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## FEATURES

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## THE MYSTERIOUS WAYS OF

### THE PEARL OF HOY HOW

It was certainly a glorious New Year's Day in Hong Kong, the beautiful island of "Fragrant Waters." Not January the first—no, not that at all, for that is, to the happy Celestials, merely the ignorant European's distortion of the sacred calendar of antiquity—but February the fourth, the glorious day fixed by the silver moon, the radiant Queen of the starry heavens, and not by the glaring sun of the noonday. And how wonderfully she accommodated herself to the Oriental's inherent dislike of a hard and fixed regularity! She never dates it alike on any two following years, but she the unrivalling of her smiling face—her waxing and her waning with the changing moon—she draws the curtain forward and backward as the seasons come and go and so gives to all her children the fascinating charm of variety. Indeed, the cold, calm, businesslike way in which the western man celebrates the dawning of the year has led them in the various parts of China, to imagine that December 25, and not January 1, is the real changing of the calendar. "Yang ten go men," (the Ocean Man is passing the Year) is a saying on every side at Christmas, and the little rice-paper cards which are sold everywhere with the words, "My chin-chin you Merry Christmas," are universally supposed to be the New Year's greetings.

Queen's Road and all the other business streets were a blaze of golden glory. Red banners and streamers floated in the air, beautiful lanterns of all fantastic shapes hung from every available point, while the constant din of fire-crackers without vied with the music of the three-stringed fiddles within. Every business house, from the great houses along the water to the humblest shops in twisting alleys, was closed and its doors hermetically sealed. Red paper, bearing their good wishes and their blessings, "Kai men ta chik" and "Sing men was foo," ("Great luck on your enterprise" and "Myriad blessings of the New Year") greeted one on every side. Everyone was happy and every man that had a new coat or a new hat or a pair of new shoes had them on. The last neighborhood row, the last family squabble, the last dunning for debts had ceased promptly at the stroke of midnight and now all was bowing and scraping and good cheer, as the "pipes of harmony" and the "wings of peace" passed around.

Of course, every jinrikisha and sampan fare was either doubled or tripled. It was hard enough for even these poor coolies to be working on the great day of the feast and mean beyond words must be the wages they would be grudging them the extra wine-money. Every old resident in the Colony knew this and cheerfully paid accordingly, but the tourists in the hotel could hardly be expected to grasp the situation. This explains why Colonel and Mrs. Witherspoon, wealthy globe-trotters from St. Louis, U. S. A., were calling for the police at the hotel entrance, when the men who had pulled them from the steamer wharf insisted in somewhat violent tones, on an addition to the fare.

"I give them a dime apiece and that's more than enough for hauling us less than three blocks," exclaimed the state Colonel. "They're regular sharks—worse than the cabbies in Naples."

"Twenty cents!" "Twenty cents!" Blongee New Year, China New Year, ussee pay more money," cried the coolies in unison.

"Not a cent more, if I die for it. Now get out of this quick, every one of you, or I'll have the whole lot of you in jail."

The foremost runner started to take the Colonel's steamer and hold it back, just in time to dodge a blow in his heavy walking-stick, when a handsomely dressed Chinese gentleman who had been an eye-witness of the occurrence stepped in between them and, in the most perfect of English, attempted to explain.

"I hope you will excuse these men, Sir. They really do not mean to be exorbitant or to do you any harm, but you see it is the great feast of the year with them and they are accustomed to an extra consideration, that is all. Just step into the hotel, Sir, with the lady and I will settle with the jinrikishas."

"You don't mean to say that you are going to pay it yourself, do you?"

"Oh, never mind about that, Sir; that is a very trivial consideration. You see, the respectable Chinese especially dislike to have any unpleasantness on the Holiday. It doesn't look well, and—"

"Well, answered the Colonel, quite taken aback by this unusual courtesy. "I am sure I am greatly obliged to you, Sir. Here is my card, and I hope we may meet again before we leave the island."

Wang Foo, the "man of mystery"—for it was none other than he—accepted the card with a gracious bow, and was on the point of opening his case to return his own, when Mrs. Witherspoon called to her husband from within and he was lost to sight in the corridor.

"Here are two extra cups of wine for you," he said to the coolies, as he proceeded to explain and to calm them down. "Do not mind the ocean men; be means well, but he does not understand our native customs. His New Year is over, a month and a half ago. Here, take this extra silver for good luck and may the god of riches bestow upon you."

The coolies eagerly accepted the proffered tips, bowing low to their benefactor, and saying: "Venerable Father, a

very Happy New Year to you. You have indeed exhorted men to be harmonious."

Just what interesting part Colonel and Mrs. Witherspoon played in the events of the following weeks belongs to a later portion of our story.

The Peninsula and Oriental steamer "Bombay" was making her regular twenty-four-hour stop at Ceylon on her schedule eastward and all her passengers had gone ashore to spend the night at the Colombo Hotel. This not only made a very pleasant break in the monotony of the long sea journey, but also enabled them to escape the noise, confusion and dust of the steamer's cooking.

The afternoon had been spent in driving about in native garras, visiting the fascinating jewelry shops and watching the jugglers and fakirs on the hotel veranda. Borahjee Sam, who kept one of the finest arrays of spices, rubies and pearls on the island, was of course on hand with his wares, as he always was on the arrival of every mail steamer, and did the usual thriving business with the travelers.

He was particularly attentive, on this evening to a lady and gentleman from the U. S. A., who had paid him the compliment of looking over his show-cases and purchasing a few moderate priced stones. He was very anxious that they should grant him a private interview in their apartment, where he might show them some of his special treasures, without exposing them to the vulgar gaze of the other guests.

His request being finally granted, he produced from the inner folds of his capacious robe a number of leather and velvet jewel-cases, and opening them, laid them out in order on the table for the admiring gaze of his customers.

"And you guarantee everyone of these stones to be perfectly genuine and flawless?" asked the lady.

"Absolutely so," was the unhesitating answer; "if you have any doubts about it, you may take them to London or Paris or New York and have your own jeweler examine them without paying me a dollar. If what I say is true, you will send me the money by mail."

"That is remarkable confidence to show in perfect strangers," she added. "You never saw us before in your life. Suppose we should take this beautiful ruby away with us and never write a word to you about it; how would you stand the loss?"

"Madam," said the Chinese merchant, bowing profoundly as he did so, "I have trusted many Europeans with my jewels to take away and I have never lost a dollar! I have been in the jewelry business many years and, I think, I know ladies and gentlemen when I see them."

In spite of this very generous offer, the lady decided not so avail herself of it and merely selected a few little stones at their cash value and insisted on paying for them on the spot. Borahjee Sam seemed to be hesitating for a moment and then drew forth from his sleeve the last of the little cases. He smiled significantly as he opened it.

"I wish to have the pleasure of showing you this, though it is not for sale," he held it gently up to the light—the most perfect and beautiful pearl on which they had ever laid their eyes!

"Not for sale—what do you mean?"

"I mean it is not for sale at any price that you would be willing to pay."

This is the famous "Pearl of Hoy How," brought to Ceylon three years ago by a Chinese merchant from that little island of Yokohama, bearing that a message of their contents were identical!

The former read as follows: "Office of the Chief Inspector, Department of Police, Victoria, Hong Kong. To Wang Foo, Esq., Alley of the Red Cloud."

My Dear Mr. Wang:—We are in receipt of a wire from the Department at Yokohama, stating that a lady traveler on the last P. and O. Mail was robbed while in the Hong Kong Hotel of a pearl of the value of several thousand dollars. The jewel was purchased by her at Colombo and she claims, was quite a famous one, being known as "The Pearl of Hoy How." Our department is working on the case here but I feel that we need your cooperation in case the jewel has fallen into Chinese hands.

I shall be glad to have you call at my office at any hour after five tomorrow, and, in the meantime, shall be glad to know from you whether this reported famous pearl is known at all among our Chinese fellow-citizens in the Colony. I am, Sir, yours very truly, Archibald A. Wallace, Chief Inspector of Police.

In the beautiful harbor beneath the windows, one had flowed in from the Eastern world and one from the Western, and they had met and encircled themselves together by the shores of "Fragrant Waters." One was white, the other was yellow. One represented Europe, the other Asia. One bore the heading of the Police Department of His Britannic Majesty's Post Office, the other had come through the very irregular agency of being torn from a

Fragrant Waters to smoke a blessing upon an aged crone whom he had often befriended, and, as he stood there, his eye happened to glance upward at the yellow notices on the opposite wall. He started back a step in utter astonishment—right before him were the very words he had been repeating to himself, the identical "Pearl of Hoy How!" He stepped up to the paper, tore off carefully the portion containing the notice and folding it up in his hands, inserted it between the pages of the little leather notebook; not, however, before he had very carefully, with the aid of his crystal spectacles, inspected the entire wall and found that there was not

from the Colony. The confederate would probably follow on the very next steamer, receive the gem from the hands of the thief, pay him the agreed upon reward and then leave for some European or Australian port where he could dispose of his treasure with much less suspicion than he possibly could on the island. The very first step would be to get into confidential touch with the Telegraph Office and try to trace the message. With this agreement, they gave the sacred sign of the Brotherhood—the solemn pledge to inviolate secrecy—and parted with the blessings of the night.

Early the following morning Wang Foo sought an interview with Mr. Robinson, the courteous head of the Great Eastern Telegraphs. The Englishman became deeply interested in the case and promised to extend to his visitor every facility for tracing the message. Two difficulties, however, stood in the way: first, all messages over the cables were considered strictly confidential and could only be delivered to the police on the request of the authorities, and, second, they were usually in private codes and their meaning known only to the telephonists who held the key. The first was easily disposed of. Wang drew out from his wallet a little card and handed it to the manager. It read:

"To the Great Eastern Telegraphs:



another line or word bearing upon the subject.

The Abbot spoke: "There is no hearing and there is no signature. Did you notice that?"

"Quite so, Venerable Father," replied the Detective. "It is anonymous and of course intended to catch the eye of some one who is passing and who wishes to avoid suspicion."

"But why did they not send it through the mails?"

"As a guilty conscience dreads the Post Office, I have often noticed that."

"Are there not some words from the Sacred Classic of the Christians carved above the entrance in the foreign tongue? I have so been told."

"Oh, yes, a famous line: 'As Cool Waters to a Thirsty Soul So Is Good News From a Far Country.'"

"It does not actually prove it, but it makes it very likely."

So the two friends talked and talked, and thought it over in the clouds of their own mind native tobacco until the town clock struck the hour of eleven. They had reached the following conclusion, viz:—A robbery of a very valuable gem had undoubtedly taken place, and apparently while the owners of it were guests in the Hotel. Several parties must be implicated, for it was evident from the yellow notice that a confederate had wired the notice of the purchase from either Colombo or some intervening port, so that it was being looked for on the arrival of the "Bombay." The Hong Kong agent in the crime must have familiarized himself with the plans of the travelers and possibly hastened their departure

found that the jewelry concealed in some clothing in the bottom of a cabinet was missing and as it had only been opened once between Ceylon and Japan—and that right here—they at once jumped to the conclusion that the theft had taken place in the Colony. We have, of course, interviewed the managers and carefully questioned the room-boys and servants, but their minds are—as might have been expected—a perfect blank upon the subject. My only hope is that possibly the repetition of the jewel might be known to some of the native dealers here and that through your influence we might get on to the track of it, that is, supposing any attempt has been made to dispose of it in the Colony, which seems to me very doubtful."

The man of mystery hesitated. Should he or should he not reveal the story of the mysterious yellow paper that he had torn from the wall. How could it help the Inspector? Would the ends of justice allow him to break his pledge of privacy to the old Abbot without his permission? He quickly decided to keep the secret to himself for a while longer—that is, provided none of the native detectives had seen it and noted it.

"You have thoroughly questioned the Chinese Officers as to any knowledge on their part of the 'Pearl of Hoy How'?" he asked.

"Yes, Sir, Captain Brownlow has gone all over it with them and sent them to the pawnshops and sailors' dens and they report that it has never been heard of."

Wang Foo's mind was relieved. He had feared that many copies of the notice had been posted up on the city's walls, but evidently there was only one, and that one was now safely in his own possession.

The afternoon was getting late and as he had still a number of ceremonial calls to make, he bade the Inspector good day and, with a promise to call again in the course of the week, he joined the long line of well-dressed pedestrians on Queen's Road and bashed the subject of the robbery from his mind.

A week later Inspector Wallace, Captain Brownlow and Wang Foo, met again by appointment at the Department Office.

"Well, Mr. Wang," began the Chief, "what new light have you to throw upon the 'Pearl of Hoy How'?"

"Only this," replied the visitor, with a countenance of intense satisfaction, "the pearl has been found and is now in my possession safe and sound. If you two gentlemen will do me the honor to be my guests at a little informal gathering at my humble home this evening, I shall be glad to hand it over to you."

"Well, that certainly is a new and mysterious joke on us and the Department. I wonder if there are two of them."

He handed Mr. Wang a piece of yellow paper—it was a cablegram from Yokohama—which the Detective respectfully received and, putting on his large tortoise-shell spectacles, proceeded to read aloud:

"Department of Police, Yokohama, Japan. To the Chief Inspector, Victoria, Hong Kong:—Pleased to report that valuable jewel known as 'Pearl of Hoy How' reported stolen in Hong Kong Hotel, has been recovered by detectives concealed in clothing in trunk."

Yamashiro Taburo, Chief Inspector, Yokohama, Police.

He folded the paper, handed it carefully back to Mr. Wallace, slowly removed his spectacles and remarked to their utter astonishment:

"Gentlemen, I cannot allow a little master like the finding of the pearl in Japan to interfere with my proposed plan for your entertainment this evening. I shall expect you promptly at eight and—"

He added with an especial emphasis—"I shall be true to my word and return to you, there and then the beautiful 'Pearl of Hoy How!'"

"What do you make out of it, Brownlow?" inquired the Chief, as they resumed their seats and cigars after Wang Foo's departure.

"It's surely too much for me," replied the Captain, "but I can tell you one thing, you and I are certainly going to have the great surprise of our lives tonight when we get to his house in Red Cloud Alley, mark that!"

Promptly at eight o'clock old Chang drew back the outer bolts and admitted the two foreign officers to the dwelling of Wang Foo, where they were most graciously received and made to sit in the highest row of the red-cushioned New Year's chairs. The smoking tea and the trays of sweetmeats were promptly introduced and placed before them, but, out of deference to their European lack of skill in handling the Chinese water-pipes, Manilla cheroots of a specially fine grade were substituted for the latter token of hospitality. The hour passed pleasantly away and the hands of the clock upon the mantel pointed to five, before they realized it. The great Detective rose and spoke:

"My honored guests, it is the hour of nine, a symbolic hour of good luck, I believe, in all Eastern lands. Allow me to have one of the greatest pleasures of the Happy New Year's season, and to present to you the matchless jewel, the original and only genuine 'Pearl of Hoy How.' Venerable Old One!" he called through the curtain that concealed the inner apartment, "bring in the 'Pearl!'"

At the word of command the lacquered dame appeared, not bearing a jewel in a casket, but leading by the hand one of the sweetest little Chinese maidens that their eyes had ever looked upon! She was beautifully dressed in all the brightly colored silks of the festive season and looked for all the world as if she had just stepped off some daintily painted fan or screen. She gave them the sweetest of courtesies and modestly blushing at the presence of the European guests, cast her bright little eyes downward to the floor. The two associated officers instinctively rose and returned the salutation, then sat down and awaited the coming explanation.

"What is the mystery, Mr. Wang?"

"It is simply this, Gentlemen, the theft, or supposed theft, of the jewel at the Hotel has been indirectly the means of unearthing a far more serious and dangerous crime; namely, the stealing and selling of a human life!"

This dear little girl was rescued by me three days ago from a gang of villains who stole her from Singapore and were preparing to sell her to a Portuguese theatrical troupe of Macao. She was brought up to the Colony concealed in a lifeboat on board a steamer and her coming and going corresponded among other things, the dates of the arrival and departure of our friends, the tourists."

"But what do you connect the two and to suspect the stealing of the child?" asked the interested and puzzled Inspector.

"A very interesting way that would be a little difficult for the European mind to unravel," replied Wang Foo, with a smile. "An anonymous notice posted on a wall of the city, conveyed the intelligence to someone that the 'Pearl of Hoy How' had been stolen on a certain ship and that she was to be met and taken charge of according to a previous agreement. This is hardly language that would be used for a new jewel, and so I naturally suspected a kidnapping or something of that kind and here is the result of the suspicion."

"And was the notice wired up from the Straits?"

"No, we searched every telegram, but without a clue. The notice was brought up by some of the crew of the coaster that left two days ahead."

"And what are you going to do with the little 'Pearl' now that you have rescued her? Send her back to Singapore?"

"That would be an awful pity. 'Oh, no, gentlemen; that life for her is finished. She has passed into the care of some kind English ladies in the Colony.'"

"And how about the gang who stole her?"

"The man of mystery looked carefully about him to see that every door was closed, and then, with his long upturned finger motioning for silence and attention, he said: 'If you have a half a dozen pairs of good reliable handcuffs at headquarters, I think I can show you a few Chinese and Portuguese wrists that they would greatly adorn for the remainder of the New Year's season.'"

"Brownlow!" said the Chief, as he rose to bid them good-night—let us go home and polish them up!"

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