

## THE EYE OF A GOD.

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When the strong arm of the law reached out for Moung Ouray and gathered in Hpo Thit instead, it was this way:

The night after the boat race at the water festival at Thayetomeo Hpo Thit came to Valentyno, the superintendent of police, and said that there were many balls of opium hid away in Moung Ouray's house. When he spoke of Moung Ouray, Valentyno started a little.

Moung Ouray was Mi Mrs's brother, and Mi Mrs—she had the daintiest way of doing her hair, all looped up with circlets of jasmine flowers, and the nuttiest little supari pellets she used to chew. Valentyno was always putting the little Burmese worked silver supari box away out of sight. Fellows were always dropping in on him, and those things looked so odd lying about.

Hpo Thit knew all about that, only Valentyno was not aware that he knew.

"How do you know of this thing, O Opium Walla—of the balls of opium in Moung Ouray's house?" queried the superintendent, with a hard, impatient ring in his voice. "Did you put the beastly stuff there yourself, and then come to cackle about the eggs of your own laying?"

"No, thakine. Abdul, who is a pariah of a Mussulman, saw Moung Ouray take it off the fireboat which goes up the river."

"And did Abdul, who is a pariah, see where Moung Ouray put the black stuff?"

"No, thakine, but where would Moung Ouray put it? Would he put his rupees in a rice pot and bury it in the ground like a Bengali? No, thakine, that which is good and of much value will Moung Ouray have in the box where is kept the hand loomed putsoe, which he bought at the time of the races, which were one year ago, for 200 rupees, from the seller, who came from Mandalay."

There was a little soft rustle just beyond the plaited bamboo wall which rose on the inner side of the veranda, close behind the thakine's head. It might have been the mosquito curtain falling from the top of the bed frame over which it was thrown, so gentle was the noise.

Then there was a little metallic click. Surely that was the closing of the lid of the silver supari dish.

Valentyno gave a toss in his chair and coughed long and lustily. That was diplomatic, for jungle wallahs like Hpo Thit had sharp ears.

Another little rustle as Mi Mrs wrapped the lemon colored silk scarf about her throat and slipped like a gentle shadow down the back steps of the bungalow.

In and out among the mango trees her slight figure flitted as she sped swiftly through the tops toward Moung Ouray's bamboo bungalow.

"The thakine, who makes Mi Mai laugh, asked Hpo Thit if he had laid the eggs in brother's box. Perhaps he did. We shall see—ha, ha, ha!" and her teeth, which were pink from the juice of the supari, gleamed in the flickering moonlight like coral beads.

Valentyno pondered for a few moments over what Hpo Thit had told him. His duty was straight enough, but, but—"It's a put up job!" he muttered to himself. "It's the same old bazaar trick of running a man."

And also was not Moung Mi Mrs's brother?

Eventually, however, Valentyno summoned the sergeant of police over at the thauna, and together they proceeded to Moung Ouray's bungalow.

At the sergeant's request he unlocked the box for them and the former proceeded to go through it.

First the handsome putsoe, and then, one after another, the jaunty little jackets and divers other things were laid on the floor.

In the bottom was a big round lacquer box. When the sergeant lifted the lid, there were four balls there—four oval, white balls, as unlike opium as they could well be, for they were eggs.

Now Moung Ouray knew that he had not put the eggs there. He did not make a pantry of his clothesbox; also had not Hpo Thit left them. The balls he had slipped into the lacquer box while Moung Ouray was down at the pody were round and black, not at all like eggs.

The two Punjabi policemen were grinning from ear to ear. Valentyno gave a sarcastic little laugh and asked Hpo Thit if that was the opium he had seen Moung Ouray carrying off the steamer.

"Here is not got afim," said the sergeant, and asked if he should search further.

Before Valentyno could answer a fiendish uproar smote upon his ears. It was as though the pody and the whole flush of bazaar noises had been suddenly emptied into the compound of the Phoongye Kyong across the road.

It was a proper oriental babel, the cry of "thief!" cutting through the general noise like a sharp edged knife.

"The bazaar budmashes are killing some one," said the sergeant.

"We'll have to go and look into that first," said the superintendent, "and we'll come back here and finish the search after. You must come, too, Ouray, so that this Sheitan cannot say that you had a chance to hide anything."

That also was diplomatic, but it was the little slip of losing track of Hpo Thit that gave the Nahta chance to work more mischief.

"Somebody is murdering a Phoongye," he said to the sergeant as they reached the road.

Rushing into the pagoda, he found the Phoongyes in the temple clustered about the big Buddha, the "Beda Buddha," as it was known.

The priests were prostrated at the feet of the great image, raving and lamenting and shrieking in despair.

"What's the matter?" asked Valentyno.

"A thief has stolen the Beda, the Eye of God, the ruby."

And they pointed to a great hole in the forehead of the Buddha, where the sacred "Beda ruby" had been for 12 centuries.

How calm and dignified the alabaster god seemed, sitting there with the hand resting in his lap! Through 12 centuries of strife and passion and blood and carnage had it looked with calm serenity upon the struggles of the little men who had come and gone.

Twelve centuries before had King Uzzana given it to the Talopins of Panja—Uzzana, the son of Mienzaim, and Poaza, the Chinese princess.

The seven great Kyongs of Talopins which Uzzana founded gained him great merit, so that when he died the "Beda Buddha" worked miracles.

And now for 1,200 years had the sacred eye, the "Beda ruby," done even so.

The mad frenzy of the priests seemed

like the petulant temper of children. Their thin brown bodies, draped with the sacred yellow robe, swayed and rocked in the weird light of their flick-



"A thief has stolen the Beda."

ering earth oil chirags, as they called the curse of their offended godhead upon the sacrilegious thief who had stolen the ruby—taken the sacred Beda.

Valentyno was horror struck at the audacity of the thief, for the Beda Buddha was the most sacred image in all Burma. Pilgrims came from all over the Burmese empire to strike with the stag's horn the crescent shaped gong hanging there at its side and then plead, with forehead prone on the cemented floor in front of the god, for the intercession of the Beda with Buddha Gaudama.

The Phoongyes watched it night and day, and how any one had managed to steal the ruby Valentyno could not understand.

In the meantime Hpo Thit had glided silently back through the crotons and into the bungalow once more.

The very air was full of demoniac noises as Hpo Thit slipped into the bungalow, for the crows, aroused by the Phoongyes' uproar, were screaming and shrieking in a big tamarind that towered high above the champac.

Within all was quiet, and Hpo Thit lost no time in making his way to the box they had so lately searched for the opium.

The little chirago was still burning, so he could see just where to put the little round packet he took from the roll in his putsoe, just at his waist there.

He put it down in a corner of a teak-wood box; then, actuated by a sudden resolve, he picked it up, unrolled the little piece of yellow cloth in which it was wrapped and took a long, loving look at it. As he rolled it in his hand near the flickering cotton dip the little room seemed bathed in a flood of warm blood red light. Great ruby tinted rays shot hither and thither until the dazzling brightness lighted up the uncertain gloom, and it was as though red wine had been thrown high in the bright noonday sunshine.

It was the stolen ruby over which night was being made hideous with the din over across the road in the Phoongye Kyong.

There was so much of terror, so much of menace, in the hoarse roar of the Phoongyes and the crowd of Buddhists who had been attracted by their cries that his heart failed him—he dropped it again in the box and passed silently and swiftly out into the Burmese night.

As he disappeared a small figure

glided out from behind a penang mat which served as purlah to a doorway and kneeling over the box searched for that which Hpo Thit had put there.

It was Mi Mrs. "Ho, ho, Hpo Thit, because Moung Ouray told Mi Mrs that you are always smoking at the opium, and because of that Mi Mrs would have nothing to do with you, you would have Valentyno Thankyne make a thief of Moung Ouray."

Then she disappeared behind the purlah again, and the oil dip flickered lower and lower, and only the outside clamor crept into the house, it was so still.

Soon there was the steady tramp, tramp of men that are accustomed to marching, and once more the superintendent and the sergeant and the police came up the steps, and also were Moung Ouray and Hpo Thit and the Phoongyes and others there.

"We shall find the opium," Hpo Thit was saying, "or else Moung Ouray has given it to some one, to some of the opium eaters to steal the ruby for him—the great ruby which was in the forehead of the god Beda. If the opium is gone, we shall find the ruby. If the ruby is not here, we shall find the opium. I do not know all things like the thakine, but that is the way of our people."

"I think that this is no end of a fool's game," said Valentyno to the sergeant, "but we might as well finish our search here while we are at it. Where shall we look first?"

"In the box, thakine," eagerly interposed Hpo Thit. "If the opium is not there and he has the ruby, there shall we find it."

So once more the sergeant continued his interrupted search for the box. There was nothing beyond a pair of Chinese patent leather shoes, a palm leaf, Buddhist bible and Moung Ouray's tiken headdresses, many of them packed away there in the bottom.

"There is nothing here, Hpo Thit," said the superintendent brusquely. "What I really ought to do is to arrest you, Hpo Thit, for a dangerous lunatic; but I'll see to that tomorrow. In the meantime, sergeant, just beat up the surrounding country for the budmash that has taken the ruby."

That the ruby was gone was a facer to Hpo Thit. First, the balls of opium had disappeared, but that he had attributed to Moung Ouray; now the ruby had vanished, and Moung Ouray had been with the police all the time.

Then he saw something which gave him a clew. It was an innocent looking circlet of jasmine flowers lying in front of the box. It was such a circlet as the girls wore on their hair, and it hadn't been lying there when they searched the box before.

"Of a certainty Mi Mrs as taken the ruby," murmured Hpo Thit, "and has gone to the house of San Shwe, who is her father. If San Shwe will keep it, there will it rest; but if his heart fail him then will he tell her to take it to the police thakine." There was no time to be lost, for it would be discovered that he had stolen it, and he would also lose the ruby.

His opportunity to steal the ruby had come to him just as he was leaving Moung Ouray's house, after having put the opium in the box. For some unknown reason, probably owing to the pony, he had found the temple deserted for a few minutes and had knocked the ruby out of the alabaster with his dah. Then the sudden fear and the chance to implicate Moung Ouray as the thief, his other scheme having failed, had led him to put it in the box. Now he knew that Mi Mrs must have seen him put