

September. The yellow leaves clothe all the forests with brown and gold ; the sunlight strikes upon the peaks and ridges of the great Sierra, lights up the broad belt of wood, making shadows blacker than night, and lies among the grass-grown streets of the deserted Empire City. Two men in hunting-dress are making their way slowly through the grass and weeds that choke the pathway.

"Don't like it, Colquhoun," says one ; " more ghostly than ever."

They push on, and presently the foremost, Ladds, starts back with a cry.

"What is it ?" asked Colquhoun.

They push aside the brambles, and behold a skeleton. The body has been on its knees, but now only the bones are left. They are clothed in the garb of the celestial, and one side of the skull is broken in, as if with a shot.

"It must be my old friend Achow," said Colquhoun calmly. "See he's been murdered."

In the dead of night Ladds awakened Colquhoun.

"Can't help it," he said ; " very sorry. Ghosts walking about the stairs. Says the ghost of Achow to the shade of *Leeching*. 'No your piecy pidgin makee shootee me.' Don't like ghosts, Colquhoun."

Next morning they left Empire City. Ladds was firm in the conviction that he had heard and seen a Chinaman's ghost, and was resolute against stopping another night in the place.

Just outside the town they made another discovery.

"Good Lord !" cried Ladds, frightened out of sobriety of speech. "It rains skeletons. Look there ; he's beckoning !"

And, to be sure, before them was raised, with finger as of invitation, a skeleton hand.

This, too, belonged to a complete assortment of human bones clad in Chinese dress. By its side lay a rusty pistol. Lawrence picked it up.

"By gad !" he said, "it's the same pistol I gave to *Leeching*. How do you read this story, Ladds ?"

Ladds sat down and replied slowly. He said that he never did like reading ghost stories, and since the apparition of the murdered Achow, the night before, he should like them still