

The Sable Lorcha

By Horace Hazelton.

With an effort the physician commanded himself. When he spoke again he was comparatively composed. "Mr. Clyde," he said apologetically, "I am not given to discussing personal matters with my patients, but the fact that you and Cameron are friends, and the fact that this subject has come up, make it almost imperative, I suppose, that I should explain briefly the feeling I have just exhibited. Five years ago Rob Cameron and I were about as near counterparts of Damon and Pythias as ever existed. While Cameron was in Europe, I had an opportunity to go around the world with a patient. We dived a good deal, and, you understand how uncertain correspondence is under those circumstances, I never knew just where I should be at any given time. Consequently, a number of letters were missed by both of us. I was still thinking of Cameron as in England or on the European continent, when I one day beheld, I saw him one morning, hurrying along the principal street of the inner city of Peking. I don't know whether you have ever been there or not, but if you have, you know what that thoroughfare is. It was all bustle and activity that day, and about as crowded as Broadway at the noon hour, but with much more picturesque and contrasting currents of individuals and vehicles. I was in a carriage, myself, and Cameron was afoot, walking in the opposite direction. As we passed each other, he did not seem to see me, though I called to him loudly. This, however, did not surprise me, for there was an ungainly racket in progress. Instantly, I had the carriage turned about, but before I could overtake him, he was lost in the crowd. I was leaving Peking that afternoon, and so had no chance to look him up. I wrote him afterwards and told him of the incident, and how I regretted having to go away without exchanging at least a word with him. To my amazement he not only denied having been in Peking, but in the Chinese empire at all. When we met in London, the following spring, and I recalled the matter, asking why he had refused to admit what I knew to be the truth, he became icily indignant; and that was the beginning of the end. If I had conceded the possibility of mistake on my part, all might have been well, I suppose; but there was no such possibility. I had known Cameron for twenty odd years, and I could not have made an error. I had seen him distinctly, clearly, at midday in the open. It was he beyond all peradventure, and from that time to this I have been unable to conceive why he lied to me, and why he chose to and our friendship rather than admit what was indisputable fact.

His explanation finished, he reached for a pen and, as he dipped it in the ink, he added:

"I trust you will pardon me, Mr. Clyde. I have detained you."

"You have interested me," I assured him. "And that more than I can tell you." Which was quite true; yet I was even more perplexed than I had been. To the maze of circumstances there was now added another baffling feature.

Dr. Addison handed me the prescription he had written.

"After meals, and at bedtime," he directed, with a return to his professional manner. "If you do not find yourself much better at the end of a week, come in again."

On the sidewalk I tore the little square of paper into bits which the wind carried in a thin flurry across Madison avenue.

CHAPTER XIV.

The Dark of Doyers Street.

At one o'clock that day, Evelyn Grayson joined me at luncheon at Sherry's. She had been in no mood to wait any longer than was absolutely necessary for tidings of my visit to Dr. Addison; and, moreover, she had news of her own which she was anxious to convey to me.

I have often wondered why it is that the kind-you-so passion is inherent in all women. There are those who manage to control it with admirable success under average circumstances, but sooner or later, even the most courageous battlers against this maternal heritage succumb, and indulge in a sort of disguised orgy of reproach.

Evelyn might have told me, for instance, that Captain MacLeod, after careful investigation, had been unable to discover either hair or hide of Peter Johnston in Gloucester or elsewhere, and stopped there. That is what a man would have done. But, altogether admirable though she was, the eternal feminine was strong within her. Therefore it was incumbent upon her to add:

"It doesn't surprise me, Philip. When you told me how you pleased that man up, I was confident that he was floating out there in your path for that very purpose."

"I had no intention to discuss the point with her," I said. "That was the most painful part of it. I knew that she was right—that in putting Peter Johnston ashore, instead of in front, I had committed an error that might prove costly. But why couldn't she see that I meant to do it then and

not know. Probably any one as dominated by the general scene as I was, would have noted as closely its individual elements. I am not sure. But the truth is that in a very few moments I had acquired a mental paragraph of the opposite side of the street, in so far as it came within my direct vision. In other words every detail of the background of the moving picture before me was indelibly printed upon my mind's retina. There was the playhouse, with its plain, rectangular doorway, unadorned, save by a quartette of rude signs; two above, slanting outward, and one on either side, all announcing "Chinese Theatre," and one giving the current attraction in Chinese characters, with the added notice, "Seats reserved for Americans." To the left of this had been. Evidently he had retraced his steps up the rude ladder to the street, closing the doors after him to check any further pursuit.

The place into which I had followed him was evidently a Chinese candy manufactory and cake bakery. To the right of the entrance were rows of shelves containing jars of what I recognized as sweetmeats peculiar to the celestial. In a large bowl on a rough table or counter was the granulated flour with which these confections are invariably powdered; and here, too, were boxes of round, jumble-like cakes. I saw now that the space upon which I had fallen was so restricted that I wondered how it was possible for my quarry to have reached the steps and descended without touching me or at least acquainting me with his presence. And I marvelled, too, that twisting my ankle as I did, I had not plunged at a slant and struck my head upon one or another of the crowding tables and boxes with which the cramped basement was furnished.

My third match disclosed a narrow door in the broad partition at the rear, and fancying that perhaps the elusive Peter Johnston had escaped by that means while I was getting to my feet, I lost no time in seeking to investigate what was beyond. I was somewhat surprised to find the door unfastened. Once open, it revealed a smaller and more crowded room, warm and fetid, into which were packed no less than half a dozen barrels of raw and cooked peanuts, arranged about a low stove on which a peanut-filled cauldron was slowly steaming.

Curiously interesting as all this would have been under ordinary circumstances, I experienced only a surprised relief, for with my injured ankle I was in no fettle to cope with even the weakest adversary. Indeed, now that this easement was afforded me, my sprain suddenly asserted itself with a new vehemence, and sharp twinges of pain shooting to my knee and demanding instant relief.

In front of the low stove I had noticed a stool, and for this I groped with the eagerness of the drowning man for a straw. To my joy I laid hands upon it, and drawing it nearer sank down with a sigh of gratification comparable only to that with which a Marathon victor drops to earth after a hotly-contested race.

Gradually, now that my weight was removed, the pain lessened, and a sense of comfort ensued. Contentment enfolded me, which, I thought of it at all, I attributed, I suppose, to the reaction from the agony which I had just been suffering. I remember thinking that I would rest a few minutes and then take my departure as I had entered, for I realized that cellar doors are fastened only from within, and that there could, therefore, be no impediment to my going when I chose.

I distinctly recall that I was conscious of a certain strange incongruity of situation, but could hardly comprehend in just what the incongruity consisted. I knew only that I felt pleasantly warm and drowsy; and my sprained ankle had ceased altogether to pain or annoy.

And then, I was sitting in an open boat in midocean, and Peter Johnston, in dinkies, sat at the helm, with a returning leer on his face, and tugged at brief intervals, always longer and stronger, upon what seemed to be the sheet, which had become wrapped around my throat and chest and which, by degrees, was crushing my windpipe and, hence, my breath came only in sharp, shuddering, aching gasps.

To be Continued.

OUR PROVINCES ARE BEST IN CANADA

Opinions of British Writer After A Tour of The Dominion

Sydney, N.S., Dec. 17.—"The Maritime Provinces are the best part of Canada, only the people don't know it," said V. Halford, a representative of Canada, a London, England illustrated weekly, who has just completed an eight months' trip through the Dominion, which included a visit to Sydney.

"If you had the spirit of the west here, you would not know the country in a few years. Most of the people in Eastern Canada admit their part of Dominion has a great future before it, and generally they let it go at that. More, the people seem to be content to wait for things to come along; in the west they go after things. Here the people pray for things; in the west they do things."

"It is mainly the people who make a country, of course, you have got to have the natural resources and possibilities. Here you have a better country than they have in the west, and you can deliver the goods, if you make up your minds to."

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L. C. R. FIREMAN HAD NARROW ESCAPE

Locomotive Broke Away From Tender of Northern Division

While running down from Campbellton a day or so ago, the locomotive of a heavy freight train broke away from its tender, allowing the fireman, who was standing on the "apron" between the engine and tender to fall through the gap. Fortunately the distance between the engine and tender was somewhat less than the length of the locomotive, and the fireman was able to pull himself back to the deck, safe and sound although somewhat bruised by his fall. It is rather unusual for a big engine to "break" in the days of the little engines it was a common occurrence, and many a local fireman can tell of narrow escapes from being crushed to death. Sometimes, too, they did not escape—Transcript.

THE "HEAVENLY PLANT"

Kit in December CANADA MONTHLY.

Talking of mistletoe reminds us of the "ancestries" of the plant. It is a sprig from the gods, a plant not born of this earth but springing from some divine source. Thus the ancient thought it, and called it the Heavenly Plant, or the Sprig that Heals. Probably the Druids were the first to accord to it divinity, for they used it in their ceremonies, and performed worship to it, and gave it to the people to hang in their houses as a protection from evil, and a charm to bring good-luck. It was this, no doubt, which led to the adoption of the mistletoe as the "lucky plant" of Christmas time, and later as "The Kissing Sprig." It was thought in by-gone times that if a branch was held in the hand with certain ceremonies, a spectre would appear to the watcher and hence the plant was called "the spectre's wand." The "Fairies' wand" we of old Erin called it, and many a time when the big Christmas hamper arrived have we gone to secret places upon Fairy Hill where the Good People dance, and wave the "fairies' wand" and bid them to the feast.

From Christmas to Christmas the fairies' wand hung from the rail of every bed. Many and many were the incantations we performed with it—but the only luck it ever brought the writer was to set her one day on a big ship that carried her to Canada.

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