

LETTERS FROM CHINA

AND SOME EASTERN SKETCHES

By JAY DENBY

ILLUSTRATED BY H. W. G. HAYTER

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PLEYDELL HOUSE

PLEYDELL STREET, FLEET STREET, E.C.

his food, exactly suited to his eccentricities and peculiarities, which latter have become petrified into changeless form by the flux of time. When the stewards serve him in accordance with the customs of the ship, he has great difficulty to prevent himself bursting out crying with rage. He storms and rants with senile decrepitude, uttering sophistical tirades in the cracked falsetto of dotish excitement. He is a nautical nuisance, who can be compared only with the spoiled child on a voyage, who cades cakes and sweets of which he subsequently relieves himself with noisy renunciation during the night.

Again, there is the lady whose figure is far nearer perfection than her breeding, and whose physical attraction has transported her from Poplar to Park Lane. She alludes to servants as "menials," and "keeps them in their place," because the line of demarcation between herself and servility is so faintly defined that it requires continually pointing out; for she is aware that she herself escaped drudgery only, as it were, by the skin of her shoulders.

* * * * *

I find that I shall just have time to jot down my impressions on approaching Shanghai. The first tangible sign that one is getting into touch with that land of mystery, China, is

the appearance of the coast shipping. We passed quite close to a large junk crowded with Chinese, and a stranger contrivance it is difficult to imagine. Picture a great, lumbering hull, roughly built of very heavy hewn logs. The body is shaped like a punt, with the stem and stern raised high out of the water, and is fitted with heavy lee-boards.

This strange craft had five masts standing at varying angles out of the perpendicular, not one of them being fitted with stays or shrouds. Upon these masts were set very lofty rectangular sails, stretched upon cross battens of bamboo, presumably in order to prevent bellying, and controlled by dozens of cords, each one fastened to the after end of the sail battens. All of these cords were led together into a single rope before reaching the steersman's hand. The sides forming the freeboard are carried well aft of the transom and rudderhead. On each side of the bow is painted an eye, in order to enable the junk to see where she is going, and on the stern, gaudy pictures of weird and hideous dragons.

The repulsiveness of the latter must be designed to present the average Chinese countenance in a comparatively agreeable light. After examining the faces of several of the crew I was thankful that I saw the dragons first.

The man who was steering possessed a physiognomy that resembled the human face only vaguely. It was a kind of rude insinuation, or facial sneer aimed at the beauty of the human species. I can only describe it by saying that it would be utterly impossible for him to "make faces" at any one, this object being already attained for him by nature.

Nothing that could be done to that face would make it worse—not even if one skinned it. In a spirit of idle curiosity I tried to imagine slight alterations to this end, but found that nature, or the man's mother, or both combined, had, in one supreme effort, concentrated all the superlative ugliness the world has ever contained or imagined, and worked it into that one devoted visage, given it life, and let it go, so that the world might see to what lengths ugliness can reach when the mighty forces of nature are brought to bear with that one specific object, and thus encourage others to rest content with such beauty as had fallen to their lot.

Miss Snodgrass suggested that perhaps he had been frightened at birth. If his mother bears any resemblance to himself, Miss Snodgrass is most probably correct in her surmise. I shall never call any one ugly again.

I next noticed what I took to be a yellow

mud-bank ahead, but was informed by a resident of Shanghai, who had joined the ship at Hongkong, that this was the river water. There is a distinct and clearly defined line which ebbs and flows with the tide, but never breaks up. This does not augur well for the drainage of a densely populated district.

Shanghai lies some distance up the Whangpoo River, which is broad, turbid, and unbeautiful. Anchored just inside the mouth of this muddy stream are several war junks, armed with a brass cannon apiece, resembling somewhat those used at the Battle of Trafalgar, after due allowance is made for the fact that they are not so modern. A Maxim gun in a Thames skiff would put one of these fighting machines out of action in two or three minutes.

Our vessel steamed quite close to one of the banks of the river, so that I could see the Chinese at work in their fields. The land is extremely fertile, intersected with creeks, and cultivated mostly in patches. Every foot is under either crops or corpses.

I have always been under the impression that the Chinese worship their ancestors, but fail to understand how any one can worship a man and use him for manure as well. Human remains are not buried; they are laid on the surface and

sometimes, but not always, covered with earth. I saw several coffins covered with straw only.

The land on each side of the river lies perfectly flat, and very little above water-level. As one approaches Shanghai the banks on each side are lined with wharves and warehouses until the Bund is reached.

The Bund consists of a fine road parallel to the river, and upon the waterside of this thoroughfare a succession of lawns is laid out, having a public garden with bandstand at the approach end. On the opposite bank are more wharves and a factory or two. Adjoining the foreign settlements and further up the river is the walled Native City. All these things, and more also, will I describe to thee later, when I have seen them properly.

Whilst I was waiting to go ashore, a Chinaman with a face like a rag doll that has been left out in the garden in the rain came up to me and said :—

“ You wanchee catchee Shanghai money? suppose you wanchee, my can do.”

“ I beg your pardon? ” I replied, unable to make out his meaning.

He looked at me patiently, and explained :
“ Suppose you go shoreside, follin money alle-same no use. You pay my follin money, my pay you China money all plopper. Can? ”

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“ Can what? ” I enquired. “ Why on earth don't you talk longhand? ”

“ Parlez-vous Flançay? ” he enquired, taking something out of his ear, which upon examination I discovered to be a printed paper giving the rates of money exchange, which I could make nothing of, but deducted that he wished me to exchange “ follin ” money for Chinese.

Then it occurred to me that this hollow-chested, disreputable yellow degenerate, with a dirty scalp and a pair of pants the seat of which flapped about his knees, not only had the right to call, but actually was calling me a foreigner, and it was borne in upon me that I was indeed a stranger in a strange land.

I afterwards discovered that I had been paid sixty cents short, and had received two brass dollars and four bad twenty-cent pieces. The worst aspect of the affair is that I shall never be able to recognize the animal again, because all Chinese are exactly alike, except the steersman I saw in the junk as we came in.

Will write you more fully when I am settled down ashore.

Your affectionate son,
JIM.

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No. III

Mrs. TIMM'S BOARDING HOUSE,
BOBBING WELL, SHANGHAI,
Friday evening.

MY DEAR FATHER,—

I arrived in Shanghai on the 4th inst., and am staying at the above address, or, rather, I take my meals here. It would be untrue to say that I sleep here, because I have only lain down at night and scratched myself so far, but hope for the best, as I have ordered a new mosquito curtain.

I find that it is necessary to have a mosquito curtain with a small mesh. My old curtain had a large mesh, through which the hungry pests could easily obtain access to the cuticle of the would-be sleeper; the result of which was inflammation and profanity.

Having stolen what little nourishment I have been able to obtain from a boarding-house diet, the mosquito, with its paunch distended at my expense, was unable to pass out again.

Here everything is very, very strange as to customs, and even language, into which latter

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many words are introduced that one never hears round about Roehampton. For instance, the local inhabitants call a person who has not had time to have his constitution destroyed by the climate, his stomach ruined by the food, and his good temper utterly spoiled by Chinese servants, a "griffin." Although they affect to despise any such, one can see that they have a sneaking regard for the newcomer, who is as yet free from the awful disabilities under which they themselves suffer.

Do not think I am decrying the local residents, as this is the last thing I would do, even if only from a feeling of pity; for who could suffer as these poor people do and be amiable? Consider the conditions—mosquitoes that are capable of thought and ingenuity, and that possess bodies as large as snipe; thermometer 102° in the shade; a very limited and poor diet on account of the fact that each and every article of food, except haricot beans, places one in imminent danger of a distinct complaint peculiar to itself; constant and unremitting drenching with Carlsbad salts (which sell more readily than piece goods), and servants possessed of an inherited guile, improved and perfected through thousands of generations, combined with the bland, shameless mendacity that one usually

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associates only with the vendor of a rubber plantation.

As if this state of affairs were not bad enough, there are quite a number of Scotchmen settled here, who, as is almost invariably the case, thrive, because they drink nothing but whisky (which is safer than the water), and, having survived a draughty, blue-nosed upbringing in the Land o' Cakes, can stand anything in the way of climate and food; further, the mosquitoes (being, as I said before, intelligent) do not bite them, because their skins are so hairy and tough. They are in great demand as managers of businesses and superintendents of shipping lines, because they never give anything away, even to their relations.

Ladies are very scarce, and are spoiled, as a natural result; probably on account of the fact that the unmarried ones receive, so I am informed, an average of four proposals a week. As they never accept any one with less than 400 taels per month (which expression I will explain later) and a relation on the Board of Directors or in the firm, as the case may be, they acquire, from the habit of continually rejecting suitors, a kind of "Wha' for?" expression of countenance, which is very disconcerting to a stranger, and makes one get off

the pavement when they approach, even if there is plenty of room.

After they are married, however, they become quite nice, especially to any one who is a member of the Country Club, and who has a motor-car or a houseboat and a lot of discretion, coupled with a placid temperament.

I am of opinion that the tael is retained as a method of calculating payment and receipt by the Chinese principally on account of the fact that it does not actually exist, and in consequence cannot be faked or counterfeited. Anything that does exist is imitated, adulterated, and otherwise used as a method of deception by nearly every Chinaman over three years of age.

Money goes further here than anywhere else in the world. My salary this month is out of sight already, but the "compradores" (native cashiers) are always willing to advance anything one requires by paying one's bills, because they are so adept at working out the exchange and getting commissions on accounts paid.

The town is not at present prosperous, and one reason for the bad times now existing is that the Chinese cheat the foreigners in every conceivable way, and also in every inconceivable way, and if caught, which is seldom, are fined

\$5, or get a week's imprisonment and immediate re-employment on release. Even in prison they are generally better off than out of it. The penalty is so small that they consider the reward well worth the risk, corporal punishment being now abolished.

Should a foreigner, however, be discovered trying to cheat a Chinaman, he is awarded a long term of imprisonment, which means ruin, of course; and if he happens to be a German, an American, or a Britisher, he is lucky to escape with his life.

This remark does not apply to promoters of rotten companies, for whom, as you are aware, no adequate punishment can be designed until the advance of science enables our legislators to administer a severer correction than the death penalty.

This muddled state of affairs is principally owing to the fact that all Chinese have to be tried at a place called the Mixed Court, which title it has acquired because everything about it is so mixed up that no one understands what to do.

Any Chinaman can bring a suit against a foreigner before that foreigner's Judge or Consul, but in cases where a foreigner has an action to bring against a Chinaman his only resort is the Mixed Court. The Mixed

Court is designed to form a happy medium between the law of nations and the abominable, muddle-headed corruption of China. In this Court sit a foreign assessor of the same nationality as the foreign litigant whose case is down for hearing, and the Mixed Court Magistrate, a Chinaman, who is chosen by the native authorities on account of his uncompromising Chineseness. The judgment of these two arbitrators must coincide, and the time of the Court is mostly taken up by the Chinese Magistrate's efforts to make the foreign assessor's judgment coincide with his own. This can never happen until China has an army and navy sufficiently strong to make the Powers see the force of her arguments, whether they are reasonable or the reverse. Chinese arguments being usually the reverse, her only hope of getting the better of a discussion is by force, even as we did in the days of those persuasive debaters, Raleigh, Drake, Clive, Phip and Dampier.

The Germans, Americans, and British consider it their duty to administer justice tempered with mercy, not to say generosity, to the man who is lodging a complaint *against* any of their nationals, a diplomatic arrangement of which the wisdom is apparent to all—who happen to

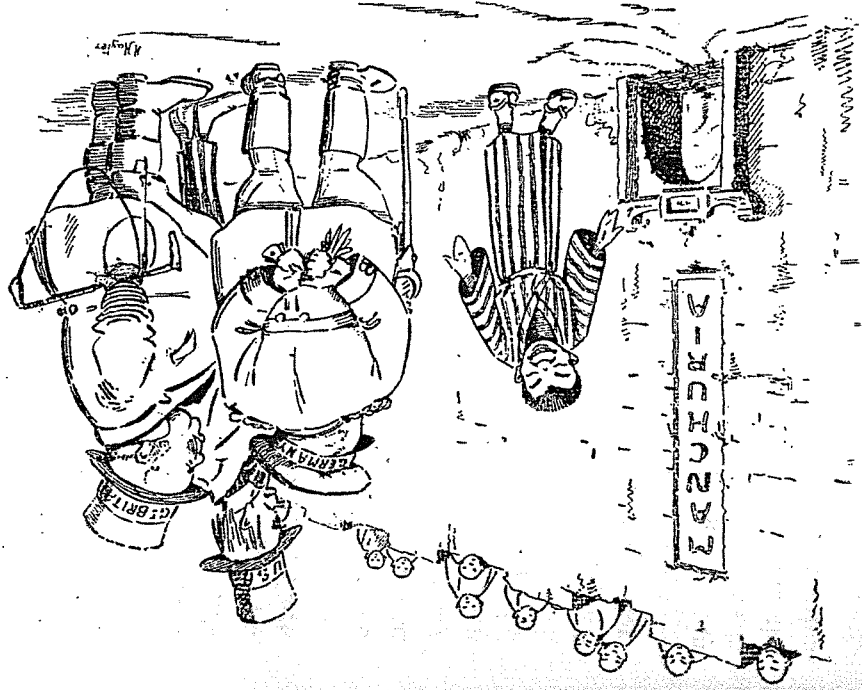
live at home. As the Chinese idea would appear to most distinctly favour their own nationals in the Mixed Court, the whole arrangement is a hopeless failure, and—like every other hesitating concession of a higher civilization to a lower—obstructive to advancement by reason of the activity of opposing forces.

The continual bickering and disputes which characterize the procedure at this Court culminated in a riot some five years ago, and one incident occurred which goes to prove that there is humour even in riots.

Many of the volunteers were stationed at the Country Club, and one citizen soldier showed such keenness to get to work that his eagerness was the cause of some speculation. When questioned as to whether he had any especial cause to desire wholesale slaughter, he replied, "Oh, no, it's not that exactly, but if they *will* riot I'm going to look for my Chinese tailor. I owe him \$100."

The Japanese is the only foreigner who can indulge in a misdemeanour with impunity, as in his case drunkenness and an assault on the police are only punished by a severe caution and perhaps \$1 fine.

A Japanese once explained to me that the reason of their leniency is because they are such



"THE DOOR IS WIDE OPEN, BUT IT IS SO SMALL THAT ONLY A JAP CAN PASS IN."

a kind-hearted race that they cannot bear to see anyone suffer, but I feel sure he was only referring to his own race, as in spite of the fact that a Jap goes practically unpunished for assault here, even if committed on the police whilst on duty, if a foreigner in Japan hits a Japanese, the punishment is invariably imprisonment without the option of a fine, and a long imprisonment at that.

This is on a par with the open-door policy as applied to their recently annexed territory; the door is wide open, but it is so small that only a Jap can pass in.

Not that I have a word to say against the Japs, for nothing could be farther from my intention, but they do love themselves with such an all-absorbing passion that they have no sentiment to spare for other races.

I will bear in mind what you say about saving money, so soon as I get any material to work with; meantime, if you have a couple of racing saddles to spare, with weight cloths, please send them along.

Having only just time to catch the mail, I must now conclude, and, with love and duty to mother and all at home, subscribe myself,

Your dutiful son,

JIM.

No. IV

79, BUBBLING WELL CRESCENT, SHANGHAI,
Friday evening.

MY DEAR FATHER,—

You will notice that I have left Mrs. Timm's Boarding Establishment. I could hardly do otherwise, for she was extremely rude to me on Friday evening at dinner, just because I told the "boy" to serve my soup after the fruit, in a finger bowl. This at twelve pounds sterling a month with extras. Oh, shades of the Cecil and Savoy! Gastronomic memories of the Berkley and Prince's bring tears of useless longing to my eyes, till I can barely see to capture the elusive haricot bean which is daily fed to me because it is safe. And yet the variety of foods offered to and consumed by such as are acclimatized is positively bewildering, for one sees the "old hands," whose stomachs are presumably too far gone to be capable of revolt, eating sauerkraut, raw meat, frogs, and canned snails.

The choice of liquids is limitless. I was intro-

with his modest programme, however, and the forthcoming renewal of the Russo-Japanese War is an accomplished fact, it would seem that there will be no lack of employment for the man behind the gun in China.

Your affectionate son,
JIM.

No. XXI

MY DEAR FATHER,—

At the time of writing we are at the very top-notch of the thermometer. If the mercury climbs any higher, something will break, and we shall begin to burn. I have tried everything I can think of to keep cool. The bulk of my wearing apparel is discarded, and if I shed any more I shall certainly be arrested. Oh, to be a woman or a Chinaman till the end of September, and not have to worry about keeping oneself covered up!

I believe one feels the heat here more than in any other city in the world, yet the people follow their ordinary occupations, eat roast beef and steak and kidney pudding, go to office during the heat of the day in linen collars, play tennis, get married, and conduct themselves generally as if this were London in May.

Last Thursday I met George Lassing, who was passing through to Japan. He came

asore in evening dress and a single comb, and I showed him round. After we had seen all that was worth seeing, and a lot that wasn't, he was a limp wreck; his collar lay down on his coat like an "Eton," and his shirt front resembled a dish-cloth. Going off to his ship in a sampan, he said:

"And you live here, eh, Denby?"

"I do," I replied.

"Why?"

I thought hard for two minutes, but had to confess in the end that I didn't know the answer, and I've thought since, but I haven't got it yet. I must confess that I, personally, feel that the attraction is less since the rubber boom collapsed and the Russo-Japanese War came to an end.

It is particularly rough on a man living in a place like this and having hosts of friends who look him up at short intervals whilst they are travelling round the world.

You have to show them round, and at about 3 a.m. they ask you where you propose to spend the rest of the evening. They can lie back the next morning and sleep, but you have to work all day, holding your throbbing head and trying to remember how you managed to spend the best part of a month's salary in about eight



"NOT HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT KEEPING ONESELF COVERED UP."

hours, and where you lost the left tail of your dress coat.

It is a mistaken idea to suppose that the East—even if the birthplace of original sin—still allows it greater freedom than the West; yet such is the idea of most male tourists, and they insist upon dragging you out to show them your local dissipations.

What desperate efforts we do make to beautify our iniquities with the rosy glow of wine! Yet we invariably come back to our early morning gallop in the fresh, sweet air, or our before breakfast swim, and thus realize that the world is a beautiful garden in which to stand with one's arms upstretched to the sun and shout for the joy of health.

But again, if we never had a wild night or a headache, and had never been bored to semi-consciousness by vacuous remarks, or suffered in powerless sympathy with the strained, pathetic gaiety of tired women with unhealthy eyes and drawn, painted cheeks, perchance our sombre contrast would no longer throw up the really beautiful into sharp relief—and we have such short memories.

Perhaps my moodiness is partly accounted for by the fact that I am suffering from the after-effects of a Chinese dinner, or chow-chow.

I have attended a big dinner at home, and felt bilious next day, but after this Chinese horror I feel that I shall notice the effects for the rest of my life. No foreign medicine can cope with the mass of garbage, both cooked and raw, that I was compelled to swallow.

My companion who induced me to attend this function is a well-known business man, and it was necessary for him to attend for business reasons. I think myself, looking back upon what occurred, that he had made a lot of money out of his Chinese host, and that the Chinaman was having his revenge. Of course you will say, "Why did you not give every dish a miss in baulk?" I will explain.

The man who accompanied me impressed me with the fact that the dinner cost a lot of money, and that it was very uncomplimentary to the host not to eat. That is where they have you, and that is why I have a mouth like the waste-pipe of a kitchen sink, and see airballs every time I look at the sky.

The initial horror of the affair was encountered on the way to the restaurant. We started along Nanking Road in rickshas, and I had visions of going to a Chinese garden, sitting out under the stars, absorbing local colour, enjoying quaint dishes, and generally

the mysteries of the East about which I could, in after-life, lie fearlessly to my friends at home.

The first disillusion occurred when we were half way along Nanking Road, where my ricksha, following my companion's, turned down a narrow, noisy, dirty little street.

"Hi!" I shouted after him, "where on earth are you going?"

"It's all right," he replied over his shoulder.

"All right!" I yelled, with my handkerchief to my nose, "you surely don't mean to try and get me to *eat* anything down this sewer?"

"It's better further along," he replied, and with this I was forced to be content.

Each narrow street in a Chinese district is characterized by its own smell, which is lidded in by overhanging roofs from opposite buildings and confined by huge, hanging signs slung cross-wise. Each portion of that street has its own characteristic variation on the main scheme of stink, like divisions in a Neapolitan ice.

The local inhabitants do not require or cultivate any sense of direction: they find their way about from earliest infancy by the sense of smell.

Eventually, after going about a mile through an atmosphere which reminded me of the back

staircase or a half-crown Soho restaurant at dinner-time, and that would be a paradise to any one interested in the theory of germs, we stopped opposite a building having more gold paint, carving, and dirt upon it than any I had previously seen. We entered, and my companion handed the attendant two slips of paper with Chinese characters upon them. The attendant then bowed, shook hands with himself, and showed us inside.

A Chinaman probably shakes hands with himself because he is the only person he knows that he can be thoroughly sure of.

We passed through a stone courtyard where they store the vegetables that have gone bad (nothing is ever thrown away here) and upstairs into the front room. There we found four Chinese who appeared delighted to see us, and were very polite and very, very greasy.

After eating some nuts and seeds that you have to crack with your teeth—though why, I fail to see, since there is nothing inside them—we sat down at the table.

In the centre were dishes containing shelled pigeon's eggs swimming in some stuff I cannot be sure of, but fancy must have been vaseline; little cubes of pork surrounded by what appeared to be chickweed, and other delicacies

I cannot even guess at. One dish, however, caught my eye and held it. Lying right in the middle of the table, surrounded by stewed grasshoppers, were some eggs cut in half, with black yolks. I asked my companion why they dyed their eggs.

"Dyed?" he replied; "those aren't dyed, the colour comes with age."

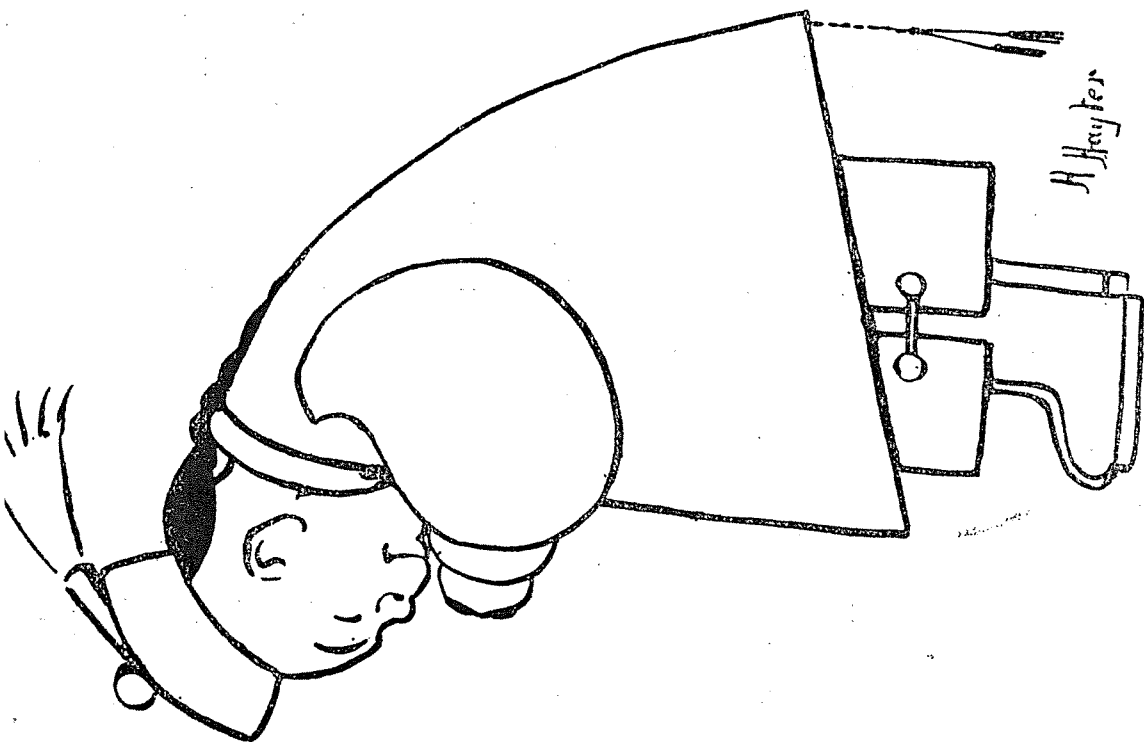
"But what are they here for?" I enquired.

"The Chinese eat them."

Something turned over in my stomach, and I had to grip the chair.

"Good-night," I said, and was half way out of my seat before he could stop me; but it was useless. He begged me, for the sake of our friendship, to resume my place. I asked him whether he had considered our friendship when he invited me to this culinary practical joke, but he excused himself upon the plea that he thought I should be interested. I told him that I might be interested if I didn't feel so damnably sick, and he advised me to try to think of something else, but I couldn't—those eggs, lying there naked and shamelessly exposed, fascinated me.

To make matters worse, just at that moment a Chinese stretched out a claw with two sticks held in the talons and gripped the most



"A CHINAMAN PROBABLY SHAKES HANDS WITH HIMSELF BECAUSE HE IS THE ONLY PERSON HE KNOWS THAT HE CAN BE THOROUGHLY SURE OF."

disgusting egg on the dish. I shut my eyes and counted twenty. The Chinaman on my left must have noticed something, for he explained that many foreigners wondered why they kept their eggs to a ripe old age, and yet they—the foreigners—ate cheese in an advanced stage of decomposition. I explained that cheese was cheese always, but that eggs, after the copy-right expired, became a public nuisance ; yet he couldn't see the point somehow.

He argued that an egg, after it had died, stunk with all its might for a few months, and then resumed its odourless state from sheer exhaustion and became beautiful once again ; whereas cheese gathered strength and energy to stink with a continually increasing violence as time elapsed.

What is the use of arguing with a benighted savage like that?

And again, he is quite right ; so I smiled in a superior way and changed the subject, trusting to luck that he would think I had several other arguments with which to confound him, but mercifully refrained from using them out of politeness.

The next course consisted of a brown ball of something in a little dish, surrounded by a lot of green something else. I was about to

take the brown thing, drop it on the floor and put my foot on it, when I caught the host's eyes fixed on me, so I had to put the stuff in my mouth. Then I bit it. It was pure pork fat !

When I recovered consciousness, a man was bringing round what I at first took to be about seven pounds of steaming tripe in his hands, seeing which I staggered to my feet, determined to fight my way out if necessary, but to my unspeakable relief it turned out to be a bunch of hot, wet towels. Each man took one and wiped his face. This would be a splendid custom to introduce into Europe—for the men—and is very refreshing ; but I couldn't help wondering who had been using mine before my turn came.

During the dinner they gave us Chinese wine. It is served in special metal cups, probably because it would corrode ordinary glass. The flavour is somewhat similar to that of mixed crude petroleum and petrol, but is far more potent, and tastes like one of those buzzy things the dentists use to take the tartar off your teeth.

After the others had finished eating, six singing girls made their appearance ; for the custom here is for a diner to send for one of

these entertainers after dinner to sing to him. They have their "amahs" (or duennas) with them, and one or two musicians.

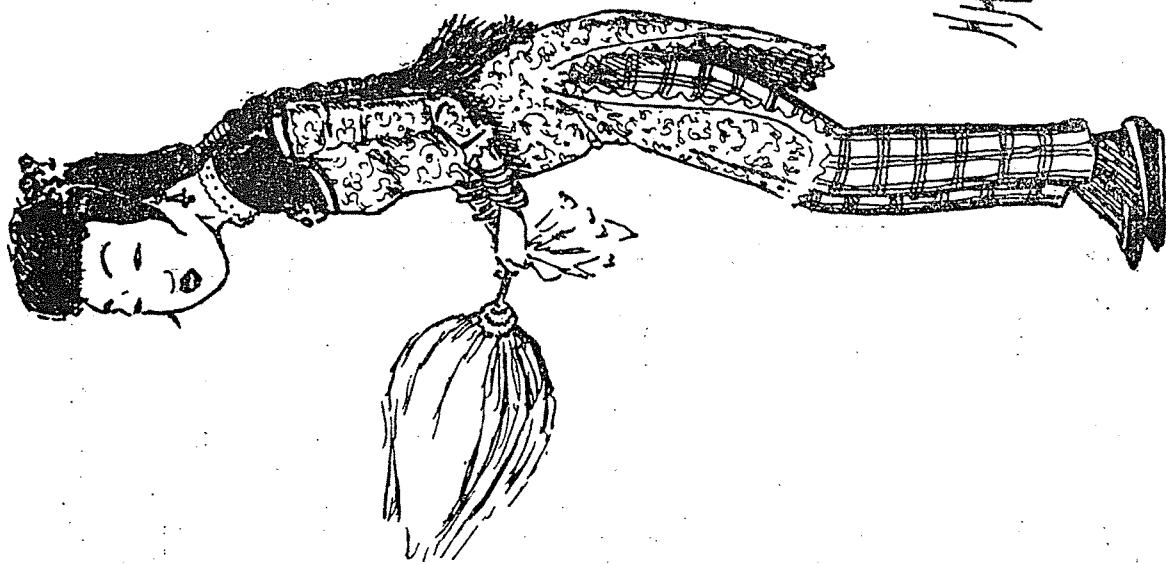
They were all beautifully dressed in elaborate flowered-satin coats, and mine wore pink silk trousers trimmed with frilling, but her face was one of the most careless pieces of work I have ever seen. I felt convinced that had I dug my finger into her cheek the impress would remain as in dough, and longed to make the experiment.

All had small feet, the result of tightly binding them in linen from babyhood, which had the effect of making them walk like automatic dolls; for their feet are mere stumps, without muscular play.

Seeing a small-footed woman walk always gives me that creepy feeling of the skin which one associates with shrimps crawling up one's spine, for I cannot disabuse my mind of the impression that every step causes her pain; though, of course, such is not the case.

I turned to the moon-faced maiden who had taken up her position on a stool behind my chair, and was about to ask her whether she had been to any dances lately, or engage her in some equally inane conversation such as is expected of one on these occasions, when she looked me

"ALL BEAUTIFULLY DRESSED."



squarely in the eye, made a horrible face, and let out a yell that detached a piece of plaster from the ceiling, which fell to the floor with a crash.

Jumping from my seat, I yelled to my friend to get some brandy.

"What do you want brandy for?" he screamed.

"Look!" I shouted, pointing to the girl, "she's got some female complaint, and got it badly."

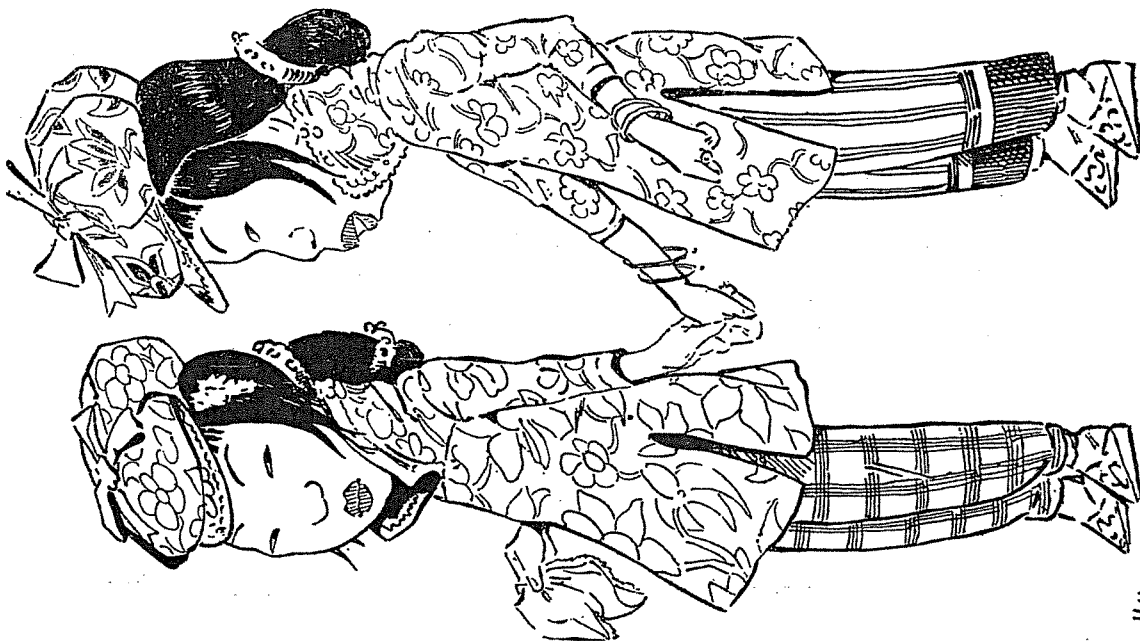
"Don't be an ass," he roared, "she's singing"; and glancing around at my fellow-guests, I was astonished to observe that they listened to her hysterical screams unmoved—nay, if anything, they appeared to enjoy them.

That was my first experience of Chinese vocal music. It is worse than a gramophone.

The Chinese each held the left hand of one of these apparitions and smiled a beatific smile.

At irregular intervals, and without the slightest warning, one of them would let out a screech like a girl who has found a beetle in her bed. I held the bejewelled fore-limb of the lady who had overstrained her pharynx under the misapprehension that she was entertaining me, and wondered, not without some trepidation, what was going to happen next; but I couldn't smile,

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"SMALL FEET."

because I was uncertain whether I was going to be ill again.

However, even a Chinese dinner comes to an end, and I eventually returned home and wrote a letter to the man who had invited me, telling him I should hold him responsible if anything serious happened to me, and asking him to be kind enough to keep out of my way for a week.

How I envy you your week ends up the river, with a lobster salad, a bottle of bubbly, and a fruit salad off the ice!

Your affectionate son,
JIM.

No. XXII

MY DEAR FATHER,—

Your question as to the management of the affairs of this town is easily answered. There are no politics here except those of an international character, which probably accounts for the excellent way the ratepayers' interests are looked after in the town itself.

The Municipal Council is composed of men who appear to be intimately acquainted with every wickedness of which the human mind is capable; for they guard against lawlessness with an ingenuity only possible to those of ripe experience.

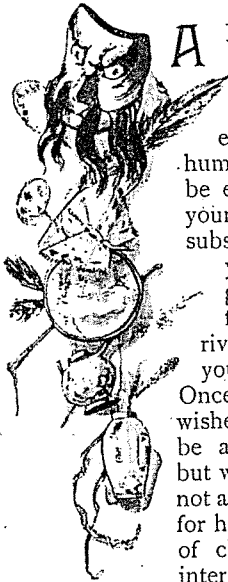
Of course, this only shows what keen observers they are; no one would suggest that they have been wicked themselves.

For the services they render the town, they do not, I understand, receive payment—though one of their number has recently been awarded four months' imprisonment—neither are they knighted, but on the other hand they are slanged

AH MAN.

A STUDY FROM LIFE.

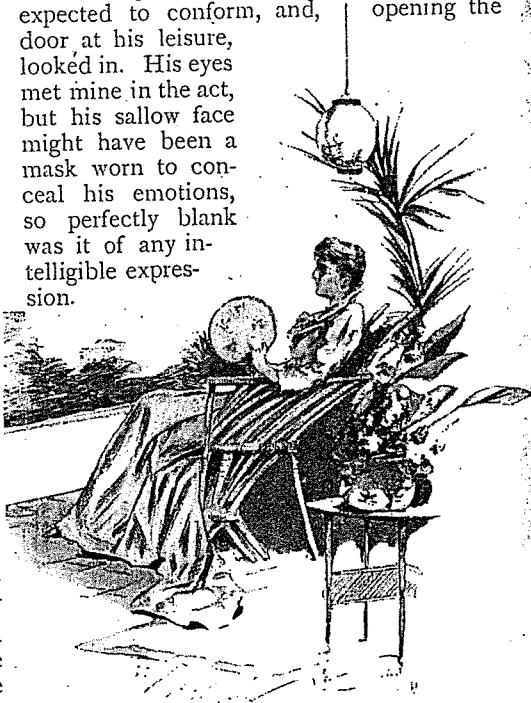
BY SARAH GRAND.



A HOUSE managed by Chinese servants works as if it were subject to natural law which is inevitable rather than to human discipline that can be evaded. If you dismiss your butler at breakfast, his substitute will stand behind your chair at lunch, and go about his business from the moment he arrives as if he had been in your service all his life. Once let him know your wishes, and everything will be arranged to suit them; but woe be to you if you are not a person of regular habits, for his motive power is a kind of clockwork which resents interference, and if you would put him back or hurry him on the probability is he will stop or break up altogether—at least, this is the view of him that is generally accepted. Ordinary Europeans who come in contact with him never seem to suspect that a servant so methodical can be anything but a machine. What precisely the human nature of him is in detail, wherein exactly he resembles or differs from us, opportunities never enabled me to decide; but once there came under my observation a profoundly interesting specimen, interesting as an enigma, the solution to which I seem to see, although I cannot find a formula in which to express it.

Our butler had been dismissed in the morning; and in the afternoon I was sitting alone upstairs in the verandah overlooking a grove of mango trees, the heavy foliage of which formed a screen between me and inquisitive amahs and coolies who might be loitering in the road below. The fruit shone ochre against the green in the cloudless sunshine. There were two doors to the

verandah, one leading into my sitting-room, and another on to the landing. Leading up to the latter was a carpetless staircase which echoed noisily to every tread, and as I sat fanning myself drowsily with a book on my lap, I became aware of the dull regular thud of rigid wooden soles clumping up, and knew that a Chinaman was ascending. It was a peculiarly emphatic, doggedly determined clump clump up, not at all like the step of any of our own servants. I thought there was the stiffness of age in it, and when it stopped an undue time outside the closed door, I supposed my visitor was recovering his breath before he knocked. He omitted the latter ceremony altogether, however, as being a foolish "foreign devil" fashion, perhaps, to which a superior Chinaman could not be expected to conform, and, opening the door at his leisure, looked in. His eyes met mine in the act, but his sallow face might have been a mask worn to conceal his emotions, so perfectly blank was it of any intelligible expression.



"Sitting alone upstairs in the verandah overlooking a grove of mango trees."

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We surveyed each other some seconds in silence, then he suggested abruptly in a gruff voice, uttering the words without emphasis, as if they had been let loose mechanically: "Wanshee butler?"

Certainly I wanted a butler, but my first thought was, "Not one with your manners, my friend, nor with such a cast of countenance." I did not say so, however. In fact I said nothing, but sat still and stared hard at him, thereby causing his conscience to smite him without intending it, for as I continued to gaze he removed his little black silk cap, slowly unwound his

character doubtless from former employers, and these he handed to me now without further preliminary. "Ah Man has asked me to write him a recommendation," I read on the first, "and as I am convinced that he will bathe in my blood if I refuse, I write him this in self-defence." "This is to certify," the next ran, "that Ah Man is the wickedest old scoundrel in China." "If you have courage for anything engage Ah Man, but not otherwise, as with him you never know what to expect," I read further; and yet another was written in similar terms.

Ah Man had watched me reading these productions. "Very good chit?" he suggested with some show of self-satisfaction when I looked up.

"Remarkable," I answered. "There is a kind of agreement about them that is convincing."

"My stop?" he asked.

I pursed my mouth, and shook my head.

He turned imperturbably to go, or so I should have thought had I not surprised a glance of his oblique brown eyes, a flash expressive of despair if ever an eye expressed anything, or I feared so, and I hesitated.

"Wait, Ah Man," I said. "Tomorrow I let you know."

"Chin chin," he responded, taking his left hand in his right and shaking it towards me. "Chin chin," he muttered again as he slowly closed the door. Clearly, it seemed to me, his courtesies depended upon my good manners; if I showed him no consideration, I need not expect any.

My next visitor was a colonial official, who arrived so soon after Ah Man had retired that I was sure they must have met on the stairs, and I was right.

"What was that old rascal, Ah Man, doing here?" he began immediately.

"You know him, then?"

"Know him? I should think so! Everybody knows him, and no one will have him in their service. He's notorious."

"But what has he done?" I asked.

"Everything, I should think. He made his name and became celebrated through taking advantage of an indiscretion on the part of one of his masters. There is a certain kind of British officer, you know, who thrashes his servants. He comes from India, where the natives are weakly and cannot retaliate, and therefore it is safe to thrash them. One Captain Guthrie Brimston, who

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"We surveyed each other some seconds in silence."

long thick pigtail, which had been coiled round his head, dropped it behind him, and replaced his cap. It is disrespectful for a servant to appear with his pigtail rolled up, but I could not tell if his coming so had been insolence or inadvertence. In any case, however, I considered that he had apologised, and let it pass.

He had a bundle of what looked like foreign letters in his hand, "chits" of

* In China everything that is not Chinese is called foreign.

overlooking

was quartered here, entertained the same delusion with regard to the Chinese at first. Ah Man was his servant and annoyed him one day, and he determined to thrash him. He called him in for the purpose, and gave him fair warning of his intention. 'All light,* Ah Man responded cheerfully. Then he went to the door and bolted it, which, having accomplished, he squared up to Captain Guthrie Brimston, politely intimated that he was ready, begged him to come on, and offered to wipe him 'off of a face of cleation.' By that time, however, Captain Guthrie Brimston had changed his mind; but, unfortunately for him, Ah Man, with the tenacity for which his race is distinguished, stuck to the point; and it was a poor satisfaction which Captain Guthrie Brimston afterwards secured at the police court."

"Ah Man is interesting!" I exclaimed.

"Yes," he answered, laughing; "he has distinguished himself in some equally unexpected way in every house he has entered yet."

"He is decidedly interesting," I repeated. "There is the charm of the unexpected in his character, which is irresistible."

"Well, I warn you, if you have anything to do with him, you'll repent it."

When my visitor had gone I rang for the boy. "Go catchee Ah Man chop chop,"† I said. "My likee he for butler."

So many original recommendations had been too much for me; I was impatient to secure him, and felt that if I failed I should have lost one of the great chances of my life.

Next day when I came down to breakfast I found beside my plate an exquisite arrangement of pinky blossom in a blue and white china jar of quaint design. Jar and flowers together were a work of art. "Where *did* they come from?" I exclaimed.

"My no savee," the boy answered stolidly.

A servant came round from behind and handed me a dish at the same moment, and on looking up in surprise to see who it was, for I had not noticed another in the room, I recognised the sinister visage of Ah Man, the new butler; but I never dreamt of associating him with the exquisite offering of flowers.

Besides the butler and "boy," who answers to a footman at home, we had a Larn-pidgin in our household at that time. Larn-pidgin (literally Learn-business) is a young boy who comes to be trained; he gives his help in return for the training, and does as

* In pidgin English *l* is substituted for *r*.
† Immediately.

much damage as he can in the time. We happened just then to have a particularly interesting Larn-pidgin. He was a thief



"I found beside my plate an exquisite arrangement of pinky blossoms."

naturally, devoured by curiosity, and garrulous to a degree, his favourite *role* being that of chorus to cast light on all that was obscure in the conduct of the other members of the establishment. I was his audience, or rather his victim, for he never spared me the result of his observations if it pleased him to keep me informed. He did not profess to have any respect for me, but spoke of me habitually as the "foreign devil's" wife, mimicked my manners, and laughed unaffectedly at my dress.

Larn-pidgin was privileged to be present at every meal, and took advantage of the privilege more or less regularly. As might have been expected, he had come in that morning to study Ah Man, and found the pursuit so absorbing that he did not trouble himself to wait upon us, but tacked about the room, taking observations apparently from different points of view. Suddenly there was a tre-

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mendous crash behind me, and boy and butler rolled on the floor amidst much wreckage of plates and dishes. They had been going quickly in opposite directions, but had been brought up short with a jerk, Larn-pidgin having managed, as they stood at the side-board taking things up to carry away, to tie their pigtails together. So I thought we might anticipate wild times of trouble between him and Ah Man.

The next time he had me at his mercy, being alone, he began about the dainty gift of flowers. He spoke much better English than the other servants.

"Wanshee know who kumshaw* you them flowers?" he began. "I savee. That Ah Man."

In spite of ominous predictions, all went well in the household from the time that Ah Man took charge of it. He was an excellent servant. There was the occasional hubbub of a fierce dispute down in the servants' quarters, and on looking over the verandah one caught glimpses of Larn-pidgin fugitive, and Ah Man with a stick in hot pursuit; but these were outdoor incidents that did not affect the indoor comfort of our daily lives, or the respectable decorum of our attendants when on duty. Most of my time was spent in reading, writing, and music, and I soon noticed that Ah Man took a curious interest in my pursuits. He alarmed me at first by persistently dusting my papers, about the arrangement of which I was particular; but I soon found that although he lingered long over them, patting them as if he were petting them, he never disturbed their order. My music, too, invariably brought him upstairs, and he would loiter about listening as long as I played. Larn-pidgin had done the same at first, and I had been so glad to think I was giving the poor boy pleasure that in a weak moment I asked him what he thought of my playing.

"I tinkee awful," he rejoined.

There come crises in life, whether of mental or physical origin, which set in with a sudden drastic for everything hitherto habitual. Interest goes out of the old pursuits, joy from the old pleasures, life is blank as a wall without windows, and the patient sinks at last utterly enervated. When one falls into this phase in the tropics the result is apt to be serious. You pass from an energetic attitude to an easy chair, from the chair to a couch, and then to bed, from whence you will not again arise unless roused by some vitalising force from without.

* Present.

It was the hot weather when Ah Man came to us, and soon afterwards I fell into this state of indifference. It grew upon me gradually until all the old occupations were abandoned. I was not very observant at the time, but it has since occurred to me that as my health declined I began to see more and more of Ah Man. He never spoke except in answer to some remark of mine, and then his replies consisted of a single syllable, or even a grunt if he could make that do, but he began to hover with his feather dusting-brush in his hand about my sitting-room, and especially about my writing-table, at hours that were unconscionable for dusting, and now I believe that on those occasions he came to satisfy himself; he wanted to see if I had been able to work. When I could not eat my breakfast, he would appear in the middle of the morning with a cup of beef-tea, which he would set down beside me silently, and if I had not touched it when he returned he would quietly take it away, and come again later with something else. He never said a word, nor did I, except to thank him.

Larn-pidgin was naturally very much on the spot at this time, interpreting in his character of chorus. Larn-pidgin was a cynic without any conception of what we mean by disinterested affection.

"Ah Man tink you makee die," he told me one day cheerfully, "and he not get 'nother number one mississee."

When I was in the last stage of the subtle disorder, and could no longer get up, his attentions redoubled. I had an English maid, but he came into my room as by right whenever he could frame a pretext, and watched my face furtively as I had seen him examine my writings, as if he would fain decipher the signs he could not comprehend. He was an artist in the arrangement of flowers, and would bring me fresh ones almost every day,



Larn-pidgin.

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each more exquisite than the last. It was all done, however, with a singular gravity. There was never a smile on his face, never a sign of any emotion; only his eyes showed the intelligence within, but even they said no more than we see in the eyes of animals when they are watchful.

A friend of mine had an amah,* a nice woman, whom she often sent to me with messages at this time. Ah Man would show her in, but he always did it in a lordly way, as if



"He sat himself down in my chair, and proceeded to turn the pages of the magazine."

he despised her. Larn-pidgin came continually, waiting and watching doubtless with the deepest interest for early symptoms of my dissolution. On one of these occasions I had been wondering why Ah Man was so ungracious to the comely amah, and I asked Larn-pidgin.

"Ah Man mallied† to her," he grunted contemptuously.

The amah brought me some unbound numbers of the *Cornhill Magazine* one day, with a note from my friend entreating me to try and read the story, "Far from the Madding Crowd," that ran through them.

* Maid.

† Married.

She said it was by an anonymous writer, they thought George Eliot, and would revive me. I took up the first number without the slightest interest, merely to please her, and began to read. I had not looked at a book for weeks, and found it an effort at first, but by degrees all consciousness of strained attention wore off insensibly. I ceased, as it were, to read, and began to live in the book, and I found something neither visible nor definable, but perfectly perceptible to me, something vivifying, worth having, worth using, and more, worth contemplating in another, a power that wrought itself into feeling and claimed in me a humble kinship.

After the third number I sat up, and asked for strong tea and bread and butter. Next day I struggled on to a couch. At the end of a week my brain was busy again, and only the state of skin and bone to which I had been reduced remained to show that I had ever been ill.

Ah Man watched my progress with simmering excitement. When I sent for strong tea, he brought it himself, quite fussily for him. Later he tried champagne and an omelette as an experiment on his own account, and, finding it eminently successful, he redoubled his efforts; and every time he came in he eyed the orange covers of *Cornhill* with undisguised interest. At last, under an elaborate pretence of dusting, he managed to abstract one of the numbers, and retired with it to the next room. From where I was lying I could not see him through the door, but there was a mirror on the wall beside me which reflected his subsequent proceedings accurately, to my no small edification. When he thought himself out of sight, the dusting brush fell from his hand as if he had forgotten that he held it, and he sat himself down in my special easiest chair, drew a pair of huge spectacles with tortoise-shell rims from his voluminous sleeve, adjusted them, and then proceeded to turn the pages of the magazine over conscientiously from beginning to end, looking up and down each carefully as if in search of something. I could see that the pictures excited a tragic interest in him. He gazed into them close to, then held them off a little, then raised them above the level of his eyes and looked up to them, his face meanwhile intently set, and yet with a show of excitement on it, and a glow such as samshu brings to a Chinaman's cheeks; it was as if he had at last obtained something deeply desired, and was revelling in the first ecstasy of possession. He was not left long in peace to enjoy it,

however, for Larn-pidgin, patier thoroughly absorbed on him from behind, which was the back of the chair had brought for cautious precipitous observation to cracker explode his chair, and as I could see one.

For the next consecutive. By day a sky bare as a cloud, and at night radiated up as if we could not breathe of fresh air, the hoarse change as by a relieve us. The such a passion slept I dreamt it particular I remember to come to a cliff with a low, grey sky on that ac methodical as the able, and noble lounge about the exhausted to endure. It might look at us, that terrible suspense, for something... decrease of weary self to being some relief of ice and snow approaching an eminent danger, Officers and crew to keep the ship not respond, however a fearful rate, ing for the collision The deck quiver Ah Man was still little saucer of slender strips of feeble light flick he looked grotesque if never occurred "What you demanded.

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ymous writer, they would revive me without the slightest harm, and began to read at a book for sport at first, but by and by strained attention ceased, as it were, on the book, and I was visible nor definable to me, something worth using, and I went in another, a into feeling and friendship.

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progress with sim- a I sent for strong ; quite fussily for champagne and ant on his own ac- cidentally successful, and every time he je covers of Corn- st. At last, under sting, he managed nbers, and retired From where I was through the door, he wall beside me quent proceedings edification. When sight, the dusting as if he had for- id he sat himself chair, drew a pair tortoise-shell rims e, adjusted them, a the pages of the sly from beginning own each carefully- thing. I could excited a tragic l into them close little, then raised eyes and looked while intently set, itement on it, and rings to a China- if he had at last desired, and was sy of possession. cease to enjoy it,

however, for Larn-pidgin was in the neighbourhood, patiently waiting till he should be thoroughly absorbed, when he stole a march on him from behind, tied a cracker to his pigtail, which was hanging down over the back of the chair, lighted it from a taper he had brought for the purpose, and retired with cautious precipitation to a distant post of observation to await events. When the cracker exploded, Ah Man bounced out of his chair, and the episode ended, so far as I could see, in hot pursuit of the evil one.

For the next few months the heat was excessive. By day it beat down upon us from a sky bare as a lidless eye of all solace of cloud, and at night it arose from the earth and radiated upwards. It seemed each day as if we could never endure another without a breath of fresh air, but we lived on nevertheless in the hope that the monsoon might change as by a miracle earlier than usual and relieve us. The longing for fresh air became such a passion at last that always when I slept I dreamt it was snowing. One day in particular I remember, when the heat seemed to come to a climax; a dark day it was, too, with a low, grey sky, but all the more oppressive on that account. Even the servants, methodical as they were, did as little as possible, and nobody else did anything but lounge about the house, too hot to talk, too exhausted to eat, but devoured with thirst, and conscious all the time of the effort to endure. It might have been supposed, to look at us, that we were all a prey to a terrible suspense, so obviously were we waiting for something. After dark there was a slight decrease of temperature, and I took my weary self to bed early, in the hope of finding some relief in sleep. As usual I dreamt of ice and snow. I was on a great ship, approaching an iceberg. We were in imminent danger, and all was confusion. Officers and crew were making frantic efforts to keep the ship clear of the ice. She did not respond, however, but kept on her course at a fearful rate, and I held my breath, waiting for the collision. It came with a crash. The deck quivered. I started up in bed. Ah Man was standing over me, holding a little saucer of oil, in which burnt some slender strips of pith for a wick. With the feeble light flickering upon his sinister face, he looked grotesque as a bronze demon, yet it never occurred to me to be afraid of him.

"What you wanshee, Ah Man?" I demanded.

He held his head in a listening attitude,

significantly, and, following his example, I became aware of a tumult in the street, with cries and trampling as of excited people.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Dat earth hab catchee too muchee bad inside," he answered.

I could not think what he meant, but he had hardly spoken before there came an appalling uproar; it was as if a mighty engine were crashing along under the house and threatening to shake it down. No need to ask another question, although it was my first experience of an earthquake. Ah Man was shivering nervously.

"What shall I do?"

"Get up," he answered laconically, and at the same time he handed me some garments that were lying on a chair, and held the light while I scrambled into them. Ah Man never stood upon ceremony, but indeed I think it is hardly necessary when there are earthquakes about.

A great stillness succeeded the shock, and it was evident to me as we hurried downstairs that only he and I were left in the house; every one else had deserted me. Out in the street, among the howling Chinese, it was pandemonium let loose. The crowd was making for an open space on the hillside, and thither Ah Man piloted me safely.



"In hot pursuit of the evil one."

He found me a place among some decent amahs, and then all at once he disappeared. Two great shocks and some slighter ones succeeded each other during the night, and always after each the howls of the people

were awful. In the intervals they let off fire-crackers and burnt joss-sticks* to propitiate the demons, but looked by the fitful flare and flash of these like the very worst of demons themselves. All eyes were turned towards the city as the dawn broke, and it emerged, as it were, out of darkness. There was little enough to see. Some of the buildings had fallen from the perpendicular, one here and there had collapsed altogether, great cracks appeared on others, and roofs had fallen in; but the damage looked old and accustomed already in the first glow of the sunrise.

I made my way back to our house alone. It was in the part of the town which had suffered most, and was cracked from top to bottom. I ascended the stairs nervously, and heard subdued voices muttering in my sitting-room, one wall of which had fallen forward into the verandah.

* Joss is a god.

† Worship.



"And there beneath the beam, but ghastly still, I recognised Ah Man."

There had been a heavy beam in the ceiling above my writing-table, and this had come down. Several servants were crowded together beside it, looking at something lying on the floor, but when they saw me they separated to let me see, and there, beneath the beam, face downwards, grasping a bundle of papers in his hand, but ghastly still, I recognised Ah Man. He had returned to rescue my wretched writings.

Larn-pidgin was there too, deeply interested in the details. When he saw me all overcome, he sidled up to me and explained, but less in his habitual character of chorus than in that of unctuous moralist, improving the occasion: "He tinkee you all same joss," he said, "dat Ah Man! He pay you joss-pidgin."† The obvious moral, according to Larn-pidgin, being that it would have been better for Ah Man had he kept himself from idols.

MR. EUSTACE

A pretty wedding interest, took place at Church, Florence, daughter Esq., and Mr. Chudleigh, Piazza, Cavot Florence, was married to Mr. Eustace Reynold Ball, B.A., of Inner Temple Barrister-at-Law, eldest son of late Rev. A. Ball, M.A. The bride's dress was white duchesse satin, trimmed with old Brussels point lace; the train being entirely bordered with it, and set off the right side a pretty horsehair of orange-blissoms. The tulle veil was fastened by a sword hair of sapphires and diamonds (the gift of the bridegroom). Her other ornaments were a lovely pearl necklace. The dress was composed of green hand-made Edinburgh perle satin ribbon and straw hat with l

"Mr. Wrong."

A CHINA COAST TALE.

CHAPTER I.

It is a very great mistake, not to say a grave misfortune, for a girl to fall in love with a man before he has fallen in love with her. But it is a mistake that occurs, despite all the proprieties, very often in this generation.

And when it came to excuses—there were plenty for Eva Joyce. She was very poor, and very pretty, and had been brought up to count her face as her fortune. Then, she was governess to children generally reputed to be the naughtiest and the most objectionable, not only in Newchwang, but in all the Treaty Ports. And, thirdly, she had seen so much of him.

I don't think he meant it in the least, by which "it" be it understood a design to destroy her peace of mind merely for want of something better to do—but he certainly went out of his way to pay her little attentions, which attentions he would have been wiser not to have paid. But breathes there a man—fathers always excepted—who can stand by and see a pretty young girl bullied and brought to the verge of tears by three or four spoilt monkeys, without finding his hands in the collars of their astonished owners, and causing a universal shrieking stampede on the part of the young tormentors? And then, the field clear, and poor, pretty, helpless Eva Joyce in agony lest she should now get into trouble with her employers, what man could have helped comforting her a little, always without meaning anything serious?

Eva Joyce had plenty of diplomas, certificates and credentials. She had passed through the regular course of higher education, and could command a high salary. But she was quite alone in the world. And the path of right living and ideal-following is very slippery and dangerously discouraging to the girl who has no home-people to care for her.

And so Archie Urquhart was kind to her, for which Eva was grateful. That was the very beginning of the trouble. Then, as is the fashion in small ports, Archie came every day to the house—for Eva's employer was his official chief—and there he saw Eva rudely, almost insultingly, treated by his host, and overworked, or thoughtlessly left out in the cold, by his perfectly good-natured but altogether absorbed-in-maternity hostess. Naturally, being a gentleman, he sided with the oppressed governess, and even on one occasion nearly came to loggerheads with his chief about her. Eva certainly contrived to strengthen him in his opinion that she was ill-used, by means of a peculiar tactlessness—inherent in some women—which seemed to bring out all the brute there was in Mr. Lloyd, all the selfishness in Mrs. Lloyd, just when Archie Urquhart was there. But though that Quixotic youth risked his prospects in life, and narrowly escaped embroiling himself for Eva Joyce's sake, he never for a moment came near falling in love with her.

And why?

For the very best of reasons: that he was already in love with another girl.

Not that any one knew it, the girl herself included. Archie Urquhart had not been born north of the Tweed for naught. And his love could not hold a candle to Eva Joyce in looks or accomplishments, or a great many other things Archie's people would have considered essential in a girl who would certainly one day be lady, and might possibly, failing five or six cousins, be a peeress. A poor little missionary-girl, who acted up to her very dim lights, bore patiently the upbraidings and revilings of the cantankerous old maid with whom she was appointed to dwell; a girl who was shockingly badly dressed, who never dreamt of love or marriage: an enthusiast, if you will a maniac, but, at any rate, Archie Urquhart's ideal woman.

So Eva Joyce played his accompaniments in vain—Archie laboured under the painful delusion that he possessed a voice—dreamt of him in vain, took the children for walks past his house in vain. After nine months Archie Urquhart was no nearer the "scratch" than he had been at the beginning.

Then Eva began to cast about her for the Why, and failing to find it, set to work to plan out the How.

For she was bound by a three years' engagement to the Lloyd family, of which time barely a year had gone. Two years more of this drudgery? Impossible, impossible! And besides, she genuinely loved Archie.

When a girl loves, and is not loved in return, one of two

things happens. Either she sinks into a sentimental softness and general compassion for all mankind, of which she deems herself the scapegoat and most miserable member; or her love curdles into a deep resentment towards all who are more fortunate than herself. From which resentment springs not only envy, hatred, malice, etc., but a resolve to do unto others, so far as in her lies, what has been done to her. She is miserable; it is but fair that others should be miserable too.

They were a very small circle in that out-of-the-way outpost in China, small to an embarrassing degree in winter, when the river was icebound for three months and more at a time, and no fresh arrivals with, if not fresh ideas, at least fresh "gup," were possible. There was the Consul, engaged in a constant warfare with the Commissioner of Customs, Mr. Lloyd. Then there was Archie Urquhart, and Mr. Frederick Freke. Mr. Freke was the senior assistant, but no one in the community ever dreamt of putting him before, even of bracketing him equal with, his junior Archie. Grey hair and middle age had stolen upon Frederick Freke without his noticing them, or rather without any one else's noticing them. He had always lived out of the tide of youth; had never raced ponies in Peking, never danced in a dance, never joined in a jambaree. He had but one enthusiasm—if you could call that an enthusiasm which was so very sober and middle-aged—and that was Chinese. But the world was none the richer for his knowledge; indeed, there were those who declared he had nothing to impart to it. Be this as it may, he was known to conscientiously spend a certain number of hours every day in looking at sundry pages of Chinese; and it was perfectly positive that he had laid by a large amount of dollars.

After the Consular folk and the Customs, there were only the missionaries. Even the doctor was a missionary doctor, with a reputed American degree, obtained after some six months' apprenticeship in the States. Luckily, the port was a healthy one, and the doctor had a commendable way of experimenting with his drugs on the vile bodies of the natives. Most of the missionaries were American too, but Mrs. Lloyd was very friendly with them, and discountenanced all games in which her children and the missionaries' youngsters tried to introduce the Battle of Bunker's Hill. Mrs. Lloyd was a peace-loving woman, in mortal dread of her husband and children. Even Eva Joyce inspired her with an uncomfortable feeling of inferiority—thanks to those unlucky diplomas and certificates! She only felt herself at her best, and all her rejected maternal and wifely feelings

gratefully appreciated, with Archie Urquhart's ideal woman, Lina Allen.

And so it came to pass that she invited Lina constantly to spend some hours with her, while Eva was dreaming, over endless scales, of the days to come when she should never touch the piano. And so it also came to pass that Archie Urquhart, who hated nothing more than his own company, constantly joined the two women after office hours, to the great perturbation of his well-ordered mind and his strong wholesome body.

Archie Urquhart had his own peculiar unconventional way of turning into the Commissioner's gate straight from the office, with inky fingers, soiled coat, and that dustiness which every well-conducted male brushes off before appearing in the presence of ladies. He was so jolly, so hearty, so full of spirits that women pardoned him these, his little trespasses. Mr. Freke, on the other hand, never dreamt of putting in an appearance till Eva and the tea-tray were due. Then he came, summer and winter, in the same buttoned-up, collarless coat—it was really an alpaca coat in summer and a serge one in winter, but the two coats looked exactly alike—refused to drink any tea, but sat by smiling in a nervous way, while Eva chaffed Archie Urquhart in the most fascinating way, and Lina Allen shrank into the background, and faded out of the lively circle as the clock struck four. For it was only from two to four every day that Lina Allen was allowed by her old maid guardian to call her soul her own.

Archie Urquhart never offered to take Lina home; never seemed to note her going. He even—for a man strong physically is often a coward mentally—used to laugh when Eva made fun of Lina's dress, her darned cotton gloves, and the inverted small clothes-basket that stood for her hat. Mr. Freke never laughed, and so Eva also jeered about *his* affection for Lina. But the reason why Mr. Freke never laughed was that he never heard a single word either Eva or Archie was saying.

No, Mr. Freke never heard a word Eva said, never answered her or anybody else till he had been addressed at least three times. Not because he was deaf, nor because his thoughts were far away among his beloved Chinese pamphlets, but because he was, during that hour he regularly passed in the Lloyds' house, no longer a responsible being. He was utterly absorbed, to the exclusion of all outside ideas, in the ecstatic contemplation of that little flirt, that naughty little quiz, Eva Joyce.

I think what first drew his attention to her was her beautiful

handwriting. Eva wrote divinely (there is a divine hand, as well as a damnable one), and not only English, but Chinese characters too. She had picked up—no one knew how—that art of reproducing those exquisite turns of the writing brush which is pick-up-able by so few. Mr. Freke, though he had laboured in vain, and sweated much, still wrote Chinese abominably. Eva Joyce came along, copied a few pages for Mr. Lloyd on one occasion when he was hard pressed for time, and lo! no European expert could have distinguished her characters from those traced by a native. Those few pages of copy for Mr. Lloyd turned Mr. Freke's ancient head. They were so utterly exquisite that he secretly possessed himself of them, and sat up for two whole nights copying them again, which inferior copy of Eva's copy he managed to substitute in the official archives. Eva's work he kept for himself.

And so, as he daily sat and watched her, and saw her pretty little hands—Eva was justly proud of them—moving about the tea-tray, or the handle of her fan tracing strokes and curves everywhere and anywhere (for Eva fancied herself on a foreign habit of gesticulating, and had rather cultivated what nervous folk call fidgeting), sober Mr. Freke completely lost command of himself. He never considered for a moment whether Eva was a suitable wife for him, whether he was a suitable husband for her, whether marriage would entail upon him more of sacrifice than of satisfaction; the marriage part did not enter into his calculations at all. He was like a book-maniac, who sees before him an inestimably precious folio, into which he will probably never look, but to possess which, for the mere pleasure of possession, he is ready, if need be, to sell his soul. He is conscious of naught besides this, his heart's desire, nor does he realise that the having it may send leanness into his soul.

But how to get it? Here indeed was the rub. How is a man, who has sat and stared steadily before him for an hour daily during six calendar months—staring at nothing for the most part apparently—how is such a man to suddenly change his skin, and appear as a suitor? And how find a chance to say anything suitor-like to a girl who had no eyes and no ears for anyone but that great lout Archie Urquhart?

Love—for in his own way he was genuinely in love—made Mr. Freke a very wide-awake looker-on at the game that poor little Eva Joyce was trying to play. One did not need to be very wide-awake to see that Eva was in love with Archie. Mr. Freke did not mind that; jealousy was not part of his mental composition. But it took a great many weeks, even months, to be quite

sure where Archie was in the matter. As has been previously stated, that imprudent young man was constantly skirting the border-line between jest and earnest with Eva. Mr. Freke was in two minds concerning his junior's intentions for some five weeks. Then he decided that, incomprehensible to him though it was, Archie was not his rival, though there was no saying when he might become one. He was certainly no "farrarder" with Miss Joyce at the end of another fortnight, though during that time Eva had been the victim of two scenes wherein Archie had gallantly played the part of rescuer. And then, after the fortnight, by the merest chance, owing in fact to the trivial circumstance that his watch (instigated no doubt by the Evil One himself) suddenly gained half-an-hour in a single day, Mr. Freke found himself in the Lloyds' drawing-room at half-past three instead of at four, and in possession of Archie Urquhart's secret.

For there he sat, the great lout, the useless hulk, as Mr. Freke, checking Archie's work with its maddening slips, so often had dubbed him—with his eyes fixed on Lina Allen, and his ears drinking in the sound of her voice. There was a mirror opposite the window outside which Mr. Freke, in his usual cat-like way, had lingered an instant before making his presence known by tapping on the open woodwork. It was in this mirror that Mr. Freke saw Archie's face as neither of the women could see it. Lina was reading aloud; her eyes were on the book. Mrs. Lloyd was busy counting stitches in her knitting. And Archie was gazing his fill at the girl, with that look in his eyes which one need not be a lover oneself to recognise—that look of an infinite longing which, for the time being, sets an individual apart from his fellow-men.

Mr. Freke rapped, not so discreetly as usual. His fingers were trembling unaccountably—with joy. Then he stepped into the room and greeted the ladies with an effusiveness and flow of spirits which even the discovery that he was half-an-hour too soon failed to damp.

It mattered not now the least to him that when Eva came in with reddened eyelids Archie devoted himself to her, and carried on a brisk conversation in an undertone of concern. Mr. Freke saw that Archie's heart and eyes were both far away; he followed them as they watched Lina slip away; he saw them grow sombre as the sound of Mr. Lloyd's voice came to their ears, inquiring in his most offensive manner after the progress of "her converts." More, Mr. Freke imagined he saw Archie slightly raise himself in his chair, as though to follow and stand by Lina. But Mr. Lloyd came into the room, Lina's steps died away, and

Archie, lumbering across the room with Mrs. Lloyd's tea and cakes, nearly came a cropper over Mr. Freke's stick, which the owner, all unconsciously, was twirling round and round in his hands in a fashion absolutely juvenile.

CHAPTER II.

SUCH was the lull that preceded the great storm.

The storm had been giving signs of its approach long before it actually broke. Little speeches, little gestures, like the leaves whirling before the rising wind; little misunderstandings, little chidings, like the dust-clouds, clearly showed to Mr. Freke, if to no one else, that Eva Joyce's limit of endurance was rapidly being neared. What would happen then? Supposing she threw herself on Archie Urquhart's protection, appealed to his pity (which pity, the world would have us believe, is akin to love)—what might Archie do? The possibility of that *might* alarmed Mr. Freke, for the first time in his life, into actually deciding upon doing something, and into violating the only principle by which his life was governed: that principle which, in those who succeed, is called masterly inactivity, and in those who fail, drifting.

And so, one fine afternoon, taking his courage in both hands (one hand would really have contained all he possessed) Frederick Freke turned into the Lloyds' gate, resolved to propose to Eva Joyce before the sun went down.

How unpromising the occasion turned out to be, in spite of all Mr. Freke's preparations for the dread interview! As Mr. Freke was immovably a steady man, that whisky and soda, of which the fragrance still lingered around him, must have been necessitated by the heat, not by that sinking of the inner man which makes the diffident betake himself to Dutch courage. Yet at first sight it appeared as though he had disarranged his internal economy, and bereft himself of an appetite for dinner—all in vain.

For Mrs. Lloyd was out in the garden, under the great trees in the shade, and entertaining the whole missionary body.

The tea-table was surrounded by black coats, sported by men who, most of them, ought to have been ashamed, at their ages, to bandy words as they were attempting to do with Eva. Archie Urquhart, leaning gloomily against a tree in the background, was watching, with a thoroughly ill-tempered scowl on his face—the tea-table group, was it? No, it must have been something

the tea-table hid from his (Mr. Freke's) view, for when Eva turned round to speak to him Archie gave a great start and blushed a most hot, unaccountable crimson.

And Mr. Freke, walking up to Mrs. Lloyd, to shake hands with her, saw the little group in the background which had been hidden from him before.

Only a young missionary, very young, very plain, and very much in earnest, who had drawn his chair particularly close to Lina Allen's, and was talking unceasingly to her. And, on guard, with an odious simper on her faded countenance, the redoubtable Miss Brown, Lina's guardian and tormentor.

"There's a case over there, don't you think?"

Mr. Lloyd, prowling round the tea-table, flung the words, with a backward jerk of his thumb over his shoulder, at the entire company of black coats, who forthwith turned their heads as one man, while Eva tittered.

"They seem exactly suited for each other—except in age," she laughed. "There, I fancy, she has the advantage. Don't you think so, Mr. Urquhart?"

But for once Eva had made a slip.

"I think Miss Allen a great deal too good for most people," came the astonishing answer. "And I greatly admire that gentleman's taste."

And before Eva had time to make the smart repartee which set all the old black-coats coughing and choking with laughter, Archie Urquhart had slouched across to Lina, and thrusting himself between Miss Brown and her charge, had compelled the youthful missionary to transfer his attentions to the elder lady.

Eva made her repartee, and her circle applauded, as they had applauded everything she had uttered that afternoon. But it was her last sparkle, in any sense of the term. Her mood changed noticeably; so noticeably that the black-coats began to look at their watches, and half turn towards their respective spouses, who with one ear devoted to Mrs. Lloyd's slightly prosy anecdotes of her amahs and children, had been listening with scarcely-suppressed indignation to the conversation round the tea-table. Such an unseemly noise as that governess had kept up! Mrs. Lloyd should show her her proper place, and make her stay with the children. The walk home, when the wives would have their innings, promised to be anything but dull for the erring husbands.

The party began to break up directly. Miss Brown, her best teeth set in a smile, rose to take her leave. The young mis-

missionary followed her example, and Lina pushed back her chair to follow them.

"Mr. Urquhart, will you tell the boy to take away the table?"

Eva's voice, coming from out two white lips, though shaky, was perfectly distinct.

Archie looked round calmly.

"In a few minutes, Miss Joyce. No, Miss Brown, Miss Allen is not going with you now. I will see her home, by your leave, in good time for her class."

And before Lina could protest, he had drawn her hand within his arm, and was leading her across the lawn.

"I am going to give the boy your message, Miss Joyce."

* * * * *

"My eye! I always thought it was to be you, Eva!" cried Mr. Lloyd jocularly, when in an awesome silence the two had disappeared, and the missionaries, slowly recovering from their amazement, were resuming their farewells.

Poor Eva! Was not this the last straw? How she longed, with a longing straight from Satan himself, to strangle Mr. Lloyd, catch him by the throat till his horrid, ogling eyes protruded from their sockets; to shake him, to call him a beast, a beast! Was there no one to sympathise with her?—no, not sympathise, Eva wanted no sympathy, but to cover her retreat. No one, no one! the skunks, the cowards!

And as these thoughts rushed into her brain, looking with a bold eye at her tormentor, she caught sight of—Frederick Freke, sitting coolly by, sharpening a pencil.

His eyes were steadily fixed on his work; fixed, that Eva might not see the triumph in them. Scratch, scratch, scrape, scrape, with the coolest deliberation, till the offending pencil was snatched out of his hand, actually wrenched from him, and flung right away among the bushes by Eva Joyce herself.

"You set my nerves on edge with your scraping," she said with an impatient stamp of the foot. And as Mr. Freke looked up, in such genuine surprise that all other emotion was blotted out from his countenance, she added, with a catch of her breath which sounded alarmingly near a sob: "I will come with you and help you find it now."

Truly that Providence which is said to watch over fools and bairns had a special eye told off to look after Frederick Freke that afternoon.

CHAPTER III.

NEITHER of the couples wished for a long engagement.

Archie Urquhart, as perhaps was to be expected, had been rather astonished at himself when he came to cogitate over the events of the afternoon in the quiet of his own chamber, and by the assistance of an excellent manila. Archie belonged to that class of men who genuinely adore and admire a woman as long as they are in the same place, or house, or company, as she is in, but who, on leaving that particular place, or house, or company, straightway but decidedly cool down. Call them not fickle, for they are not so. As long as they have a chance of meeting their flame, they are wholly hers. But take away that chance, let one or the other leave the port with no definite prospect of return—Archie Urquharts are easily consolable.

And it may be that it was because Archie Urquhart felt he could not rely upon himself, could not trust himself should he be separated from Lina, that he was in a hurry to get married.

For this was what his chief had said to him on parting that evening:

"What a fool you have been, Urquhart, to get yourself engaged! I know positively that you are to be transferred to Shanghai next month. I would have told you before if I had guessed that you were going to make such an ass of yourself!"

And Archie, not being able to give his chief the kicking he deserved, had gone home and sworn at his boy; and then, feeling ashamed of himself, had come to the unalterable resolution of going to the Consulate to have the banns put up the very next morning.

As for Mr. Freke, he was in no such hurry. Like the bibliomaniac whose offer has been accepted, he was quite willing that his property should remain on show in another's window for a time, labelled *Sold*, to be sure, but admired and envied and regretted by too late bidders. The prize was his (he ignored the fact that no one had wanted it but himself); and he did not now much mind whether the two years of Eva's contract with the Lloyds elapsed before he should place her in his own sanctum. Indeed, he was by no means prepared to marry her at once; for will not the girl to whom you are engaged be even more ready to oblige you in the matter of copying than your own wife? And, as has been already stated, it was principally, if not entirely, with a view to his own library that Mr. Freke had acted.

But Eva was by no means content to wait. She was in a very devil of a hurry to be gone, to quit the scene of her humiliation, to be able to answer back Mr. Lloyd as he so richly deserved, to be no longer the servant at the beck and call of those odious children, but free, independent, her own mistress, at her own disposal. Poor Mr. Freke! he entered not at all into her vision of the future. He was simply the means to her end, the machine who was to pay. The only virtues that Eva felt redeemed Mr. Freke as a marital appendage were, that he showed no signs of getting bald, and that his teeth were undoubtedly his own.

It is a lamentable fact, but a true one, notwithstanding its lamentability, that the Eva Joyce who went to bed that evening was not the Eva Joyce who had got up the morning before. And undoubtedly on Archie Urquhart's broad shoulders rested the responsibility for the warp in Eva's life.

She had never had a fair chance, poor girl, either for good or for evil. Now her chance had come, but with it had faded away all the desire to use it for good. She was conscious of nothing but a great restlessness, an overpowering wish to have done with the irrevocable, to be married, and to show Archie Urquhart that she did not care for him. He should be made to smart; she would make him tingle; he should see what a fool he had been; he should be sorry, and make that girl Allen sorry too, that he had not chosen differently.

Yet, though all her thoughts began, continued, and ended with Archie, Eva was quite positive that her present feeling for him was hatred pure and simple.

Both Mr. Freke and Mr. Lloyd protested against a speedy marriage, but in vain. Eva was bent on it, and when Mr. Lloyd brought forward what seemed to her bridegroom a crushing objection—the payment of the forfeit agreed upon in her engagement as governess—Eva turned the tables on Mr. Freke by promising for him that the money should be forthcoming. On that occasion Mr. Freke's breath was so completely taken away by the enormity of the promise that he was literally unable to speak, and his silence was counted for consent. But he vowed mentally that the like should never happen to him again.

Mrs. Lloyd on this occasion came out, according to Eva's notions, well. That is, she took Eva's part, and in such a practical way that even Mr. Freke was forced to yield. She scouted the idea of the forfeit in public, and secretly made over to her husband a nice little legacy she had been hoarding up to spend on her next holiday in Europe. You see, she was so very anxious to get rid of Eva!

So the banns were put up between Frederick Freke and Evelyn Joyce, as well as between Archibald Urquhart and Caroline Allen. And, as Mr. Lloyd could not spare both his assistants on honeymoon trips at the same time, Frederick Freke and Eva were married first, and left by the earliest steamer for Shanghai.

What a lovely time Eva had there, to be sure! So different, so blessedly different, from that last time, when she had passed through, a humble governess whom nobody noticed! Now there were broughams at her disposal, for though Mr. Freke had no friends, he had many acquaintances, and most of those of the masculine gender were ready enough to hover round "the remarkably pretty little girl" old Freke had picked up. They came, these bachelor friends, and took her out drives in their dog-carts for two; they sent her invitations to dances, where Eva was the belle of the evening and danced without ceasing, while her husband concealed his yawns in a corner among the old fogies. There was only one cloud on Eva's horizon, but an ominous one, alas!—she could not get a cent out of Mr. Freke. She might go in other people's carriages as much as she liked, go to as many gaieties as she chose, so long as Mr. Freke did not have to pay. And yet, as everyone told her, he was rolling in money!

Eva mentally resolved to set this right as soon as she got home.

Indeed, she might have done so, for Mr. Freke was really fond of her—in his own peculiar way—and would undoubtedly have yielded to her spells had she chosen to charm him. And in their own little outport, where she had nothing better to do, Eva might have become domesticated, perchance even a good wife. But a great shuffling and shifting took place in the Customs' service just then, and as if the Chief had simply laid his hand upon one group and transplanted them in a lump, the Lloyds, the Frekes, and the Urquharts all found themselves transferred to Shanghai.

The Urquharts—for Archie and Lina had been married the very day they left. Married in such an unbecoming dress, too! For Mrs. Lloyd, who had volunteered to superintend the wedding outfit, was lacking in taste to a degree positively disastrous. And Lina knew no more about dress than about Dutch.

Archie resolutely shut his eyes to the wedding garment. But shutting them only seemed to make him see more clearly than before a simple, but exquisitely dainty, white frock that had clothed another bride a fortnight before.

CHAPTER IV.

"You are not fair to Mrs. Freke, you really are not," Lina Urquhart protested to Mrs. Lloyd. "I don't like her, I never did, but I am sorry for her. She has such a mean husband, and such a hard life, with no children to make up for it!"

Mrs. Lloyd had been duly admiring a purply-red infant which Lina had caused to be brought in for exhibition. A very ugly and ordinary little mite, but perfection in its fond mother's eyes. The possession of her boy was making Mrs. Urquhart charitable to a foolish degree.

"But she has *not* got a bad husband, nor a mean one either. I have known Mr. Freke ever since I was married. He is not attractive, I grant you, but Eva chose to marry him; and no one will make me believe that, if she treated him properly, he would not be as kind to her as—your husband!"

Mrs. Lloyd spoke hastily, as was her wont. Perhaps a little more hastily than usual, for she pulled herself up abruptly over the last two words.

"I don't dislike Mr. Freke myself," Lina said hesitatingly. "Archie always said he helped him a great deal in the office, and I had got rather to like him when he came in the afternoons, just before baby was born. But after what Eva said of him yesterday—poor Eva, she quite cried about it—I don't think he can be nice to live with. At least not nice for Eva; you know some other girls would not mind. But she is so brilliant; Archie says she is the smartest woman in Shanghai, so of course she can't take much interest in what Mr. Freke likes. And then, he is so mean!"

Mrs. Lloyd frowned, shook her head, and frowned again.

"And Eva told you all this, did she?" she asked in a tone intended to be sarcastic.

"Yes; she came in yesterday, and I showed her baby, and seeing him seemed to upset her. I didn't believe till then she could be upset, could care for anything—you understand! I was so sorry for her; for Archie came home in the middle of it all, and she didn't hear him coming into the room, and went on saying things she wouldn't have said before him, I'm sure. I got Archie to take her home—it was pouring with rain—and he took her a little turn round, and she was quite bright again when he dropped her at her own door. Archie has such a nice way with women."

"A very nice way," Mrs. Lloyd assented drily. "Particu-

larly!" she repeated absently, touching the baby's crumpled-up hand with her little finger. The hand opened and closed over the finger, and both women stood silent for a few minutes. Then Mrs. Lloyd gently disengaged her finger, and turned to Lina with the nervous air of one who has something unpleasant to say, and who desires to say it quickly.

"Lina, I don't like Eva Freke. I never have liked her, and I never have trusted her. I have my good reasons for not trusting her, but it wouldn't be fair to give them to you. Only don't trust her, Lina, don't trust her even as far as you see her. And don't encourage your husband in being friends with her."

Which speech, solemnly delivered, so impressed Lina that she innocently repeated it all to Archie that very evening, adding, "What could she mean?"

"Mean!" Archie answered, getting up with a savage kick at an unoffending footstool; "it means that all women are cats, and all jealous of each other. She ought to have been ashamed of herself to try to prejudice you against that unfortunate girl. I must beg you, as my wife, to pay no attention to such nonsense, but to go on being as civil to Mrs. Freke as you have always been. By the way, I promised to drive her out to the Kennaways' party to-morrow afternoon. You didn't mean to go, did you, dear?"

"N—o, I suppose not," Lina said doubtfully. "Perhaps I had better wait another week before going about."

But she had intended to go; only Archie had forgotten all about her when Eva had asked him to drive her out.

CHAPTER V.

It takes a little longer in the Far East to get "talked about" than it does in the West. But not very much more in some cases, where the flirting is very outrageous—that is, in Eva Freke's case.

It was almost a case of changing husbands, Eva used laughingly to declare to Lina when she and Archie came in together from some drive or garden-party and found Mr. Freke sitting opposite Lina, gravely contemplating that wonderful baby. Mr. Freke was losing his interest in his studies, or rather Eva had cured him of his harmless little craze. She had a way of making him seem ridiculous in his own eyes, which Mr. Freke had found it impossible to stand out against.

"Why, Freddy," she had said one day, long long before, "you

don't know any Chinese, and you never will. I've heard your Chinese laughed at over and over again. Don't you see they only get you to speak at their meetings and to write in their Journals because they want your subscription? You *can't* speak, my friend, and you *can't* write; and every one is afraid to tell you so, except your poor little wife!"

True this may have been, and most likely was. I am too much of a Philistine to be able to say whether the world has been any the poorer since Mr. Freke left off enlightening it. But he himself was undoubtedly a loser.

Physically, too, Mr. Freke was declining. It is dangerous to disturb the habits of mind of a lifetime at forty-five. And Mr. Freke's had been more than habits: they had grown into his very being. Just as a man who retires early from business is fated to die sooner than if he had remained active—to die from utter boredom—so Mr. Freke's health began to suffer. He was still master enough to prevent Eva's flooding his house with guests; he still fought valiantly an ever-losing battle against her demands for money. But his wife had taken from him all he had striven after in life—taken, and given him nothing in return. He would have been utterly desolate had it not been for Lina Urquhart and Lina Urquhart's baby.

The world of Shanghai shook its head at Mrs. Freke—disapproved of her, and invited her all the same. She was the making of a party with her fun, and her life, and her little bit of naughtiness! The world likewise shook its head at Archie Urquhart's foolishness in dangling after Eva Freke, but it invited him and his wife all the same. And Mrs. Urquhart went and sat quietly in a corner, while her husband joined the group round Eva, and left his own wife to amuse herself as best she might. He always impressed upon her as they drove home that he had done so on purpose; that husband and wife should keep at opposite poles when they were in company. Frequently too, very frequently, he would take Mrs. Freke a drive. Herein, however, he must be absolved, for Eva never scrupled to ask him to take her, and she had not yet succeeded in getting a carriage out of Mr. Freke. Archie was always extra kind and attentive to Lina after these drives, and Eva, who invariably came in to tea afterwards, used to chaff Archie's wife exceedingly on *her* admirer, Mr. Freke. It vexed Archie rather that Lina never took up the joke.

In short, Archie Urquhart, from that foolish easy temper and readiness to interfere on behalf of any one whom he imagined was oppressed, was fast drifting into Eva's champion, and beyond

that—who knows? Not that he was in his heart of hearts a bit unloyal to his own wife; but Eva was decidedly good company when you wanted to be made to laugh. Mr. Freke was no companion to her, and—he was sure Lina didn't mind.

Still, matters got a little complicated when Eva ventured on a very tiny sneer at Lina. Archie coloured up then, and bit his lip, but, moral coward that he was, made no answer. However, Eva was quick enough to perceive she had made a mistake, and taking a sudden wifely fit, requested Archie to drop her at her own door (they were of course out driving). Mr. Freke had not been very well that day; she was anxious about him. So anxious that Archie, coming for a stroll along the Bund with Lina half-an-hour later, was amazed to meet Mrs. Freke, the centre of a lively throng, strolling towards the Public Gardens, where the little Manila bandsmen were entrancing crowds of loudly gossiping amahs.

But then Eva was so different again next day, and spoke so nicely of Lina! So nicely to her also, that Archie was again sorely perplexed. And she wept too, wept over Mr. Freke's unkindness, wept that she had no one to care for her! And then Archie felt mean; for he was Mr. Freke's friend too, yet he kept silence.

So the time drifted on, and tongues wagged louder and faster, and Mr. Freke looked older and feebler day by day, and Eva went on confiding in Archie, who was too weak-minded to reject her confidences, till matters came to a crisis. Mr. Freke it was who put an end to the whole concern. And this he did in a manner peculiarly annoying for Eva—in short, by dying quite suddenly.

He died at his desk in his office, quite quietly, and quite alone. Archie Urquhart, coming in to get him to correct some muddle in some report, had found him sitting with his head in his hands, leaning his elbows on the table, only dead, apparently without a struggle, without any pain. But his face, though peaceful, looked horribly careworn, and in his hand, crumpled up, was a note with a few words from his wife—words Archie's wife would never have penned to him:—

"You were so dull this morning that I am going to leave you to sulk by yourself the rest of the day. Expect me when you see me."

Archie crushed the note into his pocket as he went and summoned Mr. Lloyd.

For once in his life the chief was awed into respectful silence in the presence of the dead. In truth, he felt wretchedly cowardly, and having sent post haste for the doctor, and ordered

Mr. Freke's body to be laid on a long chair, he would willingly have cleared out to the Club for a pick-me-up, had he not been restrained by a wholesome fear of what the world would say. And, pacing up and down the passage outside Mr. Freke's office, there crowded in upon him all the unpleasant scenes he would have to go through in connection with this disaster. One at least he could avoid, and he would. Urquhart should go and break the news to Eva Freke.

"I don't suppose he'll mind the commission." Mr. Lloyd salved his conscience by saying this to himself. Then he called Archie, and bade him go forth.

Archie's face was very white, and his teeth set hard, as he came out of the dead man's room. Poor Freke! good fellow now—now when it was too late. He had neglected him—they all had neglected him—all but Lina. Poor Eva, who had been so anxious about him a few days since, how hard it was that he, whom she had called her best friend, should deal her this blow! But, after all, rather he than any one else, rather even than Lina. Thus he went.

"Mississy no can see."

The boy almost shut the door in his face. But Archie contemptuously thrust him aside, and flung the door wide open.

"Mississy must see," he said imperatively. "Talkey he come drawing-room chop-chop."

The awful look in Archie's eyes vanquished even the Chinaman. He fell back, and Archie walked through the passage, and tapped at the drawing-room door.

"Mississy no got that side," said the boy with a diabolical grin. "Mississy just now chow-chow breakfast."

And he pointed to the dining-room door. Archie opened the door, and went in.

There sat Eva at the breakfast-table, the poor Eva he had come to comfort for her husband's death.

Eva was it, indeed? Archie saw before him a young woman, dirty, untidy, clad in a torn morning wrapper. Her curls, those sweet little curls, "quite natural," which peeped under her broad-brimmed hat and round her little ears, were concealed by huge safety pins, which left her face bare and unshaded. Did Eva at home, then, wear wrappers that were pinned together? Did she leave her husband to breakfast alone—she—Eva, who had so pitied Archie when Lina had been laid up? Archie caught himself up in haste. With shame he remembered that while his sole thought ought to have been how to soften the shock he had to give her, while he ought to have considered,

nothing but the awful news he had brought, he had been criticising the unfortunate girl. But still——

"Mr. Urquhart!"

Eva's astonished voice brought Archie fully to himself. He looked at her, to gain courage for his tale, but the look was too much. He had never realised before, he scarcely realised now, how much admiration for Eva's person had swayed his affection for her. The Eva who had been "such fun" was not the Eva of this morning. This was the dead man's wife, the wife who had written that note he held in his hand, the wife who (how often they had laughed over it together!) had "cured" her husband of his harmless hobby. Those patent hair-curlers were gripping his imagination tight. Never—never more, could Eva Freke be to him what she had been. The look on that still face in the office had burnt itself into Archie's brain.

And so he told her the news quietly—gently it is true, but not tenderly, with his eyes averted, gazing at a blank wall. She did not interrupt him; there were no floods of tears, no hysterics, no fainting. She only asked—

"Must they bring him here?"

Archie's eyes travelled back to her face. The curlers were gone, Eva's fluffy hair strayed once more enchantingly over her face. While he had been telling her this tragedy she had been quietly arranging her toilette.

Archie rose and took up his hat.

"I will go and inquire, Mrs. Freke. Perhaps you had better burn this, which I found in your husband's hand."

And with the slightest inclination of his head, Archie Urquhart passed for ever out of Eva Freke's life.

LISE BOEHM.

COOLIES

CHEONG-WO did not bear a very good name even among his unprincipled compatriots, though I doubt if we could justly blame him for what happened during the voyage. I have since heard that several of our passengers were very badly 'wanted' by the police, and that Cheong-Wo was well paid to ship them out of the colony; but that is what any yellow man would do, or white one either, if he thought he wouldn't get found out. Both are 'on the make'; honestly on it if possible, if not, one must seize every trifling advantage. The aggregate mounts up rapidly. In China one must either 'squeeze' or be 'squeezed,' and as the former is the more pleasant sensation, its cultivation is obvious. Might is always right; but cunning is the supreme test of intelligence.

We were chartered this time to carry coolies from Hong Kong to Singapore and Penang,

William Carlton Dawe,
Yellow and white (London:
John Lane, 1895)

returning through the Straits to Bangkok, where we were to load with rice. On this particular occasion the aforementioned Cheong-Wo was the important person who had chartered us, and I can't say that he was neglectful of his own interest, for he not alone presented each of us officers with a box of good cigars, but the night before we sailed he had as many of us ashore as could come, and gave us the best dinner we had had for a long time. You may be sure that the 'old man,' which is the familiar way sailors speak of their captain—behind his back—also came in for something substantial. It was not likely that Cheong, who had propitiated the juniors, would forget that all-powerful one.

So, early one Thursday morning away we went with eighteen hundred of the ugliest, dirtiest wretches on board that it had ever been my lot to see—filthier, I believe, than the cargo of pilgrims we took to Jeddah last year. Pilgrims, I admit, are universally given the palm for filth; it is a part of their sanctity: they are human sewers, and worse; but I think that even the most devout pilgrim that ever journeyed to the sacred shrine at Mecca could not give many

points to several of the wretches we had aboard. At least, for the sake of the poor devils who have to carry them, I hope not. I was never on such a floating midden in my life, and I pray to heaven, apart from what happened, that I may never be again. To poke your nose down a hatchway, to get to leeward of a ventilator, or to pass 'tween decks, was to inhale the concentrated essence of eighteen hundred unprecedented stinks. To describe the scene is impossible, the details would be too revolting; but perhaps it is not altogether impossible to imagine eighteen hundred filthy creatures all huddled together for four or five days, afraid to leave their belongings for a moment.

All went well with us till we had passed the dangerous Paracels, a cluster of rocks lying in the track of steamers bound from Hong Kong to Singapore, upon which many a good ship had rushed to her doom. Even the thoughtless coolie breathes freer when he knows that he has passed that treacherous spot; while captain and officers, though not dreading it, heave an inward sigh of satisfaction as they think of it far astern.

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But, as I was saying, everything went well with us till we had passed this place. Our passengers seemed an innocent, well-behaved lot, albeit not over-cleanly. There were few disturbances among them, and little prowling in forbidden quarters, though once or twice we caught two or three ugly fellows in places where they had no right to be; but as one stands on no ceremony with coolies, they were somewhat unceremoniously hustled back to their own quarters. Yet when we were well on our voyage, and the Paracels passed, this prowling about increased to an alarming extent. No matter at what time of day or night you happened to be about the ship, you would find one of these fellows sneaking around somewhere, and not unfrequently when you expostulated with him, he would show his teeth. At night they spread themselves across the decks in such a way that you could scarcely move without walking on them; and though you might tread on the faces of eleven men with impunity, the twelfth might uprise and hamstring you, or, with a friend or two, toss you over the side, and who but themselves would be the wiser? When you have eighteen hundred

of the lowest class Chinamen aboard, you must not be surprised at anything.

As we drew nearer Singapore this prowling about grew more general, till we were pestered out of our lives. Our worthy passengers did not alone frequent the after-deck, which they knew they had no right to do, but they even took to peeping into the saloon and cabins. This was more than we could bear. Though only a 'tramp,' we had our dignity, and could not tolerate this setting our authority at defiance. One afternoon the captain, as he passed down the companion, caught a coolie, a thick, one-eyed, villainous-looking fellow, making his way into the saloon. Without more ado the old man seized him by the pig-tail, and gave him sundry sledge-hammer cuffs alongside of the ear, and then sent him spinning backwards with a kick. There were some horrid screams and oaths, and for a moment the fellow looked like fighting; but thinking better of it, he picked himself up and, growling beneath his breath, slunk off.

That was the beginning of the bother. The next move was one which for brazen impudence fairly staggered me.

I was keeping the first dog-watch at the time. We were making good headway in a smooth sea, with every prospect of reaching Singapore before another forty-eight hours had passed. The sky was clear, the glass set fair. On the starboard bow the sun, a great golden chrysanthemum, was sloping down to the west. I never knew a brighter day bring in a blacker night.

Presently the captain joined me on the bridge, and, after making a few of the usual inquiries, perched himself up in the port corner, and took a good look round; I, in the meantime, continuing my walk between the starboard corner and the binnacle. After a while he beckoned me to him.

'I don't like the look of those damned coolies,' he said. 'Have you noticed anything?'

'Nothing really suspicious, sir. They are always a bad lot, of course; but I think they know how far they can go.'

He laughed. 'I've taught one of them a lesson anyway.' And he told me what he had done.

I knew the man well enough, an ugly one-

eyed pig. He had been prowling about the ship ever since we had left Hong Kong.

'But the best of the joke,' continued the old man seriously, as though not quite sure of the humour of the thing, 'is that that one-eyed cuckoo actually came up to me just now and inquired if we were really going to Singapore. What do you think he meant?'

'I am glad we have not three or four hundred like him,' I answered evasively. 'We should want a detachment of soldiers to guard them.'

The old man began to laugh, then stopped midway, looking quickly over my shoulder. I saw his eyes start as though they would jump from his head. Then he bounded past me. Turning round, I saw that three of our passengers had mounted the bridge by the starboard ladder, and that the leader of the trio was the squat, one-eyed blackguard whom the captain had thrashed that afternoon.

'Well,' yelled the skipper, who, when his authority was disputed, was a fiend incarnate, 'what do you want?' Only he embellished this simple question with a whole gallery of beautiful adjectives.

The Chow grinned servilely, showing a row of dirty yellow teeth.

'Me likee speakee you, cap'n.'

'You infernal—' began the old man. But no. Since I cannot give the captain's impressive language in full, it would be folly to attempt any other. When the gods are angry the heavens thunder and the world quakes. Our captain was a god in his way, and when he spoke in anger, his rage coloured the atmosphere. He, however, gave the impudent Chinaman to understand that the bridge was the Olympus of the gods, and that neither mortals nor inferior deities had any right there. The one-eyed yellow man bowed and smiled. A Chinaman always smiles, though the smile is not always pretty.

'Wing solly, welly solly,' he said, 'but all ee same he come top side speak along of cap'n.'

'Well,' said the old man, unbending like a god, 'what the dooce do you want?'

'Me no wantee go Singlaplore.'

'Eh?' roared the captain, as though he doubted his hearing.

'Wing no wantee go Singlaplore side. Sab-bee?'

'Oh,' said the old man sarcastically, 'wouldn't like to go to Singapore, eh? Now, where would you like me to take you? Please give it a name.'

This delicate irony was lost upon Wing.

'Tonking way,' he said seriously: 'Flenchyman's China. Plenty better than Singlaplore.'

'Sorry to disappoint you,' said the old man suavely, 'but this ship's going to Singapore. Now clear, damn you, clear, or I'll break your damned neck.' And, his suavity gone, he strode savagely forward. The man, however, did not budge, though his two companions flew down the ladder, where, on the deck below, half a dozen more ugly wretches awaited them.

'Are you going?' roared the captain, pointing down to the deck.

'All li, all li.'

But his movements were so slow that the old man's boot had to waken him up a bit.

'Pretty cool, Anderson?' said he, turning to me.

'Very, sir. I think I should put that one-eyed chap in irons.'

'Oh, I guess he's had enough for one day.'

was the laughing reply. 'You won't forget to call me if you see anything?'

'No, sir.'

And so away he went, an awful bully of a man, but one in whom there was a lot of good run wild. I know I liked him with all his faults; and though at times I could have punched his head, at others I would have done anything for him.

Early the next morning the mate came to my berth and roughly awakened me.

'Hallo, Joe, what the devil are you doing?'

I sprang up, rubbing my eyes.

'For God's sake come on deck!' he whispered hoarsely. 'The old man's missing.'

'Missing?'

'Yes. Come as soon as you can.' And he was gone.

In two minutes I joined him on the bridge, and in the early morning light I thought his face looked ghastly.

'What is it, old chap?' I asked.

'My God!' he whined, 'this is a nice business and no mistake. The old man's missing. I went below to call him half an hour ago, and he wasn't in his room. I have searched every-

where, but there's not a trace of him to be seen.'

'But he must be about somewhere. He couldn't fall overboard.'

'No,' said the mate in a scared voice, 'he couldn't very well *fall* overboard; but suppose he was *chucked*?'

I started. Visions of the one-eyed Wing and his villainous companions flashed before me.

'They wouldn't dare,' I stammered.

'Ah, wouldn't they. I tell you what it is, Anderson, we've got the choicest crowd of blackguards aboard this boat that you'll find between here and Shanghai. My God!' he groaned, 'we may thank our stars if we don't get our damned throats cut between this and Singapore.'

'Nonsense!' I answered, disgusted at the cowardice of the man. 'Let us go down and fish out our revolvers, and put the engineers on guard. We ought to be in Singapore to-night.'

'O my God!' he moaned, 'I don't think we shall ever see Singapore again.'

'Not if you let them see you in that state.

'Work it out yourself.'

The mate did not take the hint.

'Well, let us hope you're right, Anderson. But seventeen hours! My God, what an eternity!'

I was turning away from him in disgust when I heard a scuffle outside by the binnacle. The next moment the quartermaster, who was steering, shouted loudly, 'Look out, sir!' I had only time to spring forward, unhitch the door, and slam it to when the foremost ruffian threw himself upon it.

'The window. Quick, quick!' I yelled to the mate.

In the front of the chart-room, looking out over the bridge, and so out across the bows of the ship, was a window, the glass of which slid in and out like a screen. There was also a sliding shutter of wood outside the glass again. This, luckily, the mate had seized in his fright. It came to with a bang, and we were safe for a while.

Save for a pale gleam of light which played about the end of the window, we were in utter darkness, and I could hear the mate moaning as he clutched the ring of the shutter to keep it in its place.

I'll go and warn the third and the engineers.
You keep a sharp look-out.'

'Wait a minute, Anderson. I—I think
you'd better not risk it.'

Knowing why he wished me to stay, I laugh-
ingly pooh-pooed all idea of danger.

'Then let us have a look at the chart first.'

We went into the chart-room, which was a
house built on a level with the bridge, the
door of which was set in the back, or after-
part of it. Here, spread out on the top of the
locker, which answered the purpose of a table,
lay the chart, and the mate and I at once
began to study it. Along the chart the captain
had drawn our course, marking off the length
of each day's run, and putting the date opposite
it. There was the addition he had made at
noon yesterday; the last, I was afraid, he would
ever make.

'Well, Anderson,' said the mate, 'what do
you make of it?'

I respected his feelings. He was not a quick
or skilful navigator.

'We should be abreast the lighthouse between
nine and ten to-night.'

'Are you sure?'

'My God!' he whined, 'we're in for it now.'

Though believing he was right, I would not gratify him by admitting as much. I struck a match and lit the lamp which was always kept in the chart-room—which, in fact, the mate had only put out an hour before.

'Let's see what's here,' I said, as I began to search the lockers. 'Perhaps we shall find something we want.'

'No dashed fear,' whined the mate. 'You never find a thing when you want it.' And he began to feebly curse his star, the mother who bore him, and all things beneath the sun. The way he blasphemed in his terror might have been amusing were it not for its extreme pathos.

And yet on opening the second small drawer I discovered a revolver—the captain's I knew it to be—which I held delightedly before my companion's eyes.

'There,' I cried, 'what do you think of this?'

For a moment a ray of hope brightened his dull eyes. Then a gloomy look leapt into them.

'It would just be my dashed luck if it wasn't loaded.'

An icy wind swept across my heart.

'It's not,' I said, after examining it.

'I thought as much,' he added consolingly.

But there might be cartridges somewhere in the locker! I searched high and low but without success. Two of the big drawers were filled with charts, the other one with nautical odds and ends, among which I noticed a battered compass, a coil of india-rubber tubing, an old sextant, and one barrel of a pair of glasses. But not a cartridge: not even the shell of one.

The mate looked at me despairingly: a look of blank, unutterable terror.

'My God! we're done for,' he wailed. 'These devils will rip us up, Anderson, and then chuck us overboard.'

'They may do what they like with me when I am dead,' I answered; 'but I'm not dead yet.'

'No, but you soon will be. I know them, Anderson. They're devils, fiends incarnate. They'll torture us, I tell you—torture us, by God. They'll cut us into strips and grill them before our eyes.'

'Damn you, shut up!' I shouted, as a wild sensation of frizzling ran down my backbone. 'It's bad enough to know those devils are

prowling about unchecked, without being plagued with your confounded croaking. If you can't suggest a way out of this, you had better hold your row.'

Remembering his dignity, that he was my superior officer, he tried to look offended; but the time and place forbade any outburst. Indeed, the rap which came upon the shutter at that moment knocked all the dignity out of him.

'Wha-at's that?' he gasped.

'Our friends want to come in.'

'Don't budge, Anderson; my God! don't budge.'

'But, my dear sir, we can't stay here all day. Let us see what they want.'

He implored, he entreated; but quietly shoving him aside, I flung back the shutter. Wing, the one-eyed coolie, who seemed to be the ringleader, and three others immediately sprang forward; but in an instant they drew up sharp, for I had covered them with my empty revolver.

'Well,' I said, 'what is all this about? Do you know that this means hanging when we get to Singapore?'

The one-eyed rascal grinned in his oily, unpleasant fashion, and I knew by the way he was hitching his trousers behind that he was hiding a knife. But I caught no glimpse of a revolver, for which I was devoutly thankful. My own harmless weapon had an evident effect upon them.

'Me plenty sabbee,' he grinned, 'but me no go Singlapore. Singlapore too muchee no good. Me wantee speakee mate. He all the same belong cap'n now.'

'They want to speak to you,' I said. 'Come, don't let them think you're frightened.'

'My God!' he whispered, 'I'm not frightened.' But it was a wretched, craven face he turned to the pirates.

The one-eyed scoundrel bowed.

'Good mornin', cap'n,' he said. 'You all the same belong cap'n now. Udder cap'n, he say he wantee go Singlapore. This ship no go Singlapore. Udder cap'n, he say he will go Singlapore, so he jumpee overboard to swimee-swimee. Sabbee? Suppose new cap'n, he wantee go Singlapore, he also have to swimee-swimee. Sabbee?'

The mate's face grew livid with terror.

'What do you want?' he groaned.

'No wantee this ship go Singlaplore. Singlaplore too muchee dam swingee-swingee,' and he encircled his ugly neck with an imaginary noose. 'Me wantee go Flenchyman's China. New cap'n, he find nice spot, takee ship there, Wing let him go flee,—new cap'n, he no takee ship there, Wing slit him thloat.'

'My God, Anderson!' groaned the mate, 'what shall we do? These devils have got possession of the ship. They'll slit our damned throats as sure as eggs.'

'Let them slit and be damned,' I answered angrily. 'Of one thing you may be sure, they're not to be trusted. It's only a ruse to get us out of this. You may go if you like. I don't. That villain, Wing as he calls himself, knows well enough how to steer to pick up the coast of Cochin China. Look here,' and I unhitched the little compass that hung at my watch-chain, 'we're steering west by north now.'

My companion looked thunderstruck.

'We're fast getting out of the track of ships,' he said. 'Anderson, we're lost.'

'Not yet. Tell them you will think over their proposal. I have an idea.'

The mate did as he was bidden, and I pulled the shutter to.

That the engines should be running freely all this time betokened one of two things: that either the engineers were unconscious of what had happened above deck, or that they had all been overpowered and the engines were running unattended. If the latter were the case, I knew we should not go long without a dreadful breakdown; if the former, there was still some hope, for those three sturdy Scotsmen in the engine-room were worth half a dozen men.

In the left-hand corner of the chart-room was a metal speaking-tube which led down into the engine-room, but which I had never seen any one use. In fact, I did not know if it was in working order, for there was not even a whistle in the orifice. However, there was the faint hope that there might be one in the other end. As I leant over it I could distinctly hear the clank, clank of the engines. But there was, unfortunately, no whistle for me to sound the alarm upon. I halloed, I roared, I whistled down it, but in vain. Nothing but the monotonous clank, clank of the engines greeted my ear.

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In the meantime the rascals outside were growing impatient. They tapped at the shutter, rapped loudly on the door, even tried to burst it in; but like all ships' doors it opened outwards, so that the task they set themselves was not an easy one. Still, I knew that we could not hold the place for long, and I felt a queer shudder run down my back as I thought of the squat, one-eyed villain, the master of my fate. I turned despairingly to the speaking-tube. Our only chance of salvation was through those sturdy Scotsmen. If they failed us, or were prisoners, we were as good as lost.

As I placed my ear to the tube I heard the voice of our second engineer, Duncan Macpherson, cry out, 'Hallo, there! What the de'il's the matter wi' them? Goodness, goodness, goodness!' And then he began to shriek and whistle like a madman.

'Duncan, Duncan,' I cried, as soon as he had stopped his noise.

'Ay, man, it's me,' came up the answer. 'So ye're there? I've been tryin' to speak to ye for the last half-hour. What's the matter?'

'The ship is in the hands of the coolies. The captain has been killed; the mate and I are in

the chart-room, prisoners. Have you any one with you?’

‘Only the third, and the third officer. The chief went up an hour ago, and I’m afraid they’ve nabbed him. Can’t ye get out of the house and make a rush for it?’

‘We have no arms of any description. The pirates swarm the bridge. They are even now trying to force the door.’

‘Dear, dear! and it’s almost as bad wi’ us. They tried to rush us here, but we managed to shut them out. Every time I look up I see a dirty face peerin’ down through the gratin.’

A pause followed, during which the monotonous clank, clank of the engines was mixed with the scratchings and scrapings on the wood outside. Presently the voice came again.

‘Are ye there, Anderson?’

‘Yes.’

‘I’ve been thinkin’ that if ye could only use this speakin’-tube in some way or other, I could send ye up a beautiful jet of hot water that would peel the skin off any blasted pirate between hell and Hong Kong.’

‘It can’t be done,’ I added despairingly. ‘The pipe only rises a foot above the locker. It

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would be no use. We should scald ourselves.'

'Ah, now, if ye only had a nice length of tubin' ye might do somethin'.'

My heart gave a quick throb. I remembered the piece in the locker. When I told him of it he said, 'Verra weel. When ye have fixed it on, just ye whistle down and let me know.'

In a moment I had the tubing out of the locker, and to my delight found that it was in splendid preservation, and some nine or ten feet in length. To unscrew the wooden cup and fix the tube over the pipe was done with a rapidity which must have astonished the mate, who, pale and speechless, stood clinging to the ring of the shutter. In the drawer, which was full of odds and ends, I found plenty of good stout lashing, and with this I securely bound the tubing to the pipe.

I do not think the whole business could have taken more than half a minute; yet short as it was the blows upon the chart-house redoubled, as though our assailants were trying to beat in the door with hammers or axes. There was no time to be lost. I whistled down the tube and told the engineer I was ready.

'Verra weel,' he answered. 'Just look out that ye dinna scald yoursel.'

I held the nozzle of the tube towards the door.

'Now,' I said to the mate, 'when I say the word, you fling open the window. I think we have a very pretty surprise in store for them.'

'If it comes off,' he answered. 'But you know, there is many a slip 'twixt cup and lip.'

I felt like pointing the hose at him and giving him the first dose, but at that moment my attention was arrested by a curious smoky smell which came in from under the door.

'Look, look,' shrieked the mate, 'they're going to burn us out!' and he fairly jumped with terror.

'Not at all,' I answered, enjoying the joke in a deadly sort of way, 'they're going to smoke us out.'

'And that Ning-po varnish burns like hell.' He was referring to the new coat of varnish we had but lately given the deckhouses. 'Oh, my God, my God!' he moaned, 'why did I ever come to sea?'

I wondered why, though I had scant time for wonder. With almost incredible swiftness the

Smoke grew in volume, a thick, pungent smoke which proclaimed the use of tar. Presently the crackling of wood was heard. I knew it would not be long before the house was ablaze. And still no message from below! Had anything happened? Had the engineer's calculations in any way proved faulty? The mate groaned and moaned, mixing his supplications to heaven with strings of the most abandoned oaths. It is horrible to hear him, even more horrible to see him as he shrank back closer and closer in the corner, his face ghastly, his eyes vacant with terror. A little more of it and I knew he would be a raving madman. Well, poor devil, so much the better for him. Before this day was over I might have cause to envy him such a merciful stroke of Providence.

My eyes stung with the smoke: I knew that I was inhaling it in great mouthfuls. I developed a sudden coughing and sneezing. The mate, I believed, was already half-unconscious. What with the smoke and my streaming eyes I could scarcely see him. The situation was becoming intolerable. And still no sign from the engineer! Had he failed in his tempt?

At the thought the cold perspiration oozed out of me, and for a moment or two my faculties were numbed. Pulling myself together with a great effort I turned to the mate to tell him to open the window—for it was better to die by the knives of the pirates than be choked in this fashion—when I felt the hose in my hand tremble. A moment's acute suspense; then followed a sudden hissing of wind, and out spluttered a torrent of steam and boiling water.

'Open, open!' I cried excitedly.

With a last effort, and like a man in a dream, the mate swung back the shutter, and then fell senseless to the floor.

In an instant a dozen hideous, grinning wretches, bared knives in their hands, rushed to the aperture, the one-eyed scoundrel, Wing, to the fore. The next moment he threw himself back with a horrible shriek, for I had turned the hose fair in his face, and the steam and boiling water had blinded and scalded him. The others stopped, surprised, awestruck; but before they had time to realise the situation, I served three or four others in a similar manner. These set up a horrible screaming, struggling fiercely to get away; but before the bridge was

ared of them a dozen at least were howling
h pain.

Once the bridge was clear I opened the door
the chart-room and extinguished the flames,
ich were rapidly getting a good hold of the
odwork. This I did by means of the inval-
e hose. Then, looking away aft, a curious
ht met my gaze. The fellows whom I had
lded had all fled to the after-part of the ship,
ere they were joined by about twenty or
rty others, the whole lot, by the way they
ieked and gesticulated, evidently being in a
te of great excitement. Then suddenly out
he engine-room skylight I saw the head and
uldiers of the second engineer rise. In one
id he held the big brass nozzle of our fire
e. The next moment it spouted out a
fect torrent of steam and boiling water. The
ineer clambered out on to the deck and
lly walked towards the mutineers. About
nty yards off he stood and directed the
lding flood upon them. Some ran this way
l that way, others dashed madly past him
h fearful shrieks, but I doubt if a single one
aped a horrible scalding.

after that we had no more trouble with our

passengers. The ringleaders were all ironed and handed over to the authorities at Singapore, which port we reached in the early hours of the following day. About a month afterwards six of them, including the one-eyed Wing, who had been nearly scalded to death, 'suffered the extreme penalty of the law.'

Our mate, thanks to the energetic manner in which he had suppressed the outbreak, was at once given command of the ship.

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ADELPHI TERRACE

1909

He had no strong ties in the homeland, and he soon decided that Hong Kong was, as he put it, "bloomin' well good 'nough for him."

At first he shared quarters with some half-dozen of his fellow - inspectors, but as soon as his prospects in the Department appeared assured, he decided on setting up an establishment of his own.

So he hired a flat in a terrace of semi-European houses, receiving, as matter of course, a considerable rebate on his rent from the Chinese landlord because of his footing in the all-powerful P.W.D., in whose hands lies the ordering of the architectural and material details of that piled-up debauch in bed-rock granite and Portland cement yclept the City of Victoria. Then he moved in his effects, and installed Fan-Lee as housekeeper.

Fan-lee was almost pretty, tall for a native girl, slim but full-bosomed, with perfect hands and feet, a pure-bred *Poon-Ti* from some landward village of the green Canton Delta to her taper finger-tips; and how she came to be associated with a white man, a "foreigner," a "foreign devil," was something of a mystery. Whether she was a lady with a past, or had been forced into her present situation

D

THE CASE OF JOHN DYER: HERO

JOHN DYER first saw the 'Far East as a private in a line battalion. In an Indian frontier skirmish he saved the life of the captain of his company, and gained the V.C. This, and the fact that he possessed a better education than the ruck of his fellow-rankers, marked him for promotion; and when his regiment arrived in Hong Kong he had mounted the stripes of a sergeant.

His term of service expired while in the Island Colony, and, the Public Works Department being as usual short-handed, he applied for and obtained the post of Sanitary Inspector; and glad the Chief Inspector was to secure the assistance of such an eligible recruit, for John was a fine, upstanding young fellow enough, and of unquestioned sobriety—the great desideratum in this land of chronic thirst and liquors duty free.

His salary, as things go in the Orient, was not princely; but there were ways of adding to it, and he found himself saving money.

by poverty, or simply that young Dyer had taken her woman's eye, I never learned.

She possessed in high degree the inborn genius for housekeeping with which the gods have gifted the Chinese female. As is usual in such households, Dyer allowed her a certain monthly sum to run the *menage*, and, small as the sum was, she managed to make the little "squeeze" dear to the Celestial heart. If she robbed him, be sure she allowed no one else to do so. So John Dyer waxed proud of his housekeeper, and missed no chance to impress on such of his fellow-inspectors as were unattached the wisdom of doing as he had done. Thus a pleasant and profitable year went by.

Then "Callots" was born. His father had called him "Carrots," a nickname soon softened into "Callots," in deference to Fan-Lee's pronunciation. He was a well-grown, healthy, three-year-old toddler when first I had the honour to be admitted to his acquaintance. He had his mother's eyes, wells of ink with stars in their depths; his little head was crowned with gold even as that of the "red-haired barbarian," his father; but his finished manner was all his own. He was a strange child, grave and self-possessed, a very pocket edition of an old man, knowing not

tempers nor tears. It was Fan-Lee's delight to dress him in Chinese style; and not the Viceroys of the Two Kwang himself wore his robes of office with a more affected dignity than this child of East and West put on with his little, black, red-buttoned Mandarin's skull - cap, and crinkley, gold - embroidered petticoat. Still, he was very lovable, and the thought of the quaint little figure waiting to wave him a solemn greeting with a paper flag from his verandah cheered John Dyer through the long, red-hot hours of many a noisome day's work.

Then came black 'ninety-four—the plague year. Such a visitation had not been in the memory of living man, and the City went mad with fear. Then men lay down and died in the streets, and the living merely stuffed paper in their nostrils, fingered their charms, and hurried by. Then mothers with the babe at the breast died in their beds, none tending them, to be found months later as skeletons, their bones picked clean by the rats. Then the Canton river steamers worked double tides carrying those that fled the doomed city, and son fought with father for standing-room on the over-crowded craft. But one boat had peace among her passengers—that detailed to carry the dead. Then all the cities of

Eastern Asia cried out at this horror in their midst, and said: "From such and such a date we hold no dealings with thee and thine."

So all business came to a standstill in this mart of nations. The great steel doors of her streets of warehouses gaped cavernously on her rows of empty wharfs; her anchorage, swept clean of coaster and liner and ocean tramp, glittered and danced without a break clear to the Kowloon shore. Only her three miles of ranged and ordered mooring buoys told of the anchored tiers of steam shipping that should have been, and were not.

Up went the daily death-rate: five hundred—a thousand—two thousand; then the over-worked dozen of Sanitary Inspectors gave it up, and the record of that first terrible month of plague-time is the blank pages in the books of the Sanitary Department—incontestable, eloquent pages, telling clearer than printer's ink or engraver's bronze the story of those dark days of the Colony.

Then the local Government awoke, and called for volunteers from the infantry battalion in garrison. The response was worthy of the traditions of the Service, for was there not a dollar a day extra pay to be earned, not to speak of beer—the oceans of free beer and whisky, mountains of cold ham and chicken

sandwiches which the white residents in the fulness of their fear-stricken hearts lavished on the working parties. Thomas Atkins rolled up like one man.

Every morning he was marched into the deathly slums of 'T'ai-ping-shan—seven hundred of him, singing; and was split up into gangs, and worked methodically up one side of some narrow street and down the other, gutting the filth-clad woodwork out of the awful rookeries, tearing up the floors and down the ceilings, leaving nothing behind him but a shell of bare granite walls and gaping windows, and the miserable tenants wailing the destruction of their frowsy household gods. For the destruction was decreed to be complete, and at every crossing of streets, on every little square, the cleansing fires crackled and roared and sent their vicious red tongues forking towards the cloudless blue. And a mist of acrid, ochreous-grey smoke hung over the doomed quarter like a pall.

So far the Black-Death had visited only the Chinese; from the Europeans he held his hand—for a time; and John Dyer, like his fellows, upborne by the useful belief that somehow, either by virtue of his daily tub, or his superior constitution, or the direct intervention of a well-advised Providence, he was beyond the

risk of contagion, went stolidly his diurnal round of the fetid, stricken city.

Then one evening from club to club went Rummour and turned men's hearts to water. A young officer in charge of one of the working parties had been taken ill in his quarters, and died within the hour. Plague, surely, said some; others, brave on strong wine, scoffed. But the morning's papers, with their half-inch margin of printer's ink, gave awful confirmation. The Destroyer was truly among them—among the White Lords of the Island—for two privates of the dead lieutenant's company lay even now sick unto death; and in the dark hours His Minions had come for a well-known merchant, and round a palatial bungalow high up in select Gleneally red-turbaned men with carbines kept watch and ward. And there was no cure; not even a recognised treatment; nothing but to sit and see the loved one die. Thereafter they died in dozens. So now was added to the prayers of the city a clamorous calling on the Christian's God, where had been but pitiful cries to Buddh, and Tao, and Mahound.

The scanty force of Sanitary Inspectors was still intact, though for a month every man had done the work of ten men. For were there not forty recruits, specially selected men

from the staffs of famous city corporations in England, on the way to their aid? They had hope.

The forty came; they saw—saw things, things that might have been human, alive and yet not alive, horrors in the mass and by the mile such as no imagination could picture in a European city; and they went back on their written words. Jail—yes, they would go to jail, certainly; but not into those suppurating, smoke-grimmed charnel houses, not a man of them! Still the Public Works Department, backed by the courageous Tommies, now callous experts in death and demolition, carried on the hopeless fight, and always John Dyer toiled like the hero men held him to be.

Days passed, days that to Dyer seemed like nightmares; then one evening, just when blessed sleep was hovering round him, he was roused to find by his side a frantic being that wept and prayed him to come to his friend. One of his fellow-inspectors lived in the same terrace, and to his house he hurried, dreading the worst. He found it. Through the man's eyes Death mocked at him; in an hour coma set in; when Dyer left the house, what yesterday he had called friend, was to-day corruption. That day

Dyer toiled like one in a trance, and at times came a shadow in his eyes that in any other men might have counted fear.

Late that afternoon he received from his Chief the order to change his dwelling-place; the Government had decided to provide quarters for the entire staff in a bungalow far up the breezy slope of the Peak, the health of the Inspectors at this crisis being a matter of supreme importance to the Colony. A doctor would live on the premises, and every comfort would be theirs.

The man's heart leapt; it was what he had dreamt of, to get away from the noisome city, away from the stifling, frowsy terrace, and, even for a few hours in the twenty-four, rest beneath the untainted sky of heaven, and breathe the bloom-scented breath of the fir-clad uplands.

But Fan-Lee—and Callots—what could he do with them? He knew he need not expect provision for illicit love in a Government bungalow. Despair claimed him. Then, in a flash, he found the solution. His mistress and the child he would send to her people up-country. It was quite a usual proceeding in his world. In the country they would be safe from contagion, and on the Peak he

would be safe. When the epidemic had run its course they would be again united.

A doubt crossed his mind as to how Fan-Lee might take it. But no, that would be all right. Always Fan-Lee had been a good girl, never noisy or argumentative like some of his friends' girls; a good girl, but queer—that was his reading of her; and he thought he knew all about her there was to know.

His judgment was not at fault. He encountered no remonstrance, no tears; only a catch of the breath, a swift, spasmodic lacing and unlacing of the slim amber fingers, a startled fixing of the black, omniscient eyes that might have told him something had he not looked carefully over her head while making his announcement. When he did look the eyes were veiled; and she was as usual, indifferently acquiescent, his servant, his kept-girl, his slave.

Dyer left Fan-Lee on the understanding that she was to take the first steamer in the morning for Canton, and that evening he smoked his pipe on the verandah of the bungalow on the hill.

The weeks dragged on, but the plague showed no signs of abating. The month of rains arrived, but the heavens, though lowering and overcast, clung vengefully to their

prayed-for store, and to the other horrors was added a water famine. Shortly the supply had to be cut off from the houses, and soon soldiers were needed to guard the taps on the street. Water rose to unbelievable prices, and every time Dyer came on a wild-eyed crowd cursing and trampling one another round a hydrant he blessed his stars that those he loved were out of it all, and safe in some slumbrous village of the Delta.

But once in all that time did he cast eyes on the house he had lived in, his duty lying in another part of the city. The terrace was completely deserted; the hand of Atkins, the plague expert, had lain heavy on it. Minus doors and windows, lime-washed from sidewalk to eaves, it was but the pale ghost of the little home he had spent so many happy hours in; and he hurried by, feeling like a stab in the back the presence of his two empty windows that followed him with the gaze of a pair of sad, reproachful eyes.

One short week passed, and Dyer stood again without the threshold. But in those few days what a change had come over the city! The gods had heard, the rains had come; falling not in drops, but in sheets and pencils, in one eternal, roaring cataract that blotted out the red-hot town in swathe on

swathe of steaming vapour, and sent every granite-paved nullah spouting brown to the sea. And four hundred thousand despairing hearts found joy and thankfulness.

Dyer shook the raindrops from his mackintosh, and ran up the stairs whistling. The front room was empty, bare as a billiard-table. He passed into the back room of his little apartment. The light was poor, and for a moment he thought it empty as the other. But hold, there was a bundle of mats in the corner, and some one asleep, breathing softly as a child in that house of death. He crossed the room and lifted the upper mat. He started back.

"Fan! O God! . . . you! . . . you here!"

The girl rose, and flinging the sleep from her, raised to him her arms and face with the slow, seemly smile that had always charmed him.

"I come," she said in her simple English, that left so much to be inferred; "I come."

And the man, never doubting but that she had hurried back to him the instant she heard the epidemic was over, took her to his heart.

Then a fear seized him, and "The boy—the boy?" he cried.

"The boy," she answered; "the boy is happy."