THE HONBLE GENTLEMAN AND OTHERS

ACHMED ABDULLAH

The Honourable Gentleman And Others

By

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To

DAVID BELASCO

CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE HONOURABLE GENTLEMAN . . .	1
THE HATCHETMAN	41
A PELL STREET SPRING SONG . . .	73
COBBLER'S WAX	112
AFTER HIS KIND	144
A SIMPLE ACT OF PIETY	196
HIMSELF, TO HIMSELF ENOUGH . . .	241

The Honourable Gentleman

YEARS later, when Tsing Yu-ch'ing had "resigned his dignities and ascended the dragon" —which was the priest Yu Ch'ang's happy euphemism for a brutal and unsolved Pell Street murder; when his emaciated body, dressed in twelve white linen garments and enclosed in a red lacquer coffin made air-tight with cement to ward off the "little devils who nag the soul," had been shipped from New York to Canton; there carried in state, with fifty hired mourners in green and scarlet cloaks accompanying the cortège, to the house of his honourable ancestors in the Loo-man-tze Street; and finally buried, together with his carved, inlaid chopsticks, a bowl of rice and dried bits of pork, and a roll of paper money, in a charming and carefully chosen spot where his spirit might

find æsthetic delight in contemplating running water and a grove of flowery, feathery *loong-yen* trees—years later, the members of the Tsing clan, which prospered from London to San Francisco, from Manila to Singapore, from Pekin to Buenos Aires, subscribed ten thousand taels gold with which to build a *pailan*—an honorary arch to commemorate the exceeding righteousness of the deceased Pell Street newspaper editor.

The *pailan* itself is of plain, dull finished ivory, without any ornaments, to prove to posterity the dead man's simplicity, honesty, and modesty. But, as you pass through, you see on the western, the lucky, side a carved, chiselled, and fretted teakwood beam, lit up from above by three enormous paper lanterns that are shaped to resemble the pleasant features of the Goddess of Mercy, a rich violet in colour, and inscribed each with a different sentence in archaic Mandarin ideographs.

The first reads:

"The elements of Tsing Yu-ch'ing's faith had their roots in the eternity of understanding."

The second:

"Tsing Yu-ch'ing was just in affirming the permanency and reality of trust."

And the third:

"Tsing Yu-ch'ing was a wise man. Through death did he make love eternal."

On the teakwood beam itself is carved a quotation from the *Book of the Unknown Philosopher*, and it says that the man who is departing on a sad journey often leaves his heart under the door. But it is worth while remembering that the Chinese ideographs *sin*—heart—and *menn*—door—when placed one above the other and read together make a third word: "melancholy"; which latter, by a peculiar Mongol twist, is considered an equivalent of "eternal love."

And it was of eternal love that Tsing Yu-ch'ing dreamed one day, twenty years earlier, as he walked through the viscous, sluttish reek

of Pell Street, with the summer air aloft blazing around a naked, brutish sun; shooting down brilliant wedges of light that clothed the rickety, fetid houses with an illogical garment of golden gauze slashed with purple and heliotrope; farther back, where the haughty silhouette of the Broadway mart etched the horizon, dimming the roofs and steeples and square, parvenu towers to delicate jade; and touching the foaming, broad sweep of river, far out, with flecks of silver and oily splotches of rose and aquamarine and clear emerald.

Fastidiously, so as not to muddy his socks which showed white and silken above the padded, black velvet slippers, he stepped over a broken pocket flask that was trying to drown its despair in a murky puddle, turned into the Bowery, passed beneath the spider's web of the Elevated that screamed down at him with sneering, strident lungs of steel, and walked up two blocks.

A pawnbroker's place, pinched in north by

a ten-story, tubercular giant of a house where tenement flats mingled odorously with unclassified home industries and south by the prurient, eight-sheet posters of a Yiddish vaudeville theatre, was his goal: a squat building, mouldy, acrid, red bedaubed, crouching there like a beast of prey; the show-cases garish with the cheap, heart-breaking luxuries of the poor, and here and there a bit of fine old Sheffield plate, an ancient mosaic and filigree brooch, a piece of cerulean Bristol glass, or a rose-cut diamond in an old-fashioned, black onyx setting—a passing, tragic tale in each of them. The three balls above the door twinkled ironically in the direction of Mr. Brian Neill's saloon, as if to show the way.

The proprietress, Widow Levinsky *née* O'Grady, a short, heavy, square-shouldered, good-looking woman of forty, with straight nose, firm, well-shaped lips, and violet eyes, stood in the open door. She smiled when she saw Tsing Yu-ch'ing.

"I thought ye'd never come," she greeted him.

He bowed courteously, and shook hands.

"The weekly Chinese newspaper which I publish goes to press today," he replied in his beautifully modulated, slightly precious English which he had learned at Harvard. "Few of my countrymen can read the American newspapers. It is therefore my duty——"

"Yer duty? Say!" Mrs. Levinsky obeyed the suggestion of the word. She spoke with hectic, running ease. "You—and yer duty! It's man's favourite excuse when he don't want to play the game none, see? Look a-here, Tsing, did ye ever stop to think wot's yer duty to my little Minnie—in there?"

She pointed with thumb across shoulder into the shop, and when Tsing looked puzzled, she went on:

"Say! All men are just the same, ain't they—if they're white or if they're yeller Chinks like yerself! Ain't got no thought in yer head

'xcept yerself, have ye? Selfishness! That's man's middle name—though—" she paused—"mebbe it's thoughtlessness more'n selfishness."

"My dear Mrs. Levinsky, I assure you——"

Tsing had no idea of what he was going to assure the belligerent Irishwoman. Nor did she give him time.

She waved a pudgy and derisive hand.

"Aw!" she cried. "Come off'n yer perch. Don't try and play the little blue-eyed angel all dressed up in white innercence and floppy wings and never a bad thought in yer pumpkin! Ye know what I mean, all right, all right."

"I do not." Tsing Yu-ch'ing stiffened. His Chinese dignity was beginning to bridle.

But it was lost on Mrs. Levinsky.

"If ye don't know it's high time ye learned," she countered. "D'ye ever consider what a goil thinks when a feller calls on her night after night like you been doin' on Minnie, for over two years now—and brings her candy and

flowers and talks to her soft and mushy-like—as *you* do?"

A dull, blotchy red was beginning to mantle the Chinaman's sallow, ugly features.

"Mrs. Levinsky!" he exclaimed. "I give you my word——"

"G'wan! Keep yer word! Ye may need it some day! No use denyin' that ye're talkin' tootsie-wootsie to Minnie, young feller! I heard ye myself, many's the time, when ye thought I was asleep. I heard ye tell my daughter——"

"Nothing that you shouldn't have heard! I told her the little charming fairy stories of my own country," he defended himself.

Mrs. Levinsky sniffed.

"Git out! That don't go down with me none. Fairy stories—God! Minnie ain't a baby in diapers no more. She's sixteen, see? And all the fairy stories she wants is a feller poppin' the question and doin' the regular thing with a wedding-ring and choich

bells and a flat furnished on the instalment plan."

Tsing looked up, a strange light eddying in his narrow-lidded eyes. His breath came staccato, distinct.

"Do you mean to say," he asked, "that she is—" he slurred and stopped.

"Sure! She's stuck on yer—if that's what yer tryin' to say. How can she help herself, eh? Ye're the only guy wot ever calls on her regular except onct in a while her cousins and them's just roughneck bums and talk of nuthin' 'xcept baseball and gang fights and mebbe a doity story or two. Sure Mike! How can the poor little kid help bein' stuck on ye? You mush all over her—and I told you she's sixteen!"

"I am sorry. Of course you are right. I see that now. I—I didn't mean—to——"

"Don't ye be sorry, my lad. Just ye go in there and—well—pop the question." She interrupted herself with a jolly, Irish laugh. "Say! That's the worst of havin' been married to a

Sheeny as I been. Here I'm matchmakin' like a regular—what do my Levinsky in-laws call it? Sure—*schadchen*—marriage broker—that's the woid." She laughed again and added: "I can't say as I admire Minnie's taste none too much. But—well—it's her own funeral."

"You really mean that you won't object to——"

Tsing Yu-ch'ing made a helpless gesture, quickly understood by the sharp-eyed, intelligent woman.

"Forget it, Tsing!" she said, with something almost like affection in her voice. "Sure ye're a Chink. Ye're yeller and ye're homely even for the likes of you—with that long, thin mutt of your'n, and them beady, woozy eyes, and that mouth that looks more like a cellar door than a place to push food in, and them spidery legs and arms. But—" she smiled—"Minnie's *blind*, ain't she? *She* don't know the difference between whites and Chinks!"

"Yes." The Chinaman breathed softly.

"She is blind. She doesn't know the—ah—difference——."

"I thought I could make yer see sense. And I'm glad I put it up to yer straight. Yer see—" there was the suspicion of a break in her voice—"Minnie's my only child, and I just know she's crazy about yer. Ye're a Chink, sez you! And we both live around Pell Street ways, sez I! There's more than one goil around here that'll toin up her nose at Minnie, I guess, when she's Mrs. Tsing. But wot the devil? That won't prevent them same goils wot toins up their noses from havin' a Chink for a side-kick when nobody ain't lookin'! And so I sez: let's fix it straight and regular with a ring and a weddin'-cake. Sure I know wot my mother's family'll say, livin' all proper and swell up in the Bronx! But what do I care? They washed their hands off'n me when I married a Sheeny—and ol' Jake didn't beat me up, as my father beat up my mother—not much! And I guess they'll do the same thing all over again when Minnie marries

a Chink. Well—let 'em! Their hands need washin'——"

She talked on and on. But Tsing Yu-ch'ing hardly listened to her.

A great pain was in his heart and, too, an all-pervading sense of beauty and glory and sweetness; and he passed through the shop into the tiny back garden where a few potted plants were making a brave, losing fight against the dust and grime and reek of the Bowery.

Minnie Levinsky was one of those purely and exclusively American miracles by the strength of which, all theories of eugenics to the contrary, two underfed, underbred, atavistically inimical races mix their pitiful seed and produce a perfect human body. Tall she was, and round breasted, but with a delicate, boyish touch in her narrow hips that tapered down to yet narrower ankles and the feet of a Cinderella. Her hair was like golden, curled sunlight, her nose small and straight with nervous, flaring nostrils, her tragic,

unseeing eyes were sea-green beneath the audacious hood of black lashes.

There was a sweet curve to her upper lip and a quick lift at the corners as she heard the soft, familiar pad-pad-pad of Tsing's felt-soled slippers.

"Hello, Tsing!" she said, holding out her hand.

"Hello, Plum Blossom!"

That was the name he had given her two years earlier when, just out of Harvard, he had come to Pell Street to share with his countrymen the wisdom the West had taught him. His clan, typically Chinese in their admiration for him, the literatus, the educated gentleman, had backed him with capital for his enterprise, a weekly newspaper which he called the *Eminent Elevation*—with an ironically democratic side-glance, the result of American training, at the Empress Dowager Tzu Hsi who, within the crenelated battlements of Pekin's Tartar town, was known by the same honorific title. But

there was little money in the newspaper, heavy expenses, great risks, and so one day he had entered the pawnbroker's place on the Bowery and had exchanged his gold watch for a small sum; enough to tide him over for a week or two.

Behind the counter he had seen Minnie, then a golden-haired child of fourteen, and blind.

"Plum Blossom," he had called her, in a surging, warm access of pity.

"Plum Blossom," he called her now, that his pity had given way to love.

"I just adore to have you call me Plum Blossom," she said in her soft, careful English which Miss Edith Rutter, the social settlement investigator, had taught her.

"Do you?" He smiled. "And I adore to call you that and—other names."

He sat down by her side.

"For instance?" she asked, looking up radiantly, expectantly. And when he did not reply,

she went on with a little sigh: "Any more stories about your own country?"

"Yes, Plum Blossom."

She sat up straight, eager, interested. For two years, nearly every day, he had called on her, and always had he told her the stories of his own land.

Stories of China! Stories of Asia!

He had woven the warp and woof of them around her with adroit and ardent hands. Nor can it be said that he had woven close to the loom of lies. But his love for her had blended with his love for China. Subtly they had influenced each other; and thus the China which he pictured to her was a charming land of pale yellows and exultant blues; a land that tinkled with tiny silver pagoda bells through the lotus-scented spring breezes; a land that had the mellow patina of ancient wisdom, ancient culture, ancient justice and intolerance.

He showed it to her through his yearning, poet's eyes, and she—the eyes of her body blind

—saw it all through the eyes of her love for him; love that had grown, steadily, day by day.

"I wish I could see China," she would say, "China and the Chinese."

And he would shudder a little and draw his bony hand across his repulsive Mongol devil mask of a face.

"Yes, Plum Blossom," he would reply. "I wish you could see it—and us."

"Seeing must be wonderful."

"Feeling is even more wonderful. And only the blind can feel—really feel——"

Of course, her cousins and the occasional neighbours' children who dropped in now and again, would make slurring, slangy, sneering remarks about that there "damned yeller Chink wot's hangin' round all the time." But to her there was neither sense nor hurt in the words.

Damned Chink? What of it?

The blind have no racial prejudice. They know neither the meaning nor the tragedy of

colour, and if the others called Tsing Yu-ch'ing a damned, yeller Chink, they called each other damned Mick, and damned Dutchman, and damned Sheeny, and damned Wop, and damned what-not.

Damned! Rather the Pell Street term for ethnological melting-pot endearment.

"Why don't you go on with your story?" she said now, a little impatiently.

"Because my heart is too full for words, Plum Blossom. Because I feel both proud and humble in your presence. Because—oh—" he continued, getting more stiffly, archaically Chinese by the minute, "I taste in your company the refined and exquisite happiness that was tasted by Tcheng Tsi, the insignificant disciple, when, with the zither singing under his fingers, he accompanied with his timid harmony the teaching of the great Koung Tzeu. Because——"

"Tsing!"

Suddenly the girl interrupted him, her mother's belligerent Celtic blood breaking through the brooding patience which was her Semite heritage, and just a faint shade of bitterness bubbling amidst her words!

"Tsing! Why don't you tell me straight out that you love me? Is it because I am—blind? Tsing! Why don't you tell me that you love me? Why *don't* you?"

And he did.

He took her in his arms.

With the correct intonation of Harvard, but the slightly fustian, slightly stilted, entirely delicious phraseology of China, he told her that hers was the strength of his body, hers the dreams of his soul, hers the pulsing of his heart and the ambition of his mind. He told her that he would weave his love in a flower chain and tie it gently about her wrist; that he would change his love to a rose-red pearl to hang in her little white ear. Of love he talked, while the houses that pinched in the dusty back garden on

all sides looked down like sardonic sentinels, while the roofs flashed hard and sinister under the naked tenuity of the August sun, while the Pell Street litany brushed in on strident, stained pinions.

She snuggled close against him.

"I love you, dear," she said. "Love—it's wonderful, glorious! And—" her voice splintered and broke, "I wish I could see you. I wish I could understand what seeing means, what beauty means—to the eye! I wish I could see—*you!* For I know that you are beautiful, beautiful, Tsing! I just know it!"

He gave a little start.

Again he drew his bony hand across his repulsive Mongol devil mask of a face. Again he told her that he loved her; that his love was a strong and eternal thing; that it would last forever, through the days dripping with golden sunlight, the starless nights loud with pattering rain, and beyond.

"Everything shall I give to you," he said, "except sorrow."

It was a proper marriage with the pealing of church bells, an enormous, pink-iced wedding-cake, and a gargantuan banquet at the Great Shanghai Chop Suey Palace; the food furnished free of charge by Mr. Nag Hong Fah, the pouchy proprietor of the restaurant, in honour of the literatus, the educated gentleman who was the bridegroom, so as to gain face for himself, his ancestors, and his descendants with Faoh Poh, the God of Learning, the Jewel of the Law; and the beer and whisky and green and purple liqueurs for the ladies contributed by Mr. Brian Neill, the saloon-keeper, for the negative reason that, a week earlier, he had had a fist fight with Mr. Sarsfield O'Grady, Mrs. Levinsky's brother, who had come down from the aristocratic Bronx to tell his sister that—by God!—it wasn't himself would stand for no damned, yeller nigger of a Chink marryin' into

his family, but had instead fallen foul of the saloon-keeper over a question of Tammany politics.

Yet, for all the splendours of the wedding, Pell Street and the Bowery whispered and sneered. If the whites objected to the union on racial grounds, because the bridegroom was a Chinaman, the yellows objected on physical grounds, because the bride was blind.

"*I lou fou sing*—may the star of good fortune protect you!" piously said Nag Hop Fat, the soothsayer, to Tsing Yu-ch'ing. "But, O wise and older brother, think left and think right. Think much. Remember what is written in the *Kiou-li:* 'The blind rise and depart when the torches are brought in!'"

"Love never departs!" replied Tsing Yu-ch'ing.

Thus the talk, to and fro. Too, though this was restricted to officious and sincere outsiders since Pell Street knew better—and worse, there was the usual babble of opium and Chinese

slavery and other resplendently, romantically wicked things; and Miss Rutter, the social settlement investigator, took it upon herself to look into the matter.

Mrs. Levinsky would have boxed her ears, had it not been for the close proximity of Mr. Bill Devoy, Detective of Second Branch. As it was, she contented herself with giving the well-meaning amateur sociologist a piece of her mind.

"Getta hell outa here!" she said. "Who asked ye to come here and stick yer ugly snub nose in other people's pots? Well—it ain't my fault if ye don't like the smell, see? Bad luck to ye and the likes o' ye!"

Then, her good nature getting the better of her indignation as she saw the hurt expression on Miss Rutter's ingenuous features:

"Gwan! I didn't mean to hurt yer feelings!"

At which the other took fresh courage and returned to the attack:

"My dear Mrs. Levinsky—I know Tsing is

an educated man, and he may be a fine man. But——"

"He's yeller. Right ye are foist shot out o' the box. But, yeller or pea green or black with white polka dots, he's *a* real gent—get that? And Minnie's my only child, and I got rheumatiz of the heart, and she'll be all alone, and she's blind—and Tsing 'll take care of her. I trust that homely, yeller Chink—see? And there ain't many—white *or* yeller—that I trust around Pell Street."

Yet, as the days grew into weeks and months, and the young couple kept house in a small flat above the store of Yung Long, the grocer, it was not Mrs. Levinsky's tirade as much as the testimony of her own eyes and ears which convinced Miss Rutter that, for once, there was here a mixed marriage which was bringing happiness and peace to both the yellow and the white.

Detective Bill Devoy put it in a nutshell.

"Sure!" he said. "He's a Chink. But he's

white, all right, all right. And Minnie—say—she's just an angel—" and he added, as a profane sop to his sentimentality: "Yep! A damned little angel—that's what she is!"

When, on the first day of each month, the few local members of the Tsing clan residing in New York met at the Pell Street liquor store which belonged to the Chin Sor Company and was known as the "Place of Sweet Desire and Heavenly Entertainment," and talked over matters vital to Chinatown with the numerous clan of their distant cousins, the Nags, Tsing Yu-ch'ing's married life, though he himself was usually present, was a topic of never ceasing interest to the company.

It was Nag Hong Fah, the restaurant proprietor, rather than Tsing Yat, the head of the clan of that ilk, who occupied the seat of honour on these occasions. Not because of his stout burgess wealth, but because he was considered an authority on mixed unions since he himself

had married a half-caste—one Fanny Mei Hi who, on a mysterious distaff side, was related to Mr. Brian Neill, the saloon-keeper.

Nag Hong Fah would lean well back in his chair, smoke a leisurely pipe of *li-un*, fragrant with the acrid sweetness of India's scarlet poppy fields, look dreamily at the wall which was covered with yellow satin all embroidered from ceiling to floor with philosophical sentences scrawled vertically in purple characters, and give of his garnered wisdom.

"Happiness between the black-haired and the red-haired race is possible," he said sententiously, "if a few simple rules be observed. Let the woman open to her husband not only the door of her house, but also the door of her heart. Let the man listen to the woman without answering; let him listen to her advice and—" he said it unsmilingly—"then do the opposite. Let them both unite in producing strong and healthy men children, thus taking of the white woman's feverish substance and

gently kneading it into a child of our own strong, placid race."

With calm disapproval he looked at Tsing Yu-ch'ing. For, since everything from drawing teeth to shaving, from birth to burial, is a matter of communal interest to the Chinese who do not know the meaning of the word privacy and have no objection to the most glaring publicity, it was a scandal in the nostrils of all respectable Pell Street householders that Minnie Tsing, married now nearly three years, had not as yet brought a child into the world and that there seemed no prospect of her doing so.

"Given obedience to these few simple rules, chiefly the last one," Nag Hong Fah resumed, "happiness between the black-haired and the red-haired race is possible"; and he sipped his jasmine-flavoured tea noisily from a precious cup of *iao* jade, while Tsing Yu-ch'ing smiled.

"O serene father of many and healthy children!" he replied. "Happiness *is* possible.

But my rules differ from yours. I say that happiness demands only one thing: love!"

"Love?" Yu Ch'ang, the priest, picked up the word like a battle gage and tossed it to the crowd. "Love is an infidel act. Love is the mental refuse of the very young and the very old. Love—'*ju lai-che, chi-chu-har-ru-i*—Buddha alone is love and law!' Remember what the book says!"

"The book?" Tsing laughed. "O priest, what you cannot find in the written book, the brook will whisper to you—the brook in the soul of the loved one—" and he pointed through the window at his little snug flat across the street that winked through the malicious, faltering maze of Chinatown with golden eyes.

"Such love," brutally said Tsing Yat, head of his clan, "is the love of the eye. And your honourable wife has no oil in her eyes"—using the Chinese simile for a blind person.

"Indeed!" gravely assented Tsing Yu-ch'ing. "She is blind."

And he added under his breath:

"For which praised be the Goddess of Mercy!"

"For which praised be the Goddess of Mercy!"

The prayer was always in his heart; often on his lips when—since Harvard had not touched the roots of his life, his faith, his traditions, and ancient racial inhibitions—he entered the joss temple around the corner and burned there Hung Shu incense sticks before the purple-faced image.

"Praised be the Goddess of Mercy!" he mumbled when Minnie, in a sudden wild, choking longing for the unattainable, would wave inarticulate, stammering arms and complain about the hard fate which was hers:

"If I could only see! Only for one minute! If I could see your face! For I know you are beautiful, beautiful—my lover, my sweetheart, my husband! As beautiful as your soul—your heart!"

And she would take his face between her white hands and touch the ugly, flat nose, the thin eyebrows, the broad, narrow-lipped gash of a mouth, the high angular cheek-bones with the sallowish, yellow skin drawn tight across so that it looked like crackly egg-shell porcelain, the ludicrous lantern jaw, the skinny, emaciated neck which supported the repulsive head as a slimy stalk supports an evil, leering jungle flower.

"I know you are beautiful, best beloved in all the world!" she repeated, kissing his lips. "And I want to see your beautiful face—if only for a minute!"

Then fear—nameless fear of the unknown, unknowable—crept into Tsing Yu-ch'ing's heart on silent, unclean feet, and in all Pell Street there were only two who understood him: Tsing Yat, the head of his clan, and Mrs. Levinsky.

The former would listen politely when his young cousin came to him and clothed his brooding fear in clumsy, stuttering words. He

would busy himself with his opium lay-out, the tasselled bamboo pipe that had been coloured a deep, golden brown by a "thousand and ten thousand smokes," as he put it, the box filled with treacly *chandoo*, the *yen-hok*, and the *yen-shi-gow*, and reply calmly:

"Do not give wings to trouble. It flies swiftly without them."

Mrs. Levinsky told him the same thing in her slightly more crisp phraseology.

"Forget it," she said. "It'll all come out in the wash. You'll cross that there bridge when ye get to it—and ye never will. Minnie is blind, ain't she? *She'll* never see that ugly mutt of your'n!".

On her very death-bed, a year later, she repeated her advice:

"Cut it out! Don't be a damned fool!"

And she passed from the mephitic chaos of Pell Street into another world, serene to the last in her faith that that there "yeller Chink" was all right and sure he'd see to it that there wasn't

no sorrow would ever come to her little blind "goil"—blessed be the dear Saints!

It was about a year later that Tsing Yu-ch'ing, back from his newspaper office, found Minnie in animated conversation with a visitor, an American, who rose at his entry, slapped him heartily on the back, and hailed him by his old Harvard nickname:

"Well—old Tsingaloo! It's a coon's age since I've seen you. Five years, I wager."

"Nearly six," smiled Tsing, shaking hands with the other, a tall, dark man with a thin face ending in a projecting, rather predatory chin and a domed forehead furrowed by the abyss of deep-set sparklingly intelligent eyes. "I'm awfully glad you looked me up, Hardwick. How did you find me?"

"Oh—what's the chap's name—countryman of yours who went to Chicago and became consul there——?"

"You mean Ma Lü-k'un?"

"The same. I ran across him the other day when I ran up to the Windy City to see a patient. We spoke of old times, including your noble self. He gave me your address. And here I am—and here you are! Regular married, tired businessman, aren't you? Completely Americanized, eh?—with mission furniture and a victrola and Axminster rugs and cold tea in the ice chest and—" he laughed—"you know I've always been a tactless brute—a pretty little golden-haired wife!"

Minnie smiled, while Tsing inclined his head.

"I am all you say, old man," he replied. "And what have *you* been doing with yourself since I saw you last, Hardwick?"

"I?" The other heaved a mock dramatic sigh. "*Sic transit!*" he quoted more or less appropriately. "Do you mean to say that Pell Street hasn't heard of me, the little boy wonder of his chosen profession? That you have not heard of Travers Hardwick, the——"

Suddenly he checked himself. Afterwards he

could have sworn that, simultaneously with Minnie's cry, "You are the eye specialist—the famous eye specialist!" he heard a deep, sonorous, "Hush—for God's sake, hush!" issuing from between Tsing's tightly compressed lips. But he was not looking at the latter, could not read the brooding, sinister tragedy in his heart. He only saw the tragedy in Minnie's unseeing, sea-green eyes—a commingling of awe and fear and hope—and then her words, flat, slurring, hectic:

"Doctor—Doctor Hardwick—please!"

And, a second later, Tsing's voice cutting in, even, clear, yet somehow marred and tainted by something unknown, something racially unknown:

"Doctor—will you—oh——?"

"Of course. Let me see." He consulted a little note-book. "Yes. Come to my office tomorrow at half-past two. Here's my card. I'll make a thorough examination—"; and he launched into cold, passionless, professional

talk while Minnie looked at him out of her blind eyes as she might at her Saviour.

"Perhaps, dear! Perhaps I shall see—*you!* You—strong and fine and beautiful!" she sobbed in her husband's arms after the doctor had left, caressing his repulsive face with her narrow hands.

"Yes."

Tsing's voice was numb, like the dull stroke of a passing-bell. Then, incongruously it seemed, he told her again what he had said to her that time when he had asked her to marry him, five years earlier:

"Everything shall I give to you, except sorrow."

It was twenty-four hours later, and Tsing Yat, head of the Tsing clan, his amorphous form wrapped in baby-blue, embroidered satin, silently and gently pushed the warm bamboo pipe aside and substituted for it one of carved ivory with a burnished jade tip. Leaning his

left cheek against the leather cushion, he looked hard at his visitor, Tsing Yu-ch'ing.

"It is said in the Book of Meng Tzeu," he drawled dreamily, "that he who cannot fulfil his charge must resign it."

Having spoken his judgment, he smoked two pipes one after the other. The kindly drug poured a spirit of tolerance into his soul, and he smiled.

"It is not the question of love being right or wrong," he continued, kneading the amber opium cube over the flame. "I, personally, being wise and old and fat believe that love is like wings upon a cat, like rabbits' horns, like ropes made of tortoise hair. You, being young, look for the impossible. You look for flowers in the sky. You put self-exertion above Fate."

"One cannot argue about love," agreed the younger man. "It is or is not. But, love or no love, I am a literatus, a gentleman. I cannot break the faith I have once given, nor the trust.

I promised her that I would give everything to her, except sorrow. I cannot lose face, O wise and older brother."

"Indeed." Tsing Yat refilled his pipe. The opium in the lamp boiled over, and the opalescent smoke rolled in heavy clouds over the mats. "You cannot lose face. For, if the precious vase be broken in pieces, shall not the treasure of ancient precepts be lost forever? There are also your honourable ancestors to be considered."

For a while he smoked in silence. Then he asked:

"You have thought it out well? You have thought left and thought right?"

"Yes," came Tsing Yu-ch'ing's reply, dry and passionless.

"You are sure the foreign doctor speaks the truth?"

"He says that, without doubt, the operation will be successful. He has already arranged for a room in the hospital and a nurse. Inside of a month, perhaps six weeks, she will see.

She will see—me!" he added in a curiously lifeless voice.

"And then?" asked the other, replacing the ivory pipe with one of speckled tortoise-shell; and, when his cousin did not reply, he laughed, rather gratingly, and went on: "You think she will see you as you are—and, O little brother, you are not beautiful—and the love of her soul will choke and die in the disgust of her eyes!"

Tsing Yu-ch'ing shrugged his lean shoulders.

"I do not know," he replied. "Perhaps the love of her soul will be stronger than the disgust of her eyes. Perhaps not. Perhaps—having always thought me beautiful—the honey of five years' happiness and peace and sweetness will turn into bitter, stinking gall when her seeing eyes show her the living lie. I know—" he spread his lean hands like the sticks of a fan to show the futility of his words, the futility of life itself—"nothing—except the immutability of my honourable oath that I shall give to her everything, but sorrow."

"There is also the possibility of your honourably committing suicide," calmly suggested Tsing Yat.

"Of that, too, have I thought. For suicide is *fah-lien*—approved in the law. But if now, before the operation, I through my own hands should ascend the dragon the shock of it might kill her and her last hours would then be hours of sorrow. If I should wait until after the operation, she will see me on my death-bed, perhaps in my coffin while the last rites are being celebrated. And then again, perhaps, seeing me as I am—me, whom she thought beautiful—the honey of the past years will turn into the gall of disgust—of hatred."

Tsing Yat raised himself on his elbow and looked closely at his visitor, his almond eyes, almost hidden beneath the opium-swollen lids, flashing a look that was strangely mocking and strangely pitying.

"You have decided, little brother?" he asked.

"Yes."

Tsing Yu-ch'ing made a great gesture. It was more than a mere moving of hand and arm. It seemed like an incident which cut through the brown, smoke-wreathed stillness like a tragic shadow. Pell Street, America, the white man's law and prejudices and inhibitions, seemed very far away.

"There is only one way," he continued. "I myself shall carry the burden of sorrow and unhappiness and loneliness through the many years. Without her, my life shall be an empty, meaningless shell. But there is my honourable love, my honourable promise. Too, there is her love for me. I shall make it eternal. I shall kill her—lest her eyes see the living lie of my repulsive face."

"Ah," gently breathed Tsing Yat, kneading the opium cube against his pipe. "Presently I shall rise and speak to Lu Hsi, the hatchetman. He has a poison which leaves no trace. You can give it to your wife tonight, in a cup of hot tea. The white devils will never know."

Then, after a pause:

"Will you smoke?"—courteously indicating the carved ivory *toey* filled with opium.

"Yes," replied Tsing Yu-ch'ing.

Outside, the wicked, saturnine lights of Pell Street hiccoughed through the trailing dusk.

The Hatchetman

A BARREL-ORGAN had just creaked up the street, leaving a sudden rent of silence in the hectic clattering of the Pell Street symphony and lending a slow, dramatic thud to the words of Yung Long, the wholesale grocer, that drifted through the gangrened door.

"Yes," he said. "Wong Ti—" and Wong Ti, on his way through the hall, stopped as he heard his name—"is a killer, a hatchetman. In the whole of Pell Street there is none more skilled than he in his profession. He is old and withered. True! But his mind is sharp, his hand is steady, and he knows the intricate lore of drugs. He could put poison in your belly, and your lips would be none the wiser. Too, he is fearless of the white devils' incomprehensible laws. He has killed more often than there

are hairs on his honourable chest. Yet has he never been punished, never even been suspected."

"Then—why—?" came the slurring, slightly ironic question.

"Because," replied Yung Long, "he is a philosopher and a just man, a sane man, a tolerant man. He knows that when the naked dance, they cannot tear their clothes. He knows that a dead mule cannot eat turnips. He knows that there is no beginning and no end to the beard of the beardless. He knows that one cannot cure a woman's heart with powder and ball and steel, nor heal the canker of jealousy with poison. He is a most honourable gentleman, gaining a great deal of face through his wisdom and the guile of his charming simplicity."

"The *guile* of his simplicity, O elder brother?" stuttered a naïve voice, belonging both as to question itself and the throaty, faintly foreign inflection to some young, American born Chinaman.

"Indeed!" the grocer gurgled into his pipe, amongst a ripple of gentle, gliding laughter.

Then other voices brushed in, quoting the polished and curiously insincere sentences of ancient Chinese sages in support of his contention; and Wong Ti, the hatchetman, stepped back from the door and vanished behind the curtain of trooping, purple shadows thrown across the length of the narrow hall by the great, iron-bound tea chests in back of Yung Long's store.

He turned and walked up the stairs with that furtive step which, since it was the scientific accomplishing of murder that brought him the glitter of gold, the shine of silver, the jangling of copper, and the pleasant, dry rustle of paper money had become second nature to him: heels well down, toes slowly gripping through soft duffle soles, arms carefully balanced, hands at right angles from the wrists, and fingers spread out gropingly, like the sensitive antennæ of

some night insect, to give warning of unfamiliar objects.

As he passed the first floor, he stopped.

There, beneath a flickering double gas jet, Doctor En Hai, A.B., Yale, M.D., Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons, member of the American Society of Clinical Surgery, corresponding member of the Paris *Sociéte de Chirurgie* and of the Royal British Association of Surgery and Gynæcology, flashed the incongruous modernity of his brass shingle through the musty, mouldy labyrinth of Chinatown.

In his post-graduate year, a famous New York surgeon fainting across the white enamelled table at the crucial moment of a hypogastric operation when the fraction of a second meant the difference between life and death, En Hai had taken the scalpel from the other's limp fingers and had carried on the operation, in the same breath as it were, to a brilliantly success-

ful finish. Immediately his name had become a household word in medical circles. He had received offers from the New York Post-Graduate Medical School, Johns Hopkins, and the Boston Polyclinic, but had refused them, saying he preferred to go back to his native Pell Street and work amongst his own people— "because they need me."

At the time—it coinciding with dog days in matters political, social, and hysterical, and there being neither election, nor divorce scandal, nor sensational double murder to be blurbed across the front pages of the metropolitan dailies —Doctor En Hai's altruistic decision had caused considerable stir. All the "sob sisters" in Newspaper Row had interviewed him. They had covered reams of yellow flimsy calling him a Modern Martyr and a Noble Soul. They had compared him to Marcus Aurelius and several of the lesser saints. They had contrasted the honours and fortune and fame which might have been his to his life in the reeking,

sweating Chinatown slums which he had chosen "because they need me."

Miss Edith Rutter, the social settlement investigator who specialized in Mongols and had paid for the young doctor's education out of her own pocket, wrote to a friend in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio, interested, financially and otherwise, in her pet subject, that she had not laboured in vain, that here at last was a yellow man willing to bear the white man's burden.

If Pell Street knew different, it did not tell.

If Pell Street had its tongue in its cheek, nobody saw it.

But when, at night, the day's toil done, grave celestial burgesses met in the liquor store of the Chin Sor Company, the "Place of Sweet Desire and Heavenly Entertainment," to retail there the shifting gossip of Chinatown, it was recalled with compressed lips and eyes contracting to narrow slits, that Doctor En Hai's deceased father, En Gin, had been for many years a hopeless addict to the curling black smoke, a

paralsyed, spineless ne'er-do-well, and an object of material Pell Street charity.

But, being Chinamen, they had spiced their charity with crude jests, with floweringly obscene abuse, occasionally with a blow and a kick; and since to a Chinaman a family, including its dead and buried progenitors, is an unbreakable entity while the individual counts for nothing, young En Hai, then a wizened, underbred, sloe-eyed lad of eight, had been included in the blending of harsh contumely and harsher charity which had been heaped upon his father's head.

Then Miss Rutter had sent him away, first to a good school, afterwards to college, and now he was back amongst them, in well-cut American clothes, clean, suave, polished, smooth—a successful man—almost famous.

And Pell Street knew—and did not tell—why he had returned.

"He will sneer at us, but he will cure us," Nag Hop Fat, the soothsayer, had crystallized

the prevailing sentiment, "thereby accumulating much face for himself, his father, and all his ancestors. With every drop of medicine, will he give us two, perhaps three, grains of contempt. And we, knowing that he is a great doctor, will not be able to refuse the medicine —*nor* the contempt. A most proper and wise man is En Hai!" he had wound up with honest admiration.

Wong Ti stopped and looked at the brass plate which had the doctor's name both in English letters and Mandarin ideographs. A keen-eared listener might have heard a deep, racking intake of breath, almost a sob, and something like the crackle of naked steel, quickly drawn, as quickly snapped back into the velvet-lined scabbard.

Then the hatchetman passed on to his own apartment on the second floor of the house, that squinted back toward the Bowery with malicious, fly-specked, scarlet-curtained windows,

and out toward Mott Street with the bizarre, illogical contour of an impromptu bird's-nest balcony where homesick blossoms of remote Asia were waging a brave but losing fight against the flaccid, feculent Pell Street sough.

A dwarfed, gnarled lychee tree with glistening, blackish green leaves; a draggle-tail parrot tulip, brown and tawny and gamboge yellow, in a turquoise blue pot; another pot, virulently crimson, dragon painted, planted with anæmic Cantonese frisias; a waxen budding narcissus bulb bending beneath the greasy, stinking soot—and the whole characteristic of Wong Ti, killer, red-handed assassin; yet a philosopher and a gentle, just man.

For—the which would have condemned him as viewed through a white man's spectacles and, by the same token, enhanced his civic and moral value in the slanting eyes of his countrymen—he only killed when he was paid for it, and never out of personal spite, personal revenge, personal passion.

His footsteps became muffled, then died, as he opened the door to his apartment. The silence crept back again, like a beaten dog.

Only the murmur of singsong voices from the grocery store downstairs; a sound of metal clinking against metal from the doctor's office; and a woman's tinkly, careless laughter:

"Chia Shun!" called the hatchetman, his aged voice leaping to a wheezing crack. "Ahee! Chia Shun!"—just a little petulantly.

But Chia Shun—which is a woman's name and means "Admirable and Obedient"—did not reply; and Wong Ti shrugged his shoulders. Doubtless, he said to himself, she was on the lower floor, in the doctor's office.

Doing—what?

Talking about—what?

He made a slight motion as if to retrace his steps. His hand reached for the sheathed dagger up his loose sleeve.

Then again the tinkly, careless laughter, a

man's echoing bass, and a deep blush of shame suffused the hatchetman's leathery, wrinkled cheeks. He dismissed the sounds, and what the sounds might portend, as something altogether negligible, opened an inlaid, carved sandalwood box, and took out his opium layout.

With a great deal of care he chose his pipe: one of plain cherry wood with a brown tortoise-shell tip and a single, black silk tassel—a pipe that harmonized with his resigned mood; plied needle, blew on flame, kneaded amber coloured chandoo cube and inhaled the biting smoke deeply.

Complete peace enfolded him after a minute —his wife's laughter, the doctor's echoing bass, seemed to come from very far away, like the buzzing of harmless insects—and he smiled as he looked through the open door into Chia Shun's room, where the dying August sun blew in with mellow, rose red gold, heaping shadow upon violet shadow, and embroidering colour with yet more colour.

The room was crowded with furniture and knick-knacks.

Each separate object represented a passing whim of his wife; too, a killing successfully accomplished.

There was the large cheval mirror, intimately connected with the mysterious murder of one Li Tuan-fen, king amongst laundrymen and hereditary enemy of the Yung clan, in which every morning and countless times during the day his wife surveyed the lissom, wicked sweetness of her nineteen years, her smooth, raven hair, her long black lashes that swept over opaque, delightfully slanting eyes like lovely silk fringes, the delicate golden velvet texture of her skin, and her narrow, fluttering hands.

Next to the mirror a dragon rug was spread, a marvellous sheen of ultramarine and syenite blue on a field of emerald green, with tiny points of orange and cadmium yellow; a rug fit for the mistress of a *nurhachi*, an iron-capped Manchu prince, and paid for by the death—

"due to ptomaine poisoning," the Bellevue Hospital record had it—of a man whose very name, an unimportant business detail, the hatchetman had forgotten.

There were other things—a piano that was never opened, a couple of incongruous sporting prints, a tantalus, a princess dressing-table, a bas-relief plaque framed in burgundy velvet, an array of silver-topped toilet articles—each a passing whim, each a passing death; and finally the masterpiece! the victrola, a large, expensive, Circassian walnut affair, and the record rack filled with hiccoughy, sensuous Afro-American rags, cloying gutter ballads, belching, ear-splitting Italian arias, and elusive faun-like Argentine tangos.

He remembered quite well how he had earned it!

The whispered colloquy in the back room of Mr. Brian Neill's saloon with Nag Pao, head of the Montreal branch of the Nag clan; the tiring trip, circuitously so as to muddy the

trail, to the chilly, unfriendly northern city; the waiting in ambush back of the Rue Sainte Marie until night came and huddled the squat, rickety, wooden houses together in grey, shapeless groups; the light flickering up—a signal!—quickly shuttered; then his feline pounce, for all his brittle old bones, the knife flashing from his sleeve like a sentient being, the acrid gurgle of death—and Nag Pao's honour made clean, his own hand weighted with clinking, coined gold, and, two weeks later, his wife voicing her delight as, with a twist of her supple fingers, she sent some lascivious Argentine tango record whirring on its way.

"Say! Ye're a sure enough peach, Wongee-Pongee!"—this was the undignified nickname which she had given to her elderly lord and master and in which he delighted, as well as in the fact that she preferred speaking to him in English—"Say! Yer may be old and sorta dried up—like a peanut, see? But ye sure know how to treat a goil, believe me! Come

on, ol' socks, and have a try at the light fantastic!"—clutching him around the waist and forcing him, laughing, protesting, his dignity of race and caste flying away in a sweet rush of passion, to step to the mad rhythm of the tango that was gathering speed and wickedness.

Wong Ti smiled at the recollection. She had enjoyed it and—yes!—to him, too, it had been well worth while.

For he loved Chia Shun.

For love of her, he had picked her out of the gutter when her father, the last of his clan, had died, a bankrupt, disgraced. For love of her, he had interfered when Yu Ch'ang, the joss house priest, had perfected certain arrangements with a lady—antecedents, though not profession, unclassified—in far Seattle. For love of her, relying on his hatchetman's privileges and the shivering fear that went with them, he had committed the one sin that would have been considered unpardonable in anybody else: he

had whispered into Miss Rutter's receptive ears a tale of Chinese slavery, of a little child brought up to lead a life of shame—"we must blow away the golden bubble of her innocent beauty from the stagnant pools of vice," had been his quaint way of putting it; and had thus ranged the forces of the white man's interfering, bullying law and order on his side, with the natural result, nowise unforeseen by him, that Chia Shun, then fourteen years of age, became Miss Edith Rutter's petted ward.

Three years later, he had married her, and Miss Rutter had voiced no objections to the match.

Neither she, nor Bill Devoy, Detective of Second Branch, nor anybody else around Pell Street except the yellow men, knew the crimson source which filled the hatchetman's purse. To her, he was just a harmless, soft-stepping, middle-aged Chinaman who dealt vaguely in tea and silk and ginger, who was not altogether

indifferent to the white lessons of the Christ, and who—Miss Rutter's spinster heart gave an entirely academic flutter at the thought—loved her pert little ward with utter devotion, utter tenderness.

"Yes," she had said to Bill Devoy, the man hunter who—irony of the white and yellow Pell Street muddle!—was the man killer's Best Man—"Wong Ti is the right husband for her. He is such a gentle old dear—and so square. She will be safe with him. He will never abuse her, nor beat her——"

"Mebbe that's the very thing she needs, lady," Bill Devoy had grumbled.

For he had looked more than once into Chia Shun's black, oblique eyes, and twenty years on the Pell Street beat had taught him a certain effective, if crude, appreciation of Mongol psychology.

At the time of the wedding, Wong Ti had explained his position to Nag Hong Fah, the

pouchy, greasy proprietor of the Great Shanghai Chop Suey Palace, not because he thought that he owed an explanation to any one, but to forestall leaky-tongued, babbling gossip.

"I am not a Cantonese pig," he had said, adding with callous brutality, "as you are. I am from the West, from the province of Shensi, the cradle of the black-haired race. Our men are free, and so are our women—freer even than —these!" pointing out at the street where a tall, massive, golden-haired woman, evidently a sightseer, was laying down the domestic law to her stolid, resigned husband.

"I have heard tales about the women of Shensi," Nag Hong Fah, the remark about Cantonese pigs still rankling in his stout breast, had replied, quoting certain scandalous stories which reflected unfavourably on the virtues of the Shensi ladies. "Good morals," he had wound up with oily, self-righteous sententiousness, "have been considered the source of life by the *ta-pi-k'u*—the one hundred and fifty

Greater Disciples. Good morals are the only law by which the human mind may hope to attain to the shining planes of spiritual wisdom. Good morals are necessary for women—desirable even for men!"

"Good morals are a delusion, fool!" the hatchetman had rejoined. "Only happiness counts in life. Happiness—*and* justice. And as to Chia Shun——"

"Yes?" had come the eager question.

"I know that she is a butterfly, while I am a regrettable, dried-up cockroach."

"Do you think it fitting that a butterfly and —ah—a regrettable, dried-up cockroach should mate, O wise and elder brother?" Nag Hong Fah had smiled maliciously.

"No. But I know, too, that some day the little golden-winged butterfly will meet——"

"Another butterfly? Perhaps a male butterfly?"

"Yes. And on that day——"

"You will remember the strength of your

sword arm, Wong Ti? You will remember the poison lore which is yours and busy your honourable hands with stinking pots and phials?"

"Again—no! O son of less than nothing at all! On that day my old heart will crack just the least little bit. But I will remember that Chia Shun has given me a breath of youth, a spice of love, a gentle breeze of happiness to fan the grey drabness of my declining years. I will remember that I am old and useless, that youth will always call to youth, that a butterfly will always yearn for a butterfly."

"You will—forgive?"

"What will not a goat eat or a fool say? Am I a Christian that I should forgive? Too, what is there to forgive in love—love that comes out of the dark, without warning, without jingling of bells? No. I shall not forgive. But I shall understand, O great fool!"

And he had understood almost from the first, when Doctor En Hai had returned to Pell

Street—"because they need me"—and had nailed his shingle on the floor below.

"A butterfly will always yearn for a butterfly," Wong Ti smiled now, as he held over the lamp the little brown chandoo cube, which was stuck on the opening of the furnace. The opium fizzled, dissolved, and evaporated.

His thoughts became hazy.

"The man for whom there is no desire for coming into existence or having existence, him I call calm, he has overcome desire!"—the words of the Yellow Emperor came back to him, blending strangely with the tinkly, silvery laughter that drifted up from the doctor's office.

It was a curious, rather sardonic twist in the tail of altruistic ingenuousness that it should have been Miss Edith Rutter who first brought the young doctor into the hatchetman's life.

"I feel responsible for both these two youngsters," she had told him. "You see, I paid for En Hai's education, and I guess I taught that darling little wife of yours everything she knows."

"*Everything?*" had come the silent, gently ironic question in the hatchetman's heart while Miss Rutter had continued:

"They are bound to see a good deal of each other. They are both young. They live in the same house. They have their education—their American education—in common. And"—with spinsterly, innocent playfulness—"you must promise me that you won't be jealous, dear Wong Ti. You know what young Americans are like—and both your wife and the doctor are quite Americanized——"

"Quite!"

"And so they'll be!—oh, you know what I mean—just chums, real chums, like brother and sister. I just know it, dear Wong Ti, and I am *so* glad!"

"So am I," the hatchetman had assented, gravely—and truthfully.

And so butterfly had met butterfly, Wong Ti thought, as he inhaled the smoke of his opium pipe; and he remembered how, at first, doubtless awed by his grim reputation as a professional killer, they had avoided looking at each other, how both, when the three were together, had been stiff and stilted and ill at ease and had scrupulously addressed to him all they had to say.

Later on, En Hai had become more bold in sidelong glance and whispered word and hand furtively touching hand beneath the table, while Chia Shun had still held back, either through nervousness or through a residue of loyalty—he didn't know which.

Finally, when she had imagined that her elderly husband did not see or, seeing, did not care, she had thrown all precaution to the winds. Her love for the younger man was in her eyes,

in her every gesture; and typically feminine was she in this, that, in her very conversations with the man whom she was deceiving, she could not crowd from her lips the name of the man with whom she was deceiving him. She would speak about his neat American clothes, his skill as a physician, the agile energy of his thin, brown hands, his knowledge, his wit, his cleverness.

"Say, Wongee-Pongee," she would say to her husband, balancing her slender body on his knees and naïvely confiding to him—though she did not know what she was doing—the secret of her love—"that doctor sure knows a thing or two. And, say, ain't he just the swell dresser, though? Did ye pipe that new grey suit he bought—made to order—*yes, sir!* And you oughter see how he treats them Chinks wot useter make life a hell for him and his Dad! Just like doit beneath his feet, that's how he treats 'em, Wongee-Pongee!"

"Tell him to beware, Butterfly! Some of

these Cantonese pigs have a short temper and a long knife."

"Gwan! Wottya givin' me? That young feller can take care of himself. He's got more honest-to-Gawd guts than all the rest of them Chinks put together!"

"To be sure!"

And always the hatchetman would smile, as he smiled now, listening to the tinkly, silvery spurts of laughter that floated up from the doctor's office.

He had considered everything, had decided everything.

Chia Shun had given him a few years of youth and happiness and golden glory. For ever after would he be grateful to her.

But now love had come to her, like a sweet, swift throe, and it would be useless to fight against it, as useless as painting pictures on running water.

"Love is love," he confided to his opium pipe,

"and an elephant is an elephant on low ground as well as on high."

Presently he would die, and his body would be taken home, to Shensi of the purple, hushed West, to the free, eternal womb of China, far away from the bastard, yellow-and-white pidgin of the treaty ports, and be buried, properly, respectably, as befitted his ancient race, his ancestry, and his honourable profession. And the butterfly would marry the butterfly, and the love they were now nibbling with furtive, stealthy teeth, they would then gulp in brave mouthfuls.

He sighed a little—a sigh half of resignation, half of satisfaction.

Directly to the left of the door there was a heavy, black and gold length of temple brocade fastened against the wall, embroidered with vermilion Mandarin ideographs; and as he read and re-read, a great, white peace, a poignant sweetness, stole over his soul. The quotation was from the *Book of Lieh-Tzu the Book*

of the Unknown Philosopher who lived many centuries before Confucius, and it said:

There is a Life that is unrevealed;
There is a Transformer who is changeless.
The Uncreated alone can produce Life;
The Changeless alone can evolve Change.

"There is a Life that is unrevealed—unrevealed—" mumbled Wong Ti, the killer, as his head sank drowsily on his breast, while the silvery, tinkly laughter seemed to fade and die in the curling poppy smoke.

Quite suddenly, he sat up, wide awake.

Night had come, with a vaulted, jetty sky and a sickle-moon of delicate ivory, poised high. The flame of the lamp had flickered out. The opium had fizzled to its last, bitter, stinking dregs.

A slight headache throbbed in his temples. He felt very old, very lonely.

He rose, stretched his aching bones, and

yawned elaborately.

The laughter—the tinkly, careless laughter—it had ceased—as life must cease—and passion and love and faith and strength——

He took a step toward the other room, squinting into the dark.

"Chia Shun!" he called. "Ahee! Little Crimson Lotus Bud!"

But no answer came.

Was she still downstairs?

He wondered.

Why—they always laughed, those two, when they were together—always——

Butterflies, little, silly, golden butterflies—who loved each other—who—loved——

"Say! For the love o' Gawd! Yer don't mean it! Yer can't mean it! Ye're joshin', ain't ye?"

Clear, distinct, his wife's voice stabbed up, through the dumbwaiter shaft in the kitchen; and Wong Ti rushed back, up to the dumb-

waiter, listening tensely, his breath sucked in, his old heart beating like a trip hammer.

"But—say! Lover boy! Sweet lover boy! Ye told me ye loved me, didn't yer? And now—ye——"

And again, her voice peaking up to a hectic shrieking octave:

"Yer don't mean it, honeybugs? Tell me yer don't!"

"I do mean it, little fool!" came En Hai's smooth, silken voice.

"Yer—*do?*"

"Yes. How often must I tell you?" The man was becoming embarrassed, too, impatient. "Don't you understand English? I—" he softened a little—"I don't want to hurt your feelings, my dear——"

"Hurt my—*feelin's?* Christ! Afraid o' hurtin' my feelin's after yer torn the heart out'n my body and trampled on it and spit on it—say! And yer told me yer loved me! And I gave yer wot ye wanted! And all the time ye

told me ye're just waitin' for my old man upstairs to kick the bucket, and then ye'd marry me and love me for ever—and now ye tell me——"

"Exactly!" En Hai's voice came chilly, metallic. "You are not the sort of woman I can afford to marry. There is my reputation—my profession—my standing. Try to look at it from *my* point of view—and——"

"Then—yer don't—love me?"

"No! If you absolutely insist on hearing the truth! I—of course I was—oh—fond of you—am still fond of you, my dear. But—well—let's be sensible, my dear. There's no reason why you and I shouldn't continue——"

"Don't ye dare touch me! I hate ye, hate ye, hate ye! Yer skunk! Yer welsher! Yer damned, no-good four-flusher! I hope to Gawd one o' these days one of them Chinks you treat as if they was doit will slit yer gizzard! Get out o' my way!"

And a slamming of doors, a pattering of

little feet up the stairs, and Chia Shun rushed into the room, straight into the arms of Wong Ti who met her on the threshold.

"Wongee-Pongee!" she choked through her tears. "Oh, Wongee-Pongee! I—the Doctor and I—he——"

"Hush!" whispered the hatchetman, patting her wet cheeks. "Hush, Little Crimson Lotus Bud!"

He picked her up and put her on the couch, covering her quivering form with a silken robe.

"Wait, Little Piece of my Soul! Wait! Do not break your foolish little heart!"

"I hate him—hate him—" Chia Shun stammered, lying there limp and pitiful, staring upon her husband with stricken eyes and dropped mouth.

"Yes, yes, Little Butterfly—wait!"

And, unhurriedly, he left the room and crept down the stairs with that furtive step which had become second nature to him: heels well

down, toes slowly gripping through soft duffle soles, arms carefully balanced, hands at right angles from the wrists, and fingers spread out gropingly, like the sensitive antennæ of some night insect, to give warning of unfamiliar objects——

He slipped the dagger from his loose sleeve.

Even as he opened the door to the doctor's office, he wondered subconsciously which of the Cantonese whom En Hai had treated "like doit beneath his feet" would be suspected of the murder.

A Pell Street Spring Song

I

A POET was Chi Kun-yi, and an exceedingly vain one.

For he knew the sweetness of his own songs, the tender, dim beauty of his own words; and so, to quote the bland judgment of Yat, a squat, honey-coloured Canton man and his fellow student at Columbia University, he "imagined that he could winnow the thrashing floor of human emotions with the wind of his nostrils."

To which the poet replied in a voice as dry and cutting as the east wind:

"Why not? At home my name is honoured. Not only because"—he spoke with a certain beatific insolence, a certain brazen though not unamiable tolerance—"I am a Manchu, a gentleman tracing his descent unsullied to

Prince Yangkunu's grandson who wrested the throne of the Middle Kingdom from the Chinese Ming weaklings, but also because of what I have achieved personally.

"Before, to please my respected father, I came to New York in search of Western wisdom, in spite of most tender years—I am only twenty-two now—I was already acknowledged a poet of no mean merit by the gentry and fashion of Peking. Peking! A regal city! Even you, though born in unmentionable Canton, will admit that. The *Gazette* published the poem which I wrote on the eve of my departure for San Francisco. And now, if you will reach me my guitar, I shall charm your ears."

Growling, though secretly pleased, his friend handed him the two-stringed instrument, saying that indeed Chi Kun-yi was a poet. Still —"you are conceited, my blue-blooded Pekingese dandy. To hear you talk one would believe that the strings of your cotton drawers rival a

Mandarin's breeches of state in splendour and distinction."

"Notch your tongue, lest it slip, blinking Buddha," softly enjoined the young Manchu. "For now cometh a poem which *is* a poem. Also the melody. I composed it myself. Observe how nobly it blends: thus—and thus—and again thus!" picking the two tough strings, the *G* and the *B* into melancholy, monotonous cadences pitched an infinitesimal sixteenth below the main harmonic tones to which the Western ear is attuned, and breaking into song!

"For the sake of one rose
I became slave to a thousand thorns.
Yet do I not complain,
For I do not feel the prick of the thorns
While the scent of the rose is in my nostrils—
Sweetly—
Sweetly."

"Sweetly," he echoed in a high falsetto, twanged the strings in a final minor cadence,

and turned to his friend with a flash of even, white teeth.

"How do you like it, Cantonese mud turtle?" he inquired. "Did you sense the beauty, the flaming passion? Did you understand the truth of my song?"

The other was a serious and plodding youth, not usually given to light banter. But there was something in his friend's sublime self-sufficiency which tickled his sense of humour.

"I feel the beauty," he replied, "and, too, a little of the passion. But the truth? Ah! What do you know of the heart of woman, my blue-blooded gentleman? What do you know of the scent of the rose or the pain of the thousand thorns?"

"What *don't* I know about them, addle-brained father of inquisitiveness? Women—ah!—they made a mat of their little hearts for my feet to step on, gently, gently, back home in the shadow of the Tartar wall, in the city of Peking!"

"Peking! Yes!" laughed Yat. "It is easy to talk of the far places. But this is New York."

Chi Kun-yi brought his fist down on the table so that the ink-wells danced.

"Hush!" he said. "We be of the black-haired race, you and I, and these people, these Americans who give us of their stored wisdom without grudging the price, are of another. It is their wish that race should not mingle with race in bondage of love. And this wish is shared by us of China, be we beady-eyed Cantonese mud turtles or"—complacently—"Pekingese patricians, iron-capped Manchu princes of blue blood and rather gorgeous ancestry. Thus, do not let us speak of the women of America. But our own women? I know them. Their hearts are open books to me."

His voice was as languid as the spring wind that came across from the Jersey shore, twirled around Grant's Tomb in a spiral of scented breeze—scent from tree and flower and sun-

warm earth—and sobbed down the Drive, crying the city dwellers out to field and garden. Outside, here and there, yellow and white lights stabbed the opaque cloak of evening. The pavements echoed the passionate night refrain. The air was deepening to wet violet.

Chi Kun-yi stepped to the window and looked south where the roofs of the great city lay bunched in a carved, stony immensity. He believed in himself with the beautiful presumption of youth, and he laughed out loud in the strength of it.

"Look, Yat!" he said, his long, thin finger describing a circle, then resting on an imaginary spot, far south, where sable shadows and dancing lights rushed together in shimmering grey half-tones. "Down there is Pell Street—Chinatown. The reek and maze of it, despised, gently pitied by our American friends. But there are women in Chinatown. Women and girls of our own race, Yat! Scented buds, black-eyed, black-haired. Buds of rose and

jessamine and precious purple orchid spotted with tawny orange. And I shall go there. I shall pick the prettiest bud and wear it in my cap in sign of triumph and conquest!"

He reached for hat and stick and, in the whirling strength of his exuberance, swept the other with him into the street, down the steep steps of Morningside Park.

"Love comes with a soft, maddening breeze," he went on as they entered the clattering, dusty Elevated that spanned the street like some gigantic spider's web. "A soft, maddening breeze which changes, suddenly, terribly, into a hurricane."

He laughed.

"For the sake of one rose
I became slave to a thousand thorns—"

he hummed, and the conductor looked upon him with disfavour.

"Darned yellow Chink hop-head!" he mumbled under his breath as the train sped away.

II

Spring was in Chatham Square.

It brushed through the ancient, coiling streets with pastel shades of pink and sky-blue and delicate green; putting a tender, nostalgic bloom on the potted azalea in the second story window of Carnahan's Hotel for gents only; deepening the shiny lac of the rubber plant that spiked its broad leaves in the shop of Mike Rapotto, the pork butcher; showering the steel of the Elevated structure with silvery moon dust; mirroring the dance of stars and fleecy clouds in the pot-bellied, bronze-topped jars filled with crimson and purple water that announced an old-world apothecary's trade; painting rainbow tints in a puddle in front of Brian Neill's Bowery saloon where raindrops, caught in a tiny asphalt gully, chastened the fusel oil that dripped from a splintered pocket flask; invading the moist reek and riot of Pell Street and reflecting with a thousand flat facets

on the neat windows of the Great Shanghai Chop Suey Palace behind which Nag Hong Fah, the fat proprietor, was preparing a supper worthy of a coral-button mandarin with the aid of his entire chattering personnel.

"Oysters!" he said, splitting a long, crusty shell with the point of a crooked knife. "A dish of foreign barbarians! Yet palatable to the lips of a Chinese when blended with a drop of suey—thus! A sprig of finest Nanking parsley—thus! And, then, slowly, gently, almost tenderly, dropped into a skillet which has been dusted with fresh butter and sharpened with a mocking suspicion of cinnamon—*kwang ka nonng su!*" he shot out the words, and brought the knife handle smartly on the knuckles of his second cook. "Gently!" he admonished. "Lest the oyster lose its princely aroma, O son of an addled duck egg!"

He waddled over to another range where from an immense iron pot savoury odours were drifting to the smoke-stained ceiling. He

dipped a long-handled, wooden tasting spoon into the pot, brought out a generous measure of gravy, and sipped it noisily.

"Ah! Delicious!" he smacked his loose lips. "How much of that pickled star fruit juice did you use?"

"Two cups."

"Not quite enough."

He reached up to a low shelf, took down a squat, exotic bottle filled with a greenish liquid, poured out an exact half-cupful and dripped it slowly into the pot, as slowly stirring it.

"Sung Pu-Lu, the greengrocer, is a man who does honour to his stomach," he went on. "And Lin Hsü? Ah! He is a hatchetman, killing much, thus earning a noble wage, and used to the very best. And tonight he marries Sung Pu-Lu's oldest daughter, Wuh Wang, that charming and delicate cherry blossom. Thus we must make the supper worthy of their exalted palates and those of the many guests whom they have invited. All the Sung clan

will be there, and also Kang Kee, a great hatchet-man from San Francisco and friend to Lin Hsü. Specially he came to New York, for the wedding —and the feast!"

He stepped up to the window, opened it, and inhaled the soft spring air.

The wedding of Lin Hsü to pretty little fifteen-year-old Wuh Wang was a social event of the purest water, uniting two respectable Canton clans one of which, the Sungs, had always earned decent livelihood by catering to the wants of the human body, the other by doing away with the latter when its owner had become *persona non grata* with the leading citizens of the community.

Thus Pell Street was filled with a festive crowd that lapped over from house to sidewalk and thence to the road. Chinese and half-castes, stray whites from Bowery way, men and women and children, rangy alley dogs, and dusty guilty-looking ash-bin cats, chattering, laughing, barking, meowing. Even the vagabond

sparrows of Chatham Square joined in the general chorus of merriment.

Here and there somebody in the human eddy looked up and tossed a greeting at the restaurant proprietor, who towered above the window-sill like a greasy Buddha, and always he returned the salutation, carefully grading it according to the race and caste and purse of the speaker.

"Hello, there, Fatty!" from Bill Devoy, the spruce Second-Branch headquarters plain-clothes man.

Nag Hong Fah clasped his chubby hands and brought them to the height of his little rosy button of a nose. "How-de-do?" he singsonged. "Come along up. Have a lil' drink!"

"Thanks, Fatty. I will, later on, when the guests begin to arrive. I guess there may be a bit o' work for me."

"I hope not, Mis' Devoy!"

"Faith an' so do I!"

Another voice, drawling, unutterably Mongolian, chimed in, and the restaurant keeper gave answer in an excess of flowery politeness. "Ten thousand lives to your honour, Kang Kee! Ten thousand lives, and one, and yet another one! Supper is smoking and ready to be sampled by such as you, who are familiar with the delightful cook pots of San Francisco. A little taster before the feast, your honour?"

"No!" laughed the Californian hatchetman who had come all the way from the coast to be best man to his confrère Lin Hsü. "I'm off to the bridegroom lest his hands, used to hatchet and pistol, loiter too nervously with the tying of his wedding robe."

"Hai-hi! Grandfather of a skillet!" came another voice, terse, metallic, with the sudden high-pitched inflections and archaic phrasing of a Manchu more used to mandarin than to the vernacular, and Nag Hong Fah, anxious to see the speaker before returning appropriate greeting, leaned far out.

The man he saw, flanked by another who was short and squat and typically Cantonese, was young and good-looking. He had a fine, slim length of limb with shoulders that were supple and wide and narrow, powerful hands that proved the haughty chivalry of his breed even better than the silken, dead-white sheen of his complexion.

His nose was long and thin and audaciously beaked and contrasted strangely with his heavy-fringed, brown eyes which were those of a dreamer; and he had a swinging gait that partook not a little of strut and swagger.

"By the blessed Lord Buddha's mother's top-knot!" exclaimed Nag Hong Fah, half sarcastic, half—in spite of his democratic principles—impressed by the rare sight of a Pekingese in Pell Street. "Behold the yellow emperor who has come among the lowly! Behold the shimmering Dragon Brood!"

He lowered his voice to a husky whisper that dropped to the street like a flat stone.

"And why this honour, Manchu? Why have you come here?"

The poet snapped his long fingers. "I came to pick a bud."

"A bud?"

"Yes. A scented bud. Cherry blossom or plum, or haughty, waxen gardenia."

"Ah! You came here courting?"

"Courting? I? A poet? A gentleman? No, moon of much grease! No, commodity on which money is lost! Let the women court *me!* I throw the handkerchief for them to pick up and treasure. Thus—produce them, son of naught! Perhaps a daughter of your own or—" insolently studying the other's elderly face—"a granddaughter!"

Nag Hong Fah creased his sagging lips in a smile that curled up at the left corner like a pig's tail. The smile broadened into a gargantuan shout of laughter, and he leaned so far out that the second cook, afraid his master would lose his balance, held on to his coat for dear life.

"Ahee! Ahoo!" yelled Nag Hong Fah.

Here was a man after his own heart, a man who could yield the whip of sharp words and flavour the sauce of speech with the spice of abuse.

"Come on up, you and your friend," he said hospitably. "A wedding is being celebrated tonight in my mean and worthless eating place. Two honourable clans are being united in bondage of tenderness. And the bride is a blossom among blossoms. A dimpled moon of deliciousness. A platter of rosy sweetmeat basted in sugar and dusted with powdered violets."

"Silence, not wanted!" returned the student. "Leave the coining of words to poets!"

"But—you will come?"

"Assuredly!" And followed by the laughing, protesting Yat, Chi Kun-yi turned into the doorway of the Great Shanghai Chop Suey Palace, to bump smartly into Kang Kee, the Californian hatchetman, who had stopped to listen to the exchange of banter.

The hatchetman was lean and angular. The

nose, the ears, the uptilted chin that rose defiantly to meet the sardonic lower lip, the eyebrows, the thin, long mouth, the curve of the narrow hips, the very feet in their padded felt slippers—everything was in sharp angles. And sharply angular, too, were the words he shot at the student.

"A poet are you? And a lover of buds?"

"Yes. A poet! A student! A gentleman, and"—clenching his fists and dancing away from the other in a feline manner he had learned from his American athlete friends—"a swashbuckler! A man who loves a clashing of blades, a crunching of solid bodies! And you! What may you be?"

Kang Kee laughed in his throat. There was no greater tong fighter in the whole of California—no!—in the whole of the United States. He had always done his duty, as he was pleased to call it to himself and when praying to his household joss, neatly and with despatch. Men feared him.

For—"I am a hatchetman! A killer!" he said in a tense, dramatic rumble, and he thrust out his angular chin.

Chi Kun-yi gave a cry of delight. A killer? A yielder of sharp iron? A chivalrous and accomplished assassin? A low-caste, of course, while he himself was of the bluest blood. But what did it matter? For, too, the man was a fighter; and, fighting, killing, his own ancestors had swept out of Central Asia and had put their brand on a land hissing with blood.

"Good!" he cried. "A hatchetman, you! A poet and a Manchu, I! A worthy team indeed!"

Kang Kee was pleased. As pleased as a purring, well-fed lion when a brazen, fearless little kitten makes sport of his tufted tail.

"Ahi!" he exclaimed and he shot forth his great arms and clasped the young student to his flat, bony chest. "I love you, poet! I love you, princely swashbuckler! For I, too, am a poet. Rimes I forge with crackling steel

and run bullet. Songs I compose in the death gurgle of—ah"—he coughed—"the other party. For I am a cutter of necks! A slasher of throats! A ripper of jugular veins! And," again he embraced the youth, "I, too, love scented buds; buds of cherry and plum and kingly orange!"

And poet and hatchetman held each other at arm's length, rocking from side to side, in huge, rib-splitting laughter, and winking at each other as Greek is said to wink at Greek.

Yat looked on in naïve astonishment which presently changed into nervous fear. He pulled his friend's sleeve. "Come!" he urged. "Let's go."

"Home?" laughed the poet.

"Home?" echoed Kang Kee; and, in unison, they shouted out a great:

"No!"

"The feast!" went on Chi Kun-yi.

"The smoking supper!"

"Bamboo sprouts stewed in honey!"

"Sharks' fins boiled in cocoa butter!"

"Wines of foreign lands that rise to the nostrils and tickle the gullet, fiercely, fiercely!"

"A good cup of Hopeh rice wine, carefully warmed!"

"Sweets, sugary and pink!"

"And"—it was the hatchetman speaking—"the buds! Tiny, dainty, perfumed, rose-red buds—such as——"

"The little bride?" Chi Kun-yi asked in a very low, a very gentle voice.

"Yes," came the hushed reply, accompanied by a ruffianly wink and cough. "Wuh Wang, the daughter of Sung Pu-Lu, the greengrocer! Tonight she will become united in love bonds to Lin Hsü, my New York comrade."

"But," the poet dropped his voice yet lower, "you are——"

"Lin Hsü's best friend? To be sure. But—" Once more he took the youth in his bear-like embrace. "Poet! Manchu! Can I trust you?"

"Implicitly! Hear me give oath. By the teeth of the Lord Buddha and mine own honour I swear that——"

"Enough. I trust you. Listen." Kang Kee bent his long, lean body and whispered in the other's ear. "Once Wuh Wang looked upon me with favour. That was last year when I was called here to—ah, well"—he made a stabbing gesture with thumb and second finger, "you can guess. But Sung Pu-Lu, that swollen seller of spoiled vegetables, refused—me! Me! I would have split his gizzard if it had not been for his daughter's tearful and melodious protestations. But—ah!" he breathed the word and was silent.

"You lost face?"

"Enormously!"

"And—she is pretty?"

"Wuh Wang? None more charming. She is a precious casket filled with the arts of coquetry. Her raven tresses are female snakes. Her feet are golden lilies. Her little white

hands? By Buddha and Buddha! Her little white hands—soon to embrace the greasy neck of Lin Hsü——"

"Who is your friend," suggested Yat, speaking for the first time since the poet had refused to go home.

"Who, of course, is my very good friend," the hatchetman echoed with a murderous look. "And yet"—again he turned to Chi Kun-yi and gave another ruffianly wink—"if a poet, young, handsome, and a Manchu, would come to me and say: 'Thus and thus you have lost face. Thus and thus can I turn the tables. I can make you regain face!' If, I say, a poet and a Manchu would speak to me in such words, perhaps I might help him to——"

"Pick the bud?"

"You have said it, Pekingese!" He took him by the arm and, followed by Yat, steered him rapidly through the crowd, around the corner, and pushed him in a dark doorway. "Look! Straight in front of you!" he went on;

and Chi Kun-yi, looking, beheld a sight that made his blood course faster through his veins.

For there, on the ground floor of Sung Pu-Lu's house, sharply defined in the rays of many swinging lamps and with the curtains drawn wide (so that the kindly spirits of night might fly in unhindered) he saw Wuh Wang, decked out in all the bridal finery of Canton, from her head-dress which was a blending of cerise and royal purple and lusty emerald green, with immense seed pearl and filigree ornaments hanging down to her narrow, pretty shoulders, to her loose trousers, and her tiny shoes, broidered with flowers of many hues.

Her forehead was broad and snow-white. Her little nose——

"A flower!" murmured the enraptured poet. "An open seasamum flower slightly tilted to catch the odorous spring breeze! And her lips! Cherry-red! Rose-soft! Ah!"

He sucked in his breath noisily and flung out

an enthusiastic arm in the sweeping sublimity and selfishness of youth.

"I shall pick the bud!" he cried. "I shall make her mine!"

"Very laudable! Also poetic!" dryly cut in his friend Yat. "Only," addressing the Californian, "why, loving her, are you willing to give her up? Why do you not pick the bud yourself?"

The hatchetman slapped him mightily on the shoulder. "A logical question!" he exclaimed. "A most just question! Doubtless you are a student of forensic wisdom, and I shall answer truthfully. Poet," he turned to Chi Kun-yi, "I cannot make her mine. For these people here—Sung Pu-Lu, his wife, his toothless grandmother, his objectionable mother-in-law, and many cackling aunts—why, even Lin Hsü, who is my friend—they thrust me out!"

"Incredible!" sighed Yat.

"But true!" Kang Kee replied, levelling a wicked kick at Yat's shin. "They suspected

it might have been my intention to steal the blushing bride from under their pimply noses. And, loathly pigs!—they suspected aright. Such *was* my intention."

"And a noble, a worthy, a truly poetic intention!" Chi Kun-yi cried enthusiastically.

"I knew that you would understand. But they—they tied my hands. They invited me to the wedding and made me best man, thus pledging my honour. And I will not sully my honour."

"No?" asked Yat in a flat, still voice.

"No!" thundered Kang Kee. "But you, poet, can do as your wanton fancy bids you. You can pick the bud if your hands are skilful. You can cause them who refused me with contumely to lose face. By the same token I shall gain face. And I shall help you!"

"But—I am a poor student." Suddenly Chi Kun-yi was becoming a little shy.

"Killing is my business, and it pays," came the ready rejoinder, "and I shall fill your lap

with fifteen times fifteen bundles of minted gold. I myself shall dower the bride—*your* bride, poet! Come!"

He swept the two young students out of the doorway and around the corner to the Place of Heavenly Rest, where they sat down at a corner table and partook of rice whisky flavoured with aniseed and powdered ginger.

For many seconds he whispered in Chi Kun-yi's ear.

"It is easy," he wound up. "You are a poet, a twister and choker of honeyed words, thus practised in the art of deceit. You will come and warble melodiously. Afterwards you will claim the ancient right, the ancient privilege! And as to the rest—leave it to me!"

Again he lowered his voice to a confidential purr, and this time even the distrustful Yat was satisfied and looked upon his friend with a mixture of envy and admiration while the latter clucked like a triumphant rooster.

"Good! Good! Good!—by the toe-nail of Sakyamuna Buddha!"

Again he fell into the hatchetman's long, bony arms, and again poet and killer hugged each other and winked at each other and called each other tender, endearing names, and swayed from side to side in tremendous rib-splitting laughter.

"In an hour and a half!" said Kang Kee as he rose. "There! the bottle is half filled. Wet well your gullet, that you may pipe the more sweetly!"

And he stepped out into the crowded street that was ringing with shouts and good wishes for Wuh Wang, the little bride, who was just leaving her father's house for the wedding feast, surrounded by her numerous clan.

III

Dishes clanked. Glasses rattled. Savoury odours rose from platter and bowl. Chopsticks

clicked like knitting needles. The marriage feast was in full swing, and all the world, including even Sung Pu-Lu's wife and mother-in-law and cackling aunts, spoke with praise of the best man's conduct.

He was here and there and everywhere: helping Nag Hong Fah, the restaurant keeper, to carve a duck, cooked sweet and pungent; slapping the bridegroom on the shoulder and cracking an untranslatable and wholly appropriate joke; smilingly aping the manners of foreign devils and blowing a kiss in the direction of the greengrocer's shrivelled mother-in-law; shaking clasped hands to Wuh Wang and hoping in elaborate phrases that she would bear a hundred and three men-children to Lin Hsü and that it would be a hundred and three years before she would leap the dragon gate; listening with bowed head to a theological dissertation of Yü Ch'ang, the white-bearded priest; again turning to the company with a dozen quips and jests and puns.

"A worthy, sir!" proclaimed Sung Lung, the greengrocer's elder brother from Montreal and a magnificent prince among laundrymen. He raised his glass to the Californian. "May you live a hundred years!"

"And may *you* live long enough to be present at my funeral ceremonies!" replied the hatchet-man; and then, as the door opened and Chi Kun-yi entered, accompanied by Yat: "I have a little surprise for you. This—" sweeping a bony hand toward the Manchu, "is a personal friend of mine."

"A friend—" stammered the restaurant keeper, to be quickly silenced by the hatchet-man's foot underneath the table.

"A dear friend," he continued. "A student at the university of the white barbarians! A poet of renown and tinkling distinction in his native city of Peking!"

"Peking?" breathed a snobbish old dame. "Is he indeed from Peking?"

"Yes, mother of many charms. He is from

Peking. A Manchu! And he will sing us a stave. He will charm our ears with a dainty lilt in honour of Wuh Wang, that bud among waxen buds!"

And the poet bowed low, stepped up to the bride, looked at her with melting eyes, and broke into song:

"For the sake of one rose
I became slave to a thousand thorns.
Yet do I not complain,
For I do not feel the prick of the thorns
While the scent of the rose is in my nostrils—
Sweetly—
Sweetly."

He wound up with a high tremolo, and the applause was deafening. They shook his hands. They pressed food and drink on him.

"A slice of duck, Manchu!"

"Be pleased to honour the lowly by wetting your lips with a cupful of their unworthy wine!"

"A pipe! Here boy! A carved pipe for the poet!"

"And a flower!" boomed Kang Kee, edging nearer to Chi Kun-yi. "A flower of the bride's own choosing to sweeten the bard's liver and soften the cords of his throat—that he may warble the better!"

"A flower! A flower of the bride's!" the shout was taken up and, blushing, Wuh Wang gave a red rose to the poet.

Once more he broke into song. He improvised couplets in honour of the bridegroom, the greengrocer, and again and again in honour of the bride.

Carried away by her beauty, his fancy soared higher and higher. His young blood throbbed and raced. His eyes eddied up with the slow flame of passion. The soul of his youth fell away from him like a worn-out garment and he felt a man, a conqueror, a Manchu indeed.

He was hardly conscious of the room, the people, the tinkle of glass, the clacking of crockery. He only saw her, tiny and soft and charming, and all that had gone before, the

boasting words to Yat in their rooms at Columbia, the meeting with the hatchetman, the latter's plan and promise to help, were like cosmic atoms dancing away aimlessly, like formless, swarming snatches of dream.

He loved her, loved her—and told her so, with a poet's winged license!

"Twin lilies are thy hands,
White lilies—
White and tender.
Twin lilies are thy feet,
Gold lilies—
Gold and swaying.
Twin lilies are thy eyes,
Black lilies—
Black and soft."

He would have sung for hours, forgetting everything, forgetting even self, if the priest had not risen and warned that the auspicious hour, midnight, was near and that, if they wished to propitiate the evil spirits, it was time to proceed to the joss-house, to burn Hung Shu incense sticks to the Goddess of Mercy, and to

complete the wedding ceremony that had begun so well.

"I shall take the bride to the temple," he concluded, "while you clansmen and friends all wait here until the hour of midnight. Then follow."

During the priest's harangue the hatchetman had whispered a word to the restaurant keeper, bending his hand to the other's with a faint tinkle of gold, then he had passed in front of Chi Kun-yi, lightly stepping on his foot, and now Chi Kun-yi jumped forward. Up rose his arms. His eyes flashed. He faced the company with ringing, laughing words.

"My pardons to the honourable priest!" he cried. "But I—I claim the ancient privilege of a bard at a wedding. I, the poet, shall carry the bride!"

"Justly spoken!" boomed Nag Hong Fah, the rotund proprietor of the Great Shanghai Chop Suey Palace.

"Justly spoken!" echoed the hatchetman.

"It is an ancient and charming custom." And diplomatically turning to the oldest woman present: "Is it not right, mother of many years, that the hoary traditions of our fathers should be kept unsullied in the land of the foreigners?"

"Indeed!" croaked the old lady, and amidst the applause and approval of the assembled guests, with the very bridegroom laughing and wishing him luck on the way, the poet, followed by his friend, lifted the bride in his arms, raised her to his supple shoulders, and swaggered gaily out of the room.

Kang Kee followed a second later.

"I shall turn out the electric switch," he explained, "so that the evil spirits may not be able to see and catch them."

Came a click. Darkness. Silence.

IV

Down the stairs, into the street now empty of people, swaggered Chi Kun-yi, the soft, warm,

scented bundle pressed against his heart, her ribboned tresses gently brushing his face. He was flushed with wine and passion.

"The prettiest, the prettiest, the prettiest bud in Pell Street!" he hummed, gently squeezing the girl's left hand that was about his neck; and then, to his friend: "Lead the way!"

Yat laughed and walked ahead, carefully looking to right and left. To the west flickered the dim, mean lights of Mulberry Street cut half-way by the squatting shadow of the joss temple that jutted out slightly from the neighbouring houses as if proud of its gaudy, theological coating of crimson and gold and deep blue.

To the east, at the corner of the Bowery, drawn up close against the sidewalk, another shadow loomed up, low and compact, as uncompromisingly American as the joss temple was Mongol; and it was toward the former and not the latter that Yat led on, Chi Kun-yi following, squeezing Wuh Wang's pliable form, and steadily murmuring tender words.

But she squirmed in his arms, sick with disgust.

"You do not know Pell Street, poet!" she cried protestingly. "The joss temple is back yonder! Not where you are going——"

"The joss temple?" laughed Chi Kun-yi. "May all the evil, lumpish sprites of night and uncleanliness fly away with it and drop it on the hollow head of Lin Hsü, your respected and elderly bridegroom! I know another joss. A joss where there are flowers and perfume and sweetness—and youth! And a Manchu's love! A rollicking, swaggering poet's love! It is thus that we go there—thus!"

And while Yat opened the door of the taxicab into which the lurking, low shadow at the corner of the Bowery had sharpened, he put Wuh Wang inside, protesting, squirming, giggling, scratching with all her might.

"A Manchu's love, little pansy!" he cried triumphantly. Already his foot was on the running board, his supple shoulders stopped

to squeeze through the narrow door of the cab, when something shot out from the inside of the car.

It was sudden and hard. It caught him square in the chest with the strength and ferocity of a mule's kick. He stumbled, fell, and at the same time the machine jumped forward, like a sentient being, with a deep steely humming.

Bang slammed the door. And the last he saw, as he picked himself up from the pavement, was the hatchetman's lean, bony, yellow, hand, sharply outlined in the rays of the street-lamp.

It stabbed through the open window and wagged at him mockingly with thumb and second finger.

V

Chi Kun-yi led the way to the Chatham Square Elevated Station without a word. Without a word, side by side with his friend,

he travelled home. Still without a word, he entered the rooms which he shared with Yat, stepped to the window, and pointed at an imaginary spot, far south, where sable shadows and dancing lights rushed together in shimmering grey half-tones.

"Reach me the guitar, Cantonese mud turtle," he said finally; and, when his friend had given him the two-stringed instrument, he broke once more into song:

"For the sake of one rose
I became slave to a thousand thorns.
Yet do I not complain,
For I do not feel the prick of the thorns
While the scent of the rose is in my nostrils—
Sweetly—
Sweetly."

He looked challengingly at the Canton man, who smiled dryly and said: "Ah, yes. It is you, my Pekingese dandy, who knows the heart of woman—who knows the scent of the rose, and the pain of the thousand thorns——"

"I do, blinking Buddha!" came the calm reply. "Not only do I know the heart of woman, but down there in Pell Street, I have also learned much wisdom about the heart of man. For—listen! I have made me another verse."

And again he twangled the two tough strings, and again his voice boomed out!

"For the sake of one rose
I became slave to a thousand thorns.
But I sold its perfume for a grain of vanity,
And now there remains to me only the dust of the
rose petal,
And, too, the thousand thorns,
Thus demonstrating clearly that I, Chi Kun-yi,
am a fool—
And, of course, a poet—"

"A poet! Ahi!" he echoed, and his lips curled in a beatific smile.

Cobbler's Wax

THEY called him P'i Hsiao, or Cobbler's Wax, in Pell Street, because, to quote Nag Hop Fat, the soothsayer, "he is soft, being helpless; hard, being proud; and his skin is dark."

The latter statement was not exactly true. The man's complexion was not dark. It glowed coppery red, stamping him as one apart from the waxen-faced Cantonese whose lives were pinched between the Bowery and Mulberry Street like a thin wedge of Asia driving apart bartering, narrow-chested Russian Jews and shrill Sicilians, and who understood the necessity of putting new twists into their Mongol brains in order to meet the beggar competition of Europe's back stairs. Which they did, to the confusion of the latter and the sound enrichment of certain accounts carried under various picturesque ledger headings by the Hongkong

& Shanghai Banking Corporation, thousands of miles away.

But there was no credit entry headed by the square Chinese ideographs that correspond to P'i Hsiao, though the bearer of the name had come to America twenty-five years earlier.

The tale of his coming is a clanking and spirited Odyssey. It has never been told, and never can be. It would implicate too many people on both sides of the Pacific; for there is on the books of the republic a law called the Asiatic Exclusion Act, which puts the yellow man beneath the black in human worth and civic respect, and to circumvent which the yellow aspirant after American coin must travel hard roads and pay exorbitant "squeezes."

Cobbler's Wax travelled the roads. He paid gold to many. To name them all would give an ethnographical chart of the world's less desirable breeds and a sociological survey of many of the Far East's gaudy rogues.

But let us pick out a few. There was the

half-caste innkeeper in Shanghai whose patronymic was aristocratic and melodious,—something like Da Silva de Villareal da Costa,—and who, aided and abetted by a Kamsuh brave on whose shaven poll had been a blood-price ever since the Boxer affair, met Cobbler's Wax and thirty other prospective yellow emigrants in a first-chop chandoo place west of the Ta Kao Tien Temple. Came secondly a ruffianly Finnish skipper, wanted for murder in Riga and for arson in Palermo, who took Cobbler's Wax and associates to Vladivostok and into the tranquil presence of a Nanking compradore with gold-incased finger-nails and a charming taste in early Ming porcelain. This gentleman passed the adventurers through yet two more middlemen to a Japanese skipper who flaunted British naturalization papers and called himself Macdonald Ichiban. He was supposed to clear from Vladivostok direct for the Golden Gate, but managed to cruise off the British Columbia coast—"contrary head winds, half

a gale," he wrote in the log, and lied—until a narrow-flanked clipper shot out from the fogs of Queen Charlotte Sound and took away the living freight, only drowning four. The remainder had an interview the next day with a provincial government inspector in Victoria, British Columbia, who drowned his Scotch conscience in his Scotch greed.

Came a stormy night and a chugging motor-boat trip across the Straits of San Juan de Fuca; a dumping overboard into the greasy, swirling sea a mile from land, near a floating buoy the lights of which, for the occasion, had been changed from red to green; a great screaming wave that swallowed all the merry band of Mongol rovers with the exception of Cobbler's Wax; the latter's swim ashore, and his yellow hand reaching out from the stinking water and gripping the slippery piles at the foot of Yesler-way, in the city of Seattle.

All this for a reason which, years later, gurgled in a woman's death-cry, and the toil

of endless months to pay back the debts incurred by the way, with interest piling on interest. Rightly so, since the different gentlemen, from the Shanghai innkeeper to the engineer of the motor-boat, had done their shares of the transaction on spec, and most of the profits had already been wiped out through the inconsiderate wholesale drowning at the end of the journey.

"Pay! pay! pay!" was the cry, with the heavy hand of the Chinese Masonic Lodge in San Francisco squeezing and bullying and striking when spirit rebelled or pocket-book flattened.

Those were the years when Cobbler's Wax worked up and down the slope, from Seattle to San Diego, and back, in canneries and lumber-camps, in a forgotten Idaho placer claim, in California wine-vats and Utah chuck-wagons through to Chicago, clear through to New York, to the warm, spicy, homelike reek of Pell Street. Two decades of toil, a yellow man's toil.

And then one hazy, lilting spring evening he stood near the corner of the Bowery, free from debt, smiling, ready to strike out for himself, to labour another eighteen or twenty-eight or thirty-eight years in order to forget the thing which was calling him back to China in the watches of the night. On that particular evening a drunken Irish policeman chanced to be homesick and to turn into Pell Street, singing an ancient and riotous stave of the County Armagh.

"Down by the tan-yar-rd soide," quavered his sentimental, alcoholic hiccough, and as he passed beneath a scarlet-and-gold Chinese sign-board, bearing in archaic Mandarin characters the naïve legend! "No credit given. Former customers have taught caution," he brushed against Cobbler's Wax, who was looking up at the cloud-whipped moon, a slow smile curling his lips.

The song broke off and gave way to a belligerent query:

"An' what may ye be grinnin' about?"

Cobbler's Wax had little English. So he winked a heavy-lidded eye with amiable intent at the foreign devil.

"What may ye be grinnin' about?" repeated the latter, with a gesture of his hickory. "An' is it maybe the pitch of me tenor ye're takin' exception to?"

Still the other smiled.

"Tsieh-kwang—hai—tsieh-kwang?" he singsonged, politely inquiring if he was in the gentleman's way.

But the policeman misunderstood.

"Pokin' fun at me, are ye?" he asked. "Faith I'll wipe that smile off yer dirthy mug, ye yellow haythen!" and *whang* sobbed the point of the hickory.

Cobbler's Wax was taken unawares. He raised his right hand to defend himself, and the Irishman fell upon him with fist and stick and heavy-nailed boots, striking and kicking in blind, murderous fury.

He saw red, and struck again and again and again with all his brute strength.

The chances are that, with the whisky fumes cleared from his brain, regret followed. For instead of arresting Cobbler's Wax, he let him lay where he had collapsed, a bleeding, broken, moaning bundle, and contented himself with reporting at the station that "he had been set upon by three large and ferocious haythen Chinks; but that, faith, he gave 'em the edge of his club an' the toe of his boot an' by the rock of Cashel! what did them damned, dirty haythens do but run away, bad luck to 'em!" Wherefore he received praise.

As to Cobbler's Wax, the results of Celtic homesickness mixed with Celtic whisky were far-reaching. He became a cripple for life, his right elbow shattered, his neck twisted to one side and giving him the look of a hunch-back, his left eye-socket staring empty, his lungs affected, his health ruined. Hereafter he was an object of Pell Street charity, which

is akin to Pell Street humour, which latter is identical with Pell Street cruelty.

"Paper tiger!" the little almond-eyed urchins shouted after him, since a tiger made of paper cannot bite and, by the same token, a man whose hands are palsied cannot strike.

"Hey! a hunchback bowing! What exaggeration!" Nag Sen Yat, the opium merchant, remarked with ready wit when he saw him make obeisance in front of the crimson-stained joss-house.

"When one is eating one's own, one does not eat to repletion; when one is eating another's one eats till the tears run," was the sententious comment of Nag Hong Fah, the pouchy proprietor of the Great Shanghai Chop Suey Palace, when he gave him a bowl filled with left-over salt duck, pickled cabbage, and soy.

It would be a ludicrous hunting after sentimental effect to say that these small amenities of Mongol life touched Cobbler's Wax morally or ethically; for he, too, was a yellow man. He

knew that Pell Street was right in its treatment of him and that he would have done likewise had the positions been reversed.

"I am a cripple," he said to Miss Edith Rutter, the social settlement investigator, through the intermedium of Liu Kuang, the court interpreter, when the little lady stopped him and tried to pour the healing oil of Anglo-Saxon pity into his wounds. "A cripple is like yourself, a barren spinster," Liu Kuang edited this, "fit only to wipe the children's noses and break the household pots."

Of course one feeds and clothes a helpless unfortunate in order not only to gain merit with the Goddess of Mercy at the time of the Feast of Universal Rescue, but also to help the departed spirits of one's ancestors. For these may have been inferior in caste to those of the man to whom one gives alms, and thus, by the posthumous act of largesse, become the latter ancestors' equals in the grey, whirling world of ghosts.

Yes, one gained face by giving; but what

particular face-gaining was there in a kindly word, in sympathy?

"A word," said Yung Long, the wholesale grocer, "is a breath of wind. A word is dirt. A word is an infidel act. The deed is the thing, food is the witness, and a full stomach the divine arbiter."

Pell Street would have been well pleased had Cobbler's Wax done the decent thing and committed suicide. They even told him so in a roundabout manner, and one Friday when the cripple was burning Hung Shu joss-sticks in front of Sakya Muni Buddha, Yu Ch'ang, the priest, mentioned to him casually that the price of coffins was rising. After which delicate preamble, and using the questionable support of ponderous, long-winded quotations from the *Book of Threefold Duties*, he told him that Pell Street would gladly contribute hundreds of dollars to ship his earthly remains to China and to bury them there, in a large and comfortable red-lacquer coffin, on the side of a hill,

facing running water, and with a charming view over the rice-paddies.

"Your spirit will thoroughly enjoy himself," wound up the priest. "Also will your respectable ancestors be made happy, for your funeral shall be a white affair. Fifteen mourners shall be hired, and shall have little balls of wool suspended from their hats to represent tears."

But Cobbler's Wax preferred remaining a live cripple to a corpse buried in the state of a mandarin of the second class. He was not a Westerner, given to dissecting his soul and screwing his emotions into test-tubes. Had he been, he would have discovered that it was pride which kept him from joining the spirits of his sires by an act of his own hands—pride, though his body was shrunk and his soul growing wizen and mean as the days swooned into weeks and the weeks into the pitiless swing of years.

Pride—the pride of the grey, brooding centuries, the pride of blood, the pride of name; for Cobbler's Wax was only his nickname. His

real name was Tong Fu-hsiang, a name by right of which he had the reddish, coppery glow beneath his skin; a Manchu name of the stony, contemptuous North, reminiscent of the days when the steel-clad men on horseback swept out of the Central Asian plains, conquered the Chinese, who outnumbered them a thousand to one, and imposed on them the *tow-chang*, the pig-tail, in sign of subjection and disgrace. A name which proclaimed him to be a gentleman in his own country, and the others, the men of the clans of Nag and Yung and Yü and Liu, dirt beneath his feet.

He used to say so to them when they bought him samshu whisky and tobacco and an occasional opium-pill in the back room of Nag Hong Fah's Great Shanghai Chop Suey Palace, which was for yellow men only and bore the euphonic appellation, the Honourable Pavilion of Tranquil Longevity.

First they would fill his cup, then they would hold a charcoal ball to his bamboo pipe, then

they would ask him questions in gently modulated voices:

"Tell us about your honourable ancestors. Tell us about the honourable Manchus who rule us pigs of Chinamen."

And Cobbler's Wax knowing that he was speaking the truth, knowing, too, that the others knew it to be the truth, would begin with his father.

"A *chen-shih* he, who received the degree of eminent doctor at the Palace of August and Happy Education, to the west of the Ch'ien Men Gate, in the Forbidden City. A most respectable gentleman who wore the white sheet of repentance and burned the candle of expiation, never shaving his forehead for three hundred days, when the Emperor Tao-Kuang ascended the dragon and went to heaven."

"Good! good!" gurgled Nag Hong Fah into his opium-pipe and slapping his fat knees very much like a tired New York business man at a vaudeville show. "And your esteemed grand-

father, tell us about him." Whereupon the cripple would continue, giving the history of his family, from his grandfather, who had been captain-general of the Eighth Banner Corps, to his great-grandfather, who had been Taotai of the Imperial Circuit, "an *aisin cioro* he, an imperial clansman, a cousin-in-blood, to the Son of Heaven; a *nurhachi*—an iron-capped prince."

At which there was always a general outburst of mirth:

"Ho, Manchu!" "Ho, iron-capped prince!" "Ho, great Buddha!" and hearty slaps on his twisted, hunched spine and coarse remarks that the offal which dropped from the sty of Cantonese pigs was plenty good enough for the honourable guts of a Manchu conqueror. A Chinaman, after all, is a democrat who, far from home, enjoys the disgrace of an hereditary aristocrat fully as much as the hyphenated American, who has made his pile and can pay for the trick, likes dining in a Broadway restaurant and bullying and tipping the pale, yellow-haired, hook-nosed

waiter who back in the old country had a *von* in front of his name.

Cobbler's Wax understood, but he would answer as he was bid for two reasons. One was that by refusing to reply he would lose face, since it would make it appear that he was ashamed of his family; the other being that by playing the mountebank, the fool in cap and bells and motley, he was paying for his food and raiment.

It was only when just before the breaking up of the social evening Yung Long would ask his customary final question that the cripple remained silent.

"Why have you left China?" Yung Long would ask, propping his elbow on a hard pillow covered with ancient temple brocade that seemed woven of star-beams and running water. "Why have you, the gentleman, come to the land of the foreign devils, just like me—" complacently—"me, a tail-less pig of a Canton-ese coolie?"

No answer, though they tried to bribe him with samshu and opium. No answer, though the purplish light in his right eye eddied up in a slow flame, though even the empty left socket quivered with rage.

Then again gurgling laughter, and somebody remarked that doubtless a woman was at the back of the mystery, while somebody else, by a Chinese play on words which even the most careful editing cannot render unblushingly into English, suggested that it was time for Cobbler's Wax to play at *laoh-shin-fang*, the ancient Chinese game of teasing the bride.

It was on a day in late August—one of those New York days when the whole city, from the Battery to Yonkers, seems washed over with the lazy gold of the tropics, and the sky-scrapers and church spires soar eagerly toward the heaven as if to look for moisture and coolness—that a glimmer of the reason why Cobbler's Wax, the Manchu, had come to America like

any coolie penetrated into Pell Street. Only a glimmer, quickly dulled by steel and blood and a woman's cry.

The tale of her beauty had been bruited about Pell Street long before her coming. For when Yung Long, twelve months earlier, had decided to "sip vinegar,"—this being a Chinese euphemism for taking a second wife,—he had furthermore decided, as a sound business man, that it would not do to hide the fact of her beauty in the cloak of decorum.

"Only a rich man can afford two wives," he said to Yu Ch'ang, the priest. "Too, then, it may be that I shall love her."

"She is young?"

"No. Youth to the vapourings of youth. To the wise man of years the carved crystal of knowledge, the polished emerald of satisfaction, the cooling fan of the many accomplishments. The matchmaker in San Francisco, an honest woman with whom I have had dealings before, writes that Si-Si is of most honourable family,

that she is a precious casket filled with the arts of coquetry, and that thirty-seven summers have only increased her charms thirty-seven times. She has small feet,—what the foreign devils call deformed feet,—real golden lilies, each worth a *kang* of tears. It is said that when she washes her hands she scents the water. I wonder what my respected first wife will say." He gave a little shudder. "Her mouth is like a running tap."

"Stop the tap with your fist," advised the priest.

The matchmaker had spoken the truth! Si-Si was indeed beautiful.

She was of a dead-white complexion, and her lips, painted a deep crimson, were like a sword-wound. Her large, keen, almond-shaped eyes seemed even larger than they were through the curved frame of her immense black eyebrows and the heavy lower lids, which had that suspicion of coarseness speaking of passion and the trained knowledge of passion. The small ears

were close to the head. She had the true walk of the woman whose feet have been bound since early infancy, swaying, undulating—"skipping daintily over the tops of golden lilies," as the ancient poet has it.

Side by side with her lord she walked through the greasy, packed wilderness of the Chinatown streets, while he pointed out the sights to her from the elevated structure which rushed past the bottle-like opening of Pell Street with a great rumbling, steely sob, to the Chinese Baptist Mission Chapel, which was mantling its face in a veil of drab and dust and grime as if grieving at the gaudy, thaumaturgical monstrosities of the joss temple just across the way.

Down the street they strolled, with Yun Long's first wife leaning from the window of her apartment and hurling the full-flavoured abuse of Canton at Si-Si!

"O Calamity-on-which-money-is-lost!" she shrilled. "O Ought-to-have-been-a-dog! O il-

legitimate duck egg! O great and stinking shame!"

"*Shuey-kee!*" ("Water-fowl!") retorted the second wife, thus effectually choking her rival's recriminations in a hot flood of tears, since water-fowl is a nickname for the sampan girls who work on the river during the day and play at light-o'-love during the night. After which husband and wife proceeded on their stroll, pleased with themselves, with Pell Street, and the world in general.

They met Cobbler's Wax at the corner of Mott. That which followed cannot be told in honest American newspaper language or in the trained phraseology of American magazines.

A dramatic thing, to be sure; but, paradoxically, the Chinaman is never dramatic in dramatic moments. His drama lies in the slow, proud agony of repression, in smooth words woven close to the loom of lies; also, in unsaid words, then suddenly leaping out in a stony, incontrovertible fact.

"P'i Hsiao" ("Cobbler's Wax"), said the smiling Yung Long, waving a careless, introductory hand at the cripple. "An honourable Manchu who has condescendingly come among us to fill his honourable belly with our refuse. *Lai*" ("Come here"), he added.

The cripple came, his head bowed deep on his chest, his twisted limbs moving clumsily, like those of a maimed spider.

"Cobbler's Wax is not my name," he said in a sort of meek, querulous whine, for that evening he had partaken too freely of heady number-one opium. "I am a Manchu, *nurhachi*, an iron-capped prince."

"Oh, yes," drawled Yung Long. "Your real name is—I forgot. Tell us."

"Tong Fu-hsiang," came the answer, matter-of-fact and slow, like the response in an oft-repeated litany; and immediately the harsh Northern name was echoed by Si-Si's crimson lips:

"Tong Fu-hsiang?" with utter incredulity.

And as the cripple looked up, a haggard moon ray bringing his wizen, grimacing features into stark relief, she repeated it. "Tong Fu-hsiang!" with fatalistic Mongol certainty.

Cobbler's Wax stared at her. He studied her from the elaborate seed-pearl head-dress to the tips of her tiny, embroidered slippers.

"Yes," he said, "I am Tong Fu-hsiang. And it seems that I cannot escape you, Crusher of Hearts!" And, speaking in a voice as even and passionless as Fate! "Look at me! Look at me well! Am I not a handsome lover? Am I not comely and strong and sweetly scented? *Ahi*, Crusher of Hearts, look at me!"

She did not utter a syllable. Something like a wave of immense, breath-clogging sensations leaped up in her eyes, issuing from the past, returning to the present, trying to blend both past and present, and shuddering in the hopeless chill of the task. Shadowy, it seemed, and gentle and cruel and very unhuman; and, forgetting the world about her, forgetting her

husband, forgetting the reek and riot of Pell Street, she stretched out her hands.

"I—I waited, waited, waited," she stammered finally.

"You lie!" came the cripple's low retort. "I was poor and a gentleman, a scholar. And the other was rich—rich with riches dishonestly earned, and you——"

"No! no!" There was anguish in her words, but her eyes were scanning Cobbler's Wax's face intently as though, straight through the anguish in her own soul, she was watchful of the effect on him, a woman to the last. "That day when you wrote me—when I came to meet you in the Street of the Ten Thousand Refreshing Breezes—I waited until——"

"Be quiet, Leaky-Tongue!" came the cripple's curt command. He spoke with a strange dignity, and Si-Si kowtowed and obeyed.

It was very odd, this scene in Pell Street—the woman in her gaudy bridal finery kowtowing not before the cripple, but, as it were, before

somebody who had died, an invisible personality, an inseparable partner of her and his past, whatever it had been, and silent, slightly trembling.

And then the silence was splintered by Yung Long's voice:

"Speak, Si-Si! Tell me!" He laughed. "For many moons have we chased the slippery tail of Cobbler's Wax's mystery. Speak, Si-Si!"

Yung Long had understood at once. Si-Si and Cobbler's Wax had been lovers. But what of it?

The thought of this human derelict having in former years possessed her did not disturb his massive equanimity. Rather, it gave a keener tang to his own desire and might of possession. A Manchu, the other; and he himself was a Cantonese, a despised Southern coolie, and his the woman who once had held this broken descendant of iron-capped princes in her arms.

A jest—a fit jest made by the grinning gods of life and death! Subtle it seemed to him, and

momentous and delicious; and he smacked his lips like a man drinking warm rice liquor of venerable age and rich, oily bouquet.

"Speak, Si-Si!" he insisted as the woman did not reply. "Give me the great and terrible secret why this Pekingese scholar and gentleman has trodden the thorny path of labour, why he has come to the land of the foreign barbarians, like any coolie. Tell me the gorgeous jest!"

It was never known if the woman intended to obey her lord or if, still unaware of his presence, of his very words, she was trying to reach to the heart of the broken cripple whom, to her feminine heart, woe and loveliness and suffering had made desirable once more.

"Tong Fu-hsiang," she said, "I am speaking the truth. Together with Chi-li, my old nurse, I waited, as becomes a woman. Then, when you did not come, when your honourable mother told me that—when she cursed me on the street, giving me black names, calling me a shameless one——"

Cobbler's Wax cut off her words with a gesture. It was more than a mere gesture. It seemed like a dramatic shadow falling swift and pitiless.

"The tale is ended," he said. "Perhaps you speak the truth, perhaps you do not. It is easier to measure the depth of the ocean with a jackal's tail than to probe the heart of woman. One thing only is certain! I am—Cobbler's Wax, and you are Si-Si—and the bride of Yung Long."

Yung Long looking from the cripple to Si-Si, picked up the words and tossed them to the lowering murky Pell Street sky with an avalanche of gurgling laughter:

"The bride of Yung Long! The bride of the grocer, the Cantonese coolie, the pig! *Ahi*, my bride!" He drew her to him with a sweep of his stout arms, and crushed her wedding finery against his breast. "My bride!" he repeated triumphantly, "and once she was the bride of a Manchu, a *nurhachi*, an iron-capped

prince! Is that the great secret, hunchback?"

Cobbler's Wax had already turned to go, but he stopped. He looked at Yung Long for five long seconds. A smile curled his thin lips.

He stood very still. His neck was twisted, his limbs palsied. Yet something seemed to grow within his soul, softly to infold him, casing his outer being with shining, glittering glory, with a crowding, terrible sense of strength and pride. It seemed that the strength, the pride, whatever it was and however it had come, was moving to and fro within the maimed, shattered walls of his body, working subtly, steadily, mysteriously, to bring about a transformation of the man.

He lifted his left hand with a gesture that was prophetic and colossal. His seeing eye flamed with something eternal, racially eternal, racially vital, and indestructible.

"You are right," he said. "Once she was my bride, the bride of a gentleman. Then she met a low-caste, a man even like yourself, rich,

filling his belly with greasy food and his dull brain with unclean thoughts. I killed that man and I had to flee. Thus, by the inexorable swing of fate, I came here. I became what you see me, a cripple, maimed, helpless——"

"And living on our alms," laughingly interposed the grocer.

"Indeed." Cobbler's Wax gravely inclined his head. "But—I am still a *nurhachi*, still——"

"A lover?" came the mocking query.

"Perhaps," said the other, and he turned his eyes away from the grocer and looked at the woman, who was staring at him wide-eyed, as if seeing the spectres of the past. In his look there was groping after eternal, tremendously important secrets and a boundless, challenging assurance; furthermore love—love which was both sweet and harsh, love sombre like the dawn winds of a thousand forgotten sunrises.

"Si-Si," he said in a great, clear voice, "can it be that you have forgotten the days that are past, when I made a carpet of my heart for

your little golden feet, when your soul was a stainless mirror in which I saw my own, when your heart was the well of my love, and my heart the stone of your contentment? My life is a blackened crucible, but my love for you, Crusher of Hearts, is the golden bead at the bottom of the crucible."

He stepped close up to her, disregarding Yung Long, who was torn between fury and laughter and amazement.

"Crusher of Hearts," he went on, and it was not the cripple speaking, the outcast of Pell Street, the taker of alms, the butt of rough coolie wit, but a Manchu, a scholar, a poet, "I love you. To have you again I would curse the memory of my honourable ancestors and spit on the name of the Blessed Lord Buddha. For I love you, Si-Si. Can it be that you have forgotten?"

It is difficult to tell afterward with accuracy the many minute details which make up a comedy or a tragedy of life; but though it all

happened in a few moments, the picture of it projected itself on Yung Long's mind with the fidelity of a single, unforgettable fact.

He felt Si-Si squirm and turn in his arms. He felt her bracing her arms against his chest and tearing herself away. He saw the cripple gather her to him.

"I have not forgotten, Tong Fu-hsiang!" she murmured. "I have not forgotten, Beloved!"

"And I, too," came the cripple's sibilant reply—"I, too, have not forgotten. I have not forgotten that once you lied to me, that you gave up my love for the love of riches. I have not forgotten, Crusher of Hearts, that I am a cripple who cannot earn his own bread or that of the woman he loves, he still loves. I have not forgotten the pride of race and—" Suddenly he turned to Yung Long, who stood like a statue. "Take ye another woman unto yourself, Grocer! This you cannot have!"

With utter swiftness his palsied right hand shot beneath his dirty shirt. It came out with

a glitter and crackle of steel that found her heart, and she fell backward with a low cry at the feet of her lover, her blood trickling slowly, dyeing the green and rose of her silken bridal finery with splotches of rich crimson.

The next moment, even as Yung Long jumped forward with a hoarse cry of rage, the point of the cripple's knife gleamed again in the yellowish half-light like a crescent of evil passions.

"Love is a flower," he said. "When it is withered it is hay, and the oxen eat it." He struck his own heart with a straight, downward blow of the dagger.

He fell across Si-Si's body.

Cobbler's Wax lay there dead, with arms outstretched, as if to protect his dead love against Yung Long, against the reek and riot and cruelty of Pell Street.

After His Kind

In after years, when Bill Devoy, detective of Second Branch and on the Pell Street beat of sewer gas and opium and yellow men and white, had retired from service, he used to remark that of all them damned Chinks the only one who had ever *really* got his goat and got it a-plenty and for keeps, was that there stinkin' lemon-coloured old hypocrite of a Yu Ch'ang, the joss-house priest. Then he would cock his feet on the veranda railing of the little semi-detached Long Island villa where he was living on his pension and whatever "sugar" he had accumulated during his years on the police force, look out over the surrounding scenery which included a neat spider's web of railway metal, a neighbour's underwear swinging in the breeze with that pompous and self-

righteous dignity peculiar to wet, red flannel, and a mysterious nest of battered tomato cans, spit reflectively at a mosquito, and say, quite without rancour:

"I dunno, though. Perhaps that pouch-bellied old hop head of a Chink was as innercent as the jury of twelve gents good and true sed he was. Ye never can tell, can ye, with the likes of them—chiefly considerin' that Miss Rutter——"

He would pause, and continue, musingly:

"I dunno about that, either. Ye see—the very women down there in Pell Street ye wouldn't believe it of . . . well—never mind——"

Quite without rancour, too, was Yu Ch'ang who just about the same time, having left Pell Street and returned to his native Canton, was remarking to abbot Shen Chin, keeper of the temple of the Five Rams, that foreign devils were decidedly odd people!

"They either ask too many questions, or not enough. But then—" sliding his fan from the

voluminous sleeve and slowly clicking apart the fretted, silk-covered ivory sticks—"is sense a dog or a courtesan that it should come to men unasked?"

At which the other would incline his shaven head, scratch it delicately with the tip of his fantastically long, gold encased finger-nail, and reply, like the fat Pharisee he was, that after all it did not matter. For had not the Lord Buddha said to his disciple Subhuti that every form or quality of phenomena was transient and elusive?

"Then why, O wise and older brother, except from so discerning a rule that most transient and elusive of known phenomena, the white devil?"

Finally, as to Jack Davis, star reporter of the *Sun*—though he had nothing to do with the tale—he would dismiss the whole subject as "regular Pell Street dope. Find yourself up against a Chink stone wall every time—without any damned chinks!" he would add, punning regrettably.

There is no doubt that, at first, Jabez Carleton Trask feared Pell Street. People always do. It is thousands of miles away from the neighbouring Bowery—if you have eyes to recognize the distance—while Fifth Avenue and the Upper West Side are entirely different constellations.

And Jabez Trask *did* recognize the distance; and it fascinated him, as a snake is said to fascinate a bird.

For he had been an imagist poet of sorts before the uplift bee had stung him and had thrown him—the which is another story, nor one of soft emotions—into the ingenuous clutches of Miss Edith Rutter, social settlement investigator, who used her own money as well as that subscribed by a number of earnest mid-Western spinsters to bring the blessings of Christianity and up-to-date plumbing to Pell Street. Let it be said in parenthesis, nowise cynically, that it is still a debatable topic whether either is good for yellow-skinned Mongol and red-faced Tartar.

Trask was impressed—and awed.

Walking through the maze of Chinatown, with a night of glowing violet vaulting above the sad drab of roof top and the crude palette of impromptu, bird's-nest balcony and a nostalgic, Western moon growing fainter and fainter and slowly fading into the vast cosmos of dawn as if trying to escape the reek of sewer and opium and sweat that rose from the packed, greasy wilderness of Pell Street, with Miss Rutter's hectic, guileless, silk-gloved hand pointing out the sluttish sights, he felt his heart muscles contract with a certain nameless dread.

The soft, gliding sing-song-sing of the felt-slippered Cantonese coolies who ambled in all directions with that peculiar, furtive step of their race—as if they were bent on some mysterious and rather nasty errand—made him homesick for the clean vulgarities of Broadway, a few short blocks away. The sounds, though he knew perfectly well that they where armless phrases of barter and trade dealing with silk

and ginseng and tea and opium and other peaceful articles of commerce, suggested to him a primitive and hateful utterance going back to the days before articulate speech had evolved; a primitive utterance which was when the emotions—love and hatred and friendship—were still too vague to be caught or expressed by the sharp, strident languages of the West.

Perhaps it was the poet in him working loose from the grey fastenings of his superimposed sociological soul and rocking and swaying to the syncopated rhythm of new ideas. Perhaps it was just the chimerical far-loomings of a streaked, anæmic imagination.

At all events, that night, back in his little room above Mr. Brian Neill's saloon, he entered in his strangely naïve diary that Pell Street expressed to him something enormous and uncomplex; a dread thing which was part of contemporary civilization, yet awfully remote from civilization as he knew it; a thing which

he feared and loathed, yet which he must plumb to its reeking, yellow depths.

A thing, he added, a month later, pungent with acrid opium and sour, miasmic, unclean gas, yet scented with a thick, honey-sweet perfume; hot, heavy, lascivious, a mixture of sandalwood and dead orchids that sent his senses to reeling and called up unknown passions in his body.

When, one day, he said something of the sort to Bill Devoy, the latter compressed all his criticism into the terse, succinct word:

"Nut!"

But he added!

"Look a-here, young feller, and take an old-timer's tip. Pell Street's O.K. as long as ye don't puzzle yer coco about it none, see? Accept it as a fact—see—?—a stinkin', yeller fact!"

"But how can I help thinking, Mr. Devoy?"

"How—can—you—help—?" Devoy looked

up sharply, not unkindly. "Say—what is it? You ain't hittin' the *li-un?*" translating it when he saw that the other did not understand: "I mean you aint smokin' opium—already yet so soon, as the Dutchman sez?"

"Heavens no!" The reply was convincing in its utter, shocked sincerity.

"Then—what *is* the trouble, sonny? Come on. Tell yer uncle all about it."

The younger man blushed.

"Nothing. I was just—oh—talking," he replied, lamely, walking away.

"The hell ye were!" muttered Bill Devoy, and that afternoon he confided to Mr. Brian Neill, the saloon-keeper, that he'd keep his weather eye peeled for that silly young uptown jackanapes.

"Four weeks in Pell Street and already puzzlin' about the why and wherefore! I tell ye, Brian, that young feller is booked for a whole peck of trouble if he don't look out."

"I should worry an' raise a pimple!" came

the other's callous reply, as he passed into the back parlor to hold mysterious converse with a moon-faced, smiling celestial.

Bill Devoy was right. There was trouble in the wind.

Trouble that started with a soft word flung down from a painted balcony, that blossomed into the waxen flower of love, congealed into darkening blood, and wound up, years later, in the philosophic musings of a Buddhist abbot in far Canton.

Trouble that started with a glance from two black, lack-lustre eyes, surmounted by enormous curved lids, a scarlet mouth that gaped like a sword wound, and a honeyed voice that called to the poet in Jabez Trask's soul.

Eyes and lips and voice—too, the soft charm and sweetness of seventeen years—belonged to Tzu Mo, the half-caste daughter of the widowed Yu Ch'ang, priest of the joss temple; the latter by the same, rather sardonic token, being the

most stubborn, since contemptuously passive, opponent of the social settlement house of which Miss Edith Rutter was the base and Jabez Carleton Trask a more or less secure pillar.

Jack Davis, *Sun* reporter and cynic through the sapping influence of police blotter, morgue, and tabulated hospital sheets, who had seen Tzu Mo once or twice on his nocturnal rambles through Pell Street and had smiled upon the soft flower of her face quite impersonally, called her a "Chino-American piece of deceptively appealing inconsequence."

In which he was wrong since, though possibly deceptive as well as inconsequent, she had two more characteristics which successfully scotched the former: she was pagan, and from her Sicilian mother she had inherited the temper and general disposition of a wild-cat.

She was leaning over the balcony railing of her father's house, holding her heaving, round breasts with fluttering hands. Deep sobs

racked her frame. Her great, black, slightly slanting eyes were filled with tears. Her red lips quivered.

To look at her, as Trask did, passing on the street below, was to feel sorry; was, for a poet, to reconstruct a pathetic tale with her as heroine and persecuted victim.

Trask could not have known that the pain which was forcing the tears down her pink-and-white cheeks was not of the soul, but of the body; that, ten minutes earlier, her father had given her a sound trouncing with a doubled up leather belt, using the buckle part where it hurt the most and, between strokes, confiding to her certain hoary Chinese maxims that dealt with the piety children are supposed to have for their parents.

"A child's soul," he had said, bringing down the belt buckle with a resounding *whanng*, "is a vessel filled with cumulative merit, immeasurable and illimitable. A good child's heart is a thing larger and more precious than the eight-

een hundred thousand pale blue lotus fields of the blessed Lord Buddha. But a bad child's soul—" *whanng-whanng*, sobbed the belt—"is deeper and blacker than the great hell Aviki. Children must not reply to their doting parents with sharp words of impiety. For—" *whanngee banng !*—"tell me, O little and beloved daughter can rivers drink up their water? Can trees eat up their fruit?"

A final, swishing, smarting *binng;* and Yu Ch'ang ambled his peaceful way to the liquor store of the Chin Sor Company to refresh himself with a lukewarm cup of *moy-kwee-loo*—rice gin flavoured with whompee juice and pommelo seeds—while Tzu Mo leaned from the balcony, crying as if her heart would break.

For a while she debated with herself if she should jump into the street and break her pretty little neck; not, as a white child might have reasoned, to cause her father to be sorry and consequently blame himself, but rather to make him lose face with his neighbours.

Looking down, shudderingly measuring the distance, she saw Jabez Trask.

He stopped. Instinctively he looked up. Her glance, flitting obliquely through brimming tears, held him.

Of course she knew who he was; knew that he was one of those ultimate molecules of Western humanity who drift into Pell Street presumably with the intention of making trouble for its yellow and half-yellow inhabitants; had heard her father and her father's friends discuss his physical and mental attributes, at times with venom curling their thin Mongol lips, at other times with the soft thud of contempt and ridicule.

Thus, her first instinct was to tell him, not in a ladylike manner, to go away.

"Beat it, you——"

She choked the words back.

For, standing there in the flickering light of the street lamp, the purple, dancing shadows

emphasizing smooth, white forehead, high bridged nose, and shapely, sensitive lips brushed by a tiny moustache, Jabez Trask was not a bad-looking man; and at once Tzu Mo decided upon a more subtle and less painful way of causing her father to lose face.

She dried her tears and changed the sob in her voice to a feline, caressing note.

"You're Mister Trask of the settlement dump, ain't ye?" Her question dropped to the street. "Miss Rutter she piped me a woid about you. Sez ye're a damned fine teacher. Maybe you'll teach *me*, eh?"

Sordid, clumsy, prosy words!

But they drifted down through the greasy Pell Street soot like tinkly silver bells. They fluttered, like shy hobgoblins, through the uncertain, adventurous shadows of fretted balconies and fabulous, scarlet-and-gold Chinese signboards.

They flashed straight into the poet's heart of Jabez Carleton Trask and caused him to

blush—which was a point gained by Tzu Mo.

She knew that her father would have no objection to her spending a few studious evenings in Miss Rutter's place. For, hating the Cross and all the Cross stood for, the priest was yet enough of a practical, matter-of-fact Mongol to make his common sense subservient to his religious and racial prejudices.

"Yes, little daughter," he said. "Learn everything that these red-haired devils, in their folly and vanity, are willing to teach you, without pay. A thing learned is a sheaf garnered."

Therefore, three times a week, Tzu Mo sat meekly facing Jabez Trask and imbibing all sorts of knowledge that might be useful to her in her future Pell Street career—all about landscape gardening and physiology and Longfellow and similar approved settlement house subjects—while Miss Edith Rutter, in an adjoining room, was teaching a handful of tiny, sloe-eyed, pig-tailed tots the white man's Three R's.

It is a mooted point whether at first Tzu Mo intended more than a mild flirtation with Jabez Trask; just enough, perhaps, to annoy her father, yet not enough to scandalize him into sharp abuse and a swishing, doubled up leather belt.

"For," as, with her crudely effective, gutter bred understanding of Pell Street psychology, she confided to Fanny Mei Hi, the half-caste wife of Nag Hong Fah, proprietor of the Great Shanghai Chop Suey Palace, "father's a reg'lar Chink, see? He's just, even if it hoits him. Get me? He'll wanta skin the hide off'n me when he sees that young feller makin' mushy lamps at me. Sure Mike! But when he sees —and you just bet that wad of mazuma up yer stockin' that he's shrewd enough to see— that there ain't nothin' doin' between me and the gink, nothin' *really* doin', *you* know, Fan! —well, he won't touch me. Because he's a Chink—and just. And so he'll have to make his tongue and his hands behave, and that'll

make him as sore's a goat with a tummy ache, and so he'll lose face a heap—get it?"

"Sure I do. My better half's just the same. Say—it's easy to make a Chink hoppin' mad when yer know how!"

And Fanny Mei Hi added, with just a spice of female malice:

"Swell guy, though, that settlement Holy John. Don't ye go and boin yer fingers, kid!"

"Me? Gwan—beat it! He ain't my sort!"

And Tzu Mo meant it. Decidedly, Jabez Trask was not her "sort."

Hitherto, her beau ideal of manhood had been one of two: either a yellow boy with blue black hair, smooth, thick, satiny skin, wicked, gliding eyes, and delicate hands, American born preferably and, even more preferably, with a strain of Caucasian blood weakening his stubborn, single-minded Oriental passivity and thus making him more malleable to a woman's speculative, inquisitive, dissecting fingers; or

a youthful, battling Bowery tough with peg-top trousers, waspish waist, truculently pink shirt, shaved neck, and that final, incongruously, leeringly effeminate touch: narrow last shoes with coloured cloth uppers.

Both yellow boy and white tough she knew instinctively how to handle; knew exactly how far to go with them and when to say, nowise prudish or insulted:

"Cut it out, kid! You're gettin' too damned fresh!"

Jabez Trask, on the other hand, represented to her the very type she had always disliked, always ridiculed, and—had she been truthful with herself—always slightly feared and envied, not physically, but psychically.

Thus, at first, she was self-conscious in his presence; felt inimical towards him, and when, with the greasy soot of Pell Street pouring through the windows, he expounded to her the lyric beauty of smooth greensward and peeping

crocus as warbled by Wordsworth or some other poet of the open-air school, she had to stuff her handkerchief in her mouth to keep from bursting into impatient and slangy abuse; while he, cleanly bred, puritanical for all the vagaries of his imagist soul, felt slightly guilty when, at night, instead of making entries into his diary, he found himself penning certain fantastic free verse to two black, slightly slanting eyes.

But then she was seventeen and he was twenty-four, and spring was brushing into Pell Street on quivering, gauzy pinions; hovering birdlike over sordid, tarred roof tops; gilding romantically the ghastly obscenities—dried sea-weed, dried strips of fish and duck, and bulbous, improbable vegetables—in the Chinese grocery stores; dropping like liquid silver over the toil of the mazed, scabbed streets; adding music to the strident calls of pavement and gutter.

Spring came, flowing like a clear stream over the mocking, harsh pebbles of Tzu Mo's

thoughts, scotching the atavistic inhibitions of Jabez Trask's Mayflower conscience.

Spring!

And Jabez Trask was a poet. Jabez Trask was good to look upon with the late, violet-and-orange dawn weaving a checkered, shifting pattern over white forehead and high-bridged nose, as he talked to her about Shakespeare and the musical glasses. Jabez Trask's lips were soft and warm when she kissed them—as she did one day.

Came summer, hard and scarlet.

And then, one night, Tzu Mo fell on her knees and prayed, first to Christ, and then, as an afterthought, to the Lord Gautama Buddha.

And she thought of her father—and a convulsive shudder ran through her soft, young body.

It was Yu Ch'ang's custom, when he foregathered with his countrymen in the liquor store of the Chin Sor Company—the "Place of Sweet Desire and Heavenly Entertainment,"—

to gain face for himself and his sacerdotal caste by talking didactically and naggingly on things worldly and spiritual.

"There is no more reverence for the old customs among our children," he said one night in late August. "They have deserted the good ways, the old ways, the ways of their honourable fathers. The white devils have spoiled them. You, for instance—" with calm brutality, presuming on his priestly privilege, he turned to fat, pompous Nag Hong Fah, the restaurant proprietor—"your house is a stinking and plague-spotted abomination in the nostrils of the wise and the good. I have been told that your son has openly declared his belief in the gods of the Christians."

Nag Hong Fah plied his fan with slow dignity. The other's criticism did not worry him. Yu Ch'ang was a priest—true—but he himself was a Chinaman, thus frankly and sneeringly irreligious. Nor, on the other hand, did he contradict the priest. For Chinese, too, he

was in this that there came to him rare, thaumaturgical moments when his prosy, blandly philosophic soul demanded a few ounces of hygienic stimulant in the form of a bit of incense powder, a dull-booming gong, or a meaningless prayer or two written on scarlet paper and then chewed and swallowed. And, with his typically Mongol mixture of up-to-date, driving commercialism and ancient superstitions, he thought it right that, as he bought cabbage from the grocer, he should purchase his spiritual stimulant from the priest; and he had no more intention of disputing with the latter about theology than to teach the former how to keep his vegetables cool and fresh.

Each to his job!—was his maxim. There was no face lost, no pocket pilfered. Therefore, why contradict and argue?

So he held his peace, filled his pipe, and sipped his "Cloudy Mountain" tea, while Yu Ch'ang went on, with oily, slightly malicious self-righteousness:

"It is different with my own daughter, Tzu Mo. I have brought her up in the old way, the right way!" He smiled as he thought of the belt buckle. "She will do honourable obeisance before my spirit when my body shall have ascended the dragon. Ahee! She is a shining pearl of equity and chastity and purity and piety and the many virtues!"

Came a heavy pall of silence. Only the sizzling of the opium lamps; a sucking of boiling hot tea sipped by compressed lips; a far-away street organ gurgling through the window with the tail end of some cloying gutter ballad.

The assembled company carefully avoided looking at each other. They merely sighed heavily, as if agreeing with the priest. Their faces were like carved masks, and nobody could have guessed that each was rolling under his tongue one of the choicest scandals that had happened in Pell Street for many a day; that each, with the exception of Yu Ch'ang himself,

knew that the latter's daughter had taken a white, a Christian, lover unto herself.

"Let every man clear away the snow from his own house-top," Nag Hong Fah whispered to Yung Long, the grocer.

"Yes," replied the other, out of the wide charity of his personal laxity, "it says in the Diamond Sutra that it is only the relative value which makes evil, evil—and good, good."

And another silence, while the smoke wreaths drifted to the ceiling and hung down like an immense, transparent beehive.

Then laughter, sharp, cackling, pitiless, and Nag Hop Fat, the soothsayer, looked at the priest and made a derisive gesture with thumb and second finger.

He was Yu Ch'ang's traditional enemy. For both catered to the spiritual weal of Pell Street. Both made their living thereby; the priest by expounding the calm philosophy of Buddha, the epic wisdom of the Kin-Kong-King, and the

rigid etiquette of the *Book of Outer Observances;* the soothsayer by consulting certain cabalistic volumes, by blowing on heaps of sand and rice, by reading palms and finger-nails, and by throwing painted sticks into the air and watching how they fell. Where one lost—money or face—the other gained, correspondingly.

In the past, they had had many a passage of arms, many a tilting and splintering of theological lances, and usually the priest, who had been well trained among the eighteen gilt Lohans of Peking's Lama monastery, had come out victorious in these encounters.

Now Nag Hop Fat saw a chance of settling the score once and for all, and so he repeated the derisive gesture of thumb and second finger and said:

"Wise priest, I have been told that a thousand deeds build the pedestal—and that one word suffices to destroy it!"

And when the other looked up, quick, suspicious, alert, he told him—the truth.

Yu Ch'ang rose. His face was calm, passionless.

"Does the honourable soothsayer speak the truth?" he asked of the company in general.

Then, when no answer came except a deep sigh heaved in unison, he walked to the door.

"I shall attend to the matter of my daughter's honour," he said, bowing with clasped hands. "I shall also attend to the matter of the foreigner. There is no hurry."

He left the room. They could see his tall figure pass down Pell Street, where the floating twilight was tinging his silken robe with purple and silver.

The shadows of night were drifting through the window.

"Ah," gently breathed Yung Long, as he kneaded the opium cube with agile fingers, "life is as uncertain as a Tartar's beard."

Just what happened to Tzu Mo has always been a matter of conjecture in Pell Street.

Some declare that she was killed outright by her father. Others claim that she was murdered by a hired hatchetman. Others, still, say that she was shipped to a colony of the Nag clan—who were distant cousins of Yu Ch'ang—in Southern Mexico, where she was forced to live out her remaining years in abject servitude.

Whatever happened, it is certain that she was never seen in Chinatown again; and when Fanny Mei Hi or another of her white and half-white girl friends called to see her, they were told that she had gone away. Further questionings only elicited the invariable reply of the Chinese when they do not wish to answer:

"No savvy."

It was typical of detective Bill Devoy that he refused to take any interest in Tzu Mo's disappearance.

"Say!" he confided to Jerry Maguire, the captain of the police precinct, "I don't give a

busted damn as long as the Chinks stick to moiderin' each other. A dead Chink's a good Chink. Only when they starts foolin' with the whites——"

"What about that young fellow—what's his name?" came Maguire's natural rejoinder.

"Ye mean the settlement guy? The villain in the piece? Jabez Trask?"

"Sure."

"Well, Cap, I'll slip him the woid to skiddoo while the skiddoin's good."

But when, a few minutes later, he called at the settlement house, it was Miss Edith Rutter who replied instead of Jabez Trask who was bending over his desk and hardly looked up at the detective's entry and advice to "beat it! Pell Street ain't the right climate for the likes o' you!"

"Mr. Devoy," said Miss Rutter in her precise English, "I have talked the whole affair over with Mr. Trask. He has decided to continue his work in Pell Street."

"Continue—his—*what?*" Devoy choked the laughter that bubbled to his lips.

"His work!" Miss Rutter snapped at him with her quick, birdlike eyes. "He will atone for the sin which he has committed—by service, by humility, by faith—by helping these poor heathens—by spreading the Gospel amongst them!"

Devoy looked at her, utterly at a loss.

Hitherto, he had always treated her with a slightly patronizing, not unkindly contempt. She had seemed to him to go through life with the velocity of a trundled hoop, and to accomplish about as much. She had never done any harm—she could not very well, with her hereditary, old-New-York-down-town-family armour of threadbare, meretricious gentility—nor, on the other hand, had she ever done any constructive, lasting good in Pell Street.

And now——

He scratched his bullet head.

"I don't get ye, lady," he said.

Miss Edith Rutter tapped the table smartly with her pencil.

"You don't have to 'get' me, Mr. Devoy. Mr. Trask understands. Don't you?"

She turned to the younger man who looked up, flushed, but not exactly embarrassed.

"Yes," he replied in a low voice, throbbing with sincerity, "I understand, Miss Rutter."

Then, to the detective who stood there, honest bewilderment on his square, ruddy features:

"Don't worry, old man. I am all right. I am going to——"

"Nix on the atonement business!" brutally cut in Devoy. "There's only one way ye'll be able to atone for that little love spat o' yourn —to Yu Ch'ang's likin' leastways: And that's with yer gizzard slit from ear to ear, or three ounces o' lead in yer belly, see? Take my tip, sonny, and travel straight back to the Upper West Side where ye came from!"

"I have made up my mind!"

"Ye have, have ye? All right, my lad. But remember—I gave ye fair warnin'!"

After which Bill Devoy walked over to Mr. Brian Neill's saloon and confided to that sunny, though dissolute son of Erin that of all them damned fools that there Jabez Trask——

"What the hell, Bill, what the hell!" laughed the saloon keeper. "We needs a little excitement down here onct in a while. Good for what ails us. What's yer tipple?"

But there was no excitement—though Pell Street stood on its toes, holding its fetid breath, shudderingly, pleasurably expectant.

Tzu Mo had disappeared. That was all.

Yu Ch'ang went the even tenor of his ways. Daily, as was his custom, he attended to his sacerdotal duties in the joss temple, exorcising evil spirits, burning insense, beating gongs and cymbals, and mumbling endless "*O-mi-to-fat's.*" Nightly, he explained these same rituals—and lied frightfully—to the personally conducted

rubberneck tourists on their shocked way through Chinatown.

Two or three times a week he sipped his cup of tea or *moy-kwee-loo* and smoked his simple bamboo pipe in the "Place of Sweet Desire and Heavenly Entertainment." Never did he refer to either Tzu Mo or Jabez Trask. Nor was there ever question asked of him. For he said that he would attend to the matter of the foreigner. Too, he had said that there was no hurry.

Thus Pell Street waited, day after day, week after week, until summer had swooned into autumn.

Several times Bill Devoy was on the point of asking Yu Ch'ang a direct, bullying question. But each time he desisted. For the other had an odd, magnetic trick of spreading a sort of hush about him whenever he willed, and not even the detective's bred-in-the-bone contempt for yellow men was able to pierce it.

So he had to be satisfied with watching closely —to discover nothing.

"Maybe the Chink has lost his nerve," opined police captain Jerry Maguire.

"Forget it, Cap!" snorted Devoy. "There ain't nothin' a Chink wouldn't do when it comes to revengin' his daughter's honour. Only them Chinks is damned long-winded and damned careful. Yu Ch'ang ain't goin' to risk his yeller pelt if he can help it—believe me!"

He spoke of it one day to Yung Long, the wealthy grocer, over whom for some mysterious reason, unrecorded on the police blotter, he had a certain hold.

"What's Yu Ch'ang goin' to do?" he asked.

"What is Mr. Trask going to do?" countered the grocer, in the perfect, well-modulated English Miss Edith Rutter had taught him. "If I were Mr. Trask, I would ponder over the ancient saying that even the fleetest horse cannot escape its own tail"—a figurative reply which did not help to allay the detective's worry.

But, still, nothing happened.

Winter came, with the snowflakes thudding

softly, and Yu Ch'ang seemed to have forgotten the black stain which had been put upon his honour.

"He shows an almost Christian forbearance," said Miss Rutter when Trask told her that he had met the priest on the street, that he had mumbled a few awkward words of greeting not knowing what else to do, and that the Chinaman had bowed courteously in return. "I feel that I ought to express to him my admiration and my sympathy. I think I shall call on him tonight."

She did, and Yu Ch'ang received her hospitably, smilingly.

Thereafter she saw him frequently, and the two had long discussions.

It was only Mr. Brian Neill who expressed open and blasphemous disappointment. He had hoped for a spice of excitement, and there was none except the usual police raids on gambling house and opium den—until about six weeks later, when Pell Street seethed and

tittered with news that was second in importance only to the love affair between Tzu Mo and Jabez Trask.

"It is incredible, isn't it?" demanded Miss Rutter, her ingenuous features flushed with triumph, of Bill Devoy whom she met near the Elevated Station.

"You sed it, lady," came the detective's ambiguous reply. "It's incredible, all right, all right!"

Yet, directly as well as circumstantially, there was no reason in the world to doubt the truth of the report.

It had started one day in the liquor store of the Chin Sor Company.

Nag Hop Fat, the soothsayer, bilious with too much heady number-one opium, had turned to Yu Ch'ang with a sneer and asked him, in typically Mongol metaphor, if he had ever considered that gold was at the root of everything in this life as well as in the life to come.

"There is gold in the bread we eat," he said, "gold in the toil we ply, gold in the silk we weave—and gold"—raising himself on his elbow and looking around the room like a hostess gathering eyes—"in the dishonour of our children! For tell me, O pious priest, how much gold did the white devil give you to blot out the crimson stain on the chastity of your daughter?"

Yu Ch'ang stared at him with heavy-lidded eyes that were contracted into narrow slits, studying him as he would study a new, exotic and rather repulsive variety of animal—not yet sure if he should fear and loathe it or if he should simply ignore its existence.

"My friend," he said finally, with utter plethoric calm, "it is as useless to ask you for understanding as it would be to beg a Buddhist nun for the loan of her hair comb."

"And why not ask her for the loan of her hair comb?" demanded Nag Hop Fat, bewildered.

"Because," the priest let fall softly, "Buddhist nuns shave their heads. Consider, then, the practicability of asking you for understanding. It would be like measuring the depth of the ocean with a jackal's tail—"; with which he turned on his mat and looked out, up at the sky, where the sun was gaping in the west like a great, red door.

And when the soothsayer, his mean soul rising and bristling with fury, burst into frothy, mazed, incoherent speech, accusing the other of having turned his feet from the old way, the true way, the decent way, the way of his fathers; of having kowtowed in the house of the foreigners; of having brought stinking disgrace not only upon himself and his ancestors, but upon all Pell Street, all the black-haired race; of having become almost like a Christian in weak, cowardly spineless forgiveness—the priest inclined his head and said that there was nothing impossible in the world.

"A stone swims in the water," he said, "and

an ape sings a song. Everything is possible—if you have eyes to see, ears to hear. And, as to Christianity—" his voice stabbed out sharp and distinct, with something like a challenge in the rising inflection—"perhaps I was wrong. I have talked often and at length with the foreign woman, Miss Rutter, about the worth of her faith. Yes! Perhaps I was indeed wrong in the past. Perhaps there are certain lessons in the Gospel of the foreigners which ——"

"Infidel!" screamed Nag Hop Fat. "Traitor! Camel spawn, baseborn and plague-spotted!"

"Silence—dog without heart or faith or manners!" cut in the priest, his half-clenched hands twisting spasmodically.

Then he recovered himself. He smiled upon the soothsayer as he might upon a babbling child.

"What does a pig know of the taste of ginger?" he inquired gently. "What does a man like you—blowing upon heaps of sand, throwing painted sticks into the air—know of the finer essence of theology?"

He turned, addressing the whole company of silent, smoking celestials.

"My friends," he said, and his voice was deep with a certain, hidden meaning, "do not be astonished if you should hear that I have renounced the faith of our own people. For—" he stroked his smooth chin—"I have learned that there is not very much difference between Christianity and Buddhism. Christianity—so the foreign woman tells me—teaches us to forgive our enemies. But, too, it says in the *Chin-Kong-Ching* that the man who forgives a black injury will reach the further bank of blessedness across the stream of anger, having overcome the torrent of passion. Therefore—" he quoted verbatim—" 'there is no further use for a raft to float upon the waters of anger and hatred! Therefore if thou wilt, rain, O sky!' "

He fanned himself slowly.

"Tonight," he added, nonchalantly, imperturbably, "I shall hold learned and pious converse with the foreigner—with Jabez Trask."

A faint shudder ran through the room, topped by Yung Long's unfinished question:

"And—shall you ——?"

"No!" said the priest. "I shall not draw the sword of revenge. Nor shall I throw away the scabbard of precaution. I am a meek man —*almost* a Christian!"

And again he looked out, up at the sky, where the sun was flickering like a spent candle in the meeting of winds.

It was natural that the soothsayer should spread the tale far and wide, that yellow man and white and half-white should cackle and gossip; and when Miss Edith Rutter declared triumphantly, as she did to Bill Devoy that day near the Elevated Station, that the Church had gathered another sheep into the fold, the detective was not taken altogether unawares, and so Pell Street was already bored with the old scandal and looking for a new when, on a Sunday a few weeks later, a little chapel not

far from Mott Street was sweet with music and sacred ceremonial and Yu Ch'ang, with Jabez Carleton Trask by his side, forswore his heathen gods and bowed his stubborn head to Jesus.

Hereafter, the joss temple squatted dusty and sad and sullen, without priest, without curling incense, without the thumping of gongs and tomtoms.

Hereafter, Nag Hop Fat, the soothsayer, freed from the priest's witheringly orthodox competition in matters spiritual, made much money with painted sticks and heaps of sand.

Hereafter, every night, Jabez Carleton Trask knelt in front of his bed and prayed long and fervently for his own soul as well as for that of Yu Ch'ang, his brother in the faith.

Hereafter, the affair of Tzu Mo's disgrace and Tzu Mo's disappearance—for even the most earnest entreaties on Miss Rutter's part to tell her what had happened to the girl would not unseal Yu Ch'ang's lips, and she was too wise a woman to risk the loss of a promising

Church recruit by too much nagging, preferring to put her trust in the softening influence of Time—dropped to the limbo of forgotten things, until one Saturday evening, a little after six, Mr. Brian Neill arrived at the police station, excited, out of breath.

"Where—is Devoy?" he panted; and, when the detective came out of the captain's room:

"Ye won yer bet, Bill! Yu Ch'ang's croaked young Trask!"

"He—what——?"

"Slit his bloody gizzard from ear to ear—*yes, sir!* I was talkin' to O'Connor—ye know, my assistant barkeep—and we hears one hell of a screech from upstairs. Gee, but it scared me! We rushes up and on the stairs we meets Yu Ch'ang goin' down like greased lightnin'——"

He stuttered. The words choked in his throat.

"Go on!" impatiently from Devoy.

"I'm tellin' ye as fast as I know how. Well—I guess we was too excited to grab the Chink.

And then we pops into Trask's room, and there we finds his nibs on the floor, deader'n a door-nail!''

Devoy picked up revolver and handcuffs.

"Ye sed ye met Yu Ch'ang on the stairs?"

"Yes."

"Sure it was him?"

"Narry a doubt. Say—" he interrupted himself; then continued, truculently sticking out his prognathic jaw: "Don't ye believe me? Think it was *me* cracked the gink—or Danny O'Connor?"

"Forget it! I was only sort o' puzzlin' why Yu Ch'ang should have been so all-fired careless—why, if he wanted to kick the guy off, he didn't use a little grey matter and cover his tracks up better. Yu Ch'ang ain't a fool. Look a-here, Brian, ye know yerself how all them yeller Chinks looks more or less alike—and the stairs is half dark—and——"

"It was him all right, all right. I'd reker-nize that ugly phiz of his'n in a million, I tell

ye, and Danny saw him too. And Trask didn't have another enemy in the whole of Pell Street, and Yu Ch'ang has had it in for him ever since he mixed it up with that daughter of his. Why, Bill, it was yerself told me there'd be trouble!"

"Sure. But all that ain't enough proof. Not for a jury leastways."

"Wait. That ain't all. If ye'd only give a feller a chance— Ye know Mrs. Levinsky who keeps the second-hand store round the corner?"

"Sure."

"Well—on my way over here I pipes her the news and she tells me that Yu Ch'ang was in her place early in the afternoon and bought him a straight-blade knife—one of them ticklers the sailors use, ye know—and that's the sort o' knife wot's stickin' in Trask's gizzard, see? I tell ye, Bill, that Chink's all trussed for the electric chair. Zing-blooie-banng—touch the little black button and watch him sizzle—unless he skips in time!"

But Yu Ch'ang had made no attempt at skipping.

Bill Devoy found him peacefully sipping his tea in the back parlour of the Great Shanghai Chop Suey Palace, and when he entered with drawn revolver, saying he guessed the priest knew he was under arrest, the other inclined his head and replied that—yes—he understood perfectly. A few minutes earlier he had heard that Mr. Trask had been murdered and that, of course, given the unfortunate old scandal, he would be suspected.

"Look a-here! Ye don't mean to say as yer goin' to try and come the innercent, are ye?" demanded the detective as he snapped the irons around the other's wrists. "Ye don't mean to say as yer goin' to spring that sort o' bull?"

Yu Ch'ang sighed, with a great deal of resignation.

"Mr. Devoy," he said in his correct, slow, rather drawling English, "I *am* innocent. I have a—what you call——"

"An alibi?" suggested the saloon keeper who was an interested spectator.

"Yes, Mr. Neill."

"Well, sonny," laughed the Irishman, slapping the priest's shoulder, no wise ill-naturedly, "it's got to be one hell of an alibi to beat mine——"

"Yours?" Yu Ch'ang raised his eyebrows.

"Ye sed it, lad. Mine and O'Connor's and Mrs. Levinsky's. Why——"

"Shut up, both o' ye!" ordered the detective, remembering his duties, as he led the prisoner downstairs.

"So long!" laughed Mr. Brian Neill, as the Black Maria clanked off. "I guess I'll phone Sing Sing and tell 'em to grease up the electric chair!"

But, four weeks later, Yu Ch'ang was a free man once more, treading the maze of Pell Street on padded, furtive slippers, talking gently to yellow and white; an object of considerable

sympathy to certain out-of-town tourists who had him pointed out to them as a typical specimen of persecuted Asian humanity; an object of financial interest to a shyster lawyer from the Tombs district who spoke glowingly of Bill Devoy and false arrest and damages; an object of admiration to his grave countrymen as they smoked their tasselled opium pipes in the "Place of Sweet Desire and Heavenly Entertainment," and quoted learnedly from ancient books; an object of admiration—sneaking admiration—even to Bill Devoy himself who, for many weeks, walked the Pell Street beat with a puzzled expression on his square, ruddy features, suspecting that painted balcony and fretted screen and bulbous Chinese house front were mocking him.

For he did not understand.

"No!" he confided to Mr. Brian Neill, two hours after the jury had brought in their verdict of *Not Guilty*. "I don't get it. There ain't a

doubt in the woild but that you and O'Connor spoke the truth."

"And the knife he bought at Mrs. Levinsky's!"

"Sure. He sez he bought the knife all right, all right—but that he lost it a few minutes later—somebody, the moiderer, must have picked it up!"

"Lost it? Picked up? For cripes' sake—that won't hold water, Bill!"

"It didn't either. Nor did it help him much when he springs them Chinks on the jury—Nag Hong Fah and Yung Long and a couple more. They swore they seen him right up to within a half-hour before the moider—when you heard the screech and ran upstairs and see Yu Ch'ang come down."

"Well—even s'pose the jury was damn fools enough to believe a Chink witness—wot about that half-hour, Bill?" demanded Mr. Brian Neill whose duties had kept him out of the courtroom the last minutes of the trial.

"That's it. Ye see, from a little after half-past five right up to a few minutes before I pinch the guy, he was together with——"

"Some brother Chink?"

"No. With Miss Rutter!"

"Ye mean to say that Miss Rutter swears to that?"

"Yes," sighed the detective. "Sez she remembers it most special. Sez Yu Ch'ang comes in, sort o' melancholy-like, and sits by her side without sayin' a woid—up at the settlement house, ye know—and picks up a Bible and reads it like a good lad. Yes—she swears to that ab-so-lu-te-ly—and—well——"

"Saves Yu Ch'ang's yeller neck?"

"Sure. The jury wasn't out five minutes."

There was a pause while Devoy stared moodily into his whisky glass.

Suddenly, Neill leaned across the bar.

"Bill," he asked in a stage whisper, "d'ye think that Miss Rutter—that she and the Chink——?"

The detective shook his head.

"I give up, Brian. I been in Pell Street too long, I guess. Sort o' lost my perspective. Ye see, I would have rather took poison than believe that Miss Rutter was the kind wot——"

"Falls for a yeller boy and perjures herself to save his stinkin' neck?"

"No, no! I won't believe it!" exclaimed Devoy, hurt to the core of his honest, simple heart. "Miss Rutter may be a fool. But—God!—she's square and white and a lady—a real lady——"

"And yet—" he continued after a pause——

"And yet—" he said, years later, speaking to a friend about old days in Pell Street, "there's no doubt but Brian Neill and Danny O'Connor spoke the truth. There ain't a doubt in my mind that Yu Ch'ang croaked the guy. And if it hadn't been for Miss Rutter—why, she swore up and down how Yu Ch'ang sat by her side, sort o' silent and sad, and read the Bible

like a good lad and— Well—I give up! I don't get it!"—and he spat reflectively at a mosquito.

And just about the same time, in the odorous garden of the temple of the Five Rams in far Canton, Yu Ch'ang remarked to his brother priest, abbot Shen Chin, that foreign devils were decidedly odd people, asking either too many questions, or not enough.

"Yes, O wise and older brother," he said, "a thousand questions did they ask me—the judge, the prosecuting attorney, and the police. But there was one they forgot to ask."

"Yes?" gently breathed Shen Chin.

"Indeed. They forgot to ask me if I had, belike, a twin brother, Yu K'wang by name, a twin brother as alike to me as two pebbles the surge of the sea tosses on the yellow beach."

"Yes," he went on after a short pause, "he took the long journey from San Francisco to help me in the little matter. And often since

then has he told me how he enjoyed Miss Rutter's company, sitting by her side, reading the Bible of the foreigners, gently, silently, while I was making my daughter's honour white."

A Simple Act of Piety

His affair that night was prosy. He was intending the murder of an old Spanish woman around the corner, on the Bowery, whom he had known for years, with whom he had always exchanged courteous greetings, and whom he neither liked nor disliked.

He did kill her; and she knew that he was going to the minute he came into her stuffy, smelly shop, looming tall and bland, and yellow, and unearthily Chinese from behind the shapeless bundles of second-hand goods that cluttered the doorway. He wished her good evening in tones that were silvery, but seemed tainted by something unnatural. She was uncertain what it was, and this very uncertainty increased her horror. She felt her hair raise as if drawn by a shivery wind.

At the very last she caught a glimmer of the truth in his narrow-lidded, purple-black eyes. But it was too late.

The lean, curved knife was in his hand and across her scraggy throat—there was a choked gurgle, a crimson line broadening to a crimson smear, a thudding fall—and that was the end of the affair as far as she was concerned.

A minute later Nag Hong Fah walked over to the other end of Pell Street and entered the "Place of Sweet Desire and Heavenly Entertainment." It was the gathering-place for the Chinese-born members of the Nag family, and there he occupied a seat of honour because of his wealth and charity and stout rectitude.

He talked for about half an hour with the other members of his clan, sipping fragrant, sun-dried Formosa tea mixed with jessamine-flowers, until he had made for himself a bullet-proof alibi.

The alibi held.

For he is still at liberty. He is often heard to speak with regret—nor is it hypocritical regret—about the murder of Señora Garcia, the old Spanish woman who kept the shop around the corner. He is a good customer of her nephew, Carlos, who succeeded to her business. Nor does he trade there to atone, in a manner, for the red deed of his hands, but because the goods are cheap.

He regrets nothing. To regret, you must find sin in your heart, while the murder of Señora Garcia meant no sin to him. It was to him a simple action, respectable, even worthy.

For he was a Chinaman, and, although it all happened between the chocolate-brown of the Hudson and the murky, cloudy grey of the East River, the tale is of the Orient. There is about it an atmosphere of age-green bronze; of first-chop *chandoo* and spicy aloe-wood; of gilt, carved statues brought out of India when Confucius was young; of faded embroideries, musty with the scent of the dead centuries.

An atmosphere which is very sweet, very gentle —and very unhuman.

The Elevated roars above. The bluecoat shuffles his flat feet on the greasy asphalt below. But still the tale is of China—and the dramatic climax, in a Chinaman's story, from a Chinaman's slightly twisted angle, differs from that of an American.

To Nag Hong Fah this climax came not with the murder of Señora Garcia, but with Fanny Mei Hi's laugh as she saw him with the shimmering bauble in his hands and heard his appraisal thereof.

She was his wife, married to him honourably and truly, with a narrow gold band and a clergyman and a bouquet of wired roses bought cheaply from an itinerant Greek vendor, and handfuls of rice thrown by facetious and drunken members of both the yellow race and the white.

Of course, at the time of his marriage, a good

many people around Pell Street whispered and gossiped. They spoke of the curling black smoke and slavery and other gorgeously, romantically wicked things. Miss Edith Rutter, the social settlement investigator, spoke of—and to—the police.

Whereas Nag Hong Fah, who had both dignity and a sense of humour, invited them all to his house: gossipers, whisperers, Miss Edith Rutter, and Detective Bill Devoy of the Second Branch, and bade them look to their hearts' content; and whereas they found no opium, no sliding panels, and hidden cupboards, no dread Mongol mysteries, but a neat little steam-heated flat, furnished by Grand Rapids via Fourteenth Street, German porcelain, a case of blond Milwaukee beer, a five-pound humidor of shredded Kentucky burlap tobacco, a victrola, and a fine, big Bible with brass clamp and edges and M. Doré's illustrations.

"Call again," he said, as they were trooping down the narrow stairs. "Call again

any time you please. Glad to have you—aren't we, kid?" chucking his wife under the chin.

"You bet yer life, you fat old yellow sweetness!" agreed Fanny; and then—as a special barbed shaft levelled at Miss Rutter's retreating back: "Say! Any time yer wanta lamp my wedding certificate—it's hangin' between the fottygraphs of the President and the Big Boss—all framed up swell!"

He had met her first one evening in a Bowery saloon, where she was introduced to him by Mr. Brian Neill, the owner of the saloon, a gentleman from out the County Armagh, who had spattered and muddied his proverbial Irish chastity in the slime of the Bowery gutters, and who called himself her uncle.

This latter statement had to be taken with a grain of salt. For Fanny Mei Hi was not Irish. Her hair was golden, her eyes blue. But otherwise she was Chinese—easily nine

tenths of her. Of course she denied it. But that is neither here nor there.

She was not a lady. Couldn't be—don't you see—with that mixed blood in her veins, Mr. Brian Neill acting as her uncle, and the stinking puddles of East-Side vice about her.

But Nag Hong Fah, who was a poet and a philosopher, besides being the proprietor of the Great Shanghai Chop Suey Palace, said that she looked like a golden-haired goddess of evil, familiar with all the seven sins. And he added —this to the soothsayer of his clan, Nag Hop Fat—that he did not mind her having seven, nor seventeen, nor seven times seventeen bundles of sin, as long as she kept them in the sacred bosom of the Nag family.

"Yes," said the soothsayer, throwing up a handful of painted ivory sticks and watching how they fell to see if the omens were favourable. "Purity is a jewel to the silly young. And you are old, honourable cousin——"

"Indeed," chimed in Nag Hong Fah, "I

am old and fat and sluggish and extremely wise. What price is there in purity higher than there is contained in the happiness and contentment of a respectable citizen when he sees men-children playing gently about his knees?"

He smiled when his younger brother, Nag Sen Yat, the opium merchant, spoke to him of a certain Yung Quai.

"Yung Quai is beautiful," said the opium merchant, "and young—and of an honourable clan—and——"

"*And* childless! *And* in San Francisco! *And* divorced from me!"

"But there is her older brother, Yung Long, the head of the Yung clan. He is powerful and rich—the richest man in Pell Street! He would consider this new marriage of yours a disgrace to his face. Chiefly since the woman is a foreigner!"

"She is not. Only her hair and her eyes are foreign."

"Where hair and eyes lead, the call of the

blood follows," rejoined Nag Sen Yat, and he reiterated his warning about Yung Long.

But the other shook his head.

"Do not give wings to trouble. It flies swiftly without them," he quoted. "Too, the soothsayer read in the painted sticks that Fanny Mei Hi will bear me sons. One—perhaps two. Afterward, if indeed it be so that the drop of barbarian blood has clouded the clear mirror of her Chinese soul, I can always take back into my household the beautiful and honourable Yung Quai, whom I divorced and sent to California because she is childless. She will then adopt the sons which the other woman will bear me—and everything will be extremely satisfactory."

And so he put on his best American suit, called on Fanny, and proposed to her with a great deal of dignity and elaborate phrases.

"Sure, I'll marry you," said Fanny. "Sure! I'd rather be the wife of the fattest, yellowest

Chink in New York than live the sorta life I'm livin'—see, Chinkie-Toodles?"

"Chinkie-Toodles" smiled. He looked her over approvingly. He said to himself that doubtless the painted sticks had spoken the truth, that she would bear him men-children. His own mother had been a river-girl, purchased during a drought for a handful of parched grain; and had died in the odour of sanctity, with nineteen Buddhist priests following her gaily lacquered coffin, wagging their shaven polls ceremoniously, and mumbling flattering and appropriate verses from *Chin-Kong-Ching*.

Fanny, on the other hand, though wickedly and lyingly insisting on her pure white blood, knew that a Chinaman is broad-minded and free-handed, that he makes a good husband, and beats his wife rather less often than a white man of the corresponding scale of society.

Of course, gutter-bred, she was aggressively insistent upon her rights.

"Chinkie-Toodles," she said the day before

the wedding, and the gleam in her eyes gave point to the words, "I'm square—see? An' I'm goin' to travel square. Maybe I haven't always been a poifec' lady, but I ain't goin' to bilk yer, get me? But—" She looked up, and suddenly, had Nag Hong Fah known it, the arrogance, the clamourings, and the tragedy of her mixed blood were in the words that followed: "I gotta have a dose of freedom. I'm an American—I'm white—say!"—seeing the smile which he hid rapidly behind his fat hand —"yer needn't laugh, I *am* white, an' not a painted Chinese doll. No sittin' up an' mopin' for the retoin of my fat, yellow lord an' master in a stuffy, stinky, punky five-by-four cage for me! In other woids, I resoive for my little golden-haired self the freedom of asphalt an' electric lights, see? An' I'll play square—as long as you'll play square," she added under her breath.

"Sure," he said. "You are free. Why not? I am an American. Have a drink?" And

they sealed the bargain in a tumbler of Chinese rice whisky, cut with Bourbon, and flavoured with aniseed and powdered ginger.

The evening following the wedding husband and wife, instead of a honeymoon trip, went on an alcoholic spree amid the newly varnished splendours of their Pell Street flat. Side by side, in spite of the biting December cold, they leaned from the open window and brayed an intoxicated pæan at the elevated structure which pointed at the stars like a gigantic icicle stood on end, frozen, austere—desolate, for all its clank and rattle, amid the fragrant, warm reek of China which drifted from shutters and cellar-gratings.

Nag Hong Fah, seeing Yung Long crossing the street, thought with drunken sentimentality of Yung Long's sister whom he had divorced because she had borne him no children, and extended a boisterous invitation to come up.

"Come! Have a drink!" he hiccoughed.

Yung Long stopped, looked, and refused courteously, but not before he had levelled a slow, appraising glance at the golden-haired Mei Hi, who was shouting by the side of her obese lord. Yung Long was not a bad-looking man, standing there in the flickering light of the street lamp, the black shadows cutting the pale-yellow, silky sheen of his narrow, powerful face as clean as with a knife.

"Swell looker, that Chink," commented Fanny Mei Hi as Yung Long walked away; and her husband, the liquor warming his heart into generosity, agreed:

"Sure! Swell looker! Lots of money! Let's have another drink!"

Arrived at the sixth tumbler, Nag Hong Fah, the poet in his soul released by alcohol, took his blushing bride upon his knee and improvised a neat Cantonese love-ditty; but when Fanny awakened the next morning with the sobering suspicion that she had tied herself for life to a

drunkard, she found out that her suspicion was unfounded.

The whisky spree had only been an appropriate celebration in honour of the man-child on whom Nag Hong Fah had set his heart; and it was because of this unborn son and the unborn son's future that her husband rose from his tumbled couch, bland, fat, without headache or heartache, left the flat, and bargained for an hour with Yung Long who was a wholesale grocer, with warehouses in Canton, Manila, New York, San Francisco, Seattle, and Vancouver, British Columbia.

Not a word was said about either Yung Quai or Fanny. The talk dealt entirely with canned bamboo sprouts and preserved leeches, and pickled star-fruit, and brittle almond-cakes. It was only after the price had been decided upon and duly sealed with the right phrases and palm touching palm—after, though nothing in writing had passed, neither party could

recede from the bargain without losing face—that Yung Long remarked, very casually:

"By the way, the terms are cash—spot cash," and he smiled.

For he knew that the restaurant proprietor was an audacious merchant who relied on long credits and future profits, and to whom in the past he had always granted ninety days' leeway without question or special agreement.

Nag Hong Fah smiled in his turn; a slow, thin, enigmatic smile.

"I brought the cash with me," he replied, pulling a wad of greenbacks from his pocket, and both gentlemen looked at each other with a great deal of mutual respect.

"Forty-seven dollars and thirty-three cents saved on the first business of my married life," Nag Hong Fah said to his assembled clan that night at the Place of Sweet Desire and Heavenly Entertainment. "Ah, I shall have a fine, large business to leave to the man-child which my wife shall bear me!"

And the man-child came—golden-haired, blue-eyed, yellow-skinned, and named Brian in honour of Fanny's apocryphal uncle who owned the Bowery saloon. For the christening Nag Hong Fah sent out special invitations—pink cards lettered with virulent magenta and bordered with green forget-me-nots and purple roses, with an advertisement of the Great Shanghai Chop Suey Palace on the reverse side. He also bestowed upon his wife a precious bracelet of cloudy white jade, earrings of green jade cunningly inlaid with blue feathers, a chest of carved Tibetan soapstone, a bottle of French perfume, a pound of Mandarin blossom tea for which he paid seventeen dollars wholesale, a set of red Chinese sables, and a new Caruso record for the victrola.

Fanny liked the last two best; chiefly the furs, which she wore through the whirling heat of an August day as soon as she was strong enough to leave her couch, on an expedition to her native pavements. For she held fast

to her proclaimed right that hers was the freedom of asphalt and electric light—not to mention the back parlour of her uncle's saloon, with its dingy, musty walls covered with advertisements of eminent Kentucky distilleries and the indelible traces of many generations of flies, with its gangrened tables, its battered cuspidors, its commingling atmosphere of poverty and sloth, of dust and stale beer, of cheese sandwiches, wet weeds, and cold cigars.

"Getta hell outa here!" she admonished a red-powdered bricklayer who came staggering across the threshold of the back parlour and was trying to encircle her waist with amatory intent. "I'm a respectable married woman—see?" And then to Miss Ryan, the side-kick of her former riotous spinster days, who was sitting at a corner table dipping her pretty little upturned nose into a foaming schooner: "Take my tip, Mamie, an' marry a Chink! That's the life, believe me!"

Mamie shrugged her shoulders.

"All right for you, Fan, I guess," she replied. "But not for me, Y'see—ye're mostly Chink yerself——"

"I ain't! I ain't! I'm white—wottya mean callin' me a Chink?" And then, seeing signs of contrition on her friend's face: "Never mind. Chinkie-Toodles is good enough for me. He treats me white, all right, all right!"

Nor was this an overstatement of the actual facts.

Nag Hong Fah was good to her. He was happy in the realization of his fatherhood, advertised every night by lusty cries which reverberated through the narrow, rickety Pell Street house to find an echo across the street in the liquor store of the Chin Sor Company, where the members of his clan predicted a shining future for father and son.

The former was prospering. The responsibilities of fatherhood had brought an added zest and tang to his keen, bartering Mongol brain.

Where before he had squeezed the dollar, he was now squeezing the cent. He had many a hard tussle with the rich Yung Long over the price of tea and rice and other staples, and never did either one of them mention the name of Yung Quai, nor that of the woman who had supplanted Yung Quai in the restaurant keeper's affections.

Fanny was honest. She travelled the straight and narrow, as she put it to herself. "Nor ain't it any strain on my feet," she confided to Miss Ryan. For she was happy and contented. Life, after all, had been good to her, had brought her prosperity and satisfaction at the hands of a fat Chinaman, at the end of her fantastic, twisted, unclean youth; and there were moments when, in spite of herself, she felt herself draw into the surge of that Mongol race which had given her nine tenths of her blood—a fact which formerly she had been in the habit of denying vigorously.

She laughed her happiness through the spiced,

warm mazes of Chinatown, her first-born cuddled to her breast, ready to be friends with everybody.

It was thus that Yung Long would see her walking down Pell Street as he sat in the carved window-seat of his store, smoking his crimson-tasselled pipe, a wandering ray of sun dancing through the window, breaking into prismatic colours, and wreathing his pale, serene face with opal vapours.

He never failed to wave his hand in courtly greeting.

She never failed to return the civility.

Some swell looker that Chink. But—Gawd! —she was square, all right, all right!

A year later, after Nag Hong Fah, in expectation of the happy event, had acquired an option on a restaurant farther up-town, so that the second son might not be slighted in favour of Brian, who was to inherit the Great Shanghai Chop Suey Palace, Fanny sent another little cross-breed into the reek and riot of the Pell

Street world. But when Nag Hong Fah came home that night, the nurse told him that the second-born was a girl—something to be entered on the debit, not the credit, side of the family ledger.

It was then that a change came into the marital relations of Mr. and Mrs. Nag Hong Fah.

Not that the former disliked the baby daughter, called Fanny, after the mother. Far from it. He loved her with a sort of slow, passive love, and he could be seen on an afternoon rocking the wee bundle in his stout arms and whispering to her crooning Cantonese fairy-lilts: all about the god of small children whose face is a candied plum, so that the babes like to hug and kiss him and, of course, lick his face with their little pink tongues.

But this time there was no christening, no gorgeous magenta-lettered invitations sent to the chosen, no happy prophecies about the future.

This time there were no precious presents of green jade and white jade heaped on the couch of the young mother.

She noticed it. But she did not complain. She said to herself that her husband's new enterprise was swallowing all his cash; and one night she asked him how the new restaurant was progressing.

"What new restaurant?" he asked blandly.

"The one up-town, Toodles—for the baby——"

Nag Hong Fah laughed carelessly.

"Oh—I gave up that option. Didn't lose much."

Fanny sat up straight, clutching little Fanny to her.

"You—you gave it up?" she asked. "Wot-tya mean—gave it up?"

Then, suddenly inspired by some whisper of suspicion, her voice leaping up extraordinarily strong: "You mean you gave it up—because—because little Fanny is—a *goil?*"

He agreed with a smiling nod.

"To be sure! A girl is fit only to bear children."

He said it without any brutality, without any conscious male superiority; simply as a statement of fact. A melancholy fact, doubtless. But a fact, unchangeable, stony.

"But—but—" Fanny's gutter flow of words floundered in the eddy of her amazement, her hurt pride and vanity. "I'm a woman myself —an' I——"

"Assuredly you are a woman and you have done your duty. You have borne me a son. Perhaps, if the omens be favourable, you will bear me yet another. But this—this girl—" He dismissed little Fanny with a wave of his pudgy dimpled hand as a regrettable accident, and continued, soothingly: "She will be taken care of. Already I have written to friends of our clan in San Francisco to arrange for a suitable disposal when the baby has reached the right age." He said it in his mellow, precise English. He had learned it at a night-school,

where he had been the pride and honour of his class.

Fanny had risen. She left her couch. With a swish-swish of knitted bed-slippers she loomed up in the ring of faint light shed by the swinging petroleum-lamp in the centre of the room. She approached her husband, the baby held close to her heart with her left hand, her right hand aimed at Nag Hong Fah's solid chest like a pistol. Her deep-set, violet-blue eyes seemed to pierce through him.

But the Chinese blood in her veins—shrewd, patient—scotched the violence of her American passion, her American impulse to clamour loudly for right and justice and fairness. She controlled herself. The accusing hand relaxed and fell gently on the man's shoulder. She was fighting for her daughter, fighting for the drop of white blood in her veins, and it would not do to lose her temper.

"Looka here, Chinkie-Toodles," she said. "You call yerself a Christian, don't yer? A

Christian an' an American. Well, have a heart. An' some sense! This ain't China, Toodles. Li'l' Fanny ain't goin' to be weighed an' sold to some rich brother Chink at so many seeds per pound. Not much! She's gonna be eddy-cated. She's gonna have her chance, see? She's gonna be independent of the male beast an' the sorta life wot the male beast likes to hand to a skoit. Believe me, Toodles, I know what I'm talkin' about!"

But he shook his stubborn head. "All has been settled," he replied. "Most satisfactorily settled!"

He turned to go. But she rushed up to him. She clutched his sleeve.

"Yer—yer don't mean it? Yer can't mean it!" she stammered.

"I do, fool!" He made a slight, weary gesture as if brushing away the incomprehensible. "You are a woman—you do not understand——"

"Don't I, though!"

She spoke through her teeth. Her words

clicked and broke like dropping icicles. Swiftly her passion turned into stone, and as swiftly back again, leaping out in a great, spattering stream of abuse.

"Yer damned, yellow, stinkin' Chink! Yer —yer— Wottya mean—makin' me bear children—yer own children—an' then—" Little Fanny was beginning to howl lustily and she covered her face with kisses. "Say, kiddie, it's a helluva dad you've drawn! A helluva dad! Look at him—standin' there! Greasy an' yellow an'— Say—he's willin' to sell yer into slavery to some other beast of a Chink! Say——"

"You are a—ah—a Chink yourself, fool!"

"I ain't! I'm white—an' square—an' decent —an'——"

He lit a cigarette and smiled placidly, and suddenly she knew that it would be impossible to argue, to plead with him. Might as well plead with some sardonic, deaf immensity, without nerves, without heart. And then,

womanlike, the greater wrong disappeared in the lesser.

"Ye're right. I'm part Chink myself—an' damned sorry for myself because of it! An' that's why I know why yer gave me no presents when li'l' Fanny was born. Because she's a goil! As if that was my fault, yer fat, sneerin' slob, yer! Yah! That's why yer gave me no presents—I know! I know what it means when a Chink don't give no presents to his wife when she gives boith to a child! Make me lose face—that's wottya call it, ain't it? An' I thought fer a while yer was savin' up the ducats to give li'l' Fanny a start in life!

"Well, yer got another guess comin'! Yer gonna do wot I tell yer, see? Yer gonna open up that there new restaurant up-town, an' yer gonna give me presents! A bracelet, that's what I want! None o' yer measly Chink jade, either; but the real thing, get me? Gold an' diamonds, see?" and she was still talking as he, unmoved, silent, smiling, left the room and went

down the creaking stairs to find solace in the spiced cups of the Place of Sweet Desire and Heavenly Entertainment.

She rushed up to the window and threw it wide. She leaned far out, her hair framing her face like a glorious, disordered aureole, her loose robe slipping from her gleaming shoulders, her violet eyes blazing fire and hatred.

She shouted at his fat, receding back:

"A bracelet, that's what I want! That's what I'm gonna get, see? Gold an' diamonds! Gold an' diamonds, yer yellow pig, yer!"

It was at that moment that Yung Long passed her house. He heard, looked up, and greeted her courteously, as was his wont. But this time he did not go straight on his way. He looked at her for several seconds, taking in the soft lines of her neck and shoulders, the small, pale oval of her face with the crimson of her broad, generous mouth, the white flash of her small, even teeth, and the blue, sombre orbit of her eyes. With the light of the lamp

shining in back, a breeze rushing in front past the open window, the wide sleeves of her dressing-gown fluttered like immense, rosy butterfly wings.

Instinctively she returned his gaze. Instinctively, straight through her rage and heartache, the old thought came to her mind:

"Swell looker—that Chink!"

And then without realizing what she was doing, her lips had formed the thought into words:

"Swell looker!"

She said it in a headlong and vehement whisper that drifted down, through the whirling reek of Pell Street—sharp, sibilant, like a message.

Yung Long smiled, raised his neat bowler hat, and went on his way.

Night after night Fanny returned to the attack, cajoling, caressing, threatening, cursing.

"Listen here, Chinkie-Toodles——"

But she might as well have tried to argue with the sphinx for all the impression she made on her eternally smiling lord. He would drop his amorphous body into a comfortable rocker, moving it up and down with the tips of his felt-slippered feet, a cigarette hanging loosely from the right corner of his coarse, sagging lips, a cup of lukewarm rice whisky convenient to his elbow, and watch her as he might the gyrations of an exotic beetle whose wings had been burned off. She amused him. But after a while continuous repetition palled the amusement into monotony, and, correctly Chinese, he decided to make a formal complaint to Brian O'Neill, the Bowery saloon keeper who called himself her uncle.

Life, to that prodigal of Erin, was a rather sunny arrangement of small conveniences and small, pleasant vices. He laughed in his throat and called his "nephew" a damned, sentimental fool.

"Beat her up!" was his calm, matter-of-fact

advice. "Give her a good old hiding, an' she'll feed outa yer hand, me lad!"

"I have—ah—your official permission, as head of her family?"

"Sure. Wait. I'll lend ye me black-thorn. She knows the taste of it."

Nag Hong Fah took both advice and black-thorn. That night he gave Fanny a severe beating and repeated the performance every night for a week until she subsided.

Once more she became the model wife, and happiness returned to the stout bosom of her husband. Even Miss Rutter, the social settlement investigator, commented upon it. "Real love is a shelter of unexpugnable peace," she said when she saw the Nag Hong Fah family walking down Pell Street, little Brian toddling on ahead, the baby coddled in her mother's arms.

Generously Nag Hong Fah overlooked his wife's petty womanish vanities; and when she

came home one afternoon, flushed, excited, exhibiting a shimmering bracelet that was encircling her wrist, "just imitation gold an' diamonds, Chinkie-Toodles!" she explained. "Bought it outa my savings—thought yer wouldn't mind, see? Thought it wouldn't hurt yer none if them Chinks hereabouts thinks it was the real dope an' yer gave it to me"—he smiled and took her upon his knee as of old.

"Yes, yes," he said, his pudgy hand fondling the intense golden gleam of her tresses. "It is all right. Perhaps—if you bear me another son—I shall give you a real bracelet, real gold, real diamonds. Meanwhile you may wear this bauble."

As before she hugged jealously her proclaimed freedom of asphalt and electric lights. Nor did he raise the slightest objections. He had agreed to it at the time of their marriage and, being a righteous man, he kept to his part of the bargain with serene punctiliousness.

Brian Neill, whom he chanced to meet

one afternoon in Señora Garcia's second-hand emporium, told him it was all right.

"That beatin' ye gave her didn't do her any harm, me beloved nephew," he said. "She's square. God help the lad who tries to pass a bit o' blarney to her." He chuckled in remembrance of a Finnish sailor who had beaten a sudden and undignified retreat from the back parlour into the saloon, with a ragged scratch crimsoning his face and bitter words about the female of the species crowding his lips. "Faith, she's square! Sits there with her little glass o' gin an' her auld chum, Mamie Ryan—an' them two chews the rag by the hour—talkin' about frocks and frills, I doubt not——"

Of course, once in a while she would return home a little the worse for liquor. But Nag Hong Fah, being a Chinaman, would mantle such small shortcomings with the wide charity of his personal laxity.

"Better a drunken wife who cooks well and washes the children and keeps her tongue

between her teeth, than a sober wife who reeks with virtue and breaks the household pots," he said to Nag Hop Fat, the soothsayer. "Better an honourable pig than a cracked rose bottle."

"Indeed! Better a fleet mule than a ham-strung horse," the other wound up the pleasant round of Oriental metaphors, and he re-enforced his opinion with a chosen and appropriate quotation from the *Fo-Sho-Hing-Tsan-King*.

When late one night that winter a high wind booming from the north and washing the snow-dusted Pell Street houses with its cutting blast, Fanny came home with a jag, a chill, and a hacking cough, and went down with pneumonia seven hours later, Nag Hong Fah was genuinely sorry. He turned the management of his restaurant over to his brother, Nag Sen Yat, and sat by his wife's bed, whispering words of encouragement, bathing her feverish forehead, changing her sheets, administering medicine, doing everything with fingers as soft and deft as a woman's.

Even after the doctor had told him three nights later that the case was hopeless and that Fanny would die—even after, as a man of constructive and practical brain, he had excused himself for a few minutes and had sat down in the back room to write a line to Yung Quai, his divorced wife in San Francisco, bidding her hold herself in readiness and including a hundred dollars for transportation—he continued to treat Fanny Mei Hi with the utmost gentleness and patience.

Tossing on her hot pillows, she could hear him in the long watches of the night breathing faintly, clearing his throat cautiously so as not to disturb her; and on Monday morning—he had lifted her up and was holding her close to help her resist the frightful, hacking cough that was shaking her wasted frame—he told her that he had reconsidered about little Fanny.

"You are going to die," he said placidly, in a way apologetically, "and it is fitting that your daughter should make proper obeisance to your

departed spirit. A child's devotion is best stimulated by gratitude. And little Fanny shall be grateful to you. For she will go to a good American school and, to pay for it, I shall sell your possessions after you are dead. The white jade bracelet, the earrings of green jade, the red sables—they will bring over four thousand dollars. Even this little bauble"—he slipped the glittering bracelet from her thin wrist—"this, too, will bring a few dollars. Ten, perhaps twelve; I know a dealer of such trifles in Mott Street who——"

"Say!"

Her voice cut in, raucous, challenging. She had wriggled out of his arms. An opaque glaze had come over her violet-blue eyes. Her whole body trembled. But she pulled herself on her elbows with a terrible, straining effort, refusing the support of his ready hands.

"Say! How much did yer say this here bracelet's worth?"

He smiled gently. He did not want to hurt

her woman's vanity. So he increased his first appraisal.

"Twenty dollars," he suggested. "Perhaps twenty-one. Do not worry. It shall be sold to the best advantage—for your little daughter ——"

And then, quite suddenly, Fanny burst into laughter—gurgling laughter that shook her body, choked her throat, and leaped out in a stream of blood from her tortured lungs.

"Twenty dollars!" she cried. "Twenty-one! Say, you poor cheese, that bracelet alone'll pay for li'l' Fanny's eddycation. It's worth three thousand! It's real, real—gold an' diamonds! Gold an' diamonds! Yung Long gave it to me, yer poor fool!" and she fell back and died, a smile upon her face, which made her look like a sleeping child, wistful and perverse.

A day after his wife's funeral Nag Hong Fah, having sent a ceremonious letter, called on Yung

Long in the latter's store. In the motley, twisted annals of Pell Street the meeting, in the course of time, has assumed the character of something epic, something Homeric, something almost religious. It is mentioned with pride by both the Nag and the Yung clans; the tale of it has drifted to the Pacific coast; and even in far China wise men speak of it with a hush of reverence as they drift down the river on their painted house-boats in peach-blossom time.

Yung Long received his caller at the open door of his shop.

"Deign to enter first," he said bowing.

Nag Hong Fah bowed still lower.

"How could I dare to?" he retorted, quoting a line from the *Book of Ceremonies and Exterior Demonstrations*, which proved that the manner is the heart's inner feeling.

"*Please* deign to enter first," Yung Long emphasized, and again the other gave the correct reply: "How should I dare?"

Then, after a final request, still protesting, he entered as he was bidden. The grocer followed, walked to the east side of the store, and indicated the west side to his visitor as Chinese courtesy demands.

"Deign to choose your mat," he went on and, after several coy refusals, Nag Hong Fah obeyed again, sat down, and smiled gently at his host.

"A pipe?" suggested the latter.

"Thanks! A simple pipe of bamboo, please, with a plain bamboo mouthpiece and no ornaments!"

"No, no!" protested Yung Long. "You will smoke a precious pipe of jade with a carved amber mouthpiece and crimson tassels!"

He clapped his hands, whereupon one of his young cousins entered with a tray of nacre, supporting an opium-lamp, pipes and needles and bowls, and horn and ivory boxes neatly arranged. A minute later the brown opium cube was sizzling over the open flame, the jade

pipe was filled and passed to Nag Hong Fah, who inhaled the gray, acrid smoke with all the strength of his lungs, then returned the pipe to the boy, who refilled it and passed it to Yung Long.

For a while the two men smoked in silence —men of Pell Street, men of lowly trade, yet men at whose back three thousand years of unbroken racial history, racial pride, racial achievements, and racial calm, were sitting in a solemn, graven row—thus dignified men.

Yung Long was caressing his cheek with his right hand. The dying, crimson sunlight danced and glittered on his well-polished finger-nails.

Finally he broke the silence.

"Your wife is dead," he said with a little mournful cadence at the end of the sentence.

"Yes." Nag Hong Fah inclined his head sadly; and after a short pause: "My friend, it is indeed reasonable to think that young men are fools, their brains hot and crimson with the

blinding mists of passion, while wisdom and calm are the splendid attributes of older men ——"

"Such as—you and I?"

"Indeed!" decisively.

Yung Long raised himself on his elbows. His oblique eyes flashed a scrutinizing look and the other winked a slow wink and remarked casually that a wise and old man must first peer into the nature of things, then widen his knowledge, then harden his will, then control the impulses of his heart, then entirely correct himself—then establish good order in his family.

"Truly spoken," agreed Yung Long. "Truly spoken, O wise and older brother! A family! A family needs the strength of a man and the soft obedience of a woman."

"Mine is dead," sighed Nag Hong Fah. "My household is upset. My children cry."

Yung Long slipped a little fan from his wide silken sleeves and opened it slowly.

"I have a sister," he said gently, "Yung Quai, a childless woman who once was your wife, O wise and older brother."

"A most honourable woman!" Nag Hong Fah shut his eyes and went on: "I wrote to her five days ago, sending her money for her railway fare to New York."

"Ah!" softly breathed the grocer; and there followed another silence.

Yung Long's young cousin was kneading, against the pipe, the dark opium cubes which the flame gradually changed into gold and amber.

"Please smoke," advised the grocer.

Nag Hong Fah had shut his eyes completely, and his fat face, yellow as old parchment, seemed to have grown indifferent, dull, almost sleepy.

Presently he spoke:

"Your honourable sister, Yung Quai, will make a most excellent mother for the children of my late wife."

"Indeed."

There was another silence, again broken by Nag Hong Fah. His voice held a great calmness, a gentle singsong, a bronze quality which was like the soft rubbing of an ancient temple gong, green with the patina of the swinging centuries.

"My friend," he said, "there is the matter of a shimmering bracelet given by you to my late wife——"

Yung Long looked up quickly; then down again as he saw the peaceful expression on the other's bland features and heard him continue:

"For a while I misunderstood. My heart was blinded. My soul was seared with rage. I—I am ashamed to own up to it—I harboured harsh feelings against you. Then I considered that you were the older brother of Yung Quai and a most honourable man. I considered that in giving the bracelet to my wife you doubtless meant to show your appreciation for me, your friend, her husband. Am I not right?"

Yung Long had filled his lungs with another bowlful of opium smoke. He was leaning back, both shoulders on the mat so as the better to dilate his chest and to keep his lungs filled all the longer with the fumes of the kindly, philosophic drug.

"Yes," he replied after a minute or two. "Your indulgent lips have pronounced words full of harmony and reason. Only—there is yet another trifling matter."

"Name it. It shall be honourably solved."

Yung Long sat up and fanned himself slowly.

"At the time when I arranged a meeting with the mother of your children," he said, "so as to speak to her of my respectful friendship for you and to bestow upon her a shimmering bracelet in proof of it, I was afraid of the wagging leaky tongues of Pell Street. I was afraid of scandal and gossip. I therefore met your wife in the back room of Señora Garcia's store, on the Bowery. Since then I have come to the conclusion that perhaps I acted foolishly.

For the foreign woman may have misinterpreted my motives. She may talk, thus causing you as well as me to lose face, and besmirching the departed spirit of your wife. What sayeth the *Li-Ki?* 'What is whispered in the private apartments must not be shouted outside.' Do you not think that this foreign woman should—ah——"

Nag Fong Fah smiled affectionately upon the other.

"You have spoken true words, O wise and older brother," he said rising. "It is necessary for your and my honour, as well as for the honour of my wife's departed spirit, that the foreign woman should not wag her tongue. I shall see to it tonight." He waved a fat, deprecating hand. "Yes—yes. I shall see to it. It is a simple act of family piety—but otherwise without much importance."

And he bowed, left the store, and returned to his house to get his lean knife.

Himself, to Himself Enough

At the shock of noon, as was his habit, Ching Shan rose from his bed, made a vague and sketchy toilette but for the elaborate brushing of his teeth, and crossed into the little front room that caught the hectic, frosty rays of the sun as they shivered through the dome of sooty Pell Street smoke with a certain cosmic energy.

Carefully studying the sky, he picked out from amongst the clouds and the smoke a jagged blotch of pure, smaragdine blue that dimmed into delicate jade where it disappeared behind the contours of the joss temple across the way; as carefully, he stored away the memory of the bit of colour in his tenacious Mongol brain. It was a rite of his, an integral and not unimportant part of his daily search—a deliberate, philosophic, constructive

search—after peace, beauty, long life, and happiness.

"These four are enough for me," he would say in his precise Harvard English to Miss Edith Rutter, the social settlement investigator, when, in the conceited innocence of her heart, she preached to him the message of the gentle Christ. "No. Personally I do not care for unselfishness. It is so immoral. For it takes away from the strong—who should possess the fruits of the earth; and gives to the weak—who should not have anything except, perhaps, the rind. Why? Because they are weak—thus fools."

Turning away from the window, he lit two lotus incense sticks before a hideous, paunchy joss idol with whom he was on terms of tolerant and rather saturnine intimacy, went back to his bedroom, pressed his lips to the rubber tube which led into the kitchen of the Great Shanghai Chop Suey Palace downstairs, and gave his order for breakfast in a gentle singsong:

The same order, day after day.

"A dish of fried noodles. A heaped platter of rice. A handful of dried shrimps. A cup of cloudy-mountain tea. Have the tea served in my Tibetan celadon cup painted with the picture of the Lord Buddha in the *abhaya* pose. For this is Tuesday, and this day last week you made a mistake. You served my tea in the Wednesday cup, the blue Ming cup with the white flowers, thus disturbing the delicate harmonies of my soul. Also my pipe. My bamboo pipe with the black tassels and the Yü-nan jade mouthpiece."

"Listen is obey, O wise and older brother," came the reply of Nag Hong Fah, the restaurant proprietor.

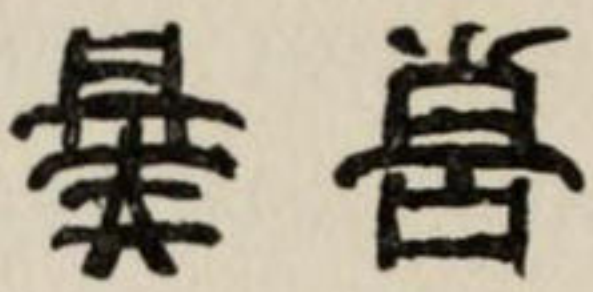
"Very well."

After which Ching Shan, while waiting for his food, sat down at his writing desk, unrolled a scroll of creamy vellum, dipped pointed brush into thick black ink, and continued the ode at which he had been working for over a year.

It was an ode against an enemy of his youth, a certain Kwang Ch'i-ch'ao, governor of Canton, whom he called in his poem *Hun-te-kung*, or "The Duke of Confused Virtues"—well-meaning bungler, in other words.

By a curious twist of Chinese ideographic writing, each stanza wound up with the characters of Ching Shan's own name.

Thus:



But the two characters, taken in connection with the two preceding ones, were read and pronounced in an entirely different manner, quite untranslatable and, from a Chinese point of view, delightfully humorous. Read this way, they reflected grievously on the governor's honour and, since the man died twenty years earlier, would cause his spirit to lose a great deal of face.

Ten minutes later, P'i Hsiao, the hunchback, who did odd bits of work for the restaurant proprietor, came in with food, opium, lamp,

and needle, and Ching Shan closed his writing desk with a sigh of satisfaction.

He was conscious of a warm glow of happiness as he beheld the hunchback's twisted features and contorted limbs.

"Put down the tray," he said, in his gentle, gliding accents. "Over there, P'i Hsiao. Wait, though. In the future I shall call you I-Ho Yüan, an exquisite jest which you, as a Pekingese, will appreciate and savour. For I-Ho Yüan is the name of the Summer Palace in the Imperial City being thus named after a sentence in the *Book of Rites and Honourable Outer Observances* which means 'to give rest and peace to Heaven-sent old age.' And, whenever I see you, I feel rest and peace. For everything in life goes by contrast, and here am I, fifty years of age, rich and healthy and satisfied with life and what life has brought me, and there are you, a mean, poor, stinking, tainted pimple of a man. I am jade, precious and green, while you are alabaster, brittle and ugly and

useless, and it was the Philosopher of the province of Lou, speaking one day to Tzeu-Kong, who explained why jade is beloved by the wise, and alabaster is not. Yes. A most charming thought of the worthy Nag Hong Fah to have my breakfast served by a hunchback. I shall send him a chest of mandarin blossom tea for the New Year. Now go, O Not Wanted!"

And he sat down to his meal, sipping his tea noisily and using his fingers instead of his nacre-inlaid ivory chopsticks.

"For," to quote his own words, "good manners are only a contrasting foil for the awkwardnesses of youth. To youth the world looks for good manners, as a peasant looks for the harvest of glutinous millet in the first month of autumn. But old age, being careless of the world's opinion, can afford the splendid elevation of thoroughly bad manners. I know it. I have thought about it. I have thought left, and thought right."

The whole—from the studying of the noon sky to the burning of the incense sticks, from the baiting of P'i Hsiao to the noisy tea sipping—was a ceremony to Ching Shan; it was a daily episode, a rite, a quintessence of proper habits which he performed and solemnized with the heavily hierarchal irony of a claret-robed Tibetan monk declaiming the *prajna paramita*, the fictitious Buddhist gospel on Transcendental Wisdom, before the altar.

Yes! A ceremony, almost beautiful to his Chinese mind!

And he had performed it daily, without the slightest variation, since his fortieth birthday, ten years earlier, when he had given up his Broadway office and his great apartments on Riverside Drive and had moved to Pell Street—that tenacious, tough-fibred slab of Cantonese excretion which is flung over the New York East Side like saturnine dung; that self-centred, passively inimical and entirely supercilious

Asiatic alluvium which, in spite of Kearney, California, and the Exclusion Act, squats flaccid, obese, but sublimely obstinate amongst the White Man's hysterical skyscrapers that close it on all sides like a tide of carved stone.

He had lived on Riverside Drive for business reasons. Now, retired, with no pursuit in life except that of peace, beauty, long life, and happiness, he preferred to herd with his own people. Pell Street, the White Man called it and cursed its reek and dirt; but Ching Shan, who for a couple of decades had moved in the White Man's best social and commercial circles, called it the Street of the Thousand and Three Beatitudes, and praised its rich flavour.

Breakfast over, he smoked his first pipe—"the honourable pipe of august beginning," he called it—just a miniature cylinder of amber-colored opium held over the lamp, fizzling, dissolving, evaporating, the bowl filled, the

acrid smoke inhaled at one breath; and he proceeded with his daily routine.

He walked over to the large mirror on the opposite wall of the room.

Gravely he gazed in the glass, standing a little sideways and looking over his shoulder, following the contours of his face, the outlines of his figure, the high arch of his tiny, velvet-slippered feet.

Ching Shan was pleased with himself—as he was every morning.

After all, he thought, he had not aged during the preceding night—his skin was smooth and satiny with hardly a wrinkle; his lips showed full and red beneath the drooping moustache; his hair was thick and glossy and delicately sprinkled with white; his body was strong and well-fleshed.

Too—and this was the final and most important summary of himself which the mirror gave him, no less than the gentle glow in his soul—he was tranquil, utterly without nerves, of

a subtle philosophic calm that was a constructive achievement born of adroit, wire-drawn habit and mental diet:

Peace, beauty, long life, and happiness!

Peace of the body, and peace of the soul.

"For," said Ching Shan, quoting the words of the Tso Chuan, "the upper and lower jaws mutually assist each other; if the lips shrivel, then must the teeth catch cold."

Years ago, ten years to be exact, and, to be more exact still, at half-past eleven in the evening, five minutes after the pretentious door of his Riverside Drive apartment had closed on Calhoun Allen, his best American friend, and Sarah, the latter's sister, he had bid a slightly pathetic farewell to the days of his exuberant youth and his ripe, achieving manhood which had been shot through with the prismatic diffractions of adventure and excitement; not only in business, since he had been a very successful merchant and, by the same token, a

cool-headed gambler, but also socially, since there was no doubt of his breeding and education—he was a Harvard graduate *summa cui laude*—and since, even from an Occidental viewpoint, he was considered good-looking in a heavy, rather arrogant way. Thus, more than one woman had smiled upon him with pleasure—and a certain nervous expectancy.

But, congenitally fastidious as well as quite unselfconsciously conscious of the fact that, while at times the White Woman, having nothing to apprehend from racial competition, has no racial prejudice, the White Man, having a great deal to apprehend, nearly always has, and knowing that his business success was importantly dependent upon his American friends' good will, he had never fulfilled the expectancy that had smiled to him from grey eyes and blue and brown—until he had met Sarah Allen, his good friend Calhoun Allen's sister, a woman of thirty with that strange, haunting loveliness which refuses to centre itself on one particular

point, the sort of beauty which is no abstract beauty in itself, but an impression of beauty. New England she was, with just that little, tiny *Mayflower* hypocrisy, that peculiar, evasive, and unconscious hypocrisy which rhymes with lettuce sandwiches and Hawthorne and mince pie. She had fits of Christian inhibition, as well as fits of shouting, resolute paganism.

Almost at sight, she and Ching Shan had fallen in love with each other.

Why?

Impossible to say.

Perhaps, since he was of the East, Eastern, and she of the West, Western, in spite of the fact that they had nothing in common, culturally, traditionally, and civilizationally; perhaps because of that same fact.

At all events, they had met; and they had loved. For, while there are times when life is only acted psychology and other times when it seems an illogical deduction killed by a crassly logical fact, there are finally those rare and

grey-misted moments when life is just nilly-willy submission.

Ching Shan, being an Oriental, had submitted without even trying to analyse the Why and Wherefore; she, being New England, had analysed—*and* submitted; and, a week later, Ching Shan invited Calhoun and Sarah Allen to help him celebrate his fortieth birthday.

Over coffee and cigarettes, he had asked Calhoun Allen for Sarah's hand in marriage and, although a sodden, shivering pall of silence had followed upon his low: "I love your sister, Allen. She loves me. I want her to be my wife," there had been no scene at first. For, while good breeding is differently standardized in America and China, meaning in the former country a certain spiritual aloofness blended with intellectual sympathy and in the latter a blending of rigorous etiquette with incongruously brutal frankness, they were both gentlemen; and thus Allen, carefully impersonal, had marshalled his reasons, biological, theologi-

cal, and historical, why he was utterly opposed to intermarriage between the Yellow and the White, while Ching Shan, carefully personal, had refuted the other's argument point for point.

Both had been perfectly good-humoured until, suddenly, a word—a fleeting, negligible word, and afterwards it had made no difference what it had been nor who had spoken it—had destroyed the delicate equilibrium; and, on the spur of the moment, there two representatives of the White and the Yellow, gentlemen both, friends, had crystallized in their hearts all the hatred, contempt, and disgust the two races have felt for each other since the world began.

Suddenly, the old racial mistrust and repulsion had whispered to them in a language of dread stillness; with dull, muffled throbbings; with the shadows of creeping, unspeakable thoughts bursting up from the abyss of dead souls.

They had looked at each other, as wolf looks at grey-wolf. They had tried to search each other's souls. One wrong word, one wrong gesture, a smile, wrongly interpreted—and these two immaculate, meticulous gentlemen in evening dress would have been at each other's throats, primevally biting and clawing.

Finally, Ching Shan had risen, walked over to the window, and had looked out into the night where the moon was flickering out behind a racing cloud drift like a spent candle, while Calhoun Allen had turned to his sister who had sat there, dry-eyed, trembling, silent, the tension of various emotions oddly mingled in her face and giving it an expression that was ludicrous straight through the horror.

He had spoken a dozen words—no more—and her love had not been able to stand up against her brother's chilly, withering contempt. Still silent, with wooden, jerky movements, she had accompanied her brother out of the

room, into the outer hall, had picked up her wraps, had stepped across the threshold.

There she had turned to the Chinaman who had followed them.

"Ching!" she had said in a choked voice. "I—I love you. I shall never forget you. Perhaps—some day—I—shall——"

And Ching Shan's words had cut through hers like a knife:

"Would I drag for the moon reflected in the water? Would I keep meat on trust with the jackal? Would I look for love and friendship and loyalty in the heart of——"

Suddenly his voice had peaked to a cracked screech:

"God damn you—God damn you and yours!"

Then the door had clanked shut on Sarah and Calhoun Allen, and he had been alone.

He had prepared and lit an opium pipe, the first in twenty years, and, five minutes later, his mind had been made up.

"Peace!" he had said to the purple night sky. "There is no Calhoun Allen. There is no Sarah Allen. There is no White Man. I doubt that there is a Chinaman. There is only Ching Shan, the individual. There is no friendship, no love, no enmity, no hatred. There is only my own body, my own soul, my own heart. There is only myself—to myself enough, for myself enough."

And so, on his fortieth birthday, he had, to quote his own words, given up vigorously threshing mere straw. He had left his apartment and sold his business at a considerable loss which he had nowise regretted; he had prudently swept his mind and thoughts and conscience free of everything except the cult of peace, beauty, long life, and happiness.

"The highest heights of love and friendship and loyalty and unselfishness and ambition," he would say to Miss Edith Rutter, the social settlement investigator, "are nothing except

inane limbos created by one's own imagination. Useless, tinkly things. Bad for the nerves, bad for man's happiness, bad for man's digestion—a Trinity which holds to me a sounder truth than the one mentioned in Buddha's Diamond Sutra, or your own worthy New Testament."

Today his life was an exquisite mosaic of gentle but steely habits, logically calculated, fitted into each other, and carried out with the intention of making every minute a guarantee for the quiet happiness of the entire day. With ruthless single-mindedness, he had arranged all his daily acts, from the moment of rising to his final pipe in the back room of Nag Hong Fah's restaurant known as the Honourable Pavilion of Tranquil Longevity, where he was a passive listener and onlooker, silent, self-contained, and much respected by the Pell Street aristocracy.

He looked at his watch. It was a little after one. Time for his second pipe, and then a

leisurely stroll across Chatham Square, through the East Side, and over to the North River. Yesterday the sun had been wonderful; had misted the rippling waves with golden, purple-nicked gauze. Doubtless today, too, he would be able to find some beautiful nuance of colour. Perhaps glaucous green. He loved glaucous green. It was so peaceful.

He smiled—and turned, a little annoyed, when he heard the buzzing of the rubber tube that led into the Great Shanghai Chop Suey Restaurant.

Nag Hong Fah had his orders for everything. That was what he paid him for. What did he want of him? Why did he——?

"*Zzt-zzt-zzt*"—zummed the buzzer, and Ching Shan crossed the room and pressed his mouth against the orifice.

"What is it, grandfather of a skillet?" he asked in a low, even, passionless voice, careful not to excite himself.

But Nag Hong Fah's thick accents were preg-

nant with perturbation and, too, with curiosity.

"A woman!" his answer drifted up. "A woman to see you, O wise and older brother!"

"A—what?"

"A woman to see you! A foreign devil! A white woman! Her name is——wait!"

Ching Shan could hear Nag Hong Fah's staccato, stuttering English, and a woman's softly slurred reply, then again the former speaking through the tube in Chinese:

"Her name is Sa-lah! Can you hear, Worthiness? Sa-lah Allen! She says she must see you, speak to you at once. She says that——"

"Wait!"

For the fleeting fraction of a moment, Ching Shan was undecided. For the fleeting fraction of a moment, he wondered, speculated. Sarah! Sarah Allen! The woman he had loved, who had been like incense in his heart, who had been to him the breath of all things!

What did she want? Why had she come here? Did she want to——?

"Ho! Nag Hong Fah!" he called down.

"Yes?"

"Tell her to——wait, wait!"

He paused, shivered a little. He was afraid to speak to her, afraid to find out what she wanted, afraid to have her jar the delicate and precise equilibrium of his daily life.

Why——

The door opened, and P'i Hsiao entered, with the second pipe of the day, a long ivory affair with a rose crystal mouthpiece and silver tassels; and, suddenly, Ching Shan made his decision.

Here was his pipe, his walk to follow, his search for a bit of glaucous green colour. Here was his daily life, minutely arranged, minutely dovetailed. Here were peace, beauty, long life, and happiness. Here was he himself, to himself enough.

He pressed the rubber tube against his lips:

"Nag Hong Fah!"

"Yes, O wise and older brother?"

"Tell the woman I do not recall her."

And he turned to the hunchback who stood waiting, pipe in hand.

"Great Pimple!" he said. "Consider yourself—and myself! Consider that peace, beauty, long life, and happiness are——"

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