

## Joe Moy

( - 14 Jan 1910)

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*The Evening Star, January 16, 1910*

### **With Oriental Rites**

#### **Funeral of Moy Joe to be Held Tomorrow**

#### **Chinese Symbols to Decorate the Coffin and Feast Will be Ready at the Grave**

With every touch of the orient which can possibly be added to a Washington funeral train, the body of Moy Joe will be taken to Congressional cemetery tomorrow afternoon. All the relatives and friends of Moy Joe--and there are a great many of them--will follow the hearse. Moy Joe's body will rest in a coffin decorated with Chinese symbols wrought of paper flowers and odd-looking inscriptions on odd paper of far eastern make.

One of Moy Joe's countrymen will ride upon the hearse and will make a startling figure as he scatters imitation money to the four winds of heaven. He will be "buying off" the evil spirits, who might otherwise interfere with the passage of Moy Joe's spirit to its rightful resting place.

At the grave a grand feast will be found waiting for the spirit before it takes its journey across the mystic chasm. There will be roast duck, roast chicken, sweetmeats, rice and tea, and there will also be a fire built somewhere near the grave. The last is one of the Chinese customs used at all funerals.

Moy Joe was at one time a laundryman, but he made enough money to sell out and retire to the Chinese quarter. He developed tuberculosis and, learning the probably outcome of it, he devoted his time to every effort possible at prolonging his life.

He died Thursday at Sibley Hospital.

*The Evening Star, January 18, 1910, p. 10*

### **Curious Mixture of Christian and Pagan Customs**

#### **Chinese Stand Aloof**

#### **Sweetmeats, Tea and Rice Wine Sent to the Grave**

#### **An Old Friend's Tribute**

#### **Hymns Sung by Teachers From the First Baptist Church--Dr. McMasters Reads Service**

Moy Joe, who was born in Canton, China, about forty years ago, was buried in Congressional cemetery yesterday, with half the circumference of the world between him and the men and women who knew him before he came to America.

It is not often that a Chinaman dies and is buried here in Washington, and the people who pushed their way into the chapel of the undertaking firm at 325 Pennsylvania avenue yesterday afternoon were mainly of the curiosity seeking sort. There were many women, a very few Chinamen, and a scattering of the men that you can find around the city doing nothing at all but looking for a chance to pass the time away pleasantly.

There was not the air of a funeral. There was a buzz of conversation, and occasionally one of the Chinamen would get up and walk up or down the aisle. Moy Joe lay in a coffin of American make. There was nothing Chinese or oriental about it, with the single exception of a certain bunch of white roses. A shrinking, tiny Chinaman, hatless and embarrassed, pattered quickly up the middle aisle of the chapel just before a quartet from the First Baptist Church began to sing. The little Chinaman had a bunch of white roses in his hand, and attached to them was a rough bit of paper daubed with odd-looking Chinese characters.

The man shyly placed them on the coffin, and then taking a hasty look at the face of Moy Joe, glanced around with a scared face and actually ran away from the place. A moment later he was in the midst of the clerks of a Chinese merchant near the chapel. He was Moy Joe's best friend.

#### *Mixtures of Christian and Pagan*

It was an odd funeral service. A more curious mixture of Christian and pagan things is rarely seen, and yet to a person not seeking for the odd things it seemed perhaps like a very poor, dull affair--this burial of an unknown Chinaman. First there were Sunday school teachers from the First Baptist Church who have worked many years among the Chinese men and boys of the quarter here. And Moy Joe's own teacher was there, with a wreath of roses to lay upon the coffin, and later to be placed upon the grave.

A quartet of these teachers sang some of the hymns of the church before Rev. Dr. McMasters appeared. While they were singing, the unbelieving Chinamen from the tea stores and merchandise companies along the block ran in and out whispering to one another and paying no attention at all, as far as outward appearance go, the body of Moy Joe.

The minister came, book in hand, and started the set form of the burial service. He had known Moy Joe, for the man had fluttered back and forth, hesitating between his own gods and Dr. McMasters' God for many months before he finally decided to shave off his queue and become Christian. So he could speak about Moy Joe with some feeling—and he did.

#### *Old Chinamen Amused*

Then three boys--Moy's own countrymen--sang a hymn. A gray queued Chinaman, leaning against the back of the chapel, laughed and said something aloud to another old Chinaman half way up the aisle, who turned and grinned. They took no interest--they were Moy Joe's friends, and had known him in Canton--but Moy Joe had turned Christian and had broken away from everything that had held him a friend to them.

And then Yee Li, a very small China boy stood up and read something from a book. He, too, spoke his own tongue. He stood very near the open coffin, and now and again looked into it. The half dozen Chinamen from the Sunday school, who had come with American clothes, paid strict attention to him. The older men, those who have not yet broken away from the religion of their fathers, listened to him with apparent unconcern.

A young man standing up near the back of the chapel asked a gray old Chinaman what the boy read:

"Him crazy," said the old man.

"What is he reading," asked the young man of another Chinaman.

For an answer he got a shrug.

#### *She Knew*

A woman who had been shifting noisily about, craning her neck to see what was going on said she knew what the boy was reading:

"He's reciting a Buddhist prayer," she volunteered in a loud whisper.

"Ain't it a shame?" replied a companion who had just dropped in out of sheer curiosity.

"Sly things," murmured the other one.

"The Buddhist prayer" that Yee Li was reading slowly and with all the feeling at his command was the Twenty-third Psalm.

Six Chinamen carried the coffin from the chapel to the street. On the sidewalk another curious crowd stood. Some of Moy Joe's native friends crowded into the three carriages provided and the little procession started toward the cemetery.

*An Old Friend's Tribute*

As the drivers clucked to their horses one of the gray-queued Chinamen who had known Moy Joe before he had become a Christian ran out to the curb with a bundle in his arms. The hearse stopped. The old man who had smiled at the Christian prayer and had paid no attention to the service or the flowers handed up to the driver a basket in which were tea and rice, a bottle of Canton rice wine of a kind so rare that it is scarcely ever seen in America, and sweet meats.

This was the old man's tribute. It was like the things they had put on the grave of Moy Joe's father and his mother and their parents and grandparents in China for countless generations back. The old man did not understand the flowers--nor the Twenty-third Psalm--but he knew the ways of his kind, and when they put those few sweet meats of his on the grave it expressed exactly as much as it does when someone else puts thousands of American Beauties at the door of some tomb.