

'Them as put me here 'all 'ave to git me out, but they'll 'ave to pay for it fust,' he said. Only that, and nothing more. It was a good formula, and James stuck to it.

'James Barner,' said Josiah, when he came down and was taken to visit his old servitor, 'it's very sad to see you here. I never would have thought it of you.'

'Nor I'd never 'ave thought it of you, yer old spectacled baby,' said James, eyeing his benefactor with a look of contempt. 'Why, you ain't fit to be trusted out without a nuss. Instead of 'avin a cab yer ought to 'ave a prambulator. I never seed a man of your age more like a baby, and a nice mess ye'r in now. To go for to put a hinncent bloke into prison as if yer was the Bay o' Naples, and could do wot yer liked! Tell yer wot, Mr. Smith; it 'll cost you a hundred pun afore you see the end o' this.'

Josiah was very much shocked at the altered tone of James Barner, and began seriously to think that he had been deceived in him. It was evidently no use arguing with him in his present mood. Josiah was inclined to follow his usual impulse, and hand out the supplement to the fare demanded. But a hundred pounds was a good deal, in addition to the hundred pounds originally invested in his now dispersed stud. Mr. Aminadab J. P. Doveton, who felt that his young man had been too sharp, undertook to see what could be done. He had an interview with James, and in the end succeeded in inducing him to accept fifty pounds, and be good enough to leave the prison and go his way. This James did, permitting himself the additional luxury of not paying Mr. Chewton.

Josiah returned to England much depressed by the evidence of the depravity of human nature as illustrated in the case of James Barner. Suspicion once aroused, doubt darkened over many episodes of his connection with the cabman. He began to believe that Bill Muggins was an entirely imaginary person, and that no transaction such as that described by James Barner had ever taken place. He was also convinced that it was not four miles from King Street, St. James's, to Victoria station. But there was one reflection really too horrible, against which he stubbornly closed his mind. Still, he could not help sometimes remembering that, a day or two after he had made the acquaintance of James Barner under such promising circumstances, he had got into serious trouble through tendering a bad sovereign in payment of some wares. He had taken the coin from his purse, and he did not like to think how it might have got there.

HENRY W. LUCY.

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Mr. Chung.

The first time I ever met poor Chung was at one of Mrs. Bouverie Barton's Thursday evening receptions in Eaton Place. Of course you know Mrs. Bouverie Barton, the cleverest literary hostess at this moment living in London. Herself a well-known novelist, she collects around her all the people worth knowing, at her delightful At Homes; and whenever you go there you are sure to meet somebody whose acquaintance is a treasure and an acquisition for your whole after life. Ah, yes, an admirable woman, Mrs. Bouverie Barton!

Well, it so happened on one of those enjoyable Thursday evenings that I was sitting on the circular ottoman in the little back room with Miss Amelia Hogg, the famous woman's-rights advocate. Now, if there is a subject on earth which infinitely bores me, that subject is woman's rights; and if there is a person on earth who can make it absolutely unendurable, that person is Miss Amelia Hogg. So I let her speak on placidly in her own interminable manner about the fortunes of the Bill—she always talks as though her own pet Bill were the only Bill now existing on this sublimar planet—and while I interposed an occasional 'Indeed' or 'Quite so' for form's sake, I gave myself up in reality to digesting the conversation of two intelligent people who sat back to back with us on the other side of the round ottoman.

'Yes,' said one of the speakers, in a peculiarly soft silvery voice which contrasted oddly with Miss Hogg's querulous treble, 'his loss is a very severe one to contemporary philosophy. His book on the "Physiology of Perception" is one of the most masterly pieces of analytic work I have ever met with in the whole course of my psychological reading. It was to me, I confess, who approached it fresh from the school of Schelling and Hegel, a perfect revelation of *à posteriori* thinking. I shall never cease to regret that he did not live long enough to complete the second volume.'

Just at this point Miss Hogg had come to a pause in her explanation of the seventy-first clause of the Bill, and I stole a look round the corner to see who my philosophic neighbour might happen to be. An Oxford don, no doubt, I said to myself, or a young Cambridge professor, freshly crammed to the throat with all the learning of the Moral Science Tripos.

Imagine my surprise when, on glancing casually at the silvery-voiced speaker, I discovered him to be a full-blown Chinaman! Yes, a yellow-skinned, almond-eyed, Mongolian-featured Chinaman, with a long pigtail hanging down his back, and attired in the official amber silk robe and purple slippers of a mandarin of the third grade, and the silver button. My curiosity was so fully aroused by this strange discovery that I determined to learn something more about so curious a product of an alien civilisation; and therefore, after a few minutes, I managed to give Miss Amelia Hogg the slip by drawing in young Harry Farquhar the artist at the hundred-and-twentieth section, and making my way quietly across the room to Mrs. Bouverie Barton.

'The name of that young Chinaman?' our hostess said in answer to my question. 'Oh, certainly; he is Mr. Chung, of the Chinese Legation. A most intelligent and well-educated young man, with a great deal of taste for European literature. Introduce you?—of course, this minute.' And she led the way back to where my Oriental phenomenon was still sitting, deep as ever in philosophical problems with Professor Woodstock, a spectacled old gentleman of German aspect, who was evidently pumping him thoroughly with a view to the materials for Volume Forty of his forthcoming great work on 'Ethical Psychology.'

I sat by Mr. Chung for the greater part of what was left of that evening. From the very first he exercised a sort of indescribable fascination over me. His English had hardly a trace of foreign accent, and his voice was one of the sweetest and most exquisitely modulated that I have ever heard. When he looked at you, his deep calm eyes bespoke at once the very essence of transparent sincerity. Before the evening was over, he had told me the whole history of his education and his past life. The son of a well-to-do Peking mandarin, of distinctly European tastes, he had early passed all his examinations in China, and had been selected by the Celestial Government as one of the first batch of students sent to Europe to acquire the tongues and sciences of the Western barbarians. Chung's billet was to England; and here, or in France, he had lived with a few intervals ever since he first came to man's estate. He had picked up our language quickly; had taken a degree at London University; and had made himself thoroughly at home in English literature. In fact, he was practically an Englishman in everything but face and clothing. His naturally fine intellect had assimilated European thought and European feeling with extraordinary ease, and it was often almost impossible in talking with him to remember that he was not one of ourselves. If you shut your eyes and listened, you heard a

pleasant, cultivated, intelligent young Englishman; when you opened them again, it was always a fresh surprise to find yourself conversing with a genuine yellow-faced pig-tailed Chinaman, in the full costume of the peacock's feather.

'You could never go back to live in China?' I said to him inquiringly after a time. 'You could never endure life among your own people after so long a residence in civilised Europe?'

'My dear sir,' he answered with a slight shudder of horror, 'you do not reflect what my position actually is. My Government may recall me any day. I am simply at their mercy, and I must do as I am bidden.'

'But you would not like China,' I put in.

'Like it!' he exclaimed with a gesture which for a Chinaman I suppose one must call violent. 'I should abhor it. It would be a living death. You who have never been in China can have no idea of what an awful misfortune it would be for a man who has acquired civilised habits and modes of thought to live among such a set of more than mediæval barbarians as my countrymen still remain at the present day. Oh no; God grant I may never have to return there permanently, for it would be more than I could endure. Even a short visit to Peking is bad enough; the place reeks of cruelty, jobbery, and superstition from end to end; and I always breathe more freely when I have once more got back on to the deck of a European steamer that flies the familiar British flag.'

'Then, you are not patriotic,' I ventured to say.

'Patriotic!' he replied with a slight curl of the lip; 'how can a man be patriotic to such a mass of corruption and abomination as our Chinese Government? I can understand a patriotic Russian, a patriotic Egyptian, nay, even a patriotic Turk; but a patriotic Chinaman—why, the very notion is palpably absurd. Listen, my dear sir; you ask me if I could live in China. No, I couldn't; and for the best of all possible reasons, they wouldn't let me. You don't know what the furious prejudice and blind superstition of that awful country really is. Before I had been there three months they would accuse me either of foreign practices or, what comes to much the same thing, of witchcraft; and they would put me to death by one of their most horrible torturing punishments—atrocities which I could not even mention in an English drawing-room. That is the sort of Damocles' sword that is always hanging over the head of every Europeanised Chinaman who returns against his own free will to his native land.'

I was startled and surprised. It seemed so natural and simple to be talking under Mrs. Bouverie Barton's big chandelier with this interesting young man, and yet so impossible for a moment to

connect him in thought with all the terrible things that one had read in books about the prisons and penal laws of China. That a graduate of London University, a philosopher learned in all the political wisdom of Ricardo, Mill, and Herbert Spencer, should really be subject to that barbaric code of abominable tortures, was more than one could positively realise. I hesitated a moment, and then I said, 'But of course they will never recall you.'

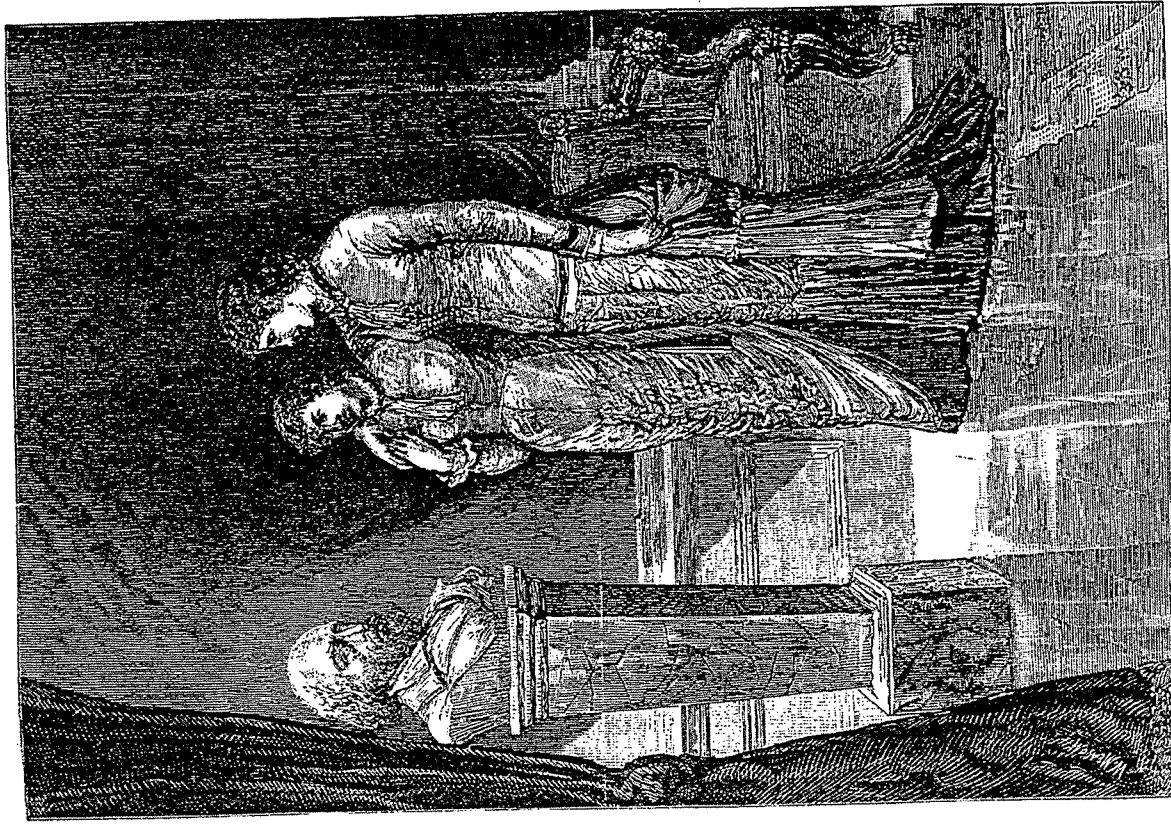
'I trust not,' he said quietly; 'I pray not. Very likely they will let me stop here all my lifetime. I am an assistant interpreter to the Embassy, in which capacity I am useful to Pekin; whereas in any home appointment I would of course be an utter failure, a manifest impossibility. But there is really no accounting for the wild vagaries and caprices of the Vermilion Pencil. For aught I know to the contrary, I might even be recalled to-morrow. If once they suspect a man of European sympathies, their first idea is to cut off his head. They regard it as you would regard the first plague-spot of cholera or small-pox in a great city.'

'Heaven forbid that they should ever recall you,' I said earnestly; for already I had taken a strong fancy to this strange phenomenon of Western education grafted on an immemorial Eastern stock; and I had read enough of China to know that what he said about his probable fate if he returned there permanently was nothing more than the literal truth. The bare idea of such a catastrophe was too horrible to be realised for a moment in Eaton Place.

As we drove home in our little one-horse brougham that evening, my wife and Effie were very anxious to learn what manner of man my Chinese acquaintance might really be; and when I told them what a charming person I had found him, they were both inclined rather to laugh at me for my enthusiastic description. Effie, in particular, jeered much at the notion of an intelligent and earnest-minded Chinaman. 'You know, Uncle darling,' she said in her bewitching way, 'all your geese are always swans. Every woman you meet is absolutely beautiful, and every man is perfectly delightful—till Auntie and I have seen them.'

'Perfectly true, Effie,' I answered; 'it is an amiable weakness of mine, after all.'

However, before the week was out Effie and Marian between them would have it that I must call upon Chung and ask him to dine with us at Kensington Park Terrace. Their curiosity was piqued, for one thing; and for another thing, they thought it rather the cheese in these days of expansive cosmopolitanism to be on speaking terms with a Chinese attaché. 'Japanese are cheap,' said Effie, 'horribly cheap of late years—a perfect drug



Marian and Effie.

in the market; but a Chinaman is still, thank Heaven, at a social premium.' Now, though I am an obedient enough husband, as husbands go, I don't always accede to Marian's wishes in these matters; but everybody takes it for granted that Effie's will is law. Effie, I may mention parenthetically, is more than a daughter to us, for she is poor Tom's only child; and of course everybody connected with dear Tom is doubly precious to us now, as you may easily imagine. So when Effie had made up her mind that Chung was to dine with us, the thing was settled; and I called at his rooms and duly invited him, to the general satisfaction of everybody concerned.

The dinner was a very pleasant one, and, for a wonder, Effie and Marian both coincided entirely in my hastily formed opinion of Mr. Chung. His mellow silvery voice, his frank truthful manner, his perfect freedom from self-consciousness, all pleased and impressed those stern critics, and by the end of the evening they were both quite as much taken with his delightful personality as I myself had originally been. One link leads on to another; and the end of it all was that when we went down for our summer villeggiatura to Abbot's Norbury, nothing would please Marian but that Mr. Chung must be invited down as one of our party. He came willingly enough, and for five or six weeks we had as pleasant a time together as any four people ever spent. Chung was a perfect encyclopædia of information, while his good humour and good spirits never for a moment failed him under any circumstances whatsoever.

One day we had made up a little private picnic to Norbury Edge, and were sitting together after luncheon under the shade of the big ash tree, when the conversation happened to turn by accident on the small feet of Chinese ladies. I had often noticed that Chung was very reticent about China; he did not like talking about his native country; and he was most pleased and most at home when we treated him most like a European born. Evidently he hated the provincialism of the Flowery Land, and loved to lose his identity in the wider culture of a Western civilisation.

'How funny it will be,' said Effie, 'to see Mrs. Chung's tiny feet when you bring her to London. I suppose one of these days, on one of your flying visits to Peking, you will take to yourself a wife in your country?'

'No,' Chung answered, with quiet dignity; 'I shall never marry—that I have quite decided in my own mind.'

'Oh, don't say that,' Marian put in quickly; 'I hate to hear men say they'll never marry. It is such a terrible mistake. They

become so selfish, and frumpish, and old-bachelorish.' Dear Marian has a high idea of the services she has rendered to society in saving her own fortunate husband from this miserable and deplorable condition.

'Perhaps so,' Chung replied quietly. 'No doubt what you say is true as a rule. But, for my own part, I could never marry a Chinawoman, I am too thoroughly Europeanised for that; we should have absolutely no tastes or sympathies in common. You don't know what my countrywomen are like, Mrs. Walters.'

'Ah, no,' said my wife contemplatively; 'I suppose your people are all heathens. Why, goodness gracious, Mr. Chung, if it comes to that, I suppose really you are a heathen yourself!'

Chung parried the question gracefully. 'Don't you know,' said he, 'what Lord Chesterfield answered to the lady who asked him what religion he professed? "Madam, the religion to which all wise men belong." "And what is that?" said she. "Madam, no wise man ever says."'

'Never mind Lord Chesterfield,' said Effie, smiling, 'but let us come back to the future Mrs. Chung. I'm quite disappointed you won't marry a Chinawoman; but at any rate I suppose you'll marry somebody?'

'Well, not a European, of course,' Marian put in.

'Oh, of course not,' Chung echoed with true Oriental imperturbability.

'Why of course?' Effie asked half unconsciously; and yet the very unconsciousness with which she asked the question showed in itself that she instinctively felt the gulf as much as any of us. If Chung had been a white man instead of a yellow one, she would hardly have discussed the question at issue with so much simplicity and obvious innocence.

'Well, I will tell you why,' Chung answered. 'Because, even supposing any European lady were to consent to become my wife, which is in the first place eminently improbable, I could never think of putting her in the terribly false position that she would have to occupy under existing circumstances. To begin with, her place in English society would be a peculiar and a trying one. But that is not all. You must remember that I am still a subject of the Chinese Empire, and a member of the Chinese Civil Service. I may any day be recalled to China, and of course—I say "of course" this time advisedly—it would be absolutely impossible for me to take an English wife to Pekin with me. So I am placed in this awkward dilemma. I would never care to marry anybody except a European lady; and to marry a European lady would be an act of injustice to her which I could never dream of

committing. But considering the justifiable contempt which all Europeans rightly feel for us poor John Chinamen, I don't think it probable in any case that the temptation is at all likely to arise. And so, if you please, as the newspapers always put it, "the subject then dropped."

We all saw that Chung was in earnest as to his wish that no more should be said about the matter, and we respected his feelings accordingly; but that evening, as we sat smoking in the arbour after the ladies had retired, I said to him quietly, 'Tell me, Chung, if you really dislike China so very much, and are so anxious not to return there, why don't you throw off your allegiance altogether, become a British subject, and settle down among us for good and all?'

'My dear fellow,' he said, smiling, 'you don't think of the difficulties, I may say the impossibilities, in the way of any such plan as you propose. It is easy enough for a European to throw off his nationality whenever he chooses; it is a very different thing for an Asiatic to do so. Moreover, I am a member of a Legation. My Government would never willingly let me become a naturalised Englishman; and if I tried to manage it against their will they would demand my extradition, and would carry their point, too, as a matter of international courtesy, for one nation could never interfere with the accredited representative of another, or with any of his suite. Even if I were to abscond and get rid of my personality altogether, what would be the use of it? Nobody in England could find any employment for a Chinaman. I have no property of my own; I depend entirely upon my salary for support; my position is therefore quite hopeless. I must simply let things go their own way, and trust to chance not to be recalled to Pekin.'

During all the rest of Chung's visit we let him roam pretty much as he liked about the place, and Effie and I generally went with him. Of course we never for a moment fancied it possible that Effie could conceivably take a fancy to a yellow man like him; the very notion was too preposterously absurd. And yet, just towards the end of his stay with us, it began to strike me uneasily that after all even a Chinaman is human. And when a Chinaman happens to have perfect manners, noble ideas, delicate sensibility, and a chivalrous respect for English ladies, it is perhaps just within the bounds of conceivability that at some odd moments an English girl might for a second partially forget his oblique eyelids and his yellow skin. I was sometimes half afraid that it might be so with Effie; and though I don't think she would ever herself have dreamed of marrying such a man—the

physical barrier between the races is far too profound for that—I fancy she occasionally pitied poor Chung's loneliness with that womanly pity which so easily glides into a deeper and closer sentiment. Certainly, she felt his isolation greatly, and often hoped he would never really be obliged to go back for ever to that hateful China.

One lovely summer evening, a few days before Chung's holiday was to end, and his chief at the Embassy expected him back again, Marian and I had gone out for a stroll together, and in coming home happened to walk above the little arbour in the shrubbery by the upper path. A seat let into the hedge bank overhung the summer-house, and here we both sat down silently to rest after our walking. As we did so, we heard Chung's voice in the arbour close below, so near and so clear that every word was quite distinctly audible.

'For the last time in England,' he was saying, with a softly regretful cadence in his tone, as we came upon him.

'The last time, Mr. Chung!' The other voice was Effie's. 'What on earth do you mean by that?'

'What I say, Miss Walters. I am recalled to China; I got the letters of recall the day before yesterday.'

'The day before yesterday, and you never told us! Why didn't you let us know before?'

'I did not know you would interest yourselves in my private affairs.'

'Mr. Chung!' There was a deep air of reproach in Effie's tone.

'Well, Miss Walters, that is not quite true. I ought not to have said it to friends so kind as you have all shown yourselves to be. No; my real reason was that I did not wish to grieve you unnecessarily, and even now I would not have done so, only—'

'Only——?'

At this moment I for my part felt we had heard too much. I blushed up to my eyes at the thought that we should have unwittingly played the spy upon these two innocent young people. I was just going to call out and rush down the little path to them; but as I made a slight movement forward, Marian held my wrist with an imploring gesture, and earnestly put her finger on my lips. I was overborne, and I regret to say I stopped and listened. Marian did not utter a word, but speaking rapidly on her fingers, as we all had learnt to do for poor Tom, she said impressively, 'For God's sake, not a sound. This is serious. We must and ought to hear it out.' Marian is a very clever woman in these matters; and when she thinks anything a point of duty

to poor Tom's girl, I always give way to her implicitly. But I confess I didn't like it.

'Only——?' Effie had said.

'Only I felt compelled to now. I could not leave without telling you how deeply I had appreciated all your kindness.'

'But, Mr. Chung, tell me one thing,' she asked earnestly; 'why have they recalled you to Pekin?'

'I had rather not tell you.'

'I insist.'

'Because they are displeased with my foreign tastes and habits, which have been reported to them by some of my fellow-attachés.'

'But, Mr. Chung, Uncle says there is no knowing what they will do to you. They may kill you on some absurd charge or other of witchcraft or something equally meaningless.'

'I am afraid,' he answered imperturbably, 'that may be the case. I don't mind at all on my own account—we Chinese are an apathetic race, you know—but I should be sorry to be a cause of grief to any of the dear friends I have made in England.'

'Mr. Chung!' This time the tone was one of unspeakable horror.

'Don't speak like that,' Chung said quickly. 'There is no use in taking trouble at interest. I may come to no harm; at any rate, it will not matter much to any one but myself. Now let us go back to the house. I ought not to have stopped here with you so long, and it is nearly dinner time.'

'No,' said Effie firmly; 'we will not go back. I must understand more about this. There is plenty of time before dinner; and if not, dinner must wait.'

'But, Miss Walters, I don't think I ought to have brought you out here, and I am quite sure I ought not to stay any longer. Do return. Your Aunt will be annoyed.'

'Bother Aunt! She is the best woman in the world, but I must hear all about this. Mr. Chung, why don't you say you won't go, and stay in England in spite of them?'

Nobody ever disobeys Effie, and so Chung wavered visibly. 'I will tell you why,' he answered slowly; 'because I cannot. I am a servant of the Chinese Government, and if they choose to recall me, I must go.'

'But they couldn't enforce their demand.'

'Yes, they could. Your Government would give me up.'

'But, Mr. Chung, couldn't you run away and hide for a while, and then come out again, and live like an Englishman?'

'No,' he answered quietly; 'it is quite impossible. A China-

man couldn't get work in England as a clerk or anything of that sort, and I have nothing of my own to live upon.'

There was a silence of a few minutes. Both were evidently thinking it out. Effie broke the silence first.

'Oh, Mr. Chung, do you think they will really put you to death?'

'I don't think it; I know it.'

'You know it?'

'Yes.'

Again a silence, and this time Chung broke it first. 'Miss Effie,' he said, 'one Chinaman more or less in the world does not matter much, and I shall never forgive myself for having been led to grieve you for a moment, even though this is the last time I shall be able to speak to you. But I see you are sorry for me, and now—Chinaman as I am, I must speak out—I can't leave you without having told you all I feel. I am going to a terrible end, and I know it—so you will forgive me. We shall never meet again, so what I am going to say need never cause you any embarrassment in future. That I am recalled does not much trouble me; that I am going to die does not much trouble me; but that I can never, could never possibly have called you my wife, troubles me and cuts me to the very quick. It is the deepest drop in my cup of humiliation.'

'I knew it,' said Effie, with wonderful composure.

'You knew it?'

'Yes, I knew it. I saw it from the second week you were here; and I liked you for it. But of course it was impossible, so there is nothing more to be said about it.'

'Of course,' said Chung. 'Ah, that terrible *of course*! I feel it; you feel it; we all feel it; and yet, what a horrible thing it is. I am so human in everything else, but there is that one impassable barrier between us, and I myself cannot fail to recognise it. I could not even wish you to feel that you could marry a Chinaman.'

At that moment—for a moment only—I almost felt as if I could have said to Effie, 'Take him!' but the thing was too impossible—a something within us rises against it—and I said nothing.

'So now,' Chung continued, 'I must go. We must both go back to the house. I have said more than I ought to have said, and I am ashamed of myself for having done so. Yet, in spite of the measureless gulf that parts us, I felt I could not return to China without having told you. Will you forgive me?'

'I am glad you did,' said Effie; 'it will relieve you.'

She stood a minute irresolute, and then she began again: 'Mr. Chung, I am too horrified to know what I ought to do. I can't grasp it and take it all in so quickly. If you had money of your own, would you be able to run away and live somehow?'

'I might possibly,' Chung answered, 'but not probably. A Chinaman, even if he wears European clothing, is too marked a person ever to escape. The only chance would be by going to Mauritius or California, where I might get lost in the crowd.'

'But, Mr. Chung, I have money of my own. What can I do? Help me, tell me. I can't let a fellow-creature die for a mere prejudice of race and colour. If I were your wife it would be yours. Isn't it my duty?'

'No,' said Chung. 'It is more sacrifice than any woman ought to make for any man. You like me, but that is all.'

'If I shut my eyes and only heard you, I think I could love you.'

'Miss Effie,' said Chung suddenly, 'this is wrong, very wrong of me. I have let my weakness overcome me. I won't stop any longer. I have done what I ought not to have done, and I shall go this minute. Just once, before I go, shut your eyes and let me kiss the tips of your fingers. Thank you. No, I will not stop; and without another word he was gone.

Marian and I stared at one another in blank horror. What on earth was to be done? All solution were equally impossible. Even to meet Chung at dinner was terrible. We both knew in our heart of hearts that if Chung had been an Englishman, remaining in heart and soul the very self-same man he was, we would willingly have chosen him for Effie's husband. But a Chinaman! Reason about the prejudice as you like, there it is, a thing not to be got over, and at bottom so real that even the very notion of getting over it is terribly repugnant to our natural instincts. On the other hand, was poor Chung, with his fine delicate feelings, his courteous manners, his cultivated intellect, his English chivalry, to go back among the savage semi-barbarians of Peking, and to be put to death in Heaven knows what inhuman manner for the atrocious crime of having outstripped his race and nation? The thing was too awful to contemplate either way.

We walked home together without a word. Chung had taken the lower path; we took the upper one and followed him at a distance. Effie remained behind for a while in the summer-house. I don't know how we managed to dress for dinner, but we did somehow; and when we went down into the little drawing-room at eight o'clock, we were not surprised to hear that Miss Effie had a headache and did not want any dinner that evening. I was more

surprised, however, when, shortly before the gong sounded, one of the servants brought me a little twisted note from Chung, written hurriedly in pencil, and sent, she said, by a porter from the railway station. It ran thus:—

‘Dear Mr. Walters,—Excuse great haste. Compelled to return to town immediately. Shall write more fully to-morrow. Just in time to catch up express.

‘Yours ever,

‘CHUNG.’

Evidently, instead of returning to the house, he had gone straight to the station. After all, Chung had the true feelings of a gentleman. He could not meet Effie again after what had passed, and he cut the Gordian knot in the only way possible.

Effie said nothing to us, and we said nothing to Effie, except to show her Chung's note next morning in a casual, off-hand fashion. Two days later a note came for us from the Embassy in Chung's pretty incisive handwriting. It contained copious excuses for his hasty departure, and a few lines to say that he was ordered back to China by the next mail, which started two days later. Marian and I talked it all over, but we could think of nothing that could be of any use; and after all, we said to one another, poor Chung might be mistaken about the probable fate that was in store for him.

‘I don't think,’ Effie said, when we showed her the letter, ‘I ever met such a nice man as Mr. Chung. I believe he is really a hero.’ We pretended not to understand what she could mean by it.

The days went by, and we went back again to the dull round of London society. We heard nothing more of Chung for many weeks; till at last one morning I found a letter on the table bearing the Hong Kong postmark. I opened it hastily. As I supposed, it was a note from Chung. It was written in a very small hand on a tiny square of rice-paper, and it ran as follows:—

‘Thien-Shan Prison, Peking: Dec. 8.

‘My dear Friend,—Immediately on my return here I was arrested on a charge of witchcraft, and of complicity with the Foreign Devils to introduce the Western barbarism into China. I have now been in a loathsome prison in Peking for three weeks, in the midst of sights and sounds which I dare not describe to you. Already I have suffered more than I can tell; and I have very little doubt that I shall be brought to trial and executed within a few weeks. I write now begging you not to let Miss Effie hear of this, and if my name happens to be mentioned in the English papers, to keep my fate a secret from her as far as possible. I

trust to chance for the opportunity of getting this letter forwarded to Hong Kong, and I have had to write it secretly, for I am not allowed pen, ink, or paper. Thank you much for your very great kindness to me. I am not sorry to die, for it is a mistake for a man to have lived outside the life of his own people, and there was no place left for me on earth. Good-bye.

‘Ever yours gratefully,
‘CHUNG.’

The letter almost drove me wild with ineffectual remorse and regret. Why had I not tried to persuade Chung to remain in England? Why had I not managed to smuggle him out of the way, and to find him some kind of light employment, such as even a Chinaman might easily have performed? But it was no use regretting now. The impassable gulf was fixed between us; and it was hardly possible even then to realise that this amiable young student, versed in all the science and philosophy of the nineteenth century, had been handed over alive to the tender mercies of a worse than mediæval barbarism and superstition. My heart sank within me, and I did not venture to show the letter even to Marian.

For some weeks the days passed heavily indeed. I could not get Chung out of my mind, and I saw that Effie could not either. We never mentioned his name; but I noticed that Effie had got from Mudie's all the books about China that she could hear of, and that she was reading up with a sort of awful interest all the chapters that related to Chinese law and Chinese criminal punishments. Poor child, the subject evidently enthralled her with a terrible fascination; and I feared that the excitement she was in might bring on a brain fever.

One morning, early in April, we were all seated in the little breakfast-room about ten o'clock, and Effie had taken up the outside sheet of the ‘Times,’ while I was engaged in looking over the telegrams on the central pages. Suddenly she gave a cry of horror, flung down the paper with a gesture of awful repugnance, and fell from her chair as stiff and white as a corpse. I knew instinctively what had happened, and I took her up in my arms and carried her to her room. After the doctor had come, and Effie had recovered a little from the first shock, I took up the paper from the ground where it lay and read the curt little paragraph which contained the news that seemed to us so terrible:—

‘The numerous persons who made the acquaintance of Chung Fo Tsou, late assistant interpreter to the Chinese Embassy in London, will learn with regret that this unfortunate member of the

Civil Service has been accused of witchcraft and executed at Peking by the frightful Chinese method known as the Heavy Death. Chung Fo Tsiou was well known in London and Paris, where he spent many years of his official life, and attracted some attention by his natural inclination to European society and manners.

Poor Chung! His end was too horrible for an English reader even to hear of it. But Effie knew it all, and I did not wonder that the news should have affected her so deeply.

Effie was some weeks ill, and at first we almost feared her mind would give way under the pressure. Not that she had more than merely liked poor Chung, but the sense of horror was too great for her easily to cast it off. Even I myself did not sleep lightly for many and many a day after I heard the terrible truth. But while Effie was still ill, a second letter reached us, written this time in blood with a piece of stick, apparently on a scrap of coarse English paper, such as that which is used for wrapping up tobacco. It was no more than this:—

‘Execution to-day. Keep it from Miss Effie. Cannot forgive myself for having spoken to her. Will you forgive me? It was the weakness of a moment: but even Chinamen have hearts. I could not die without telling her.—CHUNG.’

I showed Effie the scrap afterwards—it had come without a line of explanation from Shanghae—and she has kept it ever since locked up in her little desk as a sacred memento. I don’t doubt that some of these days Effie will marry; but as long as she lives she will bear the impress of what she has suffered about poor Chung. An English girl could not conceivably marry a Chinaman; but now that Chung is dead, Effie cannot help admiring the steadfastness, the bravery, and the noble qualities of her Chinese lover. It is an awful state of things which sometimes brings the nineteenth century and primitive barbarism into such close and horrible juxtaposition.

J. ARBUTHNOT WILSON.



LOOK steadily (in a good light) for 30 seconds in the centre of the name "PEARS," then immediately fix your gaze on the Ceiling, the Sky, or a piece of White Paper for another 30 seconds, where you will see a DISC OF BLUEISH GREEN TINT gradually develop itself with "PEARS" in RED letters thereon.

SOME few people are colour-blind and cannot see this, but most persons can do so. The proprietors of **PEARS' SOAP** will pay **£1000** if they fail to prove, by scientific evidence, the general truth of these phenomena.

£1,000 if not true!!

LETTERS FROM CHINA
AND SOME EASTERN SKETCHES

By JAY DENBY

ILLUSTRATED BY H. W. G. HAYTER

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