his brothers Shem and Japheth—an episode which supposedly provided biblical legitimacy to slavery and other forms of racism—see Genesis 9:20-27.

One evening a card is brought to my room. It bears the name of some naval officer. I go down to my visitor, thinking he is probably some one who, having been told that I am a reporter for the local paper, has brought me an item of news. I find him lounging in an easy chair on the veranda of the hotel—a big, blond, handsome fellow, several years younger than I.

"You are Lieutenant _____?" I inquire.

He bows and laughs a little. The laugh doesn't suit him somehow—and it doesn't suit me, either.

"If you have anything to tell me, please tell it quickly, because I'm very busy."

"Oh, you don't really mean that," he answers, with another silly and offensive laugh. "There's always plenty of time for good times. That's what I am here for. I saw you at the races the other day and twice at King's House.¹ My ship will be here for _____ weeks."

"Do you wish that noted?" I ask.

"Oh, no! Why—I came just because I had an idea that you might like to know me. I would like to know you. You look such a nice little body. Say, wouldn't you like to go out for a sail this lovely night? I will tell you all about the sweet little Chinese girls I met when we were at Hong Kong. They're not so shy!"

I leave Eastern Canada for the Far West, so reduced by another attack of rheumatic fever that I only weigh eighty-four pounds. I travel on an advertising contract. It is presumed by the railway company that in some way or other I will give them full value for their transportation across the continent. I have been ordered beyond the Rockies by the doctor, who declares that I will never regain my strength in the East. Nevertheless, I am but two days in San Francisco when I start out in search of work. It is the first time that I have sought work as a stranger in a strange town. Both of the other positions away from home were secured for me by home influence. I am quite surprised to find that there is no demand for my services in San Francisco and that no one is particularly interested in me. The best I can do is to accept an offer from a railway agency to typewrite their correspondence for \$5 a month. I stipulate, however, that I shall have the privilege of taking in outside work and that my hours shall be light. I am hopeful that the sale of a story or newspaper article may add to my income, and I console myself with the reflection that, considering that I still limp and bear traces of sickness, I am fortunate to secure any work at all.

1 The official residence of the Governor General of Jamaica.

The proprietor of one of the San Francisco papers, to whom I have a letter of introduction, suggests that I obtain some subscriptions from the people of Chinatown, that district of the city having never been canvassed. This suggestion I carry out with enthusiasm, tho I find that the Chinese merchants and people generally are inclined to regard me with suspicion. They have been imposed upon so many times by unscrupulous white people. Another drawback—save for a few phrases, I am unacquainted with my mother tongue. How, then, can I expect these people to accept me as their own countrywoman? The Americanized Chinamen actually laugh in my face when I tell them that I am of their race. However, they are not all "doubting Thomases."¹ Some little women discover that I have Chinese hair, color of eyes and complexion, also that I love rice and tea. This settles the matter for them—and for their husbands.

My Chinese instincts develop. I am no longer the little girl who shrunk against my brother at the first sight of a Chinaman. Many and many a time, when alone in a strange place, has the appearance of even a humble laundryman given me a sense of protection and made me feel quite at home. This fact of itself proves to me that prejudice can be eradicated by association.

I meet a half Chinese, half white girl. Her face is plastered with a thick white coat of paint and her eyelids and eyebrows are blackened so that the shape of her eyes and the whole expression of her face is changed. She was born in the East, and at the age of eighteen came West to answer an advertisement. Living for many years among the working class, she had heard little but abuse of the Chinese. It is not difficult, in a land like California, for a half Chinese, half white girl to pass as one of Spanish or Mexican origin. This the poor child does, tho she lives in nervous dread of being "discovered." She becomes engaged to a young man, but fears to tell him what she is, and only does so when compelled by a fearless American girl friend. This girl, who knows her origin, realizing that the truth sooner or later must be told, and better soon than late, advises the Eurasian to confide in the young man, assuring her that he loves her well enough not to allow her nationality to stand, a bar sinister,² between them. But the Eurasian prefers to keep her secret, and only reveals it to the man who is to be her husband when driven to bay by the American girl, who declares that if the half-breed will not tell the truth she will. When the young man hears that the girl he is engaged to has Chinese blood in her

1 In the book of John, Saint Thomas is skeptical of Jesus' resurrection and asks to touch his wounds.

2 A bar running from upper right to lower left on a coat of arms, traditionally to indicate an illegitimate birth.

veins, he exclaims: "Oh, what will my folks say?" But that is all. Love is stronger than prejudice with him, and neither he nor she deems it necessary to inform his "folks."

The Americans, having for many years manifested a much higher regard for the Japanese than for the Chinese, several half Chinese young men and women, thinking to advance themselves, both in a social and business sense, pass as Japanese. They continue to be known as Eurasians; but a Japanese Eurasian does not appear in the same light as a Chinese Eurasian. The unfortunate Chinese Eurasians! Are not those who compel them to thus cringe more to be blamed than they?

People, however, are not all alike. I meet white men, and women, too, who are proud to mate with those who have Chinese blood in their veins, and think it a great honor to be distinguished by the friendship of such. There are also Eurasians and Eurasians. I know of one who allowed herself to become engaged to a white man after refusing him nine times. She had discouraged him in every way possible, had warned him that she was half Chinese; that her people were poor, that every week or month she sent home a certain amount of her earnings, and that the man she married would have to do as much, if not more; also, most uncompromising truth of all, that she did not love him and never would. But the resolute and undaunted lover swore that it was a matter of indifference to him whether she was a Chinese or a Hottentot, that it would be his pleasure and privilege to allow her relations double what it was in her power to bestow, and as to not loving him—that did not matter at all. He loved her. So, because the young woman had a married mother and married sisters, who were always picking at her and gossiping over her independent manner of living, she finally consented to marry him, recording the agreement in her diary thus: "I have promised to become the wife of _____ on _____, 189—, because the world is so cruel and sneering to a single woman—and for no other reason."

Everything went smoothly until one day. The young man was driving a pair of beautiful horses and she was seated by his side, trying very hard to imagine herself in love with him, when a Chinese vegetable gardener's cart came rumbling along. The Chinaman was a jolly-looking individual in blue cotton blouse and pantaloons, his rakish looking hat being kept in place by a long queue which was pulled upward from his neck and wound around it. The young woman was suddenly possess with the spirit of mischief. "Look!" she cried, indicating the Chinaman, "there's my brother. Why don't you salute him?"

The man's face fell a little. He sank into a pensive mood. The wicked one by his side read him like an open book.

"When we are married," said she, "I intend to give a Chinese party every month."
No answer.

"As there are very few aristocratic Chinese in this city, I shall fill up with the laundrymen and vegetable farmers. I don't believe in being exclusive in democratic America, do you?"

He hadn't a grain of humor in his composition, but a sickly smile contorted his features as he replied:

"You shall do just as you please, my darling. But—but—consider a moment. Wouldn't it just be a little pleasanter for us if, after we are married, we allowed it to be presumed that you were—er—Japanese? So many of my friends have inquired of me if that is not your nationality. They would be so charmed to meet a little Japanese lady."

"Hadn't you better oblige them by finding one?"
"Why—er—what do you mean?"

"Nothing much in particular. Only—I am getting a little tired of this," taking off his ring.

"You don't mean what you say! Oh, put it back, dearest! You know I would not hurt your feelings for the world!"

"You haven't. I'm more than pleased. But I do mean what I say." That evening, the "ungrateful" Chinese Eurasian diaried, among other things, the following:

"Joy, oh, joy! I'm free once more. Never again shall I be untrue to my own heart. Never again will I allow any one to 'hound' or 'sneer' me into matrimony."

I secure transportation to many California points. I meet some literary people, chief among whom is the editor of the magazine who took my first Chinese stories.¹ He and his wife give me a warm welcome to their ranch. They are broadminded people, whose interest in me is sincere and intelligent, not affected and vulgar. I also meet some funny people who advise me to "trade" upon my nationality. They tell me that if I wish to succeed in literature in America I should dress in Chinese costume, carry a fan in my hand, wear a pair of scarlet beaded slippers, live in New York, and come of high birth. Instead of making myself familiar with the Chinese-Americans around me, I should discourse on my spirit acquaintance with Chinese ancestors and quote in between the "Good mornings" and "How d'ye dos" of editors.

1 Charles Fletcher Lummis (1859-1928) was editor of the Southwestern regional magazine, *Land of Sunshine* (renamed *Out West* in 1901), in which Eaton/Sui Sin Far published numerous stories.

"Confucius, Confucius, how great is Confucius, Before Confucius, there never was Confucius, After Confucius, there never came Confucius,"¹ etc., etc., etc.,

or something like that, both illuminating and obscuring, don't you know. They forget, or perhaps they are not aware that the old Chinese sage taught "The way of sincerity is the way of heaven."²

My experiences as an Eurasian never cease; but people are not now as prejudiced as they have been. In the West, too, my friends are more advanced in all lines of thought than those whom I know in Eastern Canada—more genuine, more sincere, with less of the form of religion, but more of its spirit.

So I roam backward and forward across the continent. When I am East, my heart is West. When I am West, my heart is East. Before long I hope to be in China. As my life began in my father's country it may end in my mother's.

After all I have no nationality and am not anxious to claim any. Individuality is more than nationality. "You are you and I am I,"³ says Confucius. I give my right hand to the Occidentals and my left to the Orientals, hoping that between them they will not utterly destroy the insignificant "connecting link." And that's all.

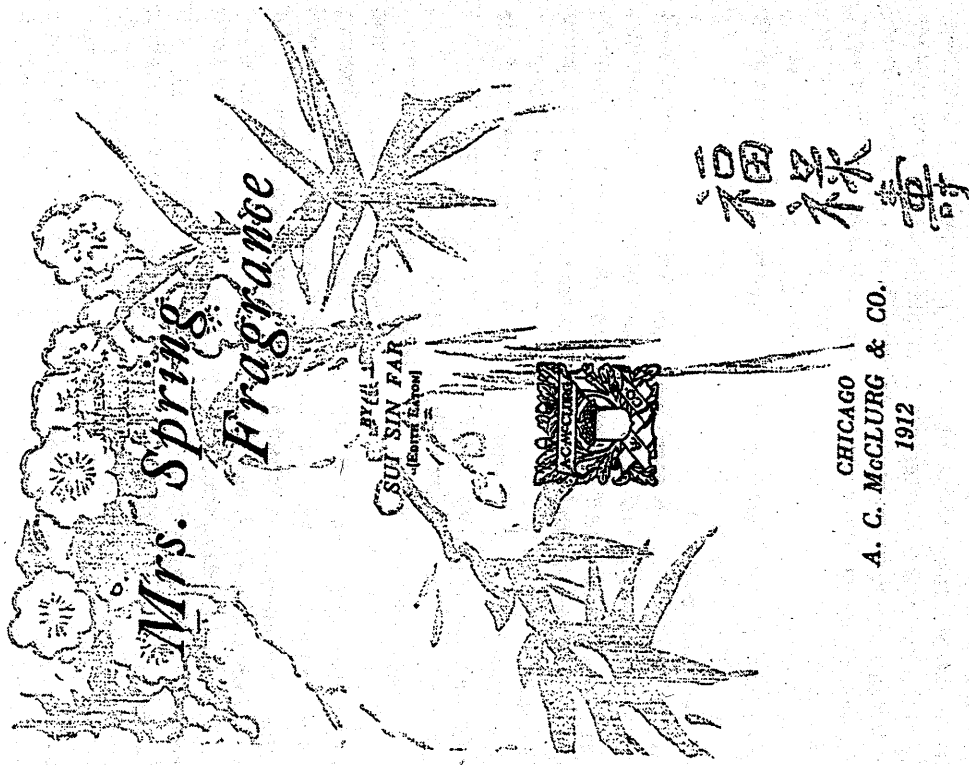
2. From Sui Sin Far, *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg & Co., 1912), 1

[The title page of the first edition of *Mrs. Spring Fragrance* shows how important the exotic "oriental" décor was to the book's design: every recto page is imprinted with images of flowers, birds, and the Chinese characters "Fu Lu Shou" (Good Fortune, Prosperity, Longevity). Despite the book's frequent Christian overtones, its publisher has managed to incorporate a reference to three Chinese deities (and common household "idols") into half of its pages. The inclusion of both "Sui Sin Far" and "[Edith Eaton]" on the title page reveals the artifice behind the author's Chinese pen name.]

1 A popular paean commemorating the ancient Chinese philosopher.

2 *The Doctrine of the Mean*, in *The Chinese Classics*, trans. James Legge, I.83.

3 *The Works of Mencius*, in *The Chinese Classics*, trans. James Legge, II.137.



3. From "The Chinese in America," *Westerner* (May 1909)

[When juxtaposed with Mrs. Spring Fragrance's desire to write a book about Americans in "The Inferior Woman," this vignette shows that Sui Sin Far recognized the limitations of sentimental fiction—which above all had to be "amusing." Here, Far suggests that the intimate proximity to Americans enjoyed by Chinese house servants and students could lead to "instructive" critical insights into American character. Instead of serving as an informant about exotic aspects of

Chinese culture, the Chinese writer in this passage reverses the ethnographic gaze and also improves it by participating actively in American society.]

A Chinese Book on Americans

"I think," said Go Ek Ju, "that when I return to China I will write a book about the American people."

"What put such an idea into your head?" I asked.

"The number of books about the Chinese by Americans," answered Go Ek Ju. "I see them in the library; they are very amusing."

"See, then, that when you write your book, it is likewise amusing."

"No," said Go Ek Ju. "My aim, when I write a book about Americans will be to make it not amusing, but interesting and instructive. The poor Americans have to content themselves with writing for amusement only because they have no means of obtaining any true knowledge of the Chinese when in China; but we Chinese in America have fine facilities for learning all about the Americans. We go into the American houses as servants; we enter the American schools and colleges as students; we ask questions and we think about what we hear and see. Where is there the American who will go to China and enter into the service of a Chinese family as a domestic? We have yet to hear about a band of American youths, both male and female, being admitted as students into a Chinese university."

4. From "Literary Notes," *The Independent* (15 August 1912), 388

[The following notices and reviews show how Mrs. Spring Fragrance was initially received by critics, and presumably by many of its readers.]

Our readers are well acquainted with the dainty stories of Chinese life written by Sui Sin Far (Miss Edith Eaton) and will be glad to know that those published in THE INDEPENDENT as well as in other periodicals have been brought together in a volume entitled Mrs. Spring Fragrance (McClurg: \$1.40). The conflict between occidental and oriental ideas and the hardships of the American immigration laws furnish the theme for most of the tales and the reader is not only interested but has his mind widened by becoming acquainted with novel points of view.

5. Review in *Journal of Education* (31 October 1912), 468

A most delightful group of stories pertaining to the Chinese of the Pacific coast by an author who knows them intimately and writes of them appreciatively. These stories have appeared beforehand in many of our best magazines, both eastern and western, and are now presented in book form by permission of the publishers. It is a revelation to read this book. It is such an easy, almost popular thing to present the Chinaman as the "Heathen Chinese"¹ that it is gratifying to be credibly informed of quite different and most commendable features of the Chinese character by one who knows them like a book. The first story ("Mrs. Spring Fragrance") is but the initiative to the thirty-six others that follow it. It is a charming bit of composition, but no better than any of its successors. Nearly one-half the stories are juvenile, being stories commonly narrated to Chinese children. They are worthy of a recital in any nursery. Evidently "Sui Sin Far" knows the ins and outs of Chinatown in San Francisco as few know it, and she helps us to know it. The book is an elegant bit of printing also, a feature being a pictorial waterlining of every page throughout. It is unique both in text and typography.

6. "A New Note in Fiction," *New York Times* (7 July 1912), BR405

[This review from the *New York Times* clearly identifies *Mrs. Spring Fragrance's* primary themes: intermarriage, the mixing of populations and races, and the importance (as well as the "well-nigh superhuman" difficulty) of understanding "feelings [and] sentiments" across racial lines.]

MRS. SPRING FRAGRANCE. By Sui Sin Far (Edith Eaton). A. C. McClurg & Co. \$1.40.

Miss Eaton has struck a new note in American fiction. She has not struck it very surely, or with surpassing skill. But it has taken courage to strike it at all, and, to some extent, she atones for lack of artistic skill with the unusual knowledge she undoubtedly has of her theme. The thing she has tried to do is to portray for readers of the white race the lives, feelings, sentiments of the Americanized Chinese of the Pacific Coast, of those who have intermarried with them and of the children who have sprung from such unions. It is a task whose adequate doing

¹ See Appendix B1.

would require well-nigh superhuman insight and the subtlest of methods. In some of the stories she seems not even to have tried to see inside the souls of her people, but has contented herself with the merest sketching of externals. In others, again, she has seen far and deep, and has made her account keenly interesting. Especially is this true of the analysis she makes occasionally of the character of an Americanized Chinese, of the glimpses she gives into the lives, thoughts and emotions of the Chinese women who refuse to be anything but intensely Chinese, and into the characters of the half-breed children. Particularly interesting are two stories in which an American woman is made to contrast her experiences as the wife of an American and afterward of a Chinese.

7. From Frederick Burrows, "The Uncommercial Club," *New England Magazine* (1912), 193-94

Under the daintily poetic title of "Mrs. Spring Fragrance," the McClurg Co. are bringing out a book of Chinese-American stories by Sui Sin Far (Edith Eaton). The author knows her field with a fullness and accuracy, that tells in the minutest turns of phraseology, as well as in formal statements and descriptions. With the aid of this knowledge, and unflinching sympathy and considerable literary tact, she carries us nearer to the human heart of Chinese-American life than many of us have ever been before. As an introduction to a little-understood human group the book is as important a contribution to the brotherhood of the race as Zangwill's "Children of the Ghetto." Miss Eaton is gifted with a fine sense of humor that is as dainty and delicate as the grotesqueries of a Chinese fan. There is but small hint of a possible dark and tragic side of the story, and it is well that it is so. That phase has been overdone in many a lurid under-world tale. In Miss Eaton's book our Chinese friends have a quaint wisdom, mingled with childish simplicity and childish cunning, boundless good-nature and a prevailing right intention, that is all as human as possible.

Such a book justifies the printing press, because it brings us all nearer together. The volume is charmingly made, bound in red, the Chinese good-luck color, and printed on paper having a Chinese bamboo design under the type,—a beautiful ornament for a boudoir or library table. While this is the author's first published volume, her stories are familiar to the readers of the best magazine literature, who will welcome their collection in this permanent form. By all means make the acquaintance of her Chinese-American daintiness, "Mrs. Spring Fragrance" and with the very substantial virtues of her worthy husband.

8. Review in *The American Antiquarian and Oriental Journal*
(July-September 1913), 181

[This positive review takes Sui Sin Far's novel subject matter as a point of departure for the anonymous reviewer's own theories about the inhabitants of Chinatown, the difficulty of "becom[ing] American in impulse and thought," and the disadvantageous situation of the "half-breed."]

The stories brought together in this little book have appeared in a wide range of American magazines and periodicals. They are something quite new in our literature and are intensely interesting. They are pictures of life in Chinatown—the Chinatown of San Francisco and Los Angeles and Seattle. True to life, they give an insight into the thought and feeling of the Chinese who are with us, but not of us. To what extent the stories are accounts of actual experiences we cannot say, but they are so true and so natural that they might easily be based on fact. Whether so or not, they are written by a woman who knows Chinese character intimately and appreciates the romance and tragedy of Chinatown. The Chinese who live there are in our country for a definite purpose, the accomplishment of which may be worth while, but often involves enormous humiliation and sacrifice. They are members of a proud and high-strung people, and for many of them every day and hour of their stay in this boasted land of freedom is suffering and chafing. The non-Chinese inhabitants of Chinatown are unfortunates, deprived, outcasts, and leeches, who prey upon the Chinese and take advantage of their ignorance and needs. Few of the Chinese ever become American in impulse and thought, though they may gain temporary advantage by subjecting themselves to American influences and adopting, at least in appearance, American ways. Those most Americanized, however, must now and again feel the pull of the old life, the force of old customs, the power of the old belief, and when they do the struggle is a fierce one. The half-breed American-Chinese, born in Chinatown, is an unfortunate and anomalous being, at disadvantage all along the line, heavily handicapped for life, unless he remains in Chinatown or seeks refuge in China. It is stories of these people—Chinese, outcast, and mongrel—which our author presents us. Her book is divided into two parts—Mrs. Spring Fragrance (stories for adults) and Tales of Chinese Children (juvenile stories). It surely would have been better to have divided them into two books making different appeal, but all the stories are charmingly told, with taste, fancy and sympathy. The book deserves a wide reading. It is fresh and new, different from anything else, and is pervaded by a fine spirit. It should do much to arouse sympathy through a better understanding.

Appendix B: Chinese Exclusion

1. Bret Harte, "Plain Language from Truthful James,"
The Overland Monthly Magazine (September 1870)

[A parody of Algernon Swinburne's *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865), Harte's poem was intended to satirize the anti-Chinese prejudices of Irish immigrant laborers. However, advocates for Chinese exclusion enthusiastically used this poem's description of the "heathen Chinese" to propagate anti-Chinese sentiments. When this poem became a popular and widely quoted depiction of the inscrutable character of the Chinese, Harte expressed regret that he had written it at all.]

(Table Mountain, 1870)

Which I wish to remark,
And my language is plain,
That for ways that are dark
And for tricks that are vain,
The heathen Chinese is peculiar,
Which the same I would rise to explain.

Ah Sin was his name;
And I shall not deny,
In regard to the same,
What that name might imply;
But his smile it was pensive and childlike,
As I frequent remarked to Bill Nye.

It was August the third,
And quite soft was the skies;
Which it might be inferred
That Ah Sin was likewise;
Yet he played it that day upon William
And me in a way I despise.

Which we had a small game,
And Ah Sin took a hand:
It was Euchre. The same

1. A trick-taking card game usually played with four players grouped into two pairs.