

A CHINESE ROMANCE OF REAL LIFE.

THE HERO NOW IN TORONTO.

About nine years ago, at the close of the disastrous war waged by the inhabitants of the Chansee mountains upon those of the Royal City of Peking, one of those romantic episodes occurred which give rise to the familiar assertion, that "truth is stranger than fiction."

Tehek a dealer in spices and perfumery occupied with his wife and five sons a small dwelling in the Loofovia, or principal street in Peking. Embarrassed in business, and with want staring them in the face, the prospects of the family were anything but brilliant, until the sudden death of an uncle left Tehek the master of a considerable fortune, and guardian of Lha Eung, the beautiful and accomplished daughter of the deceased. Geng, the wife of Tehek, thus suddenly removed from actual penury to comparative affluence, proved herself a worthy woman in every respect. Not so her husband, however, who no sooner found himself in a position in which he could gratify every whim than he plunged into a headlong course of dissipation. As is usual in such cases, a fool and his money were soon parted, and Tehek was not long in squandering all the wealth he had acquired so easily, except that part of it set aside by her father as the marriage portion of Lha Eung. To gain possession of this the heartless scoundrel forced the girl to become his wife; heedless alike of her remonstrances and the pleadings of Ah Saum, his eldest son, who had long loved the wealthy beauty. A quarrel ensued between the father and son, the latter being aided by E Wah, a younger brother, in the course of which Tehek was severely beaten, and his two sons, supposing him to be dying, left their home and fled to the city of Tientsin on the Ci Ho river, near the gulf of Pechelec, where they engaged with a firm of tea growers and learned the art of tasting, sorting and mixing the various brands of tea.

In the meantime, Tehek had recovered and resumed his old dissipated habits, and the money of Lha Eung soon followed the rest of her father's hard-earned savings. But the murder of Tehek by one of his associates during a drunken orgie in an opium den, left his unwilling bride once more free but penniless.

At this time, an incursion of the Asiatic negroes from the Shamo desert beyond the great wall proved successful, and, amongst other prisoners carried off by them were Geng, the first wife of Tehek, with her three remaining sons, Lan Sing, Outh, Chi Geng, and the bride-widow Lha Eung, who were incarcerated to await ransom by their friends.

Ah Saum and E Wah having, by this time, risen in the service of the planter to the positions of overseer and valuator of brands, and being as industrious and thrifty as their father was improvident, soon began to realize the fruits of their mother's good training. One day, as a train of captives was brought into Tientsin, E Wah fell into conversation with one of the guards, and obtaining his permission to speak to the prisoners, learned from them to his utter amazement, that his mother, brothers, and Ah Saum's betrothed, were prisoners in the hands of the Shamoese, and could

only be released on the payment of an immense ransom. That evening, after communicating the sad news to Ah Saum, the two brothers resolved on rescuing their family from the hands of the Shamoese, and in order to accomplish their project, started for the great Shamo desert the next day. After a weary and monotonous journey of two months they arrived at Nieuchwang, and were imprisoned as spies in that city, after being deprived of all the money they possessed. Their imprisonment was, after four months' duration, terminated in rather a strange manner. Their gaoler had fallen in love with Lha Eung, who was imprisoned in the same building, and hearing the story of the two brothers, thought the most effectual way of removing a dangerous rival was to give Ah Saum his liberty, or rather wink at his escape. Accordingly, one night, our hero was conducted to the outer court and told he had eight hours to get clear of the Shamoese territory. Scarcely knowing what he was doing, Ah Saum set off, but a few days after was captured by a party from a Coolie ship, in which he was conveyed, with several hundred others, to San Francisco, where he got some work, and saved a little money. From there, in search of a better field of labour, he wandered to St. Louis, at which city he arrived about eighteen months ago. Hearing of a fellow-countryman of his who owned a laundry there, he sought out the place, when, imagine his surprise at finding the laundryman to be E Wah—his own brother—whom he had left in a Chinese prison, and for whose release and that of Lha Eung he was slowly saving money. Mutual explanations followed, and Ah Saum was thunderstruck to learn that his affianced stepmother had consented to wed the gaoler, and it was through her instrumentality that E Wah was liberated. Poor Saum was disheartened and had nothing to live for, so he resolved on self-destruction. Accordingly, one day he went down to the piers to hide himself and his sorrows beneath the turbid waters of the Mississippi. In he plunged, but scarcely had he done so, when a gentleman passing at the time, leaped in also, and seizing him by the pigtail, drew him safely ashore. The preserver of Ah Saum (who is a prominent merchant in Toronto), took him home and heard his story, and then reasoning with the would-be suicide, showed him that there are as good fish in the sea as ever were caught, but that jumping into the sea along with them is not the most profitable method of catching them. He then painted in glowing terms the attractions of our Canadian cities, and finally induced Ah Saum to accompany him to Toronto, where he now resides. But few words of explanation will now suffice. The gentleman who rescued Ah Saum from a muddy grave is Mr. T. D. WAKELEE, the senior partner in the Peking Tea Company, at the corner of Yonge and Albert Streets, and Ah Saum and his brother, E Wah, who has since come to Canada, may be seen in their Oriental costume attending to customers daily at that well managed establishment.

MORAL.—Absence makes the heart grow fonder—of somebody else. C. 3

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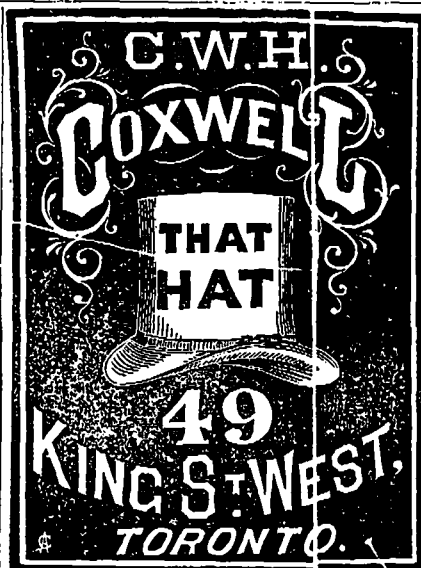
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