

The Tale of Mulan, the Maiden Chief

Translated by Eva March Tappan

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"Say, maiden at your spinning wheel,
Why heave that deep-drawn sigh?

Is't fear, perchance, or love you feel?

Pray tell—oh, tell me why!"

"Nor fear nor love has moved my soul—
Away such idle thought!

A warrior's glory is the goal
By my ambition sought.

"My father's cherished life to save,
My country to redeem,
The dangers of the field I'll brave:
I am not what I seem.

"No son has he his troop to lead,
No brother dear have I;
So I must mount my father's steed,
And to the battle hie."

At dawn of day she quits her door,
At evening rests her head
Where loud the mountain torrents roar
And mail-clad soldiers tread.

The northern plains are gained at last,
The mountains sink from view;
The sun shines cold, and the wintry blast
It pierces through and through.

A thousand foes around her fall,
And red blood stains the ground;
But Mulan, who survives it all,
Returns with glory crowned.

Before the throne they bend the knee
In the palace of Chang'an,
Full many a knight of high degree,
But the bravest is Mulan.

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"Nay, prince," she cries, "my duty's done,
No guerdon I desire;
But let me to my home begone,
To cheer my aged sire."

She nears the door of her father's home,
A chief with trumpet's blare;
But when she doffs her waving plume,
She stands a maiden fair.

The End