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ST. JOHN, N. B., SATURDAY MORNING, MAY 10, 1919.

THE MYSTERIOUS WAYS OF

WANG FOO

By SIDNEY C. PARTRIDGE

THE JADE-STONE PENDANT

"Captain," said the Inspector, as he rose from his office chair and, turning toward the long open window, gazed out over the blue waters of the harbor, "we might just as well give it up. It is the most puzzling case I have ever had since I came to the Far East, just seventeen years ago this month."

And, Inspector Wallace of the Hong-Kong police, reaching up to a little Chinese ebony shelf upon the wall took from it a long Manila cheroot and, slowly and thoughtfully lighting it, watched the Peninsular mail steamer maneuvering toward her anchorage amid the forest of shipping.

"Yes, it certainly is a deep one," answered Captain Brownlow, second in command, and, like his chief, a veteran of the Indian army. "We certainly have made a very thorough search. Every dive of stolen goods and every pawn-shop in the colony has been combed, but there isn't the faintest trace of it. And here," pointing to a file of letters upon the desk "here are the confidential reports from the Vice-Consuls at Canton and Macao. They say they have done their best, but they are just as much in the dark as we are. There's only one thing left sir; we'll have to send for Wang Foo."

"You are right, Captain. It takes a Chinaman to catch a Chinaman, as the old saying goes. Look him up, and meet me here at nine tonight sharp. I am dining on the flag-ship and will excuse myself early."

While the foregoing conversation was taking place in the Police Inspector's private office, Lady Evington, wife of the Governor of the colony, was just bidding good-bye to the wife and the daughter of the Admiral at Government House.

"Yes, I have about made up my mind that I shall never see it again," she said. "The Inspector told the Governor this afternoon that he considered it practically a hopeless case."

"And you are quite positive that it wasn't stolen at the reception?" asked one of the ladies.

"Quite positive," answered Lady Evington. "I remember distinctly looking at it and admiring its rich green color just before I laid it away in the case on my dressing-table, after the last visitor had gone. And" she added, with a great deal of emphases, "I know one of the servants could not possibly have taken it, for my door was securely locked and bolted."

The article in question, that had so mysteriously disappeared from Lady Evington's dressing-room two weeks before, was nothing less than the famous jade-stone pendant that the Viceroy of Canton had presented to the Governor of Hong-Kong in recognition of His Excellency's services in conducting the campaign for the relief of the thousands of sufferers from the great Pearl River flood. It was a wonderful jewel, of almost priceless value, and had for no end of years been part of the official insignia of the Viceroys of Canton, hanging from the center of a necklace of coral, over the gold-embroidered phoenix on the ceremonial robes.

The gift had been elaborately described in the English papers of Hong-Kong, and the notices had been translated into all the native papers of the colony and of Shanghai, and it was generally recognized that no more striking token of appreciation had ever been presented by a Chinese high official to a foreign ruler.

His Excellency, Sir Arthur Wayne-Evington, the Governor, had kept it securely locked in his office safe until the evening of the reception to the officers of the army and navy, when Lady Evington wore it for the first time in public. She had laid it on her dressing-table just before retiring and in the morning it had mysteriously vanished. That was all she knew. And that was all that anyone knew, although the entire official staff of attendants and servants had been most rigorously examined and cross-questioned. And so "The Theft of the Vice-Regal Jade-Stone," as the heading in the papers ran, became the subject of gossip and speculation all up and down the eastern coast from Singapore to Peking.

Captain Brownlow returned to his home after the interview, and summoning his faithful servant, Ah Sing, said:

"You savee Wang Foo, go catchee four pieces chair-coolie, my wantchee go his house very chop-chop."

"You wantchee him catchee tief-man?" asked the ever-inquisitive Ah Sing.

"Never you mind what my wantchee," replied the Captain, passing from his pidgin English into the more regular tongue of his mother country. "Get the chair ready quick, and mind you don't tell anyone where we are going."

The light open-work sedan was got ready in a very few minutes and swinging on the shoulders of four stalwart coolies. The Captain, followed by the faithful Ah Sing with a lantern, passed rapidly down Queen's Road until they reached the Avenue of Fragrant Waters, and turning to the left began the steep ascent of the Alley of the Red Cloud, stopping at last in front of a little doorway that bore the thrice interwoven symbol of "5-5-5," the Chinese emblem of good luck.

The coolies quickly put down the chair and, pulling their bamboo pipes from their girdles, sat down to smoke around the lantern of Ah Sing, while the Captain knocked at the door and was immediately admitted.

"Good evening, grandma," he said, with a smile, to the venerable figure who drew back the double bars, for some missionary had told him that that was always a polite form of address to any Chinese dame who had reached the age of fifty. "Is Wang Foo at home?"

"The lord of our humble mansion is waiting to receive you," was the answer, as she ushered him into the little reception room and hastened to get ready the water-pipe and the inevitable bowl of scalding green tea. The officer took the proferred chair, and soon a footstep was heard descending the narrow stairs that led into the upper loft, where the humble citizens of Hong-Kong spend the sweet hours of night. Wang Foo, the man of mystery, stood before him.

Tall and slender and light of weight, clad in a long blue gown of delicate blue silk with an upper jacket of the lightest yellow, neatly braided cue with a tassel of white (indicating mourning for a parent), the host had all the dress and manner of the perfect Chinese gentleman. His face was the traditional oval, nose rather sharper than usual among his countrymen, while the high cheek bones would have located him in the northern rather than in the southern provinces. His skin was as smooth as a child's, except on the forehead, where it bore traces of an ugly wound received many years before in an accident. But the eyes—these were what attracted the Captain's attention, as they did that of everyone who ever talked with him. Narrow and slightly almond-turned at the outer edge, they were as piercing as an eagle's and seemed—almost chameleon-like—to change their color with every changing glance. No one could have told their exact color, even in the strongest sun-light. And the hands (he put out one of them to grasp the Captain's) were as long and slender as those of the fairy princess in the Chinese tales of childhood, with tapering nails of the most delicate coral pink. He would have been an interesting character study at any time or in any place; he was doubly so now.

"Good evening, Captain," he said, with a most gracious smile of welcome, before the English officer had had time to say a word. "I am highly honored to have you under my very humble roof. Please take a seat and let me know how I may have the pleasure of serving you. You surely haven't come to consult me about the robbery at Government House, have you?"

"That's just it," replied the Captain. "We may as well confess it, we're in a fix, and you seem to be the only one that can help us out."

"Did the Inspector himself send you for me?" inquired Wang.

"He did, sir, and he is anxious to see you about it. Of course, you know about the case?"

"I have read about it in the English papers," was the brief and characteristic answer.

At this point grandma suddenly appeared with the Chinese brass pipe, which she placed before them on the table, with two bowls of smoking Foo-Chow tea and a little tray containing some cigarettes for the use of the foreigner not accustomed to the native pipe. The host politely passed them to his guest, and after a few minutes' conversation on the weather and the ordinary topics of the day, the Captain arose to leave.

"At what hour Mr. Wang may I tell the Inspector to await you?"

"Say to him, with my very best compliments, that he may look for me at precisely nine o'clock tomorrow morning."

"At his office, I suppose?"

"Yes, at his office."

"Good-night."

"Good-night, sir, and, as the Chinese say, may lucky stars guide you on your way!"

As the Captain rode along Queen's Road on his way home, he kept saying to himself:

"Wonderful man, that Wang. No doubt, he knows all about his countrymen and their tricky ways, but where did he get that smooth and polished English? Not a syllable of 'pidgin' the whole time I was there. Why, he speaks as correctly as an English school-marm."

He did not know that Wang had learned his first English from the Bishop's own daughter in the old mission on the Bund, and polished and refined it afterward by a two years' residence in Melbourne. Long and faithful study had made him a master of it, as he was of his own ancestral tongue and its complicated literature.

"Venerable Grand One," he said, addressing the old lady, who had bolted the door after the departure of the foreigner, "where is old Chang?"

"He is resting in the outer court."

"Call him at once, and tell him to go to the Temple of the Queen of Heaven and ask for the Abbot, and say that Wang Foo desires the honor of his presence without delay."

"It is done as the master says."

In scarcely twenty minutes' time the old Abbot arrived and after the tea and pipes they ascended the rickety stairs to the upper loft.

"Welcome, venerable father, to the humble shrine of Choo-Foo-Tse," said Wang Foo as they entered and took seats in the little study.

"I am honored beyond words in being admitted to the shrine that bears the name of the greatest scholar of the classics," replied the guest.

For two long hours they were closeted together, and the results of their consultations amounted to this: It was not likely that any Chinese official even of the rank of Viceroy, would knowingly give to a European a jewel of such value and such national pride as the famous jade-stone pendant of the dynasty of the Tsings. Therefore, on first thought, what the Governor received must have been a cheap duplicate or an imitation, trusting that the European eye would never detect the difference. But no Chinese thief would ever be able to dispose of such a treasure without being instantly apprehended. Therefore, on second thought, the only conclusion was that the Viceroy actually did present the genuine pendant to the Governor, and then privately arranged for it to be stolen and brought back to him.

There was a loud cry and commotion in the outer passage way "A Thief, a thief. Into the river with him!"

The guilty party, whoever he might be, must be sought in the Viceregal Yamen at Canton. But it must be done with the utmost secrecy, for the exposure of an official of high rank would mean almost certain death to the informer. An immediate trip to Canton and an entree into the inner Yamen must be the very first step in tracing the criminal.

"You are quite sure, venerable father," he said to the old ecclesiastic on leaving "that your description of the jewel is correct?"

"Quite positive," was the answer. "See! Here it is as I copied it today from one of our rarest volumes in the Temple library, entitled 'Jewels of the Imperial Line and Sacred Possessions of the Sons of Heaven.' No. 28—The jade-stone pendant, or seal of the Tsing Emperors. The most perfect stone ever brought from the imperial jade-stone mines of Shen Si. It measures two inches in length by an inch and three-quarters in width and depth. It is of the clearest green, pure as the waters of the sacred sea. On it are carved the words of the motto of the great Tsings, 'Pure as this stone must ever be the Imperial heart.' But that which gives it its priceless value and marks it as the very gift of high heaven to the Celestial line is this: that when held up to the direct light of the sun the crystale markings in its center outline the character for 'Tsing' or 'Pure.' There is and can be no other like it in the world."

"It is enough," said Wang Foo. "We are pledged to eternal secrecy?"

"By the oath of the Elder Brotherhood that is never broken," responded the Abbot, as he passed out into the darkness.

At precisely nine o'clock on the following morning Wang Foo was announced at the Inspector's office, and was immediately ushered into the inner room, where, after a most cordial greeting and a friendly cheroot, the following terse conversation took place between him and the English officer:

"I have sent for you, Mr. Wang, because I believe you are the only person that can unravel this mystery for us, if there is really any unraveling to it. I remember the wonderful way in which you cleared up the matter of the Hong-Kong bank robbery last year and everyone has heard of your help in tracing the harbor pirates to their dens and in convicting the Kow Loon murderers. You certainly understand these people better than we do. So we want you to find the thief that took Lady Evington's pendant."

"I need hardly say that it will be a pleasure and a privilege to serve His Excellency the Governor in any way or at any time," replied Wang, "and I take a special interest in this case because it concerns him and Lady Evington personally. First, let me ask, have you made a thorough examination of the premises and questioned Her Ladyship directly Tell me the whole story, slowly, and with every detail."

The Inspector sat down, and beginning with the ceremonies of the presentation of the jewel, gave his Chinese visitor all the facts that the police force under him had been able to collect. Wang listened very attentively, making now and then a note or two in a red leather case which he drew out of a copious sleeve of his jacket. His only interruption was an occasional, "Yes, I know all that; please proceed quickly," spoken in a nervous and jerking way. When the Inspector had finished he rose and said:

"It will hardly be necessary for me to call at Government House and make a personal examination of Lady Evington's apartment. We Chinese do not usually trace crime in that way. But out of compliment to their Excellencies and because they might otherwise question my thoroughness, I think I had better go. Kindly send an officer ahead of us and ask if we can have the honor of an interview in half an hour."

The officer returned in a very few minutes, and, accompanied by the Inspector, our Chinese prince of detectives, for such he was, visited Government House and heard from the Governor and Lady Evington in person, teh story of the robbery, and visited under their guidance the apartment from which the pendant had so mysteriously disappeared. On bidding them farewell, he bowed respectfully and said:

"This is the first of the new month; I ask just fifteen days to look into the matter thoroughly. Whatever happens, you will see me or hear from me on the morning of the thirteenth, the Feast-Day of the Yellow Dragoon."

Wang Foo reached his home and after the morning rice said to his faithful housekeeper:

"Venerable Grand One, I go away for a few days. Keep everything quiet and in order until my return."

"And to the honorable visitors what shall the answer be?"

"The master is gone to the Quiet Glade for study and reflection."

"It is done as the master says."

He ascended the steep little staircase to the upper room and locking the door made the following preparations: He took from under the bedstead the little white pigskin trunk—faithful companion of every Chinese traveler—and disrobing himself entirely laid all his garments carefully in it. From the book-shelf he took a few ancient volumes—"The Analects of Confucius," the "Doctrine of the Mean," the "Book of Rites and Ceremonies," and a little copy of "Seals and Carvings of the Ancient Empire"—and tucked them carefully away underneath the clothing. Then from a drawer in his desk he drew a bundle of long strips of red paper, visiting cards of assorted ranks and laid them with the books. To these he added his water-pipe of cloissonne, a package of native tobacco, and a few necessary articles for his daily toilet. Last of all he opened a little lacquer cabinet, and drawing from it three octagon tin boxes, examined them carefully (they were marked "light," "medium," and "strong"), and, wrapping them carefully in a sheet of yellow paper, put them in the top of the pigskin trunk and closed and securely locked it.

Wang Foo, as we know him, did not reappear. But a half hour later a Singapore rice merchant, clad in the dark-brown garments of the southern provinces, and followed by a coolie with a pigskin trunk and a roll of bedding on either end of a bamboo, passed rapidly down the Avenue of Fragrant Waters and joined the long line of passengers ascending the gangway of the afternoon steamer for the City of Canton. He found a vacant spot on the upper deck, and was waiting patiently for the final whistle of departure when he saw the familiar form of old Chang passing hurriedly by and apparently looking anxiously for his master. He hailed him:

"How did you know I was here?"

"The bamboo carrier told me he had brought a gentleman from our alley, and I wanted you to receive this letter, which came just after you had left."

"It is well. Here is the wine money. Return at once, and let your words be few."

As the great steamer (she was a Hudson River boat years ago, that had weathered the Cape) pushed her way out through the deep waters of the harbor, the rice merchant tore open the envelope and revealed a tiny slip of red paper with these words:

"At Canton look out carefully for the Viceroy's second secretary. His real name is Fong, but he is known everywhere as the 'Black Fox.' He is dangerous to others, but he may be valuable to you."

Underneath was the seal of the old Abbot. He read it over carefully again, and repeating the words "Black Fox," "Black Fox," he tore it into a hundred fragments and tossed them into the foaming wake of the steamer.

Arriving at the great teeming city, the rice merchant, traveling under the name of Woo, engaged an upper room at the "Inn of Heavenly Welcome," and proceeded to unroll the matting roll of bedding and to make himself at home. It was a very warm evening and he enjoyed sitting by the open window and breathing the cool air from the great Pearl River. The partition between him and the adjoining room was very thin and the boards so cracked that any conversation could be overheard by him without any effort at eaves-dropping.

As he sipped his bowl of fragrant tea and tasted the little slices of preserved ginger which the servant had placed upon his table, he became suddenly conscious of a heated argument which was going on in the adjoining apartment. This was what he heard:

"I tell you, there isn't a greater villain in the entire Yamen, and he has His Excellency the Viceroy completely in his power. He even uses his seals and his private keys. I tell you, 'Black Fox' is the curse of Canton, and the city will never prosper till it is rid of him."

"Yes," said another voice, "I have even heard that he is suspected of having stolen the jade-stone seal of the Tsings, and that the Viceroy wore a clever imitation in its place."

The entrance of a servant with the evening meal ended the conversation abruptly here, but Woo, the rice merchant, had overheard enough to set him in a train of careful reflection, and he passed the night in thinking and planning.

Early the following morning he set out for the Street of the Seal Cutters, and, sauntering leisurely along, he entered a shop where an engraver was hard at work at his little bench.

"Pray tell me," he said to the workman, "who is it that carves the seals for the officials of the Yamens?"

"Old Chow Foo, at the sign of the Jade-stone Temple," was the answer, "has had that monopoly for many years."

Woo thanked him and walked along the crowded street until his eye caught the sign of the official engraver. He entered and asked to see the master of the shop. An aged workman, with large crystal goggles enclosed in rims of horn, came forward to meet him.

"I wish to speak to you on a matter of important private business," he said.

The master took him into an inner chamber and carefully closed the door. They waited a moment until the servant that had brought the tea bowls retired, and then Woo began:

"What did the Black Fox pay you for carving that imitation seal of the Tsings?"

The master carver turned pale and stammered, "Black Fox—seal of the Tsings?—I do not understand you, sir!"

Woo leaned toward him over the tea-pot, and, seizing him by the wrist with a grasp of steel, held him like a vice while he said, piercing him through and through with eyes of fire:

"Do not attempt to deny it, or your head will roll on the ground when His Excellency hears of it. You know well the penalty for forging an Imperial seal."

The seal-cutter winced, and, trembling for his life, confessed it all. The Black Fox had come to him in the dead secrecy of night and paid him two hundred Mexicans for duplicating the seal of the Tsings, and threatened him with instant death if he ever divulged it.

Woo relaxed his hold and the old seal-cutter sank down into his seat.

"That is all I wished to know," said the visitor as he rose to depart. "Cease your trembling. You are safe, on the one condition that you let no mortal man ever know that this interview has taken place between us."

With that he unbarred the door of the inner room and in a moment was lost to sight in the crowded street.

The following morning Woo sat in the gate-keeper's lodge of the Viceregal Yamen.

"Does the second secretary accompany His Excellency to the Imperial Custom today?" he asked of the old gate-keeper, as he slipped a Mexican into his palm. "I am a visitor to the city and am most anxious to see him."

"He passes out in an hour's time," was the reply. "Sit here and enjoy your pipe and you shall see him."

Woo sipped the proferred tea and waited patiently for the official procession to pass. Eere long he heard the shouts of the out-runners and the lictors, and soon he saw the outlines of the Viceregal sedan chair. He took a position of special vantage, and in the second sedan chair he saw the object of his search. There was no mistaking the Black Fox; he would know him anywhere on earth, and in almost any disguise. His excellency the Viceroy wore the coral necklace of his office, but without the usual pandant, for the original was concealed in the inner robes of the secretary, while the imitation had been, all unconscious of the deceit, presented by His Excellency to the Governor of Hong-Kong.

"The secretary is leaving on the morrow to visit his parents in the province of Four Rivers," volunteered the gate-keeper, as Woo rose to leave. "As the family is in deep mourning he goes secretly, in a citizen's blue gown."

The down river steamer for Hong-Kong was loading at the Customs wharf, getting ready to depart at sun down. All day long, from early dawn, a traveler with a pigskin trunk and a roll of bedding had sat at the side of the gang-way. He was apparently lost in the pages of a historial novel; in reality he was scanning intently every passenger who bought a ticket. Hour after hour he sat there, when at last his efforts were rewarded. A plainly clad gentleman purchased a ticket and was assigned to cabin No. 32. Instantly the watcher followed him and secured the other berth in the cabin.

Woo waited until his companion was ready to retire, and then courteously offered him a pipeful of tobacco, which was readily accepted. It came out of the little tin box marked "strong." The effect began to show itself at once, and his companion fell into a deep and heavy slumber.

Quick as a flash Woo was upon him and the long hands were searching the folds of his capacious sleeves. In an inner pocket, carefully sewed up, he felt a hard, square lump. Sharply pointed scissors soon cut it loose, and out of a silken wrapper rolled the seal of the Tsings!

Almost at the same instant there was a loud cry and commotion in the outer passage way, and Woo heard the ominous shrieks, "Chang Tao Tsai Sui, Tsai Sui!" ("A thief, a thief! Into the river with him!") He knew only too well the swift and stern justice which Chinese passengers administered to those who were caught robbing them. He opened his cabin door just as they were dragging their victim by.

"Not into the river," he cried: "throw him in here, and we will lock him up until the morning."

The crowde yielded for a moment, and he dragged the swooning wretch into the cabin. He bolted the door, and it was but the work of a few rapid moments to pull off the thief's ragged garments and substitute the blue gown of the secretary, and then to drag the drugged officer to the floor and clothe him in the cotton trousers of the river pirate. The crowd outside grew restless.

"Bring him out!" they screamed. "Into the river with him!"

They started to break in the door. Woo opened it, and ere he could restrain them they had dragged the helpless form to the deck and with a loud cry of vengeance had throw him into the swirling waters of the river.

It was the thirteenth day of the moon and the Feast Day of the Yellow Dragon, and Wing Foo and Inspector Wallace were ushered into the private office of Government House. His Excellency and Lady Evington greeted them most cordially.

"Well, Mr. Wang," said the Governor, "we are waiting anxiously to hear the results of your labors. We hope you have good news for us."

"Your Excellency," said Wang Foo, as he rose and drew from his left sleeve a tiny packet. "I have the very great pleasure of now returning to you and to Her Ladyship the jade-stone pendant stolen from Government House."

"Wonderful!" cried Lady Evington. "Wonderful beyond words! How can we express our gratitude to you: And she took once more the jewel into her hands and admired it.

The Governor opened a secret drawer in his desk and drew out a roll of

(Continued on Page 12.)