

THE CHINK AND THE CHILD

By THOMAS BURKE

This powerful story is by the author of "London Nights," a book which is proving one of the sensations of the literary season.

It is a tale of love and lovers that they tell in the low-lit Causeway that slinks from West India Dock Road to the dark waste of waters beyond. In Pennyfields, too, you may hear it; and I do not doubt that it is told in far-away Tai-Ping, in Singapore, in Tokio, in Shanghai, and those other gay-lamped haunts of wonder whither the wandering people of Limehouse go and whence they return so casually. It is a tale for tears, and could you hear it in the lilled tongue of those yellow men, it would awaken in you all your pity. Told in our bald speech, it must unhappily lose its essential fragrance, that quality that will lift an affair of squalor into the loftier spheres of passion and imagination, beauty, and sorrow. It will sound unconvincing, a little nasty . . . you know . . . abnormal . . . the kind of thing that is best forgotten. Perhaps . . .

But listen.

It is Battling Burrows, the lightning welter-weight of Shadwell, the box o' tricks, the Tetrarch of the Ring, who enters first. Battling Burrows, the pride of Ratcliff, Poplar, and Limehouse, and the despair of his manager and backers. For he loved wine, woman and song; and the boxing world held that he couldn't last long on that. There was any amount of money in him for his parasites if only the damned women could be cut out. Again and again would he disappear from his training quarters on the eve of a big fight, to consort with Molly and Dolly, and to drink other things than barley-water and lemon-juice. Wherefore Chuck Lightfoot, his manager, forced him to fight on any and every occasion while he was good and a money-maker; for at any moment the collapse might come, and Chuck would be called upon by his creditors to strip off that "shirt" which at every contest he laid on his man.

Battling was of a type that is too common in the Eastern districts of London; a type that upsets all notions of classification. He wouldn't be classed. He was a curious mixture of athleticism and degeneracy. He could run like a deer, leap like a greyhound, fight like a machine, drink like a suction-hose. He was a bully; he had the courage of the high hero. He was an open-air

sport; he had the vices of a French decadent.

It was one of his love-adventures that properly begins this tale; for the girl had come to Battling one night with a recital of terrible happenings, of an angered parent, of a slammed door . . . In her arms was a bundle of white rags. Now Battling, like so many sensualists, was also a sentimentalist. He took that bundle of white rags, he paid the girl money to get into the country; and the bundle of white rags had existed in and about his domicile in Pekin Street, Limehouse, for some 16 years. Her exact position was nondescript; to the casual observer it would seem that she was Battling's relief punch-ball—an unpleasant post for any human creature to occupy, especially if you are a girl of 16, and the place be the one-room household of the lightning welter-weight. When Battling was cross with his manager . . . well, it is indefensible to strike your manager or to throw chairs at him, if he is a good manager; but to use a dog-whip on a girl is permissible and quite as satisfying, at least he found it so. On these occasions, then, when very cross with his sparring partners, or over-flushed with victory and juice of the grape, he would flog Lucy. But he was reputed by the boys to be a good fellow. He only whipped her when he was drunk; and he was only drunk for eight months of the year. For just over 16 years this bruised little body had crept about Poplar and Limehouse. Always the white face was scarred with red, or black-furrowed with tears; always in her steps and in her look were terror and expectation of dread things. Night after night her sleep was broken by the cheerful Battling's brute voice and violent hands; and terrible were the lessons which life had taught her in these few years. Yet, for all the starved face and the transfixed air, there was a lurking beauty about her, a something that smote you. The brown hair chimed against the pale face, like the rounding of a verse. The blue cotton frock and the broken shoes could not break the loveliness of her slender figure, a shade tall for 16, or the shy grace of her movements as she flitted about the squalid alleys of the docks; though in all that region

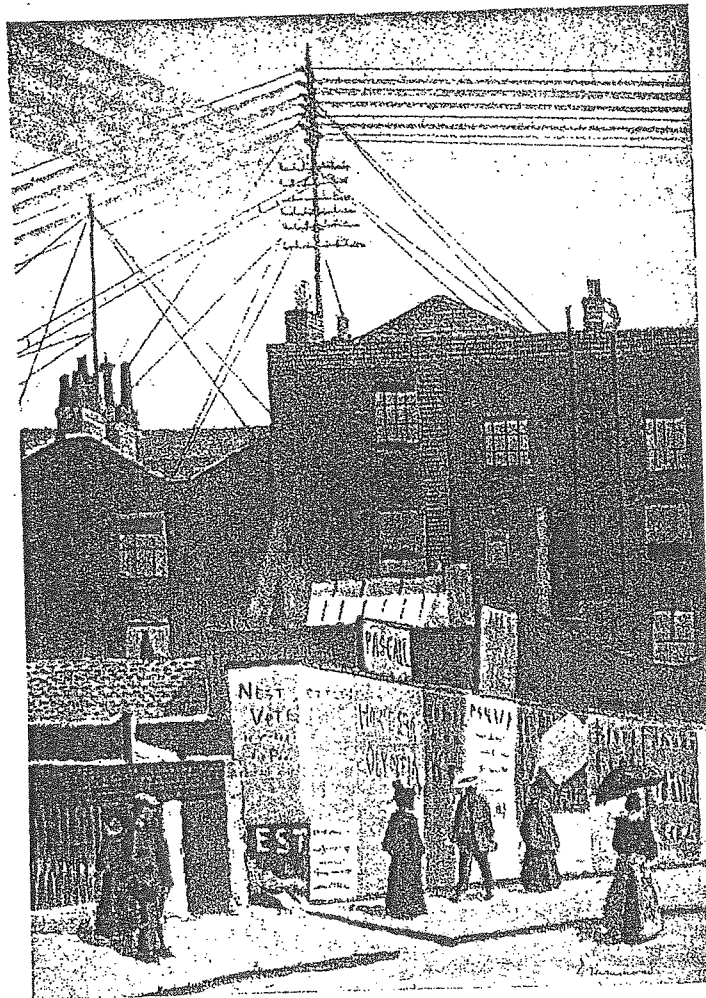
of wasted life and toil and decay, there was not one that noticed her, until . . .

Now there lived in Chinatown, in one lousy room over Mr. Tai Fu's store in Pennyfields, a wandering yellow man named Huan Cheng. Huan Cheng was a poet. He did not realise it, but he was. He had never been able to understand why he was unpopular; and he died without knowing. But a poet he was, tinged with the materialism of his race, and in his poor listening heart strange echoes would awake of which he himself was barely conscious. He regarded things differently from other sailors; he felt things more passionately and things which they felt not at all; so he lived alone instead of at one of the lodging-houses. Every evening he would sit at his window and watch the street. Then, a little later, he would take a jolt of opium at the place at the corner of Formosa Street.

He had come to London by devious ways. He had loafed on the Bund at Shanghai. The fateful intervention of a crimp had landed him on a boat. He got to Cardiff, and sojourned in its Chinatown; thence to Liverpool, to Glasgow; thence, by a ticket from the Asiatics' Aid Society, to Limehouse, where he remained for two reasons—because it cost him nothing to live there, and because he was too lazy to find a boat to take him back to Shanghai.

So he would lounge and smoke cheap cigarettes, and sit at his window, from which point he had many times observed the lyrical Lucy. He noticed her casually. Another day, he observed her, not casually. Later, he looked long at her; later still, he began to watch for her.

Then that beauty which all Limehouse had missed smote Cheng. Straight to his heart it went, and cried itself into his very blood. Thereafter the spirit of poetry broke, blossoms all about his odorous chamber. Nothing was the same. Pennyfields became a happy-lanterned street, and the monotonous fiddle in the house opposite was the music of his fathers. Bits of old songs floated through his mind: little sweet verses of Le Tai-pih, murmuring of plum blossom, ricefield, and stream. Day by day he would moon at his window, or shuffle about the streets, light-



"BEAUFORT STREET"

By Malcolm Drummond

ing to a flame when Lucy would pass and return with wondering eyes his grave regard : and night after night, too, he would dream of a pale, lily-lovely girl.

And now the fates moved swiftly various pieces on their sinister board, and all that followed happened with a speed and precision that showed direc-

to take a dish of noodle and some tea. Thence he moved to another house whose stairs led straight to the street, and above whose doorway a lamp glowed like an evil eye. At this establishment Cheng mostly took his pipe of opium, and a brief chat with the keeper of the house, for, although not popular and very silent, he liked some-

though here and there a lantern stung the glooms. Low couches were ranged about the walls, and strange men decorated them: Chinese, Japs, Malays, Lascars, with one or two white girls ; and sleek, noiseless attendants swam from couch to couch. Away in the far corner sprawled a lank figure in brown shirting, its nerveless fingers curled

mingled in one grand offence against the nostrils.

As Cheng brooded on his insect-ridden cushion, of a sudden the lantern above the musician was caught by the ribbon of his reed. It danced and flung a hazy radiance on a divan in the shadow. Huan saw—started—half rose. His heart galloped, and the blood pounded in his quiet veins. Then he dropped again, crouched, and stared.

O lily-flowers and plum blossoms! O silver streams and dim-starred skies! O wine and roses, song and laughter! For there, kneeling on a mass of rugs, mazed and big-eyed, was Lucy . . . his Lucy . . . his little maid. Through the dusk she must have felt his intent gaze upon her; for he crouched there, fascinated, staring into the now obscured corner where she knelt.

But the sickness which momentarily gripped him on finding in this place his snowy-breasted pearl passed and gave place to great joy. She was here; he would talk with her. Little English he had, but simple words, those with few gutturals, he had managed to pick up; so he rose, the masterful lover, and, with feline movements, crossed the nightmare chamber to claim his own.

If you wonder how Lucy came to be in this place, the explanation is simple. Battling was in training. He had flogged her the day before starting work; he had then had a few drops of brandy—not many: some eighteen or nineteen—and had locked the door of his room and taken the key. Lucy was therefore homeless, and a girl somewhat older than Lucy, so old and so wise, as girls are in that region, saw in her a possible source of revenue. So there they were, and to them appeared Cheng.

From what nameless horrors he saved her that night cannot be told. What he brought to her was love and death. For he sat down by her. He looked at her—reverently yet passionately. He touched her—wistfully yet



"A STUDY"

By Richard Clarke's

eagerly. He locked a finger in her wondrous hair. She did not start away; she did not tremble. She guessed what she had to be afraid of in that place; but she was not afraid of Cheng: 16 years with father had made fear almost her normal state. She pierced the mephitic gloom and scanned his face. No, she was not afraid. His yellow hands, his yellow face, his smooth black hair . . . well, he was the first thing that had ever spoken sweet words to her; the first thing that had ever laid a hand upon her that was not brutal; the first thing that had deferred in manner towards her as though she, too, had a right to live. She knew his words were sweet, though she did not understand them. Nor can they be set down. Half that he spoke was in village Chinese; the rest in a mangling of English which no dis-

torted spelling could possibly reproduce.

But he drew her back against the cushions and asked her name, and she told him; and he had then a beautiful word which came easily from his tongue. He repeated it again and again:

"Lucia . . . Li'l Lucia . . ." Musical phrases they were, dropping from his lips, and, to the girl who heard her name pronounced so lovingly, they were the lost heights of melody. She clung to him, and he to her. She held his strong arm in both of hers as they crouched on the divan, and nestled her cheek against his coat.

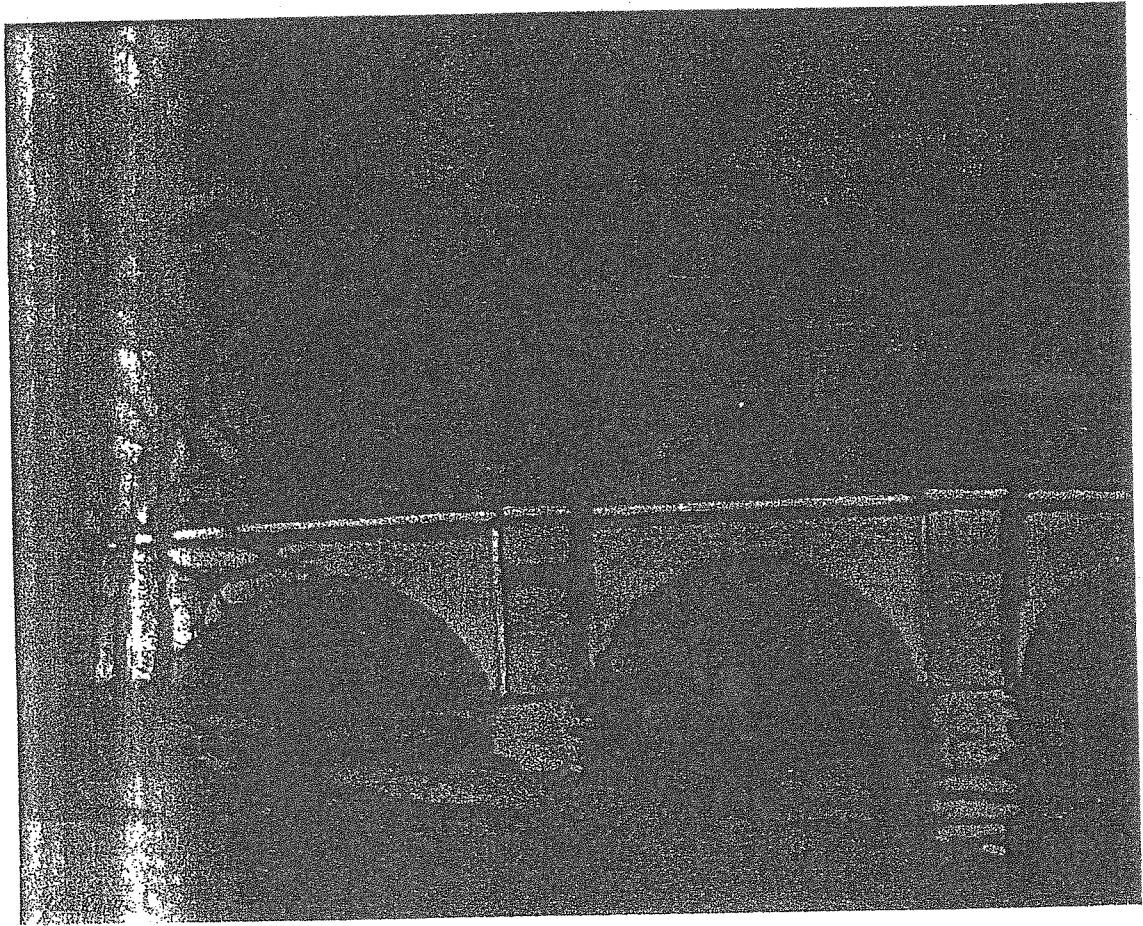
Well . . . he took her home to his wretched room.

"Li'l Lucia, come-a-home . . . Lucia . . ."

His heart was on fire. As they slipped out of the noisomeness into the night air and crossed the West India Dock Road into Pennyfields, they passed unnoticed. It was late, for one thing, and for another . . . well, nobody cared particularly. His blood rang with soft music, and the solemnity of drums, for surely he had found now what

for many years he had sought—his world's one flower. Wanderer he was, from Tuan-Tsen to Shanghai, Shanghai to Glasgow—Cardiff—Liverpool—London. He had dreamed often of the women of his native land; perchance one of them should be his flower. Women, indeed, there had been. Swatow . . . he had recollections of certain rose-winged hours in coast cities. At many places to which chance had led him a little bird had perched itself upon his heart, but so lightly and for so brief a while as hardly to be felt. But now—now he had found her in this alabaster Cockney child. So that he was glad and had great joy of himself, and the blue and silver night, and the harsh flares of the Poplar Hippodrome.

Slowly, softly they mounted the stairs to his room, and with almost an obeisance he entered and drew her



"MOONLIGHT"

By John Riddle

in. A bank of cloud raced to the East and a full moon flung a sharp sword of light upon them. Silence lay over all Pennyfields. With a bird-like movement, she looked up at him—her face alight, her little hands upon his coat—clinging, wondering, trusting. He took her hand and kissed it; repeated the kiss upon her cheek and lips and little white neck, twining his fingers in her hair. Docilely, and echoing the smile of his lemon lips in a way that thrilled him almost to laughter, she returned his kisses impetuously.

He clasped the little nestling to him. Bruised, tearful, with the love of life almost thrashed out of her, she had fluttered to him out of the evil night. "O li'l Lucia!" And he put soft hands upon her, and smoothed her and crooned over her many gracious things in his flowered speech. So they stood

in the moonlight, while she told him the history of her father, of her beatings, and starvings, and unhappiness; and then he moved to a cupboard, and from it he drew strange things... formless masses of blue and gold, magical things of silk, and a vessel that was surely Aladdin's lamp, and a box of spices. He took the robes, and presented them to his White Blossom, and led her then to the heap of stuff that was his bed, and himself disappeared.

In the morning when Lucy awoke, wearing the blue and yellow silk in place of her besmirched rags, she gave a cry of amazement. Cheng had been about. Many times had he glided up and down the two flights of stairs, and now at last his room was prepared for his princess. It was swept and garnished, and was an apartment worthy a maid who is loved by a poet-prince.

There was a bead curtain. There were muslins of pink and white. There were four bowls of flowers, clean, clear flowers to gladden the White Blossom and set off her sharp beauty. And there was a bowl of water, and a sweet lotion for the bruise on her cheek.

When she had risen, her prince ministered to her with rice and egg and tea. Cleansed and robed and calm, she sat before him, perched on the edge of many cushions as on a throne, with all the grace of a child princess in the story. She was a poem. The beauty hidden by neglect and fatigue shone out now more clearly and vividly. From the head sunning over with curls to the small white feet, now bathed and sandalled, she seemed the living interpretation of a Chinese lyric. And she was his—her sweet self and her prattle and her bird-like ways were all his own.

Oh, beautifully they loved. For two days he held her. Soft caresses from his yellow hands and long devout kisses were all their demonstration. Each night he would tend her, as might mother to child; and each night he watched over her and slumbered on the stairs beyond the door.

But now there were those that ran to Battling at his training quarters across the river, with the news that his child had gone with a Chink, a yellow man. And Battling was angry. He discovered parental rights. He discovered indignation. A yellow man after his kid! He'd learn him. Battling did not like men who were not born in the same great country as himself. Particularly he disliked yellow men. His birth and education in Shadwell had taught him that of all creeping things that creep upon the earth the most insidious is the Oriental in the West. It was—as you might say—so kind of—well, wasn't it? He bellowed that it was "unnacherel."

The yellor man would go through it. Yeller! it was his supreme condemnation, his final epithet for all conduct of which he disapproved.

There was no doubt that he was extremely annoyed. He went to the "Gallopings Horses" in Old Ratcliff Highway, and thumped the bar, and made all his world agree with him. And when they agreed with him, he got angrier still. So that when, a few hours later, he climbed through the ropes at the Netherlands to meet Bud Tuffit for ten rounds, it was Bud's fight all the time, and to that bright boy's astonishment he was the victor on points at the end of the ten. Battling slouched out of the ring, still more determined to let the Chink have it where the chicken had the axe. He left the house with two pals and a black

man, and a number of really inspired curses from his manager.

On the evening of the third day, then, Cheng slipped sleepily down the stairs to procure more flowers and more rice. The genial Ho Ling, who keeps the Canton Stores, held him in talk some little while, and he was gone from his room, perhaps, half an hour. Then he glided back, and climbed with happy feet the forty stairs to his temple of wonder.

With a push of a finger he opened the door, and the blood froze on his cheek, the flowers fell from him. The temple was empty and desolate. White Blossom was gone! The muslin hangings were torn down and trampled underfoot. The flowers had been flung from their bowls about the floor, and the bowls lay in fifty fragments. The joss was smashed. The cupboard had

been opened. Rice was scattered here and there. The little strait bed had been jumped upon by brute feet. Everything that could be smashed or violated had been so treated, and—horror of all—the blue and yellow silk robe had been rent in pieces, tied in grotesque knots, and slung derisively about the table legs.

I pray devoutly that you may never suffer what Huan Cheng suffered in that moment. The pangs of death, with no dying, the sickness of the soul which longs to escape and cannot, the bursting heart, the imprisoned animal within the breast which struggles madly for a voice and finds none—all the agonies of all the ages, the agonies of every abandoned lover and lost woman, past and to come—all these things were Huan's in that leaden moment.

Then he found voice and gave a great cry, and men from below came up to him; and they told him how the man who boxed had been there with a black

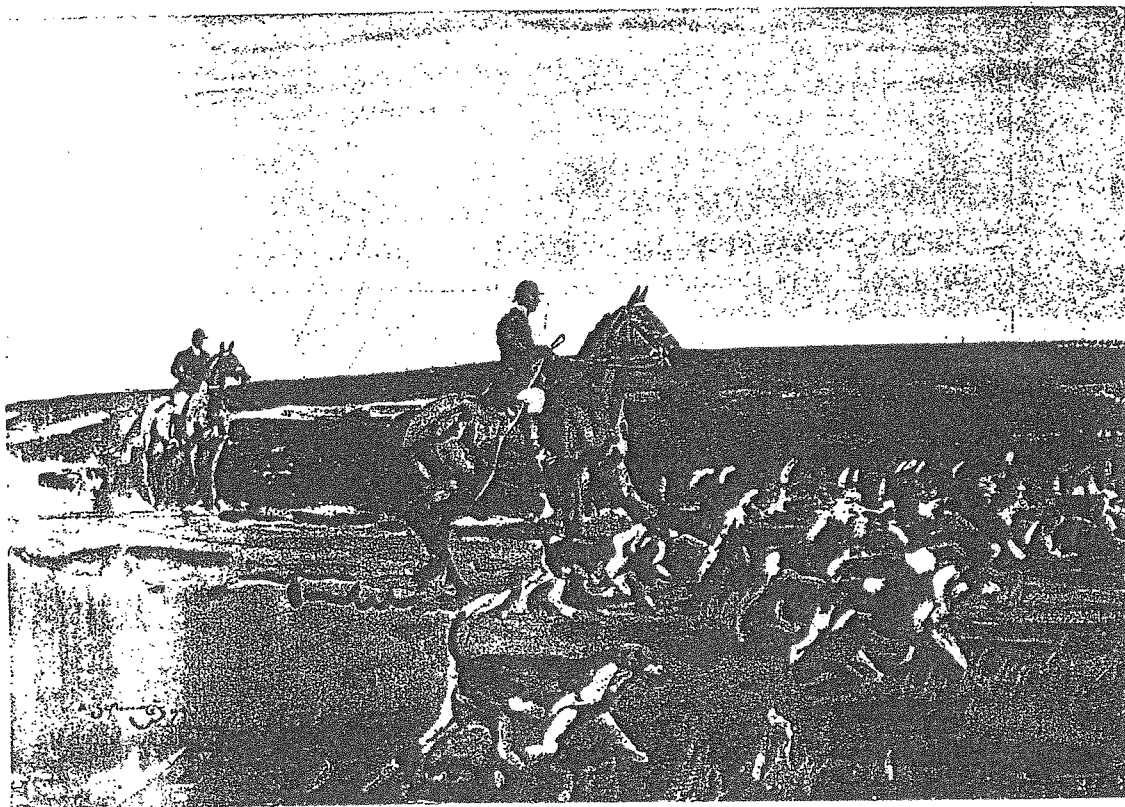
man; how he had torn the robes from his child, and dragged her down the stairs by her hair; and how he had shouted aloud for Huan and had vowed to return and deal separately with him.

Now a terrible dignity came to Cheng, and the soul of his great fathers swept over him. He closed the door against them, and fell prostrate over what had been the resting-place of White Blossom. Those without heard strange sounds as of an animal in its last pains; and it was even so. Cheng was dying. The sacrament of his high and holy passion had been profaned; the last sanctuary of the Oriental—his soul-dignity—had been assaulted. The love-ropes had been torn to ribbons, the veil of his temple cut down. Life was no longer possible; and life without his little lady, his White Blossom, was no longer desirable.



"MALINES: BAILLES DE FER"
(Destroyed)

Aquatint by Edouard J. Claes (Belgian)



Colour

By A. J. Munnings

Prostrate he lay for the space of some few minutes. Then, in his face all the pride of accepted destiny, he arose. He drew together the little bed. With reverent hands he took the pieces of blue and yellow silk, kissing them and fondling them and placing them about the pillow. Silently he gathered up the flowers, and the broken earthenware, and prepared himself for death.

Now it is the custom among those of the sect of Cheng that the dying shall present love-gifts to their enemies; and when he had set all in order, he gathered his brown canvas coat about him, stole from the house, and set out to find Battling Burrows, bearing under the coat his love-gift to Battling. White Blossom he had no hope of finding. He had heard of Burrows many times, and he judged that, now that she was taken from him, he would never again hold those little hands or touch that laughing hair. Nor, if he did, could it change things from what they were. Nothing that was not a dog could live in the face of this sacrilege.

As he came before the house in Pekin Street, where Battling was domiciled, he murmured gracious prayers. Fortunately, it was a night of thick river-mist, and through the enveloping velvet none could observe or challenge him. The main door was open, as are all doors in this district. He writhed across the step, and through to the back room, where again the door yielded to a touch.

Darkness. Darkness and silence and a sense of frightful things. He peered through it. Then he fumbled under his jacket—found a match—struck it. An inch of candle stood on the mantel-shelf. He lit it. He looked round. No sign of Burrows, but . . . Almost before he looked he knew what awaited him. But the sense of finality had kindly stunned him; he could suffer nothing more.

On the table lay a dog-whip. In a corner a belt had been flung. Half across the greasy couch lay White Blossom; her hair hung limp as her limbs; her eyes were closed. As

Cheng drew nearer and saw the savage red rails that ran across and across the beloved face, he could not scream—he could not think. He dropped beside the couch. He laid gentle hands upon her, and called soft names. She was warm to the touch. The pulse was still.

Softly, oh, so softly, he bent over the little frame that had enclosed his friend-spirit, and his light kisses fell all about her. Then, with the swift, but undirected movements of a sleep-walker, he bestowed the rags decently about her, clasped her in strong arms, and crept silently into the night.

From Pekin Street to Pennyfields it is but a turn or two, and again he passed unobserved as he bore his tired bird back to her nest. He laid her upon the bed, and covered the lily limbs with the blue and yellow silks and strewed upon her a few of the trampled flowers, and with more kisses and prayers he crouched beside her.

So, in the ghastly Limehouse morning they were found—the dead girl,

the Chink, kneeling beside her, with a sharp knife gripped in a vice-like grip, its blade far between his ribs.

meantime, having vented his wrath on his prodigal daughter, Battling, still as, had visited the "Formosa Lily"; there he stayed with a brandy shaker in his brute fist, forgetful of an ointment at Premierland whereby should have been in the ring at ten o'clock sharp. For the space of an hour Chuck Lightfoot was going blasphemously to and fro in Poplar, seeking

Battling and not finding him, and murmuring, in tearful tones: "Battling—you damn an' blasted Battling—where are yeh?"

His opponent was in his corner sure enough, but there was no fight. For Battling lurched from the "Formosa Lily" to Pekin Street. He lurched into his happy home, and he cursed Lucy, and called for her. And finding no matches, he lurched to where he knew the couch should be, and flopped heavily down.

Now it is a peculiarity of the reptile tribe that its members are impatient of being flopped on without warning. So, when Battling flopped, eighteen inches of writhing gristle upreared itself on the couch, and got home on him as Bud Tuffit had done the night before—one to the ear, one to the throat, and another to the forearm.

Battling went down and out. And he, too, was found in the morning, with Huan Cheng's love-gift coiled about his neck.

THE END:

A Fancy in Prose.

To W. W. By CLAUDE HOUGHTON

It seemed that an assembly had gathered together on a lofty hill; Men, women and Children robed in gray and white were ranged in absolute silence about a rostrum in their midst. Below the cities of the World and far in the distance towered like priestly sentinels the snow clad mountains. And I waited in eager expectancy I gazed at the strange beauty of the scene about me, for each face bore the mark of the city and the grand nobility of grief, and the eyes of all, even of the children, awakened soul seemed to gaze in wonder at the world.

In the west the Autumn sun blazed, magnificent in death.

Then, as I watched, I saw the multitude divide to make way for one of noble stature to pass. Nigh to me he came and I saw a wondrous light shining in his fearless gray eyes and marked with the abundant beauty of his white beard. And those who made way for him gave no sign of recognition or reverence but closed in silently as he passed them by.

He entered the rostrum and gazed forth upon the people as though he were taking note of their number. At length he spoke:

"My children, we have left the cities and fled to the hills. We are all that remain of the millions that once teemed those deserted towns. Our wise men have told us that here where the air is purer and where we can see the stars, the pestilence may yet be stayed.

They have even told us that had our forefathers not sojourned in cities this thing might not have been. This may well be the last Parliament of the World, after which Humanity must bow before the ultimate decree of Destiny.

"We have survived many horrors. We have created wonders and learned strange secrets. We have seen our visions, we have dreamed our dreams. We have known and conquered much that is evil. We have made the elements our servants, and after countless centuries of war and crime we have discovered our souls. If we are to be judged let it be our dreams, since every reality was once a dream and higher than all is the dream of beauty.

"To our finite minds it is inexplicable that when men have survived the horrors of the past this new pestilence—not of their conceiving—should have attacked them. Yet so it is. It has swept all but ourselves into the Shadowy Abyss of Death."

He ceased and silence reigned. Every eye was fixed on the speaker.

"I have consulted with the few men of science who have been spared, and this is our final plan. Those who bear any of the fatal signs must return to the towns, in order that the remainder may make here in the hills a new world that shall atone for all the hideous errors and infamous cruelties of the past."

Then certain men passed through

the assembly dividing the host into twain, till at length those who were tainted were ranged on one side of the rostrum and those who seemed pure upon the other.

"My children in the west the autumn sun has passed to his death in crimson glory and in the east the slender moon has risen, pale and pure, to preside over the destinies of the sky. As it is in heaven so it may be on earth. But before any return to the cities I would ask whether there be any who would fain go with them to tend them in their sickness. Ye that are pure know well what that means. Ye know that of all those millions who sought to save their fellows not one has returned. Ye know that your fate will be to die miserably and alone. To die slowly and untended, tortured by hunger and racked by thirst. Yet because ye know I ask who will volunteer to save those who must return?"

And silently every hand was raised. Even the smallest child lifted her little hand. And so they stood in silence absolute.

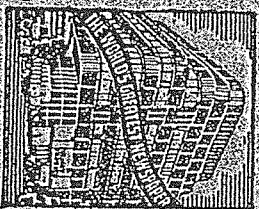
Then the voice of the speaker burst forth over the heads of the listening people, and in that clarion voice triumph and ecstasy were blended.

"Mingle together, O my children, mingle together freely, for now I know that this is indeed the end. When not one remains who is not eager to sacrifice his life for that of another, then verily the end of the world is come."

LIMBHOUSE
NICHOLS

TALES OF CHINA-TOWN

By
THOMAS BURKE



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with levelled cameras to get lasting records of that glorious, smiling head. The smile in those pictures, which you may find if you hunt up the files, is as strange and inscrutable as the smile of Mona Lisa, though there is that in its pose which seems to say: "Hands off, I'll learn anybody to mess my hair about."

For, now that Kang Foo Ah is out of it, little Gracie Goodnight is the only person in the world who knows that those extinguisher bottles had been emptied of their contents and refilled with kerosene.

THE PAW

It was the maidenly month of April, though it was not to be known in Pennyfields except by the calendar: a season of song and quickening blood. Beyond London, amid the spray of meadow and orchard, bird and bee were making carnival, but here one still gambled and waited to find a boat. Limehouse has no seasons. ~~It has not even the divisions of day and night.~~ Boys must sail at all hours at the will of the tide, and their swarthy crews are ever about. It has no means of marking the pomp of the year's procession. Justy spring may rustle in the hedgerows; golden-tasselled summer may move on the meadows. In Limehouse there are only more seamen or less seamen. Summer is a spell of stickiness, and winter a time of fog. There may perhaps be those who long to escape from it when the calendar calls spring, to kiss their faces to the grass, to lose their tired souls in tangles of green shade; but they are hardly to be met with. For the most, Limehouse is sufficient. These rather futile green fields and songs of birds and bud-sparangled trees are all very well, if you have the limited mind, but how much sweeter are the things of

the hands, the darling friendliness of the streets!

It was this season of flower and awakening that was the setting for the most shuddering tale that the Chinese quarter can tell.

It is of Greaser Flanagan, gateman at a docks station, and his woman: how she was stolen from him by Phung-tsin, the Chink, and of Flanagan's revenge.

Now Greaser Flanagan was a weak man, physically and morally flabby. Your strong man fears nothing but himself. The Greaser man feared everything but himself. He feared God, he feared the devil, and other men's opinions and their hands, and he feared life and death. He did not fear himself, for he was in the wretched position of knowing himself for the thing he was.

He was not a bad man. He had neither the courage for evil nor the tenderness for good. He was a Nothing. He did not smoke. He seldom swore. He did not drink. But he was a bit of a hop-head, and did sometimes hire an upper room in the Causeway, and sprawl his restless nerves on the solitary bed, with a pipe of li-tun or a handful of snow, and from it snatch some of the rich delights that life gave to others.

Now narcotised sensibilities are all very well for the grey routine of life. They help you to bridge the gaps. They carry you through the

redium of things, and hold you in velvet and silk against the petty jolts and jars. But when the big crisis comes, the grief of a lifetime . . . well, that you feel just ten times deeper and longer than the normal person. God! How it bites and stings and lacerates, and bites again, and tears the roots out of you, and creeps into every nerve and tissue of you, and sucks at the bones! How it scalds and itches and bruises and burns the body of you, and colours every moment of thought, and strangles your sleep!

So the Greaser found it. For the Greaser loved his wife with the miserable, furious passion of a weak thing. He loved her to life and death as such men do when they rise to it at all. He only lived when with her, Opium could not give him what even the sense of neighbourhood with her could give him. Of all things in the world he loved only her; his crawling blood only ran warm when she was by.

Which was not as often as it should have been, for she took her departures when and as she chose. Sometimes she would be out for a day, and return in the dark morning, without explanation or excuse.

And suddenly, on a bright Sunday, he lost her for all. She went from him to a yellow man in Pennyfields, leaving a denisive note of final farewell. The brutality of the blow got

him like a knife on a wound. Something fouled within him, and for an hour or so he was stupid—a mere flabby thing in a cotton suit. Then, as his faculties returned, they returned in fevered form. Something had happened. He was a new man—a man with an idea—a fixed goal—a haunting.

The Chinky must be killed. He wanted to kill him, but he knew he had not the pluck or the strength to do it. Did he hate Daffodil, his girl? No; he loved her with a more absurd little passion than before. He wanted her back, but not to harm her. It was the Chinky on whom all his thin rage was directed.

The Chinky must be killed.

The Chinky must be killed.

Round and round his brain it rolled. . . . Kill the Chink. He realised dimly that his life had now but one purpose, the outing of the Chink. In his slow, untaught mind a dozen snakely schemes uncoiled themselves, but all were impracticable for him. For all his brute ignorance, however, he had, as people of the soil often have, a perception which sometimes leads directly to surprisingly shrewd conclusions, to which the educated mind only comes by steps of thought.

He sat on the edge of a rickety chair, his hands on his knees, his face to the floor; and so he sat, all through that Sunday evening,

thinking, planning; now determined, now fearing. But that night he began his work, and in five days it was done.

There had been born to Daffodil and the Greaser a daughter. He had never much noticed the child, for he was not demonstrative, and was not at ease with any children or animals. The three of them had lived in one dirty bare room in the throated byway of Formosa Terrace, one room in which they commonly lived, slept, ate and toileted. As he lay on his ragged bed, sleepless that night, he suddenly saw, clearly, as though the Fates had placed it in his hand, the weapon whereby he should achieve his desire. He dared not do it himself. His limbs had shaken for hours at the mere notion of the act. He was afraid of a fight with the Chinky; and he leapt to a cold, wet terror at the prospect of the Old Bailey and the light cord. But . . . as this new idea came to him he lay and shivered with joy; the joy that a craftsman will take in a difficult task skilfully performed. In fifteen minutes it was all planned. It could be done—oh, easy! The result would hurt no one. A few years' detention in a good home for the culprit, and then released under official auspices—nothing of any consequence. He knew well the material he had to work upon—nervous, resilient material, responsive to suggestion, half paralysed by command—and how to work

upon it in such a way that nothing could be traced to him. Oh, it was too damned easy, with that material—namely, the fruit of a hysterical, erotic girl and a weedy opium-jolter. He lay and pinched his white face and the limp hair about his mouth, and chortled. He would start now. In the corner of the room farthest from the window was young Myrtle's mattress. He crawled out of bed, stretched himself horribly, and moved over the bare floor to where she lay lost and lovely in sleep.

Had the Greaser heard of what he was about to do as the conduct of another, he would have turned sick. But the man was mad, soberly mad. The thought of having the horrid Chinky stark and stiff and bloodless in a day or two was so sweet that it burned all other emotion out of him. Gawd—to think of it! Even now, when Limehouse Church was squeaking one o'clock, perhaps the Chinky's lemon hands were upon the skin of his Daffodill! Now, perhaps, he was stripping her, kissing with his long, wet lips, all the beauty of white arms and breast, and knowing by now, as well as the Greaser, every bit of that shining body that had been his for eleven years, and still was his—his—his! Gawd! It was suffocating to think about it! If he was a strong man—if he could get the throat of the lousy Chinky in his hands, and squeeze the wind out of it! But he had

seen him fight, he knew the dexterity of his tactics. That dexterity, however, would not avail against this new scheme.

So he grabbed the thin blanket that covered Myrtle, flung it off, and, before she was awake, half-a-dozen sharp, light blows had fallen on the exposed little form from a switch. Three gasps of surprise, and then a scream of pain tore through the night. Again and again he whipped her, against her screams and struggles. All about the writhing limbs the fang fell, until screams and appeals sank to moans and a fight for breath, and then a hoarse voice came to her out of the dark:

"Know what that's for?" She had not the strength to force a word, but at a sharp cut she pleaded through automatic sobs.

"That's 'cos yer ma's gone with the yeller man, that is. So now yer know. The yeller man took yer ma away, damn 'im, and I gotter look after yeh meself now. So that'll learn yeh to be'ave yerself—see? Someone ought to stick a knife into that bloody Chink—that's what they ought. Now, hold yer row and go to sleep, else you'll have some more."

As quickly as he had descended on her, he left her and returned to bed, and there he lay murmuring to himself. And when Myrtle, with stifled cries and sobs and chokings, fell at last into a late sleep, it was with terror in her heart, and a voice in her ears that was

murmuring: "Someone's gotter stick a knife inside that bloody Chink!"

Next morning he said nothing of the happenings of the night, but he did not go to work. And suddenly he called her to him, and stood her between his knees, and so held her in a vice. For some three minutes he held her thus, staring at her, silent and motionless. The child stood scarcely supported by the little strength that was in her, like a mesmerised rabbit.

Then a hand concealed behind him shot up savagely at her cheek. She reeled, but made no movement to break away, and as she fell sideways across him, a lean dog-whip curled with a clever crack about her legs. He made her stand up, and dressed her with the whip, letting her cover away, and bringing her smartly back, and then, through her strangled screams and moans, she became aware that he was singing. The tune was a music-hall lilt, and the song was:

"Someone oughter stick a knife—stick a knife—stick a knife—someone oughter stick a knife across that bloody Chink!"

On went the merry song, while little supplications, and moans rising to screams, and screams dropping to moans, punctuated it, and with each scream and gasp he suffered a thrill of ecstasy. Then he made her undress, and slashed her round the room, slashed her to a faint, and himself to a whirlwind of profanity,

all to the little tune of the Chink. As she dropped in a grey swoon at the window, her eyes closed, her breathing scarcely perceptible, he got the water-jug and flung its contents full over her. A mechanical parting and muscular jerks were the only sign of life; she was now but a quivering organism. But he took her arm and twisted it, and the new shock of pain aroused her to the tune of "Stick a knife—stick a knife—inside that bloody Chink!" She was too weak to make any sound, or to plead for release; and while the Greaser got some cheap whisky from a cupboard, and forced her mouth open, and poured some few drops down, there was a terrible silence where a moment ago had been lunatic screams and the voice of the whip.

Then he dragged her up, and bade her dress, and amused himself with playing the switch about her beaten limbs, still chanting his song; and at last he flung her to a corner, and went out, locking the door upon her.

He had begun his work well. For as she lay there, sick with pain, bleeding and lacerated and quivering, knowing nothing of the reason for this change in the nature of things, but conscious only that it was not so before, she went away, she had in her head a horrible tune that jangled, and would not leave her. It tripped to the racing of her burning pulse, to the throbbing of her scorched body, and to the beating

of the dynamo in the gas-station beyond the window:

"Someone ought to stick a knife—stick a knife—stick a knife—someone ought to stick a knife across that bloody Chink!"

What happened during the next four days in that loathly room can hardly be told. Day and night there were screamings and entreaties. Not one night's rest did she know. Sleep, for an hour he would give her, and then she would be awakened by a voice singing a familiar song of "Stick-a-knife," and lean hands that worked horrors upon her rosy limbs.

The lemon-coloured curls and the delicate, light beauty of her, so like her mother, must often have smote him, but he never swerved from his aim, and in a day or two she became an automaton, anticipating his wish, moving at a turn of his head, obedient to his unspoken word. As his idea progressed by these methods he found that the beast that lies in all of us had burst its chain, and a lust of torture possessed him. He seemed to lose himself in a welter of cruelty, yet never lost his sense of direction. In the intervals of these debauches and the pursuance of his plan, his love-made heart would be fall to sickness for his lost Daffodil, and the beauty of her, and her ways and speech—how thus she would go, and thus, and say so and so. He would awake at night and not find her by him, and his very bones would

yearn for the girl who had chucked him for a yellow man. And then he would think upon his plan, and, thinking upon that, he would try to further it; and once the beast of cruelty was loosed again, it would run in him with a consuming pace, until he began to fear that the child would be too overdone for his desire.

At last, on the fourth day, he neared the end. She had been laid across the chair and beaten almost to physical insensibility, and the inevitable reaction on the mind had left her mentally quiescent, blank. He had timed it cunningly. For all his abandonment to the passion of torment, some poison in his blood had led him clearly to his goal; and it was almost with a shriek of glee that he heard her speak after one of those assaults which she had come to regard as normal and to accept without surprise.

"Dad—why don't someone kill the Chink, then?"

He held himself well in hand, and answered casually: "Cos they're all afraid, that's why."

"No one couldn't kill the Chink, could they?"

"Course they could. Easy. Any afternoon. All them lot goes to sleep every afternoon—Chinky, too, in a dark room. Anyone could kill 'im then. As easy! I'd like someone to do it, that I would. Taking yer ma away from you and me, damnim!"

"How'd they do it, then?"

"Why——" He caught her by the frock, and dragged her to him. The physical pain of the four days had left her half animal, and in her face, swollen with tears, was a vacant look with less of intelligent consciousness than a cat's. She did not notice that the hand that pulled her was not cruel, but gentle. "Why, easy he'd do it. He'd go to the Chinky's house—the brown 'un at the corner—and he'd slip through the door, 'cos it's alwis open. And he'd creep to the back room where the Chinky sleeps, all in the dark. And he'd *creeeep* up to the bed. And he'd have the knife in both hands. And he'd bring it down—Squelch!—into the Chinky's neck—so!"

He pantomimed, and noticed with delight that the child's face was drawn, as in one who strives to learn a lesson.

"But why don' someone do it, then, and bring ma back to us?"

"Oh—'cos they're afraid. And 'cos they mustn't—that's why. It'd be murder. Killing people ain't right. Murder's awful wicked."

"Don't you wish Chinky was dead, dad? I do."

"Not 'arf I don't. I'd be a better man if Chinky was dead. It ain't right to say that, but I wish he was. But there . . . you don't want to think about that kind of thing. It ain't nice. Don't you go thinking about it."

And don't talk about it no more. Else you'll get some more of what I just done to yer!"

Next morning, he summoned her, and tore the frock from her, and whipped her again, and tied her to the bed, suspended, so that her feet twisted and just touched the ground. And there he left her till noon. Again, and again her aching head would droop, and throw the weight on her arms, and every time she raised it she would see, on the mantelshelf before her, a knife that was not there before—a large, lean knife—and a cheap "sticky-back" photograph—a portrait of the Chink. And as she swayed with the sustained torture, in her little brain sluggish thoughts began to crawl, and the golden head was moved to much strange reasoning.

At noon, he returned and released her, and let her dress, and gave her food. At about three o'clock he departed suddenly, leaving the door unlocked. He stayed away for part of an hour.

When he came back, the room was empty, and he had great joy. His heart sang; he flicked his fingers.

He squatted down by the fetid bed, chewing a piece of betel nut, and waited for her.

At four o'clock he heard the clatter of small feet in the passage, and then a little storm of frock and dishevelled stockings burst into the room, slipped and fell, and rose again, and

fell yet again on seeing the Greaser's sensual grin. Her face was whipped to a flame, and her breathing was hard. Her hands clutched the breast of her frock.

"Oh!" was the cry she gave, and for a moment she stood transfixed, expectant of an assault. And when it did not come, she ran on: "Oh, dad, don't beat me, don't whip me. Daddy, I only run out just to—to do something. I done it, dad. I done what they was frightened to do. Dad, aincher glad? I bin and killed him, I bin and killed the Chinky. I done him in, dad. All in the dark. He's dead all right. I put it right in . . . both hands. Don't whip me no more. I thought it'd bring ma back, p'raps. I thought. . . . Ooooh! Don't look like that. . . . dad! . . ."

His heart leapt. He could have howled with laughter. He wanted to kick his legs on the bed, and roll about. But he veiled the truth, and stared at the child with a face that assumed a grey terror.

"You done . . . what?" he asked, in slow tones of wonder. "You done . . . you killed someone. . . . Myrtle . . . killed that Chink. Oh—my—Gawd!"

"Yes," she said, with stark simplicity, stupidly fingering a large knife which she had drawn from under her frock. "Yep. I done 'im proper. 'Cos he took ma away from us. Look—here's the knife. I went right in, all

in the dark. Mind—it's wet. It went right in. It didn't half spurt out."

"Oh, Gawd," he screamed, acting better than he knew. "Blood. Oh, Gawd!" He sank limply to the bed, his figure a question mark. Then he leapt up, dashed to the door and rushed, in a cloud of words, to the street, crying hoarsely:

"Oh, Gawd! Police! Police! Someone tell the police. My kid's done a murder. Our Myrtle's bin and killed a Chink. Oh, Gawd. Oh, Gawd. Come in, someone. Someone go in to her. She's struck a knife in a Chink, and she's playing with it, and it's got blood on it. Oh, Gawd, can't someone tell the police!"

In the space of a minute, Hornosa Terrace, at that hour torpid and deserted, awoke to furious life. A small, vivid crowd surrounded him, and he stood at its centre, gesturing wildly, his hair drooping, his face working, as, fifty times, he told his tale.

Then a whistle was blown, and slowly the police came; and some went to Pennyfields, to the house of the Chink, and another took the child, and the sergeant took the Greaser and questioned him. He had it all so pat, and was so suitably garrulous and agitated, that he noted with glee how suspicion fell from him.

Yes, the knife was his; it had been given him at the docks by a Malay. Yes, he did hate

the Chink because the Chink had taken his wife, the child's mother; and quite probably he had said that the Chink ought to die. Not the right thing to say, perhaps, but quite likely he'd said it, because he felt like that then. No, he hadn't been to work to-day, but he'd been round at old Benny's most of the morning and the people downstairs saw him come in about an hour ago. Yes, he had punished the child several times lately. Had had to. His missus had gone with the Chink, and left him alone with the child to look after as well as himself, and he couldn't manage her. He'd had to whip her because she was dirty. (He brushed away a well-forced tear.) But if ever he'd have thought anything like this was going to happen, he'd never have left that knife there. Gawd help him if he would. To think that his kid—his only kid—should do a murder. It was awful. What'd he done to deserve two blows like that? His wife gone; and now his little kid to kill someone. . . . Gawd.

And he broke upon the arms of the supporting constables.

Myrtle and he were taken to the station, the child wondering and a little pleased with the novelty; he with his life's work done, his Daffodil's ravisher put to sleep. His statement was taken again, and he was told that he must consider himself detained with the child, to which he brokenly concurred.

Now there came to the station the officers who had visited the Chink's house, and they made a verbal report of what they had seen.

And suddenly, there burst upon the quiet station a great howl—the howl of a trapped beast, as Greaser Flanagan fell forward over the desk and hammered the floor with his fists.

"Yeess," the constable was saying; "yeess—we bin there. Found the body all right. In bed. Knife wound through the neck—left side. Only it ain't the Chink. It's a woman. It's Daffodil Flanagan!"