

KNIGHTS *who* FOUGHT
The DRAGON



BY EDWIN LESLIE

KNIGHTS WHO FOUGHT
THE DRAGON



**Knights Who
Fought the
Dragon**

**By
Edwin Leslie**

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DEDICATED
TO MY FRIEND
THE ORIGINAL OF DR. GILMOJR
TO WHOSE MODEST MANLINESS
I HAVE DONE BUT
FEEBLE JUSTICE

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"Some say that the age of chivalry is past; that the spirit of romance is dead. The age of chivalry is never past so long as there is a wrong left unredressed on earth, or a man or woman left to say, 'I will redress that wrong, or spend my life in the attempt.' The age of chivalry is never past so long as we have faith enough to say, 'God will help me to redress that wrong, or if not me, he will help those that come after me, for his eternal will is to overcome evil with good.'"—DEAN STANLEY.

FOREWORD

O China! arrogant in thine isolation, had not thine ears been stopped by prejudice, in the very beginning of this twentieth century thou wouldest have heard at thy closed doors a voice crying, "I am Zeitgeist, the Spirit of the age, mighty, invincible. Bid me welcome, patriarch among the nations. Admit me freely and thou shalt prosper; resist me, and lo! thy doom. For enter I will. If thou wilt not greet me as friend, I come as foe. As futile to build a Great Wall to bar the winds from thy fair landscapes, as futile to erect towers on thy beach to check the tides from thy shores, as to oppose my onward march. For I am a force of the Infinite.

"Thou lookest with pride on thy four hundred millions of inhabitants. Well thou mayest! For where is their equal for industry, for intelligence, for perseverance, for frugality, for cheerfulness? What realm has an aristocracy like thine, measured by breadth of intellect?

Foreword

"Thy very greatness renders me more clamorous. For with it thou art narrow, superstitious, blindly exclusive.

"Thy system of government is effete; thy officials are driven to rapacity and plunder; when thou shouldest have enough and to spare, thy system of taxation makes thee a borrower from many nations; rich beyond estimate in undeveloped resources, masses of thy people ofttimes hunger for food; thou worshipest thou knowest not what.

"I bring thee unstinted communication with the world of which thou art but a part; power to see the untold wealth of coal and minerals which lies at thy feet; manufactories to facilitate thy industries; railroads to aid thy commerce; knowledge of less wasteful modes of collecting thy revenue; skill in the science of war that thou mayest guard thy peace.

"I, the Spirit of the age, hold these gifts for thee in my outstretched hands. Thou spurnest them at thy peril. Thinkest thou that by whetting thy sword to kill my heralds thou wilt balk my designs? Believe it not. The

Foreword

sword shall pierce thine own heart, and from every sod red with the blood of the slain there shall spring a host whose testimony shall be like to that of those thou didst wantonly uproot. O China! turn towards me thy wilful face, I pray. Thou lookest ever into the past; on my ensign is 'Forward, the best is yet to be!'"



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CHAPTER I

AT HOME IN PEKING

In the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and ninety-nine, the November sun shone down in Peking into the street of Eternal Harmony. The fronts of the shops were brightly gilded, and crimson banners suspended horizontally over the way bore in gay letters diversified sentiments. In one place the loiterer was informed that "Chattering and gossip interfere with business," the next asserted with a positiveness calculated to convince the most skeptical, "No Cheating Here," while across the road, where were displayed needles and thread of various sizes and hues, the modest sign announced a "Place of Heavenly Treasure."

The shop windows, destitute of glass, opened directly on the street, and jutting out over the footpath were arrayed counters of shining wares, amid which the sunbeams glistened.

Between the raised mud embankment for the vehicles and the little hard walk close by the shop for foot passengers, lay a gutter down which there slowly trickled, or festeringly stag-

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nated, filth of all description. Lean pigs and mangy dogs disputed the right to scavenging the little heaps of garbage; while pungent odors compounded of ten thousand mismatched smells rose in the keen air.

There was movement and activity everywhere. Heavy two-wheeled carts jolted over the thawing mud road; half-naked coolies moved forward carrying poles from which were suspended heavy burdens; and making their way with many interruptions were sedan chairs borne by villainous-looking bearers.

The cry of the mule-driver, the yelling of the hawker, the creaking of carts and wheelbarrows, the disputing voices of loose-robed, wide-trousered tradesmen haggling over cash, all mingled in one deafening hubbub.

The sunshine sent little glints of light from the razor of the barber who was shaving the forehead of his well-wrapped patron, fell on the beggar adjusting his tattered garment to more fully display his loathsome sores, and glowed upon the flaccid face and bald head of the coarsely-clad Booddhist monk.

At the end of the causeway was a low building, built around the three sides of a court—a building which for years had been familiar to the Orientals near as the "Mission Compound."

At Home in Peking

Dr. Gilmour, an American and a graduate of Harvard, had been head of the hospital there ever since its beginning. His hair was black when he came, it was snow-white now, though the doctor was but middle-aged.

In one of the dwelling-rooms of the compound, Mrs. Gilmour and her daughter Ray sat in heart-to-heart conversation.

"Now that you are home again, do you regret the sacrifice of those two years at college, Ray?"

"No and yes, mother. I didn't have any hesitancy about giving them up when first you wrote that Paul's two thousand had been spirited into nowhere by that unlucky bank failure. I reasoned that father divided evenly between us two the legacy of four thousand dollars, which was all he had to spare for our education, and that I had already used one thousand dollars of my share, so when Paul's had vanished, it was only fair that I should come home and save the remaining one thousand dollars for him. And yet, forgive me, mother, for my selfishness, sometimes, since, I have half wished you hadn't allowed me to do it. It is only noble souls, of which I am not one, that give generously without ever counting the cost."

"Poor child! I can guess what it must have

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meant to you. But you could graduate still by studying at home, Ray."

"Nay, marmee, dear! I couldn't, because I haven't half your energy and ambition. It is a craving with me, as it has always been with you, to know. But a steady, wearisome climb up Parnassus is what I never could endure. Even at Boston, first places and honors never aroused me to enthusiasm. I reveled in some of the subjects, but I liked tennis and boating and country excursions just as well. By what law of heredity do you account for the fact that such an unceasingly active little mother should have a daughter so ease-loving? The too-industrious students used to remind me of Heine's description of the knowing old Canon who studied night and day as if he were afraid the worms would find an idea too little in his head. That busy bee of Dr. Watts' was a most exemplary insect, but if I were to improve every shining hour I would lose all my cheerfulness and pine in the dumps."

"I think you are right, Ray. Many a time I have tired myself into a fever of nervousness and impatience, and then felt displeased that you didn't do the same. You pursue your aims in life leisurely, but they are always in your sight. Your personality gets full play so, and

At Home in Peking

the mind receives more vivid impressions. To change the subject, Ray, I have been waiting ever since you came home, hoping you would tell me about Frank. You never said in your letters why your engagement was broken off."

"I never could talk of it to any one while I was passing through the conflict, mother, and since I have been home, when I would have spoken of it, the words died on my lips. All that first year in Boston I was in Elysium. I believe Frank loved me with his whole heart. We used to meet every Sunday at auntie's, and often on Saturday afternoons he came up for me and we went to the art galleries together. I understood everything he told me about pictures, though I can't draw a line. He would talk to me for hours about his studies, and how he drank in new life with every advance in skill. I heard from others, too, that he was a star pupil and certain to make his mark in the artistic world. I rejoiced in his genius. I treasured up every scrap of praise of him and gloried over it in secret. At the end of the first year he got employment in engraving pictures for editions de luxe and made a good deal of money. He told me he had saved enough for us to be married, but he would like instead, if I were willing, to go to Rome and study. I urged him to

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go. I wanted him to live abroad for a time and see the old masters. He went. From that moment our lives began to diverge."

"He does not love any one else, Ray?"

"Not any person, mother, but a thing. He loves art. It absorbs him. Nothing outside of his pursuit of it can touch him. We have had no quarrel. Our separation has been such a gradual process. His letters became less frequent, began to have more of his work in them and less of love, and now it is only seldom that he writes at all."

"He will find art cold and will return to warm human love, Ray."

"No, mother, he is gone from me past recall. This year, when he came back to Boston he spent every Sunday with me at auntie's, just as he used to, but, oh! there was such a difference. He was perpetually showing me that art had my old niche in his heart. And I understood only too well."

"His must be a narrow heart if it is not large enough to hold both you and his profession, Ray."

"You don't understand Frank, mother. He is changed so since he was here. Art isn't a profession with him now. It is his master-passion. He is happy only when he is working

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at it. He spends every minute with it that he can spare, and he is impatient if he is absent from it long. He could grow rich if he wished, by embellishing books, but he doesn't care the snap of his finger for money except to buy leisure to go on studying. I know he thinks if he were married he would have to work to provide for me. But I would live on a crust if I might share it with him."

"Does he covet fame, then, Ray?"

"No, he cares less for that than for money. He loves art for its own sake, and desires to excel only to satisfy the hungering of his nature.

"When auntie and I stopped at Rome on our way home, Frank met us and took us up to his studio. He has developed wonderfully in the past year. And he himself is so different. He is as strong as ever, but he has a kind of pure, ethereal look, as if constant contemplation of the beautiful had chiseled away everything sensuous from his face. Auntie said he really was almost uncanny, he seemed so far removed from the ordinary aims and passions of mortals. He ordered dinner for us and invited some of his fellow-students to meet us. I was so miserable I couldn't be myself, and I know I appeared hopelessly stupid."

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"Poor Ray!" said her mother, caressingly, 'you have suffered.'

"Yes. I have, mother, but I wouldn't be without this love for twice the pain it has cost me. I don't want to be sour, or to let this sadness embitter my life. It ought to ennoble me. If it were all to do over again I would act just the same. I would urge Frank to go abroad, even if I knew beforehand that it would separate him from me. Better that a thousand times than for him to marry, and then find me a clog on him. He will be great some day, and I will be proud of his greatness and count myself blessed that a man of such genius loved me once."

"How could Frank cast away love, Ray? His artistic conceptions will be devoid of life if he shuts himself out from human sympathies."

"Not necessarily, mother. The greatest artists, Raphael, Michelangelo and Leonardo da Vinci had no need of wives and home associations. You know what Bacon says, 'He that hath a wife and children hath given hostages to fortune, for they are impediments to great enterprises.'"

"But you still love Frank, Ray?"

"With all my heart. No one can ever fill his place to me. I wish I were beautiful like

At Home in Peking

Cousin Elsie. Frank is so keenly sensitive to all loveliness."

"Outward beauty is a gift to be highly esteemed, but soul beauty is better, Ray."

"But to be devoid of either, mother. I want to be good, but I am full of fierce contradiction. I hate this dirty old city of Peking, and missionary work seems the most appalling drudgery in the world. I wish things could appeal to me as they did before I went away. Then the fate of the patients in the hospital was a matter to be absorbed about, and the progress of every little pig-tailed Celestial in the school a theme fraught with interest. Now everything palls on me, and I grope around in my consciousness in vain for a return of the old sensations. I'm like the little girl in Punch, to whom 'The world was hollow, her doll stuffed with bran, and she wanted to go into a convent.' You mustn't think, though, that I don't appreciate home, mother. I feel like an ungrateful wretch not to be happy here with you and father and Paul."

"It's no wonder our uneventful life should seem distasteful to you after your exhilarating school-days, where you were surrounded by blithe friends. But 'every day cannot be a feast of lanterns.' In each life there are long, long stretches of commonplace, where every

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day is so like its fellow that its monotony wearies us; and all we can do is to be cheerful and uncomplaining, and not chafe because ecstatic happiness is denied. You should go out more, and take an interest in others."

"You are the most sympathetic little mother in the world," said Ray, thoughtfully. "I could not open my heart to any one as I can to you. I really do make some effort to turn a deaf ear to my clamorous 'ego.' There are two warring elements within me. When I would do good, evil is present with me—the evil of loathing all the things I ought to like."

The door opened, and Dr. Gilmour and his son Paul entered. Dr. Gilmour was tall and slight, but finely proportioned, and his face, though worn and tinged with sadness, was very pleasant to look upon. Paul had his father's regular features, but his complexion blossomed with the ripe, rich tints of health, and his bounding movements and boyish exuberance accentuated the grave calm of the figure beside him.

The doctor crossed over to his wife. He had a square parcel in his hand, which he proceeded quietly to untie.

"The mail is here, is it, Graham?" said Mrs. Gilmour, watching him.

At Home in Peking

"Yes," he said, bringing forth from its wrappings a copy of Palgrave's "Golden Treasury" and putting it into her lap.

"Did you think I had forgotten to get you a birthday present?" he questioned. "Here are some sonnets and lyrics for you to dream over."

His love for her showed itself in glance and manner, and in indescribable ways. It diffused itself about her like a fragrance. Twenty-five years of married life had only rendered purer and more intense Dr. Gilmour's chivalric devotion to his wife.

Mrs. Gilmour took the gift with the thanks shining in her face.

"I'm so glad it came to-day," she said. "Presents lose half their flavor when they are a day late."

"That's pure sentiment," said Dr. Gilmour. "I've been compelled to intercept the 'boy' with the mail for the past two weeks, lest the book should lose half its flavor for you by coming too soon."

"There's one thing left for you to do," said Mrs. Gilmour, "and you neglect it upon pain of my displeasure. You must manage to make time so that we can all spend the evening together. My birthday is an occasion, and must

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have precedence even before that much-demanding dispensary."

"I'll stretch a point," he answered.

CHAPTER II

DOUGLAS MEDHURST SOLILOQUIZES

Across the courtyard in the compound that same afternoon Dr. Douglas Medhurst was busy in his room packing his grips for a journey. A party of surveyors, among whom was a college chum of his, were going through the Northern Provinces, and they had called in the morning to ask him to accompany them as interpreter. He had jumped at the chance of a trip into the interior.

Six years before he had graduated in medicine and had come straight from college to Peking to give his life to alleviating the sufferings of the Chinese. He had spent the whole six years assisting Dr. Gilmour in the hospital, and had lived in the compound with the Gilmours until he had come to seem to them almost like a member of the family. As he folded clothes and pulled straps he was engaged in a soliloquy which made furrows along his high forehead.

"This is a rather cowardly business, leaving the doctor at this juncture. He'll work himself to death, I'm afraid. But I must see the

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interior some time, and this is my opportunity. Why don't I face the truth squarely now and tell myself I'm running away because I fear I'll make a consummate fool of myself if I stay around where Ray is? I'm thirty-two years of age, old enough to have myself under control, in all conscience, and yet the very sound of her voice unnerves me, and when she has a sad mood, I long to thrust myself and my love upon her that I may comfort her. The contempt with which she would greet such an ebullition of feeling ought to restrain me. I am less than nothing to her. She simply does not consider me at all, that is, as I think of her. I believe I loved her the first day I saw her. I thought I had myself pretty well in hand until I heard that all was over between her and Frank, but since then—how dare I aspire to her, even in my secret thoughts? I am not made for such as she. She would adorn any society. She ought to marry an aesthetic, dreamy-eyed fellow like Frank—the product of several generations of culture, whose genius could create for her an atmosphere of refinement. Self-centered fool that he was—why didn't he marry her and make her happy—and me miserable? I can never fill his place, never be to her what he has been. Those first seven-

Douglas Medhurst Soliloquizes

teen years of my life that I spent in the backwoods have left their mark upon me, and I'm sadly in need of elegance and grace."

He glanced involuntarily in the mirror, and smiled half-sadly at the great gaunt face with the prominent cheek bones and lantern-jaws. "My most determined flatterer couldn't call me handsome.

"What a mope I'm getting into! The first thing I know I'll be weeping over my own sorrows, as if they were the only griefs under heaven. I wish I could talk some common sense into myself. I've always said that if a man finds his right place in God's world and has a chance to work in it, that is all that is absolutely essential to his well-being. And so it is. It is unmanly to be engrossed in my own disappointments when I should be at leisure from myself that I may help others. I'll be more sympathetic, no doubt, for having felt some heartache. Cheer up, old fellow," he continued, shaking his head again at the image in the glass, "you are not the only human being who has loved in vain, so be a man and don't whine. If you can't be loved, you can at least try to be worthy of love, which is the main thing, if you look at matters rightly." With which emphatic injunction he took up the Pe-

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king Gazette and resolutely centered his attention on its memorials.

CHAPTER III

THE BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION AND ITS GUESTS

Rooms always speak unmistakably of their owners to those who have ears to hear, and persons entering Mrs. Gilmour's apartments found there a symmetry which soothed them, even though they could not analyze its charm. The harmony and fitness of the simple furniture were evidences of Mrs. Gilmour's taste, but the distinctly artistic suggestions, the abundance of pictures on the walls, the porcelain and brass ornaments, were Ray's selection and gathering.

A cheerful party gathered in the dining-room on Mrs. Gilmour's birthday night. The doctor and his wife were at the head of the table, Dr. Medhurst at one side, and Ray and Paul at the other.

Mrs. Gilmour looked across ruefully at her husband. She was about forty-five, but she appeared younger. Her face, with hopelessly irregular features, was rendered attractive by soft pink coloring and a mobile expression.

"Li has been trying my patience again," she

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said. "Now don't laugh. He's my thorn in the flesh."

"What are his latest developments?" queried the doctor. "Has he been smoking again in the kitchen or bestowing all the cooking utensils on his numerous relatives?"

"That and more. I ordered him to buy some chickens for to-day, to celebrate with. When I went out this morning, he frightened me by producing two dangling eels, remarking in his most confident tone that he had bought them because, when fried in oil, they were a delicacy beside which chicken in any form sank into insignificance. So we have to be content with eggs to-night."

"Never mind, mother," said fourteen-year-old Paul, "eggs are undeveloped chickens—the nearest thing you could get to the real article. I'll honor mother's birthday by taking two if you please, father."

"I really think, Graham, I'll have to dismiss Li. He cheats us systematically. I believe I could forgive him for that if I didn't feel all the time that he is constantly chuckling over his astuteness in outwitting us. Surely we could find a cook who would render us more faithful service."

"I doubt it, Mary. They all 'squeeze' more or

The Birthday Celebration and Its Guests

less commission out of us for buying, and Li is a good bargainer. We barbarians in China are so bewildered by the various standards of weights and measures; we are blandly informed at one place that one thousand cash means six hundred or seven hundred or eight hundred, as the case may be. We are duped on every side by finding when too late that one catty may or may not make four-thirds pounds avoirdupois, and who of us has ever fathomed the fickle law which regulates Chinese scales and yardsticks?"

"Li knows all the twists of his countrymen," said Paul, "and he's too wide awake to let them get ahead of him. I've been with him when he's shopping, and he would haggle and haggle to get the reduction of a single cash."

"You are too gentle to cope with Li, Mrs. Gilmour," said Dr. Medhurst. "He's a Stoic for impassiveness, and a Frenchman for politeness, and the two make a baffling mixture."

"I sent Ray out the other day," said Mrs. Gilmour, "to see if she could do anything with him, but I haven't noticed any very pronounced improvement since."

"I didn't hope for any," said Ray. "He listened to my enumeration of his faults with concentrated interest. You would have thought

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from his manner that I was explaining to him that one of his relatives had died and left him a fortune; humility and sincerity were depicted on his countenance; he was as pliant as a willow-wand, and as obstinate as a mule. He assured me blandly when I was leaving that I had only to hint my wishes to him to have them fulfilled; that he lived but to serve me, and my will was his law. I've no doubt he considered himself victorious in the conflict. What can one do with an oily fellow like that? He is such a cheerful liar."

"And yet," said Dr. Medhurst, "he has a certain fidelity to your interests, too. He cheats you unblushingly (he would, and does, cheat his own brother), but he won't allow any one else to cheat you, if he can help it."

"He ought to be devoted to you, father, when you fished him out of the Grand Canal," said Paul. "I wish I could swim like you."

Dr. Gilmour smiled over at his impetuous son.

"We are having plenty of milk again, Douglas," said Mrs. Gilmour. "Did the cow you bought turn out to be a good animal, after all?"

"Yes," said Douglas. "She's sound, but I'm not sure I've acted discreetly about it. The last cow Li bought seemed no good. I cannot

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prove that her eccentric habits of giving milk sometimes at night and none in the morning or vice versa were owing to Li's manipulations, but I had my suspicions; and, partly to punish him, I sold the animal and bought another. I angered Li because he had no chance of a 'squeeze' on the purchase. The cow gave a fine quantity of milk, and lest Li should get ahead of me, night and morning I went to the stable and watched while he did the milking. When from some mysterious cause the cow gave less and less I was baffled, until I noticed her growing thin. Upon investigation I found Li was feeding her only a little provender and was selling the remainder to his brother for a fair sum."

"He was reimbursing himself for the loss of his 'squeeze,'" said Ray.

"Did he have the grace to be ashamed of himself when you found him out, Douglas?" asked Mrs. Gilmour.

"He felt he had 'lost his face' to me," said Douglas, "not because he had done wrong, but because he had done it so bunglingly that he had been discovered. It would have been wiser not to have antagonized him. Not to mention the discomfort of having to go to the stable early and late, I feel that, in some way, he'll

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get pecuniary satisfaction for the humiliation of having 'lost his face.'"

"I think you are mistaken, Douglas," said Dr. Gilmour. "When a Chinaman knows he's wrong he usually accepts his deserved punishment without retaliation.

"Talking of Li Sing reminds me," he continued, "that yesterday I met him coming out of the temple, and he told me casually that the subject of his petitions had been that I might come to understand propriety! The blow he unwittingly dealt to my vanity! To think that after these years of experience I still appear so deficient in Chinese etiquette that I excite the compassion of even my cook! I shall have to betake myself to re-studying the three thousand rules of behavior, and endeavor again to bend my stubborn knees after the manner of the Chinaman, whose grace fills me with admiration and despair."

"Why, father, how could he?" burst out Paul. "You're the politest and handsomest man in Peking."

They laughed merrily at Paul's championship. But in truth even a Chinaman might have coveted the grace of his athletic, supple form.

"I wonder if in the Chinese Pantheon there

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are gods who preside over etiquette and politeness," said Dr. Medhurst. "Ceremony receives more worship within the four seas than is accorded to any idol."

"And yet their elaborate manners seem to be often only pleasant formalities. They would rather show how conversant they are with the rules of good behavior than put others at their ease," said Ray.

"Prejudice, Ray, pure prejudice," answered her father. "'Wad some power the giftie gie us.' When an educated Chinaman goes to the land of the Stars and Stripes he thinks us a boorish nation, with no politeness to ease our brusque ways. A letter from a Chinaman in America to a friend of his in Peking came into my hands the other day, showing a different point of view from ours. I have it in my pocket. After describing some of our—to him—shocking everyday customs, such as gentlemen and ladies walking together unblushingly on the street, eating at the same table, etc., he excuses us by saying, 'But what can you expect of folk who have been brought up in barbarous countries on the very verge of the world. They have not been taught the maxims of our Sages; they have never studied the Rites; how can they know what good manners mean? We often think

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them rude and insolent, when I'm sure they don't mean it—they're ignorant, that's all.' ”

“Douglas,” said Paul, breaking, boy-like, into the conversation, “are you really going to start into the interior to-morrow? Who will help me with my chemistry now?”

“Miss Gilmour will take my place as tutor, perhaps,” said Douglas.

He had been involuntarily watching Ray's face to see if the news of his sudden departure startled her. He saw she was interested only in a casual way. His insight into the minds of those around him was keenly penetrative, and he was seldom blinded by his own inclinations.

Not that Ray was wholly indifferent to Douglas Medhurst. His was a strong personality, which persistently made itself felt; but he was utterly at variance with her girlish ideal of manhood.

A smothered exclamation was heard outside the door, and after a moment a gentleman and lady, with a little girl of four, stood inside the threshold.

“Elsie, Elsie, how welcome you are! How did you get here?” said Mrs. Gilmour, taking her in her arms. From the others such a greeting followed as is awarded only to home-comers.

The Birthday Celebration and Its Guests

Elsie Andersen was Ray's cousin, and had lived with the Gilmours from the time, years ago, when her mother had died, a penniless widow, until the day when she had married Herbert Andersen, and had gone with him to a little mission station in Shansi.

"Herbert has not been very well, auntie," said Elsie, "so I have brought him home for uncle to doctor."

"You are run down, Herbert," said Dr. Gilmour, looking at him with a physician's eye. "You've been disobeying Nature's laws and my commands, and overworking again."

"This is your birthday night, auntie," said Elsie, "we are in time to share the end of the fete."

"I'm sure you're much too tired after your long journey to stay out of bed this evening," said Mrs. Gilmour.

"A bath and clean clothes will refresh us. Besides, we couldn't sleep when there are so many things to say and hear. Just think! I haven't seen Ray for five years."

"This is the fair little angel I've heard so much about, Elsie," said Ray, taking the shy child in her arms.

"Yes, that is Blossom," said Elsie. "Such an odd name, but she came to us in the spring-

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time, and her father would have her called that."

Blossom was very beautiful, with shining golden curls falling about a pure face, out of which looked eyes of deepest blue.

An hour later they had all gathered in the wide, low drawing-room. They were a merry group, and although some of them had sorrows, they forget them and gave themselves up to the joy of the hour.

A knock came at the door.

"I hope that's not some one for Douglas or you, Graham," said Mrs. Gilmour.

The wooden-faced messenger-boy appeared, and delivered a parcel and letter for Dr. Gilmour. The doctor read the letter with an exclamation of annoyance.

"See, Douglas!" said he, "here is the medicine I sent with the boy in haste this morning down to the American Legation."

"I met the boy this afternoon," said Douglas, "coming out of an alley with the bottle undelivered. When I asked him the cause of delay he explained that he had embraced the opportunity, which seemed to him a favorable one, of rebraiding his queue. I reprimanded him and sent him on his way."

"Apparently he took the medicine to the

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French Legation," said Dr. Gilmour, "for Monsieur Le Bruisson has just returned it with a polite little note."

"Likely the boy thought it wouldn't matter as long as some foreigner received it," said Paul.

"How selfish I am to complain about Li," said Mrs. Gilmour, "you have more to harass you than I, and you bear it all patiently."

"You do not complain," he said, looking down at her upturned face.

He never admitted her faults, even to himself, nor would he have changed one of her characteristics if he could.

"I will run over to the Legation and look in on our medicineless patient," said Douglas.

"I wanted us all here this evening," said Mrs. Gilmour.

"I'll be back in half an hour," he answered, brightly.

"What a magnificent physique Dr. Medhurst has!" said Mr. Andersen. "His chest is twice the girth of an ordinary man's, and there must be muscles of steel in those long, bony arms."

"You are right, Herbert," said Dr. Gilmour, "and his mind is as vigorous as his body. Nominally I am the head of the hospital work, but in reality it is Douglas Medhurst. I'm getting

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to be a back number. When the day's work is done I'm too tired to study. I lack energy, initiative, daring—what you will. I'm like the Chinese in regard to the roads, I'd rather walk on the beaten path though I see it's far from perfect, than get up enterprise to mend the old ways or make new ones. I've grown to be a plodder. I do the day's work I'm accustomed to as faithfully as I can, but Dr. Medhurst does the same work with a vim and originality which makes it count. He's so strong he hardly knows what fatigue means, and rises early and sits up late to study."

"He's splendid," said Paul. "He can carry a man from one ward to another as easily as you, Herbert, would carry Blossom. He explains my lessons, too, better than any one else. I mean to be like him when I'm a man."

"You're fickle in regard to ideals, Paul," said Ray. "Don't you remember how you used to declare you would be a 'prize-fighter,' like St. George, who killed the Dragon? And since when have you dethroned Oliver Cromwell, who was your hero par excellence for a time? Your heroes are in a descending scale. From St. George to Dr. Medhurst is quite a drop. With all due deference to Cromwell and Dr. Medhurst (if it isn't profanation to mention

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them both in one breath), I'm not so unkind as to wish that you should resemble the last two in appearance. I'd be sorry to see that shiny black hair of yours take a reddish cast like Cromwell's, or bleach to a faded straw-color like Dr. Medhurst's."

"You can't recognize a man when you see one," said Paul, indignantly. "You would probably have poked fun at Mr. Lincoln himself because he hadn't tapering, lily fingers and a high-bred air."

"Commend me to one's brother for laying bare one's faults," said Ray. "But why so hot, my little sir?" she asked, lazily waving her hand over Paul's head with a fan-like gesture. It was impossible to be angry with her, for she never got out of temper and even in her half-mocking speeches there was no malice.

"Paul is partly right, Ray," said Mrs. Gilmour. "It is hard for you to do justice to any man who has not a prepossessing exterior. For instance, you picture Cromwell as a red-faced, loud-voiced squire, and you compare him with the mournful-eyed, gentlemanly Charles, and instantly your sympathies go toward the king. It makes no difference in your judgment that Charles was false and vacillating, and Cromwell strong and true."

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Mrs. Gilmour spoke warmly. She was an extremely impetuous little woman and, Dr. Medhurst being a favorite of hers, it irritated her to see how utterly Ray failed to appreciate him.

"I plead guilty to your charge, marnee," said Ray. "Does it lessen my offense in your eyes that I know it to be a fault and struggle against it? Yet there is a correspondence between outward and inward beauty. What a person is will show itself in one's exterior."

"Certainly it will," said Mr. Andersen, "but not by making the features regular or changing the color of the hair. The constant practise of all the virtues won't alter the shape of a man's nose."

They all laughed at this, for Mr. Andersen's was decidedly of the pug variety.

"How goes the work in Shansi, Mr. Andersen?" asked Dr. Medhurst, having returned in a glow from the haste he had made.

"Discouragingly slow," said Mr. Andersen. "I feel like an ant undertaking to remove the Kolan Shan Range when I'm trying to make headway against the ingrained beliefs of three thousand years. There never was a people as proudly conservative. You think you know something of it here in Peking, but to see it in

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its intensity you must live in the interior. A Chinaman's whole life may be summed up in one word—ceremonial. Ceremonial takes the place of sincere affection in home life; it supplants morality in official life; and it blunts the deeper feelings in all things religious."

"And yet their very clinging to the precepts of their ancestors wrings admiration out of me," said Dr. Medhurst. "They are such a stable nation. The Chinese are bound in a few more generations to play a prominent part in the history of the world. But the cross of Christ is the only lever which will raise China from her sluggish morality."

"Yes, when I think of it," said Mr. Andersen, rising and pacing up and down, "I feel as if I must implant in some hearts before I die a knowledge of the teaching of the Nazarene, be the cost to me what it may."

Ominous red spots burned in his cheeks with his inward excitement.

Dr. Gilmour, looking at them, felt alarmed, and skilfully turned the conversation into channels where the shadow of the Dragon could not come.

Ray was the life of the company. She played the "Troisieme Ballade" for her father; she tried her skill with Herbert at a game of chess;

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and gave a laughable account of some college scenes.

Shy little Blossom sat near her mother, amusing herself with a few ancient books and playthings hastily gathered from the attic.

Douglas slipped out and got some nuts to coax her to his knee. She grew to feel quite at home on her improvised throne, and prattled about her doll and the 'effelunt' book. Her golden hair fell over his gaunt face and she stood both of her tiny feet on his great palm.

"Beauty and the Beast," whispered Ray mischievously to Paul, enjoying the frantic pantomime that was the only way he could express his disapproval.

Blossom liked the deep gray eyes which looked so tenderly into hers; and, moved by a sudden impulse, she threw her arms about Douglas and gave him a prolonged kiss.

Douglas blushed crimson. Every nerve in his body vibrated. He could not remember when he had been kissed before—perhaps not since his boyhood, when he had said the last good-bye to his dying mother. A thousand feelings struggled within him—longings for home life; for some one to whom it was a vital matter whether he came or went. He had such a great, strong, loving heart, and he was so

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lonely. A mist swam before his eyes and his giant frame trembled.

Mrs. Gilmour, who had been watching the scene, guessed, with woman's quick instinct, something of the cause of his emotion.

"Douglas," she said, "we were speaking about those photographs you mounted the other day. Will you be kind enough to get them for us?"

Endeavoring to gain his self-control in his room, he blessed the tactful woman who had given him a chance to recover himself in solitude.

He came back in a little while with the tumult in his heart abated. He had grown used to the necessity of putting a strait-jacket on his ardent feelings.

But Blossom gained a devoted subject to her queenly sway that night.

It was, on the whole, an evening to be remembered—a halcyon season, all the more precious because they rarely had leisure to be all together. Each one was at his or her best. No shadow of the separations and sorrows that the next few months were to bring to the little group fell on their joy.

"How happy we have been to-night," said Mrs. Gilmour. "Such reunions tone us up for

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the seasons of depression which are the inevitable heritage of the highly-strung natures of my household. We must meet here again a year from this time."

How merciful the kindness that veils our eyes from beholding the future!

CHAPTER IV

RAY'S LETTER FROM SHANSI

"Herbert is so much better now, auntie," said Elsie, "that he is restless to get back to his people. When the echo of the last New Year's firecrackers has died away and people settle down to work again after their holiday, we will start homewards."

"I've about decided to listen to Ray's pleading, and send her back with you for a month or two. She is so listless. Anything that promises novelty and adventure suits her. She turns a deaf ear when I speak of the various discomforts of such a trip. I shall miss her. She brings so much of youthful buoyancy into my life, but——"

"But you never knew what it was to prefer your own happiness to that of any one you loved," said Elsie.

"Her father could go for her as soon as Douglas comes home," said Mrs. Gilmour. "The journey might be a benefit to him, too. He has had too much on his hands since Douglas left."

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A week later, when Mr. and Mrs. Andersen and Blossom returned to their mission station among the hills, Ray made one of the party.

She described her nine-days' journey in a characteristic letter to Paul.

PINGTING, March 7th, 1900.

MY DEAR PAUL:

We have just come home from a visit to Cheng-pai and Sai Na. They are at a miserable little village among the mountains, a day's journey from here. Both of them have the same cheerful, happy spirit they always manifested when they were with us in the schools in Peking. I asked Cheng-pai if he ever regretted giving up his comfortable position as interpreter to labor among these stolid, irresponsible people; and he seemed surprised that I could even ask such a question.

Sai Na is the proud possessor of a restless, clever looking boy of three, whom—tell it not in Gath—she calls Graham, in honor of father. Blossom and he became firm friends immediately.

What shall I tell you about Shansi? It is a land distinguished for the wealth of its minerals and the poverty of its people. It is an unrivaled place for acquiring a taste for salt fish, because fresh meat is a luxury.

After we left the railroad at Paoting we came over apace, making sometimes ten miles a day and sometimes twenty. Two-wheeled springless carts—merely an exaggeration of what we see in Peking—were our conveyances over the muddy plain as far as the arm of the Great Wall on the boundary line

Ray's Letter from Shansi

of Shansi. They answered very well on the land, but when we got stuck in the middle of the river when fording the Huto, they had manifest disadvantages. We were delayed so long in mid-stream that we could not get to a kung kwan to stay over night, and so betook ourselves to the nearest inn. The sign-board bore the title "The Place of Heavenly Rest." This was enticing. After our jolting over the abominable roads we felt in need of empyrean refreshment. The door-posts had been recently papered with reassuring mottoes, one of which I deciphered as "May happiness rest on all who enter." If I hadn't been credulous, the fact that the proprietor was forcibly ejecting a railing victim from the gateway might have disturbed me—but confidence in my fellow-men is my weakness. After picking our way across a filthy courtyard we were ushered into the guest chamber. The furniture was marked by simplicity. It consisted of a k'ang and a table. Some hens, looking extremely aged, were domesticated in one corner. Blossom was delighted with the "chuckies," and the prospect of spending a night in their vicinity made her clap her hands with glee. I am fond of feathered fowl, but too much familiarity breeds contempt. I explained to the landlord that my peace of mind depended upon their removal. He promised that my desire should receive his careful consideration. He may have been still considering it when I retired, for the hens were not removed.

Before daybreak an antiquated rooster set up a querulous crow. I reached out and sent my boot at it, when immediately the hapless bird fell down dead. It was so old it must have been near its last gasp, anyway. In the morning the innkeeper was

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inconsolable. That rooster was his companion, his dear familiar friend, the apple of his eye. He doted upon it, and he must have a recompense for it proportionate to the intensity of his feelings. We paid the exorbitant sum he demanded, whereupon his grief visibly lightened.

Herbert had the most diverse experiences. In the "Place of Heavenly Rest" the crowd swarmed into the room to see us eat. To use their own expressive idiom, they "stared themselves full." The proprietor made a show of keeping them out, but it was only a show. He bustled about, saying: "Back from my foreign guests; crowd no farther. Have you no sense of the proprieties? This gentleman is one who speaks doctrine. Pay respect to the teacher," but even his stinging rebuke: "You are not know-the-Rites men," failed to budge them.

Finally a middle-aged man was chosen as spokesman, and asked Herbert the usual questions as to his distinguished surname, his honorable age, the distance to his ancestral home, the age of his venerable parents, if he believed in filial piety, if his distinguished Emperor was a woman; how many sons he had; how he got his linen so white, etc., etc., and then, to Herbert's delight, desired to "borrow light" concerning the doctrine he taught.

Herbert began to preach immediately, and waxed enthusiastic and eloquent. The man looked at him so earnestly he hardly winked.

"Is there any question you would like to ask?" said Herbert, when he had finished, and the man appeared lost in thought.

"Was your face white when you were born?" inquired the man gravely.

Ray's Letter from Shansi

I couldn't help laughing, Herbert was so disconcerted.

But at another place, distinguished by the title "Unapproachable Purity," where the pig-sty was separated by only a slight partition from the guest-rooms, a pedlar who had come down from the mountain, recognized Herbert as one who had given him a book some years ago. He drew out of his pocket a copy of the Gospel of Mark, wrapped round and round with blue cotton cloth.

"I have read about Jesus in this book," said the pedlar. "He was a great Teacher and a good Man. My heart desires to know more about him. Who was he? Why did they kill one who did such wonderful deeds? I have thought about him often as I walked along, and I want you to tell me of him."

Herbert talked with him until far into the night. The pedlar's heart was prepared and eager, and he became converted. It was one of those startling transformations which defy explanation or disbelief, and in the morning, as he accompanied us for some distance, his face literally shone.

Real estate here is somewhat insecure. At any time wind may sweep down, lift up all the light dust on the surface of a farm, and transfer it to a neighbor's.

The road after Hwuyloh passes sometimes through gorges thirty feet deep—roads which were once on the level, but have been worn down by the incessant traffic of generations, and blown over by the winds of centuries. It gave me a weird feeling to think that when Abram was making that untried journey Canaanward from his kindred and his father's house in Ur of the Chaldees—even then Chinese traffic

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was wending its way through this hill country, and Chinese feet were treading down these pathways.

The exciting part of the journey was through the mountains in a mule-litter. A mule-litter, my uninitiated Paul, is a generous-sized sedan-chair with projecting shafts which are attached to a mule in front and a mule behind. It was a conveyance to rejoice the heart after our jerking, jolting carts, if one is not subject to seasickness. The track (I hesitate to dignify such a humpty-dumpty zigzag footpath by the name of road) wound on the ledges of mountains with perpendicular cliffs of yellow stone on the one hand, and sheer plunges one hundred feet deep on the other. My mules had an inexplicable bias for treading on the very edges of the abysses. I expressed my opinion of their conduct to the driver in my most forcible Mandarin; and as he smilingly protested he could not understand me, I shouted "Hi! Hi!" to the mules. This was equally ineffectual, so I devoted myself to winding up my estate and setting my affairs in order. Whenever I caught a glimpse of what lay ahead I thought of your favorite form of encouragement, "Cheer up, old fellow! the worst is yet to come."

Since reaching here I have been having what Englishmen call a "soak." I breakfast in bed in the morning at nine and spend the rest of the day in refraining from fatiguing exercise.

The amusements open to a foreigner in Pingting are not noticeably disquieting. In fact, I have been reduced to go to prayer-meeting for a diversion.

Just as I had written so far, Elsie ushered in—you can't guess whom, so I'll tell you—Douglas Medhurst. He was as brown as a walnut and wore the

Ray's Letter from Shansi

Chinese dress. His figure looked positively gigantic in the loose robes. The surveying party is near us, so he ran over to see Herbert and Elsie. He did not know that I had left Peking. I hope his delight equaled his surprise at finding me, but "I hae my doots," for he appeared rather confounded by my presence.

He brought Blossom a Chinese doll. Its nose and ears were glued on, its pigtail stuck in at an angle of forty-five degrees, and the rest of its features were supplied with paint. Its expression is as unhappy as Laocoon's when enveloped by the serpents. But it is a beauty in Blossom's eyes, and the dear little maiden's most precious possession, next to the "effelunt" book you gave her.

Dr. Medhurst has been using his camera in Shansi and has some curious pictures mounted in pairs. He gave me several to send home. The contrast, of course, means something. Mother will understand, if you don't. I like two best—the one with the gorgeous landscape of mountains and ravines on the right and on the left (the Chinese place of honor) the little old woman bent double weeding in a millet patch with three generations of sorrow in her face—and the miniatures of Elsie and Sai Na. You mustn't think Douglas grouped these two women together to exhibit how much more beautiful Elsie is than Sai Na. He is too kind to make such a comparison and Elsie's loveliness needs no offset to render it more striking. It was to show that Sai Na's scarred face, lighted up by her intensity of feeling, has an attractiveness as well as Elsie's chiseled perfection. And Sai Na has the place of honor—the left.

It will be a week yet before Douglas starts home-

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wards. I hope father will come for me as soon as he returns. I am like a "pelican in the wilderness" in this remote land. It is cause for thankfulness that I have come to the end of this letter. I have simply a lawless pen, one I am not in sympathy with, and it defies me utterly.

Take good care of the little mother till I come.

Ever yours,

RAY GILMOUR.

CHAPTER V

BEFORE DR. GILMOUR LEFT HOME

A few days after Paul received Ray's letter, a messenger stood at the door of the dispensary in Peking. He had a contented, cheerful face, with intelligence beaming from his almond-shaped eyes, and when he smiled he showed teeth which a London belle might have envied. His garments were disordered and bore the marks of hasty journeying. It was Cheng-pai. He sent in his name to Dr. Gilmour, with a request for a speedy audience.

The doctor came at once. After warm greetings to his old pupil, he inquired: "Are they well in Shansi?"

"I am the bearer of painful tidings," said Cheng-pai, producing a note.

It was from Ray, and read:

DEAR FATHER:—

We have telegraphed three times, but received no answer. Herbert is ill with typhoid fever, I fear. Elsie has the gravest apprehensions because of his recent heart trouble. She thinks if only you were here you might save him. The two weeks before you can get this word and come seem an interminable

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period. Sai Na has left little Graham with his grandmother and is assistant nurse.

The cook, though mortally afraid of the fever, sticks to his post.

If only Dr. Medhurst were home to look after mother! Tell her I long for the time when I shall be with her again as watchers with the sick long for the morning, and through my sympathy with Elsie there shoots a gleam of selfish joy that soon you will be with your own

RAY.

PINGTING, March 25, 1900.

Dr. Gilmour sent Cheng-pai to the guest chamber to remove his travel-stains while he went in search of his wife. He found her teaching the cook's chubby little boy to read.

She welcomed him with a bright smile. They never met after a few hours' absence but each tried to show the other the pleasure it was to be reunited.

The color left Mrs. Gilmour's cheeks when the doctor told her Cheng-pai's errand; but with characteristic energy she began to prepare the necessary things for the journey.

"Ray will be exposed to the disease, Graham; you must let me go too."

"That would be useless, Mary. You are not strong enough to travel in such haste as we must make."

"How can I wait inactive here with both you

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and Ray gone? It is so hard for me—worse than the journey.”

“If you were less frail, Mary——” He hesitated. “It could not be best for you to come,” he said. “Your fears make you exaggerate Ray’s danger. She has never been delicate, and typhoid, with proper precautions, is not really contagious. If it please God to spare Herbert, I will do all I can to insure him a speedy convalescence; if not, I will bring Elsie home with Ray. And now I must leave you, to make arrangements for my work while I am gone. We must start at three in the morning. Do not tire yourself over my packing.”

In spite of gentle wooings, sleep that night refused to visit the eyelids of either Dr. Gilmour or his wife.

“Graham,” broke forth Mrs. Gilmour at last, “I wish we were not to be parted for such a long time. A heavy presentiment of evil hangs over me.”

“Foolish little wife,” said Dr. Gilmour. “Did I ever leave you for twenty-four hours that your fancy did not conjure up some monster which was watching for a chance to steal me from you?”

“I know I’m always imagining calamities which never happen, Graham. It’s because I

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love you so much and my life would be empty without you. I'm like a woman who has invested all her money in one precarious bank, and who lives in constant danger of bankruptcy."

"Ray and Paul would be left you from the wreckage, even if that unstable banking concern were to go under," said the doctor, playfully following out her figure.

"Yes, but they can never be to me all that you are. The most perfect sympathy is between those of the same age. It is right that Ray and Paul should carve out a future for themselves in which they leave no prominent place for us. We have drifted from our childhood moorings and so must they. And yet I feel an unreasonable pang, almost akin to jealousy, when I see how dissimilarity in years and difference in training shuts me out from much that makes up their life. I have struggled so to keep my heart young. When I was a child and saw middle-aged people with rigid ways and uncompromising opinions, I used to resolve that I would never grow like that, but would always preserve the elasticity of youth. But somehow years make a difference in spite of one's self. Habits fasten on one unconsciously, and the steady pressure of daily care

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makes sports a hardship. I don't want Ray and Paul to be tied to my apron-strings, either; I like to see them working out life's problems and forming independent opinions. They are so loving and thoughtful, in so far as they understand, that I positively hate myself when I care that they are happier with their young friends when we are not present. It would kill me to have them know how small I am. I am only twenty-three years Ray's senior. What an impassable chasm a score of years make! And yet I could lay down my life in the children's stead, and count myself happy in the doing of it. I have always been exacting in my loves, haven't I, Graham? The unselfish love that is satisfied without the fullest reciprocation is beyond my ken. And so I come back to what I meant to say at the beginning, dearest. You answer to my inner self. You comprehend me in all my moods, and the fiercest trials of my life seem bearable when I am with you. You have grown old with me, and the years, instead of bringing separation, have only bound us closer together. You give me a feeling of rest, create a harmony within me."

"I am very dependent on you for my happiness," said Dr. Gilmour. "I always have a sense of disquiet when I am away from you. Not

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that I picture dangers for you, but because you are my complement, and have become so much a part of myself that alone I'm like a man with one hand. I do not feel as you do about Ray and Paul. I am less intense than you. Then I couldn't be with them very much when they were growing up. It is natural that you should have some heart pangs when they unconsciously exclude you from their pleasures, and choose younger associates. Probably most loving mothers who sacrifice the best portion of their lives to their children, as you have done, go through a similar experience. But the children are in no way to blame. The nation is built up by a man following the visions which allure him in the future, and by his capabilities of forming new ties and new friendships."

"I am wrong, as usual. I am demanding the impossible. I believe, Graham, that once and only once in a lifetime there comes to all men and women a supreme earthly love, intense as the individual is capable of feeling; and, though the person may, and does, have other loves strong and deep, this one affection stands out, clearly-defined, unapproachable, like Tai Shan among the lesser hills. A lover may give this gift of gifts to his betrothed, or a betrothed to a lover; a mother to her children, or a father

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to his son or daughter; a man may bestow it on his profession, or a miser on his gold. But whatever the object, it is the zenith of devotion, reached only once in a lifetime. Our love for each other is our master passion, and all others, though bright and luminous, pale before it."

"I'll turn over your theory in my mind and see how it fits on to facts," said Dr. Gilmour.

"I can prove it to you by citing biographical evidence," said Mrs. Gilmour, with a gay little intonation. "Do you suppose 'Pen' Browning did not receive lavish affection from both his parents, and yet would his death have wrung his father's heart with such poignant grief as beset it when his genius-crowned wife died. Think of him pacing those lonely Florentine corridors and sobbing, 'I want her, oh, I want her.' Did Charles Kingsley's wife ever have any love equal to that for her 'most true and perfect knight'? For whom but for his darling son William would Henry I have had his heart so filled with gloom that his lips forgot their trick of smiling? Isn't Frank's art wife and child to him? And nobody in the wide world could take little Eva's place in St. Clare's heart."

"Ah, wife, I challenge the proofs. You are

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descending from the historical to the world of romance in that last illustration."

"Perhaps I am, but the characters in great books always seem real to me. Logic couldn't convince me that Juliet didn't lean out of a casement in Verona to answer Romeo's love speeches; or, that Pendennis didn't err and repent in Old England; or that Maggie Tulliver didn't meet and master her strong temptation. They wouldn't be great books if they didn't represent people as they are."

"See how far we have shifted from the theme we started with," said Dr. Gilmour.

"It's always easy for me to get back to the subject of my love for you," laughed his wife. "Do you suppose, Graham, I could keep my faith in a wise, overruling Providence if you were to be taken from me?"

"Why should that shake your trust, Mary? You would not doubt the love of the Father if his will was that I go to him a little before you, would you? I might be an abject coward if death faced me—I cannot tell—but, viewed from a distance, if it were not for leaving you and the children, it would mean to me just a joyous home-coming after a long term at school. Not that I have any sickly longing after death, nor that my work is not dear to

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me. More than ever I regard being permitted to labor in China as a privilege, a sacred trust.

"In the years I have spent here I have watched the career of many successful men filling positions which brought honor and fame—from Sir Robert Hart to Li Hung Chang—but I have never seen one whose position had not drawbacks equal to mine or one with whom I would willingly exchange. We have had hard work, discouragements, homesickness; we have been hampered by lack of money and of leisure (few anywhere escape these fetters); but we have had also consciences without remorse, the gladness of stretching out a helping hand, and a happy home and children that a crowned monarch might envy."

"There is such a serenity about your life. You have a great settled calm in your soul. I am always crossing bridges before I come to them. It's the fault of a too-vivid imagination. I have in my mind this minute two pictures with the details well worked out. The first is you in heaven, and I in a snug corner of Ray's house, perhaps knitting stockings (save the mark!) for the family comfort. The other is we two growing old side by side, with deepening joy in each other's companionship, reading and thinking more than we have time to do

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now, and cultivating a predilection for spoiling our grandchildren."

"We will leave the future, wife. It is in wise hands. Let us be thankful that we have had so many happy years together. They are ours and memory will keep the joy of them."

CHAPTER VI

SHANSI TROUBLES

It was the eighth of April when Dr. Gilmour and Cheng-pai entered the mission house at Pingting.

Elsie met them. Her eyes were filled with tears.

"I am so glad you are come, uncle," she said, with sadness in her voice.

"Am I too late to help Herbert?" asked the doctor, divining the worst.

For answer, Elsie took him by the hand and led him through the courtyard. There in the corner lay a mound of newly-placed earth.

"He died four days ago," said Elsie. "He gradually weakened in spite of all we could do, until at the last he just slept away. I think he knew when the end was near, for at midnight he asked for Blossom. We brought her to him, and she put her little arms about his neck and kissed him, and then fell asleep beside him. When I lifted her up to take her away again he said several times: 'My fair little flower!' In the morning he had gone, we scarcely knew

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when, his breathing was so quiet. The few church-members buried him. One of the men read in Chinese: 'I am the resurrection and the life,' and offered a simple prayer. Poor little Blossom cried to be put in the box with her 'dear fadder.' We buried him here, so that she and I might see his grave often. It is foolish, I know, but somehow I feel as if we were nearer him.

"And, uncle," Elsie went on, "how can I tell you all? The worst for you is yet to come. Ray took the fever the day Herbert died. Don't go just yet," she said, laying a restraining hand on the doctor's arm, as he turned impulsively to the house, "she is sleeping now. I hope I am not to blame for her illness. I tried to shield her, but she would take her turn in nursing Herbert, and we had so little help."

The doctor could wait no longer.

"I must see her, Elsie," he said. His voice was husky.

They went indoors together. On a bed drawn out in the center of an airy room Ray lay with closed eyes.

"Father," she cried, rousing and stretching out her hands, "You've come at last. I'll soon get better now. Tell me about mother and Paul."

Shansi Troubles

"Sai Na," said Cheng-pai, when he was alone with his wife, "it is unfortunate that Miss Gilmour should have taken the fever now. I wish with all my heart all foreigners were safe in Peking within reach of the Legations. The country is in a regular ferment. In a large number of the towns and villages we passed through, bands of the Righteous Harmony Fists, as they call themselves, were practising with guns and long knives, and volunteers are flocking to them from everywhere. They say that by some art they can render themselves invulnerable, even from a shot of a rifle. When we were at Yu-lu an old man said to me it would be a good thing if the foreign missionaries were out of the country, because their presence was drawing attention to the native Christians."

"Is Dr. Gilmour alarmed?" asked Sai Na.

"Not as much as there is reason for," said Cheng-pai. "He can't measure the depths of hate the people of the Flowery Kingdom have for foreigners. He sees the best side of them in the hospital work. Even a cur won't bite the hand that does it good, and though he is thoughtful of others, he always seems careless of danger for himself. He thinks these are lawless bands, and that the troops of His Ex-

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cellency the Emperor will make short work of them if they go too far. But they claim to be acting with the royal sanction. Their motto is: 'Exalt the dynasty and extirpate the foreigners.' I copied one of the placards I saw posted up. It reads:

"Our Emperor is about to become powerful."

"The leader of the Boxers is a royal person."

"Within three months all foreigners will be killed or driven away from China."

"During forty years the Empire has become full of foreigners."

"They have divided the land."

"Come and kill them."

"Unless this summons is obeyed you will lose your head."

"I came on from Yu-lu to get you and learn how Mr. Andersen was. My honorable mother is so timid, she besought me to return at once, and I promised her I would. We must set out early in the morning."

"I pine for a sight of my little Graham, Cheng-pai, but it is my duty to stay with Ray as long as she is here. What if she should die, too? I should 'lose my face' forever to Mrs. Gilmour if I were to leave her now. And Elsie might take the fever any day. She looks ill.

Shansi Troubles

You go to-morrow, and I will come home with Dr. Gilmour, whether it is sooner or later. You say our boy Graham is well?"

"The image of health, Sai Na."

"He has not forgotten his mother, Cheng-pai?"

"No, he spoke of you often."

"Well, I should be content then to stay a little longer when you will be with him."

Sai Na went about her work crooning in a grating, metallic voice:

"My little baby, little boy blue,
Is as sweet as sugar and cinnamon too;
Isn't this precious darling of ours
Sweeter than dates and cinnamon flowers."

On her entrance into the world, Sai Na had had the misfortune to appear as a girl. Her parents had prayed that their first-born might be a male child; but the gods were stone deaf. The disappointment was grievous and the mother turned her face to the wall and died. Sai Na grew for ten years, neglected and abused, until one day her grandmother, who was a passionate woman, in a fit of anger, branded the child's face with red-hot irons. Then she was thrown in an outhouse to die. One girl less in that swarming country where there was scarcely bread enough for the boys'

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mouths—what could it matter? Dr. Gilmour chanced to find her and, being told that he might have her and welcome, in pity carried the starved, seared little heap of bones home, and delivered her to the care of his wife. Mrs. Gilmour nursed Sai Na back to life, and then the question arose, "What is to be done with the waif?"

"If I wanted to send her away, Graham," said Mrs. Gilmour, "where could she go?"

As this was a stubborn question, Sai Na had stayed at the mission compound. She proved to be a very good student and graduated at the Girls' High School. After serving a term as nurse in the hospital she had married Cheng-pai and had gone with him to Yu-lu.

Elsie Andersen and Sai Na were of the same age. They made a strange contrast, Elsie with her tall form and well-poised head upon which great masses of black hair were coiled; Sai Na small, shrinking and disfigured, with the painful self-consciousness which a physical blemish gives to a sensitive nature. But underneath Sai Na's marred exterior was concealed a nature that rivaled Elsie's in steadfastness and ardor.

CHAPTER VII

THE CAVE

Three days after his arrival at Pingting Dr. Gilmour despatched a "boy" with a letter to his wife:

PINGTING, April 11th, 1900.

MARY, MY DEAREST:

It pains me to have to tell you what must needs be told. Herbert had passed away when I arrived. His body rests here among his people, as he would have wished.

I have to write you something now that will cause you apprehension, but you will believe me when I say that I will state the exact truth so far as I am a judge, neither softening nor concealing anything.

Ray has contracted the fever, but has only a slight attack, in which, as yet, there are no alarming symptoms. The worst which I foresee from it is that it will detain us a couple of weeks longer and keep you nervously waiting for us, and I know you will find that a wearing ordeal.

Your first thought will be that you must come to Ray. But that would not be wise, Mary. I will give her my undivided attention and (in so far as my obtuse masculine perceptions admit) will be to her what you would were you here.

I found the country more disturbed than we in the capital realize. The Anti-Foreign Society is spread-

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ing from Shangtung into Chilhi and Shansi. No doubt the Imperial troops will soon disperse these bands, but while they are abroad it would be rash for you to leave Peking. I have no fears for our own safety. We shall, if it please God, start homeward in about two weeks, and we shall be happier for our brief separation.

Cheng-pai felt uneasy about some reports of trouble in his own neighborhood, as we were passing through, and went back home the day after our arrival here. I advised Sai Na to go with her husband, knowing that her mother's heart felt drawings toward her little son, my namesake, but she was resolute and has stayed with Ray.

She and Cheng-pai are a noble pair. A lifetime of arduous service in China would be a paltry price to pay to win trophies such as these for Jesus Christ.

Ray is conscious and cheerful. She delighted us this morning with a turn of speech in her old-time humor. She is extremely solicitous, as I am, lest her illness should cause you anxiety.

I hope Douglas is with you. Elsie will come home with us for a rest. She is worn, and her quiet resignation is another proof of her grave, placid nature. Blossom is the antidote to her sorrow. She is the most ethereal child. She divides her affections impartially among us all.

Tell Paul I rest satisfied because I have committed to his care you, my most precious possession, and I know he will guard my treasure tenderly.

Yours as always,

GRAHAM GILMOUR.

Ray improved steadily in the budding April

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weather. She had begun to sit up a little during the day and to enjoy in a dreamy languor the sensations of the balmy spring. Blossom filled Ray's lap with grass and leaves, and read to her out of her "effelunt" book, with the page turned upside down. There was a strong sympathy between the two. Ray was not fond of children as a rule, they wearied her after a time; but Blossom was such a quiet, unobtrusive little fairy that Ray found pleasure in watching her sunny happiness. She might not have been so interested had she been in Peking with her favorite pursuits to occupy her time and attention—but here, where she had nothing to do but to be quiet and get well, to lie and look at Blossom's pure, sweet face was her favorite diversion.

Outside, the Boxer movement was stealthily creeping up towards Pingting. The officials either could not or would not restrain it.

Dr. Gilmour was now keenly alive to the gravity of the situation and busied himself preparing everything for flight. He carefully concealed his fears from Ray lest her recovery might be retarded; but her perceptions were keen, and a chance word or two aroused her suspicion. She questioned her father, and he, deeming truth the best, told her of their peril.

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"Let us set out to-day, father. I am well enough, and the thought that I am hazarding you all brings me misery," said Ray.

Dr. Gilmour took up Ray's wasted hand and laid it down half sadly.

"If only we could have given you time to gain more strength," he said, "but I have completed the arrangements for us to go the day after to-morrow. Do not dissipate your energy by over-anxiousness, Ray. You must hoard it for the journey. Think of pleasant things—of the little mother and Paul in Peking. Every day will bring us nearer to them. Pleasant thoughts are a patient's best tonic, so indulge in them freely."

That night Dr. Gilmour was roused by a hurried knocking at the gate of the compound. When he opened it a native Christian, agitated and breathless, presented himself.

"Honorable teacher," he gasped, "make haste to leave this place. I have run nine li to warn you. The Boxers have set fire to the homes of the Christians. Some of the men and women they bound with cords and threw alive into the flames. When they tried to crawl out the Boxers beat them back with their long knives. It is a slow and bitter death that I do not like to think of," said the man.

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"But you and the Christians here?" asked Dr. Gilmour. "What will you do? Could I help you if I stayed?"

"Your kindness fills me with gratitude, but we are better off without you. The Boxers don't care whether we serve Booddha or Confucius; but if we are Jesus-men they think we have become barbarians."

"I might get the magistrate to protect you," said the doctor.

"Some of his followers from the yamen were helping the Boxers, so there is nothing to be hoped for from him. We are in God's hands and must abide his will," said the man, with the passiveness so characteristic of the Chinese when called upon to submit to the inevitable.

Dr. Gilmour called Lung Te, the cook, and despatched him for the mule-litters already ordered for the journey; then he roused the women and explained the need for an immediate departure.

He was a man ordinarily very calm; his temperament inclining almost to the phlegmatic; but in times of danger he became alert and active, quick of eye and ear.

He packed the litters now with quiet and despatch. He remembered to pile the pillows

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as Ray liked them; he put Blossom's doll and book in his pocket, and superintended the work of Elsie and Sai Na.

Lung Te, the cook, was to go with them as far as Yu-lu. He was a faithful fellow, but an abject coward. During Mr. Andersen's illness he prepared meals and ran errands with a dog-like fidelity; but persuasion could not have induced him to go near the sick man's room or sleep under the same roof. He was almost paralyzed with fear now and physically unable to give much help.

Ready at last, they stumbled out through the gloom over the uneven roads, listening with strained alertness for the sound of their enemies, and trembling at even the voices of the drivers as they shouted to the mules.

Elsie pressed little Blossom more closely to her breast, and wept in the darkness thinking of the grave in the deserted courtyard.

Dr. Gilmour was a brave man, yet he felt the tension of hourly expecting a hideous danger against which he had no adequate means of defending the women and himself.

In one place where they stopped to rest the mules, the innkeeper drove them away with angry threats.

"You shall not come here to poison my

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wells," he cried, gesticulating wildly; "leave my premises at once, or my servants shall compel you to go. I know now why two men died so suddenly in the village this morning. You have been tampering with the water."

It was noon before they reached Yu-lu. In the morning they passed an excited group, among whom, stirring them up to fury, were ferocious-looking men wearing the Boxer uniform and brandishing their long sharp knives to accentuate their speech. The women shuddered and drew the curtains of their litter more closely.

Cheng-pai's home was a small building, presenting, as most houses do in China, a stretch of blank wall to the street, having the rooms opening on to a courtyard in the interior. While maintaining its native character, inside there were evidences of contact with Western civilization. The windows were of glass, instead of glazed paper; a big clock ticked away the hours, and between the red mottoes bearing Chinese sentiments hung the Lord's Prayer in English. Two younger brothers of Cheng-pai and his mother lived with him.

There was some agitation among the inmates of the little dwelling. Cheng-pai and his brothers, eating their noonday meal of salt

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fish and millet, were talking with grave, perturbed faces. Their mother, near, joined in the conversation in a fretful treble.

"The Taotai has taken down the proclamation friendly to foreigners and native Christians from the yamen wall; and he has had orders from the governor, Yu Hsien, that he is not to protect or aid any one even known to favor them," said Cheng-pai. "I must go for Sai Na to-night and warn Dr. Gilmour."

"Sai Na! you always think of her first," said his mother, peevishly. "But you have adopted the ways of the barbarians, and it is their wont to make much of their wives."

"We can scarcely spare you now," said Cheng-pai's brother, who fellowshiped his mother's belief that Sai Na's fate was of very secondary importance to their own. "I have just received word that the Boxers are advancing, and that our village is a marked spot. We must consider how we may best fortify ourselves in case of attack."

"Ah! Cheng-pai!" broke forth his mother, "You see, I always said evil would come upon us when you took down the tablets and neglected the worship of your ancestors. As if it were not enough that you should give up your official position at Peking, but you must

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bring destruction down upon our heads. And what is your Yasu [Jesus] better than Confucius, anyway? But it was always your way to win a cat and lose a cow."

"Honorable mother!" said Cheng-pai, with no trace of resentment at her reproaches. "I will neglect no means of defending you from danger. Do you wish me to take you where you will feel more secure?"

"No!" she said pettishly. "Where should I go? I have no love for strange faces, and I know all my sons are determined to stay here."

An interruption occurred in the bounding in of a little almond-eyed, black-haired fellow of about three years old, quaintly dressed in long trousers, with a loose, shirt-like garment falling over them. He had a broad back and a sturdy, upright carriage, and his baby face wore a habitual expression of gravity. Having been accustomed, in his short lifetime to flattering attention, his manner was easy and assured. He clambered up on Cheng-pai's knee, confident of finding grace in his father's eyes.

"Graham saw a mule in the courtyard," the child announced, and the next moment Sai Na had darted into the room.

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"Thank God you are safe," she cried, catching up little Graham, and smelling his soft brown cheek again and again.

Cheng-pai hurried out to Dr. Gilmour. "Can you persuade your mule-drivers to go on with you?" he asked anxiously.

"No," said the doctor, "for some reason they mutinied this morning, and refused to carry us any longer. It was only by dint of bribes and threats that I induced them to bring us this far."

"Come in and rest for the present," said Cheng-pai. "Troublous times are upon us here."

Cheng-pai drew Dr. Gilmour aside when the women had withdrawn.

"The Magistrate of this District," he said, "has issued a proclamation and posted it everywhere on the walls, that whoever shelters a foreigner or aids him in any way, even to giving him a drink of water, he and his household shall die. The knowledge of that may have made your mule-drivers reluctant to proceed this morning. The Boxers have committed so many outrages near us that the Christians are intimidated."

"Then you are endangering your life and those dearest to you now by housing us," said

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Dr. Gilmour. "Have you procured us conveyances, as I sent word to you to do? We will go forward at once."

"I have vainly spent two days without being able to get you so much as a wheelbarrow. Money will not tempt the people. But I have been thinking of a plan. There is, about a mile out of the village, a long, narrow cave, of which no one knows but myself. I happened upon it one day in my walk. It was evidently once inhabited, for it has a large stone for a door, which runs in a groove, though the grass has grown up and almost covered it. At the farther end were chinks enough to let in the air. It is dark and damp, but if you could hide there until to-morrow night, I might find a way of escape for you. I will go over the mountain to Si-chu early in the morning, and, as it is out of the jurisdiction of our Magistrate, perhaps I can hire you litters or carts and send them over to-morrow night. I know the people, for I frequently preach there. The cave is no fit place for Miss Gilmour in her feeble condition. I would gladly keep you here, but I could not conceal you. I am a suspected man, and already to-day my premises have been searched by my officious neighbors, whose heart of spying will not be

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awed. Nothing is a secret in a village of the Flowery Kingdom. What is told in the ear is often heard a hundred miles off."

"You are thinking more of our safety and welfare than of your own, I fear, Cheng-pai," said Dr. Gilmour.

"If I were, I should be doing what you have taught me by your worthy example. If you will choose but the most necessary part of your belongings we will carry them to the cave, with food and rush-lights."

"Seeing that you are in such peril, Cheng-pai, why not bring your household to Peking with us? I could find employment for you until this storm blows over."

"I must stay," said Cheng-pai calmly. "I am the shepherd of the flock, and when the wolf is nigh I am most needed to watch over the sheep."

"But Sai Na?" suggested the Doctor.

A shade passed over his face.

"Sai Na and Graham," he said, "it is hard for them. If Sai Na wished me to go to Peking I would not refuse. But I have asked her, and she thinks I ought not to desert my people. She is a very steadfast woman."

"I have had proof of that in her devotion to Ray," said Dr. Gilmour.

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There was busy unpacking and repacking, and when it became dark again the little band were ready to set out.

Cheng-pai led the evening prayer before they separated.

"Our Father, we thank thee for the fellowship of our companions which we have enjoyed. We have taken sweet counsel together, and have rejoiced that thy name is revered in our hearts.

"We commit our lives and these of our beloved into thy hand. Do with us as seemeth best in thy sight. If we are called upon to suffer, strengthen us, O thou who wast a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. Save us from knowing anything of the gnawing anguish which follows a denial of thee.

"There come to us, in exalted moments, glimpses of the rare beauty of thy character, and we feel that to do simply right, whatever may be the consequences, is a thing worth living and dying for. Confirm us in our loyalty to goodness.

"And those who are committed to our care—some of them but babes in Christ, understanding but dimly thy love and the reality of the life which is to come—may they see thee with

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clearer vision and realize that if they suffer with thee, they will also reign with thee.

"Be with each of us, O Lord, as we go our separate ways, never perhaps to meet again on earth. We thank thee that thou hast prepared a place for us where separations are not; where love and joy are perpetual because thou art there; where thou thyself dost wipe the tears from the eyes of thy people and dwell among them.

"May we meet in that Holy City where we will ascribe all honor to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen."

There was a tender leave-taking of Sai Na, then they turned their faces out into the night. Lung Te and Cheng-pai and his brothers accompanied them, carrying food and water and wraps.

They found the cave with difficulty. It looked like a simple mound of earth. Inside, it had a circular roof and curving sides. Judging by its formation, it had probably been scooped out of the rock in bygone centuries by the action of water.

"At dark to-morrow night I hope to send you the means of release from this dismal spot," said Cheng-pai. "I will set out for Si-chu at the first streak of dawn."

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"You heap up benefits upon me, Cheng-pai, and confer most favors when I am least able to repay you," said Dr. Gilmour.

"It is I who am your debtor for past kindnesses," said Cheng-pai. He hesitated a moment, and then said in a low voice:

"If I were to die soon, and Sai Na be left,—it might be so, one cannot see into the future,—my brothers would provide for my honorable mother and Graham—but Sai Na . . . there is no one to care for her. If it were in your power . . . you would protect—you would not fail her?" he asked, stammeringly.

"My offers of help seem useless enough now, imprisoned as I am by circumstances," answered the doctor, "but should the time come when I am free and Sai Na is in need, Ray's welfare shall be no less dear to me than hers."

Cheng-pai folded his hands on his breast and bowed silently, as he passed out with his brothers and Lung Te. They rolled the stone-door into position carefully.

The next day was long and wearing. They could tell that it was sunny outside by the light which penetrated through the fissures. The damp, dank smell of the cave sickened little Blossom, who was very sensitively

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organized, and she was feverish and could not eat.

Dr. Gilmour chafed at the enforced inaction. He moved nervously about for hours, then, wearied out, lay down and slept.

"What sweet lulling deceits dreams often are, Ray," he said, on awakening. "I had forgotten that such a country as China existed, and I have been back in Boston with your mother in the days before we were married. I saw her as she used to look, flitting over the lawn, shaded by the big horse-chestnut tree at her home. You do not resemble her as she was then. She was slight and frail and very implusive in her manner. I counted myself the happiest man on earth when I won her, and well I might. She has been my 'comrade' ever since. But I never felt worthy of her."

He was talking half to himself in an abstracted fashion. Evidently his thoughts were with his "comrade."

Ray interrupted his reverie.

"Father," she said, "I blame myself for our present trouble. If I had never come to Shansi and had not taken the fever, we wouldn't be here in terror of our lives."

"You lay the blame on the wrong shoulders,

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Ray," he said, smiling at her serious face. "If you want to trace out causes why don't you go back to first ones, and say that if I had never come to China we wouldn't be hiding from the light of day in such a cavern as this? We must not blame ourselves for unfortunate issues of right actions which none of us could foresee."

He was gratified to note that the shadow passed from Ray's brow. Long years of habit had made it almost a necessity with him to alleviate, if possible, any distress, whether mental or physical. There are rare souls so habituated to self-forgetting that their acutest sorrow comes through their sympathies with those they love.

"Uncle," said Elsie, "see how hot Blossom's temples are. Do you think she is seriously ill?"

The doctor took the fragile form in his arms, and examined her carefully.

"I think it is only a temporary indisposition, Elsie," he said. "She is truly a little blossom and wilts away from the air and sunshine. To-morrow, out of doors, I hope she will revive."

She was languid, and would have remained in the doctor's arms, but Elsie took her again.

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Elsie was calm and matter-of-fact, with a much greater stock of common sense than sentiment; but the intensity of her mother-love stood out prominently as something positive in her otherwise rather neutral character.

Blossom's beauty and winsomeness made some maternal pride pardonable. The child created an atmosphere of kindliness about her. By a certain fineness of instinct combined with a happy disposition, she was seldom obtrusive, even when constantly among older people.

"Mudder," she said, speaking in one of the long pauses of the long day, "is heaven in the ground?"

"No, darling," said Elsie, "heaven is in the sky. Why do you ask?"

"Because they put fadder in the ground, and you said he went to heaven."

Elsie tried to explain to her the difference between the soul and body.

The child looked grave, but failed to understand.

"I don't want to go to heaven," she said decidedly.

"Why, Blossom, what makes you say that?" asked Ray, laughing at the little skeptic.

"'Cos I'd have to be put in the ground, and

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it would smell like this place," said Blossom, with a movement of her delicate nostrils.

"We will soon take Blossom away from this dark cave," said Elsie soothingly.

Evening came with its long twilight. The twilight melted into night. At last, at one of the apertures of the cave, they heard a low whistle, the signal which had been agreed upon of Cheng-pai's presence. Dr. Gilmour answered it, and went to the door. It was rolled away by a vigorous hand, and there entered—not Cheng-pai, but a large, sinewy man, so tall that he could not stand upright without knocking his head against the roof.

"Douglas Medhurst," said Dr. Gilmour, amazed, hardly knowing whether his senses were cheating him or not.

But Ray had no such doubts. They had been so helpless, so forlorn, and Dr. Medhurst's presence brought a revival of hope of communication with the outside world which made her spring forward and seize his great dirty brown hand in her soft white ones.

"Douglas! Douglas!" she said, "what a welcome apparition! What quarter of the compass did you drop from? And how did you know we were here?"

She had never called him Douglas before,

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and would not have done so now but for the excitement of his unexpected appearance. His strong hand trembled in the grasp of the slight woman's fingers. He was more excited than she. He would have liked to take her in his arms and to whisper his joy that he had found her.

He summoned his self-control and answered, "I come from the northeast corner, where Peking is located, and as to how I knew you were here—'thereby hangs a tale.'"

"Mrs. Andersen, I have heard of your loss," he said, quietly, as Elsie came forward, carrying Blossom asleep. "We could ill-afford to spare so enthusiastic a soldier as your husband from the ranks."

As Douglas moved nearer the shaded light, they saw that his eyes were bloodshot, and the lids inflamed and swollen. His bony face was haggard and covered with dust; and to add to his uncouth appearance a stubby beard of days' growth bristled over his lips and chin.

"You are not well, Douglas," said Dr. Gil-mour. "You look as if you had just emerged from a battlefield."

"I've not been fighting anything more tangible than the dust of this friable soil. I'm decorated with imperial yellow enough," he

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answered, glancing at the fine dirt which clung persistently to him, "to excite the suspicion of the Emperor himself. I feel like one of the unregenerate. I would be glad to have a wash. Is this all the water you have here?" he asked quietly, examining the pail to which Dr. Gilmour conducted him.

"Yes," said the doctor.

"Then," said Douglas, "if you will excuse my unkempt appearance I will not use any of that precious liquid. We may need it on our journey. It is not easy just now to obtain even a cup of cold water."

"You come from Peking, Douglas," said Dr. Gilmour. "How did you leave Mrs. Gilmour?"

"As well as usual, but very anxious about you all."

"What is the state of affairs in Peking?" asked the doctor.

"They look ominous. Kwang Su is powerless, and the Empress Dowager appears to be favorable to the Boxers. At any rate, she is not restraining them. The Boxer movement is advancing nearer and nearer the capital."

"Why did you leave Mrs. Gilmour and Paul, Douglas?" said the doctor, reproachfully. "I would feel safer if I knew you were with them."

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"That last sentence is exactly what Mrs. Gilmour said when she sent me," said Douglas smiling. "She would have come herself if I had not. I think no harm will befall her and Paul. I ran over to Major Conger, and he promised to defend them under the American authority if there was need. The safest place in China now is by the Legations. Even if the worst happened, the Empress Dowager is too astute and too well-versed in international etiquette to injure the ambassadors of foreign countries or their followers."

"You haven't unraveled the mystery of your knowledge of our whereabouts, Dr. Medhurst," suggested Ray.

"To go a long way back, I was detained in Honan by the prostration of a young Englishman of our party, the unfortunate younger son of a titled aristocrat. He had been fed out of a silver spoon all his days, knew nothing whatever of hardships, and, as any one might have foretold, succumbed to toilsome journeys and bad water. The others had to go on, so I stayed to nurse the boy. Just as he was getting better, he heard that the surveyors were near Taiyuan, so he wilfully started to join them, taking a native servant, who worships his shadow, with him. I went to Shanghai

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and sailed to Peking. When I got there, Mrs. Gilmour had your letter. That was the first I knew of your absence and Mr. Andersen's death and Miss Gilmour's illness."

"How long ago is that, Douglas?" asked the doctor.

"Four days. I set out the next morning."

"How did you come from Paoting?"

"I rode a shambling donkey the first day—after that I walked. It was much the quickest way and time was precious."

"You walked, Dr. Medhurst?" said Ray in astonishment. "If you had had wings you couldn't have come faster."

"The thought of your danger was wings enough," he said. She shrank under the burning meaning she saw in his deep-set gray eyes, and he would have given much if he could have recalled his words.

"Did you go to Cheng-pai's home?" asked the doctor of Douglas.

"No! I saw Cheng-pai at Si-chu. When our survey party passed through the town a couple of months ago, I removed a growth from the eyes of a yamen servant called Tung. The man seemed grateful, and though I hated to trade, as it were, on his gratitude, necessity compelled me to find out whether his master

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were friendly to foreigners, as our safety in passing through the district under his jurisdiction depended upon his attitude. The saddest thing about being a refugee at this time is, that we cannot ask a kindness from any one without exposing those who aid us to the very misery we ourselves are trying to escape. I can't say that Tung was rapturously glad to see me. He admitted me with fear and trembling, and was manifestly uneasy during my brief stay. Tung is a Christian, he says, but he fears to confess his faith openly lest he should lose his position and ultimately his head. He is an only son, and his parents and family are dependent upon his earnings. Duty is not always a clearly-defined course when our lives are involved with others. He is a good creature, for he took me into his inner room and showed me Cheng-pai, whom he was sheltering at his peril. Our brave little graduate was lying on the floor, unable to move. He had been seized by a mob and dragged to the temple. Because he would not burn incense before the idol, they gave him a beating with bamboo rods. It was pitiful," said Douglas, shading his face with his hands, "the inhumanity of Chinese punishments lies on me like a weight. What I can do to miti-

The Cave

gate their atrocity seems as efficacious as trying to beat down the Great Wall with puny blows from my fist. Pardon me, Miss Gilmour," he continued, seeing her white face (he seemed to note every expression of it), "I should not talk of these things in your presence."

"Go on," she said, "I would be faint-hearted if I could not bear even to hear what poor Cheng-pai has been compelled to experience."

"He forgot his aches when he saw me, in his delight that he could send you word of his errand. He found two mule-drivers who would be willing to take you over the mountain in consideration of a good round sum—about ten times the usual fare—but they had already made an engagement for the day, which bribes could not make them break, and they could not be back at Si-chu until to-night. They returned to the village while I was there. Their mules were completely fagged out and could not go farther without a rest. The muleteer whom Tung brought to me seemed a trustworthy man, and vowed by the memory of Confucius and whatever else he held dear, that he would be here by three in the morning. I tried to do what I could to ease Cheng-pai before I came away."

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"Perhaps he did not suffer as much as you thought," said Dr. Gilmour. "You know how obtuse the Chinese nervous system is and how they will undergo operations, without wincing, that no European or American could stand without chloroform."

"Cheng-pai said this was very severe," answered Douglas. "It seemed to him the beating lasted for days, the agony was so intense."

"Have you seen Sai Na, Dr. Medhurst?" asked Elsie.

"No, Cheng-pai asked me not to expose her to danger by going near them, even to tell about his welfare. He explained accurately where you were, and gave me some undertoned lessons in the art of whistling the signal."

"What kind of weather is it outside, Douglas?" asked the doctor. "Sounds are all deadened to us here."

"It is as dark as a black cat, and wind enough to raise a duststorm."

To their surprise Dr. Medhurst's head dropped on his bosom and his eyes closed.

"Douglas! Douglas! what is the matter?" said Dr. Gilmour. "Bring the light, Ray."

Douglas roused himself with difficulty.

"Pardon me," he said drowsily. "It is some

The Cave

time since I have had a sleep. I believe I was overcome."

"Poor fellow!" said Dr. Gilmour, "we ought to have remembered that you have walked day and night since you left Paoting."

"I don't need any sympathy," said Douglas. "Let me see, it is eleven now. I can get a few hours' rest before the litters come, and then 'MacGregor will be himself again.'"

"How thoughtless we have been!" said Ray, while she and Elsie hastily arranged some comforters.

"You limp," said Dr. Gilmour, as Douglas crossed the cave towards the bundles he had brought with him.

"It's nothing! merely an inglorious blister or two," he said lightly.

"Your shoes are worn off your feet, Douglas."

"They are in rather a bad plight, that's a fact," said Douglas, looking down ruefully. "But I have others with me for the return trip."

Overtaxed Nature was asserting her sway again over Douglas, and his voice shaded off into a dozy whisper.

Dr. Gilmour led him to the bed, and in an instant he was in a deep slumber. It occurred dreamily to him as he closed his eyes that he

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would have gone to sleep if the cave had been full of dynamite, and some one was just lighting a fuse to it.

In covering Douglas, Dr. Gilmour's eyes met a sight that stirred his pity. The soles of Dr. Medhurst's feet were bare and inflamed with cuts and blisters, which were disfigured by the yellow soil of the region. The lower parts of his shoes and stockings had worn out, and the uppers hung fastened around his ankles.

"Ray and Elsie, bring water and what white rags you can find, and come here."

A great compassion moved in Ray's heart when she saw the bruised, bleeding feet of the worn-out giant. She began to understand something of the great love of this powerful man who braved dangers and was indifferent to his own sufferings, for her sake. "And I have laughed at his attitudes and cared nothing for the pain I have given him," she said to herself in condemnation. "Paul is right; I don't recognize a man when I see one. It is only a carpet-knight who finds favor in my eyes."

As for Douglas, he was unconscious alike of Ray's feeling and the doctor's binding up of his wounds. Sleep had laid a heavy hand on his faculties.

CHAPTER VIII

THE RESCUE OF SAI NA

"You look heavy-eyed," said Dr. Gilmour to Ray and Elsie. "I wish you would lie down and rest until the litters come. It will help to brace you for the journey."

They were wearied with the monotony of the long day and gladly obeyed.

Dr. Gilmour packed everything but the bedding, and listened feverishly for the sound of any approach. None came. He cautiously moved the stone away and gazed out into the night. The wind was blowing and it was very dark. Some dust sifted on his hand as he held it against the breeze. Tired of inaction, he ventured out into the darkness. Perhaps the mule-drivers had missed finding that obscure spot. The road was too narrow for the litters to pass him without his notice, and he ran no risk, for, even if he met any one, nobody would recognize him in that thick gloom. He took the path to the village, feeling his way by means of the cliff which formed an upright wall along the highway. He had walked some

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distance when a sudden light shot up into the sky. He paused to watch it until it became a lurid glare. Turning a corner abruptly he beheld the leaping flames. The truth flashed upon him. It was the mission compound. Conflicting thoughts darted through his mind. Where was Sai Na? He had promised to aid her if she were defenseless—and Cheng-pai was this moment suffering cruelly because he had tried to befriend him. With a prayer on his lips for Ray's safety he dashed forward.

He felt some one pull his sleeve as he came within the arena lighted by the blazing house. It was Lung Te, Elsie's cook. He was quivering like an aspen.

"What has happened yonder?" said the doctor, pointing to the fire.

"The Boxers came—six of them. I was there and saw them. I watched from a hole in the wall."

"The family," said the doctor, impatiently, "where are they?"

"All spirits, except Sai Na. The men at the compound put the women and the little boy into the inner room and fought before the door as long as they could, but the Boxers were too many, and their knives were sharp. The old woman fell on her knees and cried for mercy,

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but they would not listen. They told Sai Na she had been sheltering foreign devils and asked where they were now. She would not tell, so they——" he pulled out his tongue and struck it off with an expressive gesture.

Dr. Gilmore sickened, but the youth, though shaking, went on stolidly with his recital.

"The Boxers took her out, tied her ankles and buried her up to the waist, in the courtyard. Then they killed the boy before her eyes, and put him in her arms. She is there now."

"Take me to her," said the doctor. "Quick! don't waste a minute."

"I dare not," answered Lung Te. "I am not brave. If you had seen them——"

But the doctor was already speeding up the street. Not a soul was visible, for the terror of the slayers made the inhabitants hide within doors. The mutilated bodies had been thrown in the flames, and the smell of burning flesh polluted the air.

As he drew nearer he saw six men disputing angrily in the street in front of the compound. They had dragged the furnishings of the house outside, and were quarreling over its apportionment. The flaring blaze illuminated their hideous faces and dripping knives. Turning

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up the passage by the side of the compound, and leaping a low wall, Dr. Gilmour came upon Sai Na, buried to the waist, as Lung Te had said—and oh! the pathos of it!—clasping the sturdy, rounded little body of the dead Graham in her arms.

The doctor's heart beat with indignation and pity, as at a glance his eyes took in every detail. The brick wall completely hid the Boxers from his view. The wind blew towards Sai Na, and already the advancing flames were reddening her scarred face, showing the ominous stains about the mouth. Thrown down beside her was the shovel they had used to dig the hole in which she stood. Dr. Gilmour picked it up and delved into the light soil with a grim, desperate earnestness to set her free. She gave him a look of gratitude, but, pointing in the direction of the Boxers' voices, waved him away. With quick, unerring strokes he dug and dug, through what seemed to him hours, but was in reality only a few minutes. The breath of the fire was hot upon him, and he reeked with perspiration.

Sai Na was unearthed at last. He drew her up out of the pit just as a yell from the Boxers, "Kill! Kill! Kill!" announced that they had seen him. With a stroke of his pocket

The Rescue of Sai Na

knife he cut the cords around her ankles. She was stiff, so he waited to help her over the low wall.

"Run for your life," he shouted, and Sai Na disappeared, still holding the lifeless baby form.

Dr. Gilmour sprang again into the narrow passage. His pursuers were almost upon him. He could see the flash of their steel in the saffron light. Dashing into the street he nourished the hope that he might outdistance them yet, for he had been a good runner in his younger days. He was steadily gaining in the race, but he was on the road towards the cave, and the thought that, as soon as he was away from the light of the burning building, he must turn aside and screen himself in the dark was distinctly present with him. Otherwise he would lead the Boxers straight to Ray's hiding-place. A dark alley was at his left, and he entered it, hoping to find an egress at the other end and escape through the fields. He ran heavily against a mud wall. Exhausted and panting, he could not climb it. The Boxers were on three sides of him. He would sell his life dearly, anyway, so, placing his back against the wall, he fought bravely, parrying the strokes with what skill he could in the darkness. It was an unequal match of

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six to one, and Dr. Gilmour was overpowered and fell. The Boxers thrust their knives blindly into the prostrate body and hurried back again to the booty before the site of the mission compound.

CHAPTER IX

"OF WHOM THE WORLD WAS NOT WORTHY"

About half an hour after this the sleeping inmates of the cave were roused by a rude imitation of Cheng-pai's signal.

Douglas was alert in a moment.

"Where is Dr. Gilmour?" he asked of Ray.

"I do not know," she said. "He was here when I lay down." She trimmed the light and looked at her watch. "That was about two hours ago."

Dr. Medhurst rolled back the stone and admitted Lung Te.

"Is Dr. Gilmour not with you?" asked Elsie.

"He is as good as dead," said Lung Te.

Ray looked like one who has received a severe hurt, but is not yet aware how severe.

Dr. Medhurst raised a threatening finger towards Lung Te and said,

"Miss Gilmour, let me go outside with Lung Te and find out what he knows.

But Ray was firm.

"I will not faint," she said, "and I must hear for myself everything he has to tell."

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"Begin, then, Lung Te," said Douglas, "but be brief."

Lung Te had not learned to be brief, but he related in his slow Beotian way, interrupted by impatient questions from his listeners, what he knew of Dr. Gilmour's adventures of the past hour.

"How did you find out?" asked Douglas.

"I saw the teacher when he was going towards the fire, and I waited in the shadows across the street until he came running out again with the Boxers behind him. When they left him I went into the alley and felt his body. He moaned, so——" said Lung Te, simulating the sound of a man who was in great pain.

"Dr. Medhurst, you will not leave him there?" said Ray. "You will go for him? Never mind us," she added, as he glanced at the women, "think of him lying uncared for out under the sky."

"Will you take me to him, Lung Te?" asked Douglas.

"What will you give me?" said the man evasively.

"These taels of silver," said Douglas eagerly.

"I must have more," answered Lung Te coolly.

"Of Whom the World Was Not Worthy"

"Here is more, then. Only be quick."

"I will consider your offer," said Lung Te, as if there were three hundred and sixty-five days in which to make up his mind.

"Great God!" said Ray, "to think that a man could haggle at a time like this! Offer him all we have, Douglas; make haste."

"See, Lung Te!" said Douglas, sternly (nothing is so exasperating to Occidentals as Chinese slowness in great crises), "here are seven taels of silver, not a cash extra will you get for your information, and if you delay a minute longer you shall have no part of these. Choose!"

Douglas looked threatening, and Lung Te thought it wise to compromise.

"Give them to me, then," he said sullenly.

"Nothing of the kind," said Douglas, with a coolness that matched Lung Te's. "I shall carry them myself, and when I see Dr. Gilmour, and only then, will I deliver them up to you."

"He was always avaricious," said Elsie, as Lung Te gave evidence of a sulky compliance.

Douglas had taken a new pair of boots from his bundle and was tying up bandages and medicine.

"Let me go with you, Dr. Medhurst," said

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Ray. "I can't stay here and wait, I shall go crazy."

Feverish spots glowed on her cheeks, and her eyes were glitteringly bright.

"That would retard my speed and divide my attention, Miss Gilmour. You will help most by waiting here and being controlled."

There was a strength about him which quieted her.

"Can you carry him alone? No one will help a foreigner now," she added bitterly.

"I think I can bring him. When I was in training I could lift heavy weights with ease. You will find lint and bandages in my knapsack. If you and Mrs. Andersen will get them ready while I am gone it will be doing Dr. Gilmour a service." He wished Ray to do something to divert her dry-eyed grief.

Elsie spoke commonplace, well-meant words of sympathy when she and Ray were alone together, to which Ray answered irritably. She could not brook that any one should intrude upon her sorrow. After their little preparations had been made she knelt down beside the door, waiting for the first intimation of Douglas' return. No sentence framed itself in her thoughts, yet she prayed with a dumb intensity.

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The stone moved at last, and Douglas entered with Dr. Gilmour on his back, his mighty frame bent almost double beneath his seemingly inanimate burden.

"He still lives, I think," said Douglas. "He groaned when I lifted him."

He laid Dr. Gilmour gently on the shawls. He had bound up some gashes by guesswork in the dark, but now he examined them closely. The doctor was sorely wounded. His noble head, with its clear-cut features, was untouched, but on his body and arms there were unsightly cuts.

The supply of water was scanty, and had to be used with precaution. Neither Ray nor Elsie faltered in waiting upon Douglas as he did his surgeon's work. Elsie had had experience as a nurse, and Ray was absorbed by Dr. Medhurst's words that her father was yet alive.

She shivered before the awful stillness of death where no voice could reach. If only he were not beyond the power of hearing her, if he might speak to her again; if she could ask his forgiveness for the times when she had been wilful and inconsiderate (and those times flashed upon her now), all else seemed tolerable.

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"Do you think the litters will be here to-night?" asked Elsie of Dr. Medhurst.

"I fear not," he said. "But it would be death to Dr. Gilmour to move him now, even if we had the opportunity."

"It will be death to Blossom if we stay," said Elsie, her rich-tinted, beautiful face quivering in the effort to suppress tears.

Dr. Gilmour was not dead. With returning signs of life there came fever and deliriousness. He enacted again and again, in imagination, the rescue of Sai Na.

Ray would not leave her father's bedside an instant. She cared for nothing, saw nothing, but him. One hope possessed her—that he would recognize her, speak her name again. He fell asleep towards morning, and when he awoke he was conscious.

"Father! Father!" said Ray, bending over. "Do you know me? Say just one word to me!"

His faculties were slow in collecting themselves. It was a long time before he recalled what had happened, then he asked faintly:

"How did I come here, Ray?"

"Dr. Medhurst brought you."

He lay with closed eyes for a while longer, then he whispered:

"Douglas, did the litters come?"

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"No, Dr. Gilmour, I cannot tell why they were delayed," said Douglas.

"My wounds are mortal, Douglas?" said the doctor in a tone of conviction, "tell me plainly."

"I can only hope not," Douglas answered.

His voice was as gentle as a woman's.

"I knew it was so, but I wanted your confirmation," answered Dr. Gilmour calmly.

"Ray, my child, come nearer to me. I shall never see your mother again. I would like to send her a message before my strength ebbs away."

"Do not speak so, father," said Ray, with the hot tears running down her cheeks. "You will be well again, and take your own message to her."

"No, Ray. It is not to be. My course is run. And it is all right—all as it should be."

"Douglas, I know by my feelings that you have been giving me morphine. I would rather bear the pain than take any more. I need my faculties clear now—will you write for me, Ray?"

"Oh! father, I cannot," said Ray. "Dr. Medhurst will do it." She lifted the pillows on which her father's head lay into her lap, and softly stroked the broad brow shaded by the abundant white hair.

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Elsie moistened the parched lips and performed the little services which her trained eye detected almost before the patient was aware of their need.

Dr. Gilmour dictated slowly:—

MY DEAREST:

Up here in the mountains I am awaiting death. You remember how we always hoped we would die together. One whose wisdom exceeds ours has planned differently. For your sake, darling, I covet life; for my own I welcome the summons home.

If I could have seen you once more, have died with my hand in yours—I long for you with a hungry, passionate longing.

Do not think of me as being rash, Mary, in going to Sai Na. If it were to do again and I could foresee the consequences, I would have to do as I did. There come times when it seems as if, in order to keep one's self-respect, one must act without calculating the results. And, after all, how can a man die better than in doing what looks to him like his duty? My death is not premature. It is God's own time and way. Rest assured the lives of God's children are not forfeited by accident at this time. It is a necessary part of his design for China's salvation.

You will help to train Paul to resume his father's work in China. I would not trammel his will, nor bind him to an unloved task. But in the light of death we sometimes see clear-eyed into the future; and a subtle consciousness tells me that in time Paul will take up the duties which are now slipping from my hands. He will do what I was not able to. The Chinese lan-

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guage has always been a snare to me, and I was so busy all day and so weary at night that I could not keep up with the new scientific discoveries. I have felt for the last few years that I was growing old and sluggish. It needs youth to maintain enthusiasm working against such odds.

You know where my papers are, darling. I would there were more money to leave you.

All the love of years seems crowded into these hours. Death will not separate us, beloved. It cannot. Love like ours is eternal. God forgive me, but it appears as if heaven itself will not be wholly heaven to me until you come.

And now, Mary, best beloved, farewell. There never was a day since God first gave you to me that I did not wonder at his lovingkindness in bestowing such a treasure into my unworthy hands. And no night has ever passed over my head that I did not thank him for you, my gift of gifts.

Farewell, farewell, darling, until God reunite us.

Yours in eternity,

GRAHAM GILMOUR.

There was silence among the little group, broken only by Ray's sobs. Her burning tears fell on her father's forehead as she bent over him. He kissed her hand when she wiped them away.

"If you are not tired, Douglas, I would like to send a message to Paul, too." The deep voice was growing fainter.

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MY DEAR PAUL:

My thoughts reach out in longing towards you. I had hoped to watch you grow from boyhood to manhood, but God's ways are best.

You are my only son. I leave your mother to your care as a sacred trust.

So many things that I would like to say to you crowd in upon my mind in this supreme hour that I find it difficult to choose. I covet for you a stainless life. To be manly, you must cherish three virtues—bravery, courtesy and honor. You have a perfect ideal in these things—the strong Son of God. He was the most fearless of all men, with the truest kind of courage—the courage to do the right with a full realization of the cost. He was courteous with that heart-courtesy which drew out the best that was in men and women, and which made them leave his presence with an increase of self-respect and a hungering after a nobler life. And no sense of honor was so true as his, both in guarding his own life from sin, and in his intercourse with others.

I have made many mistakes in my attempts to imitate him. You, Paul, will succeed where I have failed.

Good night, laddie. May God bless you throughout your whole life.

Your father,

GRAHAM GILMOUR.

"Oh! father! you must not die," said Ray. "I need you. I cannot be good without you."

"Poor girlie! poor girlie!" he said in a caressing tone.

The supply of water was nearly exhausted.

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Dr. Gilmour and Blossom were both feverish, and the others denied themselves that the sick ones might not be stinted

"Douglas," said Dr. Gilmour, "how long you may be immured here I do not know. If no help comes before to-night you will have to try and obtain water from the well at the end of the village. It is on the left hand side after the first turn. But don't, I beseech of you, venture out before it is dark."

He lay back wearily, unable to suppress the moans of pain.

After a pause he said, "Douglas, you have always been faithful and true. I want to ask one more proof of your loyalty. Lay your hand in mine. We have been friends for six years. Promise me that until you bring Ray to her mother in Peking, you will guard her as I would have done."

"So long as I have life, I will protect her," said Douglas solemnly, as if he were making a vow.

When he looked up, Ray's face was suffused with crimson.

"Now I can die content," said the doctor, closing his eyes.

He fell into a broken slumber, which lasted for hours. The misery-laden day dragged

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itself to a close. Blossom was heavy-eyed and fretful. Many schemes for their release revolved through Douglas' mind, but none of them seemed feasible. Towards evening Dr. Gilmour was weakened still further by a hemorrhage.

Douglas grew more and more disquieted as the supply of water diminished. Several times he cautiously rolled back the stone to ascertain if it were not dark enough to go abroad without being seen. On one of these weary reconnoiters he descried the outline of a man close to the mouth of the cave. He was just debating within himself what course to pursue towards the lurking shadow when he heard a hoarse—

"Let me come in."

It was undeniably Lung Te's harsh voice. When he was admitted he looked fearfully about him and began,

"The Boxers——"

"Hush!" said Dr. Medhurst, motioning towards the sick man.

But Dr. Gilmour had heard.

"Bring Lung Te nearer, Douglas," he said, "that I may hear what he has to tell. He has done us good service before."

"The Boxers have found out where you are,

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and they will be here in a little while to kill you," said Lung Te.

"Who told you this?" asked Elsie.

"I heard them say so myself," said Lung Te. "They entered our house this afternoon and threatened to murder us all if I did not tell where you were hid. I had to 'eat loss' because of you. They took all my money from me, because I had earned it working for 'foreign devils.'"

"And you revealed our hiding-place," said Elsie, with her calm, beautiful face alight with scorn.

"Would I let my father and mother die?" said Lung Te with emphasis.

"Your first duty was to them," said Dr. Gilmour. "He owes nothing to us, Elsie, in comparison with filial affection."

Douglas put three taels of silver in Lung Te's hand. "Take this for coming to warn us," he said. "It is our thanks in the form you understand best. I could have spared more if you had been less exorbitant in your charges last time. And now if you wish to go you will leave at once, for I intend to barricade the doorway of the cave and hold out as long as I can."

The young man shook his head. "It will be

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no use. There are many of them in the village. Set out for Si-chu. I will go as your servant, if you pay me. My brother will not keep me at home, because I bring trouble upon them. I can show you the way."

He was a cowardly fellow, and perhaps he thought Dr. Medhurst would be a good body-guard, for he looked, as he made this proposition, with a certain admiration at the doctor's dimensions.

Dr. Gilmour became suddenly animated. "Listen to me, Douglas," he said in a tone so clear that it made his hearers start. "It is madness to attempt to stay here, even if you could defend the entrance, and that is doubtful, for you have nothing to do it with. There is no food or water here to stand a siege. You must take Ray and Elsie and Blossom and flee to Si-chu with the utmost haste. It may be that you can get mule-litters there to proceed."

"My friend——" said Douglas, bending down over him.

"Do not waste a moment over me, Douglas. You must leave me here. I have but a very short time to live, and if the Boxers come they can only cut my sufferings short—surely a kindness I need not dread."

"Leave you here defenseless!" said Douglas.

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"What have I ever done that you should impute such a thing to me? The veriest pagan could do no worse. I will resist the enemy as long as I have a drop of blood in my body."

Douglas spoke hotly, for his impetuous nature was stirred.

"You are a noble fellow, Douglas. It is something to be able to call such an one a friend. But you think only of me. Ray and Elsie must be saved."

"Let me carry you as I did before," said Douglas. "I am strong."

"How fast could you proceed with such a dead weight as I would be? The Boxers would soon overtake you."

"Father! do you think I would go and leave you?" said Ray reproachfully. "I'm not afraid to die, and what place could be fitter than by your side?"

"Ray," said her father, "do you love only me? Have you forgotten the little mother in Peking? Would you rob her of husband and child in one day? You know how ardent her nature is. Think how she would wear herself out in the long agony of a sickening suspense—waiting and waiting for long-delayed news, and hearing only the worst at last. You must go to her and comfort her with tidings of me."

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"Go to her! and tell her I ran away and left you here to the mercy of the Boxers? Oh, father! how could I? You don't know what you are asking."

"Douglas and Ray, listen! I have, at the most, but an hour or two to live. Do not shake your head, Ray. I have been a physician too long to be mistaken. You see it plainly enough, Douglas, though you are not willing to admit it. See!" he said, raising his hand to his forehead, "the death-sweat is on my brow. If you stay here, four precious lives will be lost, needlessly sacrificed—and to what end? Merely that you might remain with me for an hour of flickering consciousness. Four lives of fresh youth for one hour of my ebbing pulses. You see the folly of it, surely. Do not linger. Every moment you dally makes the danger more imminent."

"Father," said Ray, "Dr. Medhurst and Elsie and Blossom shall go—but you and I, we will live or die together."

"Ray, my darling, be reasonable. There never was a day since I married your mother that I would not have undergone any pain to have saved her one heart-pang. Surely your love for her will stand this test, too. I beseech of you, by all your childhood memories

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of your mother's care, that you will not delay to go to her now."

Lung Te was impatient. He did not understand the scene.

"I cannot wait for the honor of your commands any longer," he said, "we will be caught."

Elsie watched the dialogue with bated breath, though she said nothing. She was not given to much speaking at any time, and she saw more clearly than the others that Dr. Gil-mour's plan was the only practicable one. Not that she did not entertain a calm affection for her uncle; and in other circumstances she would have cared for him in his illness devotedly; but she was not intense in any of her feelings except her attachment to her beautiful child.

"Ray," said her father, in an agony of earnestness, "I entreat you, command you, by whatever allegiance you owe to a dying father's behests that you procrastinate no further."

"I would obey you, father, but the Boxers—who knows what torture their malice may invent?"

"Their worst is done for me. I am beyond the power of their bitterness. But what might

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they not do to you and the others? Douglas, if you have compassion for me and mine, make ready and go. In the name of God, think on Sai Na and her sufferings, and, before it is too late, spare Ray and Elsie such a fate."

And Douglas, recognizing sorrowfully that it was the only way to save the women from what he shuddered to think of, began, with Elsie, to hurriedly bundle their belongings together.

Ray's features quivered with emotion. "Father," she said, "you have demanded so great a thing of me that I can scarcely obey. I never loved you so much as now. I would gladly give my life to save yours, and yet, at your wish, I will leave you and go to mother. But, oh! it is hard. Best and dearest of fathers—good-bye." She sobbed in her grief.

Elsie was somewhat moved as she bade her uncle farewell, but she was thinking more of her danger than of his. Blossom patted his cheek with her hands as she kissed him.

At the last Douglas came. The two men looked into one another's faces with a long, silent adieu. In Dr. Gilmour's eyes there was confidence; in Dr. Medhurst's an ingenuousness which might well inspire trust.

Very few women had loved Douglas, but

"Of Whom the World Was Not Worthy"

among his own sex he had enjoyed, more than falls to the common lot, those rare friendships which strong men feel for one another.

"On your way homewards, Douglas, telegraph, when you can, to Mrs. Gilmour. Do not sign the message and say nothing of me. It is best she should not know until you see her."

The excitement, which had lent a momentary strength to Dr. Gilmour, subsided, and he lay back, unable to speak.

So it came to pass that Dr. Gilmour died alone, as many brave men before him have died at the close of life's battle, with no womanly hand near to soothe the pangs of the last moments. Yet he was not alone, for One was there whose love surpasses that of women, and the dismal, dank cave was luminous with his presence.

CHAPTER X

THE MOB

Douglas took Ray's hand and led her out, for she was blind with tears. Now that the surrender of her will had been made she was sorrowfully passive. It was dark, the road was so narrow that they had to keep close to the rocky side of the cliff, the stones bruised her feet, in spite of Douglas' care, but she was conscious of neither pain nor fatigue. She was with her father again, calling up a thousand half-forgotten incidents of the past, suffering with his loneliness.

In her sharp mental strain it was a relief to her to walk and walk and walk (she felt as if she could proceed forever if it would take away rankling memories), until at last the needs of her spent body forced themselves upon her notice. There was no speech between the members of the little squad; they were occupied with "thoughts which lay too deep for tears."

Elsie carried Blossom without finding the weight burdensome. She was formed on a

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generous scale, which endowed her with both strength and beauty.

It was in the beginning of the gray morning when they descried the high stone wall with the gateway in the center, which, embellished with the gaily-painted figure of the dragon, wards off the evil spirits who have malicious intent upon the peace of Si-chu. The town is built against the side of a hill, with the houses of rough stone, terraced one above another.

"I think it would be well for us to rest outside the walls while we send Lung Te to Tung that he may advise us what to do," said Douglas. "Perhaps he could send litters out to us here."

Beside the road, near to the wall, was a large pile of dun-colored brick, and behind this they sheltered themselves in order to escape observation while Lung Te went on his errand.

"Dr. Medhurst," said Ray, speaking with slow emphasis, "I cannot go on, I must return to father. It is right that you and Mrs. Andersen should try to get to Peking, but I'd rather be hacked into little bits by the Boxers than undergo another hour such as I have just passed through."

"It has been a grievous experience," he answered with a sigh that roused her to recog-

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nize that she was not the only one who found it lacerating. "But if you choose to return I will accompany you."

"No, no, that is just the point to which I want you to consent," said Ray hastily. "I can't sacrifice you."

"And I can't leave you defenseless; even if my inclinations would agree to do it (and they never would), there is my promise to your father."

"I would tell him that I made you yield to me. Think of his suffering there alone."

Elsie appeared anxious and impatient. Was there another conflict at hand? Why was Ray so fickle when they had acted in the only wise way?

"If you went to uncle, Ray," she said, "he would not be glad that you had come. It would increase his sufferings, not alleviate them. He told you his wishes plainly. You will show your love most by obedience to them. You think only of yourself. Auntie and Dr. Medhurst and Blossom have claims, too."

Ray was convinced, but not being patient, a retort rose to her lips. It was silenced by other and sadder thoughts which crowded in upon her.

The Mob

"Miss Gilmour," said Dr. Medhurst, "I have been thinking if we offered Lung Te a liberal reward he might go back to the cave and bring us tidings."

"Yes," she said eagerly, "anything is better than this suspense. Dr. Medhurst," she continued, lifting her heavy eyes to his, "the most bitter drop in my cup is that when father was alive I did not appreciate him as I ought. I used to wish he were more brilliant, more dashing, a greater student. Now I wouldn't change one feature of his character. I am prouder of him and of having had such a man as my father than if he had had the wealth of the Rothschilds. Why didn't I understand him better when he was with me, that I might have told him how I revered him? Why is it that death reveals our beloved to us better than life? If he only knew that at the last I see him as he is—the stainless knight, the true Sir Galahad—my remorse would be less poignant."

"Your grief makes you exaggerate your want of appreciation," said Douglas. "He knew you loved him. He was so modest that he would have been surprised had he thought he wore a halo in any one's eyes. He told me once what a disappointment it was to him when, as a young man, he discovered the limitations of

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his ability. He had dreamed, as most of us do in early life, of making a name for himself, and was compelled, as most of us are, to understand what it means to be of consequence in a very small corner."

Lung Te interrupted the conversation by returning, carrying bowls of millet and bottles of boiled water, which Tung had provided.

"The Magistrate is on the watch for foreigners, so Tung dare not do as he likes," explained Lung Te. "He said you were to pass through the town without seeing him or Cheng-pai. If you will pay me now for my bitterness in serving you I will no longer be entrusted with the honor of your commands."

"Lung Te," said Douglas, "you have been useful to us and are fond of money. If you will faithfully perform one more duty, we will, if we arrive at Peking, give you one hundred taels of silver, enough to buy yourself a piece of land and build a house."

Lung Te's eyes sparkled.

"We want news of Dr. Gilmour, and if you go back to the cave and bring us word of exactly what has happened—no lying, remember, if you want pay—and then come with us to Peking, the money will be yours."

"But if you are killed?" questioned Lung Te.

The Mob

"You will have to accept the risk of that," answered Dr. Medhurst.

"Mother would pay him," interjected Ray.

"We have not much ready money," said Douglas, "but here are four taels for the expenses of your journey. Overtake us, if possible."

Lung Te grasped the silver and started.

They were on a public roadside—the main thoroughfare from Taiyuan to Paoting. Streams of traffic passed unceasingly—yellow, long-necked camels, mules and ponies, carts and wheelbarrows and litters in never-ending file—carrying goods or people to the interior, or from the interior to Peking. Travel begins in China with the earliest sunrise. The public gaze could not be avoided as they placed themselves in the awkward conveyances. Douglas saw that some equestrians riding by on their mules watched them with unfeigned curiosity and made free comments on the habits and appearance of the "foreign devils." They drew the curtains tightly together and completely screened themselves from outward view. All appeared so tranquil on leaving Si-chu, and they had been so overtaxed, that, lulled by the swaying motion of the vehicles, they soon fell asleep.

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It was noon when Douglas was awakened by the hoarse roar and sullen voices of a mob. In an instant there came a shower of stones, brick, clubs and mud. Douglas leaped out and fought his way a few feet ahead through the mass to where the women were. The crowd instinctively swayed back before this brawny man. Douglas wrung a club from the hand of the nearest insurgent, and stood upon the shafts of the women's litter. The mob was on both sides.

"Throw out the comforters, the pillows, the medicine case, everything," said Douglas.

Ray did as she was bidden. Elsie was engaged with Blossom, who was sobbing her little heart out in terror. The crowd trod each other down in their effort to gain possession of the sacrificed articles.

Douglas' strokes were none the less sure because he was passionately excited. A blow from the back shivered his club in his hands. At that moment a huge ruffian, seeing the glitter of a gold ring on Ray's hand, seized her finger and lifted his sword to cut it off. Douglas knocked the sword aside with a force that left his knuckles bleeding, snatched off the ring, and sent it down in the mud at the man's feet. Even in that terrible moment Ray felt

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a pang. It was Frank's engagement ring, and she had meant to wear it always.

Their only hope now lay in the avaricious qualities of the myrmidons. The silver and some cash were still left. Douglas flung it to left and right among the people, as far from him as he could. As he had calculated, the rabble groped after it.

An unexpected turn was given to the event, as down the street marched an armed phalanx.

"The soldiers from the yamen," was echoed from many throats, and the throng began to melt away.

The leader rode up to Douglas, expressing his regret at the plight to which he had been reduced, explained that he had been sent by the Magistrate, and politely offered to conduct him to the yamen.

The litters were pieced up and placed in the center of the squadron, and so escorted they entered the yamen gate, flanked by two stone lions with insipid countenances.

Douglas was shown to one apartment and the women to another. Water and a delicate meal of pickled duck's eggs, lotus stems and buds, bamboo sprouts, sharks' fins and chicken was brought.

After refreshment Douglas determined to

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bespeak an audience with this kindly-disposed official and get an escort for further journeying. When he attempted to open the door, it was locked. He tried the windows—they were barred. This was what the deathly quiet meant. He was a prisoner! He called through the door, through the windows, but only the hollow mocking echo of his own voice answered. Then he tried to break his way out, but what can a man do unarmed by beating against solid stone walls? How he chafed and raved and thought on Ray's helplessness! By his own simplicity he had been trapped into separation from her, and had walked open-eyed into his cell. He told himself fiercely that, dearly as he loved Ray, he would have killed her with his own hands rather than have permitted her to fall into the clutches of these torturing, pitiless ruffians. When he grew quieter, he betook himself to the resource of all devout souls in their extremity, namely, to prayer.

CHAPTER XI

WITH HUNG CHUAN

Three hours after, he heard the tread of feet in the passage. A guard of four men, armed with Mauser rifles, came to lead him out. He was to have the honor of a conference with their master, he was informed. The soldiers marched him into a large audience-chamber, with a row of servants drawn up on one side, and placed him at the extreme right of the Mandarin.

The man of the West stood fronting the man of the East. They were typical specimens of nationality—Douglas Medhurst, thin and sinewy, with keen, shrewd eyes, and something in his bearing which indicated a determination to wring success even out of his present adverse circumstances. Hung Chuan, flexible and graceful, with outstanding cheek bones and a naturally broad forehead, accentuated by shaving the hair backwards, while around his somewhat thick lips there was an expression of tenacity. A long robe of brown silk, whose only ornament was an embroidered square at

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the back and front, enveloped him from head to foot, and the ample sleeves completely hid his hands. Both possessed a quick insight into character, and each recognized the other's claim to respect.

"For there is neither East nor West, border nor breed,
nor birth,
When two strong men stand face to face, though they
come from the ends of the earth."

Dr. Medhurst, knowing the scorn a lack of acquaintance of ceremonial etiquette aroused in a Chinese breast, determined, in so far as he knew, to conduct himself with "propriety."

"What is your honorable surname?" began Hung.

"My mean, insignificant name is Medhurst."

"What is your honorable kingdom?"

"The petty district from which I come is the United States of America."

"Is the honorable man of your household living?"

"Alas! he is not," answered Dr. Medhurst.

"May I ask your honorable age?"

"Your unworthy servant has profitlessly passed thirty-two years."

"Your years are long and betoken great ability," said Hung sarcastically.

"I have pleasure in meeting you," said Doug-

With Hung Chuan

las, "and I avail myself of the occasion to present my respects to your excellence."

"I acknowledge your consideration," answered Hung with indifferent politeness.

"I trust your honorable health is good."

"Thanking you for your interest, my health is still robust."

"The worthy members of your household, are they well?"

"They are well. You will be pleased to see Pauning," said Hung in a tone of unveiled irony.

"You are the only sight in it worth looking at," said Douglas, feeling that truth and politeness coincided for once.

"You have had an arduous journey."

"We have indeed, and it is not yet ended. Our destination is Peking. Outside the gates of this town, over which you hold honorable jurisdiction, we were set upon by Boxers and stripped of our belongings. We have been guilty of no misdemeanor. We were traveling quietly along, molesting no one, therefore we feel sure that your fine sense of justice will cause you to see that our goods are restored to us, and that we are furnished with the means of going on our way."

Hung's eyes shot forth sudden wrath. The

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transformation in his countenance was so rapid that Douglas was amazed. It resembled a flash of jagged lightning from a sullen thundercloud.

"Help you to Peking!" he reiterated, scornfully. "Do not delude yourself with such a hope. Look well at the sun pouring its rays into yonder doorway, for by the great god of war I swear that when it rests there to-morrow your spirit will be with your ancestors."

"If you take away my life," said Douglas, steadily, "you will commit a great crime, for which you will be answerable to the laws of your country. His Imperial Majesty, the Emperor, has, by treaty, guaranteed protection to foreigners doing no harm."

"Yes, and how were such treaties wrung from my helpless nation? When we were contented and prosperous, desiring only the privilege of choosing our own associates, wishing for no intercourse with the barbarians of the outer seas, they, nevertheless, swarmed into the Flowery Kingdom with firearms and gunboats, and, with their hand on my country's throat and a pistol at her head, extracted promises from her when she was unable to resist. But promises made in such an extremity are not binding. You think I do not know about these

With Hung Chuan

things, but my ancestral home was in Shanghai, and I have watched the trickiness of foreign devils all my life. I have been patient and waited, and at last the day of retribution is at hand when all red-headed barbarians infesting our country shall be speedily exterminated."

"I do not know what grievances you have against those of other nations, but were you to punish the innocent with the guilty you would act most unjustly," said Douglas. "Many years ago an American, a scholar versed in the science of medicine, came to Peking. He remained there, spending his time in healing the sick and relieving the suffering of the Pekingese. He did not do this for money, but from a feeling of pure beneficence. I have been his assistant for six years and I know this to be true. This week the Boxers ended the life of this wise and good doctor in Shansi, whither he had gone because his friend, the husband of his niece, was ill. When dying, I promised him to conduct his daughter and niece to his home in Peking, where his wife and son are. The feeling of gratitude should prompt you to spare the relatives of one so worthy. Were you to kill us what good would such an act do to your country or your countrymen? Already, by Dr. Gilmour's death, you have deprived them of

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rare medical aid. You are pursuing a mad policy of cutting off your nose to spite your face. I appeal to your sense of justice."

"You prate of justice—what justice have you shown us? By justice you mean license for yourselves and subjection from us. Have you not seized our territory? Give us back your unlawful possessions of Kiao-chou, Wei-hai-wei, and Port Arthur and then talk of justice, if you will. With arrogant airs you discuss parceling out the Middle Kingdom and giving each nation a part as coolly as if it were a dead sheep you have an opportunity to divide. It is true that in our revenge some innocent ones will suffer with the guilty. Do you think the barbarians have injured none but those who harmed them?

"Draw the curtains aside," he said to an attendant. In an inner apartment, communicating with the audience chamber, on a couch covered with silken quilts, richly embroidered, lay an emaciated young man of about twenty-four, who evidently had not long to live. By his leaden-colored skin and heavy stupor, Dr. Medhurst knew him at once to be an opium-eater. Hung's rapid glance noted how Douglas bent towards him in pity, as he observed the refined, delicate cast of the features, and the

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broad brow which betokened him to be a youth of promise.

"There sleeps my only son," said Hung, with sorrowful passion, "he who should have cheered my old age and have performed the ancestral rites for me when I am no more. When I think of his blighted life, of his struggles against the awful spell of that enchaining habit, of the slow wasting of his energy—all because of that accursed drug which you foreign devils forced upon our nation by the might of your swords in spite of our prayers and entreaties, caring nothing for the wreck of our race if only your covetousness might be gratified, I say again, I hate you, and the Middle Kingdom shall be rid of such vermin. You shall be put to death by slow torture. Perhaps then you will know something of what a father feels when he watches his only son dying inch by inch, and will acknowledge that you are but suffering what you have inflicted upon others."

"The British nation has been to blame. A heavy burden of guilt rests upon her; but before China ever heard of a foreigner opium was grown on her soil and used by her natives," said Douglas.

"True," said Hung, "but how was it used? Clandestinely and under punishment of fines

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and even death itself —by a guilty few. Now one-fifth of the nation is openly under the power of the drug."

"I abhor opium as much as you do," said Douglas, "and I would destroy every vestige of it from the land, both home-grown and imported, if it were in my power."

"Barbarians speak ever in riddles," said Hung, derisively.

"There is not a missionary in the Flowery Kingdom to-day who is a follower of Jesus," continued Douglas, "who is not battling against the use of opium in any form."

"Ah, yes, your Yasu—all barbarians say they worship him, and exalt him above Confucius—does he teach you to sow your lands with poison, that you may become rich with silver stained with blood?"

"Alas! no," said Douglas, "but all men are not guided by his principles. Do all the sons of Han regulate their conduct by the maxims of your great Confucius?"

"If Confucius were here now," answered Hung, avoiding the question, "and had seen what I have from childhood, he would rouse our nation to revenge against its usurpers. My first recollection of foreign devils was on the streets of Shanghai, when, a little boy, I

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ran by my honorable father's side. He was a small farmer, and denied himself much that I might be educated and obtain official position. One day as he was peaceably pursuing his way, carrying melon-seeds for sale, some foreign sailors, regardless of his venerable appearance, ran against him and knocked him into the gutter, laughing mockingly as the seeds were whirled into the mire of the streets.

"When, six years ago, he went to the land of spirits, I resigned my official position that I might mourn for him, and, after suitable ceremonies, my brother and I buried him in the Ning-po Joss-House cemetery. Two years since the French demanded the sacred ground for a slaughter-house, and impiously began to dig up the graves. When we opposed, they landed armed troops to take possession. My brother fought, as he had a right to fight, for the hallowed tomb of his ancestors. They shot him like a dog. Over his prostrate body I vowed revenge to the calloused devils who were not content with affronting us in life, but with fiendish malice disturbed even our repose in death."

Douglas had followed his recital with deep interest.

"You have cause to feel bitterly towards for-

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eigners," he said. "The desecration of your burial-grounds, the seizure of your territory, and the enforcement of opium upon you, are wrongs which I, as an American, whose nation has had no hand in these things, deeply deplore. I sympathize with your patriotic feelings; but your present course of expulsion and extermination will be more fatal to your own and your country's happiness than any you could pursue. Do you realize that you are declaring war against all the civilized nations of the world? Pardon me if I recall to your mind some unpleasant circumstances of this century. Sixty years ago England, single-handed, proved more than a match for your armies; later, England and France combined overcame the Taku forts; and very recently Japan, your little neighbor, whose size you have despised, comparing her to a pill, put your soldiers to flight in Corea. If you slay, as you threaten to do, all foreigners within your shores, do you think the powerful nations to whom they belong will stand tamely by and take no revenge? And if events have proved you unable to withstand any one nation singly, how will you meet them combined? Your energies should be devoted to strengthening the internal resources of your country; but, instead, you

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are weakening it by dissensions; you are slaughtering many of the bravest and wisest of your race who plead for reform. Your conduct resembles that of a physician who has a patient fainting from weakness through starvation, and who, instead of endeavoring to revive him with the food he is in need of, bleeds him so profusely that his remaining vitality is destroyed."

"What you say has a shadow of truth," said Hung.

"Honorable master, forgive the temerity of thy servant in interrupting your worthy conversation. The wife of your honorable son has endeavored to commit suicide by swallowing foreign devil dirt."

Hung's whirlwind of passion made way to deep concern. Giving orders to the soldiers to guard Dr. Medhurst, he left the room with undignified haste.

Douglas was planning to knock down his sentinels, find Ray and Elsie and make an attempt to escape, when Hung re-entered greatly agitated. His manner was suave and almost deferential as he addressed Douglas.

"Your copious and learned studies—have they included the science of medicine?" he asked.

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Douglas admitted that that was his specialty. "My insignificant daughter-in-law has endeavored to commit suicide by swallowing opium. She still breathes. If your honored skill can restore her, your payment shall be equal to the greatness of the service."

Dr. Medhurst's pulses throbbed at the possibility of release, and he gladly accompanied Hung through the courtyard, brilliant with flowers and shrubs, to the women's apartments, at the end. The room they entered was so dark that Dr. Medhurst had to become accustomed to the gloom before he could distinguish the patient. She was alone, the women attendants having modestly withdrawn behind a curtain as the foreigner approached. She was carefully and richly dressed; her raven-black hair, coiled and puffed in masses from her head, was bespangled with glittering pins; her tunic and kilted skirt were embroidered in silk; rings and bracelets encircled her fingers and wrists; while peeping out from the robe were tiny feet, not more than a finger-length long, encased in slippers of such exquisite workmanship that the name of "golden lilies" seemed no hyperbole.

She lay quite unconscious, her breathing was slow and heavy, and over the young coun-

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tenance, which in health must have been pretty, there was spread a disfiguring bluish cast. Dr. Medhurst saw at once that the case required vigorous measures.

"I may be able to save her," he said to Hung. "I am not sure, but I must have the help of the ladies who are with me. One is a trained nurse. Outside the gates my medicine chest was taken from me. It contains atropine—a drug that will neutralize morphia. If you can restore to me the medicines and send me the aid I need, I feel hopeful of your daughter-in-law's recovery."

In an incredibly short time Dr. Medhurst's orders were being obeyed. In response to his note, "Come without fear," Ray and Elsie and Blossom had appeared; servants were despatched in search of the missing medicine; the mustard was forthcoming, and a strong emetic given.

Ray kept Blossom, while Elsie assisted the doctor.

Wondering brown eyes looked at them through the curtain as they shouted into the patient's ear, opened the loose dress and whipped the skin briskly with a wet towel, dashed alternately warm and cold water on the chest, and by main strength held the almost

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unconscious girl up between them, making her walk the floor.

Blossom cried out at such an unusual procedure. Poor child! she was becoming accustomed to terrifying sights.

Douglas snatched a moment to whisper to Ray, "We are in danger. Do not leave the room on any pretext, lest we become separated again."

"We will have to try artificial respiration, Mrs. Andersen," said Dr. Medhurst. "This is a grim fight, and perhaps our lives, as well as this poor creature's, depend upon our success."

"My kingdom for my chemicals," said Douglas, an hour later, baffled by the comatose state of the invalid.

In answer to his wish Hung appeared, accompanied by a servant, who bore the medicine-case, very much worse in appearance from the scuffle it had gone through. Some of the bottles had been broken, but the fragments of glass had been carefully gathered up and put in the compartments again.

Dr. Medhurst improvised a stomach-pump with some rubber tubing, injected the atropine and at last the sluggish breathing grew quicker, the contracted eyeballs dilated, and consciousness returned to the unhappy woman.

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Hung watched the slowly-dawning life with deep interest.

"It is only a matter of time until your daughter-in-law will be restored to her usual health. I will feel amply repaid if now you will give us conveyance and an escort as far as the boundary of Chilhi," said Douglas.

"I kiss your hand in gratitude," said Hung, "but remain under my insignificant roof until the morning. Perhaps the sick one is still in danger. Suitable rooms will be provided for the ladies to rest in."

Dr. Medhurst looked keenly at Hung to find out if this were a new ruse for detaining them. But when did the face of a Chinaman ever serve as anything but a mask to his thought?

"I would have preferred setting out this evening," said Douglas. "The country is disturbed, and traveling is safer by night than by day."

"The escort I shall provide will be a guarantee for your protection," said Hung loftily.

Douglas felt that it was useless to oppose the man in whose power they were, so he stipulated that comforters be brought to the sick room for Ray and Elsie, and that he himself would occupy the next apartment, within call, while some of the household watched the

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symptoms of the prostrate woman. Hung complied graciously in these arrangements, and once more the weary fugitives fell asleep.

It seemed to Elsie only a minute before the nurse roused her.

"My mistress is asking to speak with you," she said.

Elsie disengaged Blossom's soft arms from her neck and rose at once. The dim light shone on the questioning brown eyes of the Chinese woman as she raised them to the beautiful face above her.

"They tell me you brought me back from the gates of death," she said. "I am not a woman greedy of life. Why did you do it?"

"Life is too precious a gift to throw carelessly away," said Elsie.

"You do not know how miserable I am. Do you see my little feet? They are beautiful, are they not? They are my pleasure and torment. Night and day they pain, pain, pain. When I cry out my mother-in-law beats me. Is your mother-in-law kind to you?"

"I have never seen her," said Elsie. "She lives far from here, over the seas."

"You have never seen her," echoed the little lady in astonishment. "Do you not live with her?"

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"No," said Elsie, "it is the custom in our land for each married pair to have a separate house."

"How happy you must be! Have you any sons?"

"No, but I have a little daughter."

"Oh! daughters don't count. A hundred goddess-like girls are not equal to a boy with a crooked foot. It always makes me sad when I hear of a girl being born. I had a girl-baby, but I strangled it rather than let it grow up to suffer as I have done. Was your husband angry when your baby wasn't a little boy?"

"She was just as welcome to us as a son would have been," said Elsie, with a proud look towards Blossom's rounded face framed in with dewy curls.

"I have heard that it is the custom of the barbarians to make much of their wives and to care for their daughters. My husband, and mother and father-in-law all hate me because I have no son. I have not drawn one peaceful breath since my baby girl was born. They are cruel, but I almost had my revenge. If I had died there would have been an investigation, and my father-in-law would have lost his official position, for he is responsible for the good conduct of his household. My relatives,

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too, would have made him pay a handsome indemnity. He is a proud, passionate man—my father-in-law—full of words when he is in a rage, and fond of money and his position. I wish I had gone to the land of spirits, so as to have been able to plague him and my mother-in-law. A childless wife is more powerful dead than alive. But I'm afraid of death, too. To think of worms eating my soft limbs. Ugh! I have prayed so earnestly to the gods for a son, but they despise me and will not answer."

Elsie saw that the patient was becoming feverish and excited, so she soothed her by turning her attention from her sorrows.

She roused up after a time and said, "My father-in-law does not like any from foreign lands. Do not trust him. To try and appease his anger by a good deed is like trying to put out the fire in a cartload of fuel with a cup of water."

CHAPTER XII

FROM MANDARIN TO MANDARIN

Next morning the girl-wife had rallied so perceptibly that even Hung's solicitude was allayed. For reasons best known to himself he had no further interview with Douglas, but sent three mule-litters and an escort of ten soldiers, whose manner was respectful but uncommunicative. In answer to Douglas' request for some money, the captain replied evasively that their wants would be amply supplied. As they passed through the town in the early morning everything was peaceful, not a trace of the recent riots and pillage remained. They had swayed leisurely along for two hours when the leader cried, "Halt!"

"We have escorted your honorable persons as far as our worthy master commanded us, and must beg of you to descend," the soldier explained.

"Surely you do not intend to desert us in this spot?" said Douglas. "How far away is the next town?"

"About six li."

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Douglas guessed from the man's bland manner that he was lying, and that the distance was much more.

"Did your worthy master not give you some money to aid us on our journey?"

"He did not, and promised me a beating if I allowed any of the soldiers to help you."

The man was firm. There was no alternative, so they left the litters and stood out in the dirty street. Looking about them they saw one of the saddest, most desolate sights in China. It was an opium village, that is, a village where all, or nearly all, of the inhabitants had succumbed to the use of opium, such as are to be found at intervals in the mountains of Shansi. In the walls of the houses were gaping holes which no one sought to mend; the windows were dirty and minus their paper panes; and through the doors, long since bereft of hinges, were to be seen men and women with dull, drawn faces, moving listlessly about or lying in a heavy stupor. Their garments were a bundle of rags; no care was manifest in their dress, from the worn-out shoes to the unkempt, tangled queues.

"Hung has planned to give us an object-lesson with a vengeance," said Douglas, surveying the blighted scene around them.

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"There is at least no danger of persecution from these people, they are too lethargic. If you rest in this deserted courtyard you will be screened from passers-by, and I will go and see if I can find any one to take us over the mountains to N——."

Some children with wizened-up faces, on whose fingers were the tell-tale brown stains of the opium, came up to the gate and gaped in wonderment at Blossom's golden hair.

Douglas found the inn at the end of the village inhabited by a lugubrious keeper, in whose head the eyes were set so far back and the jaws so far forward that how to see at certain angles must have been a problem to him. He was, however, of a kindly disposition; had, in his capacity as innkeeper, met foreigners before, and was rather proud of being expert in dealing with such curiosities.

"I have two ladies with me," said Douglas, after greetings had been exchanged, and the innkeeper had made friendly inquiries about Douglas' age and health and home and income. "We are on our way to Peking, but have been robbed of our money and all our belongings. Do you know of any one who, for the sake of benevolence, would convey us—the ladies, I mean"—Douglas was unused to beg-

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ging, and stammered—"to the next town. One of them has been ill and is unable to walk."

"You have come to the wrong place for help," replied mine host. "It's hard to shave an egg. There isn't a mule or a cart left in the village, they have all been sold—all sold. This was a busy village twenty years ago. My father owned the inn then; and those terraces up the mountain side were cultivated—yes, cultivated. But there aren't thirty people left. They are dead—all dead—died of opium."

He paused on the last word ruminatingly, half caressingly. As he was speaking, Douglas noticed an opium smoker's pipe, dipper and lamp near him.

"You use the drug, too?" said Douglas, pointing to the outfit. "Do you not think it has done injury enough to this place without you sacrificing yourself?"

"Injury? Ah, yes, 'tis true. But the pleasure, the enchanting dreams, the sense of rest, of luxury, the new wine of excitement,—no remembrance of cold or wet or hunger or hard times—that balances the injury. We die of our indulgence, but we must die some time—why not soon as well as late?"

Douglas had no time to argue, so he asked, "How far is it to the next town?"

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"About fifteen li."

"You appear kind," said Douglas hesitatingly, "few are kind to foreigners now. Those with me need food before we reach the end of this day's journey——" He paused, finding it difficult to go on, but his torpid listener understood.

"You are climbing a tree to hunt for fish. I would give you some if I had it, but there is none in the house. I haven't tasted a morsel for a week" (he was lean enough to have fasted for a month), "but take a smoke of opium; it will sustain you without anything to eat for days."

Douglas shook his head. The old man meant to be generous, and was surprised, and perhaps relieved, at the refusal.

Up the dreary street walked Douglas, looking into decaying houses where no inhabitant was, and not a stick of furniture remained. He met a few men, who were too sluggish even to exhibit much curiosity. In answer to his inquiry they gave the same reply as the innkeeper, there were no conveyances there. Two of the men made an offer to improvise a chair for the women; but, hearing that Douglas had no money, they, in post haste, withdrew.

When he reached the courtyard again, his

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heart smote him to see how pale and feeble Ray looked, and how languorous beautiful Blossom was. The sun beat down into the open with scorching intensity. He threw himself down beside them.

"No hope, I see," said Ray.

"Hung wanted to impress upon us the havoc opium can do, and he has done it," said Douglas. "Think of this village, which for centuries was the abode of contented and cheerful farmers, and these terraces placed up the mountainside with incredible patience and labor—all undermined by the power of the poppy-seeds. And Shansi has others like this. I was dumb before Hung as he raved of his oppression. What could I say in defense of nations who wrong the weaker under a Christian banner? His method of retaliation is wrong, wholly wrong, but it is to be remembered in his defense that he has had strong provocation."

"Hung's revenge may not be ended yet," said Ray. "He may intend to send Boxers after us, knowing we can receive no help here. He would be glad to have us get a quietus, if only it happened outside the territory over which he holds jurisdiction. I heard him and his secretary talking about us in the night, and

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the secretary was advising him to let us go on farther. 'If they were to die here, who would be supposed to have killed them?' he asked; and it seemed Hung was rather uneasy under the question."

"N—— is five miles away over a rocky, mountainous road, on which swarms of traffickers are passing all the time, and we may be exposed to abuse when going along on foot. Had we not better stay here to-day and travel in the night? I know the magistrate at N——; he is friendly to foreigners. He held a position in Peking three years ago, and often came into the hospital and looked around. He will give us money and guards."

"Let us go at once," said Elsie. "I am afraid of Hung."

"You are so little able," said Douglas, looking at Ray. When he spoke to her his voice softened in spite of himself.

"Dr. Medhurst," said Blossom gravely, coming to him and patting, as she had a habit of doing, his weather-beaten cheeks, "I'm so lonesome 'out my dolly and my effelunt book."

"Ah! Blossom, what a blundering, absent-minded Yankee I am! I have your 'effelunt' book hidden away in one of the pockets of this robe. Come and hunt for it."

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Blossom clasped the treasure in glee and gave him a kiss in her overflowing spirits.

He had grown accustomed to her caresses now. By them—such is the weakness of man—she had reduced him to a state of willing serfdom.

"Will you sing to me, Dr. Medhurst?" said Blossom. "I'm so sleepy. My papa always singed to me."

"What did papa sing to you, sweetheart?" asked Douglas.

"'Sweet Story of Old,'" said Blossom. "He singed it every night when I went to bed. You sing it."

Douglas never thought of denying the pleading little face, with its halo of sunny curls, anything. He sang the hymn for her (his mother had sung it to him years ago) and succeeded not only in pleasing Blossom, but in alluring some wan-eyed children and a number of uncombed fathers and mothers to the gate.

"You sing like my papa," said Blossom. "He hasn't any little girl to sing to now," she continued in a tone of compassion, "he's in heaven."

They set out for N—. It must be reached by walking. Their progress was constantly

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impeded by having to turn aside that vehicles of all descriptions, and the long procession of men and boys, carrying suspended from rods crates of kettles or blocks of sawed anthracite from the mines, might pass on the narrow road. When they had gone about three miles they sat down to rest beside a gray stone tablet standing on the backs of two skilfully carved tortoises. The inscription on the slab testified to the virtues of the "good mandarin" who had improved the roads thereabouts. Judging from their condition he must have flourished before the present dynasty, and a successor who would emulate his public spirit was sadly needed.

"Look!" said Douglas, excitedly, pointing in the opposite direction to that from which they had come, "there is Mr. Meredith."

"Who is he?" asked Ray.

"The young man with whom I stayed in Honan when he was ill. His servant, Wu, is bringing up the rear, as usual."

The sun shone upon a horseman, slight and lithe and rather under-sized, who sat easily upon his pony. His face was oval, with deep-set, gray-blue eyes, and his complexion so fair that it gave him a feminine appearance.

"Duke," said Douglas, striding out to meet

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him, "what brings you here? Did you not find the rest of your party?"

"Yes, I left them last night en route for Shanghai."

"Why did you not stay with them?"

"A desire to renew my acquaintanceship with you. The others bored me," answered Duke lightly.

"How did you know where to find me?"

"We picked up an acquaintance of yours, who saw you mobbed yesterday. If he hadn't happened to mention your name I would have recognized you by the description—the foreign medicine-man whose head reached up into the clouds, whose hands and feet are thirty-five inches long, who can swing a club like a son of heaven, etc., etc."

"If the description were true, I might be supposed capable of defending myself," said Douglas.

"The odds were strong. Then I heard that you had been reckless of your money, tossing it into the mud like a lord, and were in reduced circumstances—the inevitable position of a spendthrift, you'll note. We took up a collection among the surveyors and I brought over the net proceeds."

"I'm grateful, Duke, with the gratitude of a

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drowning man receiving a life-buoy. If I arrive at Peking safely I can repay the loan, if not You will say this to the surveyors when you rejoin them."

"I had thought," said Duke, "if you could smother your feelings enough to allow Wu and me to be of your party we would consider it a personal obligation. The others are going southward at the rapid Oriental rate of twenty miles per diem, and it would be difficult to overtake them. Traveling alone is rather uncertain, so I'll put myself under your protection."

"Duke, your heart does you honor," said Douglas. "For my sake you are exchanging a place of comparative safety for one of danger."

"If I were a saucypan-hatted mandarin, politeness would compel me to say, 'I am unworthy of the compliment,'" answered Marmaduke. "I left you with your face set Pekingwards, how do you come to be here on the borderland of Shansi and Chilhi?"

"It is a long story," said Douglas. "I'll tell you another time. Let me present you to the ladies with me. Mrs. Andersen is a widow," he whispered.

During the introduction Marmaduke's thoughts ran thus:

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"Miss Gilmour, not pretty, looks too sad, but the bearing and manner of a lady.

"Mrs. Andersen—shades of the Greeks!—what a beautiful face! And the child, as fair as the mother is dark, an angel embodied. And yet, why do these calm Madonna-women seem to lack intellectuality? But what does such loveliness need with brains? Simply to be is enough. With my susceptibility to beauty I'll be falling in love with this soft-voiced Mrs. Andersen, aspiring to wear the deceased Mr. A's shoes, and be stepfather to the enchanting Goldilocks."

"We'll put the ladies on the ponies and march to N—," said Duke. "I had the honor of an interview with Wang, the mandarin there, and he entertained me as if I had been a Manchu of royal blood."

Ray and Elsie were mounted, and found riding on the uneven roads only one degree less painful than walking. They entered N—and proceeded at once to the yamen. Wang was cordial in his greetings. He had met Dr. Medhurst frequently in Peking, and respected both him and his work. He advised them to rest at the yamen until morning, and then he would send an escort with them as far as Paoting.

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They had, to use Wang's polished phrase, "graced his residence but a couple of hours," when a throng of Boxers suddenly darkened the courtyard, swarming into it like grasshoppers. In addition to their swords and guns they carried torches. They were there as the avowed enemies of "foreign devils," and demanded that the "pests" and "well-poisoners" be brought out to them. If Wang did not comply, and right speedily, the yamen would be burned over his head, because he was a sympathizer with the foreign sorcerers.

"They have a forcible way of accentuating their speech with those firebrands," remarked Duke coolly to Douglas, as he stood watching the parley from a sheltered position.

Wang had a good deal of decision, together with a firm reliance upon his authority as a magistrate; so, arming himself with a long whip, he went out, accompanied by some of his servants, and drove the mob away. He smiled victoriously after having seen the last howling caitiff disappear through the gate. A man who has the power of life and death in his hands is entitled to outward respect, and can command it, Wang thought. But what is so reckless of consequences, so shortsighted as a mob? And a Chinese mob is the most whim-

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sical, vacillating horde upon the face of the earth. It is always easy to collect a rabble among Chinamen; patient and lovers of peace as they are, nowhere can impetuous wrath (ch'i, they call it) be so quickly stirred up. It is as if they bore with wrongs needing righting (and they have enough of them, as any onlooker knows), smothering down all sign of resentment, until a breeze blows from an unexpected quarter and fans into a destructive blaze the long-smouldering sparks.

The courtyard soon buzzed again with angry hornets, more anxious to sting than before. Wang was hurt, surprised, that so open a display of his authority should be so openly disregarded. Plainly what was needed was a severe lesson. Having beaten them to no avail with whips, he would now chastise them with scorpions. He tied sharp little pieces of pointed metal to the end of the thongs, "quite after the Roman fashion," as Marmaduke remarked, who took a lively interest in the preparations, and offered to second Wang in his onslaught.

"You must not show yourself outside," said Wang, peremptorily, "that would be fatal."

The crowd was more furious than before. Wang was knocked down, his spectacles

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broken, his garments soiled, his whip stolen, and his dignity sorely wounded. His domestics, headed by Douglas and Duke, in a gallant sortie rescued him from being trodden underfoot.

Wang, having brushed his clothes and anointed his bruises, decided on prompt action. He had two hundred soldiers scattered about in his District. He despatched messengers for them to gather at the yamen at sundown.

The Headmaster of the Boxers received a note from Wang, containing an invitation, amounting to a command, to have a cup of tea with the defeated official and discuss some of his Boxer secrets. The Master of Ceremonies, an ex-tinker, appeared in due course.

"I have long desired to see you," said Wang, summoning his magisterial dignity to the fore, "because I believe you are a fraud and your followers are not true Boxers. If you can prove that you and your men are not impostors, I myself will become a Boxer and drill with you. To convince me, I propose that you submit to a test. Let your men make themselves invulnerable by their spells and magic, and I shall order my soldiers to fire on them. If they are true Boxers they will not be hurt and I shall know that you are indeed no dissembler,

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but a right worthy Headmaster, and I shall deliver up to you the foreigners who are under my roof; but, should the bullets take effect, then I shall know that you are a mere charlatan, and I shall act accordingly."

The Major-General of the Fire-Proofs donned that suave, pleased expression which John Chinaman invariably assumes when he finds himself tightly cornered, and asked leave to consult with his adherents. On returning, he said he agreed to Wang's proposal on condition that he himself was not to be embroiled in the fray; but, as beseemed the Master of Ceremonies, he might stand on one side to announce to the soldiers when the spirits had come; and that no shot was to be fired until such announcement was given.

Wang acquiesced in the terms and each set about making preparations for the combat.

"You do not think there is any magic by which a man can render himself invulnerable to the shot of a gun, do you?" asked Wang, a trifle anxiously, of Dr. Medhurst.

"Not if the gun will shoot and is properly loaded," said Douglas.

"Then there will be an exciting time when my soldiers deliver a broadside. In the confusion that follows will be the time for you

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to escape. I will place three carts and eight soldiers at your disposal, with a suitable supply of bedding and provisions. Mr. Meredith and his servant prefer to ride their own ponies. You can pack the carts at once and have everything in readiness to start. My guards can accompany you as far as Paoting, where you can take the train, and you will, I trust, have a safe and speedy return to Peking."

The experts in shooting and boxing and wrestling now began to pour in until two hundred of them had assembled. Wang supervised everything, loaded the rifles himself with balls, as well as powder, and gave minute directions. The contest was to take place in front of an old temple built on the wall. The news spread and the city turned out en masse as eye witnesses. It was a moonless midnight, but the lanterns and torches illuminated the scene with a lurid, flickering glare.

The "observed of all observers" were the Boxers on drill, making passes through the air with their swords, sing-singing incantations, and whirling about in a frenzy. Then they arose, eyes glazed and staring, and danced about like maniacs.

Douglas and Marmaduke, from an obscure corner, watched the dusky pantomime.

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"Poor dupes!" said Douglas, "it makes me sad to think that all this farcical mummery will soon give place to real tragedy."

"Don't let your tender feelings overcome you, doctor. It's kill or let kill, just now, and as a true son of Britain with Christian sentiments, I prefer the former. What a great-hearted mortal you are, Douglas! You look as sympathetic towards those unkempt, evil-featured villains as if they were your brothers."

"It pleases you to appear cynical, Duke, but you are sympathetic, too."

"For those of my own caste—yes; for such as those yonder—as much as for the puppets in a Punch and Judy show."

"You belong to the purple, Duke, and have the limitations of your class. Your real aristocrat never originates a reform," said Douglas. "Part of the stamp by which we know him is a 'well-bred lukewarmness.'"

"That's too sweeping, doctor. Lord Shaftesbury, now—the Book of Peerages makes him out to be an earl—and yet he was a radical reformer."

"He was a commoner in spite of the accident of birth. Because a cat is born in a kennel, it doesn't follow that it will turn out a grayhound."

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"Listen!" said Duke, "the play is about to begin."

Amid the din, the throaty voice of the Headmaster was heard:

"The spirits have come."

"Fire!" rang out Wang's voice in answer.

Douglas' eyes followed the track of the powder. He saw that a number were killed and many wounded, while those who were uninjured fled for their lives. The suddenness of the Headmaster's disappearance bordered on the supernatural.

Wang contemplated the scampering multitude with satisfaction, then sought out Douglas and Duke.

"The humble shelter of my roof can no longer protect you," he said. "It will be necessary for you to start at once. The people are in a tumultuous state, and may come back to the yamen clamoring for you at any time."

He was steady nerved and dignified, as became the wearer of a mandarin's button.

"What will you do with the wounded?" asked Douglas.

Wang shrugged his shoulders with a gesture which bespoke an indifference as complete as Duke's.

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"Their relatives can look after them if they wish. The good foreign doctor must not overthrow my plans by troubling himself with the question. I must impress upon him the urgency of his immediate departure."

CHAPTER XIII

WHEN DUKE WAS WOUNDED

They said good-bye to their kind host, and bumped over the uneven highway for hours. There had been no rain in weeks, and the dust of the road rose in choking clouds. The parched farms gaped, open-seamed, with innumerable thirsty mouths. The peasants who would have been at work in the fields, had it not been for the drought, were gathered in idleness in their village homes. Their faces wore despairing looks. By past experience they knew too well what a tale of slow, wasting hunger those brown acres foretold. They lived a hand-to-mouth existence, scarcely able to provide for the needs of the next twenty-four hours—little wonder, then, that the scorched landscape appalled them, and bred within them thoughts of rapine and murder.

"This rainless country is awful," said Duke to Douglas, "but I suppose a kindly Providence has to send a famine once in a while to wipe out the surplus population."

It was towards evening of the day after they

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had left Wang that Wu addressed Duke anxiously:

"The carter ahead says he has heard we are to be assaulted."

"Do you think he is right?" asked Duke.

"He is a man who exaggerates," Wu answered. "If he wishes to paint a snake he adds legs. But the villagers have had a gnawing in their stomachs for many moons, and are not patient."

Duke consulted with Douglas.

"I've had some experience with a mob. I'd rather retreat than face another."

"So would I," said Duke, "if there were any place of safety behind, but these sullen, hungry men—they're not pleasant company."

"There's a roundabout way to the next village. Shall we try that?"

"Anything is preferable to the public highway," answered Duke, "though you can't get away from the swarms of people in this prolific land."

They went around a narrow road, which was nothing but an embankment between the fields, until they were at the gates of H—. They dared not venture near an inn, so, choosing a retired spot, they unhitched the mules and prepared to make themselves as comfor-

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table as they could. Ray and Elsie, cramped and sore from riding in the jolting carts, limped about and gave what aid they could.

Blossom sat on the shafts of the cart, holding her white bonnet in her hands and watching the long strings as they fluttered in the stiff breeze.

Without warning a rabble was upon them. There were a few Boxers among them, but the majority consisted of gaunt, hungry peasantry.

"Seize the red-headed foreign girl!" cried one. "I saw her waving a cloth to keep away the rain."

"Blossom! Save Blossom!" cried Elsie, who understood the dialect.

The women and the frightened child were hurried into a cart, and the guards and carters, with Duke and Douglas, surrounded it and prepared to fight. The guards were armed, and Duke had a revolver, and it seemed at first as if they might beat back the unorganized ragamuffins. But these dejected men, desperate from long fasting, cared little for danger or even death itself, and threw themselves upon the very muzzles of the guns, and a grim struggle ensued. When two of the guards had been killed outright, the others, with the

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exception of Wu and one soldier, fled precipitously, and the foreigners were left almost at the mercy of the enraged herd.

Duke had been coolness itself, shooting right and left into the crowd with as much coolness as if he were on dress parade, but scythes and pitchforks came about him so thick and fast that he was blinded, and sank down on the ground, crushed and bleeding.

"It's all over, Douglas," he said with a groan.

Then Douglas heard a sharp cry from Ray and turned in time to see that a ferocious-looking fellow in Boxer uniform had dealt her a blow. She fell unconscious.

"Villain! to strike a woman!" Douglas blazed, and dealt him a staggering blow between the eyes with his sledge-hammer fist.

Douglas was terrible in his wrath. For the first time in his life hate raged in his heart—hate towards the fiends who had injured his dearest friends.

Duke was in danger of being trampled to death. Douglas stood over his prostrate body, seized his revolver, and kept back the mob. When one fellow approached too near, Douglas picked him up, and by main strength hurled him back against his companions.

But one man, even a very strong and furious

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man, is no match for such numbers. Douglas would soon have been overpowered, but two diversions saved him. The foremost of the crowd had reached the food being prepared for supper and were devouring it greedily, while those in the rear quarreled and fought for the pieces like a pack of ravenous wolves.

In the midst of the confusion there arose a venerable patriarch with snow-white hair and beard, who began a speech. The insurgents paused to listen.

"My brothers!" he said, "why all this tumult? We do not well. We shall be called to account for this peace-breaking in our District. Such deeds as these trouble the heart of our great Emperor, who loves harmony throughout his Kingdom. Have we not distress enough already without being summoned before the Magistrate? If the foreign devils can stay the rain when alive, may they not be much more powerful when they are spirits? We will take their goods and let them go their way. See! among their stores there is ample provision for us all to feast. We are hungry; let us eat together and be in quietness."

"Listen to the peacemaker. He is right," shouted several. "Let us prepare for a feast."

They untied the mules and ponies, took the

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unoccupied carts and every fragment of food and clothing they could lay their hands on, and rifled even the dead bodies of the attendants.

Douglas stood by and made no resistance, knowing that resistance was useless. No one offered to molest the cart over which he was keeping guard. A wholesome fear of his strong arm kept the men at a respectful distance.

Soon the crowd, intent upon the feast, disappeared within the walls of the town. They had humanity enough to pick up their dead and wounded and carry them to their homes.

Their backs were scarcely turned before Douglas was beside Ray with a great fear in his heart. He found she was not seriously hurt. She had fainted more from weakness and terror than from injury.

When she recovered consciousness, Elsie and Douglas left her on the floor of the cart and went to Duke. He had two wounds—one over the left eye and another on his arm. As they had no white rags Elsie went to the cart and secured a garment which she tore into bandages.

When Duke opened his eyes, it was to find Elsie wiping the blood stains from his face,

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and to see, in the dim light, her beautiful, lustrous eyes bending over him in pity.

"The rascals did not harm you, then?" he said. "I'm thankful for that."

"We are all safe but you," she replied. "That is, I mean, we foreigners."

"I was always an unlucky beggar," he said. "Got beaten in my fights at school and . . . Great Agricola! What's that, Mrs. Andersen?"

Douglas and the guard were carrying an inanimate form into the shadow cast by a brick wall.

Elsie shuddered. "That is the guard—the one you called Magog, you know. He and another fellow were killed."

"Ugh! How ghastly things look in this white half-light. I wonder if those poor unfortunates have any one to be sorry they're gone. Now if it had been I, there's not a soul on earth, except perhaps Dr. Medhurst, who would have lost any sleep over it."

"Are you so alone?" she said with quick compassion. "I know how it is. I was so once, and then I found a friend, and though I lost him, I still have Blossom."

That little bit of fellow-feeling made Duke's heart wondrous kind towards Elsie.

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"You paid dearly for staying with us, Duke," said Douglas, coming up.

"All pleasures have their price," he answered, with a pitiful attempt at his accustomed nonchalance. "How badly am I hurt?"

"Enough to keep you from fighting again for a time."

"Will I be scarred?" asked Duke, putting his hand to his throbbing head and blushing at the revelation of his vanity.

"I fear there may be a mark left there," said Douglas. "The wound is not long, but deep."

Douglas read in Duke's face that he was much more moved by the prospective disfigurement than the present pain.

"Where's Wu? He didn't run away with those cowardly guards, did he?"

"No; he's not much of a fighter, but he stuck to you. I've sent him to see if he can find a sequestered spot for us to spend the night. I'm afraid to stay here."

"And that guard—where's he making off to now?" grumbled Duke.

"One of the poor fellows who was killed was his brother," said Douglas. "He has asked leave to get a wheelbarrow and take the two bodies back to N—to their ancestral burying-place."

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"So, in spite of Wang's good intentions," said Duke, "we are left alone to be chopped into mincemeat if those villains see fit. It's a happy prospect."

Wu returned after a time with a companion—a Booddhist priest, with a mild but vacant countenance. He offered the shelter of his temple, a mile away, among the hills. It was little frequented, and there was a room at the rear where they might be hidden a few days. He knew nothing of foreigners, but something of benevolence. He wished, he said, to restrain the people from shedding innocent blood.

"Why should I see you injured?" he added gravely. "To persecute the unfortunate is like throwing stones upon one fallen into a well. There is nothing but a footpath leading to the temple. Will the sick man be able to ascend that?"

Duke groaned.

Douglas looked at Ray in perplexity. She understood, and with her accustomed generous putting aside of herself, she hastened to reassure him.

"I am stronger, Dr. Medhurst. I feel quite equal to a climb up the hills unaided. This cool night air is invigorating."

There were trees near, surrounding a burial

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ground. Douglas twisted off some branches, and with them and the comforters made a rude litter.

"Now, Duke," he said cheerily, "we'll put you on this, and Wu and I will carry you to the temple."

"I don't mind any kind of civilized warfare," grumbled Duke. "A little skirmish raises my spirits, but this crawling away into holes where you dare not put out your head lest it should become a target grates on me."

It was a stiff climb up the hillside. They had to stop and rest more than once.

"Are you exhausted, Miss Gilmour?" asked Douglas, bending over her in one of the pauses.

Even as he watched her he could perceive her heart flutter, and she was panting for her breath.

"I think I can stand it a little longer," she answered bravely. "It can't be far now. Your eyes are better than mine. Can you see the temple?"

"Yes," he answered, "there to the northeast, with trees about it. It's not more than a hundred yards from here."

When they started again Ray stumbled and fell over a root, and from sheer weariness could not get up. In an instant Douglas'

When Duke Was Wounded

strong arms raised her, and she felt herself borne swiftly to the summit of the hill. She was too weak to resist or even protest.

As for Douglas, striding up the path with his precious burden, he felt her weight no more than if she were a child. He was intoxicated with the sensation of having Ray in his arms. She was his for the moment, anyway, and he wished the walk might last forever.

He laid her on the stone bench in the grove near the temple. He was throbbing with emotion.

"You brought me here," she said, reddening as she saw the outline of the great, gaunt face above her.

"You were not able to walk," he replied, not trusting himself to say more than common-places.

"You are good," she answered, "but it was too much for your strength. You are trembling."

His face was very near to hers. Their eyes met. It was a revealing glance. Ray knew beyond doubt that Dr. Medhurst loved her, and he saw that she had read his heart. But in Ray's answering look there was no trace of love, only kindness mingled with compassion.

Mrs. Andersen and Blossom came up, and

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Douglas went back to Duke in a dream, and carried his end of the litter without being conscious of anything but the past moments he had spent with Ray.

CHAPTER XIV

THE DEATH OF BLOSSOM

The stone bench on which Ray was placed stood at the edge of a large aquarium filled with languid fish. She could see, sitting on limbs of shrubs or any convenient projection, disconsolate hens, ducks, geese and pigeons of uncertain age; while from a sty in the distance came the melancholy grunt of some pigs disturbed in their midnight slumbers. The priest was a vegetarian, and believed in the transmigration of souls, and on no account would he kill any living thing lest the spirit of some of his ancestors might be lodged therein.

The temple had once been a magnificent place, but it was falling down now for want of repair. The seats in the grove commanded a view of terraced hills and rolling valleys, which might ravish the heart of the most satiated sightseer.

The building consisted of a long auditorium, at the end of which, in stone niches, sat Confucius, Booddha and Laotze in friendly proximity. On the sides were a number of tutelar

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deities and canonized saints, elbow to elbow; the goddess of Mercy smiled eternally upon the scholar Mencius; and the god of War's stern frown bent with never a wink upon a literate of the T'ang dynasty. Both gods and mortals were thickly overlaid with dust, and a cobweb over Laotze's eye gave him a sinister stare. Birds in great numbers were roosting, unawed, upon the crown of the head of Boddha and the edge of the great toe of Confucius.

At the rear of the auditorium was a room, about twenty by thirty, used as kitchen, dining-room, bed-room and sitting-room combined. Here the priest ensconced his visitors. He and Wu bundled up mattresses and spread them in the audience-chamber, beneath the eyes of the grim divinities.

The travelers, tired, and glad of a quiet spot to rest, fell into a sound slumber. About four in the morning Elsie was awakened by a sound which sent the blood rushing to her heart. It was a hoarse, grating cough. She knew from past experience what it meant. Blossom had the croup. She sprang up. It was hardly light, and as she groped about hunting for firewood she awakened Dr. Medhurst. They soon had hot water and were bathing the child

The Death of Blossom

and applying heat in every form to the little racked body. The attack was very severe, and they fought all the morning for her life. She grew easier at noon, and wanted to be carried from one spot to another. No stranger was in sight, so they took her out into the temple, where the priest and Wu were playing cards. Blossom did not want to stay. She did not like the idols. They made faces at her, she said.

The priest was concerned lest Blossom should die on his premises. The death of a child, he averred, always brought bad luck to a dwelling. In the afternoon Blossom played with her doll, asked her mamma to repeat "Sweet Story of Old" to her, and was so bright they were sure she was recovering.

"When will we go back to our home, where fadder is?" she whispered, lying in her mother's arms.

"I don't know, darling," answered Elsie.

"I'd like to go. I want to see fadder. I think he's lonely 'out his little girl. Fadder is not in the ground, mudder."

"No, Blossom; he's in heaven."

"Yes," said Blossom, "I saw him."

"When, dearie?"

"Just now, mudder. He weached out his

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arms to me. I'd like to go to him. He wants me, and I want him. There are flowers and sunshine where he is."

"Oh! Blossom, you mustn't leave me," said Elsie. "You are all I have. I couldn't live without you."

"No!" answered the affectionate child, throwing her arms around her mother's neck. "We will live togevvver as we used to did, and fadder will sing me to sleep."

"I have seen her worse than this before," said Mrs. Andersen, trying to assure herself that Blossom was not very ill.

"Do you not think she is recovering?" she asked later. "See! her breathing is easier."

But Dr. Medhurst averted his face, and in pity made no answer.

Through all the dreary night the child suffered, speaking only to ask for water to quench her feverish thirst. In the morning the sun rose over the hills in a blaze of golden glory. Blossom roused out of her stupor.

"Mudder," she said, "some one is calling me. Some one is calling Blossom."

She raised herself up, stretched out her baby hands to the sunlit splendor, and fell back in her mother's arms—dead.

Elsie could not believe the truth. Dead, her

The Death of Blossom

beautiful Blossom dead? It could not be. Just the day before so full of life and glee, and now—dead. Every hope that brightened the future had been inseparably connected with her little child. She had dreamed so many dreams of the coming years in which Blossom was the central figure—Blossom admired everywhere, as she had always been, for her grace and loveliness.

All the hearts in the temple were sorrowful, yet few words of sympathy were spoken. A hush was upon them, and heaven seemed very near.

"Ray," said Elsie later, in response to her attempt at consolation, "my heart is broken. That sounds tragic, but it is the simple truth. I was so unprepared. I thought I would always have her. Is it any wonder I loved her, Ray? She was so pure and sweet."

"She was perfect," answered Ray; "the fairest Blossom of the springtide."

Marmaduke thought Mrs. Andersen had never appeared so lovely as in her grief. It was the greatest sorrow which had ever befallen her, which perhaps could ever befall her. She was crushed, but after the first few hours she remembered her duties to the others. When she came in her quiet way to give Duke

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a drink and adjust his bandages he felt the hot tears dropping on his face, but though her hands trembled they served him carefully.

CHAPTER XV

BREAKING HEARTS

The priest went down to the village in the afternoon to try to procure a cart to convey his guests to Paoting. He came back with a companion. It was Lung Te, very dirty and sunburnt, but stolid and imperturbable as ever.

Ray met him.

"Did you find father?" she asked.

"Yes, but he was dead—stone dead," said Lung Te, bluntly. "I brought this to you. I found it in his pocket."

He drew forth a tiny gold pencil. Ray recognized it as the one she had brought to her father from Rome.

"Had the Boxers been to the cave?" asked Ray.

"Yes," said Lung Te. "This was on the floor."

From his girdle he produced a piece of coarse red cord with dark blood stains upon it. It was an end of the belt of the Boxer uniform.

"The Boxers are very powerful about there. Cheng-pai and Sai Na and all the Christians

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in the village have been slain. You brought bad luck to the good Mandarin Wang, who helped you. His house is burned and he had to flee for his life to the interior."

Ray quivered. The horror of Lung Te's tale was accentuated by his bold manner of relating it.

"If only there were some spot away from the others where I might throw myself down and weep," she thought.

But she was a prisoner. Elsie, too, was repressing her grief, though every sight of the little dead body of her darling dealt a fresh pang.

The priest told Douglas he had been able to hire a cart to come for them at night.

"It is difficult to find any one who would venture," he said, "but the man who consented is so poor he can't buy food, and if they kill him for helping you it will be no worse than starving to death."

They waited impatiently for the dark, and the dark seemed to delay its coming.

"Dr. Medhurst," said Ray, speaking as if the words were wrung from her, "there is no God. If there were, he would have taken care of my father. Dear father," she continued, with a sob in her voice. "Who was there ever like

Breaking Hearts

him, so tender and unselfish? He gave up everything to come to China, and what has been his reward? An unmarked grave up in the mountains. I cannot bear to think of it," she said, the tears breaking forth unrestrained. "And beautiful Blossom—so pure that a shadow of the world's stain never fell upon her—she must be sacrificed on this hateful journey, too."

"Blossom is not sacrificed, Ray," said Elsie, her rich, full voice falling like music. "She has gone to Jesus, who will take care of her for me better than I could have done. My hands are empty and I feel as if nothing could ever fill them again, but my unhappiness would be intensified a thousandfold if I believed what you say. Dear as she was to me, I was not strong enough or wise enough to guard her from sickness and sorrow and pain. But she will never know any of these things now; she will be forever young. And I shall go to her. No God! no heaven! for such as your father and Herbert and Blossom? How could you think it, Ray?"

Ray sat mute. Elsie's faith was so simple. She saw clearly, even though her eyes were filled with tears. She had never questioned or wondered about life's problems; while Ray—

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poor Ray—with depths in her nature of which Elsie never dreamed, or, in catching a glimpse of, was unable to understand, struggled and wrestled and fought her way to conclusions.

"Miss Gilmour," said Douglas, with a wealth of tenderness in his voice, "your father's reward is not yonder lonely grave; it is heaven gained, the battle won. Is that a guerdon to be lightly esteemed? His death, like his life, was glorious," he went on, with kindling eye, "untarnished by any thought of self. Do you think that now, he, seeing all things with clear vision, regrets that he gave up everything—by which you mean some elegant leisure, the society of cultured friends and credit at the bank—for his service in North China? Even in this life he had his reward. The virtues which you praise and which made him so unspeakably dear to you and others—these grew into full development because he chose not to make his own happiness the end of his being, but the happiness of others."

Douglas spoke with conviction. He was unconsciously unveiling the secret of his own life.

"But all this suffering," said Ray, "the slow torture, the persecution, I cannot find a clue to it. Surely a God of pity would not permit

Breaking Hearts

such things to happen to his beloved if he were omnipotent. The 'heavy and the weary weight of this unintelligible world' is crushing me."

"I cannot tell why it is," said Douglas, "that in every conflict of light with darkness there must be martyrs for the truth before the truth can be established. I only know that it is and always has been. God was not less powerful and less loving when he allowed Paul to be executed than when he sent his angel to deliver him from prison. And Dr. Gilmour had Paul's spirit. He was always ready to be bound or to die for the Lord Jesus."

At dusk Douglas and Wu went out into the grove on the hillside and dug a tiny grave, and into it, fearful of being detected in the act, they lowered the waxen figure of beautiful little Blossom. For years afterward, Elsie heard the hollow thud of the earth falling upon her darling, and to this day she vividly recalls the picture of the somber grove, with the dry wind making dirges through its branches.

Douglas rolled great stones over the grave to mark the spot. When all was finished, Elsie asked to be left alone in the darkness.

They had been in the temple only a short time when the carter came. It was Duke who went for Mrs. Andersen. He found her sitting by

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the grave, with her head resting wearily against a stone. As he drew near he heard her voice. She was praying. He paused, not daring to intrude upon her sorrow.

"O, Jesus!" she moaned. "I am so lonely, so desolate. Let me see my baby once more; just once. I think I could bear this grief if only I could feel her arms about my neck again; or if I could see her as she is at home with thee. Thou dost love the children. Pity me, and send relief. Has she found her father yet? I fear she will be lonely without me. She never was away from her mother a night in her life. O God! be merciful and lighten my grief. If I am praying wildly, forgive me; my heart is breaking."

A great pity that was akin to love thrilled in Duke's heart. He stooped over Elsie and murmured some incoherent words of comfort.

CHAPTER XVI

AT PAOTING

The four foreigners crowded into the cart, which was designed to carry only one, or two at most. What they suffered, cooped up for hours, cramped and wounded and heartsore, only those who have gone through a similar experience can understand.

Late in the afternoon of Wednesday, May the seventeenth, the houses of dusty Paoting came in sight.

They went to the house of Mr. P——, a missionary who had been Dr. Gilmour's friend. He was a Harvard graduate, and a gentleman through and through. His wife and little son had gone to America; but he welcomed the travelers to his home with the warmth with which foreigners in a strange country greet those of their own race.

"Come in, come in," he said cordially. "You look like a traveling hospital. Miss Gilmour, you have left your roses in Shansi. Dr. Gilmour and Mr. Andersen——" he began, intending to ask if they were following, when,

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warned by the delicate insight which inheres in fine natures, he checked himself.

"I've been expecting you," he went on. "I had a telegram from Mrs. Gilmour yesterday. She is anxious about you."

"Is she well? Has she received the telegram we sent?" asked Ray.

"I think her health is as usual. She mentioned that the last message that reached her from you was from Hwuy-luh," answered Mr. P——.

"We must get the earliest train to Peking," said Douglas. "When does it leave?"

"Not till to-morrow at two," said Mr. P——, "so you may as well be content till then."

"Are you well supplied with ready money, Mr. P——?" asked Douglas, when the others had gone to their rooms.

"Well enough to lend you some if you need it," he answered.

"We haven't five cash amongst us to get to Peking," said Douglas. "The security we can offer is such as few business men would care to accept."

"I'll take the risk," said Mr. P——, smiling and going to his private drawer.

"Where are Dr. Gilmour and Mr. Andersen and his beautiful little daughter?" asked Mr.

At Paoting

P——. "I was on the eve of questioning you before, but I feared the worst."

Douglas began to relate the sad story. When he told how they had left Dr. Gilmour he paused, his voice breaking with emotion.

Mr. P—— was deeply moved.

"Dr. Gilmour gone?" he said. "How fast our ranks are thinning! He always called out the best that was in those he met. Mrs. Gilmour is too frail to stand the shock of this news unharmed."

Douglas went on with his narration to the burial of beautiful little Blossom on the hillside beside the temple stocked with grinning idols. His sorrows swept over him afresh at the recital. He was overcome, and hid his face in his hands.

"I ask your pardon," he said, recovering himself. "She was so fair, so loving, and I really miss her as if she had been of my own kindred."

"When they were passing through here, my wife said Blossom's name was prophetic and that she would never ripen into the flower and fruit of womanhood. She scarcely seemed to belong to earth, with her sweet nature and her remarkable beauty. She was very fond of my boy, who was a happy, rollicking baby of nine

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months then. I can hear yet the echo of her merry laugh over his little pranks."

"We have had griefs enough, but we have had no time to sit down and weep over our losses," said Douglas.

"Where did you pick up your little Englishman?" asked Mr. P—. "He's scarcely the type to enlist as a missionary; to ride a thoroughbred in Hyde Park would suit him better."

"I met him first when I was studying in the old country," said Douglas. "Afterwards he came to China, in the civil service, and lately has been out with a party of surveyors. He heard we were mobbed at H—, and left the comparatively safe company of his party to come to us with some money."

"His heart is larger than his body, then," said Mr. P—.

"Yes, he's a generous friend, and as brave as a lion. His cynicism is only surface deep."

"I have kept you talking," said Mr. P—. "You must go and rest now. Your travels have told upon your frame."

"I will telegraph to Mrs. Gilmour first."

"Write out what you want to say and I will take it," answered Mr. P—. "I know the operator very well, and will see that it is transmitted at once."

At Paoting

Ray could not forbear laughing when she came into the drawing-room and saw Douglas and Duke. Mr. P—— had given them clean and whole clothes in place of their filthy rags. Mr. P—— was a man of average size, and Duke, who was small, appeared with trousers and coat sleeves conspicuously turned up, and wearing a white clerical tie. The old and dirty bandages had been replaced by new and clean ones, and the white straps across his forehead and eyebrows had a nun-like effect.

Douglas, who stood six feet four in his stockings, arrayed in Mr. P——'s garments was a sight to behold. The pantaloons came only a little below his knees—"high-water breeks"—Duke called them, and his arms and hands stretched so far out of his coat and shirt that he looked like "poor Smike" when he was being clothed by Mr. Squeers.

"My tailor has just been supplying me," said Duke, making Ray a sweeping court bow, during which one of his coat sleeves fell down over his hand and hid it from view.

"His work does him credit, I'm sure," said Ray, trying to stifle her mirth.

"Teufelsdröckh was a wise old philosopher," said Duke in a low tone to Ray. "Society is founded upon cloth. Our self-respect depends

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to a larger extent than we realize upon how well our 'man-milliner' does his work. Our vestments have a reflex influence upon us. There is a subtle essence of personality about each one's dress, and another, in swathing himself in them, becomes ridiculous. I feel less of a man now than I did in my dirty, ragged tweed suit."

"You are conscious of your raiment only because there is no more important issue than luncheon on hand just now. If some daring deed were to be attempted, you would instantly be as insensible to your 'clothes-thatch' as you are to your skin," said Ray.

As for Douglas, having once put on his attire, and being amused at the way his arms and legs protruded, he forgot all about it. Clothes were to him only for a covering.

"Dr. Medhurst is unconscious of his appearance," said Elsie to Ray. "I believe he doesn't know half the time what he has on."

"That's a sign of his superiority," said Duke. "Only great men have that characteristic. Just imagine Socrates scolding his tailor, or John Knox before Mary anxious about the becomingness of his waistcoat, or Abraham Lincoln at Gettysburg aware that his trousers were baggy!"

At Paoting

It was noticeable how the ludicrous and the sorrowful were mixed up in the daily experience of these wayfarers. Mr. P——'s rooms bore the evidence of refined taste. They brought so forcibly to Ray's mind the little home in Peking, nevermore to be gladdened by her father's presence, that she felt her lips quivering, and rose and went to the window to hide her tremor.

Douglas, ever watchful, disengaged himself after a little and came over to her. He was silent, but his unspoken sympathy meant much.

"Dr. Medhurst, how shall I ever tell mother?" she said, lifting her overflowing eyes to his. "It will be like piercing her heart with a sword. She loved father so passionately."

"When the need arises it will seem easy to speak."

"Have you father's letters to her and Paul safe?"

"Yes, I put them in oiled paper and bound them on my body next to my heart. No one could get them without first disposing of me."

The luncheon bell rang. It was the first well-appointed table to which they had sat down together since leaving the good mandarin Wang at N——.

"Life looks sweeter and self-preservation

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more of an imperative duty now that I am served again with linen and silver," said Duke.

"With the accessories of roast chicken and white bread," added Douglas.

"Mr. P——," said Douglas, "have you been menaced by the Boxers?"

"Nothing serious has transpired so far except ugly accounts of what has been happening in the outlying districts."

"Do you believe Paoting will suffer from their ravages?"

"I dare not hope it will be exempt when the demolition is so general. Those in the capital may be spared; outside there is little reason for confidence."

"Then you will be coming to Peking later?" said Douglas.

"No, I have weighed the matter, and have decided that my people and I will stand or fall together. I love them and they love me, and I cannot desert them now that trial is imminent. I am glad Mrs. P—— and my boy are over the seas."

"It is an unnecessary sacrifice," said Duke. "You have stayed among these people and away from civilization so long that you have become morbid."

At Paoting

"No, I'm not morbid," said Mr. P—— brightly. "I'll live as long as I can. But what would you think of a father who forsook his weak children at the hour of their bitter distress? My people are my children, only less dear to me than my own baby, and shall I not share their sorrows?"

Duke was silent, though he disagreed with him. No man can interfere with the questions of conscience of another.

How, a little more than a month from this, on June 30th, Mr. P——, with all the missionaries in Paoting, died for their fidelity to their Chinese fellow-Christians, the history of that dark period records.

CHAPTER XVII

HOME AGAIN

The incommodious train whistled and jerked itself out of sandy Paoting, and aboard were some first-class passengers who were scarcely able to realize that, after having been so "sore bestead," they were at last drawing near to their goal—the Imperial City. For three of them at least, there were loving hearts and watching eyes and eager welcomes waiting.

"I tell you, Douglas, I'm about tired of this knockabout life," said Duke, as they stood on the platform of the car. "The rest of you are necessary to some one's happiness. There would be a blank in somebody's heart if you dropped out, but if I had 'shuffled off this mortal coil' on this confounded journey—I half wish I had—no one would have put on sackcloth and ashes. I'm going back to Peking, and there isn't a soul to whom it makes any difference that I will turn up. No heart would be sadder if I didn't. Even Wu here has relatives who are bound to him."

Home Again

Peking at last! Paul was at the station to meet them. His sharp, bright eyes spied them before they saw him, and he took off his cap and shouted, "Hurrah! Hurrah!"

"How glad I am to see you, Ray! You're as pale as a wraith. What funny clothes you have on, Douglas! Are short trousers the style in Shansi? I thought you'd never get here. Why, where's father, Ray, and Blossom?"

"Oh, Paul! we left father in Shansi. He'll never be with us again. We'll have to be more to each other now that we can't have him. Spare me, Paul. Don't ask me any more till we get home."

But Paul didn't hear her plea. He hadn't grasped that his father was dead. Death was a thing so alien to his bounding health.

"Ray," he said, clutching her arm fiercely, "father—tell me—it's not so—you don't mean——"

But Douglas took the lad aside and bade him be a man and restrain himself until the carts had taken them home.

Ray cordially invited Duke to come with them; but he, rightly divining that a stranger would be an intruder in the sorrow-stricken household, declined and sought out his acquaintances at the British Legation.

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Inside the door of the compound stood Mrs. Gilmour, very thin and delicate-looking. She wore a cream gown with pale green trimmings—Ray remembered her father had been fond of it. The scent of sweet peas filled the air—there was a huge bunch on the mantel. It was Dr. Gilmour's favorite flower. His easy chair was drawn up by the side of the table on which his mail was neatly laid, awaiting his return.

Ray took it all in at a glance. Her mother had arranged everything according to the liking of her father—and he had not come—could never come.

"Oh, mother!" she burst forth. "God pity you and all of us. We didn't bring father with us."

"Not bring him. Where is Graham? Tell me everything—everything at once," said Mrs. Gilmour. "I can't bear suspense. He is not—he is coming——"

"It chokes me, Douglas. You tell her, I can't," said Ray.

"I have a letter here that he sent you," said Douglas. "Will you read that or shall we tell you about him first?"

"The letter—the letter," she said. "Is he living? Ah, I read the news in your face. Oh,

Home Again

God! it is not so—it can't be. Tell me, is he alive?"

Douglas shook his head.

With a bitter cry she took the precious sheet and went to her room.

It was Douglas who told Paul the story of his father's last hours, and gave him the written message. Paul brushed away the tears during the narration, having a boy's feeling that it was unmanly to cry, and then went up to his workshop in the attic and lay on the floor with his head on the shavings and wrestled with his first real sorrow. There Ray found him later, and cemented with tender words the bonds between them.

After a time Mrs. Gilmour sent for Ray. "I must know all from the beginning, now," she said.

She lay prostrate during the account, numbed by the very weight of her pain.

"It was meet that he should die a brave, unselfish death," she said proudly at the close. "In his lifetime he had no peer. But I am oppressed. I cannot get used to it. I must have time. My sorrow is so new. Leave me alone until the morning, Ray."

That night was Mrs. Gilmour's Gethsemane. Fierce despair, almost crushing out her faith

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in God, grappled with her soul. Afterward she bore witness, sayings of her husband came to her mind and steadied her. She recalled that "death would mean just a joyous home-going after a long term at school;" "Let us be thankful we have had so many happy years together;" "Death will not separate us, beloved. It cannot. Love like ours is eternal." Musing, she was comforted. It was as if an angel had come and ministered unto her. But next day those who loved her noted with uneasiness that in twenty-four hours her youth seemed to have fled. From that time her face wore the pathetic resignation of the old who have suffered.

Li, the imperturbable cook, soon begged for an interview with Mrs. Gilmour. His manner was oily and bland, and Mrs. Gilmour, who had reason to dread Li's propitiatory moods, shrank from meeting him. However, Li was urgent and would not be denied.

After talking the merest commonplaces for a quarter of an hour, Li came to the point.

"My worthy master," he said in broken English, "I have heard of him. You will not leave his honorable body in the far-away. You will bury him in a sunny spot where the feng-shui men show you."

Home Again

"Yes, Li, as soon as traveling is safe again I shall send for him and lay him here where I can visit the grave often."

"Why wait?" asked Li. "My brother and I go for him quick. Lung Te show us the way."

"You, Li? Do you not know that such a journey is most perilous now? It is only a week ago that you put up the ancestral tablets and the kitchen-god in your house, and gave me warning that you would not work for foreigners any longer because it was too dangerous."

"Yes," said Li, showing his teeth and speaking as if he saw no difference between his past and present conduct. "My master, he fine man. He understand the doctor-business well and cure my son. When he die he must be buried."

To be without proper interment was, in Li's mind, a circumstance too deplorable to be considered in connection with one for whom he felt respect.

"Does your younger brother consent to go with you, Li?"

"He have to, if I say. I am elder brother," said Li, with superb confidence in his authority. "My wife, she cook for you when I am gone, and my son, he carry the water."

"I am touched that you should offer to go,

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Li. I am sure you propose it because you loved your master. I will talk to Dr. Medhurst and if he thinks it advisable I will consent. Nothing you could do for me would mean so much."

It was agreed that Li and his brother should make the quest. An ample sum of money was entrusted to Li; and—though he had pilfered from Dr. Gilmour's household everything from a silver spoon to an empty tin can; though on the trip he told innumerable lies, swearing whenever challenged that he was, or was not, a Boxer, that he had never seen a foreigner, that the body reposing in the coffin on his shoulder was his father's, or whatever else the occasion demanded—no cash of that money was used wrongfully, and when Li returned to Peking after the siege, the remainder, without diminution, was handed back to Mrs. Gilmour. So complicated and inexplicable are the standards of Chinese ethics.

CHAPTER XVIII

IN THE DRAWING ROOM

The travelers had been home a few days when one evening Duke came over to the mission compound. Douglas conducted him to the house. At the drawing-room door they paused a moment unnoticed.

The homelikeness of the scene went to Duke's heart. The room, a large square apartment, was lighted by a lamp whose brightness was toned down by a shade of Chinese porcelain. Ray was at the piano playing some plaintive, dreamy music. Her mother lay on the great old-fashioned sofa, her cheeks, where the color used to come and go, were an ashy white, and her eyes, even behind her glasses, were preternaturally bright and full of unspoken sorrow. Paul was beside her, reading. He paused now and again to give her a caressing look. Near the lamp, with the mellow radiance falling full upon her face, sat Elsie. She was sewing languidly. The night was warm and she wore a thin white dress, which enhanced her rich-tinted Southern

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beauty. In the glow of the light she seemed the central figure of a picture which the shadowy background of the room threw into full relief. A lovely woman had never failed to please Duke, and he was not blind to the attraction of the one before him.

When Duke was perceived he had warm greetings, and Ray led him over to her mother.

"I am pleased to welcome you to our home, Mr. Meredith," said Mrs. Gilmour in her gentle way. "I have heard so much of your loyalty and bravery that I feel as if we had been acquainted a long time."

"I feel like appropriating even an undeserved reputation since it wins me your esteem," said Duke, instantly drawn to her.

Douglas had to go back to the Dispensary, and Duke was both charming and charmed in the little circle. The simplicity, the culture, the home-feeling, made an atmosphere he breathed with delight. He was a musical fellow, and it was not long before he was bending over the piano with Ray, asking for this and that, and even venturing a song or two.

"Do you not sing, Miss Gilmour?" he asked.

"Not a bit," she replied. "Mrs. Anderson has the only voice amongst us. She has not sung since . . . since . . . " Ray's memory

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fitted back to Blossom and the nightmare journey. "I wish she would," she continued.

Ray played on, and Duke went over to Elsie. What he said no one heard, but she laid aside her sewing and went to the piano. Soon her rich voice rose and fell in "Angels Ever Bright and Fair." She varied the pronouns, singing, "Take, O take her to Thy care." They guessed she was thinking of Blossom.

Duke was thrilled. "What a voice!" he said to himself. "It should have been cultivated." But in the magnificent voice, as in her beautiful face, there was something lacking—an animation, a magnetism, some emotional sensibility—one hardly knew what. The calm about her was like that about a tree laden with exquisite blossoms, which never swayed to and fro, coquetting with the winds; or like a radiant humming bird bereft of its skimming and darting motions.

A silky little spaniel ran into the room and jumped on Paul's lap, sure of attention from its boy master.

"This is my dog, Mr. Meredith," said Paul, carrying it over to Duke and introducing it proudly. "I call him Beauty."

"He is well named," said Duke. "Why, really! No—yes, it is Augur and no mistake."

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"Augur! Augur!" called Duke. The dog wagged his tail in recognition of his name.

"We have met before, you see," said Duke. "Out in Shansi. Did Dr. Medhurst ever tell you about his exciting time in saving him?"

"No," said Paul. "He never talks about any of his adventures."

"Augur, or Beauty, as you have named him, came to us from nobody knows where, when we were between Ping-ting and Shou-yang. He became attached to the cook, who fed him on a foreign diet of canned meat and soda biscuits. It was in January. There had been a thaw, and it had frozen again, until everything was one mass of glare ice. We were traveling on the mountain track with gorges hundreds of feet deep on one side. Some of us dismounted and crept along, hanging to the edge of the escarpment, rather than trust to the indifferent mules. In the midst of our slippery tactics we heard a bark, a yell, and a howl all in one, echoing and reverberating, and about thirty feet down in the chasm we discovered Augur sitting on a little ledge, clinging to some icy underbrush and making the most piteous noises. It was dangerous to attempt anything in the way of rescue, but Dr. Medhurst fastened some comforters to a rope and lowered

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them, hoping Augur would cling to the pile and be drawn up. But Augur hadn't intellect enough to grasp what was meant, and, like some humans when in misfortune, refused to do anything but sit still and whine. We decided we'd have to go on and leave him to his fate. As the cook remarked, Augur couldn't stay there long and when once he fell into that depth he'd never know what had happened to him.

"About a quarter of a mile after, we stopped for dinner. Dr. Medhurst couldn't eat, and at last he said, 'I can't stand it, Duke. I'll have to go back and see what I can do for Augur. I wouldn't be able to sleep, because I'd hear him bark all the time.' I tried to dissuade him from such a fool's errand, but one might as well have talked philosophy to Augur for all the impression it made. He didn't want anything said to the rest of the men, but helped himself to a long chain, made some creepers for his boots from the blade of his pocket-knife and started. I didn't offer to go with him. I'd rather have faced an army of Cosacks than have tried that glassy route again. When the men missed Dr. Medhurst I told them where he'd gone, and, of course, we waited for him. In about an hour and a half he

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appeared with Augur licking his hands and face in infatuated style. The men made a good deal of sport of the doctor, but he didn't care a fig."

"How did he rescue Augur?" asked Paul.

"He attached the chain to a stout tree on the bank and then swung down hand over hand."

"That's just like him," said Paul, admiringly. "Now I know what he meant when he said the other day his favorite occupation was 'helping lame dogs over stiles.'"

"That is how I became acquainted with him," said Duke. "I was one of the lame dogs he helped seven years ago."

"Seven years ago—that's before he came to Peking," said Ray in surprise. "Did you know Dr. Medhurst then?"

"Yes, I met him first when he was taking his post-graduate course in Edinburgh. I was up shooting in the Trossachs. He might have had any position he liked in his profession if he had remained in the old country."

"What's that?" asked Douglas, coming into the room in time to hear the last sentence.

"I was just saying Dr. Thingumbob, of the College—I forget the old bear's name—would have made your fortune for you if you'd con-

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sented to remain with him instead of throwing away your life here."

"Throwing away my life here! What a speech! What are you doing yourself, pray?"

"I? Oh, primarily, I'm here in the interests of commerce; the noble nation of shopkeepers to which I belong demands my service; secondarily, because China now surpasses India as a dumping-ground for superfluous younger sons. I'm here to make my fortune, and in spite of my present impecunious trousers pockets, I'll do it—and when I do, a long farewell to the Orient."

"Men of your ilk are so short-sighted," said Douglas. "You look at things through a fog, and they loom up out of all proportion. If a man exhausts his energies to gain a few span-gles and plumes, and struts around in his gaudy trappings for a little before he dies, you call him successful. But if another devotes himself to the eternal welfare of his fellow-men he is throwing away his life, forsooth."

"With what becoming modesty you insist that you and your kind are the only right-thinking mortals, Douglas—the salt of the earth," said Duke lazily. "But such vehemence is unnecessary. I'd rather admit your claims—in such warm weather—than dispute them."

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"Is Mr. Meredith in jest or in earnest in his queer speeches, Douglas?" said Paul, after Duke had taken his leave.

"Both, I think," answered Douglas.

"Ray says you are rather too fond of preaching your gospel of giving up," said Paul.

"Paul!" ejaculated Ray in dismay, feeling as if she would like to shake him. "How could you? If I said anything so unkind, Dr. Medhurst, it was before . . . before . . . that journey, before I knew you as I do now."

CHAPTER XIX

DOUGLAS AND RAY BREAKFAST ALONE

The next morning Ray was alone with Dr. Medhurst. One of the pretty and unselfish things this girl did in her mother's failing health was to pour the coffee for the comers to the early breakfast. The "boy" brought in the mail. For her there was a parcel from Rome, for the Doctor a letter from Edinburgh.

The color stirred in Ray's cheeks as she untied the strings. Out from its many wrappings came a beautiful water-color, a Madonna with calm, unfathomable eyes, having a haunting resemblance to Elsie. Underneath, in delicate letters, was the artist's name, Frank Atterbury.

Ray looked at it silently while Douglas read his letter; then she passed it to him.

"How exquisite!" exclaimed Douglas.

"Do you remember," asked Ray, "the afternoon Mr. Atterbury sketched this of Mrs. Andersen? Up on the hills, you know, when the sinking sun made a halo about her head.

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That was several years ago, when she was only twenty. Do you not think it is very like her as she was then?"

"Yes and no," said Douglas. "The features are true to life, but the expression is idealized. The artist has put into the face a glint of 'the light that never was on sea or land.' Your mother's eyes and yours have at times depths like that; Mrs. Andersen's—never."

"This mail has brought you an English letter, I see," she said, purposely changing the subject.

"Yes," he answered. "The doctor whose assistant I was in Edinburgh is offering me his practise if I will come to him. He is growing old."

"And you—I know your mind so well—it is not even a temptation to you. You'd rather live among these egotistic Chinese."

"You are wrong," he replied abruptly. "It is a temptation to me, a regular devil's lure, baited with the only consideration likely to move me."

"What is that?" she asked.

"The prospect to secure ease and congenial surroundings for those I love," he answered.

His meaning was unmistakable, and she

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dropped her head and toyed with her coffee cup.

"But I have fought this out before, and have resolved" . . . he said steadily, after a pause.

"Ah! you needn't tell me—I know," she said. "But the Chinese don't for a moment appreciate the sacrifice you make."

"I hate the term sacrifice applied to me," said Douglas explosively, "as if I were an object of pity, like a beggar in the Peking streets, gaining sympathy because of his sores. I am making no more sacrifice than any honest man who finds out what God intended him to do and who has a chance to do it. That is, I mean, as far as my own inclinations lie. But, as I said before, to renounce what I have in my power to give to others, that is difficult."

"I feel as if—living in Peking—the best part of me is stifled and benumbed," said Ray.

"The best part—that is . . . ?" said Douglas, interrogatively.

"You lay bare my weakness with a masterly hand," said Ray. "I meant the mental and social side, though of course I know, I've been too well-trained not to know, that my spiritual side really is the part most worthy of consideration. I'm not what I ought to be—not

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what you are. Practising self-denial is easy for you."

"I'm not practising self-denial in the sense you mean," answered Douglas. "I'm doing what I like best to do—alleviating human misery. I'm no more heroic than Frank is. He loves art; I, materia medica. He has to deny himself many social enjoyments that he may perfect himself in skilful touch and harmony of color. I deny myself for my profession. Life is made up of relinquishing one thing that we may have another."

"It isn't what—but where, Dr. Medhurst. Frank is in Rome surrounded by all that is classic and beautiful."

"And if I live, I shall be in Peking, surrounded by more physical misery to the square foot than any place within my ken. We are each in the place where opportunities are greatest; each in a voluntary banishment."

"Decisions in life seem easy for a man," said Ray, "but for a woman it is different. Our aim in life, our surroundings, we do not mark out for ourselves, saying, 'This am I most fitted for; to this end was I born; here was I intended to be'—but they are blindly settled for us by the choice of the man we marry. No matter what our bent may be, to be happy we

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must be in sympathy with the career of our husbands."

"Yes," he said sadly. "It is that which makes some of the tragedies of life."

He rose and went out, and Ray knew he felt hopeless; that she had hurt him.

The thought gave her pain. He was too good, too noble, to wound carelessly, but what could she do when in her memory lived all that passionate love for Frank? Yet the sight of Frank's painting had not sent throbbing emotions through her as it used to do. Why was it? Was her love weakening? No; she would not let it, she told herself, striving to summon up the old pain. But, in spite of herself, its ache was ameliorated by the vision of a gaunt face with deep, kindly gray eyes.

She fell into a reverie.

If Douglas accepted that Edinburgh offer, would she be tempted by a life of variety and gaiety such as might be led there? She would delight in it until the novelty wore off; she was by nature formed for it. And yet, true woman that she was, craving these things, she knew that, were Dr. Medhurst to leave for her sake a place where he believed with all his heart his duty to lie, and believed that for him there was no other, she would respect him less,

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not more. "I daresay even Cleopatra would have held Antony in higher esteem if he had stayed fighting at his post in the battle of Actium than she did when he deserted, and followed her," she mused.

CHAPTER XX

DUKE AND ROSE FRANKLIN

From the twenty-eighth of May there was great excitement in Peking. The Boxers came by thousands into its gates, and the Emperor's troops did not hinder them. Douglas was thoroughly alarmed. A patient of his, a Manchu of royal blood, had warned him that no foreigner's life was safe in the Imperial City—the Boxer scheme aimed at no less than the rooting out from China of every foreign man, woman, and child, of every foreign sympathizer, of every one infected with foreign sentiments. He hinted darkly that mighty forces were behind the Boxers, forces which would enable them to carry out their projects.

Faithful servants, also, communicated their fears to Douglas. Daily into the compound there swarmed from the country roundabout refugees who had fled for their lives, and who told a sickening tale of maltreatment and cruelty.

On Monday afternoon, June 4th, Duke came over to see Douglas. His face was radiant, and,

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as an added proof of his excitement, his drawl was more marked than usual.

"Offer me congratulations, old fellow," he said, entering a room which bore traces of hasty packing. "I've got a fortune."

"Have you?" said Douglas, skeptically, "has Li Hung Chang given you a pension for life, or did you find a pot of gold under the wall of the British Legation?"

"No. My merits have found recognition in another quarter," answered Duke, coolly picking up a beautiful copy of Thorwaldsen's "Morning" from a chair and seating himself. "My aunt has died—requiescat in pace—and left me an estate in the Midland Counties worth £2000 a year. Hand me a fan. This climate is as hot as the lower regions. Why don't you look enthusiastic over my streak of luck? Telling good news to you is like letting off fireworks in rain."

"Of course I'm glad," said Douglas, "but I see difficulties in the way of your coming into possession. Do you know the railroad between here and Tientsin is torn up?"

"To be sure," said Duke, "but it can be laid down again. Four hundred and fifty marines have come from Tientsin into the Legations. You don't suppose these dirty, undisciplined

Duke and Rose Franklin

Chinese soldiers who carry a fan and an umbrella in the daytime, and a lantern at night, will be a match for our troops in the long run, do you?"

"I hope not," said Douglas, "but I've seen securer positions than that of the foreigners in Peking these days. If the Imperial troops joined the Boxers and the Empress Dowager smiled approval . . ."

"Don't croak. That astute old sorceress is not unversed in International Law."

"Did you know the railway to Paoting was demolished?"

"Oh, that is pitiful. Mr. P—— will be in great peril—a thorough gentleman, too Quixotic for this look-out-for-yourself age. But to return to my change of fortune, isn't this a happy windfall for me?"

"Yes! it's cheering. I did not know you were an heir-apparent. How did it happen?"

"My family history is not very edifying," said Duke, "so I'll spare you and be brief. My father's only sister was a prim old maid, who was always unreasonably angry with any one who married. When my father so far forgot himself as to commit the offense for the third time her fury became almost insanity and she vented it upon me, the unlucky offspring

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of the match. My half-brother, Lionel, poor beggar, was her favorite and has spent years of his life in toadying to her whims——”

“What will not men made in the image of God do—for a consideration?” interjected Douglas explosively.

“Just so,” said Duke. “Shortly before my aunt’s death, however, there was an outbreak between Lionel and herself, and in a huff she altered her will, and left her property to me. What a difference it will make in my character when I go home,” he went on, satirically. “My acquaintances, who had quite forgotten me when I was a dunned devil without a sixpence, will remember and look up Meredith, the landed proprietor; mammas who used to frown at their daughters if they danced with me will decoy me to their drawing-rooms; my brother will conceal his dislike and come down to enjoy the excellent shooting at the Manor; poor old father, who has been accustomed to swear roundly at me and my behavior, will shower blessings upon my head; tradesmen will fawn and sycophants flatter. Because why? Bless your heart, because I’ve money. Yellow guineas cover more sins than charity. You’re unworldly, Douglas, and know very little of Vanity Fair.”

Duke and Rose Franklin

"I know more than you think. Human nature is pretty much the same in Piccadilly or in the East End. There are those in every station who do not measure life by a money value, who are superior to their money, and could do without it if need be."

"It must be so, 'Plato! thou reasonest well,' " said Duke, fanning himself languidly. "Only in case you, being virtuous and poor, should fall in love with a fair daughter, virtuous and rich, if you would escape the scorn of papa and mamma, put off the declaration of your passion until you have replenished your fortunes."

"When you return to England, Duke, you have a chance to make a fresh start. You will not allow the old sins to have the mastery over you, will you?" said Douglas.

"No! my preacher friend," said Duke. "I'll right about face. I'll be the soberest, prosiest landlord that ever stalked over his estate in cowhide boots. Run for Parliament, no doubt, on the platform of moral reform."

He got up and walked about, singing softly to an improvised tune,

"I've often wished that I had clear
For life, two thousand pounds a year,
A handsome house to lodge a friend,
A river at my garden's end."

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"To discourse on the vanity and fleetingness of riches, Douglas, sounds well—if you haven't any; but a settled two thousand a year is really a source of happiness to a tramp who has knocked about as I have. What a fool you are, Douglas, a man six feet four, with a lucrative profession, to stay in this filthy spot, cursed by heat and fleas and mosquitoes, and lying and ingratitude and small pay, when you might make yourself comfortable in a civilized land."

"Don't abuse the soil that has provided you bread and butter for the last two years," said Douglas, smiling.

"Nor the friend who stood by me during that time, why don't you add?" replied Duke. "Ah! Douglas, when I say farewell to you I shall not look upon your like again, more's the pity."

Mrs. Gilmour met Duke at the door as he was leaving.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Meredith," she said. "I am glad to see you. I did not know you were here." Her eyes were filled with tears.

"You are troubled," he said. "We foreigners in Peking dread we hardly know what."

"It isn't for ourselves I'm concerned just now, Mr. Meredith. There are others in a worse case than we. I've a distant relative at Hsaio Chuang, she's not much related, either—

Duke and Rose Franklin

our grandmothers were sisters—but I love her dearly. I wrote her to come to us at Peking; but she's determined to stay in Hsaio Chuang with the women and girls she has been teaching. Here is her answer, Douglas. Read it and let us plan to do something for her."

Douglas read aloud:

HSAIO CHUANG, June 4th, 1900.

DEAR MARY:—

The messenger has just brought your note and is waiting for a reply. How could I rest, even if I came to Peking? Think what my women and girls are exposed to! The Boxers are practising right here in the village and have threatened our lives already. Last night the Taotai, whose daughter I have been teaching, came and with tears implored me to leave, since he could not protect me. He said he would give me an escort if I went alone, but he dared not permit me to take the Christians with me, for his own life was in danger because he was known to be friendly to foreigners. So I have settled down to waiting for the end.

I am nervous and disquieted, and find it hard to write, yet I have an underlying peace. We may escape, and if not . . .

May God comfort you in your loneliness. In all this I feel He is good and plans only wisely.

Yours in haste,

ROSE FRANKLIN.

P. S.—My papers are with my lawyers in Manchester.

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"Her remaining there is madness," said Duke. "Wu, the faithful, and I will go and bring her to you."

"I'm afraid it will be of no use. She's so devoted to the women. And you shouldn't risk yourself, either."

"I'll be safe enough," said Duke, carelessly. "Hsaio Chuang is only about twenty-seven li away and I'll be back by morning. Write a message and I'll start at sundown."

"Duke," said Douglas, when Mrs. Gilmour had withdrawn, "do you know that to go to Hsaio Chuang now is no pleasure trip? Life is sweet to a man who has newly fallen heir to £2000 a year."

"It wouldn't be if I turned a coward in my good fortune."

"Your ethics, Duke, would do credit to a knight of chivalrous times."

"Thanks. To attempt to rescue a lady in distress, my countrywoman at that, doesn't call for an extravagant type of virtue."

"Have you a revolver, Duke?"

"Yes, a first-class one. Will shoot seven times."

"I would like to borrow one."

"Happy to oblige you. To whom do you wish to show peace and good will?"

Duke and Rose Franklin

"I had rather a scare last night, Duke. I had a light burning in my room. I awoke about two o'clock this morning and saw in the hall a man standing on tiptoe, reaching up after a sword in a queer Japanese scabbard, which Dr. Gilmour had picked up somewhere. The thief had been to the dining-room, for in his left hand he had the coffee-pot and some napkin rings. I made a dash, but he heard me and fled. I fell headlong in the entrance door over a string the wily rascal had placed there to trip up any pursuer, and when I picked myself up my man was gone. Property is not too well guarded at present by city officials. That fellow or some of his confederates may return to-night. I didn't say anything to the others, but I don't like to leave the premises. I'm loath to see you set out for Hsaio Chuang. That road is horrible; stones scooped out into perpetual hollows, and your wounds are not healed yet. If you'll stay here on guard I'll go in your stead."

"Couldn't think of it. I might get tripped up myself and have a scarred cheek-bone like yours. Have you seen the 'fair ladye' I'm in search of?"

"Miss Franklin? Yes, often. Her home was in Manchester. She is about forty, I should

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judge; rich and cultured, and possessed of a most attractive personality. She came to Peking some years ago to visit Mrs. Gilmour, and, to the astonishment of those who knew her, stayed, and has been giving her time and money to help Chinese women. For two years she has been down in that filthy village, enduring—God knows what. She's very human, gets homesick for companionship, and the constant suspicion and misinterpretation weigh on her—then she comes up here for a breathing-spell and goes back bravely to her work; though, as she supports herself, there are no ties which bind her but her own love and pity.

"Safe journey and speedy return," said Douglas at parting.

"The Boxers would be doing my brother Lionel a good turn if they disposed of me. This is a mixed-up world, isn't it, Douglas, where one stands, by no choice of his own, in the way of the happiness of another?"

The next morning Duke appeared again at the mission compound. The house wore the air of desolation which packing up gives. He found the family out in the dismantled dining-room. When he made his appearance they saw there were tired shadows under his eyes,

Duke and Rose Franklin

and the lines about his mouth were drawn with fatigue or pain.

"I have returned from Hsaio Chuang alone, Mrs. Gilmour," he said, gravely.

"It was good of you to go. The journey has wearied you. Would not Miss Franklin come?" said Mrs. Gilmour.

"I was too late. I found out what I have to tell you from a refugee. Yesterday the Taotai at great risk sent to Miss Franklin warning her to start immediately. She gathered her class and they began a hurried flight. The Boxers were on their track and they hastened for their lives. But there was one girl who was lame. She could not keep pace with the rest, and Miss Franklin lingered behind with her. When the Boxers were upon them and she saw there was no escape, she put her arms around the lame girl's neck and—faced them. I need not tell you further," he said gently. "Like Dr. Gilmour, she has joined the 'noble army of martyrs.'"

Mrs. Gilmour was sobbing, and there were tears in Ray's eyes. Duke, too, was moved, and ashamed of his emotion.

Douglas motioned to him, and the two retired to the empty drawing-room.

"I'm worked up, Douglas, all right. I don't

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often think—it's an unpleasant thing for me—but there is something about the fidelity of Christians in this ghastly time that is convincing. If the Boxers don't cut short my good resolutions I believe I'll be a better man."

"Miss Franklin would think she had not died in vain if she heard you say that, Duke."

"I wish you'd look at this wound in my arm, Douglas. It took to bleeding again in one of the concussions I got in that jolting cart. That road is simply monstrous. Traveling on it ought to be reserved for capital punishment for criminals."

"Come into the dispensary and I'll find bandages," said Dr. Medhurst.

"Why, you're black and blue all over," he said, examining the wound.

"Of course I am," said Duke. "We were chased part of the way. Our drivers whipped up, and I was tossed around in that cart till I felt like a toad under a harrow. Is the wound serious?"

"It will be if you don't keep quiet and give it a chance to heal. I'm going to put you in bed and you are to stay here until to-morrow."

"Did you catch your thief, Douglas?"

"No, I watched until daylight and never caught a sight of him."

Duke and Rose Franklin

The next night Duke, occupying Dr. Medhurst's room, was awakened by a scuffle in the hall, followed by the sound of low voices in earnest conversation. He was about to rise when the sounds died away and he drowsily turned over and forgot all about it.

"I collared my midnight visitor, Duke," said Douglas in the morning.

"Did you? Where is he?"

"I let him go," said Douglas.

"That is like your misguided benevolence. You turned him loose to damage some other man's property," answered Duke.

"I hope not. He's an acquaintance of yours. I will give you sixty seconds to guess who it is."

"The saints forbid that I should slander any of my acquaintances so."

"What would you say if I told you it was your servant Wu?"

"Say you had been dreaming. Wu is as honest as a Bank of England clerk."

"It was he, nevertheless. I pounced upon him laden with spoils. He was covered with shame, not because he had stolen, but because he would 'lose his face' to you. He explained that two years ago his father and mother died within a short time. The funerals were ex-

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pensive because those who came brought so much less than they ate that he was a ruined man, and would have to abandon his home unless something intervened to save it. The only feasible project was to sell his three daughters, and, being a humane man, he revolted from the thought. Seeing the packing here, he concluded we would not miss a few articles in the confusion and they would be a help to him. He begged me not to tell you, saying that he had served you honestly, but I didn't feel bound to promise him."

"Poor Wu!" said Duke. "He was always so uniformly cheerful I did not know he was caught in the toils of debt, like myself. He has been brought up upon the precept, 'Thou shalt not be found stealing,' instead of the English version. He has told me that at his home he and his brother have to watch their millet crops when they are ripening every night, for the neighbors steal up and stealthily carry away all they can lay their hands on. If they dare appeal to the magistrate a lawsuit ensues and the yamen empties the pockets of both the litigants. Glorious country of law and justice! Men are content in it to bear the ills they have rather than fly to others that they know not of. But what are you going to do to Wu?"

Duke and Rose Franklin

Put him in the cangue or flog him with bamboo rods?"

"Neither of those methods would make him repentant or save his home and daughters. Twenty taels of silver would redeem his property and give him a chance to start a self-respecting life instead of drifting into the criminal or beggar class."

"And you think I might pay it, don't you? Well, I may, but if I were going to stay in China I wouldn't do a thing of the sort. If I once got a reputation as a charitable foreigner with a respectable income, I'd be besieged from morning till night by penniless widows with eight small children to support, or farmers whose holdings had been washed away by the Yellow River, or opium-eaters who had nothing to buy opium with, or men who had more taxes than land, or misery in any one of the ten thousand forms that assail this overpopulated country."

CHAPTER XXI

AMERICAN METHODIST MISSION COMPOUND

It was the eighth of June. Through the streets of Peking little bands of foreign men, women, and children, attended by servants and carts carrying their property, were wending their way.

Crowds of Chinese, sullen but silent, lined the roads. Hatred with no attempt at concealment was so plainly written on their faces that the foreigners looked and shuddered.

The little bands were made up of all the missionaries in Peking. It was unsafe for them to remain scattered, now that the Boxers had possession of the city, and they were congregating in the American Methodist Mission Compound.

It was large and nearest to the Legations. The chapel could be fortified and could probably withstand a siege of the Boxers. It was situated, however, only one hundred yards from the wall between the North and South cities. If the Imperial Army openly joined the Boxers and took up their position on the wall

American Methodist Mission Compound

they could riddle the chapel with cannon. Then—what? Nobody knew, and few dared to think.

The Methodist Compound that day was a scene of unutterable confusion. Crowded into its precincts were twenty missionaries with their wives and children, making seventy in number; one hundred and twenty schoolgirls not yet sent to their homes, and countless Christian refugees, haggard and woebegone.

The mass wandered up and down or sat dejectedly on piles of baggage.

Pathetic sights greeted the eye. A man of fifty came in, carrying on his back his crippled mother of three score and ten; a boy of eleven was nursing with awkward tenderness his brother of two, both, alas! were orphans; a mild-mannered Bible woman was soothing a black-eyed girl weeping over the slaughter of her kindred.

The missionaries hurried about until midnight, finding beds, food, and in some cases raiment, for this helpless host.

The next twelve days were filled with ceaseless work. Committees were formed, committees to superintend the fortifications, the food and water supply, the fuel supply, the marshaling of workers, and lastly a fire patrol.

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The women sewed steadily upon the sand-bags used for strengthening the defenses.

The Gilmours and Dr. Medhurst occupied two rooms in the dwelling near the chapel. Mrs. Andersen had gone over to the British Legation to act as nurse.

"Mother, where are you?" shouted Paul, tramping in when they had been in the compound a few days. "I want you to come and see a poor little orphan from Hsiao Chuang, whose sister went to Miss Franklin's school."

She went out with him. The yard was filled with people, and tents had been put up for the native Christians.

Paul piloted his mother along until they came to a bedraggled, half-alive lad about nine years of age.

"This is Ming, mother," he said.

"Are none of your relatives here, Ming?" asked Mrs. Gilmour, kindly.

"I haven't any left alive," said the boy with numb sadness.

"Tell mother how it was, Ming," said Paul.

The little fellow seemed glad of a sympathetic listener.

"One day the Boxers came to our house," he said, "and we all fled through the back door. We went to the home of a cousin of our father's

American Methodist Mission Compound

and they kept us for a few hours, but the baby cried, and people got to know we were there, and we had to leave lest we should involve the cousin. There were eight of us, so we divided into two bands that we might not be observed. My eldest brother went with my mother and the baby, and my father took the rest of us. When we got out into the street we were surrounded by Boxers. They asked my father if he was a Christian, and he said 'yes.' Then they made him and my brothers kneel in a circle, but a man by me said, 'This little boy isn't one of them,' and I stood still. The Boxers made ready to thrust my relatives through with their bayonets, when the same man who had spoken before bent down and whispered, 'Run, run.' I turned down an alley and ran on and on, I didn't know where. At last it grew dark and I hid behind a stack of bamboo poles and went to sleep. In the morning I found my way back home, hoping perhaps my mother and brother might have escaped, but our house was burned to the ground, and the neighbors told me all our family had been killed. Even the cousin who sheltered us was not spared, though he was not a Christian. A kind woman gave me my breakfast and a few cash and told me to go away

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where I wasn't known or I would be killed, too. I met some others coming here and I followed them."

"Poor boy!" said Mrs. Gilmour. "You look half-starved. Paul will bring you some soup for your dinner."

It was a cloudless summer day, scorching hot. Paul and his mother sauntered about the compound. The spaniel, Beauty, ran at their heels. They came upon Dr. Medhurst, engaged with a number of Chinese in digging bricks out of a walk and closing in a gateway.

"What are those holes for, Douglas?" asked Paul.

"For rifle shooting."

"How ominous it sounds," said Mrs. Gilmour.

"We're more than a match for them, aren't we?" asked Paul.

"We might defy the Boxers, but not the Manchus stationed there——"

He pointed to the wall between the North and South cities. Even as he spoke, armed Chinese were pacing to and fro on its broad top.

"If they were to fire on us from there, what would you do, Douglas?" said Paul.

"Run," he answered laconically, returning to his work.

American Methodist Mission Compound

Twenty marines had been sent over from the United States Legation as a guard. They were putting the missionaries through a military drill, and Paul paused, entranced.

"Oh, mother!" he said, fanning his hot face with his hat, "I wish I were a man."

"Why are you in such haste?" she asked.

"So I could be a soldier," he said, with a burst of boyish enthusiasm.

Farther on they met men carrying boiled water and rice into the chapel to prepare for a siege. The windows of the chapel had been taken out and the spaces bricked up. The fortifications had so changed its appearance that Paul remarked that it looked as if it were wearing goggles.

The days wore on with more or less of incident. The Boxers had set fire to everything foreign they could lay hands on—stores, churches, dwellings, two of the outlying Legations—nothing was spared. From the excess of smoke the sky became a dusky yellow. Through one long night Mrs. Gilmour had watched the forked flames shoot up from a position which she guessed was her home, and she had suffered acutely as the building round which so many happy memories clustered was consumed.

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On the nineteenth of June, Ray and her mother were sewing on some garments for the United States marines. They had been summoned from Tientsin so hastily that they had brought no change of clothing. It was Ray who planned and measured and directed, for in Mrs. Gilmour's make-up the mechanical ability was entirely lacking.

Dr. Medhurst came in and seated himself where he could get a view of Ray's face. He had been so busy for the past eleven days he had had little chance to speak to her, and to be near her was a pleasure to him.

"Major Conger has received word from the Tsung-li-yamen ordering all foreigners to leave Peking within twenty-four hours," he said.

"Where would we go, pray?" asked Mrs. Gilmour.

"Presumably to Tientsin. The foreign troops have fired on the Taku forts and the Chinese say by that act have declared war."

"Must we really prepare to leave?" asked Ray.

"Nothing is settled yet. The Diplomatic Corps have demanded more time in order to collect carts, and an escort."

"Baron von Ketteler, the German Ambassador, has been murdered in cold blood in the

American Methodist Mission Compound

city," said Douglas next morning. "He was shot by an officer of the Manchu troops when on his way to the Tsung-li-yamen to ask for better terms for the foreigners."

"This puts a damper on our leaving Peking," said Ray.

"I think it ought to make us in a hurry to go," exclaimed Paul.

"We are safer behind walls," answered Dr. Medhurst. "If we go out in the open the Boxer hordes would turn upon us and the Government would represent that its troops were unable to restrain them."

"Word has been sent that we are all to go to the British Legation," announced Douglas hurriedly, later in the morning. "Every one is to be ready in a hour."

One hour later, a perspiring, excited column formed under the broiling sun in Filial Piety Lane. First there were the fifty wives and children of the missionaries, then the hundred and twenty schoolgirls, followed by Chinese women and children and five hundred men and boys carrying baggage of various kinds. Stretched along the line as a bodyguard were the marines and missionaries.

Douglas and Paul walked beside Mrs. Gilmour and Ray. Paul led Beauty by a chain.

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They passed in sight of the Ha-ta Gate Tower, on which stood many soldiers, their rifles glittering in the noonday sun.

"Dr. Medhurst," said Ray, "if the worst comes to the worst, you must shoot mother and me, and not let us fall into the hands of those villains."

His strong face was full of tenderness, but he made no reply. How could he tell what might be his duty?

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CHAPTER XXII

IN THE BRITISH LEGATION

The British Legation was an area two thousand feet long by six hundred broad. A high brick wall surrounded it. Besides the residence of the English Minister, there were a dozen or more buildings scattered about the grounds for the use of the Legation staff. On the east side was a moated street, and across from this Prince Su's palace, a collection of quadrangles with a court in the center. In this about two thousand Chinese converts found shelter.

The Legations of ten other nations lay near to the British, and their inmates crowded into its shelter until there was a Babel of seventeen tongues being spoken within its five acres.

To the missionaries were given the chapel, and Lady MacDonald's ball room. Ray was helping Dr. Medhurst arrange things in their little bit of space about two hours after they arrived. Suddenly there came a burst of sound, many guns speaking all at once, followed by

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a rain of shot on the roofs. Ray was a brave girl, but instinctively she dropped her work and clasped her hands. There is something awful in the first sound of the cracking of hundreds of rifles.

Douglas made a motion towards her and then checked himself.

She laughed nervously, and struggled to appear composed.

"That is an eerie noise, but none of us seem hurt," she said.

"The siege has begun in earnest. I pray the Relief Column may come soon," said Dr. Medhurst.

During the ensuing days, Ray and many others became as accustomed to the sound of shot and shell, and as little disturbed by it, as those living by a railroad are to the roar and whistle of locomotives.

There was a danger to be dreaded even more than Chinese rifles—flames. The Boxers set fire to the buildings about the Legations in the hope of burning out the hated foreigners. When the bell beat out the alarm signal every man, woman, and child that could be spared formed into lines for passing pails of water from the wells to where it was needed.

Ray found herself one day in a row with a

In the British Legation

Chinese coolie on one side and Duke on the other. The latter wore the soldiers' uniform.

"Fine climate this in which to spend the summer, Miss Gilmour?" he said, making a furious dash with his disengaged hand at the flies that settled on his nose. "I'm so enamored with military life that I've enlisted, you see."

"I feel doubly safe since I've seen you in regimentals," said Ray, handing him a pail of muddy water.

"Were you afraid last night, Miss Gilmour, when the firing was so fierce?"

"Yes," she said. "We got up and put on our clothes. I think we won't undress again until the Relief Column comes."

As she spoke a shot whizzed past her only a few feet away, and he noticed that the hand passing him the bucket did not tremble. The smoke and heat together were suffocating.

"If that wind keeps up from the north and they should set fire to Hanlin College to-day we couldn't save the Legation," said Duke.

"Fire Hanlin College!" echoed Ray. "No Chinaman would ever do that. What Englishman would destroy the British Museum? The college contains priceless literary treasures, which the Chinamen reverence more than they do their gods."

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She had hardly spoken, when, to her horror, she saw a thin column of smoke rising out of the venerable building.

"What sacrilege!" she said, forgetting her own peril in the thought of the destruction of the relics of the hoary past.

But Duke clearly saw the danger of fire and sword which threatened them as the wind blew the flames towards them.

"If the prayers of Christians have any efficacy they'd better unite to supplicate for a change of wind," he said.

They worked in a grim, desperate silence for half an hour after that, intent only on the passing of the water swiftly and steadily down the lines, when lo! the wind did change and the flames with their scorching breath were directed over the city.

CHAPTER XXIII

DUKE ON THE CITY WALL

When the foreigners and Chinese crowded into the cordon where they held the enemy at bay the Relief Column, under Admiral Seymour, was expected in a few hours. The long, terrible days, and still more terrible nights stretched into weeks, and still no help came.

The women pursued their duties, with shot and shell raining about them, as calmly as the men, keeping cheerful hearts and bright faces, and amidst their fear laughed over the ridiculous in their experience (of which there was no lack) as they sewed and nursed and cooked and sang.

Many a brave fellow among the marines, whose lip was scarcely yet darkened by the sign of manhood, laid down his life in the gallant defense, and many more carry about on their maimed bodies to-day silent tokens of their valor in the siege.

There were two difficult points which had to be held at any cost, and which were held only by wise generalship and continued brav-

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ery—the Foo on the east side, which Colonel Shiba and his followers commanded, and the wall on the south between the Chinese and Manchu city, held by the Germans and Americans.

It was in a brilliant contest on the latter that Duke came to grief. The wall is sixty feet high and forty feet wide. Chinese soldiers on its crest with rifle and cannon could have shot every man, woman, and child in the British Legation. The Middle and East Gate Towers are a mile apart, and between them, on Legation street, were the American and German Legations.

Once the Chinese had crept along the wall from both towers, but the Germans and Americans rushed up the inclined ramps and shot both ways until the Chinese broke and ran. The foreigners having gained this position on the wall, built breastworks and held it.

The Americans were nearest the central gate tower. Cautiously, keeping under cover all the while, the Chinese built barricade after barricade, each one closer to the Americans, until they could stand behind their defenses and shoot the Yankees stationed at their loopholes. This was uncomfortable.

Duke on the City Wall

It seemed as if the Americans would have to abandon the wall. Hopelessly, on the third of July, they carried down their reserve rations to the Legation.

It was on this night, as Dr. Medhurst was doing sentry duty, that a voice reached him through the gloom.

"Methinks that tall form can be none other than thine, Douglas."

"Well guessed, and to Marmaduke Meredith alone pertains that voice," answered Dr. Medhurst.

"If you'll indicate how to get into this trench I'll come down and be confidential," said Duke.

"You honor me."

"I'm rather more hurried than is consistent with Oriental dignity, so I'll begin at once," said Duke.

"Instead of letting those beggarly Chinese occupy the wall, Mr. Squiers, the American Secretary, has originated a plan for us to keep it ourselves. We need it in our business, you know. The plan is for the Americans, reinforced by some Russians and British, of which I am to be one, to form in single file, leap over the barricade to-night, and rush on the Chinese. If they are aroused and fire, it's so

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dark they'll probably shoot towards the center and do very little damage to our thin line."

"That sounds feasible," said Douglas, thoughtfully. "I wonder none of us thought of it before. We might as well prepare to die the death if that wall is surrendered."

"To be sure," answered Duke.

"The prospect of a skirmish seems to make you happy."

"Happy! as happy as a boy in his first pair of trousers. Good-bye. Pay my respects to the ladies if I'm not around in the morning." And with a gay little whistle he was off.

"The pluckiest little chap," meditated Douglas, "as full of moods as his body is full of bones. The bite of a flea will drive him to frenzy and he'd face a roaring lion with a laugh on his lips. He's rather a shirk in good, plain, honest, everyday work, but in anything unusual and exciting he comes out in full dress."

An hour after this Douglas was relieved from duty and hastened over to the American Legation. A number had assembled there, full of anxiety for the result of the engagement. The fate of the women and children, of the sick in the hospital, of the Chinese converts, of every strong man, depended upon that night's work.

Duke on the City Wall

At two o'clock, after a long, depressing silence, they heard some dull thuds, then shots rang out in the air. Douglas could guess by the flashes of the rifles what was going on. The soldiers had leaped over their barricade, then into that of the Chinese, and there a grim, hand-to-hand fight was ensuing. Shouts, groans, strugglings, fallings, curses, commands, all mingled in one deafening commotion. The echoes reverberated against the walls.

The men below listened in an agony of suspense. Now and then exclamations broke from them.

"They win—they're in the second barricade. Look! the Chinese are fleeing—they're only cowards anyway. What's that? Great heavens! the Chinese must be reinforced. Our men can't hold out against such numbers. Yes! they're driving them back. Listen to the cheering! Those are American voices! Gallant fellows! We are saved! saved!"

Later, towards daybreak, some bodies, two killed and three wounded, were carried down to the Legation. Duke walked in, ghastly white, and as soon as he saw Douglas, he fainted. The wound in his arm was open and was bleeding profusely.

CHAPTER XXIV

DUKE IN THE HOSPITAL

Duke came to consciousness in the hospital. The patients had to be laid on the floor. Through all the feverish day Duke, in a half-comatose state, found his wants supplied by large, cool hands, and a soft voice spoke to him just often enough and no more. It was Elsie, who was his nurse. Before evening he had begun to wonder if it were not worth the suffering to gain such ministry. He began to forget his pain in watching her beautiful face. Her hard work had stolen no tint of her rich coloring; the superb head with its smooth masses of black hair had the same quiet self-possessed poise as ever. She wore a low-necked dress on account of the heat, and the soft lines of her white throat make Duke think of Annie Laurie.

At night Elsie went over to the ball room to get some sleep, and she had just returned to Duke in the morning when she was called away to assist the German doctor while he gave chloroform to a poor wounded marine.

Duke in the Hospital

Duke grew impatient when she had been absent for hours.

"What kept you so long, Mrs. Andersen?" he asked, pettishly, when she returned.

"It was a serious operation," answered Mrs. Andersen gently. "Then I had to change my dress, lest I should bring you the smell of chloroform, which you dislike. Have you slept during the night?"

"No," said Duke. "How can one sleep with such a pandemonium as there is outside? The shots have been raining down like hail and the heat is awful. I feel like a dried herring."

Nevertheless, shortly after this, this imperious young gentleman, soothed as usual by Mrs. Andersen's tranquil manner, fell into a deep slumber.

That was only one of many days, days of sickening suspense and hope deferred. Duke's wound proved troublesome, he had a low fever, and it was necessary to give him constant attention. He was so exacting and fretful that no one but Elsie could have borne with him with unvarying patience. He complained of his inactivity, of his arrowroot gruel and tough mutton, of the flies and the fleas, of crowding and bad smells, of the other nurses when Elsie was absent. For Duke had a mercurial dis-

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position, and spent his life in unnatural elation or equally unnatural depression.

He came to the hospital on the Fourth of July and was recovering only on the first of August. Elsie was on duty that night. The quartette that sang for the hospital patients had just left as she came in. With the heat and pleasurable excitement of the music Duke was flushed, and Elsie laid her hand on his forehead.

"How do you get your hands so cool?" asked Duke.

"I have just been washing my clothes in the washbowl in cold water," laughed Elsie.

"I'm the unlucky beggar to have to be lying around when there is such need of men," grumbled Duke.

"You'll soon be out now. The fever has gone and your wound has healed."

"Elsie," he said. "I have learned one thing here, that I can't do without you." He reached up with his uninjured arm, drew her hand to his lips and kissed it. "Bend lower, those fellows are so near. If ever we get out of this hot hole, will you give me the right to have you beside me always?"

A deafening roar of artillery made speech impossible, but Elsie did not withdraw her hand.

Duke in the Hospital

In a lull, a wounded French soldier asked for water. Elsie did not understand French, but Duke heard the call.

"Confound that fellow!" he said. "I've a mind not to interpret for him. He wants you to get him a drink; but before you go, Elsie, say one little word of encouragement to me."

What Elsie said was drowned in another volley from the cannons.

No lights were allowed in the hospital, as they made a target for the enemy. She groped her way carefully in the dark amongst wounded heads and bandaged limbs in the direction of the voice, and gave the patient the water.

"Eh bien! mais vous etes bonne," he said as she shook his pillow, straightened the sheet, and laid his head gently back.

"You may change your mind when you get well," said Elsie, coming back to Duke. "Invalids often fall in love with their nurses. One of the marines offered me his protection for life this morning."

"The—mischief he did," said Duke. "It's like his impudence. I know who it was. What did you say?"

"I said 'No.'"

"Ah! there is hope for me then."

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"Are you sure that I will fit into your home and ways?" asked Elsie.

"Quite sure, my beautiful Elsie. No duchess will wear her coronet with more becoming grace than you your coils of jet black hair. It is such a beautiful place in England where we will live, Elsie, and you will be queen of my home and learn to love the dear old land as I do."

"Are there any poor people whom I can help?" asked Elsie, to whose tender conscience enjoyment without accompanying unselfishness looked sinful.

"Yes, you can play Lady Bountiful to your heart's content. But you will find more wealthy ones in need of ministration such as you can give."

Elsie pondered over this saying without replying.

"We will not be rich, Elsie, with my income—I mean we will meet many people to whom, by comparison, we will seem poor; the old manor is a tumble-down place in need of repair, and there are some debts I contracted in my young days that I'm in honor bound to repay. When I was young nobody but my old nurse loved me or cared about me, and I led a wild, reckless life until I met Dr. Medhurst.

Duke in the Hospital

You do not want to hear about that dark past,
do you?"

"No," said Elsie, quietly. "Recalling it could
do no good. I would rather know you as you
are."

CHAPTER XXV.

RAY AND HER MOTHER

Elsie sought out Ray before she went to the hospital the next day. She found her using her camera in a rather exposed part of the tennis court.

"Come up in the bell tower," she said. "We can be quiet there. I've something to tell you."

In her modest way she informed Ray of her engagement to Mr. Meredith. The two girls had been together from childhood and had shared most of their joys and sorrows.

"I am glad you are happy, Elsie," said Ray. "Do you really love him?"

"Yes," said Elsie, simply. "When he is so kind and good to me how could I help it?"

"But is this love—forgive me if I tread on hallowed ground, Elsie—anything like you gave to Herbert?"

"No, I think not. Why should it be, Ray? I could love another child dearly, but I never could feel towards it as I did towards Blossom."

"But Herbert, Elsie, does no thought of him

Ray and Her Mother

come across your happiness?" said Ray desperately, feeling as if she must speak.

"None but pleasant thoughts, Ray. If he knows, do you not think he will be glad I have found some one to take care of me? I was so lonely after Blossom died, I couldn't tell you how I felt. Life stretched before me in one long blank. I was so young, not twenty-eight, and there wasn't any one to whom I really belonged. Oh, yes, you and auntie are good, but there is a difference between one's own flesh and blood and an outsider. I have not money enough to keep me, and the world is cold and hard to a woman who has to earn her bread. I'm sorry to leave China. I'd rather have married Dr. Medhurst on that account (Ray started), but Mr. Meredith cares for me and I will try and be a good wife to him. I ought to, because he's doing so much for me. I have heard you say you have a horror of second marriages, but I am young and all alone, and why should I be condemned to widowhood for life, as if I were a Hindu?"

"I think you are right, Elsie," said Ray. "I hope I haven't been probing where I had no business."

"No, I am glad to speak," said Elsie. "I am so often tongue-tied."

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"Mother," said Ray, an hour after, as they sat together making sandbags of some rich brocaded hangings which had been torn down for the purpose from Lady MacDonald's drawing room, "do you think people should marry more than once?"

"Some people should," said Mrs. Gilmour. "For me such a thing is unthinkable. It would be treason to my beloved. We are still married, as we always were. I could not love him less because he is out of sight. You remember what he said, 'Love like ours is eternal.' I live with him still, hold communion with him." Her eyes shone, and her small face grew radiant.

"How differently people view things!" said Ray. "Elsie has promised to marry Mr. Meredith and is perfectly happy in the transfer of her allegiance."

"Elsie's nature is calm and unemotional. I have always studied her with curiosity. Her mother was a beauty, but headstrong and imperious, and she ran away and married a man who was a dissolute scamp, but as handsome as he was worthless. You would naturally expect the child of such parents would be a lawless creature, but, though Elsie inherited her parents' beauty and in her looks resembles both of them, by some trick of atavism she is

Ray and Her Mother

the tranquil, useful woman we are familiar with."

"Elsie has a genius for goodness," said Ray. "She is vain of it, vainer of it than of her beauty. Do you think she will satisfy Mr. Meredith, mother?"

"I cannot say. He is the best judge. There is an affinity of souls which logic can't gainsay. I think whoever marries Mr. Meredith will find opportunities to exercise forbearance and patience. Supposing he chose a nervous, excitable person like himself and they both effervesced at once,—or a talkative woman with decided opinions. That would drive him crazy. I've found out no one is wise enough to pick a wife for another. Married happiness is a little bark easily capsized."

"What treason that nautical figure sounds to your experience, mother. I feel moved to mend it and compare yours, at least, to a life-boat that couldn't be swamped."

"No union was ever closer than ours, Ray," said Mrs. Gilmour, with a touch of yearning in her voice, "but we ourselves fashioned the bonds which knit us to each other. Two hearts are never so perfectly mated that there will not arise differences between them, even annoying differences, and no two ever lived long

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together without finding the need for mutual concessions and for adjustment to one another. Husband and wife must learn adaptability, to accept the limitations of each other, to be tolerant of points of difference and not to make too heavy demands upon the other's sympathy. Love is not a diamond which, once received, can be locked away in a drawer and be found unchanged after twenty years. Love is a tender, sensitive plant which must be watched and cared for every day."

"How did you promote its growth so successfully, mother?"

"By expression, for one thing. I never wearied of telling my husband I loved him, either in words or actions."

"But you are naturally demonstrative, mother. I am not; I would feel like a double-dyed hypocrite if I expressed a regard even for you that I did not feel at the moment."

"Nonsense, Ray," said Mrs. Gilmour hotly, for years had not tamed her impetuosity. "A thousand things influence your feelings. Your love for me is steadfast. You don't dub yourself a hypocrite when you are polite when you don't feel like it. You know you ought to be polite, and you act up to the oughtness instead of your boorish feelings. Feelings are hum-

Ray and Her Mother

bugs. Actions should be regulated by fixed principles."

"That reminds me, mother, I've been having a conflict with my feelings. I know Mr. Meredith would prize that Madonna Frank sent me because it is like Elsie. I'm going to present it to him. It costs me a struggle because it is Frank's work, but it would give so much pleasure that I'm resolved to do it."

"I wish you'd dismiss Frank from your thought, Ray. Your fidelity to him is blinding you to worth at your side."

"Why, mother, you wouldn't have me fickle like Elsie, who could love any man, would you?"

"I would not have a girlish folly darken all your after life."

"You have hurt now, mother. You don't understand. It isn't a girlish folly. It is my whole existence."

Ray got up and went out. An hour later she was by Duke's side. She put the water-color in his hands.

"With my sincere congratulations," she said.

"It is beautiful, beautiful. I am pleased. Where did you get it? Did you do it?"

"I? Oh, no! My talents lie wholly in the making of sandbags. A friend who was ac-

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quainted with both Elsie and me painted it." The noise of bursting shells and shrapnel on the roof prevented conversation for a time.

"How near that cannon sounds," said Duke.

"Yes," said Ray. "That is Betsey's roar."

"It is . . . ? I beg your pardon?"

"Haven't you heard about Betsey? She is our new cannon. Some call it the International. the Chinese found it, and the soldiers rigged it up. It is a Chinese gun on an Italian carriage, using Russian shells and fired by an American. She was a great kicker at first and jumped entirely across a room, but now they have restrained her sportiveness and bound her to a beam."

"Is the beam Japanese?"

"I never could distinguish between woods," rejoined Ray.

"Why do you call the cannon Betsey?"

"I don't know, unless it is because Mitchell, the gunner, loves it so well they have named it his sweet'heart. Betsey is a noble female. She has silenced the gun on the Imperial Wall that was threatening to blow us to atoms."

"Dr. Medhurst told me you were to be up to-morrow. Mother sent an invitation to you to have dinner with us. We are going to have our last can of peas for a celebration."

Ray and Her Mother

As Ray was going out she saw in a corner a soldier lying with closed eyes. His lips were moving, and thinking he was asking for something, she went to him. She heard him say:

"O kindly Death, you have ended many a poor fellow's sufferings here. Come and end mine. Do not pass me by. What can I do in the battle of life with only one arm? I found it struggle enough when I had two. Why should I want to live? It was ~~never~~ very much worth while. It will make very little difference to any one if I drop out of life. My comrades would pause a minute to exclaim, 'Poor fellow!' and my wife Nellie would be sad for a month and a day, but she is so pretty and always had so many admirers she'll soon find some one to take care of her.

"Yes, there's a hereafter. I've thought of that. I've tried to be kind and I've never been wild. I think the pitying Jesus will take these things into account, and not be too hard on me in the reckoning-up. O Death! come to me now. See how straight and decent I lie, with my hand upon my breast, waiting for your summons."

He was quite still and did not open his eyes. Ray, feeling as if she were intruding, stepped softly aside and made her way out.

CHAPTER XXVI

SIEGE HORRORS

Duke came over to the Gilmours' lodgings the next evening at six. Mrs. Gilmour and Ray had attended carefully to the cooking of the evening meal. The food was placed on a tiny table, but they sat around on boxes with their plates and cups in their laps, picnic fashion. The menu consisted of coarse brown bread, slightly sour; yellow rice, cooked without milk; boiled horseflesh, baked beans, and for dessert the can of peas which was the sole relic of the stock of provisions which Douglas had brought fully six weeks before to the Legation.

The banquet had rather a startling prelude. A shell burst outside, one of the pieces came through the open door, struck the cup Duke held in his hand, and spilled the coffee over his fresh duck suit.

He was irritated by the incident.

"I haven't another change of clothing," he said, glowering at the stains.

"Never mind, Duke," said Douglas. "Clean

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clothes are not fashionable here. To have unsoiled linen is to be a marked man."

"You seem accustomed to shot and shell," said Duke, noticing that nobody started or trembled.

"If any one had told me two months ago that I would sit unmoved through such experiences, I wouldn't have believed him," said Ray.

"Mother used to be afraid to stay in the room," said Paul, "where there was a loaded gun, but now I believe she could fire one."

"There's no use cooking horsemeat any more, mother," said Ray, when the platter had been passed around untouched. "It's too sweet and horrible; we can't eat it."

"It's no worse than this musty rice," said Paul, "Will the Relief Column never come?"

"You haven't begun to believe it's a myth and that there is no such thing, have you, Paul?" asked Duke.

"If it doesn't get here soon," said Paul, "there won't be anything left of us to find. Ray and I went round the grounds to-day. We were over at the Foo. We saw what the Chinese Christians have to eat—cakes made of millet, black-bean flour and earth mixed with the leaves of elm trees. If we have to come to that, I'll starve."

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"Some of them there are doing that now," said Ray. "Such emaciated, famished-looking creatures!"

"Haven't they any meat, Douglas?" asked Mrs. Gilmour.

"It takes more than we have to supply between two and three thousand people once a day. They are killing the large dogs for them now."

"Ugh!" said Duke, with a gesture of horror.

"You needn't pity them for that, Duke," said Douglas. "The Chinese consider the ham of a dog a great delicacy. The only trouble is we have so few."

Beauty stood up on his hind legs beside his master, and Paul fed him, looking perturbed.

"We have been having a holiday in our sewing to-day, Elsie," said Mrs. Gilmour. "Our last machine needle broke."

"No wonder it's worn out," said Ray. "We have made over seven thousand sandbags on it since we came."

"Somebody has written a song," said Paul, "about Mr. Gamewell needing a million sandbags, saving ten."

"I was struck with the picturesqueness of the sandbag barricades," said Duke. "They are as gayly colored as a tulip bed."

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"And we've made them out of every kind of material," said Ray, "silks, satins, carpets, woolen fabrics, table linens, and the coarsest blue cotton cloth."

"Has that poor soldier who was praying for death found release yet, Elsie?" asked Mrs. Gilmour.

"No! the doctor told him this morning he would recover. He was so disappointed the tears stood in his eyes. And Harry C——, who fought so hard for life and wanted to live, died at midnight. In his last moments he talked of his mother, whom he called his sweetheart."

"Paul and I attended his funeral," said Ray. "He was buried in the Russian Legation. The rain was falling, and I seemed to hear again poor Harry's moaning, 'She's a widow—a widow, and I'm her only son.'"

"There will be a good many bereaved hearts," said Dr. Medhurst, "when the world hears our story."

"If it ever does," said Paul. "Mr. Meredith, what are you going to do when we get free?"

"Hang around until the Powers present the Empress Dowager with a silk cord,"* said

*To present an official with a silk cord, signified a command to the one to whom it was presented, to commit suicide.

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Duke, "and then take the first European boat that sails."

"How many wounded are there in the hospital now, Elsie?" asked Mrs. Gilmour.

"I hardly know. More than a hundred. One can hardly move about, and it is so dark with the windows piled up with sandbags that we have to do some things by guesswork. Unless the Relief Column comes soon, we will have to have more hospital room. And more nurses, too," she added, after a pause. "I cannot hold out much longer. I am so tired that if some one told me I might have my liberty if I would walk out of Peking, I think I would rather sit down and die than start."

"It is the heat as well as your work that is telling on you," said Dr. Medhurst. "It was ninety-eight degrees in the shade at noon. The soldier who was on sentry duty next to me had a sunstroke."

"Miss Gilmour," said Douglas, drawing Ray aside, "I notice your mother coughing. In her delicate state of health she should be watched. Keep her from draughts if you can."

"It is sleeping on the damp floors which causes it," said Ray.

"Then we must contrive some kind of a raised bed," he replied.

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"Since we sent all our mosquito netting to the hospital she seldom rests more than half an hour at a time," said Ray.

He looked grave, but went his way and built a raised platform of boxes as a temporary bed.

"What is the matter with Paul, mother?" asked Ray the next evening when he didn't appear for dinner. "He hasn't eaten a mouthful all day, and I found him hiding behind the stable court crying as if his heart would break."

"Paul has been making his first sacrifice," said Mrs. Gilmour, "and he is finding it hard."

"What?" asked Ray.

"He found Ming, the little lad from Hsaio Chuang, over at the Foo, almost dying. The doctor said he was wasting away for lack of nourishing food—starving, to speak plainly. You remember the remark Douglas made last night about the Chinese considering the ham of a dog a great delicacy. Paul couldn't forget it. Beauty might save Ming's life. He thought and thought about it, and Ming's pallid face haunted him so he couldn't sleep. This morning early he took Beauty to the butcher, kissed him good-bye and left him there. He said the dog looked at him with such sad, reproachful eyes he was sure it understood what he was doing."

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"Oh, poor Beauty! how could you let him do it, mother?" asked Ray.

"I was very fond of the little creature," said Mrs. Gilmour, "but a human life is more precious than a brute's. Then I was glad to see Paul do it, though it cost him so much. He has been the baby, and we have petted him until he was rather selfish. An act like this shows that we have not spoiled him. Others have had to sacrifice not only their dogs, but even their riding horses for the general good. Paul is suffering keenly, but he is not alone."

* * * * *

There were very few sleepers in the British Legation the night of August the thirteenth. The Relief Column was near at last. Without the walls the gunning could be plainly heard. The Chinese fired on the Legations more desperately and unremittingly than ever before. The besieged were almost wild with excitement. "After all our hardships can it be that deliverance is at hand?" three thousand five hundred men, women, and children asked each other.

At two o'clock on the afternoon of August the fourteenth the red-turbaned Sikhs, under British officers, reached the Legation. Never was there such joy, such welcomes. The women kissed the dusky hands of their liberators in

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an excess of gratitude. They laughed and prayed and wept all in a breath. They sang the Te Deum, the Doxology. All the hideous horrors of the past seven weeks were at an end. The prospect of life under normal conditions was intoxicating.

CHAPTER XXVII

PEKING AFTER THE SIEGE

Everybody was eager to leave the Legation. Douglas set out to find lodgings. Acres and acres of the city about the Legations were heaps of ruins. One could not tell even where the streets had been. The walls of the Legations had been battered and beaten until they were a mass of crumbling debris. In going about, Douglas was hailed by an American who had formed one of the Relief Column.

"Hello! Doc Medhurst, is that you? Were you one of the incarcerated band we fellows took such trouble to reach?"

"How are you, Devereux? I have been imprisoned, sure enough. What kept you so long coming to slip back the bolts?"

"The same old question, Why didn't we come sooner? I had reasons which seemed sufficient to me. It does my heart good to see you looking thin and dirty. I've been feeling savage."

"What about?" asked Douglas.

"Why, the well-groomed condition we found

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the lot of you in, in Peking. I wish you could view our line of march from Tientsin here. The thermometer would have stood at a hundred degrees in the shade if there had been any shade, but there wasn't, not so much as a bamboo pole. We came through fields of tall, thin corn where not a breath of air could penetrate. Nobody but the Japs, who are made of leather and india rubber and triple-plated steel, could endure it. The men dropped one after another and we left a goodly number of exhausted horses along our path. Then, imagining you were on the eve of expiring, we forced our way into the Legation through that filthy sewage canal and made our bow in—in what? It makes me swear to think of it. It looked like a lawn party. There was Sir Claude in immaculate tennis flannels, and Mr. Conger faultlessly arrayed, and ladies fair robed in fresh muslins. I felt so besmeared and beslimed I crept away, when whom should I run up against but my friend Miles. If the beggar hadn't gained twenty pounds! Horse meat must be fattening. I had saved some brandy in a flask to revive him if he were at his last gasp, but he laughed and said you had whole casks of it on the grounds, that it might have been better for the men if there had been less of it.

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Yes! these walls look as if they'd been hard enough beset, and, as you may say, there are a good many brave fellows sleeping under fresh mounds in the Legations, but if we'd marched a little slower we'd have felt the heat less. I'm going around to the Chinese shops and help myself to enough clothes for a summer outfit, and when I'm washed and dressed once more I may swing around a little from my present point of view."

Douglas rented a temple on a quiet street, and next day the Gilmours and Mr. Meredith took possession. Some Chinese came with them.

It was a disturbed time. The Empress Dowager, the helpless young Emperor, and their Court, fled Shensi-wards. The interior of the Imperial Palace, the grounds with their artificial lakes and gardens, the Altar of Heaven, where the Emperor performs the sacred rites for his people, these royal enclosures never before desecrated by unholy foreign eyes, lay open to the gaze of the curious.

The looting by the foreign armies was lawless. It was difficult, at first, for the Gilmours to get enough to eat. Chinese servants sent out to purchase food were held up by European soldiers and robbed of all they carried.

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Li Sing found out his mistress soon. He had brought his sad burden from Shansi. They laid Dr. Gilmour's remains in the sunny cemetery overlooking the city where he had spent the best years of his life. Dr. Medhurst, as his nearest friend, attempted to speak at the grave; then, overcome by a sense of loss, saddened by the memory of Dr. Gilmour's lonely death, and weakened by long hardships, his eyes filled with tears, his great form quivered, and he broke down completely, and was led away by a friend.

"For your sake and Paul's, Ray," said Mrs. Gilmour that night, "I see that we must go to America. I regret that it is necessary. I shall not live long and I wish I might rest in the same grave with Graham."

After that Mrs. Gilmour grew more languid. She, who had always been feverishly active, was content to lie or sit for hours with folded hands. Dr. Medhurst, seeing this, hastened all preparations for leaving Peking.

Some days after Dr. Gilmour's burial, Li walked into the dining room, where all but Mrs. Gilmour were seated, and addressed Dr. Medhurst. His face, usually mild, wore a look of excited hatred, and he forgot his English and hissed his story in his native tongue.

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"Give me my wife and child," he said. "I will cook for you no more. I will never work for a foreign devil again."

"Why, that is a new story, Li," said Douglas. "What is the matter?"

"When I was gone to find Dr. Gilmour's honorable body," Li answered, "the foreign devil soldiers came to my venerable father's home. There was a Russian and a dark man with red wound about his head. When they came there was happiness; when they left there was misery. They shot my brother as he was quietly hoeing in the field. His wife drowned herself to hide her shame. The Russian stamped in the face of the baby boy as he lay on the floor—the poor, innocent, helpless baby. My honorable mother was lying ill, unable to rise, and she had to watch while they bound my father, who is large and tall, and led him away to work for them. I am going to find him, and when he points out those who carried him off . . . " Li Sing's face darkened threateningly. "None shall be able to taunt me with leaving the wrongs of my father unavenged."

"I will try and help you find your father," said Douglas.

"I am better without your help," burst out Li, in a vindictive tone. "Outside barbarians,

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some of them, pretend to be kind to us, but when trouble comes all nations unite to beat us down. The Boxers were cruel, but we have had great wrongs. We don't want you in our country, and if you come in spite of us you must take what treatment we give you, just as the brethren from the Four Seas have to do when they go to your land. We are helpless now, but the day will come when we will be more powerful, and then we will try again, and do what we failed in this time. As I said, the Boxers may have been cruel, but they are not lustful, as foreign devils are."

And while the men stared blankly at one another before this charge, Li had flung himself out of the room.

CHAPTER XXVIII

DOUGLAS WINS

They went to America by the southern route. Mrs. Gilmour watched the Chinese shore recede into a thin line, then vanish into haze. She knew she was bidding it farewell forever.

The travelers drank in with an ever-fresh delight the beauties of the voyage. The steamer stopped at Malta. Ray sat on deck observing the various throngs ascending or descending the steps of the Valetta streets, which ran down to the water's edge. There were Maltese men, lithe and handsome; Maltese women, carrying themselves with an easy grace; there were Africans and Asiatics and Europeans.

Suddenly, on the pier, Ray saw a form she knew—knew beyond doubt. She leaned over the side of the railing, unconscious of everything and everybody else.

"Frank," she called, "Frank."

He heard and turned.

It was Frank Atterbury.

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He came on board at once. How distinguished he looked with his refined, esthetic face and his graceful bearing! How beautiful his long white hands were, with their tapering, slender fingers! and how artistic was his broad-brimmed hat and rolling collar!

He was delighted to meet Ray. He had been away from Rome leading a gypsy life, he said, and had not received his mail and did not know of her whereabouts. "He could not have been very much interested in how we survived the siege," Ray thought. He would come on board, he continued, with her kind permission, and sail to Gibraltar with them.

The hours that followed were weighted with meaning for Ray. Frank appeared the same cordial friend of her girlhood—the same, with a difference. He never let her forget for an instant that the engagement between them was broken. Calm, quiet, unemotional, pleasant, he gave Ray, with a smile, a stone when she craved bread. He talked of his art, what he had accomplished and what he meant to do, of pigment and form and harmony and color; of the glorious masterpieces in Rome, so inspiring and so unattainable; of the books he had been reading; of Italian skies and Mediterranean sunsets; of the clubs of students who

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had foresworn marriage and wedded art; of theosophy, to which he was half a convert; of his den and its furnishings, where, in a conspicuous place, was some Chinese pottery Ray had sent him—even his speech was prettily turned and had an artistic dress; but Ray noted sadly that, with the quintessence of selfishness, it was always with himself and his aims he was engrossed. Her father's tragic death, her mother's ill-health, her recent perils or her possible future—to these he gave only a passing thought.

"Self, self, always self," she thought. "The man I loved was not this breathing marble, but a warm, human-hearted being. Like Parrhassius, I believe Frank would torture a living soul for his art. Has he not tortured me through two long, weary years? What I loved exists no more—perhaps never existed but in my imagination."

Beside her berth that night she prayed, "O God! how good thou art to have kept me from being bound through life to this egotistic idealist. I should have hated him and have writhed under the festering pain of my unbreakable fetters."

The next day she could talk to Frank calmly, even with a certain degree of naturalness.

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"Did you like the picture of Elsie I sent?" asked Frank.

"Yes, very much. Dr. Medhurst said you had idealized the expression."

"Of course I did. A face so beautiful as hers on canvas without more soul would drive a picture-lover mad. I've worked at Dr. Medhurst's face whole weeks at a time and then thrown the effort aside in despair. If I could paint his great homely physiognomy, big nose, high cheek-bones, hair of no color and eyes not mates, and put into those same deep eyes his habitual expression, I'd win immortality. But the soul shining out, the strength, the conviction, the power, the tenderness and gentleness—it would take Michelangelo and Rembrandt fused in one to do them justice."

Frank took a book from his pocket and made a rapid sketch of Douglas as he was walking on the deck opposite, talking to a fellow-passenger.

When Frank left, Ray bade him farewell with mingled feelings—sadness that a chapter of her life was closing, and thankfulness that duty did not forbid her saying farewell.

They were in the Atlantic when Paul, who, with a boy's activity explored every part of the vessel, found his sister on deck, and said:

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"Ray, come with me. I want to show you something."

He conducted her down to the steerage. There, walking up and down, singing softly, was Doctor Medhurst, holding in his arms a tiny, fretful hunchback, with a wizened, old-man's face on his baby body. They stood in the shadow, and Douglas did not see them. The little creature cried out in pain, and the great, gaunt doctor soothed it with a woman's tenderness.

Ray made a gesture of silence, and, taking Paul's hand, led him on deck again.

"He's a brick, isn't he, Ray?" said Paul.

Ray closed her eyes and lay back in her steamer chair. The stars came out and the moonbeams danced on the waves. She thought of Dr. Medhurst's sympathy for every living thing; of his bravery and tenderness; of how little children loved him and wise men listened to his opinions; of his strong convictions and unswerving loyalty to them, and as she thought questions arose and clamored for an answer. The night grew chilly.

A tall form whose outlines there was no mistaking brought a rug and threw it over her, and then sat down beside her.

"Ray," he said, taking one of her cold hands

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in his great, warm palm. "I love you—have loved you always, I think, ever since that first evening we met. I want my answer now. I have waited a long time. Do you care for me?"

"Yes, I care for you," she answered, with the frankness which was one of her charms, "but whether it's in the right way—I mean the way you want—I don't know. Be patient with me until I explain."

He raised the little hand to his lips.

"No!" she said, with a gesture of disapproval, "you mustn't be too certain. I'm not. Don't take things for granted, Douglas, but help me. You know I loved Frank, would still be loving him if he had been different."

"Is that feeling not past now, Ray?"

"Yes, gone forever and ever. But, Douglas, I loved him passionately. He stirred all the depths of my nature. I gave to him what you give to me and what I am unworthy of, for I can never give it again."

His breathing was hard. His hand closed with an unconscious grip over the slender fingers he held.

"What can you give me, then, Ray?" he asked, with a hungry pleading in his eyes.

"Admiration and respect and honor without stint," she said slowly, weighing her words,

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"and yes—an affection calm and quiet, like that I feel for my mother."

"Is that love—love enough to marry me, Ray?" he said.

"That is just what I don't know, Douglas. Does any one ever love twice, I wonder?—that is, any one who loves deeply. Then, I'm not heroic and self-sacrificing as you are. You are blinded to my real self. I'm no mate for you. I'm contemptible in my own eyes often and often. Why don't you despise me for an ease-loving creature? Why did you ever love me?"

"Love you, darling," he echoed, passionately. "I love you because I was born to, I think. I can no more help it than I can help the circulation of my blood."

"I know," she said gently, "because I had that maddening, delirious love once, and Douglas, I haven't it now. Can you be satisfied with less?"

"I have thought sometimes," he said, speaking with an effort, "that if I could be near you always and have the right to shield you—if you were only mine—mine, darling, what presumption it seems to say it?—that that would content me; but in my calmer moments I know that, dear as you are to me, I would not want

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to marry you unless you could give me your whole heart, your whole heart, Ray. I know how generous and strong and loving it is; that is why I want it. You can never feel towards me exactly as you did towards Frank; the same feelings seldom come twice in life—but I covet . . . ” He broke off and threw a piece of wood into the phosphorescent water. The breeze blew soft tendrils of her hair upon his cheek. “Ray, my darling,” he said in husky tones, “in spite of everything, I covet you—you. God knows I never thought myself worthy of you, never thought that the monotony and comparative poverty of such a life as I could offer you should be your lot. In my maddest moments I have felt that if you would be happier anywhere else than with me, that is the spot I would single out for you.”

There was a silence.

The steel-gray eyes, with their depths of power and tenderness were doing deadly work. Something new and delightful stirred in Ray's heart. The passionate wooing of this strong man was like nectar to her. She had been so numbed, so chilled, that, by contrast, this fervent adoration roused her. All the affection in her loving nature, the affection that had been repressed, leaped up and rushed forth to meet

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the heart laid bare before her. In a flash she knew all she had been struggling to know. All this world and the pleasures of it would mean nothing to her if Douglas Medhurst were not by her side.

"Douglas! Douglas! I begin to understand. How patient you have been and how blind I was that I did not see it before. I couldn't be happy anywhere away from you."

"And China, Ray?" he questioned.

"Seeing you are going to be there and I must have you, there seems no alternative," she said, gaily.

"Ray, you are too true to trifle. You love me then, at last. You're sure, darling?" he asked, half-frightened at the greatness of his happiness.

"Quite sure," she said, lifting her head fearlessly to meet his searching gaze. "Accept me and don't doubt, dearest," she added in the softest possible whisper.

What followed was worth to Douglas all his years of waiting.

When Mrs. Gilmour came to look for Ray later, from the happy look on the two faces, she divined, before Douglas told her, what had occurred.

"Congratulations, old fellow," said Duke, as

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they paced the deck at midnight. "You've won a jewel, and you deserve it. We are two of the luckiest dogs under heaven. Look at the lights yonder. I believe that is Southampton, my own, my native land. Hurrah! Hurrah! for England, and farewell to the land of Ah Sin."