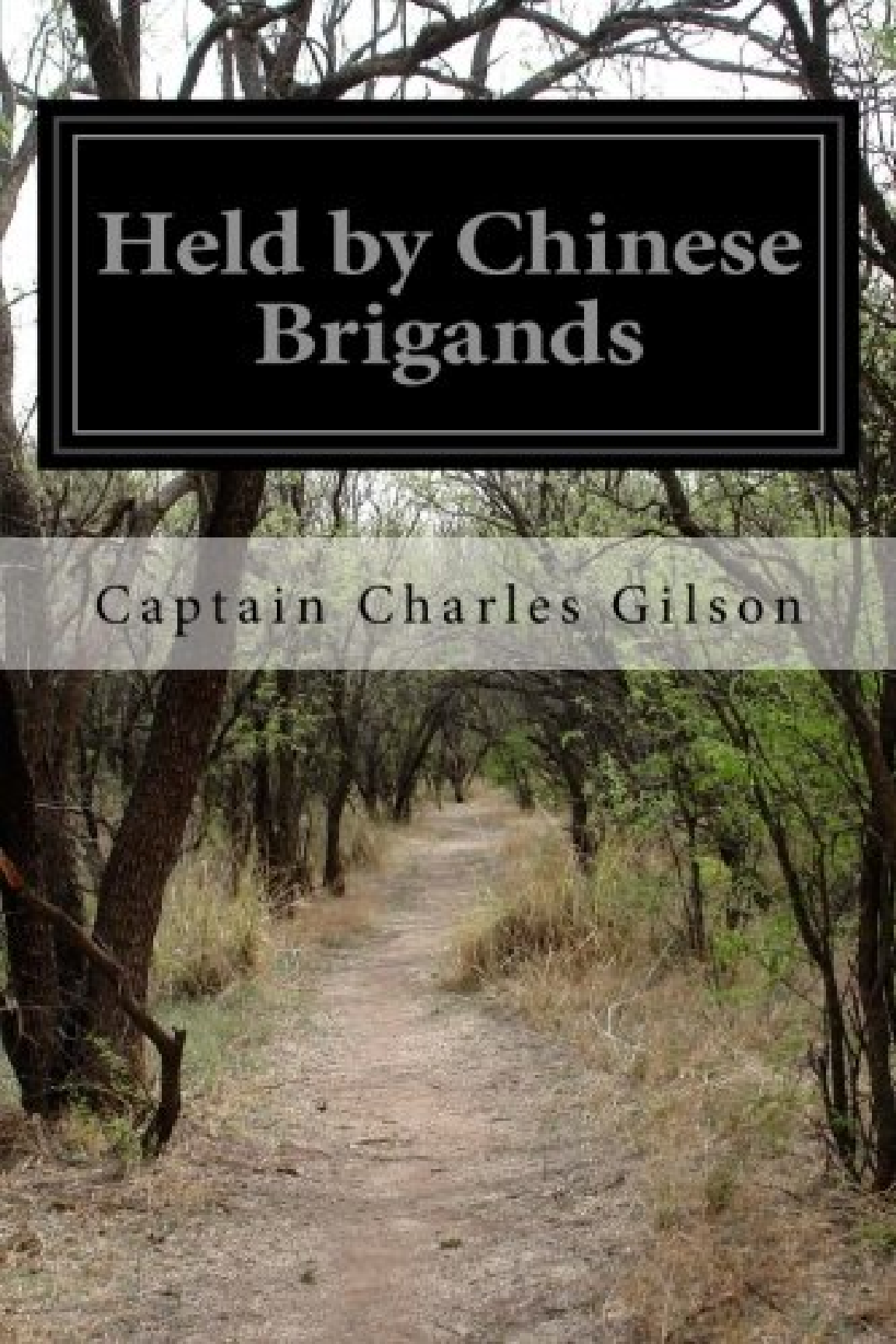

Held by Chinese Brigands
Captain Charles Gilson

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Cover art



"'I AM CHEONG-CHAU,' HE CRIED." [*See page 63.*

*"'I AM CHEONG-CHAU,'
HE CRIED." See page 63.*

HELD BY CHINESE BRIGANDS

BY

CAPTAIN CHARLES GILSON

ILLUSTRATED BY

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To
BARBARA PARTRIDGE

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"There came a roar like that of a charging lion"

"He himself was hurled after it"

CHAPTER I--HOW HENNESSY K. WALDRON "TRIPPED AROUND"

We have heard it said, by those who are widely travelled, that there are three beautiful harbours in the world: Rio de Janeiro, in Brazil; Sydney Harbour, and--most beautiful of all--the harbour of Hong-Kong.

The famous Peak rises above the town of Victoria and, at a height of about two thousand feet, buries its crest in the clouds. The harbour itself is in the shape of a crescent, enclosing the red, bare hills of Kow-lung. By day, from Lyemun to Stonecutter's Island, ferry-boats, *sampans*, *wupans* and launches scurry here and there, in and out among the great anchored men-of-war, like so many mice romping in a cage of sleeping tigers.

The slopes of the mountain are green with palm-trees, mango, orange and lichen, in the midst of which can be seen innumerable white, flat-roofed villas, each with its upper-story verandah and green-latticed windows. To the east the hills are more rugged; streams, traced through the glens by straggling brushwood, descend in a succession of waterfalls to the level of the sea. In the Pass of Lyemun the traveller finds himself in the midst of an

inhospitable grandeur, similar to that of the western Scottish isles.

It is, however, by night that Hong-Kong Harbour is at its best. With a sky of a million stars, and the pale, round China moon hanging like a lantern in the midst of the heavens, reflecting its light upon the surface of the dark, tranquil water, the moving lights upon the *sampans* and the countless lanterns in the streets of China town, this place is surely one of the most romantic in the world. Here the Far East and the West touch; it is the one place in all China where the foothold of the European is secure.

Upon this beautiful island, with its rugged hills and feathery palms, the white man stands, under his own flag--as it were, upon the very threshold of the mysterious, eternal "Middle Kingdom." Over the way, to the north-west, is the great estuary of the Canton river, the Chau-kiang--the main trade highway of the south. Canton itself, a city of two and a half million inhabitants, lies at the junction of three rivers, which meet almost at right angles: the first flowing from the east, the second from the north, and the third--and greatest---from the west. Canton is a city of mysteries and marvels; it is a city of many industries, insufferable heat, intolerable smells, and almost unbelievable devilry and crime.

The whole of the great province of Kwangsi and the eastern portion of Yunnan is drained by the West River and its hundreds of tributaries. These

tributaries for the most part find their sources upon the watershed of the Nan-ling Mountains, which extend from the Tung-ting Lake to the city of Kin-yuen, a distance of over five hundred miles.

Of that great stretch of country little or nothing is known. Thanks to the early Jesuit explorers, we are provided with excellent maps. But a map is no more than a coloured piece of paper which--at the best--is backed with linen. Names in themselves convey nothing. Though you study the map of China for a fortnight you will know less of the Si-kiang, or West River, than the naval lieutenant who ran his gunboat past Wu-chau, and blew the mud huts of a pirate village into a dust-heap with the pound-and-a-half shells of his Maxim-Nordenfeldt. For, if to this day there are wild men anywhere upon the face of the earth, who know neither mercy nor pity nor the laws of God or man, they are to be found in the tract of country that lies between the West River and the Nan-ling Mountains to the north. And thither we are about to journey, into the midst of a land that is by no means a wilderness, but which is populated for the most part by peaceable, hard-working peasants.

There are, however, certain members of the community who are neither peaceable nor industrious, who care no more for the gunboats of His Britannic Majesty upon the wide reaches of the river than they do for the *yamen* of the Viceroy of Canton, who so terrorise the province that each

honest man knows that it is more than his life is worth to give information against them.

The chiefs of these pirates or brigands are, as often as not, highly educated Chinese, sometimes entitled to wear the blue or red button of a mandarin. They hold sway by dint of their cruelty and their cunning.

Such a man was Cheong-Chau, whose headquarters were established in the town of Kong-chin, at the foot of the mountains. Thence he and his men were wont to descend to Pinglo, where they would board a sea-going junk, in which they would steal past Wu-chau to Canton, and thence to the open sea, to rob fishing-junks and sometimes even cargo ships. If they passed a gunboat or destroyer upon the broad waters of the estuary they were simple fishermen, on a cruise to Macao or Amoy. But under their fishing nets and tackle was always a veritable armoury of blood-curdling cutlasses and knives.

For the time being we will leave this cutthroat resting on his ill-gotten wealth, dazed from opium in a filthy den in the city of Pinglo, and return to the sublime and tranquil beauty of the harbour of Hong-Kong. There we are to meet a gentleman of appearance more personable, and personality more engaging, than the redoubtable Cheong-Chau. We refer to Mr Hennessy K. Waldron, of Paradise City, Nevada, U.S.A.

Mr Waldron was engaged upon what he termed

a "trip around." He had made a pile of money out of cattle, silver, a patent egg-whisk, and pigs. His "trip around" had already lasted two and a half years. He had been to London, Paris, Switzerland, and Venice. He knew the height of the dome of St Paul's Cathedral, the number of bricks in the Mont Cenis tunnel, and the names of all the famous Venetian painters. He had gazed at the Pyramids, he had contemplated the Coliseum, and standing upon the Bridge of Sighs in Venice, he had quoted Byron, sentimentalising over the narrow stretch of water that divides the Doges' Palace from the gloomy dungeon to the right.

And wherever Hennessy K. Waldron had been he had been well received. Before leaving New York he had taken the precaution of arming himself with so many letters of introduction to influential persons in all parts of the world that he was obliged to carry them about with him in a large tin-lined box. He had not been two hours in Hong-Kong before he had called upon his Excellency the Governor, *Sir* John Macintosh--with the accent, according to Mr Waldron, on the "Sir."

He had also a letter from the British Ambassador in Washington to Sir Thomas Armitage, the Chief Justice of the Colony, upon whose verandah he was now seated, with his legs sprawled out in front of him, a Manila cheroot in the corner of his mouth and a whisky-and-soda at his elbow. Hennessy K.

Waldron believed in "tripping around" in comfort.

"Judge," said he, "I've scheduled Hong-Kong for a six weeks' stay. Calculate I can do South China in that time?"

Sir Thomas smiled and shook his head.

"Mr Waldron," he replied, "you can't 'do' South China in six years, and you'll know precious little about it even at the end of sixty."

"Waal, I guess I'm not slow in the uptake. I can run my eye over the Tower of London, the Matterhorn, or the Louvre, in less time than a New York elevator would take to conduct you to the thirteenth story of the Flat Iron Building. And, sir, I'm speaking of things I know. Guess I've got face value out of every dollar's worth of shoe leather I ever purchased, or I never knew the difference between glue and honey."

"That may very well be," said the judge, "but there is so much about China to learn, so much that is confusing, and even contradictory, that I must confess, even after thirty years in the country, I know very little about it."

"Reckon," observed Mr Waldron, "the lingo would twist the tongue of a rattlesnake. I'm not referring to that."

"Whilst you are in China," asked Sir Thomas, "what is it, Mr Waldron, you most desire to see?"

For some moments Mr Hennessy K. Waldron appeared to be deep in thought. It was as if he

considered the question worthy of earnest consideration.

"Temples," said he, at last. "Judge, I'm just crazy on temples."

"It so happens," said Sir Thomas Armitage, "that I'm interested in the same subject. For many years I have made a study of the religions of China--a vast, and to me an absorbing subject, upon which I am writing a book."

"Waal, now," exclaimed Mr Waldron, "that's very interesting, Judge. I always understood the Chink worships the spirits of his ancestors, and that's about as far as he gets."

"That is by no means correct," said the judge. "There are many religions in China. The upper classes are, practically without exception, Confucianists. It is true Confucianism is scarcely a religion; it is a system of moral philosophy which, however, serves its purpose. There are few Mohammedans in China, though great numbers of Buddhists--Chinese Buddhism differing in several interesting particulars from the corruption of the religion which exists to-day in India. However, the great bulk of the people, especially in the rural districts, are Taoists. Taoism is extremely difficult to understand, and even harder to explain. The original Taoist doctrine was a philosophy of fatalism; it has deteriorated, however, into a belief in evil spirits, alchemy, black magic, and so forth. Taoism and

Buddhism have become confused; in the Taoist temples images can be seen of Buddha and his disciples."

"Guess that's what I want to see," cut in Mr Waldron.

The judge was silent a moment.

"I am about to undertake a long and somewhat arduous journey," he continued. "I have had a great deal of work of late, and am taking a six weeks' vacation. In pursuit of my hobby I intend to journey up the West River, to visit a very famous and ancient Taoist temple, situated in the hills, not far from the town of Pinglo. If you would like to accompany me, Mr Waldron, I am sure I shall be delighted. I warn you, however, that it will be no picnic. The heat will be excessive--for the summer is here--and we shall be called upon to undergo certain inconveniences and even hardships."

"Sir," exclaimed the American, "I began life as a cow-puncher in Texas. I have consorted, in the course of my career, with Mexican caballeros, bar tenders and pugilists. I'm not likely to get cold feet at the sight of a mosquito or a heathen god."

The judge laughed, and rose to his feet. Mr Waldron knocked the ash from the end of his cigar.

The moonlit harbour lay immediately beneath them. The mast-head signalling-lights upon the anchored cruisers winked their dots and dashes from one to the other. The round Chinese lanterns upon

the *sampans* moved restlessly, like fire-flies, upon the dark surface of the water. Somewhere, to the right, in the midst of the trees, a military band was playing; now and again they caught the strains of *Light Cavalry* or *The Pilgrim's March*, from *Tannhäuser*. To the left, the flaming lights in the streets of the Chinese quarter threw their reflection upon the dark foliage of the palms and orange-trees on the slopes of Mount Davis. Strange two-stringed instruments and shrill Chinese voices, heard faintly in the distance, conveyed to Mr Hennessy K. Waldron the impression that he was thousands of miles away from Paradise City.

"That's settled, then," said the judge. "We travel together, Mr Waldron. I shall be delighted to have the pleasure of your company."

"Judge," said Mr Waldron, "the pleasure is mine, sure. If it's temples, I'm your man. If there's going to be danger, I carry a six-shooter; and I can handle a gun as well as any."

"I trust," said the other, "that no such necessity will arise. However, in the region of the Nan-ling Mountains anything may happen. I myself will go unarmed."

At that moment a boy of about sixteen years of age entered the verandah from the dimly lighted drawing-room beyond, where he had been seated for some time engrossed in a book. Though he was a good-looking and well-built lad, he had the yellow

complexion similar to that of the Chinese themselves, which sooner or later comes to every European who has lived for any length of time in the Far East.

"Are you talking about your journey up the West River, uncle?" he asked, with his eyes upon the heavy Colt revolver that Mr Waldron had produced from the hip-pocket of his trousers.

"Yes," said Sir Thomas. "Mr Waldron has agreed to come with me. I have promised him that the expedition will be full of interest."

"I am going too?" asked the boy.

The judge laid a hand upon his nephew's shoulder. "I believe," said he, "that was arranged. Here, Mr Waldron," he added, turning to the American, "is our interpreter. I have studied the Chinese language all my life and can speak a little in the Mandarin dialect. But Frank is lucky. He learnt the language from his amah, or Chinese nurse. He could talk Cantonese before he knew fifty words of English. When I am travelling on the mainland I always take Frank with me. The Chinese are extraordinary people. If you speak their language badly they will not attempt to understand you, but Frank can talk the Southern dialect as well as the peasants themselves."

"I'm in luck's way," observed Mr Waldron. "In the old days in Texas, if I was prospecting for gold, I struck oil; if I was looking for oil, I found gold. That's how I made my pile. I guess there're not many globe-

trotters who get such an opportunity of leaving the beaten track, of seeing China from the inside. And, Judge, I'm no good on the stump, but let me tell you, sir, I appreciate the honour; and if ever you find yourself in Paradise City, Nevada, U.S.A., you'll find my name a free pass to anything that's going, from a ten-cent circus to a pocketful of cigars. And that's a bargain, Judge."

Whilst Mr Waldron was expressing, in his own peculiar fashion, his sense of obligation, there appeared, in the shadows of the room that gave upon the verandah, a tall, dark-eyed Cantonese servant, a man of about thirty years of age, with a black glistening pigtail which reached almost to his knees.

Wearing soft, felt-soled shoes, he glided across the room as noiselessly and as stealthily as a cat. At the casement window he caught sight of the shining barrels of Mr Waldron's nickel-plated revolver. And at once he disappeared--behind a curtain.

"And now, Judge, may I ask when you intend to start?" asked the American.

"In a week's time," said Sir Thomas. "That will give you a few days in which to see the sights of Hong-Kong. Bring no more baggage than one man can carry. We are going into a country where there are no roads, only a few footpaths between the ricefields. And above all, Mr Waldron, I must request you to say nothing about it to anyone. Our destination must remain a secret. I do not trust even

my own personal attendants."

"Your wishes will be obeyed, Judge," said Mr Waldron. "But may I ask, sir, why these precautions are essential?"

"They are not essential," said the judge, "but I think you will agree with me they are wise when I tell you that the West River abounds with pirates, and there are several gangs of Chinese bandits in the Nan-ling Mountains, especially in the neighbourhood where we are going. The town of Pinglo has an exceptionally bad reputation. You yourself, Mr Waldron, are a wealthy man, and I have a position of some importance in this colony. It might be well worth the while of some rascal who is in touch with the West River pirates to give information against us."

"I get your meaning, Judge," said Mr Waldron, returning his revolver to his hip-pocket. "I'm as dumb as a dewberry pie. And now I must get back to my hotel. Good-night, and, sir, I'm pleased and honoured to have met you."

"One moment," said the judge. "Let me send for a ricksha. I am afraid my own chair coolies have gone to bed."

Sir Thomas entered the drawing-room, unconscious of the fact there was a man not five paces away from him hiding behind the curtain. He rang a small bronze hand-bell and returned to the verandah.

The man behind the curtain dropped down upon his hands and knees, and keeping in the shade of the various chairs and tables he gained the door, opened it, and passed through silently.

Two seconds afterwards he re-entered, standing at his full height, with an expression of profound dignity, even of contempt, upon every feature of his face.

He closed the door with a bang, marched with a stately stride across the room, and presented himself at the window.

"Master rang," said he.

"Yes," said Sir Thomas. "Yung How, please order a ricksha for Mr Waldron, to take him to the King Edward Hotel."

The man bowed--if an almost imperceptible downward movement of the head may be so described.

"Yes, master," said he.

Stepping upon the verandah, he picked up the empty glass which had contained Mr Waldron's whisky-and-soda. Holding this in his hand, as if it were something sacramental, Yung How stalked gravely from the room.

That night, tossing restlessly upon his bed in the stifling heat of the breathless tropic night, Mr Hennessy K. Waldron, of Paradise City, Nev., dreamed of heathen gods.

CHAPTER II--OF AH WU'S OPIUM DEN

The small river-launch steamed away from the narrow creek which divides Canton city from the island of Shamien. The Chinaman at the wheel navigated the little craft into the very midst of the clustered shipping, the mass of junks and river-boats that thronged the entrance to the creek. Her prow cutting the water in a long, arrow-shaped, feathery wave, the launch gained the fairway of the main river, and thence worked up-stream. Seated in a comfortable chair in the bows, a cigar in his mouth and a pair of field-glasses in his hand, was Mr Hennessy K. Waldron, of Paradise City, Nevada, U.S.A.

Sir Thomas Armitage drew a basket-chair into the shade afforded by an awning. There he produced his spectacles and, opening a book, settled himself to read. His nephew, with his coat off and his sleeves rolled up, was occupied with an oil-bottle in the little engine-room.

In the stern of the launch stood Yung How, with folded arms. His dark face was expressionless. For all that, his eyes were fixed upon the northern bank of the river, where the houses of the city were so close-

packed that a man standing with outstretched arms in one of the narrow streets could have touched with his finger-tips the walls on either side.

At the extremity of one of these dark, stifling lanes stood a Chinaman, wearing a faded scarlet coat. This man was an old man, with a grey tuft of hair upon his chin, and a queue that was white and short and thin as a monkey's tail. He stood motionless, shading his eyes with the palm of a hand and looking out across the river. As the launch hove into sight he drew back a little, hiding himself in the doorway of an adjacent house. The launch passed within fifty yards of the shore.

He observed Mr Waldron and he observed Sir Thomas Armitage, who was engrossed in his reading. Moreover, he observed Yung How, who slowly raised his right hand and laid it upon the shaven forepart of his head.

At that the man disappeared. He vanished into the gloom of an even narrower side street. Five minutes afterwards he appeared in the open space on the western side of the Temple of the Gods. Here a coolie was standing, holding the bridle of a thick-necked, short-legged Mongolian pony, of the breed common in the north of China but seldom seen in the south. The man with the faded scarlet coat flung himself into the saddle.

"It is the West River!" he cried, and he was off like the wind, riding due north, leaving the suburbs

of the great city to his right.

Such an extraordinary incident stands, perhaps, in need of explanation. The judge's party had spent a week in Canton, during which time Mr Waldron had inspected the Five-Story Pagoda, the Water Clock, the temples of the Five Genii and the Five Hundred Gods; he had witnessed theatrical performances and a public execution; he had smelled the smells of Canton.

As for Yung How, he also had not been idle. He had gone by night to a certain opium den in the vicinity of the Mohammedan mosque--the opium den of Ah Wu. Thither we must accompany him if we are to make head or tail of the narrative that follows.

Yung How had appeared before Sir Thomas Armitage. "Master," said he, "I have a brother in Canton."

The judge smiled. He had lived many years in China. He knew that Chinese servants always have brothers and aunts and grandmothers.

"And you want a day's leave, Yung How?" he asked.

"No, master," said Yung How. "Go away to-night, after dinner-time. Come back to-morrow morning."

Sir Thomas guessed that Yung How's "brother" was nothing more or less than an opium pipe. He knew, however, that it would be useless to refuse the man leave. Yung How was sadly addicted to opium; in Hong-Kong he often appeared in the morning with

the pupils of his eyes no bigger than pinheads. And Sir Thomas knew also that, once a Chinese has become a slave of the opium pipe, nothing will ever cure him. The judge shrugged his shoulders.

"Very well, Yung How," said he, "you can go."

"Thank you, master," said Yung How. And he stalked in a majestic manner from the dining-room of the Shamien Hotel, where the judge and his party were staying.

Yung How crossed the little bridge of boats that connects the island with the main part of the city to the north. He found himself in narrow, twisting streets densely packed with people, the majority of whom were of the coolie class and wore little or no clothes. The shops and booths were ablaze. Everyone was shouting at once, swearing, wrangling, bargaining till they were hoarse. The heat was insufferable, the atmosphere humid. The foul smells of the city would have sickened a European, but they did not seem to affect the Oriental nostrils of Yung How, the Cantonese.

He walked slowly with long strides, turning to the left, then to the right, then to the left again. He was evidently familiar with the city. Brushing past half-naked, gesticulating coolies, and thrusting children aside, he came presently upon a great sow, sleeping in the middle of the street. Since there was no room to pass on either side he kicked the animal violently. As the pig got grunting to its feet, Yung

How swept past with an expression of contempt upon his face.

He found himself, at last, outside the Mohammedan Mosque. Crossing what the Europeans call "West Street," he entered a dark thoroughfare, a blind alley, at the end of which was a solitary, blood-red Chinese lantern, suspended above a door.

Yung How did not knock. He walked straight in and found himself in the presence of Ah Wu.

Now Ah Wu was a notorious character; he was also a notorious scoundrel. He was a little, fat man, with a round, smiling, cherubic countenance--except that there was nothing cherubic about his eyes, which were small and evil, and glittered like those of a snake.

"Ha!" he exclaimed, the moment he set eyes upon Yung How. "You have returned to Canton! Ah Wu bids you welcome. If he eats rice under the roof-tree of Ah Wu, Yung How shall have of the best. He shall smoke the finest Chung-king opium."

"I desire none of these things," said Yung How.

Ah Wu looked disappointed, for Yung How was a rich man as Chinamen went, who paid for his night's entertainment in brand new Hong-Kong dollars.

"Ah Wu," said Yung How, in a low voice, "I desire to speak with you upon a matter which is private. It will be worth your while to help me if you can."

Ah Wu's eyes glistened. He rubbed his hands together. "Come with me," said he.

He drew aside a heavy, richly embroidered curtain and, passing through, they found themselves in the opium den. This was a room of two stories, with a flight of stairs in the middle leading to the upper story, which was a kind of balcony. All around the walls, both upstairs and downstairs, were couches, and by the side of each couch was a small lacquer table. Upon every table was an opium pipe, a small bowl containing a substance that resembled treacle, and a little spirit-lamp. And upon each couch was a man, stretched at full length, wearing no more clothes than a kind of towel tied around his waist, for the heat of the room was like that of a Turkish bath.

Some of these men were engaged in smoking, rolling the opium into little pills, holding these pills over the flame of the spirit-lamp until they frizzled in the heat. Some were lying flat upon their backs, with their arms folded behind their heads, staring with eyes wide open at the ceiling. Others were motionless, insensible, asleep--drugged into oblivion. The room reeked with the pungent smell of the drug.

Yung How, taking no notice of the occupants of the den, followed the proprietor into a small room under the stairs. There a paraffin lamp of European manufacture burned upon a table. Ah Wu offered his guest a chair and seated himself on the opposite side

of the table. He produced a matchbox from the sleeve of his coat, struck a match, and lighted a small spirit-lamp. This, together with a bowl of opium and a large ivory pipe, he shoved across the table.

"You will smoke?" he asked.

Yung How could not resist the temptation. He snatched up the little skewer and dived it into the brown glutinous substance.

"Thank you," said he. "I can think better when I smoke. The matter of which I have to tell you, Ah Wu, is of some importance. It may be very profitable to me, and also, in some degree, to you--if you are able to assist me."

Ah Wu's little almond-shaped eyes glistened more than ever. His face became wreathed in smiles. He got to his feet and went to a cupboard, from which he produced his own opium pipe. Then he seated himself again at the table, and with their heads very close together these two sleek, shaven, unmitigated rascals rolled their little pills and filled the room with bitter-smelling smoke.

And as they fell under the influence of the wonderful and subtle drug that holds sway over the whole of the Far East, from Shanghai to Bombay, they discussed in low voices the affairs of Mr Hennessy K. Waldron, of Paradise City, Nevada, U.S.A.

"Tell me," asked Yung How, "do you ever see anything of Cheong-Chau, the robber?"

"He himself," said Ah Wu, "comes often to Canton. He invariably stays here. He is a great smoker. He smokes opium by day and walks abroad by night. He will not show himself in the streets by daylight, in case he should be recognised by the soldiers of the Viceroy."

"He is a brave man," said Yung How--avoiding, after the manner of the East, the point at issue.

"He fears not death," said Ah Wu. "But the day will come when he will be led to his execution, to the Potter's Yard, where they will cut off his head, and the heads of all his followers."

"How many men has he?" asked Yung How.

Ah Wu shrugged his shoulders.

"Some say twenty," said he; "some say thirty. Men-Ching, his second-in-command, is always here. He is one of my oldest patrons." Ah Wu nodded his head towards the door. "He is in there now," he added, "sound asleep. I saw him as we passed."

It is not the custom of a Chinese to convey surprise, satisfaction or displeasure, or any other emotion, upon the features of his face. Yung How's countenance remained expressionless. He did not raise an eyebrow. And yet he was delighted. He was in luck's way, and he knew it.

"What sort of a man is this Men-Ching?" he asked.

"He is an old man," said Ah Wu, "a grandfather. He wears a small grey beard, and his pigtail is almost

white."

Yung How leaned across the table and whispered in Ah Wu's ear:

"I know of a party of Europeans," said he, "who are going up one of the rivers--I am not sure which. I have not yet discovered their destination. They are rich men. How much will Cheong-Chau give, do you think, if I deliver them into his hands?"

Ah Wu chuckled. Then, very carefully, he rolled another opium pill and puffed the smoke from his mouth.

"This can be arranged," said he, rising to his feet. "I will fetch Men-Ching. He returns to Pinglo to-morrow."

Ah Wu entered the opium den and, ascending the stairs, awakened a man who was sleeping upon one of the couches. This was an old man with a small grey beard and so little hair upon his head that his pigtail was not six inches long.

Men-Ching listened to Ah Wu's apologies, and then got slowly to his feet. He put on his faded scarlet coat and followed the proprietor down the stairs. In the little room below, he was introduced to Yung How, and a Chinese introduction is a serious and ceremonious occasion. For the better part of five minutes the two men paid each other compliments, which were neither the truth nor intended to be such. Then all three seated themselves at the table, and presently the smoke from three opium pipes,

instead of two, was filling the room with the bitter, pungent smell.

They discussed the matter in every detail; they regarded it from every aspect. They calculated the risk and speculated upon their own share of the plunder. They tried to estimate the illimitable wealth of Mr Hennessy K. Waldron. Perhaps Ah Wu had visions of retiring from business and settling down in his native town of Chau-chau, on the banks of the Han river, where the rice is the best in China.

At all events they were three great scoundrels, and although Cheong-Chau himself may have been a greater one, there was a certain man who--even whilst they were closeted together--had entered the opium den, who was without doubt the greatest villain in all the thirteen provinces, in all that land of thieves and knaves and cut-throats, from the Great Wall of China to the Shan States, upon the borderland of Burmah.

And this man was Ling. He burst into the opium den with such violence that the outer door was in danger of being broken from its hinges. He thrust aside the embroidered curtains so roughly that several of the wooden rings that secured them at the top were broken. Once inside the room, he bellowed for Ah Wu, the proprietor of the establishment, and his voice was so great that he awakened many of the sleepers.

Being informed that Ah Wu was privately

engaged, he strode into the little room beneath the stairs, and there found himself confronted by Men-Ching, whom he knew well by sight and reputation, and Yung How, whom he had never seen before.

For some moments he stood regarding the three men. Then he laughed--just as a jackal laughs.

"What's this?" he cried. "Three such heads were never brought together to discuss Confucius or the writings of the learned Lao Tzu. An old fox, Ah Wu--one of Cheong-Chau's paid assassins, and a smooth-faced Hong-Kong 'boy'! Vulgar men, all three, who breathe from their throats, and walk in fear and trembling. Fetch me a pipe, Ah Wu, and take us into your council. I have a mind to learn the reason of these whisperings."

We have said that the Oriental does not betray his innermost feelings upon his features. We have stated that the Chinese countenance is incapable of expression. The case was overstated, for all three of them, the moment they set eyes upon this self-confident intruder, became visibly alarmed. It is true that to no small extent the personal appearance of Ling may have been responsible for this.

The man was a giant. Yung How was a tall man; but when he stood at his full height, the shaven top of his head was not level with the shoulders of the new-comer, who must have been at least six feet eight inches in height. His complexion was so sallow as to be almost green; his cheeks were hollow like

those of a human skull. At the same time, he had enormous features: a great hooked nose; a square, massive chin; a mouth that almost reached to his ears when he grinned. He had coal-black eyebrows which met upon the bridge of his nose, and slanted slightly upwards. Upon his upper lip was a long black moustache, the ends of which hung down below his chin. His bones were mammoth-like; he had enormous fists; and when he walked, his great shoulder-blades could be seen moving under his long blue silken robe. Ah Wu looked up at him, with the glint of fear in his little fox-like eyes.

"We were discussing the rice crop," said he.

"*Liar!*" roared Ling.

And he brought down his fist upon the table with such force that the opium bowls jumped, and one of the spirit-lamps went out.

"Liar!" he repeated. "Fetch me a pipe, as I bid you, and speak true talk. This is a human affair and concerns me as much as you. Were it a question of divine philosophy, I should be the last to intrude. Come, I propose to give you advice."

Thereupon, without the least warning, he seized Yung How by the scruff of his neck, and lifted him bodily out of his chair.

"This foreign devil's flunkey shall increase the wisdom of the mighty Ling," he shouted. "He shall tell me in his Hong-Kong jargon why he holds conference with one of Cheong-Chau's bandits, and

one who has grown so old in wickedness, and so rich in ill-gotten gains, that his eyes are sunk in the wrinkled fat of his face."

He dumped Yung How back into his chair, and for once the habitual expression of serene dignity had departed from that gentleman's countenance. Indeed, he looked terribly frightened--but not more so than Ah Wu himself, who now came forward, holding in his trembling hand an opium pipe, which he offered politely to this gigantic Oriental swashbuckler.

Ling examined the pipe critically; and then, apparently satisfied with the appearance of it, proceeded to roll opium pills in his huge, flat-tipped fingers.

"I smoke," said he, "not like fools, to dream. I smoke to fight, to think, and to make fools of others."

As he said these words he flung off his long coat. Underneath he was wearing a thin vest of the finest Chifu silk. Around his waist was a belt, attached to which was a great knife--a Malay *kris*--the handle of which was studded lavishly with jewels.

CHAPTER III--OF THE TIGER AND THE FOXES

Ling was a Northerner. He hailed from the province of Honan, a land of rugged hills and dark, inhospitable valleys, through which flows the unnavigable Hoang-Ho, the turbulent Yellow River that thrashes its way into the Gulf of Pe-chili, over cataracts and rocks, through dark, precipitous ravines.

The Honanese are a warlike race. From this province the viceroys of the north were wont to recruit the majority of their soldiers--wild, raw-boned men who, in the old days, guarded the sacred presence of the Emperor.

The pirates of the West River may be compared to wolf-packs that roam the southern provinces in search of plunder. But Ling may be likened to a solitary beast of prey, a man-eating tiger, or a rogue elephant--than which there is no more dangerous beast in all the world. He lived by his wits, his great strength and cunning. He had established such a reputation for himself in the provinces of Kwang-si and Kwei-chau that he was feared alike by peasants, priests, and mandarins. He committed crime openly and gloried in it; for in China there are no police,

and prefects and magistrates can be bought with silver *taels*.

And Ling was a man of great wealth. He employed bribery when that was likely to succeed. Otherwise he relied upon his Malay kris, or his great hands, with which he could strangle the life out of an ordinary man in no more time than it would take to wring the neck of a hen.

The wonder of this man was that he was a great scholar. He had passed several of the public examinations in which the candidates could be numbered by the thousand. He was learned in the classic books: *Spring and Autumn*, *The Doctrine of the Mean*, *The Analects of Confucius*, and the books of History, Rites and Music, and the Odes.

He was in the habit of quoting Confucius and the writings of the sages; and he could always, by twisting the meaning of the proverbs of antiquity, find excuses for his crimes.

"To the good I would be good," he would quote, adding: "As there are no good on this earth, there is no necessity to be other than I am."

In no other country in the world would such a man have been allowed to walk at large in the streets of a populous city. Everyone knew him, and everyone feared him; but no one had the courage to step across his path. He came and went at his pleasure, laughing in his loud, boisterous manner, quoting from the writings of Confucius, Mencius, and

the learned Lao Tzu, the founder of the Taoist religion. It must be remembered that China is a country in which everyone minds his own affairs. The sages have taught the Chinese to believe that the destiny of every man is in his own hands, and that whether he lives foolishly or wisely, whether he does evil or good, is a question solely between that man himself and the Spirit of the Universe. No one has the right to interfere.

In this world there are those who talk and those who act. Ling did both. He bullied and threatened and stormed; he was childishly vain of his learning, and in seven dialects he scattered his knowledge broadcast. At the same time, he was a man of action; he was resolute and brave, and without scruples or a sense of pity.

But neither courage nor brute strength nor wisdom, nor a combination of the three, can accomplish all things. And in Ah Wu's opium den, the mighty Ling found himself in the presence of three subtle, smooth-tongued Cantonese; and the whole world across, from San Francisco to Yokohama by way of Port Said, there is no more capable and fluent liar than the lemon-skinned, almond-eyed Chinese who hails from the province of Kwang-si. It is difficult to say who could lie most gracefully, who was the greatest hypocrite--Ah Wu, Yung How, or Men-Ching, the brigand. Each in his own way was a past master in the craft of falsehood.

Moreover, they had no intention of taking Ling into their confidence. They may have been frightened of the man, but not even fear could make them behave like imbeciles. They knew that if Ling gained knowledge of the presence of Mr Hennessy K. Waldron upon the upper reaches of one of the rivers, there would be but little booty left for themselves. And so they lied--gracefully, easily, pleasantly, and with admirable consistency.

What that lie was is immaterial to the skein and texture of this story. It was a presentable and passable falsehood, you may be sure, but it was not good enough to deceive Ling, who, however, professed that he believed every word they had told him, whilst he complacently smoked pipe after pipe of opium--at Ah Wu's expense.

And then he left the opium den, paying for nothing, quoting from Mencius in regard to the virtue of hospitality. In the dark streets of the mammoth city his colossal figure became lost in the shadows; but he left behind him, in the opium den, in the little room beneath the stairs, an atmosphere of tension--a feeling that a great typhoon has passed, which by a miracle had caused but little damage. The three conspirators continued to discuss their plot, but they were no longer conscious of a sense of security. Once or twice Ah Wu, who was the most nervous of the three, glanced anxiously over his shoulder, whenever a heavy footstep was heard in

the room beyond.

They had lied to Ling to the best of their ability--which was saying much. For all that, they had no reason to suppose that the gigantic Honanese had believed a single word of what they had told him. In consequence, they feared him all the more. The tiger was on the prowl, and the three foxes, their heads close together, whispered in the ears of one another and rolled their little pills.

They arranged matters to their satisfaction. Yung How was to attempt to discover the destination of Sir Thomas Armitage and the wealthy American. Men-Ching would lie in wait upon the river bank. Yung How would signal to him as the launch went by. If their destination was the North River, Yung How was to place his left hand upon the shaven fore-part of his head. If it was the West River, he was to raise his right hand. In either case, Men-Ching was to take horse and ride to Pinglo, where he would inform Cheong-Chau that the fish were swimming into his net. As for Ah Wu, at a later date, he was to play a certain part for which--on account of his cunning and secretive nature--he was eminently suited.

It was an exceedingly well-arranged plot, which will be duly explained in the appointed place. There was some discussion in regard to what sum it would be possible to obtain; but in the end it was decided that twenty thousand dollars would be sufficient, allowing that Cheong-Chau would take the bulk of it

himself.

It was long past midnight when they came to the end of their deliberations. By then they were heavy with opium, and their eyes glazed from the drug. They threw themselves down upon the soft matted couches in the outer room, and slept and dreamed--as Chinese will--of things celestial, transcendental, such as cannot be expressed in words. For all that, the following morning Yung How presented himself at the breakfast-table of Sir Thomas Armitage in the Shamien Hotel.

"Well, Yung How," said the judge, "did you see your brother in Canton?"

"Yes, master," said Yung How, without moving a muscle of his face. "He makes bobbery with his wife."

"You mean," said Sir Thomas, for the edification of Mr Waldron, "that he and his wife have quarrelled?"

"Yes, master. She does not like that he smokes opium--once a week."

The judge made a wry face. "A nasty habit," said he.

"Yes, master," said Yung How; "only bad men smoke opium."

Sir Thomas looked at Yung How's eyes. The pupils were shrunken to the size of little beads.

"Yes," said he. "You are right, Yung How; only bad men smoke opium."

"Opium does harm," said Yung How, who, five

minutes later, appeared in the hotel kitchen. Several coolies were eating rice upon a doorstep, and one of these was the engineer of Sir Thomas's river-launch. It is not pleasant to watch lower-class Chinese eat rice. They hold the bowl about two inches from their mouths, which they open very wide, and then they scoop up the rice with their fingers in much the same manner as one might brush pieces of fluff from the sleeve of a coat.

"Ah Su," said Yung How, to the engineer, "has the judge told you where we are going?"

"No," said Ah Su.

"The weather," said Yung How, "is very hot."

He then departed to the vestibule of the hotel, where he encountered the comprador. In China, the comprador knows everything.

"Are there any letters for the judge?" asked Yung How, in a lordly manner.

"He has them," said the comprador. "He himself took them into the breakfast-room."

"We leave to-day," said Yung How casually.

"So I understand," said the other.

"I suppose letters will be forwarded?"

"The judge has given instructions. All letters and parcels are to be forwarded to the British Consulate at Wu-chau."

"In Wu-chau," said Yung How, "I have a brother."

He turned away and went upstairs, where he entered the bedroom of Mr Waldron. In one of the

small drawers of the dressing-table he discovered the millionaire's cheque-book; and since he could read English tolerably well, he spent a pleasant five minutes studying the counterfoils. Then quite suddenly Mr Waldron came in.

"Say," said he, "what are you doing here?"

"Have cleaned hairbrushes," said Yung How, without a moment's hesitation.

"Then, git!" cried Mr Waldron. "Guess I can fill my own grip-sack. When I want a slit-eyed son of Satan hanging around my boudoir, I'll send for him. So, git!"

And Yung How "got." He walked gravely from the room with his head held proudly in the air, and his eyes fixed upon the ground. He appeared grossly insulted.

He knew very well, however, that the great city of Wu-chau lies upon the West River, and is not so far--as the crow flies--from the town of Pinglo, where Cheong-Chau was in the habit of smoking opium.

CHAPTER IV--HOW CHEONG-CHAU CAME FORTH OF THE TOWN OF PINGLO

Mr Waldron appreciated the journey up the West River even more than the sights of Canton. Stretched comfortably upon his deck-chair, he surveyed through his binoculars the rich, prosperous landscape of Southern China. He interested himself in the straw-hatted peasants at work in the tea-gardens and the ricefields. As the launch steamed upon its way, he inspected river-side villages, temples, gateways and pagodas.

The party arrived at Wu-chau, spent two or three days seeing the sights, and then proceeded up-river. A few days later, the launch arrived at the town of Pinglo--three days after Men-Ching, seated astride his little Mongolian pony, had ridden in from the East.

Since there was little or nothing to see in Pinglo, Sir Thomas Armitage, Frank and Mr Hennessy K. Waldron, accompanied by Yung How and one other personal servant, set out on a journey across country towards the north. They carried knapsacks upon their backs, and proceeded by way of the narrow

paths separating the ricefields. The heat was excessive, but as they progressed, and reached higher altitudes, it became cooler, and at the end of three days' march the Nan-ling Mountains stood out before them like a great wall.

They found the Taoist temple, surrounded by trees, tucked away in the corner of a picturesque valley, where there were great numbers of birds of brilliant plumage.

Mr Waldron was delighted. The temple was deserted, and appeared to have been neglected for centuries. The plaster had crumbled from the walls and lay in heaps upon the floor. The place consisted of one huge hall, with several smaller rooms on either side. Everything of value had been stolen; but the architecture remained, solid and fantastic, and of the greatest antiquity.

Ranged around the walls were the figures of scores of gods and goddesses, chief amongst whom was Buddha. Sir Thomas was able to identify several of the images, one of whom he recognised as Mohammed, another as St Paul, and a third as Marco Polo. That Marco Polo should have risen in China to the dignity of a deity is conceivable, since this dauntless adventurer was the first European to reside in the ancient Tartar kingdom of Kublai Khan. But it was indeed remarkable that the fame of such great preachers as St Paul and the founder of the Mohammedan religion should have reached--across

the whole of Asia--the heart of the Chinese Empire. This is no treatise on Chinese theology, else we could write much concerning the Taoist temple on the southern slopes of the Nan-ling Mountains, at the very back of the beyond. It is sufficient to say that the judge took copious notes, and Mr Hennessy K. Waldron was delighted. As a memento of the expedition he knocked off a stone gargoyle from above the porchway of the temple.

In many ways the expedition resembled a delightful picnic, in a country that was charming and romantic. The ruined temple was surrounded by flowering shrubs and queer-shaped deciduous trees, and there were moss-grown banks upon which one could lie at ease during the heat of the day or sleep tranquilly by night, when thousands of frogs were croaking in the valley below, and crickets were singing in the long *kiao-liang* that grew upon the mountain-side.

The place was a natural garden, scented with almond and mimosa. During the heat of the day there was shade in plenty; after sunset the temperature was cool and refreshing. Yung How and his assistant attended to their wants; gave them four-course luncheons and dinners, produced from a saucepan and a frying-pan by means of a small wood fire laid between two bricks. Neither Mr Waldron nor the judge himself showed the slightest inclination to return to the steaming valley of the river. As for

Frank, he was happy all day long, exploring the neighbourhood, climbing to the crest-line of the hills, whence he could survey a vast panorama of terraced paddy-fields, winding rivers, scattered villages and towns, each with its joss-houses and its temples and its great horseshoe graveyards.

On the second day of their visit, whilst his uncle and the American were occupied in inspecting the temple, Frank Armitage ascended a steep bridle-path which crossed the mountains at a narrow pass. To the north he found his view obstructed by another and even more rugged range of mountains. Anxious to gain a more commanding position, the boy left the bridle-path and climbed, on hands and knees, the steep face of the adjacent peak.

It took him the greater part of an hour to gain the top, but there he found his efforts rewarded by a view that reminded him of many scenes pictured by Gustave Doré, illustrating *Don Quixote* or *Paradise Lost*--pictures that had fascinated and frightened him as a child.

Immediately before him was a second valley, at right angles to the one dividing the parallel ranges, resembling a huge, deep sword-cut in the barren, savage hills. This valley narrowed as it rose to a higher altitude, and finally became lost in mountain mist. There were few trees upon the steep, glistening slopes, and such as were to be seen were stunted and deformed. There were no roads or paths; no sign of

life or civilisation. The sun itself appeared to have been shut out for ever from this stretch of desolation.

Frank turned and looked towards the south. In this direction were green trees, green fields--a plain, rich, fertile, well-watered and thickly populated. It was almost impossible to believe that a narrow watershed could divide landscapes so different that they might have been scenes from different planets. He glanced again at the dark sinister valley; and as he did so he caught a glimpse of something red, moving slowly across the spur that formed the angle of the two valleys immediately below.

He could not at first make out what this could be, for the moving object almost at once disappeared behind a hillock. When it appeared again, however, it was in mid-valley; and he recognised a party of men dressed in scarlet coats, who were marching in close formation, making in the direction of the pass across the range.

Frank knelt down behind a boulder and watched with interest, and not without apprehension, the approaching figures. A natural instinct warned him that it would not be wise to show himself. There was something in the forbidding nature of the valley itself that warned him that its sole occupants were not likely to be men whom one could trust.

They climbed the bridle-path, gaining at last the pass whence Frank himself had ascended to the hill-top. They were now easy to distinguish. The party

numbered about thirty. They were brown-skinned Chinese, evidently mountain-born; all were armed with scythe-like spears or long, curved knives, and one or two carried pistols in their belts. All wore scarlet coats, some of which were bright and new, others being so faded that they were a kind of dirty pink. At the head of the party marched a little shrivelled man, whose scarlet coat was trimmed with gold. Frank Armitage did not know it--though within eight hours he was to learn the truth--but this was the redoubtable Cheong-Chau himself--the brigand chief who plundered the southern provinces from the Nan-ling Mountains to the sea.

As they passed, swinging on their way, these men sang a low, wailing chant that might have been a funeral dirge, but which was, in fact, a pirate song of blood and lust and murder. At the rear of the party was an old man, seated upon the back of a short-necked Mongolian pony. This was Men-Ching, who had ridden post-haste from the city of Canton, bringing greetings to Cheong-Chau from Ah Wu, who kept an opium den in the vicinity of the Mohammedan mosque.

Men-Ching had seen Yung How in the city of Wu-chau, and had there heard news of the ancient Taoist temple upon the southern slopes of the mountains. And Cheong-Chau had shaken off the sleep of opium and, gathering his men, had issued from the town of Pinglo, and had marched by night

into the mountains, the sovereignty of which he shared with the eagles and the kites.

CHAPTER V--HOW CHEONG-CHAU STRUCK AT DEAD OF NIGHT

It was late by the time Frank returned to the temple, where he found his uncle and Mr Waldron engaged in an animated discussion upon the subject of the untapped resources of China. The boy had taken some time to climb down the mountain-side. Having no wish to fall into the hands of the scarlet-coated band who had descended into the valley to the south, he had given the bridle-path a wide berth, with the result that he had been obliged to go down upon all fours, and descend stealthily foot by foot.

He lost no time in relating to his uncle all that he had seen. The judge was somewhat surprised, but he did not show any signs of being nervous.

"I trust they didn't see you, Frank?" he asked.

"I have no doubt as to that," replied the boy. "I remained hidden all the time. Besides, they were immediately below me, and I should have noticed if any man had looked up."

The judge shrugged his shoulders.

"All's well that ends well," said he. "Nevertheless we may consider ourselves lucky. There can be no

question that the party you saw was one of the brigand bands that are said to infest these mountains. We are far from civilisation. We could expect neither mercy nor consideration if we fell into the hands of such desperate rascals."

"Judge," said Mr Waldron, "it looks as if I may have a use for my six-shooter after all."

"I don't think so," said the judge. "Frank was wise enough not to show himself, and the men went down into the valley. There is no reason why they should know anything about our presence in the neighbourhood."

It was then that Yung How appeared, silently, from the midst of the deep shadows beneath the temple ruins. He moved stealthily and with something of the supple grace of a cat.

"Master," said he, "dinner is served."

"Thank you," said the judge. But Yung How remained, his features calm and expressionless, a table-napkin thrown over his left forearm, after the manner of waiters all the world across.

"Guess," said Mr Waldron, "I shall sleep with my gun ready loaded."

"That is no more than a wise precaution," said the judge, "and we should be well advised to post a sentry. We could divide the night into three watches of three hours each. Frank, as the youngest, shall take the first watch, from nine to twelve; I myself propose to take the middle watch, from twelve to

three--unless you, Mr Waldron, would prefer it?"

"As you like, Judge," replied the American. "Early morning suits me well enough. In the old days in Texas, six days out of seven I was in the saddle before sunrise."

"Master," repeated Yung How, "dinner is served."

The judge whipped round upon his servant. "What are you doing here?" he demanded. "You have announced dinner already. We are all hungry enough not to forget it."

"Very good dinner," said Yung How, lapsing into pidgin-English, and without moving a muscle of his face. "Hot soup, all belong one piece tin; number one fish, all belong river; two piece chicken and top-side apricots, all belong tin, all same soup."

"And a very good dinner too," said the judge. "The sooner we get to work the better."

They dined by the light of a Chinese lantern suspended from one of the branches of an almond-tree, beneath the temple wall, where they were sheltered from the cool evening breeze that was blowing from the west. The thin mountain air, after the insufferable, humid atmosphere of the river valley, had served to give them a healthy appetite. The soup was half cold, the chickens were very tough, and the West River fish tasted horribly of mud; for all that, hungry men, encamped in a wilderness many miles from the nearest outpost of civilisation, will regard such fare as delicacies. They

ate with a relish everything that Yung How placed before them, and washed down their meal with pannikins of crystal-clear water from the mountain spring that flowed past the temple.

After dinner the judge lighted his pipe, and Mr Hennessy K. Waldron one of his choice Manila cheroots. They talked of many things, but above all of China, of its immensity and mystery, its wealth, vitality, and future. And then the judge and Mr Waldron spread their blankets and laid them down to sleep.

There is no life in the world to compare with that which is lived in the open air. A moss-grown bank supplied a bed as comfortable as any spring mattress. The wind, gently stirring the leaves of the trees, the distant croaking of the frogs, and the singing of the crickets, combined to form a sort of lullaby that soothed and enticed the wayfarers to slumber. There was no moon that night; but in a sky unbroken by a single cloud, a gorgeous canopy of stars illumined a scene that might have made a fitting setting for a fairy-tale.

Frank Armitage selected his sentry-post at the foot of a great tree immediately before the temple steps. Hence he was able to obtain a fair view both of the bivouac and the mountain slope to the south. Knowing, however, that it would be wise not to neglect the northern side of the temple, he decided to patrol the entire building at least once every

quarter of an hour. Armed with Mr Waldron's revolver, he kept well in the shade, knowing that a good sentry is one who observes without himself being seen.

An hour passed and then another hour, without the occurrence of anything unusual. The judge and Mr Waldron were both sound asleep, the latter snoring loudly. Yung How and his companion lay in the shadow of the temple wall: the former curled up in his blankets, the coolie lying flat upon his back, his mouth wide open, dreaming, perhaps, that he was back in the Chinese quarter of Hong-Kong, where lived his wife and seven children, all of whom he supported upon the astonishing sum--expressed in English coinage--of nineteen shillings a month.

Frank, as he went his rounds, frequently paused to listen. The frogs and the crickets continued their uproar. The wind murmured in the trees; once or twice he could hear wild-duck flying high in the night sky towards the north, towards the great marshes of the Yangtsi and the Yellow River. But no other sound disturbed the silence of the night.

In course of time he came to consider the utmost vigilance unnecessary. He began to interest himself in trivial things. Mr Waldron had ceased to snore and Yung How was engaged in a kind of duet with the coolie. They snored alternately, the one on a deeper note than the other. Frank paused upon one of his rounds and stood for a moment looking down upon

the two sleeping Chinese, thinking how vastly different from himself they were. Then he passed on upon his way, conscious that as the hour grew later the air was becoming colder. On that account, it was advisable to keep moving. He walked round the front of the temple, across the great stone steps leading to the entrance, and found himself on the farther side of the ruined, rambling building. There, in the deep shadow of a tall, gabled gateway, he stopped quite suddenly, thinking that he had heard a twig snap underfoot.

He was so sure of this that almost at once he became aware that his heart was beating rapidly. He held the revolver in his hand, gripping the handle tightly. The starlight enabled him to see a considerable distance, except where the shadows were deep under the temple wall itself and beneath the trees.

At his right hand was a massive stone pillar that supported the roof of the gateway. He stood stock-still, listening; and then, close to him, he heard a sound that might have been the wind, but which, on the other hand, might have been the heavy breathing of a man. As quick as thought, he stepped behind the pillar, and at once, quite suddenly, and yet without noise or violence, his revolver was taken from his hand.

For the fraction of a second he was too astonished to cry out. He took a quick step

backward, which brought him into the starlight, and at that moment both his wrists were grasped, and he beheld before him a face, sinister, fierce, and yet expressionless. It was the face of Yung How, his uncle's servant.

He let out a shout, a loud cry for help--a shout that was stifled in a second. Someone had seized him from behind. The palm of a hand was placed so tightly upon his mouth that he found it difficult to breathe.

For a moment he endeavoured to struggle, but soon realised the uselessness of an attempt to extricate himself by physical force. He had been seized by at least three men; and almost before he had time to recover from his surprise, he was thrown violently upon the ground, his hands bound behind his back, and a gag thrust between his teeth.

He lay quite motionless, wondering what had happened, and what would happen next. Men were talking in whispers in harsh Cantonese voices, but too softly for him to catch the meaning of their words.

He was bidden rise. He hesitated a moment, and was then lifted bodily to be dumped down upon his feet. He found himself confronted by a Chinaman who was small in stature, the skin of whose face was wrinkled and weather-beaten. This man wore a scarlet coat, richly embroidered with gold thread that glittered in the starlight. He came quite close to

Frank, and peered into the boy's face, grinning from ear to ear, showing dirty, fang-like teeth--teeth that resembled those of a dog.

The boy turned away in disgust, and looked straight into the face of Yung How. Yung How neither smiled nor lowered his eyes. He appeared to be neither delighted nor ashamed. His features were expressionless; his eyes looked straight into Frank's. Behind Yung How stood some twenty men, all dressed in scarlet coats. Frank took them in at a glance, and the thought flashed across his mind that it would be difficult to select from the party the one who appeared the greatest villain, whose countenance was the most hideous and repulsive. They were Cantonese of the coolie class, high of cheek-bone, with low, receding foreheads, and cruel, snake-like eyes.

The man who was wearing the gold embroidered coat turned and walked rapidly towards the temple steps, ordering the others to follow him. Frank was led forward, a great raw-boned Chinaman on either side of him, each of whom grasped him tightly by an arm. He was made to ascend the steps, and was brought to a halt in the shadow of the porchway of the temple.

Hence he could look down upon the sheltered glade where he and his friends had been encamped for two days. In the starlight he could see the figures of his uncle and Mr Waldron, both of whom were

still fast asleep.

So far, all that had happened had come to pass so rapidly that Frank had not had time to feel alarmed. But now, when he beheld his uncle--as he had every reason to believe--in the greatest danger, he was filled with apprehension. He made a lurch forward as if he would escape--for his feet had not been bound--but he was at once roughly thrown back by the men who guarded him, one of whom struck him a violent blow in the face.

At that moment it was as if the boy was incapable of feeling physical pain or moral indignation. He was filled with remorse. He had been given a position of responsibility and trust--and he had failed pitifully. And now, perhaps his uncle's life was in danger.

He was obliged to remain an impotent and conscience-stricken spectator of the scene that followed. He could neither cry out nor hasten to the assistance of his friends. He saw both his uncle and Mr Waldron seized whilst they were sound asleep, handled roughly by savage, lawless men; gagged and bound, and then led into the great hall of the temple.

As soon as they were all inside, about a dozen torches were lit, and these were planted upright between the stone flags that paved the floor; so that they resembled as many candles, illuminating that fantastic, mediæval chamber.

Indeed, it is almost impossible to imagine a

scene more weird and dream-like. The three captives in the centre of the hall; the evil-looking, criminal faces of the brigands, made to look even more alarming and sinister by the flickering light of the torches; and around that great, dingy room, the implacable, sedate, inevitable figures of the Chinese gods and goddesses, over whom presided the huge Buddha, seated cross-legged upon a stone plinth, immediately opposite the entrance.

Frank Armitage caught his uncle's eye. He tried his utmost to convey in a glance the remorse and anguish he endured. Sir Thomas must have understood him, for he slowly shook his head. Then someone from the back of the room commanded that everyone should be seated; and when this order had been complied with, one man alone remained upon his feet. This was he whose scarlet coat was embroidered heavily with gold, who now stepped into the centre of the circle, where he stood in the full light of the torches.

"I am Cheong-Chau," he cried. "And those who fall into the hands of Cheong-Chau must pay in silver *taels* or else in blood."

CHAPTER VI--HOW CHEONG-CHAU STATED HIS TERMS

The situation in which the judge and his companions found themselves was certainly not of the pleasantest. It so happened that Sir Thomas knew nothing of the reputation of the redoubtable Cheong-Chau. However, the man's character was made evident upon every feature of his face.

Standing in the centre of the hall, gesticulating wildly, he harangued his audience for the better part of twenty minutes without once pausing for breath. Sir Thomas was sufficiently acquainted with the Cantonese language to follow the drift of the man's speech, whereas Frank was able to understand every word. Mr Waldron, of course, comprehended nothing.

The American was under the impression that he was about to be put to death. He regarded, with a kind of timorous curiosity, the murderous weapons of the bandits and the villainous facial contortions of Cheong-Chau. The man held forth in the flowery language of the Chinese of the southern provinces. He talked a great deal about his own power and cruelty. He did not seem to care in the least whether or not anyone listened to him. He boasted in regard

to his past crimes; he spoke of his courage and audacity; he uttered innumerable threats. And in the end the captives were led away into one of the smaller rooms that gave upon the great hall of the temple.

There they remained until late the following evening, when the whole party--with the exception of Yung How, who returned to Canton--set out across the mountains, traversing the narrow pass from above which Frank Armitage had first beheld the brigands. They entered, at dead of night, the bleak, desolate valley extending towards the north. Cheong-Chau himself led the way, following a path, carrying in his hand a large Chinese lantern suspended from a pole about six feet long.

Daylight found them still upon the line-of-march. They had by then ascended to a high altitude, where the atmosphere was both cold and damp. The crests of the mountains were wreathed in a thin white mist, similar to that which is found in Scotland, which drenched them to the skin.

They were brought to a halt at the mouth of a certain cave, in a very desolate, inhospitable region--a country of sheer barren slopes, rugged peaks and turbulent mountain streams that descended thousands of feet in series of roaring cataracts. They had been conducted to a spot upon the globe's surface where, in all probability, no white man had ever been before.

The entrance to the cave was hidden behind an enormous boulder, almost as big as a fair-sized house, which balanced itself upon the very brink of a steep slope that descended at an angle of about forty-five degrees. Upon these slopes a few withered shrubs were growing: leafless, twisted things, tortured by the bitter east winds that swept those cheerless valleys.

Inside, the cave was comparatively comfortable. In the centre a wood fire was burning brightly, and though this filled the place with smoke, it served to introduce both light and warmth into that gloomy prison; for indeed the cave was destined, for many days to come, to play the part of a prison. For all that, some attempt had been made to give this place a homely aspect. Several Chinese mats were spread upon the floor, and there were wooden shelves loaded with provisions: dried fish, rice, and bags of green China tea.

To give so redoubtable a rogue as Cheong-Chau the little justice he deserves, it must be stated that his captives were treated with every consideration. They were well fed, on simple Chinese food, which must have been carried miles across the desolate mountains upon the backs of coolies. They were given straw mattresses upon which to sleep, and were allowed to warm themselves by the fire. Mr Waldron--as the only member of the party who was a stranger to the country--expressed the greatest

anxiety in regard to their fate. His mind was filled with vague fears to the effect that their lives were being preserved in order that they might eventually be tortured. He had interested himself in all manner of gruesome subjects; he had heard of the "death by a thousand cuts," the Chinese "corkscrew," and the wholesale manner in which Cantonese executions were usually carried out. None the less, he was not afraid. He was a man who had led a hard life, who had faced danger more than once, and who had learnt--in spite of his riches--to regard his own existence as by no means an essential part of the great scheme of universal things. He speculated in regard to his destiny after the manner of a man who backs horses without knowing anything whatsoever about what--for some reason or other--has been called "the sport of kings."

"Say, Judge," said he, "I don't cotton to this notion of a thousand cuts. Guess one cut's enough for me. If they're going to kill us, why don't they do it and have done with it, instead of stuffing us full of rice and rotten fish?"

Sir Thomas shook his head.

"There is every reason to suppose," he answered, "that this is a case of ransom. If this rascal had meant to murder us he would have done so before emptying our pockets of all the money, watches and valuables in our possession. You may be sure, Mr Waldron, he has brought us here for a purpose. That is not

troubling me in the least."

"It troubles me," said the American. "I left Paradise City with the idea of seeing the world; but I guess, Judge, this is one side of human experience that it was not my original intention to investigate. Wish I was back in Nevada."

Frank Armitage laughed aloud. It was the first time he had done so since the calamity had befallen them. Sir Thomas sat cross-legged by the fire, stirring the embers with a stick, his brows set in a frown.

"Even now," said he, in a quiet voice, "even now I can't realise that Yung How is the unmitigated villain he is."

Frank bit his lip. "If I ever get the chance," said he, "I'll be even with that scoundrel."

"He has been in my service," continued Sir Thomas, "for nearly seven years. During the whole of that period he has never once given me cause to suspect or to mistrust him. That shows you very clearly, Mr Waldron, what a subtle rascal a Chinaman can be. For seven years he has been obedient, faithful, and even honest; and yet--it is now apparent--all that time he was but waiting his chance."

Mr Waldron made a wry face.

"Guess he might have waited another seven years," said he, "or at least till I was clear of Hong-Kong. Why his chance should have come the moment I arrive in the colony is a mystery to me."

"I am sorry to say, Mr Waldron," said Sir Thomas, "I can't regard that coincidence in the light of a mystery. I have a very shrewd suspicion that your wealth is the sole cause of all our trouble."

"Not the first time," added Mr Waldron, "by a long chalk, that money has led to disaster. I tell you frankly, I was a happier man in the old days--when I lived on fifteen dollars a week--than after I had made my pile."

"I can very well believe it," said Sir Thomas. "That, however, doesn't alter the situation in the least. Mark my words, very soon Cheong-Chau will show his hand."

It is clear that the judge had correctly estimated both the circumstances of the case and the character of Cheong-Chau; for scarcely had the last words left his lips when the brigand chieftain himself entered the cave, accompanied by Men-Ching, his second-in-command.

Cheong-Chau seated himself cross-legged upon the ground, and for a few moments warmed his hands by the fire, without uttering a word. Then he spoke in the Cantonese language, addressing himself to the judge:

"Those who fall into the hands of Cheong-Chau," said he, "must purchase their freedom in silver *taels* or in blood."

The judge did not reply. After a pause Cheong-Chau continued. Though he was a little man, his

voice was both deep and guttural. He spoke slowly and with great deliberation, as if particularly desirous that his words should not be misunderstood.

"I make you a fair offer," said he. "It is not my habit to mince matters. I hold you captive. You are my prisoner. I can do with you what I like. No one will ever find you here. Neither can you escape; day and night there are sentries at the mouth of the cave. They tell me that you have the reputation of being a wise man. If that is so, you cannot fail to see that you and your companions are in my power--birds caught in the fowler's net."

He paused again and looked at the judge, who merely nodded his head.

"This is my offer," he continued. "After I have explained matters I shall give you ten minutes in which to make up your mind. You are to write a letter to the Governor of Hong-Kong, or to anyone else you may choose. In that letter you are to say that your life, and the lives of those who are with you, are in the hands of Cheong-Chau, and that Cheong-Chau demands, as the price of your freedom, the sum of twenty thousand Hong-Kong dollars, to be paid in cash before the new moon."

Having laid down his conditions, the man remained silent whilst the judge explained the meaning of his words to Mr Waldron.

"It is as I told you," said Sir Thomas. "Twenty thousand dollars. The rascal certainly cannot be

accused of being modest."

Mr Waldron snapped his fingers.

"So far as I am concerned," said he, "he can have it. Don't let the money worry you, Judge. I've paid that for a picture."

The judge turned to Cheong-Chau and asked him to continue. The man grinned--an unholy grin of fiendish satisfaction. To him and his cut-throats the sum was more than a fortune; it would serve to keep the whole gang of them in luxury for the rest of their lives.

"The matter," said he, "is quite simple to arrange. Write your letter, and I will undertake to have it conveyed to Hong-Kong. The moon is but three days old. We have therefore twenty-five days. Together with your letter I will send one of my own, in which I propose to demand that the money be left hidden in a certain place upon the Sang River, not far from Canton. If the whole of this sum is safely deposited in the proper place before the conclusion of the waning of the moon, you and your friends shall be set at liberty. If, however, for any reason, the ransom is not paid, I swear by the Five Sacred Books that all three of you will be put to death. Concerning the manner of your death," he added, "I say nothing--beyond a warning that those who die by order of Cheong-Chau die neither easily nor swiftly."

The man got to his feet.

"And now," said he, "you have ten minutes in

which to discuss the question with your friends, in which to make up your mind. Say that you agree, and my messenger leaves for Hong-Kong within an hour. Refuse, and you die before another sun has risen."

With that Cheong-Chau turned upon his heel and, followed by Men-Ching, shuffled from the cave.

CHAPTER VII--HOW THE LETTER WAS WRITTEN

Neither the judge nor Mr Waldron desired so much as ten minutes in which to arrive at a decision. Twenty thousand dollars is by no means an impossible sum to a man who is a millionaire. Even the judge himself would have found little difficulty in producing the money with a few days' notice.

Cheong-Chau, and even Yung How, who was more conversant with the manners and customs of Europeans, had underestimated the wealth of Mr Waldron. To them twenty thousand dollars represented almost fabulous wealth. It never occurred to them that they might have asked twice as much, and secured it with no greater difficulty; for we meet the real miser more in fiction and in fable than in real life, and there are few men who will not part readily with the whole of their fortune in exchange for the most valuable of all human possessions: life, the right to walk upon the face of the earth, to breathe the air of heaven.

Cheong-Chau re-entered the cave, holding in the palm of his hand the gold watch he had stolen from Mr Waldron.

"Ten minutes," said he. "I trust you are ready

with your answer."

Men-Ching stood at his side, and behind his back was a score of his ruffians, each man with a naked sword.

"We have considered your proposal," said the judge, "and we agree to it." He spoke the Cantonese language with difficulty, and his pronunciation was faulty. However, there is little doubt that Cheong-Chau understood him, for the man nodded his head with an air of satisfaction.

"You are wise," said he. "Rumour has not lied."

"One moment," said Sir Thomas, taking him up. "There is one question we would ask you. If the money is sent from Hong-Kong, and taken in safety to your hiding-place, what guarantee do you propose to give us that you will set us at liberty or even spare our lives?"

"How would I gain by killing you?" asked the bandit, with a shrug of his narrow shoulders.

"I have lived in China," said the judge, "for more than thirty years. I know that there are men in this country--and I see no reason why you should not be numbered amongst them--to whom murder is a pastime, who kill for the sake of killing, who derive a fiendish pleasure from torturing the innocent."

Cheong-Chau carried a hand to his face and stroked his wrinkled chin.

"I see that you are prudent," said he. "For myself, I never bargain with fools."

"Do you mean," asked the judge, "if the conditions are fulfilled on our part, you will guarantee our safety?"

"I mean no such thing," said Cheong-Chau. "I guarantee nothing."

"Then we have naught to rely upon," the judge answered, "but your oath--the oath of a robber?"

"That is so," said the other.

"And may I ask," said the judge, "how much Cheong-Chau reverences the Five Sacred Books?"

The Chinese answered nothing, but stretched forth a hand, and deliberately snapped his fingers.

Sir Thomas shrugged his shoulders and turned away.

"We must make the best of a bad business," said he to Mr Waldron. "I tell you frankly, I don't trust these men. I know what such scoundrels are."

He spoke in English, and whilst he did so was conscious of a gentle touch upon the shoulder. He turned and beheld Men-Ching, who presented him with a brass Chinese ink-box, a large piece of rice-paper and a writing-brush. "Write your letter," said the old man, "to the English Viceroy of Hong-Kong. Tell him that the sum of twenty thousand dollars, in silver, must be hidden under the red stone in the Glade of Children's Tears, before the waning of the moon."

"Where is this place?" asked Sir Thomas.

"On the Sang-kiang, five Chinese *li* to the north

of the city of Canton. A narrow path leads due north from the Five-Storied Pagoda. This path crosses the hills and descends into the valley of the Sang River--a very beauteous place."

"Are they long *li*?" asked Sir Thomas, understanding well the vagueness of all Chinese measurements, "or short *li*?"

"They are short *li*," answered Men-Ching, "for the road runs up-hill until you come to the last *li*, where the traveller descends into a wide valley of ricefields and fruit trees, li-chi and mango. In the Sang valley there is a tall tower, from the top of which, in days gone by, fathers were wont to throw the she-children they could not afford to keep. A woman child is no use in the world. From the day of her birth to the day of her death she does little else but talk. On the west side of the tower is a small wood, and in the centre of this wood is a glade where the birds sing in summer-time, whilst the water of the river makes sweet and pleasant music. In the glade are rocks; but in one place there is a great red stone, almost round. Two strong men can roll it away from the place where it is; but they must use all their strength. And when the red stone is rolled away, it will be seen that it rests upon a great hole in the ground. It is like the lid of a kettle. Inside this hole there is room enough for twenty thousand dollars."

The judge had listened intently, committing each detail to memory. A little after, Men-Ching left

the cave, and the three white men found themselves together. Sir Thomas turned to his nephew.

"Did you hear what the rascal said, Frank?" he asked.

"Every word," replied the boy.

"And you remember it all?"

Frank nodded.

"Then," said the judge, "help me to write this letter. It will be by no means easy to write. I shall have to explain matters very clearly to Sir John, and I've got to write it with a brush."

In the temple they had been deprived of their pencils and notebooks, and everything else their pockets contained, and these had not been brought by Cheong-Chau to the cave. Otherwise Sir Thomas might have asked for his own fountain pen. As it was, he was now obliged to write in English characters with a Chinese brush, and this was a tedious business. In the end, however, the letter was written, covering in all five pages of Chinese rice-paper, in shape longer than foolscap, but not so broad.

Sir Thomas had written fully. He had explained where and by whom they had been captured; he even went so far as to give the name of the bandit chieftain and to relate how he had been betrayed by his own personal servant, Yung How. He said that he had not the slightest doubt that, if the rascals were not paid in full upon the stroke of time, the three of

them would be ruthlessly put to death. He ended the letter by explaining the exact whereabouts of the "Glade of Children's Tears," describing the red stone beneath which the ransom money was to be hidden. He also expressed the opinion that it would be useless to endeavour to capture the brigands in the neighbourhood of the glade itself, and he strongly advised the Governor not to attempt to lay an ambush. He pointed out that such a plan would most assuredly fail, since the Chinese were sure to exercise the utmost caution, and to have spies in the neighbourhood. Moreover, the discovery of such a plan would undoubtedly lead to the immediate death of Sir Thomas himself and his companions. It would be time enough to think of reprisals, of taking steps to track down the brigands, after the judge and his party had returned safely to the island.

As the judge wrote, aided by the flickering light of a torch, Frank and Mr Waldron looked over his shoulder, each offering occasional suggestions.

"Do I understand," asked Mr Waldron, "that you don't trust these fellows?"

"I am afraid I am very far from trusting them," replied the judge. "Men of this type, in this mysterious, savage country, are as often as not without honour, cruel beyond description, and incapable of showing mercy. Moreover, in moments of delight--I know for a fact--they are capable of committing the most terrible atrocities. I don't wish

to alarm you unnecessarily, Mr Waldron, but I tell you honestly that I fear the future. Sir John will send the money, provided the letter reaches him in safety--which I have no doubt it will. But once the money is in Cheong-Chau's possession, it is quite possible he will kill us, out of sheer devilry, in the moment of his triumph."

Mr Waldron thrust his hands into his trousers pockets, and shaped his lips as if he desired to whistle. No sound, however, came from his lips. He paced backwards and forwards in the cave like a wild beast that is hungry. For all that, upon his clear-cut, regular features there was no sign of apprehension. His manner suggested impatience more than fear.

"It's just cruel luck," said he, as though he were speaking to himself. "Guess I can't look upon it in any other light. Why did I leave Paradise City!"

"There's not much paradise about this," said Frank, taking in his hand a burnt stick and stirring the embers of the fire. A flame sprang forth that illumined the rugged walls of the cave. Here and there upon the hard rock were narrow, streaky grooves, where the moisture had trickled down.

"We're helpless," Mr Waldron burst out, "helpless as the little children these fiends used to throw from the top of that tower. That's what gets me on the raw, Judge. I never before felt helpless. In the course of my life, I have found myself in a great many

awkward places; but I have always been able to see a way out and I have made good in the end. This thing's different. Hennessy K. Waldron may be a great man in the state of Nevada; but in this blamed country I guess he don't count more than a copper cash."

And Mr Hennessy K. Waldron was about right--a copper cash, in the coinage of China, having the approximate value of the fifth part of a farthing.

CHAPTER VIII--AND HOW FRANK RESOLVED TO FOLLOW IT

That same evening, Men-Ching, accompanied by another man, set forth upon his journey to the south. It was calculated that he could reach the river in five days, though to do so he would have to travel by night as well as day. The prisoners had little doubt that he would find a river-junk at Pinglo or at some other river-side village where the brigands had established outposts. With the help of the current and a favourable wind, he could reach Canton in a few days, and thence the last stage of the journey could be completed by steam-boat--ships leaving Canton for Hong-Kong at least twice a day.

There was, therefore, plenty of time--provided no mishap befell him--for Men-Ching to fulfil his mission. Cheong-Chau, who knew his business, had taken steps to convince the Governor that the plight of the judge was genuine. He had included in the envelope containing his own letter a gold signet ring, which he himself had taken from the finger of Sir Thomas.

When Men-Ching left the cave it was raining

hard. He brought the two letters to the fireside, desiring in all probability to satisfy the prisoners that there was to be no mistake, that he was not going to take any risks. He took off his faded scarlet coat, ripped up the lining with a sharp knife, and sewed the letters inside. That done, he tied a sash around his waist, threw a straw raincoat across his shoulders, and put on a large straw hat such as the coolies wear when at work in the southern ricefields. Then he and his companion departed, Men-Ching carrying in his hand a long stick. They followed the narrow path that traversed that bare, desolate region, at one moment on the crest-line of a watershed, at another upon the very brink of a precipice.

The rain descended in torrents, shutting out completely the last rays of the setting sun. A great darkness descended upon the wilderness. The water in the gullies and ravines mounted with the rapidity of quicksilver; and presently the night was alive with savage, discordant sounds: the wind howling amongst the rocks, the roar of cataracts, turbulent streams plunging, as if demented, down the mountain-side. But in spite of the darkness and the rain, Men-Ching and his companion continued to move rapidly towards the south. He was an old man, as we know, but he was by no means inactive. Also, he knew every inch of the road. It was probably for that reason that Cheong-Chau had selected him to

undertake the journey.

They did not halt to rest until many hours after daybreak, and then snatched only a few hours' sleep, after eating a handful of rice. The storm had cleared. Men-Ching took off his raincoat, and stretched it out upon the ground, in order that it might dry in the sun. Placing both his hands upon his faded scarlet coat, he expressed the greatest satisfaction to find that it was absolutely dry. The letters were safe; he could feel them inside the lining. There was no chance that the rain had washed out the ink. Indeed, in the whole world, there is probably no more efficient waterproof garment than the straw raincoat of the Far East.

In course of time Men-Ching gained the southern extremity of the Nan-ling Mountains, at a place not far from the town of Pinglo. The rich, fertile valley lay before him, extending as far as the eye could reach. He had left behind him China, the desolate, the barbarous, the unknown; before him lay China, the civilised, the prosperous, the land of ceaseless industry and untold wealth.

And there, for the time being, we may leave him, still travelling towards the south upon his robber's errand. We will leave him to his fate, to the mercy of the heathen gods he may or may not have worshipped. His destiny was already sealed, though little did Men-Ching dream that that was so.

In the cave, day followed day, so far as the

captives were concerned, with the same dreary monotony; the same fears and half-foolish hopes. They could take no exercise, and they had no books to read. There was nothing for them to do but to talk, to discuss amongst themselves the tragedy of their position.

And as time passed they had less and less reason to trust Cheong-Chau, to think that they could rely upon his word. The man proved himself a reprobate. He was an opium drunkard; and that is a thing not so common in China as the majority of Europeans imagine.

It is true that opium is smoked throughout the length and breadth of the East. Indeed, the opium pipe in China is the equivalent to the British workman's glass of beer, and opium dens in that country are as common as public-houses in this.

At the same time, most Chinese are only moderate smokers. They do not smoke enough opium even to injure their health. The reason for this is obvious: opium, even in China, is very expensive, and the ordinary man cannot afford to buy much of it. Neither does opium happen to be a drug that does a great deal of harm unless it is taken in excess; it probably does infinitely less harm than alcohol. If taken in large doses, however, its results are disastrous and terrible.

For some reason or other--never explained by physiologists--repeated doses of opium sap the moral

fibre. A man begins to smoke opium in a small way, but after a time he finds that he has to smoke double the quantity of pipes in order to get the desired result. And so on, until he finds himself taking doses that would kill one who was not inured to the drug. By that time he has lost everything a man should value most: his sense of honour, his will power, much of his physical strength, and his power of concentration. He is a degenerate whose mind is filled with the foulest, most perverted fancies, who is a stranger to truth, and who delights as often as not in committing the most fiendish of crimes.

Now Cheong-Chau was evidently such a man; for one night he rolled into the cave, awakening his captives--who for many hours had been fast asleep--by the blasphemy and violence of his language. His gait was unsteady; the pupils of his eyes, visible in the bright light of the fire, were small as pinheads. He carried in his hand a naked sword.

"I am Cheong-Chau," he shrieked. "Death to all foreign devils who dare set foot upon the sacred soil of China!"

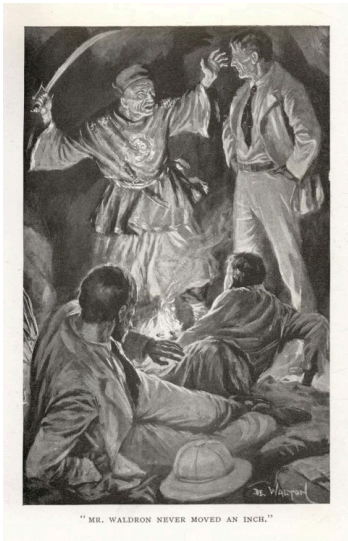
Bursting into a loud laugh, he raised his sword as if he would strike down Mr Waldron, who had risen to his feet.

"Stay," cried the judge. "Have we not your oath--that if the money is paid you will not stain your hands in blood?"

"Oath!" cried the robber. "What are oaths and

blood to me? Am I a Canton flower-girl or a Buddhist priest that I should not shed blood when the fancy takes me? Know that I am Cheong-Chau, the robber, who cares for neither oaths nor gods nor men."

For some reason or other he had singled out the American; and it looked most certain that, at that moment, the life of Mr Hennessy K. Waldron was in the greatest danger. However, Mr Waldron never moved an inch; he neither drew back nor showed the slightest sign of alarm. He held his ground, staring the villain boldly in the face.



"MR. WALDRON NEVER MOVED AN INCH."

MR. WALDRON NEVER MOVED AN INCH.

It was, in all probability, solely his courage that saved him. The Chinese was so low down in the scale of humanity that he was not far removed from the beasts; and it is well known that no animal can for any length of time look a strong man in the eyes. The eyes of Mr Waldron were those of one who had carved a way for himself in the world, who--starting life in a very humble sphere--had conquered a thousand difficulties; thereby proving himself a strong man who could not fail to be conscious of his strength.

Cheong-Chau was unable to maintain his threatening and defiant attitude before that steel-grey, steady gaze. Slowly his sword descended; his eyes dropped to the ground. Mr Waldron, with admirable calmness, deliberately placed a hand upon the man's shoulder, and addressed him in the English language in a tone that was even kindly.

"Say, old cockolorum," said he, "you ought to retire from business. You're doing yourself no good, you know. Guess you want a good six weeks at some quiet seaside resort, where there's no more excitement than a dance-hall or a merry-go-round. Take the missus and the kids."

Cheong-Chau turned away with an oath. No doubt he supposed that Mr Waldron had delivered a brief speech, somewhat in the tragic vein, suitable to the occasion; for neither in the expression upon the American's face nor in the serious tones of his voice

was there anything to convey the intelligence that Mr Waldron was disposed to be frivolous.

For all that, they could not overlook the fact that, whether or not the ransom were paid, their lives were in the greatest danger. The man who held them in his power was subject to ungovernable fits of wrath, during which his mental condition bordered upon that type of insanity which is inseparable from the truly criminal character. At such times--which invariably followed a debauch of opium smoking--Cheong-Chau was certainly not responsible for his actions; and discussing the question among themselves, they came to the conclusion that at any moment the order to murder them might be issued. By no such act of treachery could the brigand forfeit the ransom, since both the prisoners and Cheong-Chau himself had no means of direct communication with Hong-Kong. Men-Ching should be now well upon his way, approaching the city of Canton.

It was Mr Waldron who suggested that one of them should endeavour to escape. At first, this idea struck the judge as a piece of outrageous folly, since if one of the three even did succeed in getting away from the cave and crossing the mountains--a very unlikely contingency--the murderous Cheong-Chau would be so furious that he would probably not hesitate to make short work of the unfortunate two who remained. On debating the matter, however, Mr Waldron was able to throw quite another light upon

the situation.

He explained that if a survivor reached Hong-Kong who could not only identify Cheong-Chau himself and the majority of his men, but who could actually guide an avenging expedition to the neighbourhood of the cave, the brigands would be hunted from pillar to post, and if not captured, certainly driven from the province. The robber could not be unaware that in the British colony were both English and Indian troops, whilst a large fleet lay at anchor in the harbour, and he must have known enough of the British Government to remember that the cold-blooded murder of British citizens was an act not likely to be overlooked. He could not wish to involve both himself and the members of his gang in international complications. He would therefore, in all probability, hesitate to do away with his captives.

It is true that an attempt to escape might fail, in which case the plight of the prisoners would be, if anything, somewhat worse. But in any case, as day succeeded day, they became more and more convinced that Cheong-Chau intended to kill them. He did but bide his time, waiting to hear news of Men-Ching to the effect that the ransom had been duly paid. For these reasons it was eventually decided that one of them should endeavour to escape.

It was next necessary to settle who should go. The judge himself was too old to attempt to cross the

mountains alone upon so long and hazardous a journey. The choice, therefore, lay between Frank Armitage and Mr Waldron.

The American--who had already proved himself a man of the greatest courage, both physical and moral--was naturally anxious to take the risk himself. However, he could not be blind to the fact that he laboured under several very serious disadvantages.

In the first place, he was entirely ignorant of both the language and the country. He knew neither the habits and customs of the people nor the topography of Southern China. Frank, on the other hand, had been born and had lived all his life in China; on many a former occasion he had proved himself quite capable of conversing even with the most untutored and obstinate peasants. Moreover, the boy was the most active member of the party: he was a good runner; he could climb, if necessary, to the top of mountain peaks, and he was an adept at swimming--an important item, since he might have to cross the West River, as well as several tributaries, in order to reach Canton or the coast.

It was this consideration that settled the question in the mind of Mr Waldron. The American was obliged to confess that he could not swim except for a short distance in salt water. If he endeavoured to cross the strong current of a great river without even taking his clothes off, he would most assuredly drown.

"And in that case," he observed, "I might as well have stayed here to have my throat cut in my sleep, or sample the death by a thousand cuts."

He spoke of such atrocities as if they were nothing. He was so calm about it all that the judge looked at him, wondering whether he was one of the few really brave men in the world, or whether he was entirely devoid of imagination. In any case, Mr Waldron withdrew his claim to be allowed to undertake the adventure; and the choice fell upon Frank.

Once this all-important question was settled, it was obvious that there was nothing to be gained--indeed, there was much to lose--by putting off Frank's departure. The sooner he was away the better, though they did not then realise the supreme importance of time, the alarming fact that the lives both of Sir Thomas and Mr Waldron were to hang upon the thin thread of a few seconds.

It was decided that Frank should endeavour to make his escape from the cave that night. It was in the act of passing the sentries, posted at the entrance, that the bulk of his danger would lie. Once the boy succeeded in getting away from the cave, his absence would probably not be discovered until the following morning. He would, in that case, have several hours' start of any pursuers whom Cheong-Chau might think fit to send after him.

Frank had already considered the contingency of

making a dash for liberty. He had, so far as he had been able to do so from the interior of the cave, studied the lie of the land. He had noticed that the sentries were not particularly vigilant and that they were armed with old-fashioned, out-of-date fire-arms which they possibly knew not how to use. One of these was a Martini-Henry carbine, and Frank had on one occasion seen a Chinese trying in vain to lower the lever, which was so rusted on to the lock that it was quite certain that the breech could never be opened.

Immediately before the entrance to the cave was the huge boulder, or rock, which has already been described. On either side of this rock a sentry was always posted. But these men did not necessarily face the cave. Indeed, as often as not, they looked the other way, interesting themselves in the wide panorama extended before them. None the less, since the two passages on either side of the boulder were very narrow, one could never hope to pass without being seen. Escape that way, therefore, was impossible without a struggle, which meant that the alarm would be given and a party would immediately start in pursuit of the fugitive.

This was what Frank most wanted to avoid. He knew that his attempt was doomed to failure if he did not succeed in getting well away. He therefore examined the rock itself, and saw at once that it would be quite easy to climb to the top of it. Since

he could not pass *round* this obstacle he would have to go *over* it. On the other side, as he knew, was the steep mountain slope descending hundreds of feet to the bed of the valley. Whether he could climb down the slope at all, much less do so silently, so as not to be overheard by the sentries, was another question. He was resolved, however, to take the risk. It was clear that there was no other alternative. It was a perilous business, but he must make the best of it, trusting to Providence, as well as his own agility and presence of mind.

CHAPTER IX--OF THE HOSPITALITY OF THE TEA-GROWER

They waited until nearly midnight, when Cheong-Chau and his ruffians were sound asleep, and only the sentries awake. That day, both Sir Thomas and Mr Waldron had eaten no food since the morning meal, so that Frank might not set forth upon his journey unprovided. He would certainly not be able to procure anything to eat in the desolate mountain region, though with his intimate knowledge of the Chinese language the boy should not experience any difficulty in procuring rice, millet, or even fish, in the valley of the main river.

The most precarious part of the whole business, however, was to escape unseen from the cave. In this, neither of the older men could render the slightest assistance to the boy, who would have to rely solely upon his own initiative. All three lay down upon their straw mattresses, and pretended to sleep, breathing heavily and even snoring, in order to arouse no suspicion on the part of the two sentries. They had purposely allowed the fire to burn down quite low, so that there was only an exceedingly dim

and somewhat fitful light in the cave.

Choosing a moment about an hour after the sentries had been relieved, Frank Armitage rose stealthily upon his hands and knees, and slowly began to crawl towards the entrance to the cave. Neither his uncle nor Mr Waldron moved. The latter continued to snore.

Frank approached the entrance from an angle, whence he peered cautiously round the corner. He was surprised, and somewhat dismayed, by the exceeding brightness of the night. The sky was wonderfully clear; a full, round moon illumined the rugged mountain ridges, making them appear so white that they might have been snow-clad, whereas the valleys seemed by contrast to be buried in the deepest shadow. By reason of the firelight in the cave, the brightness of the moon, attended by a solitary and gorgeous planet, had not been noticeable from within.

The light, however, enabled Frank to take stock of the sentry who was on the same side of the boulder as himself. He was able to observe the man at his leisure, since he himself was in the shade.

The man was evidently wide awake, for he was moving his arms backwards and forwards with a kind of rocking gesture. His back was turned. He sat cross-legged upon the ground, upon a plaited mat of straw, surveying the magnificent scene that extended before him. Perhaps, despite his brutal features, and

low, receding forehead, there was at least a spark of sensibility, a small power to appreciate the beautiful in nature and the most wonderful works of God, in the untutored mind of this Chinese robber and cut-throat. At any rate, he seemed in a kind of ecstasy, for he was talking softly to himself.

Frank silently crawled across the entrance. And there was the other man, walking slowly to and fro, stamping his feet from time to time, as if he suffered from the cold. Clearly, it would be madness to attempt to escape until this fellow had settled down. He was far too wide awake.

The boy lay flat upon his face, in a position not exposed to the moonlight. Here he was sure he could not be seen, whereas he was well able to observe the walking sentry.

Five minutes elapsed, ten, a quarter of an hour. Frank was becoming anxious. Perhaps the man never would sit down; perhaps he did not intend to relax his vigilance until another came to relieve him of his duties.

Even as the thought crossed the boy's mind, the man stopped, yawned loudly, and then, seating himself upon the ground with his back resting against the great central rock, produced an opium pipe and proceeded to roll a pill.

Frank's heart was in his mouth. He knew that the moment of his great ordeal had come. The man had played into his hands; for not only was the

opium bound to make him drowsy, but he had planted himself in the very situation that gave the boy his best opportunity. Frank intended to climb over the central boulder, and had already satisfied himself that the ascent would be a matter of no difficulty at all.

What lay beyond was another question. He had never had any means of ascertaining whether or not he would be able to climb down the other side of the rock, much less make the descent of the slope. He who is over-cautious will, however, accomplish nothing. The traveller who considers the pitfalls in his way and the many dangers that lurk upon the highroad makes little or no progress, and as often as not fails to arrive at his destination. He who would gain all must risk all; he who will risk nothing gains nothing--or, at least, does not deserve to do so.

Frank glanced back into the cave. By the dim light of the fire he was able to see that both his uncle and Mr Waldron were stretched at full length upon their mattresses, looking up. No doubt each was unable to bear the continued suspense, the silence that had endured so long, but must take one last look at him who carried with him the fortunes of all three.

The boy glided into the shadow of the rock. There he paused a moment, waiting breathlessly to learn whether or not he had been observed whilst he was crossing the narrow strip of moonlight. A minute

passed, and as nothing happened Frank knew that he was still safe.

Then, very slowly, he began to climb. He had taken off his boots, and these were suspended by means of the laces around his neck. He was careful not to make the slightest sound; he was fearful almost to breathe. He knew that the whole enterprise was in jeopardy, that at any moment a loose stone might fall from the rock, thus attracting the attention of the sentries.

He succeeded in gaining the top, and there lay flat upon his face. Knowing that the utmost caution was of far more importance than haste, he did not move for some time. Then, slowly lifting his head, he took in his surroundings.

The sentry on the right had not shifted his position. He still rocked his arms and sat staring straight at the moon. The man on the left was invisible to Frank, being immediately under the rock. He had probably smoked his pipe of opium, and was now in that semi-dazed, self-satisfied condition that invariably follows an administration of the drug. The boy wormed himself forward, until he had gained the furthermost edge of the rock, which was flat-topped, like a table. Thence he was able to see into the second cave, where Cheong-Chau and his men were fast asleep, lying close as dogs around the dying embers of a great charcoal fire.

When Frank peered over the edge of the rock, in

order to decide upon the most suitable means of descent, his heart for a moment failed him. It was as if he was gazing down into one of the uttermost pits of Hades.

The cliff appeared to be perpendicular, which the boy knew was not the case. Moreover, it seemed to descend to eternity, to fade away into a great expanse of darkness that was like the sea. It occurred to him that if by any chance he slipped and fell, his body would be dashed to atoms thousands of feet below.

Then fortunately he had the strength of mind to remember that imagination makes cowards of us all. It was no affair of his what lay at the bottom of the valley; his immediate business was to descend from the top of the rock, and he had therefore best confine his attention to the few square yards in front of him.

Immediately he did so he saw that he was confronted by a proposition by no means difficult of solution. To descend was easy enough. In the face of the rock was a narrow cleft down which it would be quite easy to climb. Without hesitating an instant, he lowered himself, and in a few seconds found himself at the base of the rock, where he again paused and listened.

He was so close to the man whom he had seen light the opium pipe that he could actually hear him breathing. Neither, however, could see the other, since the sharp corner of the rock intervened.

However, the situation was so dangerous that Frank was resolved to have no more of it than he need; and almost at once he began to descend on all fours the steep face of the cliff.

He realised that in the first ten yards or so his greatest danger lay. He could not tell for certain whether or not he was within sight of either of the men. He could but take the only possible precaution. Lying almost flat upon his face, he slid, very slowly indeed, at about what seemed to him a snail's pace, down the smooth, rocky slope.

In three minutes he knew that he was out of immediate danger. He had escaped. Moreover, no alarm had been given.

Two courses now lay open to him: he might continue to descend until he eventually reached the bottom of the valley, or he might work his way along the cliff, parallel to the bridle-path above, until, having gained comparative safety, he could ascend to the higher level and then follow the road to the south.

He wisely selected the latter alternative, since he knew not whether the slope was accessible lower down. Besides, it might so happen that there was neither path nor road in the valley.

Owing to the steepness of the slope, he could not stand upright, nor was there any need to do so. He could progress, if not with comfort, at least at a very tolerable pace, on all fours.

He had traversed in this way a distance that, was probably about a quarter of a mile, when he deemed that it would be safe to ascend to the path above by means of which he and his fellow-captives had been conducted to the cave. This he gained without difficulty, it being easier to mount the slope than to progress transversely across it.

Once upon the bridle-path he found the moonlight of the greatest possible assistance; for having put on his boots he was able to set forward running, knowing full well that every step lengthened the distance between himself and those who he knew would certainly, sooner or later, set forth in pursuit.

It would be wearisome to describe in detail Frank Armitage's adventurous journey across the mountains. Sunrise found him still upon the road, alternately walking and running, hurrying forward for life itself.

The fact that for three whole days he saw not a single soul speaks for itself in regard to the desolation of this wilderness. On the morning of the fourth day he found himself in the midst of the foot-hills, with a clear view before him of the fertile valley of the West River. By then he had consumed all the provisions he had brought with him from the cave. He was, indeed, almost famishing, and felt tempted to take almost any risk to procure something to eat. That afternoon he encountered

several peasants, who all regarded him with undisguised curiosity. Knowing that Cheong-Chau was sure to have despatched a party in pursuit, and realising the supreme importance of time, he considered that it would be advisable to ask one of the inhabitants of the country the shortest route to the nearest main tributary of the river.

He selected his man with care, and after a considerable amount of hesitation, addressed himself to a little thin, prosperous-looking Chinaman of the middle class whom he overtook upon the narrow mule-track he had followed for several miles.

On being interrogated, the Chinaman was not a little surprised, though he was far too well-bred and polite to say so. He was surprised at two things: first, he had never expected to meet with a European in such an out-of-the-way corner of the province; secondly, he was amazed that the young Englishman should address him so fluently in his own language.

"You have travelled far?" he asked.

"From Hong-Kong," answered Frank.

"That is a long way."

"It is of the greatest importance," said Frank, "that I return without delay."

"Many days' journey is before you," said the Chinese. "I should be greatly honoured if you would deign to accept such hospitality as my miserable self is in a position to offer. I am a tea-grower," he continued. "My house is not far from here. I should

be deeply gratified if you would eat rice under my dilapidated roof."

It immediately occurred to Frank that the tea-grower might be able to assist him in more ways than one. He readily accepted the man's offer in the manner duly approved by Chinese etiquette and custom.

"Such a despicable, beggarly foreigner as myself," said he, "would be inexpressibly delighted to partake, in your palatial residence, of such nourishing and delicious provender as, I am sure, it is the custom of yourself and your honoured family to consume."

The Chinaman smiled.

"You speak our language to perfection," he remarked. "Few foreigners are able to do so. But what is even more extraordinary to me is that you appear to be acquainted with our forms of ceremony. As a general rule, the European cannot speak to you for five minutes without being guilty of a dozen breaches of etiquette, defying every canon of good behaviour."

"You see," said Frank, "I have lived in China for many years."

"Come with me," said the tea-grower. "Allow me to have the honour of conducting you to my hovel of a dwelling."

Together they followed the mule-track for about a quarter of a mile, and then the Chinese turned to

the left, walking along a narrow bank that separated two flooded ricefields. Beyond they passed through a field of *kiao-liang*, in the midst of which the crickets were singing merrily, and then found themselves in an extensive tea-garden.

In the centre of the garden was a considerable house, built after the manner of all better-class houses in China--that is to say, a one-storied rambling building, together with several outhouses and a fair-sized yard, the whole surrounded by a mud wall about eight feet in height. The building was situated upon a gentle slope that faced due south, and from the outer gate it was possible to survey the greater part of the plantation.

Here the tea-grower entertained Frank Armitage. He gave him green tea to drink and a cup of alcoholic beverage--called *samshu*--which is made from fermented rice. And then came a dinner of about fourteen courses. There were various kinds of fish, sharks' fins, larks' tongues, birds'-nest soup, small pieces of meat on little skewers, rice, millet and edible seaweed from Japan. Frank devoured all these delicacies with a relish. It was not the first time that he had eaten a Chinese dinner. Although the tea-grower lived in the wilds of the province he was evidently a rich man. He had the true gift of hospitality, and with more sincerity than is usually the case in China he offered his guest everything that his house contained.

Now Frank might have refused this offer. In fact, the rules of ceremony decreed that he should do so. He had a mind, however, to disguise himself, and he therefore begged the tea-grower to be so good as to provide him with a suit of Chinese clothes.

The man did not hesitate. He supplied the boy with a long robe, a pair of white trousers and a pair of felt-soled shoes. Thus attired, Frank Armitage bade his host adieu and crossed the tea-garden late that night, when the moon, which had guided him throughout the past three or four days, was rising in the east.

The tea-grower seemed to have taken a fancy to the boy, for he accompanied Frank almost a mile upon his journey, putting him upon the road which led to the village in which the majority of his coolies, or workpeople, lived. In bidding good-bye to him, Frank thanked the man from his heart for all his hospitality and kindness. He shook hands with himself in the approved Chinese fashion, and bowed so low that his nose almost touched his knees. Then he was about to set forward alone when the tea-grower cried out to him, asking him if he had any money.

Frank replied that he was without a cent in the world, telling the truth--that he had been robbed of all he possessed in the mountains. Whereupon the tea-grower took from his neck a long string of copper cash. These he threw over the boy's head, at the

same time quoting Confucius: "*Be charitable to the stranger from a far country! so that, when thou thyself art a stranger, doors may be opened to thy knock.*"

CHAPTER X--HOW FRANK WAS IN LUCK'S WAY

Frank found the village without any difficulty. Although it was then almost midnight, there were lights in the majority of houses, and several shops were open. The Chinese are a singular race. One of the first things that strikes a visitor to that remarkable country is the fact that the inhabitants never appear to go to bed. No people in the world work harder by day, and no people in the world are more inclined to talk, laugh, quarrel and gamble throughout the night, into the small hours of the morning.

Frank marched boldly into a barber's shop, where he expressed a desire to have the forepart of his head shaven. The barber could scarce contain his astonishment when he observed that his patron had no pigtail. He was vastly curious with regard to the matter, asking several questions as he sharpened his big Chinese razor--which was something after the shape and about the size of the business-end of a Dutch hoe. Frank informed the man that he had been robbed, and no doubt the fellow presumed that the robbers had cut off their victim's queue.

The boy rightly supposed that he could talk

quite frankly about his own affairs in a village which was populated almost exclusively by honest men who worked in the tea-gardens. But what most surprised him, and at the same time afforded him the greatest possible satisfaction, was that no one in the barber's shop appeared to notice the fact that he was a European.

Now a Chinaman can suffer no greater disgrace than the loss of his pigtail. Viewed historically, this is a strange circumstance. The mediæval Chinese did not wear pigtails. It was the Manchu race, who conquered the Chinese in the fifteenth century, who grew their hair long and plaited it in the well-known manner. The Manchus were horsemen of whom it might be said that they almost worshipped their horses, and the queue was originally grown in imitation of a horse's tail. For the same reason the Manchu warriors adopted those wide coat-sleeves, which even to this day are called "horseshoe sleeves." It was mainly by means of their excellent cavalry that the Tartar warriors were able to overcome the Chinese foot-soldiers.

A conquering race invariably enforces certain obligations and restrictions upon the vanquished, and one of the first Manchurian imperial edicts issued was to the effect that all Chinese should adopt the pigtail as a symbol of their submission to the dominant people. In the course of a few centuries what was originally a token of defeat became a

source of national prejudice and pride. The Chinaman of the nineteenth century was as loth to part with his pigtail as his forefather had been to adopt it.

The barber sympathised with Frank. Moreover, his sympathy took a practical turn. He undertook for a few copper cash to supply the boy with a new pigtail, and also to attach it to his head in such a manner as would make it appear to be natural. All this, however, took time, and it was past one o'clock in the morning when Frank Armitage left the village and continued on his way, downhill, through tea-gardens and the ricefields, following the narrow path which, he had been told, would conduct him to the river.

What the name of the river was he had not been able to ascertain. Everybody he asked told him a different name. That is usually the case in China. One man will say a village is called the Village of the Wu family; another will say it is the Village of the Chin family; and a third will be equally certain that it is called One-Tree Village. And when you get there, you will find it is called Bad-Weather Village, or the Village of Starving Dogs. Knowing this, Frank did not bother himself about the name of the river. Provided he came to it, he would be satisfied, since the water of that river must eventually find its way into the main stream which flowed past Wu-chau to Canton, and thence to the great estuary, at the

mouth of which was the island of Hong-Kong.

He reached the river at about midday. By then the heat in the valley was excessive, and the boy thoroughly exhausted. He had been travelling day and night for several days. With the exception of the almost regal banquet he had enjoyed at the house of the tea-grower, he had had insufficient nourishment. There had been few nights when he had had more than three or four hours' sleep. He felt quite unable to progress farther on foot.

He therefore hailed a fisherman whom he observed approaching down the stream in a small *sampan*, or river-boat. The man--so soon as he understood that a bargain was afoot--drew in to the bank and undertook for an exceedingly small sum of money to take Frank down-stream to a certain large town to which he himself was going. Frank got into the boat, and lying down beneath the matted awning that sheltered the stern part from the fierce rays of the sun, he was soon fast asleep. Whilst he slept, he covered several miles of his journey. The fisherman had hoisted a sail, and the wind being from the north, and the strength of the current great, the boat travelled at a considerable velocity.

When the boy awoke, refreshed from his sleep, he found to his surprise that the sun had set. Darkness was spreading rapidly, and a thick white mist clung to the river-valley. The atmosphere, however, was exceedingly close and humid, and the

air was alive with myriads of mosquitoes and gnats.

Frank asked the fisherman where they were, and the man replied, with Oriental vagueness:

"We come soon to Kwang-Chin," said he. "That is the end of my journey!"

"And where is Kwang-Chin?" asked Frank.

"Very nice town," replied the man, evading the question. "Plenty cooked-dog shops. Little Kwang-Chin dogs are very good to eat, better than little Canton dogs."

Frank knew the uselessness of trying to get anything definite out of the fisherman. He therefore lay back in a comfortable attitude, and gave himself up to thoughts of the perilous situation in which he had left Mr Waldron and his uncle.

He wondered how far Men-Ching had progressed upon his journey to the coast. So far as he could guess, the rascal should be already in Canton. At the same time, though he did not know where the town of Kwang-Chin was, he believed that he himself could not be far from the great capital of Southern China. Canton was but a few hours by river steamboat from Hong-Kong. The boy had therefore completed the greater part of his journey.

They arrived at Kwang-Chin in the small hours of the morning, and Frank could not persuade the fisherman to take him any farther. He was therefore obliged to go ashore and attempt to find a lodging for what remained of the night.

This was no easy matter, for the town appeared to consist of nothing but opium dens. It was an old walled city, the ramparts and gateways of which must have been built centuries before, in the days when China was harassed and ravaged by continual internecine wars. Frank, who did not feel capable of travelling farther that night, decided to wait till morning, when he might be able to find another fisherman who would consent to take him down-stream, probably as far as the main river, if not to Canton itself. In the meantime, he realised that he could do nothing better than snatch a few hours' additional rest, recognising the fact that he would still be called upon to undergo considerable hardships and dangers.

He therefore plucked up courage, and entered the first opium den he came to, in the doorway of which he had observed a light. He found himself in an establishment similar in all respects to that which has already been described as nourishing in the slums of Canton under the proprietorship of Ah Wu. This place, however, was very much dirtier, and--with the exception of Cheong-Chau's brigands--Frank had never seen a more villainous collection of men than the habitués of the place, who were sprawled in all manner of attitudes upon the various couches. And then he was astounded, and at the same time considerably alarmed, to observe that several of these coolies were wearing scarlet coats, similar in

all respects to those worn by the bandits. But, once inside, he could not very well beat a hasty retreat. He summoned to his aid all his presence of mind and addressed himself to the proprietor, a venerable-looking man with gold-rimmed spectacles and a white goat's-beard.

"I desire, for a few hours," said the boy, speaking in his best idiomatic Cantonese, "a couch upon which to sleep. I am a poor man," he added, "but I will pay you to the best of my ability."

"You will not smoke opium?" asked the host, opening his eyes in surprise.

"I have not the habit," said Frank.

The proprietor adjusted his spectacles upon the very tip of his nose and regarded the boy from over the top of the glasses.

"How very remarkable!" he observed. "Every man, however, can please himself. You may certainly sleep here. My charge is forty *cash*."

Now forty cash is the equivalent of two-pence, and this does not appear to the European mind to be an exorbitant charge for a night's lodging. But Frank Armitage knew the Chinese character. He had a part to act, and he knew how to act it. He remembered that a Chinaman loves a bargain.

"I will give you thirty cash," said he.

The old man pointed to the couch. "It is an excellent bed," said he. "The hangings are of silk, and I guarantee that the mattress is free from vermin. I

will let you have it for thirty-eight cash."

"I offer you thirty-two," said Frank. "Remember, I require it for a few hours only."

"In that case," said the landlord, "we will say thirty-six."

"I will give you thirty-four."

"Good!" cried the landlord. "We will call it thirty-five and have done with the matter."

Thereupon Frank counted out thirty-five of the little copper coins which the tea-grower had given him and which he carried upon a string slung around his neck like a necklace. Indeed each *cash* has a little square hole in the middle of it for this purpose.

Having settled his account, the boy took off his coat, for the heat of the room was intense and the atmosphere foul with the mingled odour of paraffin oil, opium smoke and Chinese garlic He arranged the pillow, then stretched himself at full length upon the couch. A group of three or four men at the other end of the room were talking loudly, and it was the constant sound of their voices that made it difficult for the boy to fall asleep.

He was dozing off, and in that blissful state which lies midway between slumber and consciousness, when he was startled by a remark that came to his ears very distinctly from the other end of the room.

"They tell me that Cheong-Chau has returned to the mountains."

The answer was a chuckle.

"Cheong-Chau is never idle," came the reply. "Rumour has it that there are fine fish in his net. Do you know that Men-Ching passed through here late yesterday afternoon?"

"Indeed! And where was he going?"

"He did not say."

"Some secret business," said the other. "Men-Ching is no more than the coolie of Cheong-Chau. He does all the dirty work. He runs the errands."

It was here that the voice of a third man joined in the conversation.

"I know where Men-Ching was going," said he. "I made it my business to find out. He goes to Canton to the opium den of Ah Wu, which lies near the Mohammedan Mosque. He did not leave this place till nearly ten o'clock to-night, after having smoked several pipes of opium. He is a great smoker, Men-Ching. He went down the river on a *wupan* that was taking a cargo of rice to Canton. The *wupan* calls at Sanshui, to take on board certain chests of tea."

The man who had spoken first laughed loudly.

"You know everything, Hsien-Lu," said he. "You are always prying into other people's affairs. For myself, though I wear the scarlet coat, I think it well to give Cheong-Chau as wide a berth as possible. He will have his head cut off some day. That is beyond all doubt. And on that occasion I should prefer not to accompany him. And now, good-night. I desire to

sleep. The opium has made me drowsy."

After that there was silence. Frank gave them about ten minutes in which to prepare themselves for slumber. Then he got up from his couch, put on his coat and, unobserved, left the opium den.

Outside he took in a deep breath of the fresh night air, then hurried in the direction of the river. He realised that fortune had played in a remarkable manner into his hands. Men-Ching was but a few hours in front of him. He intended, if possible, to overtake the man and possess himself of the letters. He might be able to do this by stealth if he could not succeed by force. He could, at any rate, make sure that the letters reached their destination, since the lives of both his uncle and Mr Waldron depended upon their delivery into the hands of the Governor of Hong-Kong.

CHAPTER XI--OF THE REAPPEARANCE OF LING

Walking rapidly, the boy soon found himself upon the right bank of the river. Though there was as yet no sign of daybreak in the east, several people were already abroad, for the Chinese begin their day's work early in the morning and do not cease till late at night. Parties of men were engaged in loading the junks and *wupans* which were moored to the wharves and jetties.

Frank walked along the river-side until he found a junk about to sail. He hailed the captain, a tall, sun-burnt Chinaman with his pigtail coiled round the top of his head, who wore hardly any clothes at all. This man informed him that the junk was bound upon a fishing cruise upon the open sea. He readily agreed to take Frank as far as Canton for a small consideration in the way of copper cash; and a minute later, the boy was on board, whilst the junk moved down-stream under full canvas.

Nearly all the relatives of the captain and his crew had come down to the wharf to bid them good-bye. There were small-footed Chinese women, and little round-faced, naked children, each of whom appeared to have eaten so much rice that he looked

in danger of bursting. There was much wailing and gnashing of teeth--for the Chinese on occasion can be exceedingly emotional--and no sooner was the junk clear of her moorings than the silence of the morning was disturbed by a veritable fusillade of Chinese squibs, rockets and crackers.

Indeed it might have been an Eastern Fifth of November. A great bundle of gunpowder crackers, tied to the poop of the vessel, went off in a kind of *feu de joie*, sending out so many sparks in all directions that it appeared that the ship was in danger of catching fire. The idea and object of this custom, which is universal throughout China from Tonkin to the Great Wall, is to scare away the evil spirits which might be disposed to embark on board the departing ship. The Chinese believe in the potency and the ubiquity of evil spirits. A European--commonly called "a foreign devil"--is invariably accompanied by a host of such attendant ghosts. Indeed, it is extremely difficult for any man, even a virtuous Chinese, to avoid being shadowed by malignant spooks who desire nothing more than to lead him into calamity and misfortune. There is, as every Chinese is well aware, but one method of driving away these evil spirits, and that is by exploding so much gunpowder and creating such a noise, that they flee in all haste back to the spirit land whence they come.

Frank Armitage observed this ceremony from

the forepart of the boat. He had often witnessed such a scene before in the Chinese quarter of the harbour of Hong-Kong, but he had seldom seen such an expensive and gorgeous display. It was evident that the master and owner of the junk was a rich man who could afford to insure his property at the maximum premium. Also, this particular junk had an unusually large pair of eyes painted upon the bows. As the captain himself explained later in the day, if a junk has no eyes it cannot see where it is going. If a junk cannot see where it is going, it will probably, sooner or later, strike a rock or another ship, or run ashore. That would be a disaster for both the junk and its owner. Hence a junk must have eyes the same as a man. This argument is thoroughly Chinese and would be entirely rational provided the painted eyes upon the bows of a Chinese ship were of the slightest practical use.

All that day they sailed down-stream towards the centre of the great valley of the West River. Every mile the country became more and more thickly populated. They passed many villages situated upon both banks of the river, the houses in the majority of cases overhanging the water, supported by heavy wooden piles. The country was exceedingly fertile, being given over almost exclusively to the cultivation of rice. There were few trees and few hills except far in the distance, towards the north, where the foothills of the great Nan-ling

Mountains stood forth upon the horizon like a wall.

Late the following afternoon the river joined a wider stream flowing towards the south-east. This Frank at first believed to be the West River itself, but he was informed by the captain of the junk that the Si-kiang was still fifty *li* to the south.

It was midnight when they turned into the main stream, and soon afterwards they saw before them the bright lights of the city of Sanshui, which is situated about twenty-five miles due west of Canton.

At this place, Frank was in two minds what to do. He might go straight on to Canton and thence down the river to Hong-Kong, at both of which places he would be able to get in touch with his friends. On the other hand, he had every reason to suppose that Men-Ching was at that very moment in the city of Sanshui. The junk had made good headway down the river, and the boy knew that the boat on which Cheong-Chau's messenger had come south was to call at Sanshui to take on a cargo.

Now there is no doubt that Frank Armitage would have been wise had he first considered his own safety. He was already practically out of danger; there was no vital necessity for him to put his head deliberately into the lion's mouth. If his determination appears to be rash, it may be supposed that he was guided by some natural instinct that warned him that, in this case, the most dangerous course was the only means by which his uncle and

Mr Waldron could be saved.

Be that as it may, he argued thus: from the very moment he escaped from the cave his journey had been extraordinarily uneventful; he saw no reason why it should not continue to be so. If Cheong-Chau's men were in pursuit he had seen nothing of them; he had apparently left them miles behind. He had every reason to be satisfied with his disguise; he was fairly confident that even if he found Men-Ching he would not be recognised, since he knew the old man to be extremely short-sighted. Throughout his journey, he had experienced no difficulty in passing himself off as a Chinese. The barber, the proprietor of the opium den, the fisherman and the captain of the junk--all had taken him to be a native of the country. The boy was sanguine of success; he never dreamt for a moment of failure. He saw no reason why he should not succeed in finding Men-Ching, in tracking the old rascal all the way to Hong-Kong and there having him arrested by the British police authorities. He even considered the possibility of completing the remainder of his journey actually in the company of Men-Ching and his companion.

He therefore asked the captain of the junk to set him ashore. He paid the man according to his agreement, and found himself, at about one o'clock in the morning, in the centre of a very dilapidated and evil-smelling city.

Since he had slept a good deal on board the

junk--there being nothing else for him to do--he decided to remain awake until daybreak, keeping a close watch upon the *bund*, alongside which the junks and river-boats were moored. He felt sure, from what he had overheard in the opium den, that one of the many *wupans* that lay alongside the wharves was that upon which Men-Ching had come down the river. His object was first to discover the *wupan*. He would then have no difficulty in finding Men-Ching himself.

The boy seated himself upon the end of a jetty whence he could obtain a good view of the harbour. A watery moon was low in the heavens, and this, together with the stars, illumined the river with an iridescent, ghostly light, by which it was possible to see for a considerable distance.

The hour was as yet too early for the riverside workmen to begin work. The *bund* was deserted save for a number of rats, which were to be seen quite clearly continually crossing the open space that separated the houses from the ships.

Though the night was warm the air was somewhat damp, and Frank, fearing that he would contract malarial fever, rose to his feet and strolled casually down the jetty. At the corner of a narrow street he came quite suddenly face to face with a most alarming personage.

The expression "face to face" cannot be taken literally, for the man was a giant, and Frank's face

was scarcely on a level with his chest. In the shadowy slums of a poverty-stricken Chinese town, at such a ghostly hour as two o'clock in the morning, to find oneself unexpectedly confronted by an individual of the stature of a Goliath and with the countenance of a demon, is an experience well calculated to give a jolt to the nervous system of anyone. To put the truth in a word, Frank Armitage was frightened out of his wits, and these fears were by no means dissipated when the Herculean stranger, without the least warning, grasped him by the collar of his coat and lifted him bodily from off his feet.

"Ha!" the man roared, in the Cantonese of the educated classes. "A river-side thief! A junk rat! A prowler by night! Tell me, friend weasel, have you stolen rice from on board a Canton junk, or a night-watchman's supper?"

"I pray you, sir," cried Frank, "put me down upon my feet again. I am no thief, I assure you, but a peaceable citizen of Wu-chau, who goes upon a visit to his grandfather."

"A peaceable citizen!" roared the man, bursting into laughter. "That's good, indeed. I would have you to know that all citizens are peaceful when they fall into the hands of the mighty Ling."

So if Frank were none the wiser, the reader at any rate is better informed. Frank Armitage had never in his life, to the best of his knowledge, heard of the mighty Ling. The reader, however, has made

that extraordinary man's acquaintance. He knows that Ling was not by any means one who could be trifled with, and he has been given some kind of a notion of the character and reputation of this same unmitigated villain who was wont to call himself "the mighty Ling."

The giant set down the boy upon his feet, planting him immediately in front of him.

"I have need of you," said he. "It is possible you may be able to render me some assistance. You doubtless have not failed to observe that the gods have made me too big to hide myself without considerable inconvenience. It is in this regard that you can help me. If you do so faithfully I shall reward you. If you attempt to play the fool with me, you go into the river with a twisted neck. And now, follow, my junk rat! Follow me!"

At that, he grasped the boy by a wrist and, taking such tremendous strides that Frank was obliged almost to run, dragged him along the wharf.

CHAPTER XII--HOW MEN-CHING ESCAPED

Ling led the way to one of the many warehouses which were situated along the wharf--which in China are called "go-downs." On attempting to open the door and finding it locked, with one wrench the Chinaman tore the hinges from the jamb and, casting the door aside, dragged Frank into a great darkened chamber that smelt of grease or some kind of oil. There he struck a match.

One of the first objects that attracted his attention was a candle stuck in the neck of a bottle, and this he at once lighted so that the place was dimly illumined.

The "go-down" was filled with all manner of packing-cases, casks, barrels and bales. Picking these up, one after another, as though each weighed but a few pounds, the great Honanese--who might have been in a towering rage--threw them right and left, breaking many open, and creating such a disturbance that Frank was surprised that the whole town was not awakened.

After a while, by means of such brutal violence, he had make a way for himself to the farther end of the warehouse. Thither he ordered Frank to bring the

candle, and then proceeded to ascend a step-ladder that led through a trap-door, such as one usually finds over stables, to an upper story.

The boy, following his captor, found himself in a kind of loft, containing all manner of things--rope, sails, fishing-nets, straw and sacks of millet. Here Ling, holding the candle well above his head, carefully examined the roof.

He very soon found what he was looking for, and, laughing aloud, ordered Frank to come to him. Laying one of his enormous hands upon the boy's shoulder, he suddenly burst forth into the following eulogy upon his own abilities and prowess.

"The mighty Ling," he declared, "is the favoured child of the gods; swift as the kite, wise as the tortoise, strong as the tigers of Amoy. There are few things within the attainment of mortal man that Ling cannot accomplish. Scholar, poet, robber, soldier, merchant, mandarin--all these am I, and more. But there is one thing, I declare to you, that is beyond me. Guess, my little junk rat, what it is?"

Fortunately Ling did not appear to expect an answer, for he ran on, without giving the boy time to reply:

"Do you see that man-hole in the roof?" he asked, pointing upward. "Well, the sages themselves could not devise a method by which the mighty Ling could pass through there. But you can, my monkey, and thither you go, whether you want to or not."

"What am I to do when I get there?" asked Frank, who could think of no way of escaping from this truculent, swaggering monster.

"Know you nothing," roared Ling, "of the sayings of the seers? How it is written truly that 'Patience filleth the stomach, whereas he that hurries to the feast falleth by the way'? Hearken unto me and ask no questions."

He placed the candle upon the ground and seated himself straddle-legged across a sack, with his great legs sprawled out before him. Frank regarded the man's face in the candlelight, and thought that he had never seen anyone of appearance more formidable and sinister.

His huge countenance was like a mask of some weird and evil Eastern god. There were deep lines scored about his forehead, mouth and eyes--lines of wrath; so that even in moments of rest he appeared to be in the throes of an uncontrollable passion. And this expression of fierceness and of anger was intensified by his black, glittering eyes, which seemed to pierce whatsoever he regarded. In addition to this, Frank was impressed by the gigantic proportions of the Honanese: his great sinewy hands, the muscles in his neck, his thighs, each as thick as the waist of a smaller man.

"Listen," said he. "Listen to the description of the man who goes by the name of Men-Ching, who is a fool who believed in his blindness that he and his

cur-dog friends could cheat the mighty Ling."

It was as if Frank Armitage had been struck. He was so astonished at the sudden mention of Men-Ching's name that he caught his breath in a kind of gasp. Fortunately Ling was not looking at him at the moment. The man had drawn a long knife of Malay design from his belt, and was examining it fondly, feeling the sharpness of the blade with his thumb.

"This man," said Ling, "is over sixty years of age--old in crime, but a babe in matters of intelligence. He has a long thin beard upon his chin and his grey queue is no larger than the tail of a rat. He wears a faded scarlet coat, and limps with his left foot when he walks. Also, he rubs his hands together as if he were always pleased. Pleased!" roared Ling. "When he sets eyes upon me, the pleasure will go out of him as a candle is blown out in the draught. But, tell me, you have listened and will remember?"

Frank answered that he had paid strict attention. He did not think it incumbent upon him to advise the "mighty Ling" that he already knew Men-Ching perfectly well. He was both amazed by the coincidence and utterly bewildered as regards the business which these two could have in common. He did not dream for a moment that Ling was as dangerous to himself as the redoubtable Cheong-Chau: that he now found himself in the presence of the man who would soon hold in his great hands the trump cards in this colossal game of Death.

Ling picked up the candle, and rose to his full height.

"If I lift you up by the feet," said he, "you should be able to reach that rafter. Thence, without difficulty, you should be able to gain the man-hole, and so to the roof. From the roof you will obtain an excellent view of the harbour. The moonlight should be sufficient to enable you to see anyone who approaches. Keep your eyes open, and the moment you see the man whom I have described let me know. I will remain here."

Frank had no alternative but to obey the instructions of this extraordinary ruffian. Indeed, he was powerless as a mouse in the jaws of a cat. He was ordered to straighten himself, to remain in a position perfectly upright and rigid, and then he was lifted high above the man's head until he was within easy reach of one of the rafters. Swinging himself on to this, he gained the man-hole which had been pointed out to him, and a moment after he found himself upon the roof.

Thence--as Ling had predicted--he was able to look down upon the numerous wharves and jetties along the bank of the river. The moon was sinking low, but it was so magnified by refraction on account of the moisture in the atmosphere that the boy was able to see quite clearly, not only the various junks, *wupans* and *sampans* that lay anchored along the shore, but also the whole extent of the *bund* itself.

A party of coolies was already at work, and in several places there were signs of life on board the ships. Frank, looking down through the man-hole through which he had passed, could see the mighty Ling, who had taken a book from his pocket and was reading aloud by means of the candlelight. He was reading the *Analects of Confucius*, a volume that is admitted to contain some of the purest ethical reasoning in the world. The man read aloud in a deep voice that sounded to Frank like a roll of far distant thunder. He was obviously fully conscious of the literary and philosophic beauty of the famous maxims.

As for Frank, his thoughts were purely material. He could not think why this singular and terrible man should be so anxious to find Men-Ching. He knew, however, that it was essential that he himself should get into touch with Cheong-Chau's second-in-command. Personally, he was not in the least inclined to render assistance to Ling. But he could not deny the fact, even to himself, that he feared the man more than he had ever feared anyone before--even the giants and ogres of which, as a child, he had been wont to dream. He knew that his life was at stake, that Ling would not hesitate to kill him if, through any fault of his, Men-Ching managed to escape.

There could be no doubt that Men-Ching was at that moment in the town, probably in one of the

numerous opium dens which are to be found in every Chinese city. Frank had gleaned that information, and somehow or other Ling was equally well informed. It was also certain that some time that morning Men-Ching would embark and proceed upon his journey to Canton. Frank, therefore, kept a sharp look-out for the man, but it was only fear of Ling that impelled him to do so.

About half-an-hour before sunrise, when the first signs of daybreak were visible in the east, Men-Ching and his companion were among the first people to arrive upon the wharf. They went straight to a *wupan* that was moored at a distance of about two hundred yards from the door which Ling had broken from its hinges. There Men-Ching called out in a loud voice in order to awaken the owner of the boat, who was asleep under the awning. Frank had no doubt that he had found the right man, for he recognised his voice, and besides the light was sufficient to enable him to identify the old man's scarlet coat.

The boy looked down through the man-hole into the great loft below. Ling was still reading, though the candle had almost burned out.

"He is on the wharf," cried Frank. "He is about to go on board. The fisherman is preparing to hoist his sail."

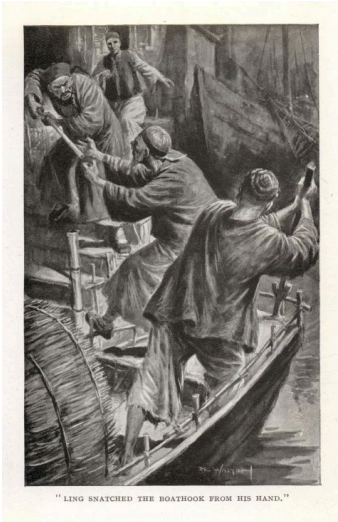
On the instant, Ling closed his book and, springing to his feet, hastened to the head of the step-ladder that led to the room below. He did not

trouble himself in the least about Frank, who was left upon the roof. By no means content to remain an inactive spectator of what was to follow, the boy descended rapidly to the rafter, and thence dropped to the floor, stinging his feet severely. A few seconds later he was swarming down the ladder, hastening after Ling, who had already gained the *bund*.

Men-Ching had just boarded the boat, when for the first time he caught sight of the mighty Ling, who charged down upon him like an infuriated tiger. Frank was in time to see the expression of absolute horror and dismay which was stamped upon every feature of the old man's face. At the sight of Ling, Men-Ching's jaw dropped and his eyes opened wide, and seemed in danger of springing from his head.

"Make haste!" he shrieked. "If I fall into that man's hands, everything is lost!"

With feverish hands the old man uncoiled the rope that secured the bows of the *wupan* to a wooden bollard. He succeeded in doing this in the nick of time, for when he was in the very act of pushing the boat clear of the wharf by means of a long boathook, Ling gained the shore and snatched the boathook from his hand.



"LING SNATCHED THE BOATHOOK FROM HIS HAND."

In the meantime Men-Ching's companion, who had accompanied him throughout his journey from the cave, had seized an oar, with which he propelled the boat clear of the clustered shipping. By that time the fisherman who owned the *wupan* had hoisted his sail, which, filling immediately with the strong west wind, carried the boat down-stream at a considerable velocity.

Ling was like a raging beast. Stamping with his feet, he filled the air with the most terrible Chinese oaths--and there is no language in the world richer in

expletives than the dialect of Southern China. The man's rage lasted no more than a moment. Determined not to allow Men-Ching to get out of sight, he looked about him for some method of following in pursuit. His eyes fell immediately upon a small sailing *sampan*, with a long oar fastened to the stern which did duty as a rudder.

"That will serve my purpose," he exclaimed, and then, lifting his great voice to the full extent of his lungs, he shouted after the *wupan*.

"Men-Ching," he cried, "you can never hope to evade me. Go north to beyond the Great Wall, or south to Singapore, and the mighty Ling shall follow."

Then, turning, he beheld Frank Armitage at his elbow.

"And you shall come with me," he roared. "There must be two of us to manage the boat."

He bundled the boy, neck and crop, into the *sampan*, and a few minutes later they were flying down-stream in pursuit of the *wupan*, upon the broad waters of the great West River that flows through the mammoth city of Canton.

CHAPTER XIII--HOW FRANK WAS CAUGHT IN THE TOILS

Throughout the greater part of the morning the pursuit continued without the *sampan* gaining upon the larger boat. Indeed, when they had sailed a few miles towards the east it became apparent to Ling that they were losing ground, that the distance between the two boats was gradually becoming greater.

The man was infuriated. He stood at his great height in the bows of the *sampan* from time to time, shaking his fist at the scarlet coat of Men-Ching, who was plainly visible upon the deck of the river-junk. After a time, however, Ling's wrath subsided; and seating himself, he confined his attention to the management of the sail. Frank, who was in the stern of the boat, had received orders to steer.

Ling shrugged his great shoulders and came out with a kind of grunt.

"He shall not escape me," said he, talking aloud to himself. "The old fool would be wiser to haul down the sail of the *wupan* and throw himself upon my mercy."

Frank, summoning to his aid all his moral courage, decided to question the man outright,

taking the bull by the horns.

"Why do you want this man Men-Ching?" he asked.

Ling looked up, lifting his black eyebrows, and then chuckled.

"Men-Ching carries upon his person certain letters," said he. "I would have you to know that those letters are worth thousands of dollars."

Frank Armitage was so much astonished that it was some moments before he could recover his presence of mind. How was this man, of all people, in possession of such information? Ling was certainly not a member of Cheong-Chau's brigand band. It was only a week before that Men-Ching had been entrusted with the letters--indeed, he had not been given possession of them until immediately after they were written. The whole thing was a mystery that Frank was in no position to solve.

Sitting amidships in the boat, the man continued to chuckle.

"I will find him in Canton," said he. "He is certain to go to the house of Ah Wu. There I will find him. I will take possession of those letters. A score of men could not prevent me. If Men-Ching hands them over quietly all will be well. If he resists, I cannot say what will happen." And Ling shrugged his shoulders.

Frank was dismayed. It took him some time to realise the extreme gravity of the situation. There was something in the aspect of the boisterous

Honanese giant, seated immediately before him, that made the boy feel quite sure that Ling seldom failed in any enterprise he undertook. The man was at once clever, strong and unscrupulous. He meant to obtain those letters, and Frank felt quite sure that he would not fail to do so.

That brought the boy face to face with the fact that the lives of his uncle and Mr Waldron were in the greatest danger. Ling no doubt intended to appropriate the ransom, thus foiling Cheong-Chau. In these circumstances, there could be but little doubt that the brigand chief, robbed of what he already regarded as his own property, would put both his captives to death out of sheer fiendish spite.

Frank could not for the life of him think what course he should take. His brain was in a whirl. In the end he decided that at any cost he must escape from Ling the moment they arrived at Canton, where he hoped to gain an interview with the British consul.

Throughout the remainder of the journey the boy's thoughts ran continuously upon the mystery in which he found himself enveloped. He could not explain it, and after a time he gave up attempting to do so. He neither knew who Ling was nor how the man had such intimate knowledge of Cheong-Chau's affairs. He regretted bitterly that he had rendered Ling such valuable assistance. He was, however, determined never to do so again, and during the

pursuit down the river he even went so far as to hold the *sampan* back by means of the oar with which he was supposed to be steering. All the time he was doing so his heart was beating rapidly, since he dared not think what would happen to him if Ling discovered his deception.

When they reached the great city of Canton it was still early in the morning. Ling hauled down the sail and himself took charge of the stern oar, by means of which he propelled the boat into the narrow creek that separates the main part of the city from the island of Shamien. Running into the bank alongside a sea-going junk, he ordered Frank to step ashore. The boy did so, determined to avail himself of his first chance to escape. In such narrow, close-packed streets as those of the great southern city, he thought he would have many opportunities of giving Ling the slip. He did not expect any difficulty in getting away, since he had no reason to believe that Ling required his services any longer.

Frank--as the saying goes--had counted his chickens before they were hatched. They had not progressed thirty yards along one of the main streets of the city before Frank dived down a side street, brushed past a party of coolies, and then turned into a still smaller street to the right. There he found a ricksha. Jumping into this, he ordered the ricksha coolie to go ahead as fast as he could. The man had picked up the shafts, and was about to set forward,

when Frank was seized by the scruff of the neck and lifted bodily from the seat. He was then thrown so violently to the ground that one of his knees was cut and his elbows badly bruised.

Gathering himself together, he looked up, and found himself at the feet of Ling.

"Do you take me for a fool?" roared the man. "Why have you run away?"

"I did not think," answered the boy, somewhat weakly, "that you needed me any longer."

"No more I do," said Ling. "But you know too much about me. When I have run Men-Ching to ground, and emptied the old rascal's pockets, then you are free to go where you like. For the present you remain with me."

He bent down, and seizing the boy by a wrist, dragged him to his feet. Then he set off walking briskly through the narrow streets, dragging the boy after him like a dog on a leash and roughly thrusting aside everyone who got in his way.

In about ten minutes they found themselves in the neighbourhood of the Mohammedan Mosque. Having crossed the main street that runs parallel to the river, Ling turned into a by-street, and thence into the blind alley, at the termination of which was Ah Wu's opium den.

He kicked open the door with his foot and thrust the boy inside. Frank found himself standing before the embroidered curtains that were suspended across

the entrance of the smoking-room. Ling lifted his great voice in a kind of shout, mingling his words with triumphant laughter.

"Ah Wu," he cried, "give welcome to a visitor who loves you. There is one here whom it will rejoice your heart to see. Come forth, old fox, and greet the mighty Ling!"

Having delivered himself thus dramatically, he flung the curtains aside, and stepped into the opium den, dragging Frank with him.

Ah Wu, as fat and crafty-looking as ever, stood in the centre of the lower room in front of the stairs that led to the balcony above.

He was holding in his hand a blue china bowl filled with *samshu*. And so dismayed was he when he set eyes upon his gigantic guest that the bowl fell from his hand and smashed to atoms on the floor.

"Ling!" he gasped.

"The same," roared Ling. "And this time I come not to debate and argue, to exchange words with liars. I come for Men-Ching. I have reason to believe that he is here."

Ah Wu strove to pretend he was delighted to welcome Ling. He smiled from ear to ear, his little eyes almost disappearing in the fat of his face. He bowed, folding his hands in the prescribed Chinese fashion. He even took a few steps forward, so that he was almost within reach of the long arms of the Honanese.

"Men-Ching," said he, still smiling, "is not here."

And no sooner had the words left his lips than he was given a practical and somewhat painful demonstration of the violent character of the man with whom he had to deal. Upon the right of the entrance, adorned by the embroidered curtains, was a lacquer table, upon which stood a heavy china vase. Without a word of warning, Ling seized this vase by the neck, and hurled it with all his force at the proprietor of the opium den. The ornament must have weighed several pounds, and it struck Ah Wu fair in the chest, with the result that he went over backwards and lay, stretched at his full length, at the foot of the staircase. Almost a minute elapsed before he struggled to his feet. Ling had not moved.

"And now," he roared, "lie to me again."

In the meantime, in spite of such extraordinary happenings, Frank had taken in his surroundings. Ah Wu's opium den has been already described--except that we saw it before at night, when the place was crowded. On this occasion there was only one man asleep upon a couch in the lower room. It was about twelve o'clock in the morning, and at this hour, as a general rule, Chinese opium dens are empty, the smokers of the previous evening having departed and the day's customers not having arrived.

Strangely enough, the vase had not broken, but in falling to the floor it had made a considerable noise, and this was sufficient to awaken the sleeper,

who evidently suffered from a guilty conscience. The man sprang to his feet, and rushed to the entrance, as if he intended to escape. There, of course, he found his way barred by Ling, who lifted one of his huge fists as if to strike the fellow. The man jumped backward like a cat that finds itself face to face with a dog. And it was then, once again, that Ling burst into one of his boisterous fits of laughter.

"And here's the flunkey!" he cried. "Here's the Hong-Kong cur-dog! Have you also a mind to lie to me, or do you set a value on your life? I tell you truly, I am not here to exchange words. I know what I want, and I am come to get it. Hands up!" he shouted, seeing the man move one of his hands to his waistbelt, under his coat, where he might have carried a firearm. "Hands up, or I wring your neck like a duck!"

In fear and trembling the man lifted both hands above his head. Frank regarded him then for the first time. And it was as if the boy's heart had suddenly ceased to beat when he recognised Yung How, his uncle's servant.

CHAPTER XIV--HOW LING SNUFFED THE CANDLE

Frank had every reason to suppose that he would be recognised in spite of his disguise. To deceive Men-Ching was one thing, but Yung How had known the boy for years. More than ever he desired to escape. It was clear that both Yung How and even Ah Wu himself were equally anxious to get away from the room. All three of them, however, were caught like rats in a trap, for Ling guarded the entrance, and it was as much as the life of any one of them was worth to attempt to pass, either by force or stealth.

Ling approached Yung How, lifted the man's coat and drew a large nickel-plated revolver from his belt.

"I thought so," said he. "I draw the jackal's teeth."

So saying, he thrust the revolver into his pocket.

"And now, Ah Wu," he cried, "is Men-Ching here or not?"

Some seconds elapsed before Ah Wu could summon sufficient courage to answer.

"Yes," said he at last. "He is."

"Where?" asked Ling.

"In the little room--asleep."

"Asleep! He could not have arrived more than an

hour ago!"

"He was very frightened," said Ah Wu, who was now certainly speaking the truth. "His nerves were shaken. He knew you were in pursuit. He smoked opium to calm himself, and now he sleeps."

"Lead the way," said Ling. "And you too," he added, addressing himself to Yung How. "I drive you before me like a herd of pigs."

This was indeed a very accurate description of the proceeding, for Ling was determined that neither of the Chinese nor Frank should for a moment get out of his sight. It was remarkable that one man should have so much power--by which we mean will-power as well as physical force. But undoubtedly, the most extraordinary thing about him was the unbounded confidence he seemed to have in himself. And it was this self-confidence, even more than his courage and great physical strength, that made this man a master over others.

Into the little room under the staircase he hustled the three of them. There he locked the door and pocketed the key. Upon the only couch in the room lay Men-Ching in his faded scarlet coat--sound asleep.

Ling bent down and placed both hands upon the sleeper's chest. Then he smiled, and turning slowly round, looked Ah Wu straight in the face.

"They are here," said he. "It is the custom of the gods to reward those who deserve to prosper."

"What do you seek?" asked Ah Wu, upon the features of whose face was stamped an expression of the most profound dismay.

"The letters," said Ling. "The letters for which I have searched for fourteen days."

"Fourteen days ago," retorted Ah Wu, "they were not written."

"Of that," answered the other, "I confess I know nothing, and care less. It is sufficient for me--and for you, too--that I have found that for which I sought."

There was a pause. And then Yung How asked a question.

"How did you know about these letters?" said he.

Ling smiled again. "Do you think," he asked, "that when I found you three rascals with heads together in this very room--do you think I did not know that something was afoot, something into which it might be worth my while to inquire? Do you suppose for a moment I believed your lies? No. I watched. And I sent a spy here to smoke opium and to pretend to sleep--a spy who listened to all you had to say, who told me that Cheong-Chau had sent a messenger with the news that the fish had been landed high and dry, and a promise that both Ah Wu and yourself would have your share of the ransom as soon as it was paid. I had but to watch the river. And when I was told that one of Cheong-Chau's men had been seen in Sanshui, and the description of that man agreed with Men-Ching, I should be little short

of a fool if I did not guess that Men-Ching carried with him letters demanding a ransom. And now," he concluded, "these same letters are mine."

He bent down, and very gently unbuttoned Men-Ching's coat. Then, without waking the sleeper, who appeared to be heavily drugged with opium, he tore open the lining and drew out the two letters: that of Cheong-Chau, written in Chinese, and Sir Thomas Armitage's letter, written in English.

Neither of these was in an envelope, but both were sealed in the Chinese fashion. Without a moment's hesitation Ling broke the seals, and Sir Thomas's gold signet ring fell to the floor. He stooped and picked it up, and then read both letters to himself. And as he read his smile broadened, displaying his fang-like yellow teeth.

"It is fortunate," said he, "that I can read English. It is of advantage in this life to be a scholar. The ignorant man works in the paddy-field wading knee-deep in the mud, but the wise man eats the rice." Then he remained silent for some minutes, still reading to himself.

"I see," he remarked, "this matter has been well arranged. Cheong-Chau threatens to take the lives of the foreigners if he does not receive a ransom of twenty thousand dollars before the new moon. It interests me to learn that the money must be hidden before that date in the Glade of Children's Tears, upon the banks of the Sang River. I know the place

well. I even remember the red stone--though I admit I did not know there was a vault beneath that stone. Certainly the matter has been well arranged."

During this soliloquy--for Ling had to all intents and purposes been speaking to himself--Frank could not help regarding the countenances of Ah Wu and Yung How. The expression upon the face of each was suggestive of the most complete disgust. Disappointment and infinite distress were conveyed in every feature. Ling looked at them and burst into laughter.

"Two fools!" he cried. "Had you been wise men you had taken me into your confidence and allowed me a share of the plunder. As it is, you may see not a cent of it. It will be very simple for me to deliver these letters and to keep watch upon the Glade of Children's Tears."

His laughter had disturbed the sleeper, for Men-Ching turned over upon his back and mumbled a few incoherent words in his sleep. Then, still sleeping, he moved a hand to the breast of his coat, to the place where he had carried the letters.

Almost at once he sat bolt upright--wide awake.

"Stolen!" he cried, his hands still clutching at his coat. "Stolen," he repeated.

Then he set eyes upon Ling.

Upon his face an expression of dismay turned, as in a flash, to one of uncontrollable anger. He sprang to his feet, at the same time drawing from his belt a

long curved knife. Though he stood upon the couch itself, he was little taller than Ling. With a savage oath he raised the knife above his head. And then he struck downward, straight for the heart of the gigantic Honanese.

The tragedy that now took place was the work of a few seconds. Men-Ching's wrist was caught. He let out a shriek of pain as that grip of steel tightened under such steady, inevitable pressure that the very wrist-bone was in danger of breaking like a piece of rotted wood. Then he was caught by the throat. He was jerked forward. Something snapped. And then he was thrown down upon the floor--dead. It was all over in an instant.

Frank Armitage was horror-stricken. He had never seen anything so terrible in all his life. And this was murder. And the man who had committed the crime merely shrugged his shoulders.

"Take warning," said he. "Behold the fool who tried to kill me. He who lives by violence comes to a violent end. I had no wish to kill him; he attempted to stab me. I have dealt with him in the same way as I would snuff a tallow candle."

Here Ah Wu fell into a kind of hysterical panic. Wringing his hands together, he worked himself up to such a pitch of emotion that the tears streamed from his eyes.

"What is to become of me?" he cried. "This thing has happened in my house. If the *tao-tai* hears of it I

shall be led to my execution in a potter's yard. Woe is me that such a crime should be committed under my roof!"

Ling laughed.

"You make a great fuss about nothing," said he. "Put him away till darkness falls. Then set him up in a ricksha, place a lighted cigarette between his lips, run him down to the river, and throw him in. Such things have happened before in this city of Canton. You make much of nothing. What was the old scoundrel worth? Not a snap of the finger. And in any case he had but a few years to live."

Ah Wu seated himself upon the couch, immediately above the body of the murdered man. Placing his elbows upon his knees and his head between his hands, he rocked himself from side to side. As for Frank, the whole thing seemed to him like some terrible nightmare. He had lived in China all his life, but he had lived in a different China--a land of comfort and civilisation. This was a world of devilry and crime. And all this time Yung How stood by, motionless, speechless, his face pale with terror.

Ling stooped down and thrust the body under the couch.

"What is death?" he asked. "A sleep--no more. A long sleep in which--for aught we know--the divine spirit roams the eternal heavens. Sweeter by far the adventures of the soul than the dreams that come from opium. A moment since he slept upon the

couch, and now he sleeps beneath it. Why grieve, old fool? Why weep? Men-Ching is already with the spirits of his fathers."

Taking the key from his pocket, he unlocked the door.

"Come," said he. "We will hold converse together; there are many things that I wish to discuss. See that the outer door is locked, that no one is allowed to enter the house. We four will be alone."

CHAPTER XV--OF CHEONG-CHAU'S MESSENGER

To the reader who is unacquainted with China, the conduct of Ling may appear to be highly improbable. In any other country in the world such a crime might be committed, but in no other country would the criminal not be seized with alarm. He would know that there was direct evidence against him and, in consequence, he would be obliged either to fly for his life or else stand his trial on a charge of murder or manslaughter, as the case might be.

In this regard China is unique--a country without police, in which evidence is extremely hard to obtain, no man presuming to testify against his neighbour. Under the old imperial regime there were no real courts of justice beyond the summary jurisdiction exercised by the local government official--the prefect, the *tao-tai* or the viceroy. And so far as we are aware, these very necessary reforms have not yet been instituted in the modern republican China of the twentieth century.

Ling had little or nothing to fear. Men-Ching had no relations who might carry the tale to the viceroy's *yamen*. Both Ah Wu and Yung How had been frightened out of their lives, and the Honanese had

no apprehensions in regard to the unfortunate boy whom he had kidnapped in Sanshui.

In less than a minute after this deed of violence had been accomplished, Ling was sprawled at his great length upon one of the couches in the outer room. There, puffing complacently at a pipe of opium, he appeared to have dismissed the incident from his mind. He was busy making plans for the future. Ah Wu had now sufficiently recovered his composure to attend to the wants of his unwelcome guest. He brought Ling opium; he lighted the spirit-lamp; he rolled opium pills in his fat little fingers.

To all intents and purposes, Ling had taken complete possession of the opium den. He himself might have been the proprietor. He offered Yung How a pipe of opium, which Yung How accepted. He ordered Frank to be seated, and the boy had no option but to obey. Then he delivered himself as follows, addressing himself to Ah Wu.

"Ah Wu," said he, "I desire that you will be so good as to make a complete confession. There are certain details connected with this affair concerning which I am completely in the dark. For instance, who was to go for the treasure to the Glade of Children's Tears?"

"I was," said Ah Wu.

"Alone?"

"No. Yung How was to accompany me." And Ah Wu indicated his Hong-Kong friend by a motion of

the hand. "We were to hire a junk in which to take away the money. We were to be assisted by Men-Ching and another man."

Ling looked across at Yung How and nodded pleasantly.

"And so, my tame cat, your name is Yung How. A fit name for one who washes plates and brushes a foreigner's clothes."

"I do not wash plates," said Yung How; "that is coolies' work."

"I beg your pardon," said Ling. "Since it is beneath your dignity to wash plates I am sorry for you, for presently I propose to eat at Ah Wu's expense. And you shall wash the plates which it shall be my pleasure to use."

Yung How made a wry face, and dropped his eyes to the ground. Frank observed that the man muttered to himself.

The boy was astonished that Yung How had not yet recognised him. Was it possible that he would fail to do so? The thought seemed too good to be true. On the other hand, it was possible that Frank had already been recognised, that Yung How knew who he was, and had managed to conceal his surprise. The average Chinese is quite capable of such extraordinary self-control. The boy's train of thought was interrupted by Ling, who took up the thread of his cross-examination.

"And so," said he, "you, Ah Wu, and Yung How,

were to go together to the Glade of Children's Tears, having first ascertained that the neighbourhood was safe, that the foreigners in Hong-Kong had not thought fit to send armed men to capture you?"

"That is so," said Ah Wu.

"And the money was to be brought here by river?"

Ah Wu nodded. "To Canton," said he.

"Where Cheong-Chau would come by night, giving you your share and taking the rest back with him to Pinglo, to divide amongst his gang?"

Ah Wu nodded again.

"A simple business," said Ling. "A well-laid plot that has come to grief. Well, I am generous. My soul is of honey. I am soft of heart. You will find me a better master than Cheong-Chau. I can be generous to those who help me, as I know how to deal with those who declare themselves my enemies." And he jerked a finger in the direction of the little room beneath the stairs.

"Do you mean," asked Yung How, "that you propose to buy our silence?"

The man rose upon his couch like a bearded lion.

"I mean nothing of the sort," he cried. "Go to the viceroy if you will and tell him that you saw Ling take the life of Men-Ching in the opium den of Ah Wu--say I murdered the man. It will be a lie, I tell you. He attempted to stab me and I killed him in self-

defence. Still you are free to go to the *yamen* with any tale you like, and when you have fulfilled your errand, I tell you frankly, upon the word of a man who holds the truth as sacred, that you shall not live for forty-eight hours. That is the manner of man I am, and that is the way in which I buy your silence."

Yung How did not move a muscle of his face.

"Then I fail to understand you," said he.

"I will make my meaning plainer," said the other. "This afternoon I send these letters to Hong-Kong by post, by the night boat. They will arrive to-morrow morning. In two--or at the most three--days, the ransom will be paid: twenty thousand dollars will be conveyed by some means from Hong-Kong to the Glade of Children's Tears. I think no soldiers will be sent because the Englishman in his letter has expressly stated that such a course would not be wise."

At that moment there came a loud, persistent rapping on the outer door, which Ah Wu had already locked. Ling at once ceased talking, but it is a singular fact that he was the only one of the four of them who showed no signs of being alarmed. They sat in silence, listening for several minutes, during which time the knocking upon the door continued. It was Ling who was the first to speak.

"Who is there?" he asked, addressing himself to Ah Wu.

"I have no idea," replied Ah Wu.

Ling got to his feet, strolled across the room, and drawing the curtains, unbolted the door. On opening it he beheld, standing before him upon the threshold, a man dressed in the scarlet coat of Cheong-Chau's brigand band.

"What do you want?" asked Ling.

"Men-Ching," said the man.

"And who, may I ask, is Men-Ching?"

"He is a friend of mine."

"He is not here," said Ling. "You can come in, if you like, and see for yourself."

The man entered the opium den, advancing down the centre of the room. Frank recognised him at once: he was the man who had accompanied Men-Ching upon his journey from the mountains. He went straight up to Ah Wu, to whom he bowed, folding his hands in accordance with the custom of his nation.

"You, I believe, are Ah Wu?" he asked. "You are the landlord of this establishment?"

"I am," said Ah Wu.

"I come for a friend of mine, Men-Ching by name. I think you know him. He told me he would be here."

"He is not here," said Ah Wu, who, palpably nervous, from time to time glanced in the direction of Ling.

"That is strange," said the man. "He certainly told me that I should find him here. Can you tell me where he is?"

Ah Wu shook his head. "I cannot say," said he.

The man looked perplexed. He stood for a moment stroking his chin, as if he was undecided what to do. Then Ling laid one of his great hands upon the man's shoulder.

"I will tell you where he is," said he. "He left here in great haste--and unexpectedly. He has gone upon a journey--a long journey. He did not say where he was going, for two reasons: firstly, he had no time to tell us; secondly, I do not believe he knew. And so, my friend, we can give you no information likely to be of value. Who are we, that we should know all things, that we should be able to solve the riddles of the universe? We are poor mortals, with little wisdom and great hopes. We arrange our lives in accordance with our own ideas, and those ideas are but guess-work, the product of imagination. We know nothing. We live in the dark. The printed page of the book of mysteries lies open before us, but we are blind and unable to read. Could I soar higher than an eagle, traversing the eternal plains of space, I might be able to tell you something of Men-Ching. As it is, I cannot." And Ling, with a shrug of the shoulders, turned away.

The man regarded his broad back in amazement. He could make neither head nor tail of what he had been told. And at the same time he was in a dilemma: he could do nothing without Men-Ching; in a great city like Canton--with which he was not well

acquainted--he had no idea where to look for him.

"It is of the greatest importance," said he, "that I find Men-Ching without delay. I have news for him."

Ling whipped round at once.

"News," he exclaimed. "I tell you, my good man, you may be perfectly frank with us. We are in the secret."

"You are!" cried the man.

"All four of us," said Ling, whose capacity for falsehood appeared to be in proportion to his other faculties.

The man looked in surprise from Ling to Ah Wu, from Yung How to Frank.

"I see you doubt me," continued Ling. "Permit me to enlighten you. You are one of Cheong-Chau's band--that is evident from your coat. You came south with Men-Ching in order to convey certain letters to Hong-Kong. Cheong-Chau demands a ransom of twenty thousand dollars as the price of the lives of three European prisoners whom he holds in his hands. This sum of money is to be conveyed by junk, before the new moon, to the Glade of Children's Tears. It has already been arranged between my very good friend, Cheong-Chau, and Men-Ching, that we four, accompanied by Men-Ching himself, proceed to the Glade of Children's Tears in order to take possession of the money. I am surprised that Men-Ching did not inform you of all this. I presume you no longer doubt me?"

"I cannot doubt you," said the man. "You know more of the matter than myself. I was aware that Cheong-Chau had agents in Canton, but I was never informed who they were. Perhaps you will be so good as to advise me what to do."

Ling stroked his black moustache. He appeared to be deep in thought.

"If I were you," said he, "I should leave the matter in Men-Ching's hands. He cannot be far away. If I were you I should return at once to Cheong-Chau."

"That is not necessary," said the man.

Ling looked up quickly, lifting his eyebrows. For a moment his eyes flashed, suggesting something of the fierce sudden intelligence of a beast of prey that scents its quarry.

"How do you mean?" he rapped out.

"It is not necessary," said the man, "that I return to Cheong-Chau, for the simple reason that Cheong-Chau himself has come to me."

Ling closed his mouth with a snap.

"Ah!" he exclaimed. "So Cheong-Chau is--in Canton?"

"He approaches Canton," said the man. "That is the information that I desired to give to Men-Ching."

"He approaches Canton," repeated Ling. "This is indeed interesting! And can you tell me why Cheong-Chau approaches Canton?"

"Yes," said the man. "One of his prisoners has

escaped."

At the word Frank Armitage caught his breath. With a great effort of will he managed to control himself. He stared hard at the opium bowl, filled with the sticky, treacle-like substance, that was immediately in front of him.

The boy felt like a helpless bird, imprisoned in a cage of poisonous snakes. He could not be blind to the peril in which he stood. Hardly a minute passed when it was not made evident to him that his life hung upon a thread. At any moment he might be discovered, and then, in the hands of such a man as Ling, he could hope for little mercy.

"What you tell me interests me vastly," said Ling, still addressing himself to the brigand. "You have no idea how annoyed I am. And so one of the prisoners has escaped! I think you had best return to Cheong-Chau, taking with you a written message from my friend, Ah Wu."

Ah Wu looked up at Ling in something like despair. The fat proprietor of the opium den, at that moment, bitterly regretted that he had ever had anything to do with the business. He feared Cheong-Chau, but he was terrified of Ling. He now found himself between the hammer and the anvil.

"What do you wish me to do?" he asked, in a weak voice. "What sort of a message am I to send to Cheong-Chau?"

"Tell him the truth," said Ling. "Tell him that

Men-Ching called here this morning, and soon afterwards departed unexpectedly, in a great hurry. Say that you presume he has gone to Hong-Kong. He told you, I believe, that the letters were safe."

And even as Ling said these words he placed one of his hands upon the pocket of his coat--and they all heard the crinkling sound of the stiff rice paper upon which the letters had been written. Both Yung How and Frank regarded Ling in astonishment. The man was beyond doubt an accomplished and unmitigated villain. He was never at a loss. As for Ah Wu, very meekly he crossed the room to the writing-desk where he kept his accounts. There he wrote a letter, handling with skill the long Chinese ink-brush. And as he wrote Ling strolled up to him, glanced over his shoulder, and strolled away. Then Ah Wu folded the letter and sealed it and gave it to Cheong-Chau's man, who a few moments afterwards left the opium den.

No sooner was he gone than Ling bolted the door and came back quickly into the room.

"This," said he, "is going to be a touch-and-go affair. It will be an open question now who gets to the Glade first: Cheong-Chau or I. You three shall help me. I take it, you prefer to be on the winning side. I shall need the assistance of every one of you. You will have your fair share of the plunder, more than you would have got from Cheong-Chau--I promise you that. But I have warned you once, and I

warn you again: play me false, and I deal with you as I dealt with Men-Ching. It is already late in the afternoon. There is much to be done to-night. Ah Wu, you must keep the place closed; you must put up a notice outside saying that no customers will be admitted. Tell me, is there a back entrance?"

Ah Wu nodded his head.

"Good!" exclaimed Ling. "You and I must get the body of that fool out of the way. We shall be able to do that as soon as it is dark. As for these two, they can remain here till we return. I care not how many men Cheong-Chau has brought with him. I know how to settle him. The man is an opium fiend, and by opium he shall fall. Now then, Ah Wu, are we to be friends or foes?"

"Friends," said Ah Wu.

"Then swear friendship."

And Ah Wu swore, with a hand uplifted, by the Five Sacred Books.

And then Yung How swore fidelity to Ling, who rounded upon Frank.

"And you, my little smooth-faced infant, whom I have truly taken to my heart, you have not told me yet your name?"

"Ah Li," said Frank, who for some time had been prepared for such a question.

"And you also swear?"

And Frank swore, following the example of Ah Wu and Yung How, and using the same words to be

faithful to the mighty Ling. And as he made the declaration he satisfied his conscience that he attached no more importance to the words than did Ling to the life of the man whom he had killed.

CHAPTER XVI--OF THE REPENTANCE OF YUNG HOW

Thus it was that they became the unwilling servants of Ling. They had no option but to obey him. By reason of his gigantic strength, Ling was the master of the situation.

Ah Wu was as crafty as a fox. All his life he had been connected with the opium business; and an opium den is a place where a Chinese may gain a very intimate knowledge of his fellow-men. He learns much in connection with human character. Whatever may have been the feelings of Frank Armitage and Yung How, the proprietor of the opium den had not the least doubt that in agreeing to follow Ling they had taken the wisest course.

During the few hours that elapsed between the departure of the brigand and sunset, they were given a further opportunity of observing the singular abilities of this inhuman monster. There is no doubt that the man might have succeeded in almost any walk of life. His plans were not only elaborate, and so carefully laid that they allowed for almost every possible contingency, but they were made rapidly without a moment's hesitation.

In the course of the afternoon Ah Wu's three

attendants arrived, gaining entrance into the opium den by means of the back door. These were sent upon various errands, from which they could not possibly return until after dark. As soon as Ling himself had conveyed the mortal remains of the unfortunate Men-Ching from the opium den, the place was to be open, customers were to be admitted. These customers were to be entertained by Yung How until Ah Wu himself returned. The establishment was to remain open, day and night, throughout the next few days. Ling made no secret of his intention to decoy Cheong-Chau to the opium den, where he was to be drugged, whilst Ling gained possession of the ransom, which by that time should have arrived from Hong-Kong.

About the middle of the afternoon Ling went out, and was absent about twenty minutes. This in itself is sufficient proof of the self-confidence of the man. It was within the power of Ah Wu, Yung How, or the youth who had called himself "Ah Li," to betray him. These three were left alone in the opium den with the horrid evidence of Ling's guilt.

During his absence, Ling posted his letters. The night boat left Canton at eight o'clock, and Ling himself took the letters on board. He returned to the opium den, and was admitted at the back door by Ah Wu himself. He did not seem in the least curious as to whether they had been discussing him whilst he was away.

Soon after nightfall, Ling and Ah Wu departed on their gruesome errand, taking with them the body of Men-Ching. This they secreted under the hood of a double ricksha, and Ah Wu, much to his dismay, was made to seat himself beside a lifeless companion. As for Ling, he stripped himself to the waist, coiled his pigtail round the top of his head, after the manner of a coolie, and himself drew the ricksha through the dark, narrow streets of the great city. Frank and Yung How stood at the small back door of the opium den when Ling took his departure. They heard the wheels rattling over the cobble-stones of the streets, and then the ricksha disappeared in the darkness, and with it that which had formerly been Men-Ching, Cheong-Chau's second-in-command.

Yung How and Frank returned to the main room, where they lighted the lamps, and shortly afterwards the three attendants returned. The establishment was then opened, and it was not long before customers began to arrive. Most of these were regular patrons of Ah Wu's, who knew how to look after themselves. Having ordered what they wanted, they disposed themselves on couches in the lower room. There they smoked opium, drank *samshu*, and nodded off to sleep.

Frank regarded Yung How. The man lay upon a couch; his arms were folded; he was staring blankly in front of him, thinking possibly of Ling and how that villain had placed himself between Yung How

and a fortune. For there could be little doubt that, under the original arrangement, Yung How was to be treated handsomely, and the man attached little or no value to Ling's promise. It does not necessarily follow that one rogue will trust another.

Frank, as he looked at the man, was busy with his thoughts. Two things were evident to him: first, that Yung How had not recognised him and that he was now scarcely likely to do so; second, that he might be persuaded to operate against Ling--provided he could do so without great personal risk.

Now in order not to overestimate the boldness of the step which Frank Armitage then and there proposed to take, it is necessary to realise that the boy could see no other way out of his difficulties, to remember that not only his own life but the lives of Mr Waldron and his uncle depended upon his success, and to remember also that he stood in no fear of Yung How, whom he had known since he was a child.

It was above all things necessary for Frank to communicate with Hong-Kong if he could not go there himself. The moment Ling left the opium den it occurred to Frank that he might write a letter. He could not, however, do this without being observed by Yung How, who had received strict orders from Ling not to allow the boy out of his sight for a single moment. Frank therefore decided to play a bold card; but he would never have taken a step so hazardous

had he not had something more than an inkling that he was likely to meet with success. He crossed the room to the couch upon which Yung How was lying, and asked the man if he would be so good as to accompany him to the balcony at the head of the stairs.

"I have something of the greatest importance to say to you," said he. "It may be to your advantage as well as mine."

Yung How looked at him in surprise, then got to his feet, and walked slowly up the stairs, followed by Frank.

They seated themselves, side by side, upon a couch in a darkened corner. Now that Frank found himself confronted by the greatest crisis in all his strange adventures, he hesitated to begin. Several minutes elapsed before he could speak, and he did not do so then without a word of encouragement.

"Well?" asked Yung How.

"I am surprised, Yung How," said Frank, "that you have not recognised me."

Yung How knitted his brows, and drawing away from the boy, turned and stared at him. Frank Armitage did not move.

"I should have thought," he added, "you would have known me."

Yung How's voice came in a kind of gasp.

"Master Frank!" he exclaimed.

The boy smiled. It was as much as he could do,

but he managed it somehow, knowing full well that everything depended upon his presence of mind. He had learned something from Ling.

"Are you blind, Yung How?" he asked.

"I did not know you," said the man, who had not yet recovered from his astonishment. "The shaven head! The pigtail! Your clothes! Besides, you are the last person I expected to see. I thought you hundreds of miles away."

"So I was," said Frank. "I escaped."

"Ah! It was you who escaped! I did not think of that." Then he lowered his voice. "But why have you told me?"

"Because, Yung How, though you have behaved like a rascal, I cannot believe you to be such a villain that you would allow my uncle, who has been a good master to you for years, to be murdered."

Yung How was silent for more than a minute.

"That is true," said he; "that is very true."

"I suppose you realise," Frank went on, "that if I remain here, Ling may gain possession of the ransom, and in that case both my uncle and Mr Waldron will be killed. You know also that, if you betray me to Ling, I shall be killed. Do you remember, Yung How, when I was a little boy who had only just learned to walk, you used to take me up to the top of the Peak, and we would walk upon the asphalt paths, and you would tell me Chinese fairy tales? I remember them to this day. Then, it

was you who taught me to speak your language. Do you remember when the plague came to Hong-Kong, and people were dying in the streets? Have you forgotten that you too fell ill, and my uncle himself carried you in his arms and sent you in a chair to the hospital? Have you forgotten that?"

The face of Yung How had grown very serious. Slowly he shook his head.

"My master," said he, "I have not forgotten."

"You had the plague," said Frank, "and my uncle took you in his arms. In doing so, he risked his life to save yours."

"That is true," said the Chinaman, who sat quite still and rigid, staring straight in front of him.

"Is there no gratitude," said Frank, "in all the Chinese race?"

There was again a long pause; and then Yung How quite suddenly fell down upon his knees. Clenching both his fists, he raised them high above his head, shaking them violently, as if he suffered anguish.

"Oh, how blind am I!" he cried. "Opium has done this. Opium, my young master, has brought me here. You smoke a little and it is good; your troubles vanish, your pains are no more, your dreams are sweet. Then you must take more, until, at last, you smoke all night, in order to forget the troubles of this world. And all that costs money. There comes a time when even ten dollars will not secure the treasures,

the delights of opium. The craving was strong upon me, and all my money had gone, when I heard that my master was about to undertake a journey to the Nan-ling Mountains. I knew that I could get into communication with Cheong-Chau through Ah Wu. I knew also that Cheong-Chau would give me a good share of the ransom. I thought there would be no harm in it. I was assured that no one should suffer death. And now I am filled with remorse when I think of what has happened, when I think of this man, Ling, and realise that the lives of us all hang upon a thread. I have had my fill of opium. I want no more of it. Believe me, my young master, I am prostrate with grief!"

It was fortunate that there was no one else on the balcony, for not only was Yung How's emotion great, but he had raised his voice, and had there been anyone near at hand, he must have been overheard. Frank realised, with a sense of relief, that he had nothing to fear from the man, that Yung How would not betray him. He saw also that Yung How must master himself before Ling returned. The boy stretched forth a hand and touched the Chinese upon the chest.

"Listen, Yung How," said he, "you need not despair. With your help, I believe, we can not only escape ourselves but save my uncle and Mr Waldron. Ling watches me. Without your help I can do nothing. But you have friends in Canton; it should be

possible for you to get a message through to Hong-Kong. To-morrow morning Cheong-Chau's letter will be delivered to the Governor. The ransom will be paid, but Ling will get hold of it if troops are not sent down to capture him. This message should go to Hong-Kong to-night. The boat leaves at eight o'clock. It is now half-past seven."

Yung How sprang to his feet.

"We have delayed matters too long," he cried. "Why should not we two escape at once without wasting a moment?"

Frank grasped the man's hand and pressed it. "I promise you my uncle will forgive you. More than that, on his behalf, I promise you a reward."

"That is not necessary," said Yung How. "I am disgraced; you have made me realise my own baseness. I should like you to see that a Chinaman can be an honest man. But, I repeat, we do but waste time in words. We must go together and we must go now--at once--if we are to catch the boat!"

Even as he continued speaking, he moved forward rapidly, followed by Frank. They passed hastily down the stairs, and thence, passing the little room in which Men-Ching had been done to death, they went to the back door, with the object of letting themselves out.

As Frank Armitage stretched forth a hand to take hold of the handle, the door swung back, as on its own accord. And there entered Ling, who had to

stoop in order that his gigantic form might pass beneath the lintel.

"And so," cried Ling, "we have returned. Men-Ching sleeps with his fathers. As the West River flows eastward to the sea, the waters sing a song of sleep to the celestial graves on either bank. Opium, Ah Wu! Give me opium to smoke, for like the long-tailed horse of a Manchu warrior, the mighty Ling scents battle from afar."

CHAPTER XVII--HOW LING WAS TOO LATE

It was, with Ling, something in the nature of a pose to speak after the fashion of the scholars, using the flowery language of the writers of poesy, or quoting the philosophical maxims of the sages. None the less, the moment he entered the opium den, though he spoke of other things, it was apparent both to Frank Armitage and Yung How that Ling had detected the fact that they were about to make their escape.

In his customary boisterous manner, the great Honanese ushered them into the room. Ascending the stairs, he sprawled at full length upon the couch upon which Frank had been seated but a few moments before, when Yung How made his confession.

"At last," said Ling, "Cheong-Chau and myself are to meet. He knows me of old. This will not be the first time that I have snatched the ripe fruit from his mouth. Cheong-Chau has no cause to love me. I have heard it said that he regards me as his deadly enemy, the only man who ever foiled him."

He puffed at the opium pipe which Ah Wu had brought him. The amount of the drug that the man consumed was extraordinary, and moreover, it

seemed to have very little effect upon either his physical or mental constitution. As he sent thin clouds of blue smoke upward to the ceiling, in the close, stifling atmosphere of the room, he half closed his eyes, and appeared to be lost in his thoughts.

"Well," said he, "I have no fear of Cheong-Chau and all his rascals. I shall win. There is little doubt as to that. The wolf cannot stand before the tiger. Therefore you would be wise to side with me. If the wolf shows his teeth, he goes the way of Men-Ching. And thither go all who oppose me. For your own guidance, I advise you to remember this."

He opened his eyes and fixed them upon Yung How, who stood at hand. Yung How did not flinch. He was as calm and dignified as usual. Indeed, for a few moments only had Frank seen him otherwise, and then he had appeared absolutely carried away by anguish and remorse. It occurred to Frank how strange it was that a man who, as a general rule, was outwardly so calm and collected should be capable of such deep-seated and demonstrative emotion. However, the Chinese are an inexplicable race, as Frank knew well enough. He regarded Yung How, and was delighted to observe that the man never faltered in his honest resolution before the steady, piercing gaze of the implacable Honanese.

"I desire to know," said Ling, "where you two were going as I chanced to enter."

Yung How did not answer a word. He continued

to look Ling straight in the face.

"Very well," said Ling, "you need not tell me. I have a shrewd suspicion that you were up to no good. I shall take the necessary precautions and ask you, for the sake of your own welfare, to remember my warning."

He disposed himself as if for sleep, throwing back his head upon the pillow. Ah Wu busied himself about the establishment, entertaining his guests, of whom there were now many, and seeing that his assistants went about their duties. As for Frank and Yung How, they lay down upon couches on the balcony, the former because he was thoroughly tired, and felt that he required a rest.

Suddenly Ling sat up, and cried out that he was hungry. Shouting down into the room below, he ordered one of Ah Wu's men to bring him food, and then turned to Yung How.

"And you shall wait on me," he declared. "I have heard it said that you have a great reputation in Hong-Kong, that you squeeze even ricksha coolies for copper cash and make more money than a comprador. You shall attend to my wants; and when I have eaten all that I desire, you shall--as I promised you--wash up the bowls and plates."

Presently one of Ah Wu's assistants mounted the staircase, carrying in his hands a large tray upon which was a number of Chinese dishes. The tray was set down upon a small table at which Yung How was

ordered to preside, handing the mighty Ling whatever dish he might call for.

Now Yung How had made up his mind to escape, and even as he waited upon Ling he took careful stock of his surroundings. He knew that he could not rely upon any help from Ah Wu, who was now hand and glove with the Honanese. He had noticed that Ah Wu had locked the back door, putting the key in one of his pockets. There was a clock in the room, towards which Yung How repeatedly carried his eyes. It was twenty minutes to eight. Yung How had, indeed, very little time if he was to make good his escape and catch the Hong-Kong boat. He could not very well cross the room, and go out by the main entrance, because Ling would certainly see him and follow in pursuit. The man was beginning to despair when he observed a window at the farther end of the balcony.

This window was closed, but it might be possible to open it. Also, since the floor of the lower room was somewhat below the level of the street, the window could not be far from the ground. The difficulty that confronted Yung How was how to reach the window without arousing the suspicions of Ling.

Now Yung How, like the majority of his countrymen, was by no means devoid of inventive powers. The Chinaman is an adept at finding an excuse, and it must be confessed that the device of

Yung How was ingenious.

In handing a small bowl of rice to Ling, the man purposely knocked over the small opium spirit-lamp which stood burning upon the table by the side of the couch upon which Ling was lying. This nearly resulted in a general conflagration that might have destroyed the whole establishment. The oil ran out, and set fire to the dry matting with which the floors were carpeted; and this burned like tinder-wood, the fire running with rapidity along the balcony and filling the whole place with smoke.

Ling, springing to his feet, utilised one of the cushions of the couch to smother the fire. Frank was not slow to follow his example, and Ah Wu and several men from the lower room, hastening up the steps, resorted to various means to quench the fire, or at least to hold it in check.

For the best part of a minute the whole place was uproar and confusion. Those who were already asleep from the effects of opium were awakened by cries of "Fire!" One or two in alarm left the establishment by the main entrance, spreading the report in the city that Ah Wu's opium den had actually been burned to the ground.

Long before that Yung How had made the most of his opportunity. At the moment when the danger was most imminent, when the attention of both Ling and Ah Wu was fully engaged, the man passed unseen to the window, which he opened. Leaning

over the sill and looking down, he satisfied himself that it was not more than twelve feet to the ground. As quick as thought he crawled through, hung for a moment at the full extent of his arms, and then dropped to the street. Instantly he set off running as fast as he could in the direction of Shamien.

When the fire was extinguished, Ling gave vent to his feelings, cursing Yung How for his carelessness and folly. However, he had not unburdened himself of more than a few sentences when, to his astonishment and indescribable wrath, he discovered that Yung How was gone. Seeing the opened window, he rushed to it, and looked out. Beyond there was nothing but darkness, an unlighted by-street, not more than two or three yards in width.

Ling descended the stairs like an infuriated tiger. Quite suddenly he came to a halt in the middle of the room. Thence he returned up the staircase, four steps at a time, at the top of which he encountered Frank. He seized the boy by the throat, and then, lifting him off his feet, tucked him under an arm, as a man might carry a hen.

He again descended the stairs, unlocked the door of the little room, threw the boy inside, and locked the door upon him. A moment later, he was in the street, rushing forward at such a tempestuous rate that he cleared all obstructions from his path. He thrust an empty ricksha aside with such violence that he broke the shafts. He knocked over three men:

a fat old merchant, a beggar, and a blind man. He killed a duck by crushing it underfoot, and finding his way barred by a pig, he picked it up and threw it over a wall, the animal squealing in terror.

Gaining the narrow creek that separates Shamien from the main part of the city, Ling dashed across the bridge of boats. That night the few Europeans who were walking along the *bund* in front of the hotel and the club beheld the remarkable apparition of a Chinese giant who charged forward like a madman, his long pigtail flying out behind him, making in the direction of the harbour.

On a sudden, Ling stopped dead. His headlong course had been arrested by a peculiar sound, or rather combination of sounds, the explanation of which was not difficult to seek. There was the shrill whistle of a siren and the sound of large paddles violently thrashing the water.

Almost at once, the Hong-Kong boat hove in sight. The decks were ablaze with light. Upon the bridge, Ling could distinguish both the Chinese pilot and the English captain.

"Hi!" he shouted. "I have missed the ship. If you slow down and lower a rope I can come on board from a *sampan*."

He spoke in excellent English. There is no doubt that the captain both heard and understood him, for Ling received his answer.

"Too late, my friend!" shouted the captain. "We

sail to time, and if you're not here it's your own fault. You'll have to wait till to-morrow--eight o'clock in the morning."

Ling's answer was neither in the English language nor at the top of his voice. It was in Cantonese, and as a matter of fact it cannot be translated. And if it could be translated, no one would print it. For Ling had not failed to observe Yung How, standing alone upon the upper deck.

CHAPTER XVIII--OF THE SPIDER AND THE WEB

When Frank was thrown into the little room beneath the stairs, and heard the key turn upon him, he at first believed himself to be in utter darkness. But very soon his eyes became accustomed to the dim light that emanated from several cracks in the woodwork.

These cracks were in the stairs that led from the lower room to the balcony. The opium den was, of course, well illumined by several paraffin lamps. The little room in which Frank was imprisoned extended from the foot of the staircase to the back wall, the staircase itself forming the ceiling, which was in consequence only about three feet high at one end of the room, and about twelve feet high at the other. Now it so happened that the largest crack was at the lower end of the room, and Frank Armitage was not slow to discover that, by placing his eye to this, he could see quite easily into the opium den.

When he looked into the outer room he was able to observe several opium smokers, and Ah Wu himself, who was seated at his desk at the doorway. There was, however, no sign of Ling, and Frank rightly concluded that the Honanese must have left

the establishment in pursuit of Yung How.

There could be no doubt upon this point; for not only could the boy see, but he was able to hear quite distinctly, the woodwork of which the small room was constructed being extraordinarily thin. If Ling had been either upon the balcony or in the lower room Frank must have heard him; for the man seldom spoke without raising his voice to such a pitch that he might have been giving a word of command to a regiment of cavalry.

Fully an hour elapsed before the Honanese returned. He was then in a towering rage. He called for Ah Wu, who chanced to be absent in the kitchen. Frank heard Ling inform the proprietor of the opium den that Yung How had escaped on the Hong-Kong boat. Both men then repaired to Ah Wu's private apartments, where they remained for the greater part of the night, Ah Wu occasionally looking in upon the opium den to see that his business prospered.

Until about eleven o'clock the following morning, Frank Armitage was left to his thoughts; and these were none of the pleasantest. He was suffering considerable discomfort. It was a long time since he had had any food; and the great heat and stifling atmosphere of the opium den, together with the pungent smell of the smoke, had served to make him so thirsty that his lips were dry and his tongue clave to the roof of his mouth. He regretted bitterly that he had not been able to escape with Yung How.

He felt that he could not stand the extreme suspense of his situation much longer. It seemed to him inevitable that before long Ling would discover who he was.

This was all the more probable, since--according to Ling--Cheong-Chau himself was coming to the opium den. The brigand would be far more likely than anyone else to recognise Frank--because he knew which of his prisoners had escaped, and had evidently come south in order to hunt for the fugitive.

Frank was seized with a great dread that Cheong-Chau had already made away with his other prisoners, that he had murdered both Sir Thomas Armitage and Mr Waldron. There was a possibility, on the other hand, that he had brought his captives with him, which he might have done quite easily on board a river-junk. Knowing full well that he could not hope to obtain the ransom if Sir Thomas and Mr Waldron were known to be dead, he may have decided to send further evidence to Hong-Kong to the effect that his hostages were still alive. On thinking the matter over, Frank was inclined to the belief that this was what had actually happened.

There was another aspect of the business which demanded consideration. It was now Cheong-Chau's intention to go himself to the Glade of Children's Tears, in order to procure the money as soon as it arrived. This, as we know, was a privilege that the

mighty Ling had chosen to reserve for himself; and so a meeting between these two redoubtable villains was sooner or later inevitable. Cheong-Chau would have upon his side the advantage of numbers. Ling, on the other hand, was in possession of the more accurate information: he knew Cheong-Chau's whereabouts and his intentions, whilst Cheong-Chau knew nothing about him; he knew also that Yung How had escaped to Hong-Kong and that intervention by the British was by no means improbable--a circumstance of which the brigand chieftain remained in ignorance.

That night Frank endeavoured to work out every possible contingency, until his brain grew dizzy with thinking. At last, dead tired, feeling sick with suspense, hunger and thirst, with such a splitting headache resulting from the foul atmosphere of the den that he could hardly open his eyes, he flung himself down upon the couch and almost at once fell fast asleep.

In the boy's last waking thoughts he found some degree of comfort. He had come to realise that he himself could do nothing. He was at the mercy of fate, in the hands of Providence--just as helpless as a wisp of straw carried down-stream upon the current of a river. So far as his own safety was concerned, he had come to such a pass that it might almost be said that he no longer regarded it. To himself it did not seem a matter of supreme importance whether he

lived or died. He had not given up hope, but physical exhaustion and mental strain had done their work.

During the earlier hours of the night his sleep was disturbed and restless. He was conscious all the time of the voices of men talking in the outer room, and these voices were in some way mingled with his dreams, which were nothing but a series of nightmares, in which the sinister figure of the colossal Ling was ever present--Ling with his great hands and brute strength, his long glistening pigtail, his evil, snake-like eyes, his rude jokes, his loud laughter, and the half-mocking, half-serious manner in which he quoted from the writings of the great Chinese philosophers. But, given a fair chance, a sane, healthy and youthful constitution will in the end triumph over both mental and bodily disorders, and towards the small hours of the morning the boy fell into a heavy, dreamless sleep, from which he was not awakened until Ling unlocked the door of the little room about eleven o'clock in the morning.

The Honanese regarded his captive for some moments without speaking.

"You have slept well?" he asked.

"I have slept well," said Frank.

"They say," said Ling, "that sound sleep is a sign of a pure conscience. I myself am in the habit of sleeping like a child. And yet," he added, in a doubtful voice, "I am half of opinion that I ought to put you out of the world."

"You are free to do as you wish," said Frank.

"I thank you," said Ling. "I am aware of it."

"At the same time," said the other, "I beg to remind you that I am not here of my own free will. I did not ask to accompany you; you can scarcely say that I intruded. You kidnapped me and demanded that I should assist you. I did so to the best of my ability. I confess I had no other alternative. That does not alter the fact that had you left me to mind my own affairs I should not have interfered with you. You told me a great deal about yourself. I did not ask you to. You brought me here, where in my presence you committed a crime----"

"No, no," Ling interposed. "You do me a great injustice. I have committed no crime. I did but defend my life. I usually do so with success."

"Have it your own way," said Frank, who now--for some reason or other--felt bolder in the man's presence that he had ever felt before. "It is not a matter that concerns me. A few days ago I had neither seen nor heard of you. It was a misfortune for me that I encountered you that morning upon the wharf at Sanshui. You have no right to detain me. I have no valuables upon me, but a few copper *cash*. If you want them you can take them. You are welcome to what I have. I ask but one thing: to be allowed to go free, to go about my own affairs."

"That is well spoken," said Ling. "I admit I am fond of you. I think I have told you already that I

have admitted you into the innermost chamber of my heart. Had I a son, I would that he were such as you. I would bring him up in the way that he should go. I would not entrust his education to the *literati* of China. I would teach him myself."

"To be a robber?" asked Frank.

"Robbery," said Ling, "is a profession. I think that education should be regarded merely as a groundwork, a kind of foundation upon which to build. A man should be left to discover his own talents. His natural inclinations will not lead him astray. One man will make a good priest, another a good pirate. An excellent *scroff* may make a fool of himself as a schoolmaster. You cannot grow mangoes upon a cherry-tree, neither will a river fish live in the salt water. I would teach you, my son, the divine philosophies of China; I would instruct you in astronomy, music and mathematics. Then, when you were grown up, you would be able to fend for yourself. It would be all one to me whether you were a government prefect, a mandarin of the Red Button, or a brigand like Cheong-Chau, whom I hope to meet this evening."

"I see," said Frank, "that you would confer many favours upon my humble self. I ask but one small boon--to be allowed to go away from this place where you have thought fit to imprison me."

"And that is the one request," said Ling, "that I am unable to grant. It so happens that I want you."

"Why?"

"Our friend, Ah Wu, has gone away. He has gone upon a visit to Cheong-Chau. Cheong-Chau and he are old friends; they are brother pigs, who have eaten many a time from the same trough. Ah Wu will bring Cheong-Chau here. Cheong-Chau is a great opium smoker, and, as all Canton is well aware, no better opium can be obtained in the city than that which is sold by Ah Wu. So Cheong-Chau will come."

"And what has this to do with me?' asked Frank.

"It has a great deal to do with you," said the other, "for, in the meantime, I am left in charge of this establishment; hence, for the second time, I need your assistance. Cheong-Chau knows me very well by sight. He would not remain in this place two seconds if he saw me when he entered. Therefore, once again, I must hide."

"Where?" asked Frank.

"There is a small storeroom between the curtains and the outer door. There I shall be. Thence I shall be able to see everyone who enters or who leaves. There will be no other way of exit, for the back door will be locked and I shall have the key. When Cheong-Chau enters you are to attend to his wants. When he asks for opium to smoke, you are to take it to him; but you are to come to me for it, and the opium which I will give you will be drugged. That is all you have to do. It will be very simple. You cannot hope to escape, for I myself guard the outer door,

and I shall be armed with the revolver that I took from Yung How. I need hardly tell you that, if necessity arises, I shall shoot."

Frank realised at once that this plan of Ling's involved the utmost peril for himself. It was probable that Cheong-Chau, when he came, would recognise the fugitive. What the result of this would be, Frank dared not imagine. On the other hand, he saw no way of escaping from Ling. It was as if the boy was no more than a fly which had been caught in the meshes of the huge net woven by this implacable and terrible spider.

Throughout the whole of that day, he was kept busily employed in the opium den, brushing the couches, sweeping the floor and cleaning the spirit-lamps. He was given food to eat, and plenty of green tea to drink, which had the effect of getting rid of his headache. And all the time he was working he endeavoured to collect his thoughts; he tried to think of some definite plan of action. But rack his brain as he might, he could see no way out of his difficulties. He could think of no means of staving off the calamity which was impending.

During the afternoon the den began to fill. Customers continually dropped in, some to smoke opium, others to purchase it and take it away. At nightfall, there was about a dozen people in the place, and when the clock which was suspended upon the railings of the balcony struck the hour of

ten, the voice of Ah Wu was heard without the main entrance. Immediately afterwards, the fat proprietor entered, accompanied by Cheong-Chau, the brigand chief.

CHAPTER XIX--HOW LING READ CONFUCIUS

Frank, who feared instinctively that the worst would happen, retreated hastily to the other end of the room. There he busied himself with vigorously sweeping the floor, until he was summoned by Ah Wu to attend to the wants of the new-comer.

The boy's heart was beating violently. It was as much as he could do to lift his eyes from the ground to meet those of the redoubtable brigand from whose clutches he had so recently escaped; and when at last he did so, he was more than ever dismayed to perceive that Cheong-Chau was attended by three of his ruffians, whom Frank knew well by sight.

As in a flash, the boy reviewed the circumstances of the predicament in which he found himself. He saw no hope that he could avoid detection. Even if Cheong-Chau himself failed to recognise the fugitive--a very unlikely contingency--one of the other three would be almost sure to do so. It must be remembered that the boy had not disguised his features. His identity was but thinly veiled by the Chinese clothes he was wearing--which had been given him by the tea-grower--the false pigtail and the shaven forepart of his head. He could

not believe for a moment that Cheong-Chau would fail to know him.

In his extreme anxiety, it did not occur to the boy that Yung How, who knew him a great deal better than any of the brigands, had been quite deceived, that Frank had been obliged to declare his identity to the man who had known him since childhood. For all that, even if the boy had had either the presence of mind or the inclination to take stock of his chances of success, he could not have overlooked a very important fact: that Cheong-Chau was looking for him, whereas Yung How, on the other hand, had never suspected for an instant that he had escaped.

Cheong-Chau and his men had come south in pursuit of the fugitive. The man had been enticed into the opium den by Ah Wu, whom he still believed to be his colleague. Here Cheong-Chau was to be drugged by order of the subtle and relentless villain who even then lay in hiding--like a great cat crouching by the side of a mouse-hole--behind the embroidered curtains. And now Cheong-Chau was to find himself, suddenly and unexpectedly, confronted by the very fugitive whom he had pursued for days.

Frank, cold with fear, certain of disaster, and dreading that he would be mercilessly put to death, looked Cheong-Chau in the face. The varied sensations he experienced were akin to what those must be of a condemned man upon the scaffold. He

did but wait for the terminating blow to fall.

He could not look at Cheong-Chau for more than an instant. He turned and regarded Ah Wu, who was standing on the other side of him. Ah Wu was smiling in his oily, plausible manner. He looked the complete host, affability itself, and all the time he was planning the discomfiture of his guest. A fat, genuine rogue!

"Ah Li," said he, addressing Frank, "you will attend to the wants of our distinguished guest. Conduct Cheong-Chau and his friends to the more comfortable couches upstairs, smooth the pillows, place a spirit-lamp upon each table, and then hasten to the storeroom and procure the best quality opium. Cheong-Chau would smoke the Indian variety, that which comes from Calcutta, than which there is no finer opium in the world."

Frank turned, and departed up the staircase. Indeed, he was devoutly thankful to get away. At the top of the steps he paused, and stood for a moment trying to think, with his back turned to the room.

Nothing had happened--nothing at all. Cheong-Chau had not spoken. None of his men had said a word. The boy was still unrecognised. It was too good to be true. It was all like a dream.

Pulling himself together, Frank carried out his orders, thinking all the time that the remarkable chain of circumstances which had carried him against his will and inclination from one adventure

to another was something altogether foreign to his former experiences. Life, instead of a pleasant and somewhat homely occupation, had become a kind of romantic nightmare. It was hard not to believe that presently he would awaken to find that Cheong-Chau, Ah Wu and Ling himself were phantasms, hallucinations, that would vanish at the moment of waking, their sinister and evil personalities fading away, in the boy's memory, like smoke upon the air.

He could scarce believe that a few minutes' calm reasoning would not instantly dissipate the reality of these strange and terrible people, the remarkable events dependent upon the thoughts and actions of a ruffian like Ling. Everything was all the more unreal to Frank because he appeared to exist, to continue to undergo such singular experiences, only by virtue of a series of miracles. The unexpected always happened.

It was also inconceivable to the boy that he himself, the nephew of one of the most distinguished government officials in Hong-Kong, a man of almost world-wide reputation as a lawyer, should find himself a coolie attendant in a Canton opium den, in which he conversed, in terms of intimate acquaintance, with Chinese thieves, brigands, swindlers and cut-throats. And yet he was not dreaming: he was conscious of a headache; both his knees and elbows had been badly bruised; and besides, Yung How, who had once been wont to take

a small five-year-old boy for walks upon the level paths on the crest of the Peak, had known him, had fallen upon his knees before him, and had wept tears of repentance.

Whilst the boy was busy with these thoughts, he was carrying out his duties. He had arranged the couches, lighted the spirit-lamps, and seen that there was one of Ah Wu's best carved ivory opium pipes upon each lacquer table.

By that time Cheong-Chau and his three companions, attended by the officious Ah Wu, had ascended the stairs. Cheong-Chau's eyes glistened at the thought of the treat in store for him; while his men--rough Chinese of the very lowest class--stared about them in awed amazement at the carved wood, the rich draperies, the gilded lacquer that adorned Ah Wu's premises. Doubtless they had never before found themselves in such a high-class establishment. They had been wont to smoke their opium in the foul and verminous dens of the provincial town of Pinglo. Possibly they had never before beheld the miraculous city of Canton.

Frank observed all this, and knew that he could find here the reason why he had not been recognised. The men were too much impressed by their surroundings to take note of details. Place a beggar in a palace, and he will most likely fail to notice the pattern of the carpet upon which he stands, even though he stare in his embarrassment at

nothing else.

Cheong-Chau stretched himself upon the couch immediately facing the stair-head. His three followers similarly disposed themselves upon his left, the one at the end reclining under the window through which Yung How had escaped.

Ah Wu rubbed his hands together and addressed himself to the brigand.

"They tell me," said he, "that one of your prisoners has cut off?"

"That is so," said Cheong-Chau, with an oath. "The fools of sentries let him through. He got away in the night. I and ten men started at daybreak, bringing with us the two other captives, but so far we have failed to find the culprit."

Frank, standing near at hand, listened intently to every word. The boy had placed himself against the wall, a little behind Cheong-Chau, so that the man would have to turn to look at him.

"Can he have reached Hong-Kong, do you think?" asked Ah Wu.

Cheong-Chau shrugged his shoulders.

"I think not," said he. "He has barely had time. But who can say?"

"And you have brought your other captives with you?"

"That was necessary," said Cheong-Chau. "I had to keep them under my eye. I cannot trust my men. They allow hostages to escape."

"Did you not find them very much in the way?" asked Ah Wu.

"Not in the least. We came down in one of my own sea-going junks. We are now anchored in the Sang River, about two miles from the Glade of Children's Tears. Still, I am not here to give information but to receive it. What news have you of Men-Ching?"

"He left here yesterday morning," answered the other, without moving a muscle of his face.

"Did he not say where he was going?"

"Not a word."

"Strange," said Cheong-Chau. "A surprising circumstance! He knew well enough that you were in our confidence. He ought to have spoken openly to you."

Ah Wu laughed.

"Of course," said he. "Why, it was I myself who arranged the whole matter."

"And what of the other man, Yung How, the Hong-Kong servant?"

"He also is gone."

Cheong-Chau was silent a moment.

"We must suppose," said he, "that Men-Ching has gone on to Hong-Kong with the letters. We may therefore presume that the letters have already reached their destination. The money may arrive at the Glade to-morrow. As for Yung How, I do not know the man. But if he contemplates treachery, it

will go ill with him. And now, Ah Wu, my opium. I would smoke."

Ah Wu turned to the boy and ordered him to bring four bowls of Indian opium from the storeroom. Frank descended the stairs, passed down the length of the lower room, drew back the embroidered curtains and entered the storeroom, where he found Ling seated upon a stool. It was one of those high stools upon which Chinese of the merchant class are wont to do their accounts, similar to the old-fashioned clerks' stools sometimes seen in offices in England. When seated upon one of these, the average man rests his feet upon a cross-piece, several inches from the ground. Ling, however, sat with one foot upon the floor and the other leg crossed upon his knee.

When the boy entered, Ling was reading, but he at once looked up from his book.

"The writings of Confucius," said he, "assure me that the perfect life cannot be attained by any man. Troubles, disappointment, sorrows and failure are bound to accompany us wherever we go. Divine philosophy instructs us to accept our destiny with grace. The coat of every man is patched; there are cracks in the armour upon which he depends to defend himself from the arrows of adversity. He who thinks himself infallible falls the most heavily; the conceited man lays the trap by which he himself is caught; his own vanity trips him up. He who

attempts much, hopes for much, but is prepared to go unrewarded, is he to whom success is doubly assured. I trust, my youthful friend, you follow me."

"Perfectly," said Frank.

"That is well," said Ling, laying down his book. "And now we will poison Cheong-Chau."

"Poison him!" exclaimed the boy.

"Fear not," said Ling. "Send him comfortably to sleep--a sleep that will last for some days. By then I shall have gathered the harvest at the Glade of Children's Tears, and you, my little one, will be free--your heart's sole desire."

He turned and picked up a large pale blue bowl in which he had stirred a quantity of opium, mixing it with a colourless fluid contained in a bottle.

"There are four of them, I understand?" said he.

"Yes," said Frank.

"It is as well," observed Ling, "that I have made enough. I fill four small bowls--one for each. These fools will not taste anything; they will not suspect. They will smoke and dream, and enjoy to the full the delights of opium. And they will fall gradually into such a sleep that the firing of a cannon in the room would not awaken them."

He handed to the boy the four small bowls upon a tray of carved black wood.

"Take it," said he, "and leave me to my reading. Happiness is to be found in wisdom, not wisdom in happiness. In prosperity the heart withers; in

adversity, it blooms. Farewell."

Frank went out, holding the tray before him, and ascended the flight of steps.

CHAPTER XX--HOW THE TIGER SPRANG

Upon the balcony Frank found Cheong-Chau still in conversation with Ah Wu. No one would have suspected from the demeanour of the fat proprietor of the opium den that he plotted the overthrow of the redoubtable brigand chief. The man was all smiles and Chinese courtesy. He rubbed his hands together; he flattered his guest; he bowed repeatedly. Frank advanced, carrying the tray upon which were the four bowls of opium.

"Ah!" exclaimed Ah Wu. "We have here the choice opium of which I spoke. I guarantee that the distinguished Cheong-Chau has never smoked the like of it. I procure it from an agent in Burma. This, I believe, is the only house in China in which it is sold."

"I thank you, Ah Wu," said the brigand, who had divested himself of the greater part of his clothing. "I thank you from my heart. I am a rough man, accustomed to the wilds. Such luxuries seldom come my way. At the same time, Ah Wu, who is this boy? It occurs to me that I have seen him before."

The man was staring at Frank, who felt his heart sink within him. Ah Wu's answer, given without

hesitation, was somewhat reassuring.

"He has been here," said Ah Wu, "for many months."

"Strange," said Cheong-Chau, "that I have never seen him before!"

Frank was, at first, at a loss to explain what motive Ah Wu could have for telling such a deliberate falsehood. It then occurred to him that Ah Wu could not explain truthfully who he was without mentioning Ling; and it was--from Ah Wu's point of view--of extreme importance to keep the name of Ling out of the whole affair. If Cheong-Chau but knew that the great Honanese was in the building, he would not have remained in the place for five seconds, much less would he have been so careless as to allow his physical and mental capacities to be temporarily subdued by the subtle fumes of the opium poppy.

"Come here, boy," said Cheong-Chau, who had not yet removed his eyes from Frank. "I want to look at you more closely."

The boy went forward in fear and trembling. Cheong-Chau grasped him by a wrist, and drew him downward, so that their faces were not more than a foot apart.

"You bear," said Cheong-Chau, speaking very deliberately, "a most remarkable resemblance to the very man I am looking for. What is your name?"

"Ah Li," said Frank.

The boy's heart was beating like a sledgehammer. He felt instinctively that the Sword of Damocles, which had been suspended for so long above his head, was at last about to fall. That the result would be fatal to himself, and those whose lives depended upon him, he could not for a moment doubt.

"I come from Sanshui," said he, in a weak voice that quailed.

Cheong-Chau suddenly rose to his feet and lifted his voice to a kind of shriek. It was the voice Frank had heard when Cheong-Chau addressed his followers in the gloomy nave of the temple; it was the same voice the man had used on the occasion when he staggered into the cave, senseless and drugged with opium.

"It is in my way of thinking," he shouted, "that you come from Hong-Kong, that your name is no more Ah Li than mine is, that you are a foreign devil in disguise!"

Ah Wu opened his eyes in astonishment. He lifted both hands with fingers widespread. He looked like an old woman who has seen a ghost.

"There is some mistake!" he cried.

"This boy," roared Cheong-Chau, "is a foreigner."

His voice was so loud that it carried to the farther end of the room. Everyone heard his words, and those who were not asleep raised themselves upon their elbows to ascertain what the disturbance

was about. Behind the embroidered curtains the mighty Ling, who had been listening to all that was said, crouching like a cat, rose stealthily and slowly to his feet. He was like a great beast of prey that suddenly scents danger. It was as if he stretched the great muscles of his body, preparatory to action.

"You are a foreigner!" cried Cheong-Chau.

Frank knew not which way to look. He had put down the tray upon a small lacquer table by the side of Cheong-Chau's couch. The brigand still held him tightly by a wrist. Realising that he could not deny the truth of the man's words, the boy made a foolish, headstrong effort to escape. With a quick wrench, he freed his arm, and turned upon his heel with the intention of dashing down the steps. Since subterfuge had failed, he felt that he had nothing else to rely upon but physical agility.

He had almost reached the head of the stairs when Ah Wu stretched forth a hand to detain him. It is strange that the boy's exposure should have been brought about by Ah Wu, in whose interests it was for the deception to continue--at least, whilst Cheong-Chau was in the house.

Ah Wu attempted to seize the boy by a shoulder, and failing in this, he clutched at Frank's pigtail, which was flying out behind him. Needless to say, as the boy plunged down the stairs, he left behind him his false pigtail in the hands of the dumbfounded Ah Wu. Before he could stop himself, Frank was at the

bottom of the stairs, and there, for the first time, he remembered that he would have to pass Ling at the outer door.

For the brief space of a moment, Frank looked about him like a hunted beast. He could see no way of escape. Ling, he knew, was in front of him, though not visible. The back door was locked. There were no windows in the lower room. On the other hand, escape from one of the balcony windows was impossible, for Cheong-Chau and his three followers stood at the stair-head. The voice of Cheong-Chau filled the room, uttering, in a weird, sing-song voice, a kind of triumphant pæan.

"I am Cheong-Chau," he cried, "and men fear me from the Nan-ling Mountains to the sea. I have hunted down the fugitive and I have found him. Those who foil me can expect no mercy. I live by the knife, and my enemies die by the knife. Death to foreign devils!"

At that, he dashed down the stairs. As he did so he drew from his belt a long, curved Chinese knife, which he raised high above his head.

Frank turned and fled down the room, but Cheong-Chau was upon him as a cat springs at a mouse. The boy was caught by the coat, and jerked backward. With difficulty he maintained his balance. Looking up, he beheld Cheong-Chau's knife raised on high, whilst the man's eyes were fixed upon the region of the boy's heart.

"By the knife!" shrieked Cheong-Chau. "By the knife!"

The cruel weapon glittered in the light emanating from the paraffin lamps. Frank closed his eyes, knowing that the end was about to come. He felt that he had not strength to look longer into that impassioned face.

Then, quite suddenly, there came a roar like that of a charging lion. Frank was pushed aside and sent flying across the room, to pitch, head foremost, over an unoccupied couch. Gathering himself together, he beheld a feat of strength that was amazing.



"THERE CAME A ROAR LIKE THAT OF A CHARGING LION."

"THERE CAME A ROAR

LIKE THAT OF A
CHARGING LION."

The mighty Ling had swooped down upon his rival as an eagle snatches his prey. A blow from his great fist sounded like a pistol shot, and Cheong-Chau, without a sound, fell in a heap senseless on the floor. And then two of the brigand's followers were seized by the throat, and their two heads were brought together with a crash. One man pitched forward on the instant, and lay upon his face, flat across the body of his leader. As for the other, he went reeling round the room like a man dazed and drunken. Then he dropped down upon both knees by the side of a couch, holding his head between his hands.

The third man turned and fled in trepidation at the sight of the fate of his comrades. However, he had gone no farther than half-way up the stairs, when Ling snatched up one of the small lacquer tables, and hurled it at the fugitive with such force that it crashed to atoms against the banisters. This projectile was followed, a fraction of a second later, by a lighted paraffin lamp, which stretched the man senseless upon the balcony at the feet of the amazed Ah Wu.

All this had happened in less than a minute. Frank Armitage had only just time to observe that

the lamp had fortunately gone out, and that there was no danger of the place being set on fire. And then he himself was plucked violently from off his feet.

Ling had picked him up as though he were a babe in arms. In his haste and violence, the man tore down the embroidered curtains. Frank heard the front door slam, and then he was conscious of the fact that he was being borne onward at a terrific pace, through the dark and narrow streets of the great Chinese city.

CHAPTER XXI--OF THE GLADE OF CHILDREN'S TEARS

Frank had neither time to consider the extraordinary sequence of events narrated in the previous chapter nor the slightest inclination to speculate in regard to the future. He realised, somewhat dimly, that he was no more than a pawn in the game. A few moments since, he had stood defenceless in the stifling atmosphere of the opium den; he had beheld the knife raised to strike him down. He had been delivered with dramatic suddenness at the eleventh hour. At the same time, he could not help realising that, in all probability, he had fallen out of the frying-pan into the fire. If his deception had been detected by Cheong-Chau, his identity had also been discovered by the formidable Ling.

In the meantime he was being carried away to some unknown destination. The boy realised the futility of attempting to struggle, and if he cried out for help in those dark streets, no one was likely to take the least notice of him.

Ling kept--so far as he was able--to the by-streets: the narrow, twisting lanes that form a veritable labyrinth in the poorer parts of this wonderful and mysterious city. The hour was

tolerably late--approaching midnight. The main streets were lighted by means of the flares in the shops and upon the hawkers' booths; and when it was necessary to cross one of these, the spectacle of the great Honanese carrying under his arm one who was apparently a foreign boy, dressed in Chinese clothes, attracted no little attention. However, with every Chinaman it is a fixed principle of life to mind his own affairs, and no one interfered.

At last, Ling set down the boy upon his feet, and taking hold of him by a wrist, proceeded to drag him forward. Presently they came forth upon the outskirts of the town. It was a bright night; for though the moon was on the wane, the sky was clear and there was a glorious canopy of stars--stars such as can only be seen east of the Suez Canal. The boy was able to make out the great gabled tower, situated upon a hillock to the north of the city, which goes by the name of the Five-Storied Pagoda. He remembered very well visiting this place, a few weeks before, accompanied by Mr Waldron and his uncle.

Ling took a bridle path leading directly to the north, lying in a bee-line across the down-like hills. The man strode forward, walking at such a great pace that Frank was obliged to run to keep up with him. All this time he said nothing. He walked, staring straight in front of him--a gaunt, sinister and gigantic figure. Never for a moment did he release his hold of

Frank's wrist, which felt as if it was held within a vice.

After a time they came to a river, or canal. Since the path led straight into the water and was visible in continuation upon the other bank, it was evident that there was a ford. Ling hesitated a moment, and then, hoisting his captive upon his shoulder, carried him high and dry to the other side, himself wading in water that reached to his knees. Beyond, he once more set down Frank upon the ground; and they went forward at the same steady pace. And at every step the water squelched in the soft felt shoes the Chinaman was wearing.

At the end of an hour, Frank was beginning to feel fatigued; he was considerably out of breath. Ling, on the other hand, appeared to be in no way exhausted. They came to a hut--the habitation, in all probability, of some swineherd or peasant.

Ling kicked open the door, and they found within an old man, very disreputable and dirty, clothed in rags, sound asleep before the glowing embers of a charcoal fire.

Ling touched the sleeper upon the shoulder, and the old man sat up.

"The mighty Ling!" he exclaimed, the moment he saw his visitor.

"Peace," said Ling. "I come in peace, my friend. You need not be discomfited. I ask for nothing more than you can give me."

The old man, who had now risen to his feet, bowed low.

"A mandarin of the Blue Button has but to speak," said he. "Who is a mere drover of foul pigs to gainsay the word of so distinguished a personage? Is it food you desire, or water, or an hour's rest upon your journey? All I have, sir, is your own."

"I want that which will cost you nothing," answered Ling. "This will not be the first time that you have aided me. I will reward you--at a later date--if all goes well with me."

"May the gods assist you," said the old man, bowing again.

"I rely upon myself," said Ling. "Tell me, Cheong-Chau's men have come from the mountains. They are reported on the Sang River. Have you seen anything of them?"

"I have indeed," said the other. "There is a junk anchored about three *li* west of the tower. I saw it this afternoon."

"Did you notice how many men were on board?"

"About five or six," said the old man.

"That agrees," said Ling, "with what I already know."

He remained silent for a moment, and then suddenly grasped Frank by an arm and thrust him through the door.

"Come!" he cried. "We have no time to lose."

The next moment Frank Armitage was on the

road again, and throughout the early hours of the morning he continued to travel northward, in company with his grim and silent captor. Once the boy dared to speak, asking Ling where they were going; but he was at once ordered to hold his tongue.

"You need what breath you have," observed the Honanese. "I am not here to answer questions."

There was more than a little truth in the first remark, for the boy was obliged to keep up a steady jog-trot mile after mile, with never a halt or a rest by the wayside.

Presently they gained the crest of a chain of low-lying hills. The moonlight was sufficient to enable them to see for a considerable distance. Before them lay a valley--so far as Frank could make out--exceedingly fertile and picturesque, in which was a tall, thin tower, somewhat resembling a short factory chimney, except that at the top there was a narrow, circular balcony protected both from the rain and the powerful rays of the sun by one of those queer-shaped, overhanging roofs that are peculiar to Southern China.

Frank knew at a glance that this was the tower from which, in days gone by, it had been the custom of the Cantonese to throw little children, whose existence had grown irksome to their parents. At one time this barbarous and terrible custom was prevalent in the Middle Kingdom, until finally even the Chinese themselves revolted against the laws that

permitted such a crime.

Flooded by the pure light of the moon, the valley appeared a perfect haven of rest. No one would have believed that such a beautiful spot had, in former times, been the scene of such terrible brutality. The tall tower shone like brass, and at its feet the broad waters of the Sang River flowed swiftly to the west.

Ling, still dragging Frank forward, descended the hill, and then turned to the right, towards a clump of trees. It was then, for the first time since they had left Canton, that, of his own accord, he spoke to his prisoner.

"Here is the place," he cried. "The Glade of Children's Tears. Here it is that Cheong-Chau's ransom money will be hidden."

Frank did not think it advisable to answer. Ling no longer held him by a wrist: such a precaution was now unnecessary. Frank could not possibly escape.

For a distance of about a hundred yards they walked in the heavy shadows under the branches of the trees, which were thick with leaves. And then, quite suddenly, they came once again into the bright moonlight, to find themselves confronted by a scene which was both grotesque and picturesque.

In ancient times the place had evidently been the site of a temple, of which only the ruined walls, a few stone steps and several flagstones remained. Here and there, lying upon the ground, overgrown

by weeds and underwoods, were great broken, hideous idols, many of which were at least twelve feet in length. In the ghostly moonlight, it was like looking upon a scene which had been the battle-field of giants.

It was manifest that Ling knew the place well, for he walked straight up to a great circular stone, considerably darker in colour than the surrounding brickwork and rocks. Though this stone must have been of enormous weight, he rolled it away without difficulty. Beneath was a large hole. Going down upon his knees, the man struck a match, the light of which dimly illumined a vault as large as an ordinary room.

"Empty!" he exclaimed. "However, I did not expect to find the money here. It should arrive to-morrow, if my calculations are correct. I do not think that your friends will venture to waste time. Too much is at stake."

"*My* friends?" said Frank.

"Exactly," said the other. "I was so fortunate as to discover who you are. I confess that for days you deceived me. I never dreamt for a moment that the boy whose services I enlisted in Sanshui was a European. I congratulate you upon your accent and your knowledge of the Cantonese language. You speak it as well as I, who am a Northerner."

"And why," asked Frank, "have you brought me here?" This was the question he had long been

burning to ask.

Ling shrugged his shoulders.

"You may have deceived me," said he, "but I am not altogether a fool."

And that, apparently, was all the reply he would condescend to give.

"I fail to understand," said Frank.

"Then you are very dense. Let me enlighten you: in a few hours, twenty thousand dollars will be hidden in this place. That money is intended for Cheong-Chau. Cheong-Chau will not receive a cent."

As he said these words, he rolled the stone back into its place.

"Cheong-Chau's junk lies up-stream," he continued, once again as if speaking to himself. "He had ten men with him. He took three with him to Ah Wu's opium den. Of those three, I have accounted for one at least, and I do not think the man I struck down with the lamp will be fit to fight for many a day. In any case, neither those three men nor Cheong-Chau himself are here. There are therefore only seven on board the junk. It is now about three o'clock in the morning. Six of those seven men are sound asleep. I propose to take the junk by storm."

"You mean," said Frank, "that you will do this--single-handed?"

"I have this," said Ling. "If necessary, I shall use it."

At that he produced the revolver he had taken

from Yung How. He played with it for a moment in his great hands, and then put it back in his pocket.

"I shall require the junk," he added, "in order to take the treasure away. And even if I fail to get possession of it, I have you, my little one, who are so clever. You are worth, to me, at least another twenty thousand dollars."

Frank saw the truth as in a flash: once again he was a hostage. Ling no doubt intended to demand a second ransom as the price of the boy's freedom--perhaps his life. As the man remained silent for some minutes, Frank had the greater time to think the matter out. And the more he thought of it, the more was he obliged to admire the consummate subtlety of Ling, who had the faculty of grasping a situation without a moment's waste of time, estimating the salient factors at their proper value.

In the opium den, Frank's identity had been unmasked, and his life threatened in a period of time which could not have been more than thirty or forty seconds. And yet, in those brief and breathless seconds, Ling, in hiding behind the curtain, had summed up the position at a glance. He had seen that Cheong-Chau--who for the moment was blind with rage--was about to throw away a human life that was likely to be extremely valuable to himself. It was not a sense of humanity that had prompted him to save the boy. He had done so for his own personal ends.

"Come," he cried, "to the junk! I promise you I will flutter the dovecot. I will scatter them like ducks."

At that he strode forward, followed by Frank, amazed at the man's calmness and audacity.

CHAPTER XXII--OF THE CAPTURE OF THE JUNK

Ling walked in an easterly direction, keeping at a distance of about a hundred yards from the river bank. The morning was exceedingly still; nothing disturbed the silence but the ceaseless sound of the current of the river, stirring the tall reeds that grew in the shallow water. The Sang River, which at this place was about a hundred and fifty yards across, is one of the main tributaries of the Pe-kiang, which flows into Canton from the north. As Frank knew well, it was navigable for a considerable distance, even for sea-going junks. Presently Ling began to talk to himself in a low voice, but loud enough for the boy to hear.

"The sages have told us," he observed, "to think before we act. Men speak of the 'road of life.' That is a false metaphor. In life there are many roads; it is open to us to travel by one or by another. The junk will be anchored in midstream." He broke off, turning quickly to the boy. "Tell me, can you swim?"

Frank replied that he was a good swimmer.

"That is well," said Ling. "It will be necessary for you to accompany me into the water. It is to your advantage to do so. On board, you will find the two

friends you left in Cheong-Chau's cave in the mountains."

"So if you capture the junk," said Frank, "if you overpower those on board, you will have three hostages instead of one."

"That is true," said Ling. "But better for you and your friends to be in my hands than in the hands of Cheong-Chau, who is a blind, senseless fool."

"You will be satisfied with the ransom?"

"Concerning that," said Ling, "I have not yet made up my mind."

He spoke no more, but continued to stride forward, the boy following in his footsteps. They came to marshy ground, where their shoes squelched in the mud. And here, knowing that they could not be far from the junk, they walked more slowly, as silently as possible.

A little after, at a place where the river turned abruptly to the north, they found themselves before the junk, which lay at anchor not fifty yards from the bank. Ling took off his coat, and the boy followed his example. Then, without a word, the Chinese, like a great water-snake, glided silently into the river.

Frank hesitated to follow. It was within his power to escape. Perhaps the great Chinaman did not care whether he did so or not. For two reasons, the boy divested himself of his coat and followed Ling: first, he had by now so great a respect for the man's ability and prowess that he doubted very much

whether he would succeed in getting away; secondly, and chiefly, he had an overmastering desire to set eyes upon his uncle, to know that both Sir Thomas and Mr Waldron were still alive and safe.

The current being somewhat swift, it was fortunate that Frank was a strong swimmer. In the moonlight he could see before him the great head of Ling, moving rapidly and silently forward upon the surface of the water.

The man reached the prow of the junk, and there, laying hold of the chain to which the anchor was attached, he lifted himself half out of the water, and in this position he remained, waiting for Frank. In a few seconds the boy had joined him.

The moonlight fell full upon the Honanese. The man's yellow skin glistened. In his teeth he held his revolver which, whilst swimming, he had held high and dry. Then quite slowly he drew himself up the chain until he had gained the deck--the high forecastle-peak which is to be found on every sea-going Chinese junk. There he crouched behind the capstan.

In a few minutes, Frank Armitage had joined him. The boy was out of breath from swimming.

Side by side, they lay quite still for about five minutes. Ling evidently intended to give his young assistant time to recover his breath. At last, the man whispered in Frank's ear.

"Fools!" he exclaimed. "They have not even

posted a sentry."

As he said the words, a man appeared from behind the mast--a man who was smoking a cigarette.

The end of the cigarette glowed brightly. It was plain that the man had just lighted it. In all probability he had gone behind the mast for that purpose, in order to be sheltered from the wind. He appeared to have no suspicion that intruders had come on board, for he walked leisurely forward, smoking and singing to himself a weird Chinese tune--a melody on three notes, each long sustained.

He reached the peak of the vessel, and there stood still for a moment, looking across country towards the hills. And then it was that Ling sprang upon him. The man was snatched from off his feet. He had no time to cry out, to give the alarm, for almost at once one of the great hands of the Honanese was placed upon his mouth. He was gagged in less than a minute with an oily rag that was found lying upon the deck, which must have been extremely unpleasant to the taste.

There is never any difficulty on board a ship of any kind in finding rope, and it was not long before the unfortunate sentry was bound hand and foot and left upon the deck.

Then Ling, still followed by Frank, advanced on tiptoe until he came to a little hatchway, a kind of trap-door, which communicated with the foul cabin

in which Chinese fishermen and their families are wont to live, eat and sleep.

Lying down at his full length, Ling turned an ear downward and remained for some time listening. From below there issued sounds of heavy snoring.

Having satisfied himself that everything was in order, the Honanese got to his feet, and returned to the man whom he had gagged and bound in the forepart of the ship. With his great fingers he tore the man's coat into shreds. These he folded carefully. Then, searching the deck, he found a long cord, which he cut into several pieces, each about a yard in length. Thrusting all these materials into his pockets, he returned to the hatchway, where he lowered himself carefully and silently into the cabin below.

What followed Frank could only guess. By reason of the darkness in the cabin, the boy was able to see nothing. He heard faint sounds of struggling--an occasional gasp or choke---once or twice a muttered Chinese oath, stifled suddenly in the midst of a syllable.

It was apparent that the mighty Ling fell upon his victims one by one, in quick succession. He dealt with them in detail, pouncing upon each man when he was deep in heavy slumber.

Not one of these unfortunates was given time to cry out, to give the alarm to his comrades. Each in turn was gagged before he was fully awake. And then

his hands were bound behind his back and his feet tied together.

The Honanese had accounted for six in this manner, when he struck a match and lighted a hanging paraffin lamp suspended from one of the beams that supported the deck. He then ordered Frank to descend.

The boy found himself in a small cabin that extended from one side of the ship to the other. It was indescribably dirty. All sorts of things were scattered upon the floor: pieces of rope, fishing tackle, unwashed plates and rice-bowls and articles of clothing. Upon the floor lay six men in a row, gagged and bound, each one wearing the scarlet coat which was the distinctive uniform of the followers of Cheong-Chau.

The place was not high enough to enable Ling to stand upright. He stood in the middle of the cabin, almost bent double, in which position he resembled a huge gorilla. He was grinning from ear to ear.

"A simple affair," said he. "They were delivered into my hands by that benevolent Providence that unerringly guides the footsteps of those who have acquired merit. Were I not a generous and kind-hearted man I should throw them, one after the other, into the water. As it is, they can lie where they are."

By then he had discovered a door at the after end of the cabin. On attempting to open this door,

and finding it locked, he turned again to Frank.

"Search those fools," he ordered. "On one of them, I have little doubt, you will find a bunch of keys."

Frank did as he was commanded, but failing to find that for which he looked, suggested that the man on deck might have had charge of the keys.

"That may be so," said Ling. "I am not disposed to wait. I have an idea that beyond this door we shall find your European friends."

So saying, with a great blow with his foot, he kicked in the door so that the lock was broken. He then took the paraffin lamp from the hook from which it was hanging, and followed by the boy, entered a small cubby-hole.

This place was probably intended for a storeroom, for though it extended from one side of the ship to the other, it was little more than two yards across, terminating in a bulkhead which divided the junk amidships.

Upon the floor were two men, both of whom were sitting bolt upright, with their eyes wide open. They appeared to have been fast asleep when they had been rudely awakened by the breaking open of the door. Each man had his feet tied together, and his hands bound behind his back. They were hatless, and their clothes were reduced to rags.

Frank Armitage gave vent to an exclamation of delight, and rushing forward, flung his arms around

his uncle. The other prisoner, it is needless to say, was Mr Hennessy K. Waldron, who had certainly undergone some very astonishing and unpleasant adventures since leaving Paradise City, Nevada, U.S.A.

CHAPTER XXIII--HOW THE TREASURE ARRIVED

Sir Thomas Armitage did not at first recognise his nephew, and when he did so, he could hardly believe the evidence of his eyes.

"Frank!" he exclaimed. "However did you come here?"

"That is too long a story to tell you now," answered the boy. "What a relief it is to see you! All these days I have not known whether you were alive or dead."

"Say," said Mr Waldron, "are we to be let loose? Am I a free citizen of the United States or a condemned criminal? I should like to know."

Frank turned to Ling.

"Those are questions," said he, "which you are better able to answer than I."

Ling, finding it inconvenient to remain standing in so cramped a position, seated himself cross-legged upon the floor and spoke in excellent English.

"You are right," said he. "The situation is in my hands. I hold you as hostages until the ransom is paid."

Here Mr Waldron was guilty of an injudicious action. He expressed himself with extreme rashness

in a moment of deep-seated indignation.

"I assure you," said he, "that I will pay this twenty thousand dollars without question and without delay. To be frank, I consider the value of my freedom and my safety to be far greater than that. Twenty thousand dollars is nothing to me."

"I am glad to hear it," said Ling. "I may demand forty or even fifty thousand. In the meantime, I must satisfy myself with what I can get."

"Do I understand," said the judge, addressing himself to the Honanese, "that you are not one of Cheong-Chau's band?"

"Does the tiger serve the wolf?" said Ling. "I am neither his coolie nor is he mine. Understand that I have taken possession of this junk, that at the present moment every man on board is bound hand and foot, with the exception of this boy. The crew, the ransom money, Cheong-Chau and yourselves--all are at the mercy of the mighty Ling. I will tell you plainly what I intend to do.

"At any moment," he continued, "I expect the ransom money to arrive at its destination. It is possible that Cheong-Chau may put in an appearance. When he recovers his senses, he will probably behave like a madman. If he puts his head into the tiger's jaws, the fault is his--not mine. It would appear to be a simple matter for me to possess myself of this money. I have but to wait here until it arrives, and then, taking the treasure on board, to

sail down-stream to the North River, and thence to Canton. However, I have reason to suspect treachery. I must therefore be careful to act with the greatest circumspection."

"Treachery from whom?" asked Frank.

"From your friend, Yung How," said Ling, "the Hong-Kong 'boy.'"

He got suddenly to his feet, and passing through the door into the cabin beyond, set foot upon the lowest rung of the little companion-ladder that led to the deck above.

"I leave you for a few seconds," said he to Frank. "In my absence you are not to attempt to unbind your friends. I propose to inconvenience them a little longer."

He mounted the ladder and returned soon afterwards, carrying the man whom he had overpowered on the upper deck. This fellow he threw down upon the ground alongside the others. He then returned to the inner room.

"I desire you to come with me," said he, still addressing Frank. "It is not so much that I find your company indispensable, as that I am not such a fool as to leave you on board. I propose to go to the tower, from the top of which we shall be able to obtain a good view of the surrounding country. So soon as the money arrives we will return to the junk. You will assist me in hoisting the sail and navigating the ship down-stream after we have taken our cargo

on board. I know of a village on the North River where I shall find friends who will assist me--good seamen, who know their work. These will sign on as my crew, and Cheong-Chau's men can be packed off ashore. We shall sail to an island that lies not far from Macao. There I shall keep you and your two friends in comfort and in safety--if not in luxury--until I obtain a second ransom. This gentleman," he added, indicating Mr Waldron, "has been so obliging as to inform me that he can well afford to pay fifty thousand dollars. Very well, he shall do so. The matter can be arranged."

He then told Frank to ascend the companion-ladder, he himself following, the ladder creaking violently beneath his weight.

Upon the deck they were able to observe the first signs of daybreak upon the horizon to the east. The old moon was setting; one by one, the stars were disappearing in the sky. The river at that hour looked ghostly. A thin white mist was drifting down the valley.

Ling, walking to the stern part of the ship, found a small boat, a kind of dinghy. This he lowered into the water; and then he and Frank climbed down by means of a rope. It required but a few strokes of the oar, wielded by Ling's powerful arms, to drive the boat into the bank, where he hid it among the rushes. A moment after they set off walking rapidly in the direction of the tower and the Glade of

Children's Tears.

By that time the first rays of the sun had flooded the valley with a stream of golden light. Frank observed that a great many of the trees were covered with bloom, and that the surrounding country was rich in colour, the slopes across the river being scarlet with the bloom of the opium poppy.

Ling came to a halt before a carved door at the base of the tower. Opening this, he entered, followed by the boy, and found himself in a small circular room. Owing to the semi-darkness of the place, Frank could not at first take in his surroundings, but as soon as his eyes grew accustomed to the light, he was able to make out a narrow spiral staircase, built into the wall itself, which must have been at least five feet thick.

By means of this they ascended to the top of the tower, where they found themselves upon a narrow, projecting balcony, encircling a little room that reminded Frank of a summer-house. From this position they were able to look down upon the whole valley, which extended to the east as far as the eye could reach, but which to the left vanished at a distance of about a mile behind a great fold in the hills.

"We wait here," said Ling. "At any moment the treasure may arrive. If you take my advice you will go inside and snatch a few hours' sleep. There are strenuous days in front of you. You will have to work

for your living. But I will reward you. I am a kind master, as those know well who serve me to the best of their ability."

Frank, thinking that he might as well follow this suggestion, entered the small circular chamber, and there lay down upon the floor, using his rolled coat as a pillow. Almost immediately he fell asleep, and must have slept for several hours, for, when Ling awakened him, he noticed that the sun had passed its meridian, and was already sinking towards the west.

The boy was exceedingly hungry, and accepted with eagerness the offer of a large piece of rice-cake which Ling produced from his pocket. Hardly had he taken a mouthful when he remembered his uncle and Mr Waldron.

"Your prisoners!" he exclaimed. "They will be starving!"

The Chinaman shook his head.

"Not so," said he, "whilst you were asleep, I returned to the junk and attended to their wants. I gave them food to eat and water to drink. Besides, I was anxious to see that all was well."

"Supposing they are found," said Frank, after a pause, "by some junk passing up or down the river? There is plenty of traffic upon the Sang River, as you know, this part of the country being thickly populated."

"They will not be found," said the Chinaman. "There is no reason why anything of the sort should

happen. They have no means of communicating with anyone passing upon the river. And there is nothing extraordinary in the spectacle of a junk lying anchored clear of the mid-stream fairway. You yourself often must have seen upon the Chinese rivers thousands of such boats with not a soul visible on board. In all such cases the crew has either gone ashore to drink *samshu* or to smoke opium, or else they lie asleep below. I am anxious about nothing--except, perhaps, Yung How," he added, in an altered voice.

"And the money has not come?" asked Frank.

"It is coming," said Ling. "That is why I awakened you."

"It is coming now!" The boy sprang to his feet.

Ling pointed to the west, in the direction of the river. There, sure enough, about half-a-mile down-stream, was a small white launch, similar to those which may be seen by the score in Hong-Kong harbour, heading straight for the southern bank, for the Glade of Children's Tears.

Like a great vulture in the heavens that soars higher and higher in a series of concentric circles, Ling from the top of the tower looked down upon his prey. After the manner of a vulture, he did but bide his time.

The launch ran into a narrow creek, and for a moment was hidden from view by the trees of the little wood. Shortly after, it appeared again, and both

Frank and Ling watched the Chinese sailors tie her up to a stunted tree that overhung the water. On board were three Europeans, dressed in white ducks and wearing sun-helmets. The launch was too far away for Frank to recognise these men.

And then they witnessed a sight that made the dark eyes of the great Honanese glitter with triumph and greed; his wide mouth expanded in a smile. A plank was thrown from the launch to the shore. Across this gangway bag after bag was carried, each one so heavy with silver that it required two men to lift it.

At last the task was ended. The Europeans, who had superintended the discharging of this precious cargo, returned to the launch, which presently turned slowly round and made off down-stream. In the red light of the setting sun, on the surface of the water, they could see the convergent lines of ripples spreading from the bows of the launch.

Ling laughed.

"Come!" he cried, seizing Frank by a wrist and dragging him out into the open. "The ripe harvest awaits the reaper; the honey-comb is full. Come, come, my little junk rat, let us hasten to the feast. Wisdom and prudence are always triumphant. The victory is ever to the strong."

As the words left his lips, there came from the direction of the glade the report of a revolver, and a bullet, speeding upon its way with a soft, shrill

whistle, cut off the lobe of one of the great Chinaman's ears. On the instant Ling fell flat upon his face, and Frank was not slow to follow his example.

CHAPTER XXIV--HOW THE TIGER VANISHED IN THIN AIR

They had thrown themselves down upon the ground in a place where the grass was long enough to screen them from view. The light was fading rapidly. It would soon be quite dark. A heavy mist was gathering in the valley.

Frank looked at his companion. He could see blood flowing profusely down the man's neck. For all that, the expression upon Ling's face did not suggest that he suffered pain. He was grinning.

He held in his hand the loaded revolver he had taken from Yung How in Ah Wu's opium den. It was manifest that every sense was alert. Screwing his eyes, he endeavoured to pierce the gloom of the thickets immediately in front of them.

Nothing was to be seen. No sound disturbed the silence of the evening. Slowly and stealthily Ling began to move forward through the long grass, after the manner of a snake, never for a moment lifting his chin more than a few inches from the ground.

Frank followed him. There was no reason why the boy should have done so, and without doubt he had been wiser had he remained behind in safety. But he was consumed by an overmastering desire to

see the matter out, to follow to the bitter end the fortunes of the mighty Ling.

He followed in the man's wake, Ling in his progress was making a kind of pathway through the grass. Frank was careful not to show himself. He realised that the exposure of any part of his body would, in all probability, immediately be greeted by another shot from the glade.

Ling was making for a great boulder that lay upon the outskirts of the wood, about twenty yards from a place where the undergrowth was exceedingly dense. He gained this without any mishap; and there, a moment later, he was joined by Frank.

"You have followed me?" he asked, in a whisper.

The boy nodded his head, not venturing to speak.

"Then you have done so at your own risk. I am not responsible for your life."

Very cautiously, Ling peered round the boulder behind which they lay in hiding. Almost at once, a single shot from a revolver was fired from the thickets immediately before them.

Ling did not draw back, nor did he flinch. On the contrary, he drew himself forward until at least half his body was exposed to view.

Then came another shot from the wood; Frank saw a bullet strike the ground not three inches from the man's head. At that moment Ling himself fired.

Three revolver shots rang out in quick succession, and then, with a roar like that of a charging tiger, the man rose to his feet and plunged into the wood.

Frank saw the flash of a long knife he carried in his left hand. In his right he still held his revolver. He crashed into the undergrowth like a wild bull, and the darkness swallowed him up.

The boy waited an instant; then, as nothing happened, he rose to his feet and followed after Ling.

He was able to see very little of his surroundings. He found himself in twilight. Trees arose on every side of him like gaunt spectres, twisted and deformed. Dark shadows upon the ground seemed to be moving, floating here and there like silent ghosts.

Knowing not which way to go, for a few seconds the boy remained quite motionless. Then suddenly there came a loud shout, in which Frank recognised the voice of Ling. This shout was followed by an uproar, a noise that bore no small resemblance to the crackling of green wood upon a mighty fire. Branches were broken; dry sticks and twigs were trampled under the feet of excited, hastening men.

Frank, running forward, found himself, before he had gone thirty yards, upon the skirting of the Glade of Children's Tears. Here there was more light. The boy could see the great broken idols, overgrown with moss and lichen, lying upon the ground; he could see the ruins of the ancient temple and the

great red stone beneath which the treasure had been hidden. Then, on a sudden, he became conscious of the figure of a man crouching behind a rock, not ten yards away.

Though he was well in the shadow, there was sufficient light to enable the boy to make quite sure that the man in front of him was not Ling. One could not fail to identify the gigantic proportions of the Honanese; and this was a thin, small man. Moreover, he did not wear the long robe of the upper classes in China, but a short jacket, reaching not far below the waist; and so far as Frank could make out, this coat was red. Also, the man was bareheaded, whereas Ling had been wearing the buttoned hat of a mandarin.

Frank remained silent and motionless, scarcely daring to breathe. On hands and knees the man moved a few paces forward, which brought him into the light. The boy recognised at once the shrunken, evil features of Cheong-Chau, the brigand chief.

He could have been given no greater cause to regret the fact that he was altogether unarmed. In this conflict, the sympathies of the boy were wholly on the side of Ling. That Cheong-Chau was more evil than Ling was not to be doubted, since the brigand was never to be trusted. Ling, on the other hand--so far as Frank's experience went--was not likely to go back upon his word. He was pitiless and wholly unscrupulous; but at the same time, he had in his

own way certain estimable virtues. The boy considered that the worst calamity that could, at this juncture, possibly befall him and his friends was for Cheong-Chau to regain possession of his hostages. If the brigand overpowered Ling, he would possess himself of the ransom money, he would recapture his own junk, setting free the crew which Ling had bound hand and foot; and then, it was more than probable, he would seek satisfaction in the murder of his victims.

Frank therefore was eager to render all the assistance he could to Ling. But since he had upon him neither fire-arms nor weapons of any sort, he could do nothing but lie still and await the tide of events. Cheong-Chau continued to move forward on hands and knees. He turned his head rapidly first one way and then another. The boy was well able to see that the brigand was armed to the same extent as Ling; in other words, he carried in one hand a revolver of European manufacture, and between his teeth a long Chinese knife.

It was plain that the man was searching in all directions for his adversary. He was still not many yards away from Frank. On a sudden, he lay quite still, seeming to flatten himself into nothing, just as a cat does when it lies in ambush. He had evidently seen something.

Frank, straining his eyes, observed another man, visible as a mere shadow, moving slowly and silently

amidst the undergrowth on the other side of the glade. This man was steadily approaching. Cheong-Chau did not stir.

When the two men were not fifteen paces away from each other, Cheong-Chau raised his revolver, and was evidently about to fire, when suddenly he brought it down again.

"Tong!" said he, in a loud whisper.

"Is that you, Cheong-Chau?" came back the answer.

"It is myself. And have you seen aught of the tiger?"

By then the two men were together lying side by side behind a fragment of the ruined temple wall. They were so close to Frank that, though they spoke to one another in whispers, it was easy for him to hear every word that they said.

"I thought you were he," said the man who had answered to the name of Tong.

"And I too," said Cheong-Chau. "I was about to fire when I saw that you were too small to be Ling."

"That is fortunate," said the other, "fortunate--for me."

"And where is Chin Yen?" asked the brigand chief.

"He is close behind me," said the man. "He is here."

Indeed, at that moment they were joined by a third man, who crept forward from out of the midst

of the shadows. The night was descending rapidly; it was already almost dark. Frank, however, had no doubt as to the identity of these two men. He remembered very well hearing their names when he was in the opium den of Ah Wu. Chin Yen was the man who had fallen down upon his knees beside an opium couch, holding his head between his hands. Tong was the unfortunate individual who had been struck down with the paraffin lamp. It was subsequently discovered that the third man never recovered from his injuries.

"Well, Chin Yen," said Cheong-Chau, "where is the tiger? Have you seen nothing of him?"

"Nothing at all," came the answer. "Three minutes ago I saw him standing on the edge of the glade. I was about to fire, when suddenly he disappeared. I think he fell upon his face."

"He is somewhere here," said Cheong-Chau. "He is too big to hide himself. We shall find him sooner or later. He cannot have been spirited away."

Tong shivered--or rather there was a tremor in his voice.

"I don't like this business," said he. "Presently, without a moment's warning, the tiger will spring upon us from out of the darkness. And then, woe betide him into whom he digs his claws."

"You are a coward," said Cheong-Chau. "We are three to one, and we are all armed with revolvers. What is there to fear, if we keep together? Ling's

strength will avail him nothing."

"That is true," said Chin Yen.

All the same the tone of his voice carried not the least conviction. He was obviously just as frightened of his opponent as his comrade. Cheong-Chau himself was the most courageous of the three.

"Obey my orders," said he, "and remain at my side. We will search the place thoroughly. He lies somewhere in hiding. Keep as close to the ground as possible. He will fire the moment he sees us."

"He may have escaped," said Tong.

"He has done nothing of the kind," said Cheong-Chau. "For two reasons: first, we must have heard him; secondly, it is not the custom of Ling to run away."

"Let us go first to the junk," said Chin Yen. "We shall then be ten to one."

"Fool!" exclaimed Cheong-Chau. "We should never get there. Ling would shoot us in the open. Come, we do but waste time talking. The glade must be searched."

As he said the words, he began to move forward, straight toward the place where Frank was hiding.

The boy's heart was in his mouth. He could scarcely hope that he would not be discovered. He could not make his escape without being seen nor was he in a position to offer resistance. And if he was discovered, he had every reason to believe that Cheong-Chau would kill him.

These were the thoughts that passed rapidly through his mind. He lay motionless, fearing to breathe, his eyes fixed upon the crouched, gliding forms of Cheong-Chau and his companions. And then the boy was discovered. The man called Tong caught sight of him and raised his revolver to fire. At the moment Tong pressed the trigger, Frank struck the weapon upward, so that the bullet flew wide through the branches of the trees.

Knowing that he would be shot if he remained at arm's-length or attempted to run away, the boy closed at once with his adversary. Flinging himself into Tong's arms, he endeavoured to seize the man by the throat; but almost immediately he was overpowered by the three of them, and found himself pinned to the ground and once again a prisoner.

Chin Yen peered into the boy's face.

"This is not Ling!" he exclaimed.

Cheong-Chau came out with a brutal oath.

"No," said he. "This is not the tiger; it is the foreign devil who has twice slipped through my fingers."

Frank Armitage closed his eyes and caught his lower lip between his teeth.

CHAPTER XXV--AND HOW CHEONG-CHAU VANISHED ALTOGETHER

There is little doubt that Cheong-Chau would have killed the boy then and there had he not been alive to the fact that he himself stood in immediate danger of a sudden onslaught from Ling, who lay in hiding somewhere amidst the shadows of the wood.

It was now almost dark. It was scarce possible to see across the glade. Cheong-Chau turned to Tong--the man who had endeavoured to kill the boy.

"You were a fool to fire," said he. "How so?"

"You have betrayed our whereabouts to the tiger. He cannot be far away."

"Let us keep together," whispered Chin Yen. "It will be as much as the three of us can do to overpower him."

It was quite plain to Frank that the three brigands stood in mortal fear of the mighty Honanese. They had not forgotten their experience in the opium den, when Ling had accounted for four of them in less than a minute. They knew their opponent, and they were well aware that he was the last man in the world to beat a hasty retreat. Indeed,

Ling had deliberately attacked them, charging blindly like an infuriated beast into the darkness of the wood.

For the time being they could give little attention to the boy. They remained for a few minutes perfectly still, holding their revolvers in their hands, keeping a sharp look-out in all directions.

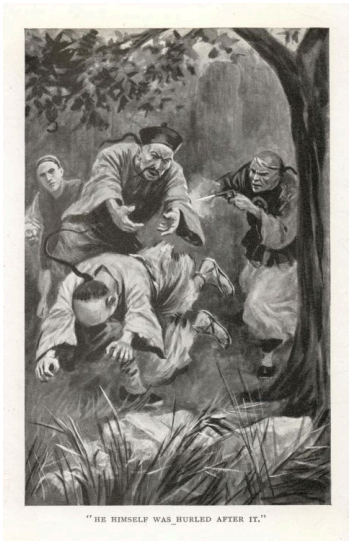
And then the mighty Ling descended into their very midst. Small wonder that they had not discovered him, for the man had climbed up a tree, and had for the last four or five minutes been seated upon a branch, immediately above their heads, listening to every word that was said. They had looked to the right and to the left; their sharp eyes had pierced the dark shadows beneath the underwoods and the crumbled ruins of the ancient temple; but never for a moment had any one of them dreamed of looking upward.

Like a thunderbolt, Ling descended to the ground. His great weight fell upon Chin Yen. The man let out a loud cry, prompted by acute and sudden pain. Then he lay upon the ground, groaning and writhing with a broken arm.

Ling himself staggered, and with difficulty maintained his balance. Indeed, he only succeeded in doing so by laying hands upon the terrified Tong.

The man had no time to fire. He was snatched from off the ground. He endeavoured to struggle, but

his efforts were hopeless. His revolver was wrenched from his hand and thrown far across the glade. Then he himself was hurled after it, thrown away like a half-filled sack. In his descent his head struck the side of one of the fallen images, and he lay upon the ground, motionless and stunned.



"HE HIMSELF WAS HURLED AFTER IT."

"HE HIMSELF WAS HURLED AFTER IT."

In the meantime, Cheong-Chau had made the most of the only chance he was ever likely to have. He had fired at Ling at almost point-blank range. Frank, who still lay upon the ground, heard a loud

groan issue from the lips of Ling, and a moment after he was just able to perceive the dark blood flowing slowly from the man's side and staining his long silken robe.

Cheong-Chau, thinking that he had done his work, turned with the intention of seeking safety in flight. He was caught by the pigtail, and jerked backward, as a boy might flick a top. A moment after he found himself held by the great hands of Ling, gripped by both forearms, so that he felt as if he were wedged in a mighty vice.

Fear took strong hold upon him. He knew, no doubt, that his last hour had come. He shrieked in pain and in terror, calling upon his followers to hasten to his help. But Tong lay senseless, and Chin Yen had already gathered himself together and taken to his heels like one possessed.

Let it be said for Cheong-Chau that he made no plea for mercy. On the contrary, he reviled his adversary, making use of a string of Chinese oaths to which the boy was a stranger. And then he kicked, his legs being the only part of him which was free. The more violently he kicked and struggled, the greater became the pressure upon his arms; until at last he was obliged to desist, lest his very bones should be broken. Suddenly he became limp from exhaustion and despair.

"Have you done?" asked Ling. His voice was deep and very low, and there was in it something of

a tremor that made it plain to Frank that the man suffered considerable pain.

Cheong-Chau made no answer.

"Listen," said Ling. "Last night, had I wished, I might have killed you. I did not do so. The more fool I! And now, you have shot me. I am wounded, perhaps mortally--I cannot say."

"We are old enemies," said Cheong-Chau.

Ling laughed. In his laugh there was something of his old boisterous manner; but at the same time, it was manifest from his voice that he was already weak from loss of blood.

"The wolf," said he, "was never an enemy of the tiger, nor can the rat be the foe of the dog. You, Cheong-Chau, are vermin. I would lose all pride in myself, in my strength and dignity, if I killed you otherwise than with my hands."

A shudder ran through the thin frame of the brigand chief. He had lived a life of crime; he had sinned, time and again, against the gods and his fellow-men, but he was no coward; he had always known that, sooner or later, he must die a violent death.

He had thought that fate would bring him to the dreadful Potter's Yard, the public and official place of execution in the city of Canton. The inevitable conclusion of the West River pirate is the block. So Cheong-Chau was prepared to die.

"You will not torture me?" he asked.

"I would," said Ling, "if I meted out to you the fate you have more than once prepared for others. But I am no such fiend. Moreover, I have no time to spare. I go down-stream to-night on your own junk, with the ransom money that you thought was yours. I go where tide and current take me--perhaps to live for the remainder of my days upon the fatness of the earth; perhaps to find my way amidst the stars in search of the Unknowable."

"What do you mean?" asked the other.

"I mean that--for all I know--the sands of life are running out. The blood issues from my wound. It may be that the breath of life goes with it. And now, you die, by what strength remains in me."

Frank Armitage was not able to see how it was done--indeed, he turned away, and covered his eyes with a hand. It seems that Cheong-Chau was taken by the throat and that either he was strangled or his neck was broken. At any rate, it was all done in silence. The lifeless body of the man was allowed to fall to the ground, and then Ling turned to the boy.

"Are you safe?" he asked.

Frank rose to his feet, but did not answer. Ling placed a hand upon his shoulder. The boy felt that he was called upon to sustain much of the man's great weight.

"You must help me," said Ling. "I am hurt badly. You must help me--back to the junk."

Together they left the wood and came out into

the starlight. The moon was already risen. It was crescent-shaped and very thin. Ling was breathing heavily.

"In two days," said he, "it will be a new moon, but I do not think I shall behold it. There is something to be said for the creed of the Mohammedans, who hold the belief that the lives of us all, down to the most insignificant details, are written in an unalterable Book of Fate. I wonder," said he. "I wonder."

They walked slowly upon the river bank, Ling still leaning upon his young companion. Presently they came to the boat, which they had hidden amongst the rushes. Ling seated himself in the bows, and as he did so he groaned again. Frank, placing himself in the stern, took hold of the little oar.

"Come," said Ling, "row me to the junk."

CHAPTER XXVI--OF GREED OF GOLD

When they reached the junk, Ling was not able to ascend by means of the rope up which he had swarmed so easily before. Frank went on deck, and finding a rope ladder, lowered it over the side of the ship.

By means of this Ling climbed to the deck, whence he descended to the cabin below, where the paraffin lamp was still burning brightly.

He asked Frank to procure for him a bucket of river water; and whilst the boy was absent, the man took off his coat and the thin under-vest that he wore. The bullet had passed under his ribs, on the left side of his body. The wound, which was still bleeding profusely, was a great, ugly rent. When Frank returned with water he was at once shocked and astonished to observe the expression upon the man's face.

His features were pinched and drawn and haggard. The agony he suffered had caused deep lines to appear upon his forehead and about his mouth, and his eyes seemed to have sunk into his head. Beyond doubt, any other man would have fainted; but Ling was possessed of something of the

vitality of a cat. He was able to speak with difficulty, yet his mind was perfectly clear. Assisted by the boy, he washed and dressed his wound.

He had evidently small regard for antiseptics, for in place of lint and iodoform, he utilised ordinary ship's tow, which he held in place by means of a silk sash tied tightly round his waist. Then he ordered Frank to search the ship for opium.

The boy found a bowl of the treacle-like substance upon a table in the cabin. This he brought to Ling, together with an opium pipe and a spirit-lamp.

The man smiled, at the same time thanking the boy for his kindness.

"I am too far gone to smoke," said he. "I desire to be released from pain."

At that, he dipped his hand into the bowl and proceeded to eat the contents. The boy stood by, amazed. He knew enough of the potency of the drug to believe that Ling had swallowed enough to kill himself. He knew nothing, however, of the man's capacity for consuming poisonous doses of morphine.

In a few minutes the drug began to work. His eyes, which had become dull, grew brighter; the wrinkles slowly vanished from his face. When he spoke, his voice was stronger.

"You may think," said he to Frank, "that the tables are turned, that you are now master of the situation. It may have occurred to you that you have

but to go into the other room to release your European friends, and then it will be an easy thing to overpower a wounded man. I assure you, that is not the case."

"I had no such thought," said Frank.

Ling smiled again, regarding the boy even kindly--if such an expression may be used in regard to a man whose face was like that of a hawk.

"You are my friend," said he. "I know not why I like you. I think, because you are brave. I am not fool enough to believe for a moment that you love me; but I am sure that you have always realised that I am a just man, whereas Cheong-Chau was no better than a fiend. I would have you to understand--lest I be forced to harm you--that, wounded as I am, I am still master of this ship and master of you. My strength is going rapidly from me, as the tide goes down upon the margin of the sea, or as the sun sets when the day draws to its close. But I can still shoot, and if you play me false I shall kill you. Whilst the breath of life is within me, you will be wise to obey my orders."

He got to his feet, and walking more briskly than before, ascended to the upper deck, followed by Frank. There they hoisted the sail, and going to the forepart of the ship, hauled up the anchor. A minute later, the junk was sailing slowly down the river in the starlight, Ling holding the tiller.

With a skill that proved that he had spent a

portion of his life upon the sea, he steered the junk into the narrow creek which had been entered by the launch. There Ling, assisted by Frank, lowered a gangway, conducting from the deck to the shore. The sail had been hauled down and the ship secured by hawsers made fast to the trunks of trees that grew upon the edge of the water.

Frank Armitage is never likely to forget that tragic night, its grim work and pitiful conclusion. He was led by Ling to the Glade of Children's Tears--so named, perhaps, because, in a barbarous age, the murdered infants had been buried there, and the temple erected so that men might pray to the heathen gods of China for those young souls who had passed so soon into the Celestial Kingdom.

The faint, cold light of the dying moon here and there pierced the branches of the trees, so that it was possible to distinguish the old moss-clad ruins, the great fallen images, and the lifeless body of the man whose very name had once spread terror from the Nan-ling Mountains to the sea. There was no sign of Tong; the man had evidently recovered consciousness and taken to his heels.

Frank stood by, a mute and wondering spectator of the fruitless efforts of the wounded giant. The air was heavy with the scent of the blossom which was on the trees; no sound disturbed the silence save the heavy breathing of Ling, becoming shorter and shorter as he worked, and the ceaseless washing of

the water against the river bank.

Ling walked to the centre of the glade. His gait was steady, though his stride shorter than usual. He stood at his full height; and had he not once or twice carried a hand to his left side, the boy might have forgotten that the man suffered grievous pain and was weak from loss of blood.

He stood for a moment, thinking. It may have been that then he prayed to the god he worshipped, the god of Confucius and Mencius and the sages of all China: the Eternal Spirit of the Universe, the Incomprehensible Wisdom of the world.

Then he passed on to the great stone, which, not without difficulty, he rolled from its place. That done, he descended into the vault below, where he struck a match, lighting a candle he had brought with him from the junk.

Frank, looking down, beheld a subterranean chamber, about five yards by six in area, and not more than six feet deep--for Ling's head and shoulders protruded above the level of the ground. And in this vault were sacks, to the number of twenty, each of which was filled with a thousand Mexican dollars.

Now a thousand silver dollars are no mean weight; and yet Ling unaided, and in spite of his fast-failing strength, lifted the sacks one after another and placed them upon the ground above.

Then he himself came forth from the vault, and

stood for a moment holding his left side, with the pale moonlight full upon his face. It was the face of death itself.

The man's features were more drawn and haggard-looking even than before. It may have been the moonlight that caused his countenance to appear snow-white. He breathed like one who is spent from running; his great chest heaved, and Frank perceived that his wound had opened again, and the red blood was even then staining his clothes. Towards this man--of whom, throughout all the adventures through which he had passed, he had stood in the greatest dread--the boy now experienced feelings of infinite commiseration.

"Let me help you?" he asked.

And Ling laughed aloud--a laugh that sounded forced and hollow, in which there was more of irony than mirth. He pointed to one of the bags.

"Lift that up," said he.

Frank attempted to do so, but found that he had not the strength.

"You must go back to the junk," said he. "I give you my word of honour I will be true to you. I will attend to your wound. I will do all I can to help you."

"You do not know me," answered Ling. "I never give in. I go through with that which I have begun. And besides, there is no time to lose. I feel sure that Yung How has not wasted his time. If I delay I may be captured."

"If you do not rest," cried Frank, "you will kill yourself."

Ling was silent a moment. Then he snapped his fingers. "And what does that matter?" he asked. "What difference does it make to you--or, for the matter of that, to me? Death is nothing. We are only put into the world to die."

At that he lifted one of the bags upon his shoulder, and set forward in the direction of the place where the junk was moored.

CHAPTER XXVII--HOW LING DRIFTED TO THE STARS

Ling staggered under the weight of his burden. For all that, he gained the junk, where he threw the sack into an open hatchway in the forepart of the ship.

He then returned to the glade, and by a great effort lifted a second sack upon his shoulder. In all, he made the journey twenty times; and on each occasion his gait was more unsteady, his breathing shorter and faster. It appeared to Frank, who watched him, that the man diminished in stature; his shoulders became round--when he had once been so upright--and he walked like an old man, with bent knees and hollowed chest.

He was not able to complete his final journey without a rest. Half-way between the glade and the junk, he threw down the last sack upon the ground, and seating himself upon it, placed his head between his hands and came out with a great sob that was pitiful to hear. He needed his last ounce of strength to steady himself to walk the narrow gangway. No sooner had he reached the deck of the junk than the sack fell from his hands, and he himself collapsed. His knees gave way from under him, and he lay for several minutes quite motionless, curled up like a

great dog that sleeps.

Frank, thinking that the man was unconscious, knew not what to do. He began to search for a tin can or pannikin of some sort in which to give him water, but he had failed to find anything suitable for such a purpose when Ling struggled to an elbow.

"Come here," said he. "I would speak to you."

His voice was so low as to be scarcely audible. Frank hastened to his side and, kneeling down, placed an ear close to his mouth.

The boy had no fear now of the mighty Ling. Indeed, it would have been mere foolishness to fear one so stricken, in so sorry a plight. Ling was no longer an incarnate monster, a blustering, boisterous bully. The tiger was caught, choked and enfolded in the meshes of a net. And yet, he still struggled for life--struggled to the last.

He was a man who, during the last few hours, had been possessed by but one idea, which had absorbed the whole of his mind and strength and energy. Call it avarice, greed of gold, or the nobility of a supreme endeavour, it is all the same--it means that there was something in him of the earthly hero. It means that a power that is immortal had given him strength to accomplish all that he desired, had given him courage to live but a little longer. And now, with the plunder safely on board, and the wide river of the valley extending to the open sea, he knew that his days were numbered, his time on earth

was short.

"I would speak with you," he whispered. "I would tell you, you are my friend. Go below and release the European prisoners, but keep Cheong-Chau's men bound hand and foot. You cannot trust them. They are all of a breed--of the same breed as their leader. In Canton--if you wish it--you can hand them over to justice. Tell the prefect that they were captured by the mighty Ling."

In that thought he appeared to find some degree of satisfaction. He had always been vain of his strength, his wisdom and his courage.

He was silent a moment. Frank noticed that he smiled--a smile that was terrible to see, because his face was so pinched and haggard. His thoughts must have turned to things divine, for when he spoke again, it was in the words of the Celestial Emperor's prayer. He had turned over upon his back, and lay with his eyes wide open, looking up at the stars.

"To Thee, O mysteriously working Maker, I look up in thought. How imperial is Thy expansive arch! I, Thy child, dull and unenlightened, come to Thee with gladness, as a swallow rejoicing in the spring, praising Thine abundant love."

All his vanity had left him now. The heart of the monster was that of a little child. The violence of the life he had lived, the cruelty of his deeds, departed from him as the life's blood flowed from his wound; and the wisdom and the reverence he had learned on

earth rose superior to earthly joys. He closed his eyes, and lay for a long time, breathing more easily, as if asleep.

Frank got to his feet and, descending into the cabin below, cut the bonds that bound Mr Waldron and his uncle. In as few words as possible, the boy explained exactly what had happened; and then all three went on deck, to the place where Ling was lying at the foot of the mast.

As they approached, he endeavoured to lift his head, but it fell back again, as if he had lost control of the muscles of his neck.

"Can you sail the junk?" he asked, speaking for the first time in English.

"I think so," said Frank. "In any case, if we can but get her out into mid-stream, she will drift upon the current."

"That is what I would wish," said Ling. "Let me drift into the other world. Forty years since, I was born upon the turbulent waters of the Hoang-Ho. Let me breathe my last upon the tranquil Pe-kiang. One is inclined to believe," he continued, "that destiny is expressed in symbols. The Hoang-Ho is the most boisterous, violent and unmanageable river in all the thirteen provinces of this celestial land. And my life has been such, in very truth. I have lived by violence, and now I die a death by violence. But--I know not why--I die calmly, in peace with all men and my Maker. I think that, perhaps, the bad that was within

me has gone out of me with the brute strength that was mine, and the good that was within me has taken possession of my soul, to conduct me to the expansive arch of heaven. And now, that I may rest in peace, bring me a pillow for my head. You cannot move me--I am too heavy. Besides, I desire to remain here, to regard the stars."

Searching the junk, they found several cushions, and these they disposed so that the man could lie in greater ease. And Mr Waldron, who--as a man who had lived much of his life in the wilds--had some little experience in surgery and medicine, attended to Ling's wound, washing away the blood and folding another and a cleaner bandage.

And then they loosed the junk from her moorings, and with difficulty at last succeeded in getting the ship clear of the creek. She at once swung round with the current. And when they lowered what little canvas she carried, the ship drifted down the river, with Sir Thomas Armitage at the tiller.

On this account progress was very slow, and they had not progressed many miles when the red dawn began to appear in the east. They passed villages upon both banks of the river, surrounded by flooded ricefields, purple in the dawn. As the light grew, they were able to perceive distant wooded hills, with ancient temples and pagodas built upon their slopes.

They had taken turn and turn about at the work

of steering, relieving one another every half-hour, so that there were always two of them in attendance upon Ling. He did not speak again until the sun had risen, when he complained that the light was trying to his eyes.

As he had said, he was far too heavy to be moved. They constructed an awning above him, a small sail tied to the mast. He thanked them with Chinese courtesy, and then closed his eyes again, as if he desired to sleep.

A little after, they rounded a bend of the river, and found that they had gained the Pe-kiang, or North River, which joins the West River a little above Canton. And there, lying in mid-stream, like a watch-dog at the mouth of its kennel, was a British gunboat, her paint glistening in the sun, the great muzzle of a 4.5 gun directed at the bows of the junk. They could see the gunners, each man in his place, standing ready to fire.

The junk drifted nearer and nearer to the man-of-war. They could see the commander on the bridge. He shouted to them through a megaphone, ordering them to heave to and drop their anchors, or else he would open fire. When he saw that there were Europeans on board, however, who were free to do what they liked, and that the only Chinaman visible was a man stretched at full length upon the deck beneath an awning, he threw back his head with an exclamation of surprise.

At the commander's side upon the bridge stood a long-coated Chinaman; and as the junk drew alongside, Sir Thomas and his nephew recognised their old servant, Yung How.

A moment later, the lieutenant-commander was on board the junk, listening in astonishment to the extraordinary tale which Frank Armitage had to tell. It was not easy to believe, but there was on board the junk indisputable evidence that the boy spoke the truth. For there was the sack of silver dollars upon the deck, where Ling had thrown it; Cheong-Chau's seven men were below, bound hand and foot; and there was the great Honanese himself, with the spark of life no more than glimmering in that colossal frame.

Whilst Frank was relating his story, Sir Thomas addressed himself to Yung How, who stood upon the deck of the gunboat. The man explained that he had done all in his power to atone for his treachery and ingratitude. He had reached Hong-Kong--as we know--on the same boat as the letters, but had not been able to pluck up sufficient moral courage to present himself before the police authorities until after he had been several hours on the island. The ransom had already been despatched, when the Chief of Police presented himself before Sir John Macintosh, the Governor.

It would have been easy to telegraph to Canton, instructing those on board the launch to wait for His

Majesty's gunboat *Ferret*. It was decided, however, to allow the ransom money to be taken over by the brigands, who could afterwards be brought to book at the junction of the Sang River with the Pekiang. It would not be possible for Cheong-Chau to remove the treasure by any other means than by junk or *wupan*. Of the operations of Ling and the undoing of Cheong-Chau and his band, the Hong-Kong police authorities, of course, knew nothing.

Yung How himself was ordered to accompany the ship's doctor, who immediately hastened to the assistance of the dying man on board the junk. When the servant found himself face to face with his master, he immediately fell upon his knees, imploring Sir Thomas to be merciful. The judge was not slow to forgive, realising that Yung How had at last been made to realise the evils of the drug to which for so many years he had been a slave, and the depths of degradation to which the opium smoker can sink.

Upon that fateful morning, however, beyond a few brief words of mutual congratulation, little enough was said. The attention of all was taken up by the prostrate figure of the notorious Canton robber, who for years past had defied all authority and law.

The naval surgeon declared that he could do nothing. The man was already as good as dead. The surgeon's sole cause for wonderment was that Ling

still lived.

The great Honanese remained insensible until the moment when Cheong-Chau's brigands were brought on deck. Then, opening his eyes, he looked at them, at first not appearing to remember who they were. Then, very slowly, a smile spread upon his face.

"They go the way of all men," said he; "to the Potter's Yard, if evidence can be produced against them; at all events, to the wooden cages that are to be found at the gates of the city. As for myself, I go before a greater court of justice. And I am not afraid."

He remained silent for a moment, and then, seeing Frank, he asked the boy to come to him.

"Had I not met you," said he, "that morning on the wharf at Sanshui, perhaps I should not now be bidding farewell to all my earthly troubles. Still, that is a matter of no importance. I would like to thank you, because you have been true to me. It does not flatter me to think that you preferred me to Cheong-Chau. You obeyed me in the first instance through fear, and then because you saw that I was one upon whom you could rely. Tell me, is that so?"

"I think it is," said the boy, and then he added: "You are a strange man indeed."

"I believe I am," said Ling. "A singular mixture: evil and good, brutality and kindness, strength and weakness."

"I should not call you weak," said the boy.

"Then you do not know me, after all. What was all my vanity and boasting but weakness? What right has any man to boast? In the midst of the universe he is smaller than the ant; his voice, beside the thunder, is no more than the croaking of a frog. And now, bid me farewell, for I am about to die, and would gladly do so, that the pain I suffer may be ended."

It was just as if the man passed into the other world of his own free will. Slowly he closed his eyes; and then he breathed no more. The features of his face relaxed; the hardness and the cruelty, the lines of agony and crime, vanished from his features. The tiger was no more. And let us believe what he himself believed: that the evil that was in him remained upon this earth in that great casket of sinew, nerve and muscle, destined to decay, and the good that was within him--all that was noble and heroic, the great thoughts that he had had and the wisdom he had acquired--was carried by his soul into what he himself had described as "the expansive arch of heaven."

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A Select List of Books for Young People: Published by Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press

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By HERBERT STRANG

The Blue Raider

Illustrated by C. E. BROCK.

Phil Trentham, a young English trader, and his friend Hoole, an American, are amongst the few survivors

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A rousing story of adventure by sea and land. The hero, Dennis Hazelrig, is cast ashore on an island in the Spanish Main, the sole survivor of a band of adventurers from Plymouth. He lives for some time with no companion but a spider monkey, but by a series of remarkable incidents he gathers about him a numerous band of escaped slaves and prisoners, English, French and native; captures a Spanish fort; fights a Spanish galleon; meets Francis Drake, and accompanies him in his famous adventures on the Isthmus of Panama; and finally reaches England the possessor of much treasure. The author has, as usual, devoted much pains to characterisation, and every boy will delight in Amos Turnpenny, Tom Copstone, and other bold men of Devon, and in Mirandola, the monkey.

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By Captain G. B. McKEAN, V.C., M.C., M.M.

Scouting Thrills

Illustrated by JOHN DE WALTON.

Captain G. B. McKean is a Canadian officer who served throughout the war, first as a private, afterwards gaining a commission, and winning successively the Military Medal, the V.C., and the Military Cross. In his book he recounts some of his most thrilling experiences on the Western Front, particularly the exploit by which he gained the V.C. Captain McKean was Scout Officer in his battalion, and his chapters are amongst the most vivid and thrilling accounts of the war yet written--not the war

of "big pushes," massed attacks, bayonet charges, and the capture of miles of trenches, but of nights spent crawling about in the mud of No-Man's-Land, of lonely vigils in shell-holes, bombing raids, and unpleasant experiences "on the wire."

GENERAL SIR ROBERT BADEN POWELL writes: "I have devoured it with great relish.... It gives a life-like representation of the risks and thrills of scouting and the 'real thing'; and as a moral lesson of chucking everything aside to get your duty done, it is bound to have powerful results."

By HYLTON CLEAVER

Brother o' Mine

A School Story. Illustrated by H. M. BROCK.

"Brother o' Mine" is a story of Harley, a great public school. Toby Nicholson, an old Harleian, after making a shot at one or two possible openings for a career, accepts the post of Games Master at his old school. To his younger brother Terence the prospect of being at Harley with Toby is one of unalloyed pleasure, and as he is pretty sure of his First XI. colours next term, the world for him is rose-coloured. But his anticipations are not altogether realised, for Slade, the Captain of Cricket, having no particular liking for Terence to start with, feels that the

presence of Toby is a direct challenge to him to assert his independence; and on the plea that he will not show favouritism to a boy because his brother happens to be Games Master, he refuses to do him simple justice and keeps him out of the XI. In the duel that ensues, Slade makes several false moves that show him to be actuated by petty spite rather than by any high motive of justice and fair-play; and his own play proving anything but fair, his career at Harley comes to an abrupt conclusion. Terence is a fine bat, and the force of public opinion and his own worth secure him the coveted "last place" in the XI.

The Harley First Eleven

Illustrated by C. E. BROCK.

"The Harley First Eleven" is a collection of Mr. Hylton Cleaver's best short stories, all centring on the great public school Harley, and, individually, dealing with the sports for which it is famous. Mr. Cleaver's knowledge of public school-boy character is extensive and profound; he has a ready fund of wit and humour at his call, and he can describe a Rugger match in a way that makes the blood tingle with excitement. Rugger was Harley's great game, though the school produced many first-class cricketers; and the two games form the pivot of several stories. Others are concerned with boxing, running and

swimming; and we are let into secrets regarding the giving or withholding of colours for which the school at large saw no justification at the time. The book is a history of battles fought and won on the playing-fields of Harley.

By CLAUDE GRAHAME-WHITE AND HARRY HARPER

Heroes of the Air

Illustrated in Colour by CYRUS CUNEO.

This book deals with the labours and exploits of those who have played an important part in bringing about the conquest of the air. It not only contains personal memoirs of the men themselves, but traces the progress of aerial flight from the early gliders to the aeroplanes of to-day. The story of the experiments of those who first essayed to fly--the problems that long baffled them and the difficulties they overcame--together with the accounts of the daring feats of modern aviators, make a stirring narrative, and carry the history of heroism and endurance a. stage further forward.

"This will prove a great attraction to a multitude of readers who wish to read of deeds of great daring and very narrow escapes."--*Nation*.

With the Airmen

Illustrated in Colour by CYRUS CUNEO.

Mr. Grahame-White has not only repeatedly proved his skill and daring as a pilot, but the well-known type of biplane bearing his name shows that he is in the forefront of designers and constructors. With his practical and technical knowledge is combined the somewhat rare ability to impart his knowledge in a form acceptable to boys, as he has already shown in his "Heroes of the Air." This time he has written a vade mecum for the young aeroplanist, who is conducted to the aerodrome and initiated Into all the mysteries of flying. The structure of the aeroplane, the uses of the different parts, the propulsive mechanism, the steering apparatus, the work at a flying school, the causes of accidents, and the future of the aeroplane are all dealt with.

"It is surely one of the most entertaining books on a technical subject that have ever appeared, as well as one of the most instructive and comprehensive."--*Nation.*

By CAPTAIN CHARLES GILSON

On Secret Service. Illustrated by JOHN DE WALTON.

Captain Gilson's new book carries us back to the early days of the war, when the hidden menace of spies in our midst was scarcely less formidable than the obvious menace from the enemy without. Daniel Wansborough, a retired Scotland Yard detective, takes up active service again in the hour of his country's need, and becomes aware of a well-organised system of espionage at work, with its headquarters in London; but for a time he cannot discover whose is the brain directing the organisation. His nephew, George, a lad of sixteen, is instrumental in obtaining this information. George falls into the hands of the arch-spy, and is kept a prisoner in London. Here he learns the details of an ingenious plan whereby the chief Government offices in Whitehall are to be destroyed by Zeppelins. The detective, in trying to unravel the mystery of his nephew's disappearance, finds the threads mingling with those of the spy-plot, and when at length he locates the house in which the boy is shut up, he finds himself with his hand upon the very nerve-centre of the German Secret Service organisation. George is able to supply the missing links in the chain of evidence, and the scheme for the destruction of Whitehall if frustrated at the eleventh hour.

The Spy

A Story of the Peninsular War. Illustrated in Colour by

CYRUS CUNEO.

To the work of story-writing Captain Gilson brings a remarkable combination of talents: an unrivalled knowledge of military history, an imagination that never flags, a dramatic literary style, and a keen sense of humour. These qualities are seen to perfection in "The Spy." The hero, Sir Jeffery Jones, Bart, when a boy of sixteen, secures a commission in a famous foot regiment, then under orders to sail for Portugal under the command of Sir Arthur Wellesley. His first encounter with the enemy takes place before he is fifty miles from home, for on the road to London he pursues and comes near to capturing a spy in the pay of Bonaparte. Several times subsequently the paths of the two cross, and eventually Sir Jeffery is the means of thwarting the Frenchman's schemes. He takes part in much of the fighting in the Peninsula, and, at the storming of Badajoz and elsewhere, renders his country good service.

"Every boy who loves tales of war and perilous enterprise--and what boy does not!--will read 'The Spy' with unqualified enjoyment."--*Bookman*.

The Lost Empire

A Tale of Many Lands. Illustrated in Colour by CYRUS CUNEO. With Map.

This is the story of a middy who was taken prisoner by the French at the time of the Revolution. While in Paris he obtained possession of Napoleon's plans for the capture of India, and, after many adventures, was the means of frustrating that ambitious scheme.

The Lost Column

A Story of the Boxer Rebellion. Illustrated in Colour by CYRUS CUNEO.

At the outbreak of the great Boxer Rebellion in China, Gerald Wood, the hero of this story, was living with his mother and brother at Milton Towers, just outside Tientsin. When the storm broke and Tientsin was cut off from the rest of the world, the occupants of Milton Towers made a gallant defence, but were compelled by force of numbers to retire into the town. Then Gerald determined to go in quest of the relief column under Admiral Seymour. He carried his life in his hands, and on more than one occasion came within an ace of losing it; but he managed to reach his goal in safety, and was warmly commended by the Admiral on his achievement.

The Pirate Aeroplane

Illustrated in Colour by C. CLARK, R.I.

The heroes of this story, during a tour In an entirely unknown region of Africa, light upon a race of people directly descended from the Ancient Egyptians. This race--the Asmalians---has lived isolated from other communities. The scientific importance of this discovery is apparent to the travellers, and they are enthusiastic to know more of these strange people; but suddenly they find themselves in the midst of exciting adventures owing to the appearance of a pirate aeroplane--of a thoroughly up-to-date model--whose owner has learnt of a vast store of gold in the Asmalians' city. They throw in their lot with the people, and are able in the end to frustrate the plans of the freebooter.

"The story is a riot of adventure. There is the groundwork of a complete new novel on every page."--*Manchester Guardian*.

The Lost Island

Illustrated in Colour by CYRUS CUNEO.

A rousing story of adventure in the little-explored regions of Central Asia and in the South Seas. The prologue describes how Thomas Gaythorne obtained access to a Lama monastery, where he rendered the monks such great service that they bestowed upon him a gem of priceless value known as Gautama's Eye. Soon after leaving the monastery he was

attacked and robbed, and only narrowly escaped with his life. "The Lost Island" describes the attempt of one of Thomas Gaythorne's descendants to re-discover the missing gem; and he passes through some remarkable adventures before he succeeds in this quest.

The Race Round the World

An Account of the Contest for the £100,000 Prize offered by the Combined Newspaper League. Coloured Illustrations by CYRUS CUNEO, and a map of the route of *The Swallow*.

Old Silas Agge has invented a new motor spirit, far more potent than petrol, and with this secret in his possession he has no doubt that he will win the £100,000 offered by a Newspaper League to the winner of the Aeroplane Race round the World. But a foreigner, with whom Silas has had business relations, succeeds in obtaining, first, the design of the aeroplane which the old man has built, and next, a sufficient quantity of the new spirit to carry him round the world. The race thus becomes a duel between these two rivals. Guy Kingston, a daring young aviator and nephew to Silas, pilots his uncle's aeroplane, and at every stage of the race finds himself matched against an unscrupulous adversary.

The story of the race is exciting from beginning to end. Readers of Captain Gilson's earlier books will be particularly happy in renewing acquaintance with Mr. Wang, the great Chinese detective.

"Suggestive of Jules Verne in his most ambitious and fantastic vein."--*Athenaeum*.

"Boys will like it, and they will want to read it more than once."--*Scotsman*.

SCHOOL STORIES BY DESMOND COKE

The Bending of a Twig

Illustrated in Colour by H. M. BROCK.

When "The Bending of a Twig" was first published it was hailed by competent critics as the finest school story that had appeared since "Tom Brown." It is a vivid picture of life in a modern public school. The hero, Lycidas Marsh, enters Shrewsbury without having previously been to a preparatory school, drawing his ideas of school life from his imagination and a number of school stories he has read. How Lycidas finds his true level in this new world and worthily maintains the Salopian tradition is the theme of this most entrancing book.

"A real, live school story that carries conviction in every line."--*Standard*.

"Mr. Desmond Coke has given us one of the best

accounts of public school life that we possess.... Among books of its kind 'The Bending of a Twig' deserves to become a classic"--*Outlook*.

The School Across the Road

Illustrated in Colour by H. M. BROCK.

The incidents of this story arise out of the uniting of two schools--"Warner's" and "Corunna"--under the name of "Winton," a name which the head master fondly hopes will become known far and wide as a great seat of learning. Unfortunately for the head master's ambition, however, the two sets of boys--hitherto rivals and enemies, now schoolfellows--do not take kindly to one another. Warner's men of might are discredited in the new school; Henderson, lately head boy, finds himself a mere nobody; while the inoffensive Dove is exalted and made prefect by reason of his attainments in class work. There is discord and insurrection and talk of expulsion, and the feud drags on until the rival factions have an opportunity of uniting against a common enemy. Then, in the enthusiasm aroused by the overthrow of a neighbouring agricultural college, the bitterness between them dies away, and the future of Winton is assured.

"This tale is told with a remarkable spirit, and all the boys are real, everyday characters drawn without

exaggeration."--*British Weekly*.

The House Prefect

Illustrated in Colour by H. M. BROCK.

This story of the life at Sefton, a great English public school, mainly revolves around the trouble in which Bob Manders, new-made house prefect, finds himself, owing to a former alliance with the two wild spirits whom, in the interests of the house, it is now his chief task to suppress. In particular does the spirited exploit with which it opens--the whitewashing by night of a town statue and the smashing of certain school property--raise itself against him, next term, when he has been set in authority. His two former friends persist in still regarding him as an ally, bound to them by their common secret; and, in a sense, he is attracted to their enterprises, for in becoming prefect he does not cease to be a boy. It is a great duel this, fought in the studies, the dormitories, upon the field.

"Quite one of the books of the season. Mr. Desmond Coke has proved himself a aster."--*World*.

"Quite the hot school story of the year."--*Morning Leader*.

By A. C. CURTIS

The Voyage of the "Sesame"

A Story of the Arctic. Illustrated in Colour.

The Trevelyan brothers receive from a dying sailor a rough chart of a locality where much gold is to be found in the Arctic regions. They set out in quest of it, bat do not have things all their own way, for some rival treasure-seekers have got wind of the enterprise, and endeavour to secure the gold for themselves. There is a race between the two expeditions, and fighting takes place, but the crew of the Sesame are victorious, and after enduring great hardships amongst the ice, reach home safely with the gold on board.

The Good Sword Belgarde

or, How De Burgh held Dover. Coloured Illustrations by W. H. C. GROOME.

This is the story of Arnold Gyffard and John Wotton, pages to Sir Philip Daubeney, in the days when Prince Lewis the Lion invaded England and strove to win it from King John. It tells of their journey to Dover through a country swarming with foreign troops, and of many desperate fights by the way. In one of these A mold wins from a French knight the good sword Belgarde, which he uses to such good

purpose as to make his name feared. Then follows the great siege of Dover, full of exciting incidents, when by his gallant defence Hubert de Burgh keeps the key to England out of the Frenchman's grasp.

By FRANK H. MASON, R.B.A.

A Book of British Ships

Written and Illustrated by FRANK H. MASON, R.B.A.

The aim of this book is to present, in a form that will readily appeal to boys, a comprehensive account of British shipping, both naval and mercantile, and to trace its development from the old wooden walls of Nelson's time down to the Dreadnoughts and high-speed ocean liners of to-day. All kinds of British ships, from the battleship to the trawler, are dealt with, and the characteristic points of each type of vessel are explained.

By GEORGE SURREY

Mid Clash of Swords

A Story of the Sack of Rome. Coloured Illustrations by T. C. DUGDALE.

Wilfrid Salkeld, a young Englishman, enters the

employ of Giuliano de Medici, the virtual ruler of Florence, whom he serves with a zeal that that faint-hearted man does not deserve; he meets Giovanni the Invincible; and makes friends with the great Benvenuto Cellini. He has many a fierce tussle with German mercenaries and Italian robbers, as well as with those whose jealousy he arouses by his superior skill in arms.

A Northumbrian in Arms

A Story of the Time of Hereward the Wake. Illustrated in Colour by J. FINNEMORE.

Harold Ulfsson, companion of Hereward the Wake and conqueror of the Wessex Champion in a great wrestling bout, is outlawed by the influence of a Norman knight, whose enmity he has aroused, and goes north to serve under Earl Siward of Northumbria in the war against Macbeth, the Scottish usurper. He assists in defeating an attack by a band of coast-raiders, takes their ship, and discovering that his father has been slain and his land seized by his enemy, follows him into Wales. He fights with Griffith the Welsh King, kills his enemy In a desperate conflict amidst the hills, and, gaining the friendship of Harold, Earl of Wessex, his outlawry is removed and his lands restored to him.

By REV. J. R. HOWDEN, B.D.

Locomotives of the World

Containing sixteen plates in Colour.

Many of the most up-to-date types of locomotives used on railways throughout the world are illustrated and described in this volume. The coloured plates have been made from actual photographs, and show the peculiar features of some truly remarkable engines. These peculiarities are fully explained in the text, written by the Rev. J. R. Howden, author of "The Boy's Book of Locomotives," etc.

By JOHN FINBARR

The Mystery of Danger Point

Illustrated by ARCHIBALD WEBB.

A story of a hundred years ago, when there were highwaymen on every public road and smuggler! in every cove. When their school breaks up, the two youthful heroes go to spend the holidays with Robin's uncle, who lives in a tumble-down castle at Danger Point on the western coast, and they soon discover that the local people are doing a brisk trade in contraband goods. To assist in putting down this

illegal business seems to them the obvious course. They find a cave which has every appearance of being used for smuggled goods, and keep their eyes upon certain suspicious characters. In the absence of Uncle Reuben, the boys get wind of a big cargo about to be run, and resolve to inform the nearest Justice of the Peace; but before they can put their scheme into operation, they are quietly smuggled away themselves out of England into France. Here an opportunity presents itself for assisting a French nobleman and his daughter to escape from the Reign of Terror, and they return to England to invoke the aid of Uncle Reuben and his ship In this enterprise. Their success brings reward in several ways. The story is very brightly written, and has many humorous touches.

By JOSEPH BOWES

The Aussie Crusaders

Illustrated by WAL PAGET.

Mr. Bowes' latest story, "The Aussie Crusaders," deals with the British Campaign in Palestine. The hero is a young Australian officer, who, having distinguished himself in the Gallipoli struggle, was given a commission and quickly attained his majority. He is still, however, "one of the boys" in spirit, and the

story gives a pretty good idea of the informal, friendly relations that existed between the officers and men of the A.I.F. Major Smith is taken prisoner by a party of Bedouins after the fight at Rafa, and on escaping from them, falls into the hands of the Turks, from whom he also breaks free, obtaining possession of papers giving valuable information about the enemy's strength and movements. After rejoining his squadron, the Major takes part in the great sweep that, starting with the attack on Gaza, culminated in the fall of Jerusalem.

By WILLIAM J. MARX

For the Admiral

Illustrated in Colour by ARCHIBALD WEBB.

The brave Huguenot Admiral Coligny is one of the heroes of French history. Edmond le Blanc, the son of a Huguenot gentleman, undertakes to convey a secret letter of warning to Coligny, and the adventures he meets with on the way lend to his accepting service in the Huguenot army. He shares in the hard fighting that took place in the neighbourhood of La Rochelle, does excellent work in scouting for the Admiral, and is everywhere that danger calls, along with his friend Roger Braund, a young Englishman who has come over to help the cause with a band of free-lances.

This story won the £100 prize offered by the Bookman for the best story for boys.

THE ROMANCE SERIES

The Romance of the King's Navy

By EDWARD FRASER. New Edition, with Illustrations in Colour by N. SOTHEBY PITCHER.

"The Romance of the King's Navy" is intended to give boys of to-day an idea of some of the notable events that have happened under the White Ensign within the past few years. There is no other book of the kind in existence. It begins with incidents afloat during the Crimean War, when their grandfathers were boys themselves, and brings the story down to a year or two ago, with the startling adventure at Spithead of Submarine 64. One chapter tells the exciting story of "How the Navy's V.C.'s have been won," the deeds of the various heroes being brought all together here in one connected narrative for the first time.

"Mr. Fraser knows his facts well, and has set them out in an extremely interesting and attractive way."--*Westminster Gazette*.

The Romance of the King's Army

By A. B. TUCKER.

A companion volume to "The Romance of the King's Navy," telling again in glowing language the most inspiring incidents in the glorious history of our land forces. The charge of the 21st Lancers at Omdurman, the capture of the Dargai heights, the saving of the guns at Maiwand, are a few of the great stories of heroism and devotion that appear in this stirring volume.

"We cannot toe highly commend this beautiful volume as a prize-book for school-boys of all classes."--*School Guardian*.

The Romance of Every Day

By LILIAN QUILLER-COUCH.

Here is a bookful of romance and heroism; true stories of men, women, and children in early centuries and modern times who took the opportunities which came into their everyday lives and found themselves heroes and heroines; civilians who, without beat of drum or smoke of battle, without special training or words of encouragement, performed deeds worthy to be written in letters of gold.

"These stories are bound to encourage and Inspire young readers to perform heroic actions."--*Bristol Daily Mercury*.

The Romance of the Merchant Venturers

By E. E. SPEIGHT and R. MORTON NANCE.

Britain's Sea Story

By E. E. SPEIGHT and R. MORTON NANCE. New Edition, Illustrated in Colour by H. SANDHAM.

These two books are full of true tales as exciting as any to be found in the story books, and at every few pages there is a fine illustration, in colour or black and white, of one of the stirring incidents described in the text.

By MEREDITH FLETCHER

The Pretenders

With Coloured Illustrations by HAROLD C. EARNSHAW.

A tale of twin-brothers at Daneborough School, Tommy Durrant (the narrator) has been a boarder for about a year, when Peter arrives upon the scene as a day-boy. The latter's ill-health has prevented him joining the school before, and, being a harum-scarum youngster, his vagaries plunge Tommy into hot water straight away. The following week, unaware of all the mischief he has made, the newcomer, who lives

with an aunt, urges his twin to change places one night for a spree. Tommy rashly consents, and his experiences while pretending to be Peter prove both unexpected and exciting.

"Mr. Meredith Fletcher is extremely happy in his delineation of school life."--*People's Journal*.

The Complete Scout

Edited by MORLEY ADAMS, with numerous Illustrations and Diagrams.

This is a book intended primarily for boy scouts, but It also possesses an Interest for all boys who like out-of-door amusements and scouting games. It contains many articles by different writers on the various pursuits and branches of study that scouts are more particularly interested in, such as wood-craft, tracing, the weather, and so on, and the book should form a sort of cyclopaedia for many thousands of boys who hail Baden-Powell as Chief Scout.

By D. H. PARRY

Kit of the Carabineers

or, A Soldier of Maryborough's.

Illustrated in Colour by ARCHIBALD WEBB.

This story tells how Kit Dawnay comes under the notice of the Duke of Marlborough while the latter is on a visit to Kit's uncle, Sir Jasper Dawnay, an irritable, miserly old man, suspected, moreover with good reason, of harbouring Jacobite plotters and of being himself favourable to the cause of the exiled Stuarts.

Kit, instructed by the Duke, Is able to frustrate a scheme for the assassination of King William as he rides to Hampton Court, and the King, in return for Kit's service, gives him a cornet's commission in the King's Carabineers. He goes with the army to Flanders, takes part in the siege of Liege; accompanies Marlborough on those famous forced marches across Europe, whereby the great leader completely hoodwinked the enemy; and is present at the battle of Blenheim, where he wins distinction.

"The story bristles with dramatic incident, and the thrilling adventures which overtake the young hero, Kit Dawnay, are enough to keep one breathless with excitement."--*Bookman*.

By W. H. G. KINGSTON

Hurricane Hurry

Coloured Illustrations by ARCHIBALD WEBB.

This Is one of W. H. G. Kingston's best books in the

sense that It has an atmosphere of reality about it, and reads like the narrative of one who has actually passed through all the experiences described; and this is no mere illusion, for the author states in his preface that the material from which the story was built up was put into his hands by a well-known naval officer, who afterwards rose to the position of admiral. Mr. Hurry enters the navy as midshipman a few years before the outbreak of the American War of Independence, and during that war he distinguishes himself both on land and sea.

Will Weatherhelm

Coloured Illustrations by ARCHIBALD WEBB.

A splendid tale of the sea, full of incident and adventure, and a first-rate account of the sailor's life afloat in the days of the press-gang and the old wooden walls. The author reveals his own ardent love of the sea and all that pertains to it, and this story embodies a true ideal of patriotic service.

By G. A. HENTY

In Times of Peril

A Story of India. Illustrated in Colour by T. C. DUGDALE.

Major Warrener and his children are stationed at Sandynugghur when news arrives that the native troops at Meerut have mutinied and murdered all the Europeans there and are marching upon Delhi. Almost immediately the Major's house is attacked and his family flee for their lives. The Major himself and some of his companions are taken prisoners, but only for a short time, for his sons, Ned and Dick, disguising themselves as Sepoys, are able to rescue them. The party after an anxious time fall in with a body of English troops who are on the way to relieve Delhi. Dick and Ned are in Cawnpore when the Europeans are attacked, but they escape by swimming instead of trusting themselves in boats. They take part in the storming of Delhi, which had been taken by the natives, and in the relief of Lucknow. The end of the Mutiny finds the whole family once more united.

Edited by HERBERT STRANG

Early Days in Canada
Pioneers in Canada
Early Days in Australia
Pioneers in Australia
Early Days in India
Duty and Danger in India

Each book contains eight plates in Colour.

The story of the discovery, conquest, settlement, and peaceful development of the great countries which now form part of the British Empire, is full of interest and romance. In this series of books the story is told in a number of extracts from the writings of historians, biographers, and travellers whose works are not easily accessible to the general reader. Each volume is complete in itself and gives a vivid picture of the progress of the particular country with which it deals.

BOOKS FOR BOYS AND GIRLS

HERBERT STRANG'S LIBRARY

This is a new series of standard books for boys and girls, comprising the great works of history, fiction, biography, travel, science, and poetry with which every boy and girl should be familiar, edited by Mr. HERBERT STRANG.

Each volume is prefaced by a short introduction, giving a biographical account of the author, or such information concerning the book itself as may be useful and interesting to young readers. Notes, maps, and plans are given where necessary.

The text of the books, many of which were not written primarily for children, is carefully edited both in regard to matters that are inherently unsuitable for their reading, and to passages that do

not conform to modern standards of taste. In these and other respects the Editor will exercise a wide discretion.

The Library Is illustrated with colour plates, reproduced by three-colour process from designs by H. M. BROCK, JAMES DURDEN, A. WEBB, and other well-known artists,

The following volumes are now ready:--

Adventures in the Rifle Brigade	By S
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The Life of Wellington	By V
The Boy's Country Book	By V
Mungo Park's Travels	
The Coral Island	By I
True Blue	By V
Little Women	By I
Good Wives	By I
Tales from Hans Andersen	
Stories from Grimm	
Tom Brown's Schooldays	By T
The Life of Nelson	By I
Quentin Durward	By S
A Book of Golden Deeds	By (
A Wonder Book	By I
What Katy Did	By S
What Katy Did at School	By S
What Katy Did Next	By S

Ivanhoe	By S
Curiosities of Natural History	By I
Captain Cook's Voyages	
The Heroes	By C
Robinson Crusoe	By I
Tales from Shakespeare	By C
Peter the Whaler	By W
Queechy	By I
The Wide Wide World	By I
Tanglewood Tales	By N
The Life of Columbus	By W
Battles of the Peninsular War	By S
Midshipman Easy	By C
The Swiss Family Robinson	By J

Books for Girls

By CHRISTINA GOWANS WHYTE

Uncle Hilary's Nieces

Illustrated in Colour by JAMES BURDEN.

Until the death of their father, the course of life of Uncle Hilary's nieces had run smooth; but then the current of misfortune came upon them, carried them, with their mother and brothers, to London, and established them in a fiat. Here, under the guardianship of Uncle Hilary, they enter into the

spirit of their new situation; and when it comes to a question of ways and means, prove that they have both courage and resource. Thus Bertha secretly takes a position as stock-keeper to a fashionable dressmaker; Milly tries to write, and has the satisfaction of seeing her name in print; Edward takes up architecture and becomes engrossed in the study of "cupboards and kitchen sinks"; while all the rest contribute as well to the maintenance of the household as to the interest of the story.

"We have seldom read a prettier story than ... 'Uncle Hilary's Nieces.' ... It is a daintily woven plot clothed in a style that has already commended itself to many readers, and is bound to make more friends."--*Daily News*.

The Five Macleods

Illustrated in Colour by JAMES DURDEN.

The modern Louisa Alcott! That is the title that critics In England and America have bestowed on Miss Christina Gowans Whyte, whose "Story-Book Girls" they declare to be the best girls' story since "Little Women." Like the Leightons and the Howards, the Macleods are another of those delightful families whose doings, as described by Miss Whyte, make such entertaining reading. Each of the five Macleods possesses an individuality of her own. Elspeth is the

eldest--sixteen, with her hair "very nearly up"--and her lovable nature makes her a favourite with every one; she is followed, in point of age, by the would-be masterful Winifred (otherwise Winks) and the independent Lil; while little Babs and Dorothy bring up the rear.

"Altogether a most charming story for girls."--*Schoolmaster*.

Nina's Career

Illustrated in Colour by JAMES BURDEN.

"Nina's Career" tells delightfully of a large family of girls and boys, children of Sir Christopher Howard. Friends of the Howards are Nina Wentworth, who lives with three aunts, and Gertrude Mannering. Gertrude Is conscious of always missing in her life that which makes the lives of the Howards so joyous and full. They may have "careers"; she must go to Court and through the wearying treadmill of the rich girls. The Howards get engaged, marry, go into hospitals, study in art schools; and in the end Gertrude also achieves happiness.

"We have been so badly in need of writers for girls who shall be in sympathy with the modern standard of intelligence, that we are grateful for the advent of Miss Whyte, who has not inaptly been described as the new Miss Alcott,"--*Outlook*.

The Story-Book Girls

Illustrated in Colour by JAMES BURDEN.

This story won the £100 prize In the Bookman competition.

The Leightons are a charming family. There is Mabel, the beauty, her nature, strength and sweetness mingled; and Jean, the downright, blunt, uncompromising; and Elma, the sympathetic, who champions everybody, and has a weakness for long words. And there is Cuthbert, too, the clever brother. Cuthbert is responsible for a good deal, for he saves Adelaide Maud from an accident, and brings the Story-Book Girls into the story. Every girl who reads this book will become acquainted with some of the realest, truest, best people in recent fiction.

"It is not too much to say that Miss Whyte has opened a new era in the history of girls' literature.... The writing, distinguished in itself, is enlivened by an all-pervading sense of humour."--*Manchester Courier*.

By J. M. WHITFELD

Tom who was Rachel

A Story of Australian Life. Illustrated in Colour by N. TENISON.

This is a story of Colonial life by an author who is new to English readers. In writing about Australia Miss Whitfeld is, in a very literal sense, at home; and no one can read her book without coming to the conclusion that she is equally so in drawing pen portraits of children. Her work possesses all the vigour and freshness that one usually associates with the Colonies, and at the same time preserves the best traditions of Louisa Alcott In "Tom who was Rachel" the author has described a large family of children living on an up-country station; and the story presents a faithful picture of the everyday life of the bush. Rachel (otherwise Miss Thompson, abbreviated to "Miss Tom," afterwards to "Tom") is the children's step-sister; and it Is her Influence for good over the wilder elements in their nature that provides the teal motive of a story for which all English boys and girls will feel grateful.

Gladys and Jack

An Australian Story for Girls. Coloured Illustrations by N. TENISON.

Gladys and Jack are sister and brother, and, up to the point when the story opens, they have been the best of friends. Then, however, certain influences begin to work in the mind of Gladys, as the result of which a coolness springs up between her and her

brother. Gladys puts on a superior air, and adopts a severely proper attitude towards Jack. Gladys has been in society, has come to be regarded as a beauty, and has been made a fuss of; consequently she becomes self-conscious. She goes to spend a holiday up-country, and here, too, her icily-regular line of conduct seems bound to bring her into conflict with her free-and-easy-going cousins. After some trying experiences, Gladys finds herself in a position which enables her, for the time being, to forget her own troubles, and exert all her strength on behalf of the rest. She comes worthily through the ordeal, earns the affection of her cousins, and Jack rejoices in the recovery of a lost sister.

"We have a large number of characters all clearly differentiated, plenty of incident, and much sparkling dialogue."--*Morning Post.*

The Colters

An Australian Story for Girls. Illustrated in Colour by GEORGE SOPER.

This book deals with a merry family of Australian boys and girls. There are a good many of them, and to each one Miss Whitfeld has imparted a distinct individuality. There is Hector, the eldest, manly and straightforward, and Matt, the plain-spoken, his younger brother. Ruby, quiet and gentle, with an

aptitude for versifying, is well contrasted with her headstrong, impulsive cousin Effie. The author seizes upon the everyday occurrences of domestic life, turning them to good account; and she draws a charming picture of a family, united in heart, while differing very much in habit and temperament.

By ELSIE J. OXENHAM

Mistress Nanciebel

Illustrated in Colour by JAMES BURDEN.

This is a story of the Restoration. Nanciebel's father, Sir John Seymour, had so incurred the displeasure of King Charles by his persistent opposition to the threatened war against the Dutch, that he was sent out of the country. Nothing would dissuade Nanciebel from accompanying him, so they sailed away together and were duly landed on a desolate shore, which they afterwards discovered to be a part of Wales. Here, by perseverance and much hard toil, John o' Peace made a new home for his family, in which enterprise he owed not a little to the presence and constant help of Nanciebel, who is the embodiment of youthful optimism and womanly tenderness.

"A charming book for girls."--*Evening Standard.*

A NEW ALBUM FOR GIRLS

My Schooldays

An album in which girls can keep a record of their schooldays. In order that the entries may be neat and methodical, certain pages have been allotted to various different subjects, such as Addresses, Friends, Books, Matches, Birthdays, Concerts, Holidays, Theatricals, Presents, Prizes and Certificates, and so on. The album is beautifully decorated throughout.

By MRS. HERBERT STRANG

The Girl Crusoes

A Story of Three Girls in the South Seas. With Colour Illustrations by N. TENISON.

It is a common experience that young girls prefer stories written for their brothers to those written for themselves. They have the same love of adventure, the same admiration for brave and heroic deeds, as boys; and in these days of women travellers and explorers there are countless instances of women displaying a courage and endurance in all respects equal to that of the other sex. Recognizing this, Mrs. Herbert Strang has written a story of adventure in

which three English girls of the present day are the central figures, and in which the girl reader will find as much excitement and amusement as any boy's book could furnish.

By WINIFRED M. LETTS

The Quest of the Blue Rose

Illustrated in Colour by JAMES BURDEN.

After the death of her mother, Sylvia Sherwood has to make her own way in the world as a telegraph clerk. The world she finds herself in is a girls' hostel in a big northern city. For a while she can only see the uncongenial side of her surroundings; but when she has made a friend and found herself a niche, she begins to realise that though the Blue Rose may not be for her finding, there are still wild roses in every hedge. In the end, however, Sylvia, contented at last with her hard-working, humdrum life, finds herself the successful writer of a book of children's poems.

"Miss Letts has written a most entertaining work, which should become very popular. The humour is never forced, and the pathetic scenes are written with true feeling."--*School Guardian*.

Bridget of All Work

Illustrated in Colour by JAMES BURDEN.

The scene of the greater part of this story is laid in Lancashire, and the author has chosen her heroine from among those who know what it is to feel the pinch of want and strive loyally to combat it. There is a charm about Bridget Joy, moving about her kitchen, keeping a light heart under the most depressing surroundings. Girl though she is, it is her arm that encircles and protects those who should in other circumstances have been her guardians, and her brave heart that enables the word Home to retain its sweetness for those who are dependent on her.

"Miss Letts has written a story for which elder girls will be grateful, so simple and winning is it; and we recognise in the author's work a sense of character and sense of style which ought to ensure its popularity."--*Globe*.

By ANGELA BRAZIL

A Terrible Tomboy

New Edition. With Coloured Illustrations by N. TENISON.

Peggy Vaughan, daughter of a country gentleman living on the Welsh border, is much too high-spirited to avoid getting continually into scrapes. She nearly gets drowned while birds'-nesting, scandalises the

over-prim daughters of rich up-starts by her carelessness in matters of dress and etiquette, gets lost with her small brother while exploring caves, smokes out wild bees, and acts generally more like a boy than a girl. Naturally enough her father and school mistresses find her very difficult to manage, but her good humour and kindness of heart make it impossible to be angry with her for long. At the end of the story, when the family have become too poor to remain any longer in their old home, she makes a discovery which enables them to stay there.

By E. L. HAVERFIELD

The Happy Comrade

Illustrated by ALBERT MORROW.

Monica, the heroine of this story, is a wealthy girl who has never been to school, but has formed a close home friendship with Penelope, a girl somewhat older, upon whom she has been accustomed to lavish valuable gifts, partly out of innate generosity, partly from love of appreciation. Her affection for Penelope induces her to enter the same school, expecting that the home relations will continue there. To her chagrin, however, she finds that Penelope's high position as head prefect prevents close intercourse, and in some bitterness of spirit she allies herself with

a set of girls who delight in lawlessness and engage in mischievous and unruly pranks. She soon finds herself in serious trouble; and the story shows how her better nature overcomes her weaknesses, how she learns to despise the dishonourable conduct into which her associates have lured her, and how the tribulation which she has brought on herself leads ultimately to a firmer, purer friendship for the girl whom she has all along admired and loved.

Sylvia's Victory

Illustrated in Colour by JAMES BURDEN.

Owing to a change in the family fortunes, Sylvia Hughes is obliged to attend a day school in a small seaside town where she has the misfortune to make an enemy of the head girl, Phyllis Staunton-Taylor, who regards Sylvia as one belonging to an inferior set to her own. One day during the holidays Sylvia swims out and rescues Phyllis, who has got beyond her depth; but even this fails to establish amity between them, and no word of Sylvia's heroism gets abroad in the school. It is not until after she has experienced many trials and heartburnings that Sylvia learns the reason of Phyllis's apparent ingratitude, and friendship is restored.

Audrey's Awakening

Illustrated in Colour by JAMES DURDEN.

As a result of a luxurious and conventional upbringing, Audrey is a girl without ambitions, unsympathetic, and with a reputation for exclusiveness. Therefore, when Paul Forbes becomes her step-brother, and brings his free-and-easy notions into the Davidsons' old home, there begins to be trouble. Audrey discovers that she has feelings, and the results are not altogether pleasant. She takes a dislike to Paul at the outset; and the young people have to get through deep waters and some exciting times before things come right. Audrey's awakening is thorough, if painful.

"Is far above the Average tale of school and home life."--*Aberdeen Free Press*.

The Conquest of Claudia

Illustrated in Colour by JAMES BURDEN.

Meta and Claudia Austin are two motherless girls with a much-occupied father. Their upbringing has therefore been left to a kindly governess, whose departure to be married makes the first change in the girls' lives. Having set their hearts upon going to school, they receive a new governess resentfully. Claudia is a person of instincts, and it does not take her long to discover that there is something

mysterious about Miss Strongitharm. A clue upon which the children stumble leads to the notion that Miss Strongitharm is a Nihilist in hiding. That in spite of various strange happenings they are quite wrong is to be expected, but there is a genuine mystery about Miss Strongitharm which leads to some unforeseen adventures.

"A convincing story of girl life."--*School Guardian.*

Dauntless Patty.

Illustrated in Colour by DUDLEY TENNANT.

Patricia Garnett, an Australian girl, comes over to England to complete her education. She is unconventional and quite unused to English ways, and soon finds herself the most unpopular girl in the school. Several times she reveals her courage and high spirit, particularly in saving the life of Kathleen Lane, a girl with whom she is on very bad terms. All overtures of peace fail, however, for Patty feels that the other girls have no real liking for her, and she refuses to be patronised. Thus the feud is continued to the end of the term; and the climax of the story is reached when, in a cave in the face of a cliff, in imminent danger of being drowned, Patty and Kathleen for the first time understand each other, and lay the foundations of a lifelong friendship.

"A thoroughly faithful and stimulating story of schoolgirl life,"--*Schoolmaster*.

"The story is well told. Some of the incidents are dramatic, without being unnatural; the interest is well sustained, and altogether the hook is one of the best we have read."--*Glasgow Herald*.

By BRENDA GIRVIN

Jenny Wren

Illustrated by C. E. BROCK.

Jenny Ferguson, the only child of a retired admiral, is sent as wireless decoder to a Scottish naval base. On her arrival she meets an old friend of her childhood, Henry Corfield, who is apparently the skipper of a fishing trawler. Jenny, ignorant of the real object of the man's "trawling," calls him a slacker. In his turn, Corfield, who has a lively recollection of Jenny's impulsive tongue, reminds her of her nurse's saying, "Miss Jenny can never keep a secret," and says he will not shield her should she fail to preserve secrecy in her work. After a few days, Jenny finds that information is leaking out. Code books are lost and mysteriously replaced, envelopes lapped. Corfield attributes this leakage to Jenny's carelessness. In the nick of time Jenny has a clue and tracks down the criminal. The breach between the

two friends, however, is a long time in healing, for Jenny does not learn till towards the end of the book that "Skipper" Corfield, on his humble little boat with her hidden guns, is one of the heroes of the war. The story ends with the coming of peace.

The Girl Scout

Illustrated in Colour by N. TENISON.

This is the story of a patrol of Girl Scouts, and the service they rendered their country. Colonel Norton announces that some silver cups, which he values as souvenirs of the time when he could win races and gymnastic competitions, have been stolen, and calls on the Boy Scouts to catch the thief, promising, if they succeed, to furnish their club-room in time for the reception of a neighbouring patrol. Aggie Phillips, sister of the boys' leader, hears of this, and at once organises a girls' patrol to help solve the mystery. In tracing the thief, the girls manage to entrap two foreigners, who, in all kinds of disguises, try to get hold of valuable papers in the hands of the Colonel. Meanwhile the boys continually follow up the tracks left by the girls, or are purposely misled by Aggie. The girls win the prize but arrange to join forces with the boys.

By ANNA CHAPIN RAY

Teddy: Her Daughter

Illustrated in Colour by N. TENISON.

Many young readers have already made the acquaintance of Teddy in Miss Anna Chapin Ray's previous story, "Teddy: Her Book." The heroine of the present story is Teddy's daughter Betty--a young lady with a strong will and decided opinions of her own. When she is first introduced to us she is staying on a holiday at Quantuck, a secluded seaside retreat; and Miss Ray describes the various members of this small summer community with considerable humour. Among others is Mrs. Van Hicks, a lady of great possessions but little culture, who seeks to put people under a lasting obligation to her by making friends with them. On hearing that a nephew of this estimable lady is about to arrive at Quantuck, Betty makes up her mind beforehand to dislike him. At first she almost succeeds, for, like herself, Percival has a temper, and can be "thorny" at times. As they come to know each other better, however, a less tempestuous state of things ensues, and eventually they cement a friendship that is destined to carry them far.

By CHRISTINE CHAUNDLER

Pat's Third Term.

Illustrated by HAROLD EARNSHAW.

Pat Baxter is a turbulent, impulsive member of the Lower Fourth in a famous Girls' School. She begins her Third Term by "cheeking" the Head girl herself, thereby earning a good deal of hostility. She falls from favour in other quarters as the story goes on, for though she has a genius for getting into scrapes, she is too honest and honourable to disavow her share in any plot, as many of her school-fellows do. Through her disobeying a stringent rule, and going alone into the town, the whole school, upper and lower, is put into quarantine, the result of this isolation being that Rhoda, the Head girl, generally beloved in the school, will have to "scratch" from a local tennis match, the winning of which would have brought her her coveted tennis colours. The whole school, in indignation, unknown to Rhoda, sends Pat to "Coventry." Pat also becomes the object of a good deal of mean, unfair treatment from a few of her form fellows, about which, in the end, Rhoda herself learns. Horror-stricken at the treatment meted out, Rhoda puts Pat under her special protection, and a deep friendship springs up between the two. Pat finishes her third term by saving the life of her greatest enemy, earning a special medal for bravery.

By MARY BRADFORD WHITING

A Daughter of the Empire

Illustrated by JOHN CAMPBELL.

Christina, a curiously vivid character, is suddenly thrown from the backwoods of Australia into the family circle at Strafford Royal, where Lady Stratford, her second cousin, reigns supreme. Lady Strafford dislikes Christina from the first, patronises her and snubs her, and the girl is thrown for sympathy and companionship into the society of Miss Luscombe, a lovable woman whose home is on a neighbouring estate. Christina finds herself continually faced by the stone wall of the prejudices of Lady Strafford, who looks on all foreigners with suspicion and her own family with placid pride, and is continually voicing her determination that the War shall not be allowed in any way to upset the even tenour of her life. Just how the War very successfully breaks in on to Strafford Royal, sweeping away the heir, rendering halt and maim the second son, is told in the course of the story. Christina's part in the denouement is characteristically plucky and honourable, and in the end she breaks down even Lady Stratford's dislike and mistrust. The story is told with much charm and sympathy.

By L. B. WALFORD

A Sage Of Sixteen.

Illustrated by JAMES DURDEN.

Elma, the heroine of this story, is called a sage by her wealthy and sophisticated relations in Park Lane, with whom she spends a half-holiday every week, and who regard her as a very wise young person. The rest of her time is passed at a small boarding-school, where, as might be supposed, Elma's friends look upon her rather as an ordinary healthy girl than as one possessing unusual wisdom. The story tells of Elma's humble life at school, her occasional excursions into fashionable society; the difficulties she experiences in her endeavour to reconcile the two; and the way in which she eventually wins the hearts of those around her in both walks of life.

By ANNIE MATHESON

A Day Book for Girls

Containing a quotation for each day of the year, arranged by ANNIE
MATHESON, with Colour Illustrations by C. E. BROCK.

Miss Annie Matheson is herself well known to many as a writer of hymns and poetry of a high order. In "A Day Book for Girls" she has brought together a large number of extracts both in poetry and prose,

and so arranged them that they furnish an inspiring and ennobling watchword for each day of the year. Miss Matheson has spared no pains to secure variety and comprehensiveness in her selection of quotations; her list of authors ranges from Marcus Aurelius to Mr. Swinburne, and includes many who are very little known to the general public.

Books for Children

A Book of Children's Verse

Selected and Edited by MABEL and LILIAN QUILLER-COUCH.

Illustrated in Colour by M. ETHELDREDA GRAY.

This is a splendid anthology of children's verse. In addition to the old favourite poems, the volume contains many by modern authors, and others not generally known. The work of selection has been carried out with great care, and no effort has been spared to make the volume a worthy and comprehensive introduction to English poetry. The book is illustrated by a series of magnificent plates in colour.

By LUCAS MALET

Little Peter

A Christmas Morality for Children of any age. New Edition.

Illustrated in Colour by CHARLES E. BROCK.

This delightful little story Introduces to us a family dwelling upon the outskirts of a vast pine forest in France. There are Master Lepage who, as head of the household and a veteran of the wars, lays down the law upon all sorts of questions, domestic and political; his meek wife Susan; their two sons, Anthony and Paul; and Cincinnatus the cat--who holds as many opinions and expresses them as freely as Master Lepage himself; and--little Peter. Little meets, and all who read about him will certainly make friends with *him*.

"It is quite an ideal gift book, and one that will always be treasured."--*Globe*.

By CHRISTINA GOWANS WHYTE

The Adventures of Merrywink

Illustrated by M. V. WHEELHOUSE.

This story won the £100 prize in the Bookman competition for the best
story for children.

This story tells of a pretty little child who was born into Fairyland with a gleaming star in his forehead.

When his parents beheld this star they were filled with gladness and fear, and they carried their little Fairy baby, Merrywink, far away and hid him, because of two old prophecies: the first, that a daughter should be born to the King and Queen of Fairyland; the second that the King should rule over Fairyland until a child appeared with a star in his forehead. Now, on the very day that Merrywink was born, the little Princess arrived at the Palace; and the King sent round messages to make sure that the child with the gleaming star had not yet been seen in Fairyland. The story tells us how Merrywink grew up to be brave and strong, and fearless and truthful.

By MRS. HENRY DE LA PASTURE

The Unlucky Family

New Edition with Coloured Illustrations by C. E. BROCK.

This is one of the most humorous children's books published in recent years, and the many awkward dilemmas and diverting experiences which ensue upon the Chubb family's unexpected rise in the social scale cannot fail to delight young readers as well as their elders. In the matter of showing the propensity for gelling into mischief these youngsters establish a record, but their escapades are generally of a harmless character and lead to nothing very serious.

"It is a clever and amusing talc, full of high spirits and good-natured mischief which children not too seriously inclined will enjoy."--*Scotsman*.

By M. I. A.

Sir Evelyn's Charge

New Edition, Illustrated in Colour.

"Sir Evelyn's Charge" is one of the most popular books for Sunday School prizes published within recent years, and has already run into very many editions. The object of the story is to show how the quiet, unconscious influence exerted by a little child upon those around him may be productive of lasting good. This new edition, with a. new cover and colour plates, makes a very attractive gift-book.

THE PENDLETON SERIES

The Pendleton Twins

By E. M. JAMESON, Author of "The Pendletons," etc. With Coloured Illustrations.

The adventures of the Pendleton Twins begin the very day they leave home. The train is snowed up and they are many hours delayed. They have a merry

Christmas with plenty of fun and presents, and in the middle of the night Bob gives chase to a burglar. Nora, who is very sure-footed, goes off by herself one day and climbs the cliffs, thinking that no one will be any the wiser until her return. But the twins and Dan follow her unseen and are lost in a cave, where they find hidden treasure, left by smugglers, buried in the ground. Len sprains his ankle and they cannot return. Search parties set out from Cliffe, and spend many hours before the twins are found by Nora, cold and tired and frightened. But the holidays end very happily after all.

"Miss Jameson's books are written with such humour and lightness of touch that they hold the young readers, and not only amuse but instruct them."--*Dundee Courier*.

The Pendletons

By E. M. JAMESON.

New Edition. Illustrated in Colour.

"Young people will revel in this most Interesting and original story. The five young Pendletons are much as other children in a large family, varied in their ideas, quaint in their tastes, and wont to get into mischief at every turn. They are withal devoted to one another and to their home, and although often

'naughty,' are not by any means 'bad.' The interest in the doings of these youngsters is remarkably well sustained, and each chapter seems better than the last. With not a single dull page from start to finish and with twelve charming illustrations, the book makes an ideal reward for either boys or girls."--*Schoolmaster*.

Peggy Pendleton's Plan

By E. M. JAMESON. New Edition. Illustrated in Colour by S. P. PEARSE.

To many young readers the Pendleton children are quite old friends, as indeed they deserve to be, for they are so merry, so full of fun and good spirits, that nobody can read about them without coming to love them. In the opening chapter of this book the family meet together in solemn conclave to discuss plans for the holidays, which have just commenced. Every one of them has a favourite idea, but when the various selections are put to the vote, it is Peggy Pendleton's plan that carries the day. All the other children think it splendid. What that plan was, and what strange adventures it led to, are here set forth.

The Book of Baby Beasts

By FLORENCE E. Dugdale. Illustrated in Colour by E. J. DETMOLD.

This book contains a series of simple little talks about baby animals, both wild and domestic. Each chapter is accompanied by a charming picture in colour by E. J. DETMOLD, whose work as an illustrator is well known, and whose characteristic delicacy of colouring is faithfully reproduced.

The Book of Baby Dogs

By CHARLES KABERRY. With nineteen plates in Colour by E. J. DETMOLD.

The Book of Baby Pets

By FLORENCE E. DUGDALE. Illustrated in Colour by E. J. DETMOLD.

"A valuable family possession, and one which admirably fulfils the role of guide, counsellor and friend."--*Athenaeum*.

The Book of Baby Birds

By FLORENCE E. DUGDALE. Illustrated in Colour by E. J. DETMOLD.

"Simply irresistible."--*Observer*.

Queen Mab's Daughters

From the French of JEROME DOUCET. Illustrated by HENRY MORIN.

This book consists of twelve stories, each concerned with an episode in the life of one of Queen Mab's daughters. These are very enterprising and adventurous princesses, somewhat wilful, indeed; and their activities, innocent though they are, often bring them into hot water. They fall into the hands of witches and wizards, and are the means of releasing from enchantment an equal number of princes who have been changed into bears, eagles, monkeys, and other animals by the powers of witchcraft. Their adventures are related with the charming daintiness wherein French fabulists, from Perrault downwards, have excelled; and the book is a decided acquisition to the store of fairy literature in which all children delight.

By VIOLET BRADBY

The Capel Cousins

Illustrated in Colour in C. E. BROCK.

The children in the Capel family hear that a cousin from South America is to live with them until his education is finished. On his arrival he is found to be very frank and outspoken, accustomed to say just

what he thinks; and as his cousins are more reserved, the misunderstandings are by no means few. In time, however, he becomes used to English ways, and his good nature and cleverness win his cousins' admiration and affection. Mrs. Bradby writes as one who knows children thoroughly, and her pictures of home life are very charming.

"The authoress shows a power of depicting a large family of delightful and quite natural children which recalls the stories of Miss Yonge at her brightest."--*Church Times*.

"A very pleasant, natural, and brightly written story "--*Lady*.

The Happy Families

Illustrated by LILIAN A. GOVEY.

Most children have probably played the game of "Happy Families," and it Is possible that they have woven stories round the grotesque characters that appear on the cards. This is what Mrs. Bradby has done in this book, and she has imagined a little girl being suddenly transported to Happy Family Land and finding herself beset on all hands by the Grits, the Chips and the Boneses, and all the other members of this strange and wonderful community.

By FLORENCE E. DUGDALE

(MRS. THOMAS HARDY)

In Lucy's Garden

Illustrated in Colour by J. CAMPBELL.

Miss Dugdale describes Lucy's garden from month to month, the plants that grow there, the insects that visit it, and the imaginary beings with which Lucy peoples it. During the first year Lucy is without any companion to share her experiences, but at the beginning of the second year, just when she begins to feel lonely, she makes the acquaintance of a little boy, Peter, who is staying with his grandmother next door, and who, too, has grown tired of playing by himself. They gladly arrange that in future they will play together, as they like each other very much. Little ones who have gardens of their own will enjoy reading about Lucy's, especially when they know that she was capable of understanding what the apple trees and leaves and roses had to tell her about things in general and themselves in particular.

"A delightful 'Nature story' written in a charming vein of playful fancy, and daintily illustrated."--*Lady*.

By TERTIA BENNETT

Gentleman Dash

Illustrated in Colour by P. H. JOWETT.

This is a book that will appeal to all lovers of animals. Gentleman Dash Is a fine collie who lives at a big house with a number of other dogs and cats. In spite of his handsome appearance, however, Dash sometimes falls so far from dignity as to run away and steal meat from butchers' shops. Then he is brought back and punished, and the other four-footed members of the family come round and offer sympathy--which is not pleasant. The relations that exist between the various dogs and cats of the establishment are friendly on the whole, though not invariably so. In the course of their conversations, the animals throw fresh light on the problems of life as viewed from the kennel and the yard.

By ALICE MASSIE

The Family's Jane

Illustrated in Colour by JOHN CAMPBELL.

This is the story of a little girl's search for her lost brothers and sisters. At first Jane did not know that she had any brothers or sisters, and she used to feel lonely. Then one day, quite by accident, she discovered that such was indeed the case, although for some unexplained reason they did not live at

home and she had been kept in ignorance of them. Then Jane set to work to reunite the dismembered family. The fact that Jane was only eight, and some of the others were quite grown up, with children of their own, did not turn her from her purpose, and eventually her efforts had the happy issue which they well deserved.

The Children's Bookcase

Edited by E. NESBIT

"The Children's Bookcase" is a new series of daintily illustrated hooks for little folks, which is intended ultimately to include all that is best in children's literature, whether old or new. The series is edited by Mrs. E. Nesbit, author of "The Would-be Goods" and many other well-known books for children; and particular care is given to binding, get-up, and illustrations.

Mrs. Overtheway's Remembrances

By JULIANA HORATIA EWING.

A delightful little book of short stories in which "the little old lady" who lives over the way relates incidents from her girlhood for the amusement of a young friend.

The Little Duke.

By CHARLOTTE M. YONGE.

Sonny Sahib

By SARA JEANNETTE DUNCAN (Mrs. Everard Cotes).

A charming story of Anglo-Indian life.

The Water Babies.

By CHARLES KINGSLEY.

The Old Nursery Stories.

By E. NESBIT.

In this book Mrs. E. Nesbit relates the old stories of the Nursery-- "Cinderella," "Sleeping Beauty," etc.

Cap-o'-Yellow.

By AGNES GROZIER HERBERTSON.

A charming series of fairy stories by one of the very few modern writers whose work compares with the classics of fairy-tale literature such as Grimm and Perrault.

Granny's Wonderful Chair.

By FRANCES BROWNE.

The author of "Little Lord Fauntleroy" declared this book to be the best fairy story ever written. Two generations of little readers have been of the same opinion as Mrs. Frances Hodgson Burnett.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE LOST EMPIRE. A Tale of the Battle of the Nile.
THE LOST COLUMN. A Tale of the Boxer Rebellion.
THE LOST ISLAND. A Tale of the Mysterious East.
THE SWORD OF FREEDOM. A Tale of the English Revolution.
THE SPY. A Tale of the Peninsular War.
THE RACE ROUND THE WORLD. A Tale of a New Motor Spirit.
THE PIRATE AEROPLANE. A Tale of Ancient Egypt.
IN ARMS FOR RUSSIA. A Tale of the Great War in Russia.
IN THE POWER OF THE PIGMIES. A Tale of the Great Forest.
ON SECRET SERVICE. A Story of Zeppelins.
A MOTOR SCOUT IN FLANDERS. A Tale of the Fall of Antwerp.
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