THE BLUE DRAGON

KIRK MUNROE

[See p. 233

"A HORSEMAN FLED BEFORE THEM"

The Blue Dragon

A TALE OF RECENT
ADVENTURE IN CHINA

BY

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THE "MATES SERIES" THE "PACIFIC COAST
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TO MY READERS

THE BLUE DRAGON, chosen as a title for this story, is the national emblem of China, adopted as such by a desire to flatter and propitiate that spirit of evil considered to be the most powerful. As the dragon is believed to be big enough and strong enough to overcome and devour all the other wicked genii who continually vex Chinese life, the wise men of the "Black-haired People" thought it best to have him on their side, and consequently accorded him the highest honor in their power to bestow. As we of America chose the eagle, strongest of visible air spirits, for our national emblem, so the Chinese chose the most powerful of invisible spirits in whose existence they believe as firmly as we do in the existence of things that we can see, hear, or feel.

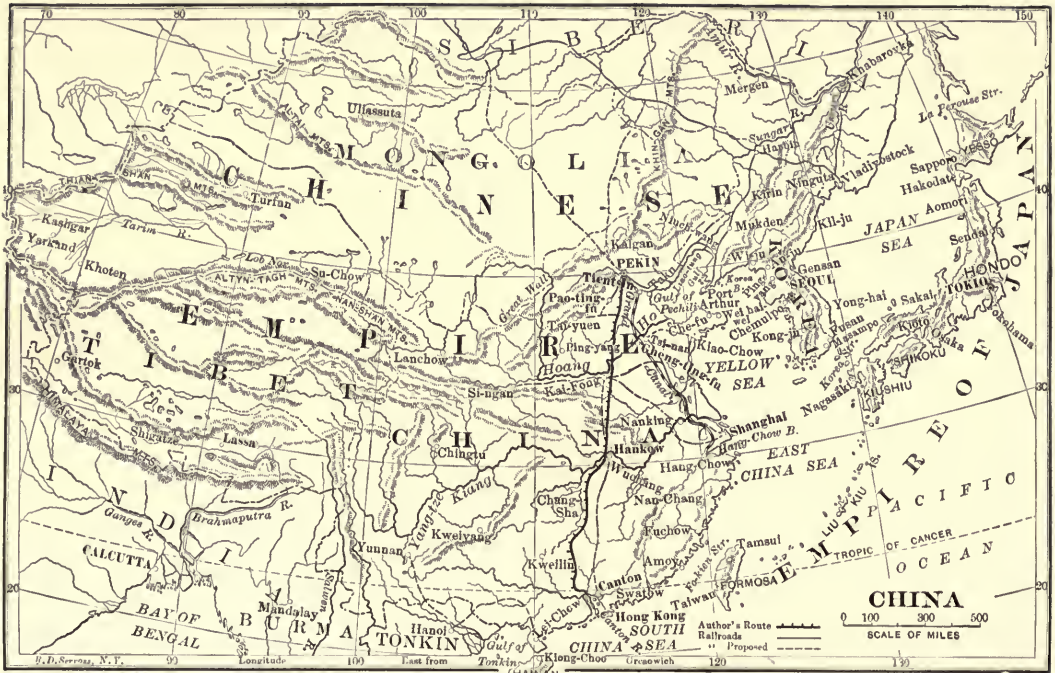
In the story thus entitled, I have endeavored to give an idea of what China has been, is, and may become through education and development, how she is regarded, and how her people are being treated by other nations, and what causes she has for resentment against those who are taking advantage of her feebleness to despoil her.

While travelling in China, and trying to gain the

Chinese point of view, I met so many charming people, so many men of intelligence and liberal education, honorable, broad-minded, and devoted to the uplifting of their unhappy country, that I became exceedingly interested in their cause, and anxious to aid it. With this object in view I am striving, through the medium of a story, to present it to those young Americans who, in the near future, will be called upon to decide the ultimate fate of the great Middle Kingdom. With them, more than with any other people, even including the Chinese themselves, will rest the decision, whether China shall remain a nation, open to the unobstructed commerce of the world, or become a series of petty colonial possessions devoted only to the interests of their several ruling powers. That my young readers may be guided to a wise and just solution of this great problem, is the sincere hope of their friend,

KIRK MUNROE.

BISCAYNE BAY, FLORIDA,
January, 1904.



MAP SHOWING ROUTE FOLLOWED BY AUTHOR

THE BLUE DRAGON

CHAPTER I

A STRANGER IN A STRANGE LAND

"CHINEE! Chinee! Chink! Chink! Chink!"

These epithets, and many others equally contemptuous, such as "Rat Eater!" and "Piggy Tail!" were gleefully shouted by a mob of young ragamuffins who crowded about a single youthful figure, early one summer morning, on the elm-shaded main street of Hatton. The lad thus hustled and insulted was a good-looking chap according to the standard of his own people; though his long-lashed, wide-set eyes were narrower than those of his tormentors, his clear complexion held a tint of yellow, the front half of his head was shaved, and the remaining luxuriant growth of jet-black hair, such as all Chinese have, and of which they are so proud that they call themselves "the black-haired people," hung in a thick, glossy braid down his back. He wore a blue gown that fastened closely about his neck and fell in severely simple lines, without belt or ornamentation, almost to his feet.

Below it could be seen a pair of black silk trousers, tightly fastened over a narrow section of white stockings, that in turn were lost to view in black cloth shoes having embroidered tops and felt soles. He had worn a round, visorless cap of black silk, surmounted by a crimson knot, but this had been knocked off, and now was being ruthlessly kicked and trampled underfoot by the hoodlums who, having discovered a victim that could be abused with impunity, were making the most of the welcome chance. Nor were they without encouragement in their cruel sport; for a group of men and young women, on their way to the great factory that was at once the mainstay of Hatton's prosperity and an ever-threatening menace, had paused to enjoy the sight of a crowd of American boys tormenting a helpless foreigner, and greeted the sorry spectacle with shouts of laughter.

"That's right, kiddies!" cried one of the men. "Down with the yellowbelly, and teach him that this country ain't no place fer him nor his kind."

"Dirty, rat-eating scab!" growled another.

"Somehow, it don't seem right, though," said one of the young women, with a tone of pity in her voice, as the badgered lad was suddenly jerked backward and nearly thrown to the ground by a violent pull at his queue. "He does look so like a girl, with his blue dress, his little hands, and his braided hair."

"Oh, hush up, Mag! You're too soft for anything!" exclaimed another. "He ain't nothing but

just a low-lived heathen Chinee, like them as runs the laundry over to Adams. They'd take the bread out of honest working-people's mouths quick as wink, if they was give half a chance."

Just then the factory bell rang with insistent clamor, and the jeering group of workers moved on. At a meeting held a few evenings before they had loudly cheered and unanimously passed a resolution to the effect that the government ought immediately to deport to their own country, at their own expense, all Chinese found within its territory. One of the speakers had declared that, if the government was slow in doing this thing, it was the duty of every American citizen to take the matter into his own hands, drive out the Chinese wherever found, destroy their places of business, and hunt them to the death if they offered resistance. Of course, the children of those men, having heard this resolution discussed, and its accompanying speeches repeated with applauding comments, deemed it their privilege to attack, and, if possible, drive from their virtuous village every representative of the hated race they might encounter; and, unfortunately for him, poor, innocent, helpless Chinese Jo was the first to fall into their joyful clutches.

This was the first experience of his first day in Hatton, which he had reached after dark the evening before. He had come to America, from his far-away native land, in company with a dozen others of his young countrymen. These others had been sent over by the Chinese government to be educated

and taught the ways of Western civilization; and Jo's father, Li Ching Cheng, a progressive mandarin, who realized the value of such an education, had seized the opportunity to add his one dear son to the party, that he might gain the priceless advantage of some years of study in the same land.

Now it happened that in Mandarin Li's district labored an American medical missionary, Mason Hinckley by name, who also had an only son. When this boy was four years old, his parents, desirous that he should have an American training from the outset, had taken him to the United States and placed him in charge of his uncle and aunt, the Rev. William and Mrs. Hinckley, of Hatton, a manufacturing village of the lovely Connecticut valley. Then, with aching hearts, they had returned to their lonely post of duty in China, and only twice during the following fourteen years were they able to visit their boy.

When Mandarin Li announced that he, too, proposed to send a son to America, and asked if the Hinckleys could not arrange to have him received into the same family with their Rob, they gladly consented to do what they could. Their hope for their own boy was that he would eventually return to China, and they realized the value to him of a present companionship with a young Chinese of education and refinement. So a letter was sent to Hatton, and finally everything was arranged for the comfort and happiness of Mandarin Li's son. Thus he was sent forth on his long journey, half - way

around the world, filled with a joyous enthusiasm over his prospects.

He and his young friends travelled in charge of a home-returning American, who had promised to see them safely to their several destinations in New England. By his advice they adopted English names for use in the country to which they were bound, and our lad chose that of Joseph. As his father's surname was Li, which, in Chinese, is pronounced "Lee," he thus became known to his future teachers and more precise acquaintances as Joseph Lee; but all his American boy friends called him "Chinese Jo," or "China Jo," or "Chinee Jo," according to their several degrees of intelligence, and it is thus that we shall know him as we accompany him through the various adventures which it is proposed to record in the following pages.

They began, as already has been seen, with his very first morning in the new home that he had reached the evening before, tired from his long journey, bewildered by the multitude of strange sights and experiences that had crowded thickly about him from the moment of landing at San Francisco, and terrified at the great loneliness that had come to him with the departure of his comrades, who had been left, by twos, at other places before Hatton was reached. At the last of these points, only a few miles away, the gentleman who had escorted them from China had been obliged to send him on alone, after notifying the Hinckleys by telegraph of his coming.

Rob met him at the Hatton station, looked after his luggage of queer camphor-wood boxes, and took him to the pleasant parsonage that was to be his home in the strange land. Although Jo talked only broken English, while Rob had very nearly forgotten the Chinese of his childhood, they managed to converse after a fashion, and took to each other from the very first. Rob, eighteen years old, brown, broad-shouldered, and sturdy, offered a striking contrast in appearance to the slender lad who walked, with noiseless, felt-shod feet, beside him, and Jo at once conceived a liking for the young American, who greeted him so cordially, took charge of him and his affairs with such an air of authority, and even could speak a few words of intelligible Chinese.

Rob also was pleased with the foreign lad, whose appearance recalled a happy childhood spent in company with many such blue-clad figures on the other side of the world. At the same time he was glad that Jo had not reached his destination a few hours earlier; for he realized that the strangeness of his companion's costume and his general make-up would have attracted much unpleasant attention from the village boys had they been revealed by daylight. He determined to urge upon his uncle the advisability of confining Jo to the house on the following day, or until he could be provided with an outfit of American clothing, and persuaded to wear his hair in accordance with American ideas.

A warm welcome and a good supper awaited the young traveller at the parsonage; and under their

cheering influence his homesickness was, for the time being, forgotten. His boxes were promptly delivered at the house, and from them he took the most marvellous array of gifts for various members of the Hinckley family that ever had been seen in Hatton. To Mrs. Hinckley he presented several superb pieces of embroidered silks from Canton, a centre-piece for a table of pale-blue grass linen, drawn work from Swatow, a cloisonné teapot from Pekin, and half a dozen tiny teacups of exquisite Foo-Chow porcelain. For Mr. Hinckley he had wonderful ivory carvings in the shape of chessmen, and a wadded silk dressing-gown; while to Rob, in addition to several jars of Chinese confections, including sugared ginger-root, bamboo-tips, watermelon rind, edible sea-weeds, and palm-leaf buds, he gave a complete suit of Chinese clothing, such as is worn by the sons of wealthy mandarins, and selected from his own wardrobe. It was in striking contrast to the simple scholar's gown of light-blue cotton cloth that he had adopted as an inconspicuous travelling costume; for its dark-blue skirt was heavily embroidered with gold thread; it had a jacket of light-blue silk, with wide, flowing sleeves, a wine-colored, sleeveless over-jacket of the same rich material, black silk trousers, with plum-colored over-trousers, a light-blue silk cap, with a crystal button on top, silken socks, and gold-embroidered felt shoes.

Rob gasped with amazement when the various parts of this superb costume were unfolded before

him, and was inclined to regard it with contemptuous amusement.

"All these silk petticoats and things for a boy!" he sniffed. "Catch me ever wearing such a lot of girl's stuff! And, I say, Uncle Will, that reminds me —don't you think we'd better get him into American clothes, and have his pig-tail cut off, before he is turned loose on the street. He'll jump into no end of trouble if he shows outside in anything like these, or even as he is now. It looks funny even to me, and I'll bet he couldn't walk down Main Street without being mobbed."

"I myself think that the sooner he conforms to the dress and customs of the country in which he is to reside for some time to come, the better it will be for him," replied Mr. Hinckley. "But, Rob, I don't like the way you seem inclined to treat his gift, and I am very glad he could not wholly understand what you just said about it. A gift of any nature, offered as a token of friendliness and good-will, should be accepted in the same spirit, even though it may not be just what you would have chosen. I do not know of anything that hurts one's feelings more keenly than to have a friendly overture contemptuously rejected."

"Of course, I wouldn't hurt his feelings for anything, Uncle Will," replied Rob, with a contrite flush mounting to his forehead. "I already like him too much for that, and I wouldn't have said what I did about his present if I had thought. I do thank you ever so much," he added, turning to Jo, "for all this

silk stuff. I'm awfully glad to have it, and I'll put it away to wear at my first fancy-dress ball, if I ever go to one. Anyway, whenever I look at it, I'll be reminded that Chinese Jo is my friend, and that I am his."

Although Jo did not understand all the words thus spoken, he was so fully satisfied with their tone and the smile that accompanied them that, a little while later, when he went to bed, he was happy in the consciousness of having gained a friend of his own age in this strange land of strangers.

CHAPTER II

AMERICA'S UNFRIENDLY WELCOME

In spite of Jo's weariness of the night before, and the sound sleep that followed, he was out of bed by sunrise and gazing curiously from his chamber window. The air was sweet and cool, the arching elms stood motionless, as though not yet awake, and between them he caught a silvery gleam of the Connecticut. Beyond it rose soft, swelling hills, and he imagined their green slopes to be thickly strewn with graves, as always is the case in China; on them, too, he could see occasional groves of trees, each of which he supposed must shelter a white-walled temple or sacred shrine, this being the prime object of groves in his native land.

He wondered at not seeing any tall-sailed junks or guard-boats on the river, and at the utter absence of the useless but picturesque pagoda towers that add so much to the beauty of every Chinese landscape. Then, remembering that America is a very new country in comparison with his own, he concluded that its people had not yet found time to build pagodas, or, perhaps, were too poor. Of course, he could trace no resemblance between the broad, well-shaded avenue below him, with its rows

of neat, white houses, and the narrow, crowded, shadeless streets to which he was accustomed. At the same time, the green country on which he gazed looked so very like a bit of Chinese river valley that he longed to explore it, with a hope of finding thatched farm-houses, curve-roofed temples, or other homelike features that should recall his own beloved valley of the Si-Kiang. He listened with pleasure to the singing of birds, which were infinitely more numerous than in China, and to the tinkle of cow-bells, a sound he never before had heard. He wished he might go down to the street and begin at once his study of the many strange things it was certain to contain, and he wondered how soon a servant would appear in his room with the bowl of tea that would be the signal for rising.

While he thus was cogitating, he heard a door below him open and close, and then he saw his newly made friend, Rob Hinckley, go whistling down the street, swinging in one hand a bright tin milk-can. If he only had known that Rob was up and going out, he might have gone, too. Perhaps even now he might overtake him and have a walk in his company. He was dressed, and the only thing about him not thoroughly presentable was his queue, which, not yet cared for that morning, looked rough and unkempt. At home some one always had combed and braided it for him, first his mother, and afterwards a servant. Since coming away, one of his Chinese companions and he had braided each other's queues every morning. Now Jo wondered

who was to perform this service, but supposed that sooner or later some servant would come to his assistance. He wished the lazy fellow had appeared, and that this most important feature of his toilet had been attended to, for in China no gentleman will present himself on the street or in company unless his queue is carefully braided smooth and glossy. Exposed to public view in any other condition, it is a sign that its owner is in such deep affliction that he takes no interest even in the most important affairs of life.

Having been carefully instructed in this branch of Chinese etiquette, Jo was puzzled as to what he should do. He longed to join Rob on his walk, but hesitated to offend his friend by appearing before him with a disordered queue. He could not put it in order himself, and no one was at hand to assist him. Of course, he might conceal the fact that it was frowzy by coiling it about his head and hiding it beneath his cap; but even this plan had its drawback, for in the Flowery Kingdom it is an almost unpardonable offence for any man to appear in the presence of his superiors with queue coiled about his head or in any other way hidden. Still, the only superiors recognized at present by Jo were the senior Hinckleys, and by going down-stairs very quietly he might slip out of the house without attracting their notice, and so avoid giving offence.

Thus thinking, the lad hastily coiled his cherished but at that moment rather disreputable-looking queue closely about his head, pulled his cap over

it, and, softly opening his room door, stole forth with the noiseless tread of a sneak-thief. He got safely as far as the front door, but there he made so much noise fumbling with the unfamiliar latch as to attract the attention of Mr. Hinckley, who was dressing, and he called down, "Who's there?"

Not understanding the question, and as dismayed at the prospect of being discovered with his queue disrespectfully coiled as an American boy would be if caught stealing jam, Jo made no reply, but redoubled his efforts at the door. Suddenly, as he was pulling it with all his strength, the latch turned and the door flew open, sending him to the floor with a crash. Mrs. Hinckley screamed, and her husband, shouting "Stop thief!" started downstairs. He failed, however, to reach the bottom in time to discover the author of the disturbance, for Jo, thoroughly frightened by the untoward result of his efforts to enact the part of a Chinese gentleman, had hastily scrambled to his feet and fled through the now wide-open door. Although the minister did not see him, Mrs. Hinckley, peeping between the half-closed slats of the window-blinds, did, and exclaimed:

"My good gracious, William! If it isn't that China boy!"

"Nonsense," replied Mr. Hinckley, as, realizing the futility of a chase under existing conditions, he hastened back to the room.

"I tell you it is, for I just saw him with my own eyes, blue dress and all, go flying down the street

as though the constable was after him. I've no doubt he ought to be, too, for the boy's run away—that's what he's done — and probably taken every mite of silver in the house with him."

"Nonsense!" again ejaculated Mr. Hinckley, as he slipped on a pair of trousers.

"You may say 'nonsense' as much as you like," retorted his wife, "but you'll think something else when you find out that every word I'm speaking is solemn truth. I always did mistrust the Chinese, and so would you if you'd heard all the stories I have about their dreadful wickedness down at the society."

"Didn't know any of them belonged to the society," interposed Mr. Hinckley, unable even at this critical moment to resist a sly joke at his wife's expense.

"You know what I mean, William Hinckley, just as well as I do," was the reply; "and I do think this is a pretty time to be poking fun at your poor wife, when a pig-tailed 'yellow peril,' as he is truly called, is running off with every mite of her own mother's family silver. It's no wonder we are trying to exclude them, and I only wish we'd succeeded before this one ever came to Hatton. They do say down at the society that the Chinese are about to overrun the world; and, from what I've just seen, I've no doubt it's true."

"Of course, it must be so if *they* say so, my dear," answered the minister, as he fastened his shirt-collar; "but I'll try some overrunning myself after this first

'yellow peril' who has ever tried to overrun Hatton. As he is too conspicuous an object to run far without attracting attention, I expect to catch up with him very shortly, and to return with him inside of half an hour. Then I hope breakfast will be ready, for both of us are certain to be extremely hungry after our exercise."

"Perhaps it will, if he's left a bit of food in the house to cook or a thing to cook with, which I doubt," retorted Mrs. Hinckley, as her husband, now wholly dressed, again started towards the street. In the mean time, Chinese Jo, quite unaware of the turmoil he had left behind him, and only anxious to overtake Rob, whom he just could see far down the street, had, as Mrs. Hinckley declared, set forth on a run in that direction. Also, as Mr. Hinckley had predicted, he was too strangely conspicuous to run far without attracting attention. At first the few people on the street at this early hour only stared at him, but after a little they began to call and point at him, and boys began to pursue him with joyous shouts of anticipated fun.

All at once Jo discovered that Rob no longer was in sight, and also that a number of small boys, all yelling at the top of their voices, were running on both sides of him. Fearing lest he might pass the place where he had last seen his friend, and puzzled to account for his present escort, the Chinese lad stopped and looked about him. He had reached the village common, on which half a dozen disreputable young ragamuffins were playing an early game

of toss-penny. These, discerning in his presence a more exciting interest, promptly abandoned their game and ran whooping towards him.

Now, for the first time, Jo began to feel nervous and wish that he had not ventured out among these barbarians unprotected. All the terrible stories he had heard concerning the cruel treatment of his countrymen by Americans surged into his memory and filled him with dismay. Never before had he believed them, but now it seemed probable that some of them might be true.

No Chinese is a fighter, either by nature or education, and Jo was not an exception to this rule. Thus he would have fled from his present unhappy position had flight been possible, but it was not. He was completely encircled by his merciless tormentors, who, as they realized his utter helplessness, became more and more bold in their attacks. At first they only hooted, jeered, and called him names. Then they began to hustle and push him. At length one of them snatched off his cap and flung it to the ground, where it was trampled underfoot and kicked from one to another. With the loss of his cap Jo's queue was uncoiled from about his head and dropped down his back. In this position it was caught and jerked by one and another of the yelling mob until its wretched owner was half crazed by pain and fright. Thus he was shoved and pulled, spun giddily round and round, pelted with mud, and repeatedly struck with sticks or clinched fists. His blue gown was torn in many places, and his face

was bleeding. Finally he slipped, failed in a convulsive effort to save himself, and fell, carrying to earth with him one of the young miscreants at whom he had clutched as he went down.

Jo's fall was greeted by yells of delight from the imps who had caused it, but directly their jubilations were exchanged for howls of dismay and pain. At the critical moment an avenger had appeared among them, and he was dealing furious blows at their unguarded bodies with a terrible, flashing weapon, that scattered them as chaff is scattered by a fierce wind.

CHAPTER III

ROB TO THE RESCUE

Rob Hinckley had gone out early on that eventful morning for the family milk that he fetched every day from a small farm at the lower end of the village. His mind was full of the strange, new companion who had come into his life the evening before; and, as he went whistling down the street, he was planning how he should introduce him to the boys of Hatton. He also wondered on what terms they would receive the young foreigner, who was in every way so different from any other they ever had met.

"Of course, they'll treat him all right, though," reflected Rob. "They may think him funny and laugh at him a little, to begin with; but when I tell 'em who he is in his own country, they'll be proud enough to have him in the school. I'll have to keep him out of sight of the muckers, though, at any rate till he gets some civilized clothes and learns how to wear 'em."

Here Rob stared with a decidedly unfriendly scowl at the group of young gamblers on the village common, across which he was walking. "Wouldn't it just be pie for them to get hold of him, blue dress, pig-tail, and all?" he reflected; "and wouldn't he

think he'd run up against a war party of American Indians, ready to scalp him? They won't have a chance at him, though, not if I know it."

Here Rob straightened himself, clinched his unoccupied hand, and held his head higher than ever, for there is nothing that so increases one's sense of importance as to have a weaker person dependent upon him.

There was much bitterness of feeling existing between two classes of Hatton boys, one of which was more or less connected with the factory, while the other attended the academy for which the village was famous. The latter called their enemies "muckers," and these retorted with the term "saphead." Members of these opposed factions always exchanged sneers and taunts upon meeting, and sometimes these led to blows that resulted in fierce conflicts. None of these fights had taken place on the common, however, for the village constable had declared it to be neutral ground, and threatened with dire punishment any boy who should break the public peace within its limits. As the constable generally was somewhere in the vicinity of the common, ready to enforce his ruling, it had been obeyed thus far, and both the boyish factions had used the open space as a playground in apparent harmony. So Rob Hinckley only scowled at the muckers, who occupied one corner of the common as he crossed it that morning, while they, in turn, pretended ignorance of his presence.

On his return, however, affairs had assumed a

very different aspect, and as Rob drew near the common he pricked up his ears at the sounds that came to him from that ordinarily peaceful enclosure. "What could they mean? Were the muckers fighting among themselves?" Rob believed they were, and chuckled at thought of what Constable Jones would do when he discovered them. This belief was strengthened as he came within sight of the fracas, for at first he could only see a lot of yelling muckers, apparently engaged in a furious struggle. Then he uttered an exclamation of dismay, and the hot blood flew to his face. In the very centre of the surging crowd he saw a slender, blue-clad figure, taller than any of those swarming about it, and realized that the very thing he most had dreaded in connection with his newly made friend from China had come to pass. Chinese Jo, whom he had thought to be peacefully and safely asleep in the parsonage, evidently had left it unnoticed, and at once had fallen into the hands of the most merciless of American savages.

With a hoarse yell of rage, and careless of what might happen to himself, Rob sprang forward, swinging the milk-can above his head as he ran. So busy were the tormentors of the Chinese lad with their sport that the coming of a would-be rescuer was unnoticed until he was close upon them. As poor Jo lost his footing and fell, Rob dashed into the mêlée, dealing telling blows with his milk-can, and scattering the horde of young toughs as though he had been a charge of cavalry. The stopper flew

"AS POOR JO LOST HIS FOOTING AND FELL, ROB DASHED INTO THE MÊLÉE"

out of the can, and its contents were flung to right and left, impartially drenching friend and foe. Thus, for a minute, the tide of battle flowed with the righteously wrathful Rob and against the cowardly and unrighteous muckers. Then one of the latter, who had not yet been reached by the deadly milk-can, and so could view the proceedings more calmly than could his companions, shouted:

"There ain't but one saphead, fellers! Go for him! Kill him! He ain't no good!"

The cry was heard and obeyed. In spite of the demoralizing effects of the milk-can, the muckers rallied, and in another moment affairs would have gone very badly with both our lads. But providentially sent peace-makers were at hand, and, ere the enemy could rally to an attack, they were put to ignominious flight by overwhelming forces that simultaneously appeared upon the field of battle from two sides. Parson Hinckley and Constable Jones had arrived in the nick of time.

"What is the meaning of this disgraceful exhibition, Robert?" demanded the former, sternly, as the flight of the enemy revealed his nephew, flushed, breathless, hatless, swinging a badly battered tin can in one hand, and with milk streaming from every part of his figure.

"Yes," chimed in Constable Jones, wrathfully, "what does it mean? You can't say that you didn't know my orders again' scrimmaging on the common; and yet here you be, caught red-handed in the very act."

"I'd call it 'white-handed,'" replied Rob, with a grin, at the same time holding out a grimy, milk-dripping paw.

"I don't want no sass, young feller, but a plain statement of facts," retorted the constable, sharply.

"Well," replied Rob, "all I know is this: That gang of muckers were killing my friend, just because he happens to be a Chinese, and I got here just in time to save him."

"Chinee, is he?" queried the constable, gazing curiously at the lad whom Mr. Hinckley was assisting to his feet. "Looks like he'd been doing some killing on his own hook," he added, quickly, as he caught sight of the small mucker who had become involved in Jo's fall, and who still lay motionless on the ground. He had been knocked breathless, but, as the constable knelt beside him and lifted his head, the boy gasped. Then he opened his eyes.

"I'm kilt, and de Chink done it," he murmured, indistinctly.

"It looks like rather a serious case, parson," said the constable, solemnly; "more especial as there's a heathen Chinee mixed into it. I believe it's my duty to arrest all parties concerned, and hold 'em for examination by Square Burtis."

"You needn't arrest these two," replied Mr. Hinckley, indicating Jo and his nephew, "for I am just as anxious for an investigation into this affair as you can be. It is my belief that a most wanton outrage has been perpetrated, for which the guilty parties should be punished, and I give you my word

that both these lads shall appear with me before Justice Burtis whenever summoned to do so."

By this time curious spectators were beginning to gather. The dispersed muckers, reinforced by others of their kind, were shouting taunts and derisive epithets from a safe distance, and, rather than invite further trouble, the constable hastily agreed to the minister's proposition. So he departed in one direction, taking with him the small tough, and thus diverting to himself the unpleasant attention of that element among the rapidly increasing spectators.

A number of those who remained walked towards the parsonage with Mr. Hinckley and his companions, plying them with questions and gazing curiously at the tattered young Chinese, who, frightened and unhappy, walked silently between his friends. Realizing that this was neither the time nor place for explanations, Rob's uncle did not demand any, but, cautioning the boys not to talk, replied to all questions that the whole affair would shortly be investigated in court.

When they reached the parsonage, and Mrs. Hinckley, in the back of the house, heard their voices, she called out:

"Is that you, Rob? I'm glad, for I want some milk, right away."

"Here it is, Aunt Alice," answered the boy, presenting himself with his battered tin can, a little ruefully, but at the same time with a twinkle in his eyes, at the kitchen door.

"Good gracious, Rob! What has happened?" cried the astonished woman.

"Only a little scrap, Aunt Alice, that I couldn't help getting into on Jo's account."

"Was that China boy mixed up in it? But, of course, he was. I've felt it from the first that he'd make trouble."

"But it wasn't his fault, Aunt Alice; I'm sure of that," asserted Rob, earnestly. "He was being shamefully abused by the muckers, who came mighty near killing him."

The next half-hour, with breakfast entirely forgotten, was devoted to explanations, and, by the end of that time, the whole affair was pretty thoroughly understood. Jo's sufferings at the hands of his tormentors had the one good effect of transforming Mrs. Hinckley's mistrust of him into a warm sympathy that afterwards developed into a real liking for the gentle fellow.

A little later, while they were at breakfast, came the expected summons for Mr. Hinckley, his nephew Robert Hinckley, and a Chinese lad known to be an inmate of the parsonage, to appear at ten o'clock that very morning in Justice Burtis's court-room for examination in connection with the recent fracas on Hatton common.

While Mr. Hinckley went to see the justice and prefer charges against several of the young muckers, whose names had been given him by Rob, for assaulting his ward, Joseph Lee, the two lads changed their clothing and prepared to make a respectable

appearance in court. While they were thus engaged, Rob, to the delight of both of them, found his early knowledge of Chinese returning to him so rapidly that he was able to understand much of what Jo said.

Acting on Mr. Hinckley's advice, the latter arrayed himself in his very richest robes, and Mrs. Hinckley's sympathy so far overcame her prejudice that, when she discovered him making a sorry attempt to do up his queue, she offered to braid it for him.

"To think that I ever should do such a thing!" she exclaimed. "But, Rob, what do you suppose he wants all this white stuff worked into it for?" she added. "I'm sure his pig-tail is long enough without it."

The white stuff thus referred to was some strands of silk braid and a silken tassel, and, after asking Jo concerning it, Rob explained to his aunt that, as white is the Chinese color for mourning, their young guest wore it in memory of his mother, who had died less than a year before.

"Poor fellow!" said Mrs. Hinckley. "But what a very curious custom!"

At length both lads were pronounced presentable, each according to the fashion of his own country, and, Mr. Hinckley having returned, the whole family set forth towards the little building in which Justice of the Peace Burtis held court.

"It is not of my first day the manner I had expected to spend it," Jo confided to Rob, as they walked down the street.

"I should say not!" replied the latter.

CHAPTER IV

A TRIUMPH FOR JO'S ENEMIES

THE little court-room was already crowded when our party reached it, and Jo's appearance created a sensation. The muckers and their friends, many of whom were on hand, scowled at him, and made sneering remarks concerning his country, his costume, and especially about his queue, which seemed, more than anything else, to excite their animosity. On the other hand, the better class of spectators were impressed by the intelligence shown in the lad's face, his air of high breeding, and by the richness of his dress, which was much handsomer than anything of the kind ever before seen in Hatton.

Mr. Hinckley was the first witness examined, and he told of the Chinese lad's coming to America, and why he had done so. Then Jo himself was called to the stand, and, with Rob acting as interpreter, he gave his account of the recent fracas, a simple statement that drew forth indignant murmurs from the better class of spectators. After that the witness-stand was occupied by several of the young toughs who had participated in the affair. Their accounts of what had happened were confused and contradictory, but in general were to the effect that they

were only looking at the stranger who had so unexpectedly appeared, running down the village street, and laughing a little at his pig-tail; that he had flown into a violent rage, and had flung one of their number to the ground, where he endeavored to choke him to death. They further testified that while they were trying to save their comrade's life by dragging the enraged heathen off from him, they suddenly were set upon by Rob Hinckley, who severely beat and seriously wounded several of them with a milk-can before they could escape from his furious and unprovoked attack. In support of this testimony, the boy who had been involved in Jo's fall was produced and allowed to tell his story, as were several who bore marks of Rob's effective weapon. A statement from the constable was then heard, and it served so to strengthen the testimony just taken that, when Mr. Jones finished his story and an adjournment until two o'clock was ordered, the case of our friends looked very black. Nor did it brighten during the afternoon session, for Rob could not swear that he had seen any specific act of violence committed by any one of those who had surrounded the young Chinese on the common. Mr. Hinckley also failed to help the case, for he was forced to admit that when he reached the scene of trouble the alleged assailants of the Chinese lad were in full flight before his nephew, and that, while they were rallying to an attack, he did not see them commit any overt act. He also was made to describe the relative positions of Jo and the boy who had

shared his fall, and, as his testimony on this point agreed with all that had preceded, excepting that of Jo himself, it served still further to strengthen the cause of the muckers.

After this the only effort made to help what evidently was a weak case was Mrs. Hinckley's description of Jo's appearance when he reached home, together with her production of the tattered blue gown he had worn. Her story seemed to produce a good effect upon the justice, until, taking the garment into his own hands for examination, he said:

"Madam, this coat, or dress, or whatever it may be called, seems to be badly stained and still is damp. Can you tell me by what fluid it has been saturated? Is it, by any chance, blood from the veins of this Joseph Lee, and caused to flow by the ill treatment he is alleged to have suffered?"

"No," replied Mrs. Hinckley, shortly; "it's milk."

This answer was greeted by a roar of laughter from the crowded court-room, and, when quiet had with some difficulty been restored, the justice announced his decision:

"The examination of witnesses in this case," he said, "will proceed no further, as the testimony already submitted is more than sufficient to warrant me in committing the principals for trial at the next session of the county court. Moreover, as the case has assumed an aspect so much more serious than I had anticipated, I am obliged to bind over Robert Hinckley and Joseph Lee in the sum of five hundred dollars each for appearance before said court. I

shall require these bonds in each case to be signed by two responsible tax-payers of this district. If such signatures cannot be procured, Robert Hinckley and Joseph Lee will be confined in the county jail until the time for their trial shall arrive. Also, pending the execution of said bonds, they are remanded to the custody of the Hatton village constable, who is hereby charged with their safe-keeping."

"Whew!" ejaculated Rob under his breath. "Prisoners! Jail! In custody! That sounds worse than any scrape I ever got into before; and what a lovely beginning for Jo's experience of free America!"

The decision was hailed with jubilation by the muckers and their friends, who, as they streamed into the open air, gave vent to their feelings through derisive yells and taunting remarks concerning "pigtails" and "sapheads."

Jo, who until now had watched the proceedings with grave curiosity, though with but slight understanding of what was taking place, was made to realize by these sounds of rejoicing from the other side that something had gone wrong, and he glanced inquiringly towards his friend.

"Yes," said Rob, speaking in fragmentary but intelligible Chinese, "the case has gone against us so far, and you and I must go to prison unless some one will put up the money to keep us out."

"My father is a mandarin, and can furnish enough money to buy my freedom from any foreign prison," exclaimed Jo, with flushing cheeks.

"Yes, of course," replied Rob; "but in this case it happens that only American money will be accepted."

"Then let me go to prison," said Jo, proudly, "for my father does not choose that I should incur obligations."

So determined was the Chinese lad upon this course that even when Mr. Hinckley had arranged the bond business with some of his friends, and the boys were free to depart, it was with the greatest difficulty that he could be persuaded to leave the court-room. Only after Rob had repeatedly assured him that Mr. Hinckley was acting as agent for his father, who, in the end, would be called upon to meet all expenses connected with the trial, did the proud young chap consent to accompany his friends to their home.

Although the case thus far seemed to have gone against our lads, it had the good result of arousing much interest in Jo and creating many friends for him among the best people of Hatton. Thus many times the amount of the bonds demanded by Justice Burtis had promptly been forth-coming the moment his decision was rendered. That evening the parsonage was crowded with those who wished to tender sympathy and friendship to the young stranger who had received so cruel a reception in the land that had promised so much, and to whose honor he had so trustingly confided.

The young Chinese was made to feel almost happy, and much of his homesickness vanished as Rob translated the friendly sentiments of his visitors, and

he realized that, in spite of his recent experience, America did contain people of kindly disposition, who held honor and fair dealing in esteem. Thus the darkness that had so heavily overshadowed this first day in his new home was decidedly lightened before its end; and he went to bed that night possessing a wealth of new experience in which evil and good were very nearly balanced.

The following day was largely devoted to procuring for Jo a complete outfit of American clothes, and in teaching him to wear them. For a time these rendered him very miserable. Never had his legs seemed so long or so conspicuous as they now appeared, divested of skirts and encased in trousers. Never before had he worn garments fitting him so closely that he doubted if they would allow him to eat enough to satisfy his hunger, and he was surprised to find that he still could draw a full breath. He was amazed at the number of pockets they contained, since never, until now, had he possessed even one, and he wondered what he should find to put in them. He approved of a hat that shaded his eyes, but felt most noisy and uncomfortable in the harsh leather shoes that replaced his own of cloth.

But all these troubles were insignificant when compared with the great grief that came to him that same day. It was nothing more nor less than the loss of his cherished queue, which both Mr. Hinckley and Rob advised, and almost insisted, should be cut off.

"It is the distinguishing mark of my nationality,"

he pleaded, "and without it people might take me for a Japanese, or even for a Korean. Also, it is a symbol of loyalty to my emperor, for in China every man without a queue is regarded as a rebel, and is liable to lose his head. Without it I should feel ashamed to look my friends in the face. No, I cannot give it up!"

When all this was interpreted to Mr. Hinckley, he replied:

"Tell him that, while I realize the force of what he says, I still must urge him to make the sacrifice. After all, the wearing of the queue is comparatively recent in China. Jo's ancestors of less than three hundred years ago did not wear them; nor did they shave their heads, that custom being forced upon them by their Manchu, or Tartar, conquerors, early in the seventeenth century. The latter wore the queue, or horse-tail, depending from their heads, and long coat-sleeves, shaped at the end like horses' hoofs, to show that they were horsemen; and when they conquered China they compelled their new subjects to adopt both these features. Now, as Jo says, to discard the queue in China is a sign of rebellion against the government; but it cannot be so considered when a Chinese is in a foreign land, and subject to great inconvenience, not to say danger, if he does not conform to the customs of the country in which he resides. Here, for instance, if Jo persists in wearing his queue with an American costume, it will render him very conspicuous and liable to constant ridicule, if not insult and abuse, from ig-

norant or vicious members of the community, while without it he rarely will attract unusual attention. When he is ready to return to his own land, he again can allow it to grow, and can supplement it with a false braid until it shall have attained a suitable length. Many Americans residing in China have adopted the native costume, including the queue, in order to render themselves inconspicuous; and why should not the process be reversed by Chinese residing in this country?"

These arguments finally so prevailed that poor Jo, with a heavy heart and tear-filled eyes, allowed the shears to despoil him of what he considered his chief and most becoming adornment. As the heavy braid of glossy hair was severed he exclaimed:

"Now even my own father would not know me, and my wife would no longer render me obedience!"

"Your wife!" cried Rob. "What *do* you mean? You can't have a wife! Why, you aren't any older than I am."

"Certainly, I have a wife," replied Jo, composedly. "We were selected for each other when I was ten years of age; and, as my father wanted a person to look after his house, we were married the day before I left home."

"But she must be a little girl," objected Rob.

"Oh no. She is older than I, and quite grown up."

"Is she pretty?" persisted the other, curiously, "and are you very fond of her?"

"No, I am not fond of her at all; for, you see, I

don't know her; and I don't think she even is good-looking. Of course I can't tell, though, for I have seen her only once, and then her face was so hidden by the wedding-paint that I have no idea how she would look without it."

"Well!" exclaimed Rob; "you Chinese certainly are funny!"

CHAPTER V

THREATENED VIOLENCE

THE next two months passed quickly, and were full of interesting happenings for our lads. Although the academy was closed, and many of its students were away for the summer, there were a number of Rob's friends left in Hatton, and these promptly taking Jo's side as against the muckers, became his friends as well. In fact, it is doubtful if anything could have advanced him so speedily in the estimation of the better class of Hatton boys than his ill treatment at the hands of their avowed enemies. It alone was sufficient to induce them to make much of him from the outset; but in a very short time they learned to like him for his own good qualities.

He always was a gentleman, polite, courteously attentive when spoken to, and invariably good-natured. Then, too, his taper fingers were marvellously deft in making things out of paper, wood, or clay, such as dragons looking fierce enough to eat one, puzzles at once simple and baffling, flutelike whistles, and other instruments for the production of sounds more or less musical. He also constructed innumerable kites of grotesque animal forms, and

he always was willing to show his boyish friends just how these wonders were produced.

They, in turn, taught him the things known almost instinctively by every American boy, and especially by those who live in the country, but of which our Chinese lad had no knowledge—such as swimming, boxing, rowing, how to camp out like Indians, and, above all, how to play the distinctively American game of baseball. To these fascinating novelties Jo took as readily as a young duck takes to water; for, with his hair cut short, instead of hanging in a braid down his back, and with a radical change of apparel, his whole character seemed to have undergone a transformation, and he now entered as heartily into the rough-and-tumble sports of his new associates as though to the manner born. To be sure, he was ridiculously awkward at first, and made such funny breaks as to excite the uproarious mirth of the other fellows; but he didn't seem to mind this a bit, and always joined heartily in a laugh at his own expense.

The thing they teased him most about was his wife, for the fact of his being married had seemed too good a joke for Rob to keep to himself. Even this, however, did not appear to annoy the young husband, for a Chinese marriage is so entirely different from one in America that there is no trace of sentiment connected with it. The most important feature of Chinese life is the worship of one's ancestors, and this worship may only properly be performed by the head of a family. Thus, to provide for the

suitable worship of their own spirits, in case of untimely death, parents are anxious to have their sons married as early in life as is possible. Such marriages are purely business transactions, arranged by the elders, and with which the young people have nothing to do except to be on hand at the appointed time. Even this is not essential in the case of the bridegroom, so long as the bride is delivered, as per agreement, at his father's house. He may be on a journey, or undergoing a scholar's examination, or engaged in some other important business that may not be interrupted for so trifling an incident as his wedding, which, therefore, is allowed to proceed without him. As he never is permitted to see his future wife or to learn anything concerning her during their betrothal, he cannot be expected to take a great personal interest in her, or she in him. Thus it happened that Jo was quite as willing to accept, good-naturedly, teasing remarks concerning his marriage as he was those called forth by any other customs of his people that struck his new companions as ridiculous.

He had one possession that excited their sincere admiration, not to say their envy, and this was a wonderful memory. Having been trained from earliest childhood to commit to memory columns and pages of Chinese characters, and not only pages but entire volumes of the Chinese classics, our young scholar now took up the acquisition of English as a mere pastime. The alphabet was conquered in a single day; several pages of short words, together

with their meanings, in another; and by the end of a week he was reading easy sentences. Rob was his first teacher, and, of course, his knowledge of Chinese was of the greatest assistance to Jo in gaining the meanings of the English words that he so readily learned to recognize by sight and sound.

Thus it happened that when the time arrived for his trial in the county court he was able to give his own version of the fracas on Hatton common in intelligible English without the aid of an interpreter.

In spite of the fact that Mr. Hinckley had employed able counsel to defend the boys, the case was decided against them, and they were sentenced to pay heavy fines in addition to the costs of the trial.

"It is an outrageous and unjust decision," said Mr. Hinckley to his lawyer, "and I will never submit to it so long as there is a higher court to which the case may be taken. I desire, therefore, that you move for an appeal, and continue to give it your most earnest attention."

"Very well, sir," was the reply; "of course, I will do so; but I must warn you that there is little hope of such a suit as yours being won in any American court. It is prejudiced from the outset by the existing strong feeling against the Chinese. For them it is almost impossible to obtain justice, even with the bulk of evidence in their favor, which, in the present instance, even you must admit is not the case."

In spite of what the lawyer said, Mr. Hinckley was determined to carry the contest to a higher

court, and, the motion for an appeal being granted, the case of State *vs.* Joseph Lee *et al.* was carried to a superior court, in which the earliest date set for a hearing was four months from that time.

In the mean time the muckers of Hatton and their friends were wildly jubilant over the victory already gained. During the evening of the day on which the decision of the county court had been rendered, they gathered about a great bonfire at the lower end of the village, where they listened to incendiary speeches against the Chinese and all who befriended them. These were received with yells of applause and ominous threats of violence.

While this was going on at one end of the village, a number of Mr. Hinckley's friends were discussing the situation in the parsonage at the other. All at once Rob, who had been doing some scouting on his own responsibility, broke into the room where these gentlemen were sitting.

"They're coming, Uncle Will!" he cried, breathlessly, "and they swear they'll run Jo out of the village. They are talking about tar and feathers, too."

Mr. Hinckley sprang to his feet. "My friends," he said, "if you will stand by me in this emergency I think the evil may be averted; but if you cannot see your way to so doing, I must hasten to remove the innocent lad committed to my charge beyond the reach of danger. What do you say? Speak quick, for there is not a moment to lose."

"We will stand by you," replied one and another,

"and there are plenty more who will do so, too. Our village must not be disgraced by scenes of lawless violence."

"Then," said Mr. Hinckley, "hasten and gather the neighbors. Let each man be back here within five minutes, bringing another with him. I will try to find Constable Jones, and urge him—"

"Here I be, parson," interrupted a voice from the doorway, "and I've telegraphed the sheriff that there's a show for trouble. He's answered that he'll be here inside of an hour, and for us to try and keep 'em entertained till he comes."

"Good!" exclaimed Mr. Hinckley. "I rather think we can."

Five minutes later, when a noisy throng of men and boys came surging up the street, the lower part of the parsonage, opposite which they halted, was so brilliantly lighted that they could see a numerous company of gentlemen assembled inside. They barely had time to realize that the house thus was occupied, when, suddenly, every light was extinguished and it stood in silent darkness. For a moment the new-comers, just now so valiantly loud-mouthed, waited in silence to see what would happen next. Then they began to murmur, and the murmurs grew into shouts of:

"Fetch out your Chinee!"

"We'll teach him English!"

"Down with the rat-eaters!" and a confusion of other cries, at once derisive and threatening.

As the mob, inflamed by these utterances, and

urged on by its self-constituted leaders, crowded about the entrance to the front yard, it was met by Constable Jones, who leaned negligently against one of the gate-posts.

"Hello!" he exclaimed. "What do you fellows want here?"

"We want to see Parson Hinckley," answered a spokesman.

"Well, you'll have to call again to-morrow, or some other day, for he's busy just now and can't see you."

"Oh, he carn't, carn't he? I rather guess he'll see us before we git ready to leave. Come on, fellers!"

"Stand back!" shouted the constable as the crowd surged towards the gate. "I have instructions from the owner of these premises not to admit any one to them this night. As this is private property, and I'm bound to protect the owner in his rights, the first man attempting to enter will be arrested for trespass."

This announcement was greeted with howls of derision, and it seemed as though Constable Jones was about to have on his hands the job of arresting the entire mob, when another halt was called by the voice of Mr. Hinckley, who came from the house to the front gate as though to investigate the trouble.

"What is going on here, Constable Jones? Who are these people, and what do they want?" he asked, loud enough for all to hear.

"Want to see you, parson; so they say."

"Well, my friends, what is it? I am too busy for an extended conversation; but if you can tell me in a few words what you desire, I am ready to listen."

"Yes, we can," answered one of the leaders, gruffly. "We want the murdering, heathen Chinee that you're a-keeping in your house agin the law. We're agoin' to have him, too, an' run him out er town."

"Against the law!" repeated Mr. Hinckley. "What do you mean? I am not harboring any person against the law, that I know of."

"Yes, you be, fer the law says all Chinesesers must be excluded, and we're going to enforce it, by excluding the one you've brought to Hatton in spite of the law."

For ten minutes Mr. Hinckley held the crowd at bay by his arguments, and his exhortations not to disgrace themselves, their State, and their country, by committing an act of lawless violence; but finally they would listen to him no longer, and again a rush was made for the gate.

This time it was checked by a new voice, the stern tones of which were well known to all of them, for it belonged to the owner of the great shops in which so many of them earned their daily bread. "Hold on, men!" he cried, "and listen to me. I don't think I need tell you who I am, or that I will do as I say, for you all know me, and you know that I never yet broke a promise. For many years you and I have lived in this village of Hatton. In all that time we have carried on business together in

orderly fashion, to my satisfaction, and, I hope, to yours. We have had differences, but always have managed to settle them without calling in outside aid. Now, however, you are threatening me, as well as this entire community, with something to which I cannot and will not submit. You are threatening this village with mob rule, a condition under which no community can exist and no business can be conducted. Therefore I give you my solemn word that if a single act of lawless violence against life or property is committed this night by a man or woman, boy or girl employed in the Hatton shops, those same shops shall be closed to-morrow, never to be reopened."

"That's all bluff!" cried a voice from the crowd, as the speaker uttered this threat.

"What do we care fer him or fer his talk?" demanded one who had constituted himself a leader. "There's a-plenty of us here as don't work in his shops to see this business through; so come on, lads, and don't fool away any more time talking. Hurray for American rights, and down with all Chinese scabs!"

At this the mob uttered a howl and leaped forward, not only putting to flight the little group holding the parsonage gate, but tearing down the fence and swarming up to the very door of the house.

CHAPTER VI

THE SHERIFF TAKES PROMPT MEASURES

Sheriff Hardy, of Hat County, was a fearlessly resolute man, possessed of great bodily strength and of a coolness in times of excitement that admirably fitted him for his difficult position, and he had constant need to exercise all these qualities, for his was a manufacturing county, having a large population of recently Americanized foreigners, who held in scant respect laws not enforced by a military power always in evidence.

On the evening of the trouble in Hatton, Constable Jones's message found the sheriff quietly smoking a cigar on the porch of his house at the county seat, some miles from the place where his presence was so urgently required. Two minutes later he was on horseback and galloping towards the scene of disturbance. Reaching the Hatton parsonage within half an hour, he entered it by a back door, and at once swore in as special deputies the gentlemen whom he found there assembled, and undecided, not having authority, as to how they should act in the present emergency. Then Sheriff Hardy stepped to the front porch, took a survey of the situation, and for a minute listened to the significant

interchange of remarks between the owner of the shops and the leaders of the mob.

He was there when the crowd tore down the fence and made their rush towards the house. Until this moment they had not suspected his presence, but now, at the sound of his sharp "Halt!" their advance was checked as effectually as though it had encountered a twenty-foot stone wall.

"Stand where you are!" he commanded. "Any man who advances so much as a single step farther will be arrested. I am not going to ask what you are doing here, nor the meaning of this cowardly demonstration against the peace. I already have heard enough to fully understand the situation. You are proposing to injure and otherwise abuse a person who is legally an inmate of this house."

"He's a heathen Chinee," muttered some one in the crowd.

"I don't care if he's a blue monkey," replied the sheriff, sharply, "so long as he is here with the sanction of the law, he is entitled to legal protection, and he is going to have it, too, just so long as I am sheriff of Hat County. Some of you Dagoes seem to think there isn't any law in this country, but I'll teach you that there is plenty of law, with ample provision for enforcing it. Now I've wasted all the time I mean to on you, and school is dismissed; so, 'bout face, and clear out of here. You want to be spry, too, for in just one minute I am going to march down that street with a posse of armed deputies, sworn to obey orders, and ordered to arrest any

anarchist who attempts to obstruct their passage. I may add that they can shoot, too; and, if necessary, will shoot. That's all."

As the mob, breaking into angry murmurs, still hesitated to move, Sheriff Hardy called out, so that all might hear:

"Posse, attention! Fall in! Come on!"

Then, as the tramp of many feet sounded on the porch, he leaped from it, and his impatient followers sprang after him. The next minute they were charging down the main street behind a panic-stricken mob in full flight, and Hatton's short-lived reign of terror was ended.

After this, Mr. Hinckley, acting upon the sheriff's advice, which coincided with his own inclination, did not seek to secure Jo's safety by sending him away from Hatton, but kept him there in attendance at the academy, where the other fellows, under Rob's leadership, acted as a body-guard for his protection.

"It is too bad that I make so much bobble," said the Chinese lad to his friend one day. "Mebbe better if I go my own country."

"Oh, rot!" replied Rob, who at times found difficulty in expressing his feelings other than by the use of slang. "It would just be pie for the muckers to have you cut away, and they would claim game on the strength of it. As for you making trouble, I call it fun, and so do the other fellows. Why, I've never known so much life in the academy as has been put into it by your coming. Same time,

you can't say you aren't getting good by being here, for I never heard of anybody learning as fast as you do. I'm not the only one that's on to it, either; for I heard old Puff—excuse me, I mean Professor Puffer—say the same thing only yesterday. Besides, you couldn't go away till after our trial, anyhow, for we are under bonds to appear, and it would simply mean ruin to Uncle Will if you didn't show up."

"That tlial," answered Jo, who had not yet fully conquered the difficulty encountered by all Chinese who come into contact with the letter *r*, " makes for me much bitterness and plenty 'fraid. In my country we say, 'Better it is to die than go in law-suit.' "

"Oh, pshaw!" answered Rob. "It isn't that way in America. Everybody here seems to get mixed up in some sort of a law-suit sooner or later, and not worry much about it, either. As for ours, it 'll come out all right; you see if it don't. I'm not fretting."

When, in the early winter, the eventful day set for the trial of the now famous case of State *vs.* Joseph Lee *et al.* arrived, it seemed as though half Hatton was determined to be on hand. Court was held in the city of S——, distant only an hour's ride by train, so that the Hatton spectators were able to go and return the same day.

Owing to the dragging length of the preceding case on the calendar, that of our lads was not called on the first day of their appearance, and they were forced to spend the night in a hotel, guarded by

a deputy. In this same hotel stayed the father of the young tough who had incidentally been thrown to the ground with Jo during the long-ago fracas that began all this trouble. When our lads, accompanied by their guard, went down to supper, this man, together with another, sat where he could see them, and, pointing to Jo, he said, viciously, but in a low tone:

"That's him, and we'll make it worth your while to fix him."

"That well-dressed young fellow?" questioned the other, in a tone of surprise. "He don't look any more like a Chinee than he does like a Dago, and if you hadn't told me, I wouldn't have suspected it."

"No, they've trimmed him up to look almost civilized; but I wisht you'd seen him when the fuss took place. He sure was a savage-appearing heathen then."

"Um," said the other, meditatively; "changed his description, have they? Well, if you can make it worth while, I'll see what can be done."

To the dismay of our lads and their friends, the trial, which occupied the whole of the following day, was, in spite of the efforts of their lawyer, but a repetition of the first one. Much additional testimony was presented by the State, but nothing new had been forth-coming in their behalf. So late in the day was the case closed that the judge withheld his decision until the next morning; but no one had a doubt as to its nature, and the muckers of Hatton

held another jubilation that night with bonfires and much noise.

Full accounts of the trial appeared in the morning papers, and our friends read these with heavy hearts.

"Looks as though we stood a good chance of going to prison," remarked Rob, gloomily. "It 'll either be that or a whopping big fine that, I'm afraid, Uncle Will can't raise. Maybe it 'll be both."

"If my father were only here," said Jo, "he would make things all right quick enough, by giving that mandarin judge much money."

"Oh, would he?" replied Rob. "That's all you know about American judges. Such a scheme might work in China, but if your father should try it on here he would be pretty apt to land himself in prison, alongside of his son, and that son's 'accomplice,' as the papers now call me. We Americans are a pretty tough lot, I'll admit, and our laws don't seem to have much to do with justice, but I don't believe we've yet come to the point of bribing our judges—that is, not to any great extent."

"But, Rob, my friend, it is for you that my heart is aching. For me it makes no difference. When I am again free I will go back to my own country as a hero, whose bad treatment here will only make my people hate foreigners more than ever. But for you it will mean shame and much sorrow, all caused by me."

"Now, don't you fret a little bit about that, old man," replied Rob, stoutly. "There is no danger of me being disgraced by going to prison in a good

cause, in the eyes of any one whose opinion is worth anything. I tell you, honestly, that, so long as you are in this scrape, I'm glad to be in it with you; for it will show that if Americans are sometimes unjust, it is not only to foreigners, but to their own people as well."

So greatly was interest in the case stimulated by the published reports that, on the second day of the trial, the court-room was crowded with spectators. Most of these were hostile in sentiment to our lads and were anxious to hear sentence pronounced, not only upon the Chinese, who had dared assault an American, but upon the white lad who had proved a traitor to his own people by assisting in the outrage. Another attraction in the court-room that morning was a Chinese gentleman, richly clad in his national costume, who entered with the judge, and was accorded the honor of a seat on the bench. He was secretary to the Chinese legation at Washington, hurriedly sent on by his chief to inquire into this case and do everything possible for the relief of his young countryman. Even after entering the court-room he continued to speak to the judge; but the face of the latter remained sternly impassive, as though, having made up his mind, nothing could change it.

When our lads were led to their seats they could nowhere see the lawyer who was defending them, and they wondered at his absence; but he appeared and took his place with other members of the bar just as court was opening. He had no opportunity

for communicating with them at that moment, but he beamed upon them with a smiling countenance, for which they could not account.

"Looks like a man grinning at his own funeral," whispered Rob to his friend, who wondered how such a thing might be possible.

In another moment, however, his attention was drawn from this puzzle by the opening of court, and by seeing their counsel rise to his feet.

"Your honor," said this gentleman, addressing the judge, "I beg leave to petition that the case of State *vs.* Joseph Lee *et al.*, concluded in this court yesterday, be reopened for the admission of new and important testimony in behalf of the defence. Only this morning has a witness been discovered whose story will, I believe, completely reverse all previous impressions gained during this momentous trial. In view of that fact we earnestly pray that you will permit us to place this person on the stand."

After listening to a demur from the district attorney, the court granted this petition and reopened the case, whereupon the counsel for the defence summoned to the witness-stand Miss Annabel Lorimer.

CHAPTER VII

THE SENTENCE OF THE COURT

As the court-crier, amid a breathless hush of expectation, loudly called the name "Annabel Lorimer," a young girl, flushed with embarrassment, but with brave, gray eyes, rose from a seat in the front row of spectators and was escorted to the witness-stand by a gentleman, who evidently was her father, and who remained near her during the examination that followed. After she had sworn to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, had given her name, her place of residence as that very city, and had blushingly admitted that, although fifteen years of age, she was unmarried, she was asked to tell what she knew of the case now on trial.

"We were going to Canada for the summer," she began, "so as to learn how to travel and get ready for the great journey around the world that papa and I are going to take this winter. So I went to Hatton to say good-bye to my aunt Marjorie, who lives in a big, white house, just across from the common. I could only stay one night, and had to leave on the very earliest morning train. So I was up pretty early, and was dressing to go down-stairs,

when such shouting and laughing came from the street that I looked out of the window. There were a lot of boys, all running, and one of them was a Chinese. I never saw one before, but I knew he was Chinese by his pig-tail and by his funny shoes, that were just like the pictures."

"Can you tell how he was dressed?" asked Jo's lawyer.

"Yes, he had on a long, blue frock, without any waist-band."

"Like this?" suggested the lawyer, at the same time holding up the very gown Jo had worn on that eventful morning.

"Yes, just the same; only at first it wasn't torn."

"Thank you. Now you may proceed with your story."

"Well, while I was looking I saw that the other boys were teasing the Chinese boy, which seemed to me dreadfully mean, when he was all alone in a strange place, especially when he stood still and began to look frightened. Then some more big boys, who had been playing on the common, came running over, and they all crowded around the Chinese boy and began to abuse him."

"What do you mean by abusing him? What did they do?"

"Why, they hit him, and pushed him from one side to the other, and pulled at his pig-tail, and ran round and round with it so as to make him turn and get dizzy, and knocked off his cap, and did everything horrid they could think of."

"What kind of boys were they?"

"Just the very kind that tie fire-crackers to poor dogs' tails, and kill pussy-cats with stones, and—swear."

This last word the witness uttered with some hesitation and in a low tone.

"Would you know any of those boys again if you should see them?"

"Yes, I'd know the two I see sitting over there," replied Annabel, at the same time pointing to a group of the Hatton muckers who had been retained in court as witnesses.

"How can you identify them?"

"Because the little one has such very red hair, and so many freckles, and the other is so big and ugly looking; besides, he is the one who knocked the Chinese boy down."

"How did he do that?"

"He butted him in the back with his head, while the little, speckled one was pulling at his pig-tail in front, and they all went down together."

"Now tell me, Miss Lorimer, what the Chinese boy did all this time? Was he very fierce, and did he strike at his assailants as if he were trying to kill them?"

"Oh no, indeed! I'm sure he didn't, because I hoped all the time he would. He only seemed horribly frightened, and kept trying to get away; only they wouldn't let him."

"Did you see any of the other boys throw anything at him?"

"Yes, mud—lots of it—and stones; and they tore his clothes until he was a sight."

"Please tell the court what happened after the Chinese boy had been knocked down."

"I object to that expression," interposed the district attorney, who was conducting the case for the State; "the witness has expressly stated that the fall in question was caused by a push and not by a blow. She also has testified that three individuals went to the ground at the same time, and we already know from recorded testimony in this case, that the greatest sufferer from the effects of this fall was not the Chinaman, but the very smallest and weakest of those whom my learned friend is pleased to stigmatize as 'assailants,' although it has been repeatedly and conclusively proved during this trial that they were the assailed. Therefore I object to the expression 'knocked down.'"

"Objection admitted," growled the judge.

"Very well," said Jo's lawyer, "since the expression 'knocked down' is objectionable, it is withdrawn; and you may tell us, Miss Lorimer, what happened after my young client was hurled to the ground."

"Your honor, I object," broke in the district attorney.

"Objection overruled," said the judge, sharply, "and I insist that the testimony of this young lady must not be interrupted by squabbles over technicalities."

"After my young client was *hurled to the ground*,"

continued Jo's lawyer, triumphantly, "with the biggest and ugliest-looking of his assailants on top of him, tell us, Miss Lorimer, what happened next?"

"The big boy scrambled to his feet, and just then Rob Hinckley came along with a milk-can and drove them all away, and the milk flew all over everybody. Then Mr. Hinckley and Constable Jones came; but after that I didn't see any more, because the breakfast-bell rang, and I was so late that I had to get dressed as quick as I could."

"That is all, your honor, and the other side is welcome to our witness," said Jo's lawyer.

"Why did you not come forward sooner to testify in this case, Miss Lorimer, since you seem so greatly interested in it?" queried the district attorney.

"Because I didn't know anything about it until this morning. Then papa read about it in the paper, and said he had no doubt that if the truth were known it would turn out that the Chinese boy had been wantonly abused by a lot of cowardly young ruffians, just because he was weak and helpless, which was getting more and more to be the American way of doing things. I didn't like to hear him say that, and told him I believed I had seen that very trouble the morning I was in Hatton; only I had forgotten all about it, because so many other things began to happen that same day, and have been happening ever since. I said, if those were the same boys, they were not real, true Americans at all, but just a lot of mean imitations, and if the law people only knew what I did, they would punish

them instead of Rob Hinckley, and the Chinese boy who had been abused. He asked what I meant, and I told him all I could remember. Then he telephoned to that gentleman (pointing to Jo's lawyer), who came to the house and asked me questions. Then we drove here in a carriage, because it was late. So if you punish anybody, I hope it will be those wicked imitation American boys; because one time that big, ugly looking one set his dog on my tortoise-shell kitty when we were visiting Aunt Marjorie, and threw stones at her when she ran up a tree, and would have killed her if Rob Hinckley hadn't made him stop."

"So you already were prejudiced against the boy, whom you describe as 'ugly looking,' before you saw him in collision with this Chinaman."

"I don't know what you mean," replied Annabel; "but, of course, I hated him, and knew just what he would do when he found a China-boy, or any one else he could abuse without a chance of getting hurt himself. He did it, too, and now I hope he'll be shut up in prison forever and ever."

"Your honor," said the district attorney, with a well-satisfied smile; "I think the animus of this witness is sufficiently shown by that statement, which I shall allow to go on record without comment. I shall also pass, without attempt at refutation, her silly naming of those naturalized citizens, who, with their brawn and muscle, their unremitting industry and their sturdy independence, constitute the strongest bulwark of our glorious republic, for she is

but a child, speaking from the ignorance of childhood. Thus we are well content to rest our case upon the evidence, with a certain confidence that the court, in its wisdom, will give us a verdict in accordance with the facts."

With this the attorney sat down. The girl witness, wondering whether she had most helped or harmed the cause she had espoused, was allowed to take her seat, and Jo's lawyer rose to address the court.

"Your honor," he said, "I need not suggest to one so well versed in proverbial philosophy, that truth, sometimes unpalatable, but always bluntly outspoken, is a universally admitted characteristic of childhood. Into the dark mazes of numberless famous law cases, as in the one we now are concluding, has the revealing light of truth been thrown by the untutored testimony of children. I could not wish a stronger witness to the justice of our cause than the fearless little lady who has just now given her evidence in our behalf. Upon it, therefore, we confidently rest our cause, with a well-grounded conviction that it is sufficient to assure a verdict in our favor."

As the lawyer sat down, our lads realized that the critical moment in which their fate was to be decided had arrived; and they awaited the words of the judge with mingled hope and anxiety. For a moment an impressive silence reigned in the court-room, and all eyes were turned upon the judge as he glanced over his pencilled notes. Finally he looked up, re-

moved his spectacles, and, fixing a kindly gaze upon the two young men, said:

"It is hardly necessary to state that the unimpeachable testimony of the last witness in the case of State *vs.* Joseph Lee *et al.* has completely altered the point of view from which it must be regarded, and causes the decision of the court to be quite different from what it would have been yesterday. I now find the defendant, Joseph Lee, to have been a victim instead of an aggressor, and to have suffered shameful persecution at the hands of a mob of young ruffians, who have been happily termed 'imitation Americans.' This term is most soothing to the pride of all real Americans, who are unwilling to believe that any of the true stock would dishonor the name by assaulting the helpless and innocent. This being the situation, the decision of the court in the case of Joseph Lee is that he be honorably acquitted of the charges brought against him."

This decision was received with looks of scowling consternation by the muckers present, and with murmurs of applause from the better class of spectators. This quickly was silenced by the court officers, and the judge continued:

"The case of Robert Hinckley, however, proves more serious, since it is evident that he did make an assault with a weapon, and without the excuse of self-defence, upon the bodies of certain persons named in the indictment, who are entitled to legal redress for the same. Of this offence the court, therefore, finds Robert Hinckley guilty and sen-

tences him"—at this point poor Rob turned very pale, while his heart sank like lead—"to pay a fine," continued the judge, "of one cent to each and every one of the aggrieved parties whose names appear in the indictment. At the same time the court wishes to express its thanks to Mr. Robert Hinckley for the fine manner in which, forgetful of his own danger, he hastened to defend a helpless foreigner from persecution by a set of unmitigated young scoundrels. Officer, call the next case on the calendar."

"Oh!" gasped Rob, as the friends of our lads gathered about them with congratulations at this happy ending of their troubles; "does he really mean it?"

"Yes," replied the lawyer who had defended them, "he really means it, and if you haven't two cents in your pocket, I'll pay the fine myself."

CHAPTER VIII

JO'S ENEMIES PREPARE A TRAP

After the happy conclusion of the law-suit that had for so long disturbed their peace of mind, our lads left the court-room in company with a group of congratulatory friends. As they went out, Rob exclaimed, triumphantly, "I told you not to fret, Jo, and that everything would turn out all right."

"Yes, but it is through the goodness of Miss Lolimer."

"Who?" inquired Rob, with a puzzled expression. "Oh, you mean Annabel! Yes, isn't she fine? I say, Annabel, I don't know how we ever can thank you enough for getting us out of that scrape. It was one of the most plucky things I ever knew a girl to do."

"It wasn't half so plucky as the way you saved my 'turtle kitty' that time; besides, I was so sorry for your friend, though I didn't know he was your friend then."

"That's so. I forgot. Let me introduce him. Annabel—I mean Miss Lorimer—this is my friend, Joseph Lee, from China, only all the fellows call him Chinese Jo."

"I'm ever so glad to know you, Mr. Lee," said

the girl, at the same time making a prim little bow that was half curtsey. "I never met a Chinese boy before, and I think they are awfully interesting. I mean," she added, quickly, and with a deep blush, "that we are going to China sometime, papa and I, and we want so much to know about the queer people out there. Not, of course, that you seem queer, because you are dressed in civilized— Oh, dear, what a stupid I am! But won't both of you come to our house for luncheon? Papa said I might ask you, and he is going to invite Mr. Hinckley and that Chinese gentleman who sat with the judge. Wasn't he perfectly splendid? Of course, I mean the judge, though the other is lovely, too, in his beautiful clothes."

"My dear," interrupted Mr. Lorimer, "this is Mr. Secretary of Legation Wang, who, together with Mr. Hinckley and, I trust, these young gentlemen, will lunch with us."

Mr. Wang, who, being a graduate of Yale, was quite accustomed to American ways, gravely shook hands with Annabel, as he also did with Rob; but his exchange of greetings with his own young countryman was quite different. Instead of shaking each other's hand and saying "How do you do, Mr. Wang? Happy to meet you, Mr. Lee," as is the American custom, they bowed profoundly to each other several times, all the while clasping and shaking their own hands and uttering flowery compliments in Chinese.

"How funny to shake one's own hand!" laughed

Annabel, as she watched with delight this novel interchange of courtesies.

"It does not seem funny in our country, Miss Lorimer," said Mr. Wang, who had overheard the remark. "There all gentlemen, and ladies as well, wear their finger-nails so long that there would be danger of cutting, or at least scratching, each other's hands if they should exchange the courteous salute in the American way. So we shake our own hands, to avoid injuring those of our friends."

"But why do you wear your finger-nails so long?" asked Annabel. "I should think it would be very uncomfortable, and that they would get broken."

"It is an uncomfortable fashion, and a very silly one," replied Mr. Wang. "The long nails are so apt to get broken, as you suggest, that they often are protected by silver sheaths. The reason they are allowed to grow long is to show that their wearers are not obliged to labor with their hands. Chinese ladies for the same reason, or rather to show that they are not obliged to walk, but can afford to be carried about by servants, compress their feet until they are hopelessly and very nearly helplessly crippled for life."

"How dreadful!" exclaimed Annabel.

"Yes. Is it not? But is it any more dreadful than certain things done at fashion's decree in your own country? For instance, in Washington I often see ladies dancing, or shivering through long dinners, in low-necked and sleeveless gowns, which at the same time are so tightly compressed at the waist as

to cause present torture and future misery. I see fashionable men dressed in exact imitation of their own servants, and only to be distinguished from them by a round bit of glass worn with much effort, and with absurd distortions of the face, in front of the right eye—not at all to aid the sight, mind you, but simply because it is fashionable. Yes, both our nations are guilty of following many absurd fashions, and each laughs at the other on account of them; but to my mind the most foolish habit of all is for us to call each other 'barbarians' because our fashions in silliness happen to differ."

In all this Annabel was so interested that the lunch-time conversation was wholly turned upon Chinese topics, with the result that Mr. Wang proved himself not only to be highly educated, widely travelled, and liberal-minded, but one of the most entertaining conversationalists any of them ever had met. So impressed were his hearers by what this versatile Chinese gentleman told them, that when the luncheon was ended Annabel regarded herself as one of the most fortunate girls in the world because of her prospect of going to China; Mr. Lorimer was thinking of the same country as probably the most interesting place they should visit during their travels; Mr. Hinckley found his views on the Chinese question greatly changed; Rob longed to get back to the land of his birth, and Jo was decidedly homesick.

For these reasons the Lorimers were pleased to learn that Mr. Wang proposed to remain in their city

a day or two longer, while Mr. Hinckley was anxious to reach home and his own library, where he might quietly review his newly received impressions. Rob was equally desirous of returning to Hatton and the lessons that must be learned before he could hope to revisit China, while Jo was made happy by an invitation from Mr. Wang to remain with him during his stay in S—— and greet the other young Chinese then being educated in that vicinity, whom the secretary had invited to dine with him that very night.

Mr. Hinckley was more than willing that Jo should accept the invitation, and remain away from Hatton for a few days on account of the bitterness of feeling against him that the decision of the court was certain to have strengthened. So Jo remained behind when the Hinckleys took their departure, and that evening, passed in company with Mr. Wang and a dozen companions of his own nationality, was the very happiest he ever had known. They dined in a room by themselves, were served by Chinese waiters procured from a near-by laundry, ate their rice with chop-sticks, drank amber-colored tea without sugar or cream, and did not speak one word of anything but Chinese during the entire evening. The one drawback to their complete happiness was that during the dinner Mr. Wang received a telegram concerning some business that demanded his presence in Boston the following morning. He therefore was obliged to leave S—— on a late train that same night, much to his own regret as well as that of his guests. His final instructions to Jo were to entertain his

young friends at breakfast the following morning before seeing them off on the train for their respective places of study, and then to remain in S—— until his return, which probably would be within two days.

This programme was faithfully carried out by our lad to the point of escorting his friends to the railway-station and seeing them off. One reason for his peculiar enjoyment of their company was that owing to Rob's constant companionship his own advance in learning English, as well as in acquiring general knowledge, had been so much more rapid than theirs that his young companions acknowledged his superiority in these respects with openly expressed wonder and admiration. Then, too, his experience in American law courts, that had resulted so triumphantly, caused him to rank among them as a sort of a hero, to be regarded with great respect.

All this was so flattering and so pleasant to Jo that after their departure, when for the first time he found himself without companions in a city of strangers, his extreme loneliness caused him to seek out the Chinese laundry near the hotel. There he would find other fellow-countrymen, who, if not of his own rank, at least could talk to him in his native tongue; also he fancied that by them the recent flattery which so had pleased him would be continued. Nor was he mistaken, for when he reached the laundry its inmates received him with profound kotows, indicating deep respect, and quickly provided him with tea and sweetmeats.

As Jo had been curious concerning the lives and occupations in America of these people, who, though belonging to the coolie or lowest class of Chinese, still were his countrymen, he spent more than an hour in the laundry, asking questions and acquiring much information, such as no foreigner could have gained in a lifetime. So interested did he become, that, in order to realize more fully the nature of the work they were doing, he took from one of them the flat-iron he was using and for a few minutes operated it himself.

The young student was so intent upon this novel form of investigation as not to realize that he was performing actual laundry-work directly before an open window, through which he was plainly visible to outsiders. Nor did he notice that a man, lounging on the opposite side of the street, was keeping keen watch of his performance. Even if Jo had noticed this man he would have paid no attention to him; nor would he have known that all his movements of that day had been closely followed by that same individual. But this was the case, and when Jo appeared at the open window of the Chinese laundry, evidently engaged in ironing a garment, the man smiled grimly. At the same time he produced a pocket-camera having a telescopic lens, which for a moment was levelled directly at the unsuspecting lad.

"I reckon that 'll settle his business," muttered the man to himself. "Who would have thought of his playing into our hands by doing such a fool thing?"

A little later Jo, while sitting in the reading-room of his hotel, was handed a telegram, the very first he ever had received. After carefully reading the superscription, to make sure that it really was addressed to him, he tore open the brown envelope, nervously unfolded the yellow enclosure, and read as follows:

"Brevoort House, New York City.

"Have important need of you here. Take first train. Wire time of your arrival. I will meet you at station.

"(Signed) Wang Chih Tung, Secretary, etc."

"Is there any answer, sir?" asked the boy who had delivered this despatch and who stood waiting while Jo read it. "Here are blanks if you want them."

"Yes," replied our lad, speaking slowly, but thinking at top speed. "I want to send two of these same things. Can you take them and see that they go light away quick?"

"Yes, sir," replied the boy. "That is my business."

"Can you tell me how soon I can get a train for New York?"

"In ten minutes, if you hurry," answered the boy promptly.

"When will it get me to New York?"

"Ten thirty to-night."

"You are sure?"

"Sure, sir, as if I was a railroad time-table."

Relieved at so easily having obtained the infor-

mation he wanted, and excited at thus being summoned by so high a dignitary as Mr. Wang, Jo wrote two despatches on blanks provided by the waiting boy, and gave them to him for delivery at the nearest telegraph-office. One was to Mr. Wang, announcing the proposed hour of his reaching New York, and the other, telling of his intended trip to that city, was addressed to Mr. Hinckley. For each of these he paid the boy twenty-five cents, and then, having no time to lose, he hurried to the railway-station. There he had barely secured a ticket for New York when an express-train thundered up to the platform. Two minutes later it was rolling swiftly away, carrying as passengers Chinese Jo and the man who had followed his movements so closely all that day.

CHAPTER IX

JO FINDS THAT HE IS SOME ONE ELSE

When, late at night, Chinese Jo reached New York and alighted from his train in the Grand Central Station he was bewildered and almost frightened by his surroundings. He found himself in a vast edifice occupied by many long trains of cars, some standing still, either receiving or discharging passengers, and others in motion, drawn or pushed by hoarsely puffing locomotives. Between every two trains was a narrow platform extending the whole length of the great station, and most of these were crowded with outgoing or incoming passengers, all in a hurry, and each too intent upon his own affairs to pay attention to those of his neighbors. Among them moved red-capped porters and blue-clad railway officials, too mindful of their own importance to condescend to answer the low-voiced questions of an insignificant "Chinaman."

As Jo drifted with the tide of one of these human streams, his eyes searched anxiously every face within his range of vision with the hope of discovering Mr. Wang. But no such good-fortune was in store for him, and finally he reached the street without having found his friend. He had asked

several of the uniformed officials if they had seen a Chinese gentleman anywhere about the station, but some of them had only laughed without answering, while others had paid no attention to him. Outside the station, however, and standing irresolute on the sidewalk, Jo was beset by plenty of persons anxious to serve him. Drivers of carriages, cabs, and baggage wagons shouted at him and solicited his patronage. Agents of express companies wanted to take charge of his luggage, ragged street urchins struggled for possession of his hand-bag, while hotel-runners besieged him with cards of their respective houses.

"But I only want to go to the Blevoort Hotel," he finally managed to explain, "and not anywhere else."

"Take you to the Brevoort for five dollars," shouted a hack-driver, waving a whip in the lad's face and at the same time reaching for his hand-bag.

"I am going to the Brevoort House, and will show you the way if you like," said some one close behind Jo, as he was attempting to explain that he had not five dollars to expend on carriage-hire.

Turning, our lad saw a man, evidently, from the bag that he carried, a traveller like himself, and, greatly relieved to find some one willing to aid him in this time of trouble, he gratefully accepted the stranger's offer of guidance.

"All right, then, come along," said the man. "No, we don't want no hack. Street-cars are good enough for us."

With this he waved aside the clamorous throng

of drivers, and led the way to a car bound downtown. As they rode, the stranger, while admitting that he was not a resident of New York, so impressed our lad with his knowledge of the great city, and of the manifold pitfalls that it held for the unwary, that he inwardly congratulated himself upon having met so willing a guide, who at the same time was so competent to direct his steps.

The car took them within one block of their destination, and when Jo read the name "Brevoort" over the doorway of the hotel he believed his troubles to be ended, for surely here he would find his friend, or at least learn of his whereabouts.

"Is there a gentleman by the name of Wang stopping here?" he inquired of a sprucely attired clerk at the desk.

"Not if we know it," was the reply, accompanied by a supercilious stare.

"But I received a telegram only a few hours ago telling me to meet him here."

"Can't help that. If he is here it's without my knowledge, and you'll have to find him as best you can."

"Then I will take a room for the night and wait till he comes," said poor Jo, desperately. "This is the only address he gave, and so he is sure to look here for me sooner or later."

"Haven't a vacant room in the house," answered the clerk, shortly; "and if you think this hotel is a Chinese joint you're mightily mistaken."

"Let's get out of here," said Jo's friendly guide.

"That's outrageous; and if this place isn't good enough for you it isn't good enough for me either."

Here, unobserved by our lad, the speaker winked at the clerk, who winked back understandingly. "Come with me," added the man. "I'll show you a decent place, where we can spend the night, and to-morrow I'll help you hunt your friend."

As Jo knew not what else to do, he for a second time gratefully accepted the offer of this stranger, and followed him out through the inhospitable doorway he had so hopefully entered a few minutes before. Again boarding a street-car, they were carried far down-town, and finally reached a small hotel, in which they secured a room containing two beds.

There they spent the remainder of the night and had breakfast the next morning. By this time Jo had determined to make one more effort to find Mr. Wang at the Brevoort House, and, if it failed, to return at once to Hatton. He still had money with him to pay his fare, but not enough to keep him much longer at a New York hotel. During breakfast, which he and his newly formed acquaintance ate together, he confided this plan to the latter, who gave it his hearty approval.

"Best thing you can do," he said. "New York is no place for a stranger, more especial a foreigner who is not used to American ways. There's only one thing, though. While we're down-town we might as well visit the office of the police commissioners, and find out what they know about your friend.

They keep track of all foreigners arriving in the city, and are sure to have full information concerning any one so distinguished as your Mr. Wang. It's only about a couple of blocks away, and you can leave your bag here to pick up as you come back."

Jo agreed to this proposal; and, filled with a new hope, willingly accompanied his friendly guide. They walked much farther than two blocks, but our lad was so fascinated by the novel sights about him that he took no note of the distance traversed. Finally they entered a massive stone building, in which an elevator speedily lifted them several stories above the street level. Jo caught a glimpse of the word "Commissioner," printed in letters of gold over a doorway, as he was ushered into an anteroom, the entrance to which was guarded by an officer. His acquaintance seemed to know this man, for he nodded to him as they passed in. Then he said to Jo:

"You sit here and wait a few minutes, while I go and see if the commissioner can give us a hearing."

With this he turned away and disappeared through a second doorway at the other end of the room.

So Jo waited and waited with the unquestioning patience of his race until more than an hour had passed, while many persons went in and out without paying him the slightest attention. At length he began to grow uneasy; and, walking over to the officer who guarded the door, he asked:

"Is the commissioner very busy this morning?"

"Rather," was the laconic answer.

"Then, perhaps, I had better not wait any longer."

"Oh, I guess you had," was the reply, accompanied by a curious scrutiny of the young Chinese.

"But it may be that he won't have time to attend to my affair."

"He'll attend to you fast enough when the time comes. Never you fear."

Reassured, but at the same time somewhat perplexed by these answers, Jo returned to his seat and waited another hour. Then, determined to remain no longer, he walked to the door with the intention of going back to the hotel and carrying out his original plan.

"What do you want now?" inquired the officer on guard.

"I am not going to wait any longer," replied Jo.

"Oh, you're not going to wait any longer, aren't you? Reckon we'll see about that, too. Just you stroll back to where the deputy marshal left you, and stay there till you're ordered to move, or I'll make things lively for you. Do you hear me, Chink? Well, then, get a move on."

Bewildered and frightened by the officer's fierce aspect, Jo did as he was bidden, and again resumed his seat. He had hardly taken it, when the door through which his acquaintance had disappeared was flung open and another officer called out, "Joseph Lee!" a summons that our lad obeyed with alacrity.

He was ushered into a comfortably furnished room, containing a number of men, and was conducted to the presence of one who sat behind a desk. Near at hand stood his acquaintance of the night before.

"Is this your man, deputy?" asked the person behind the desk.

"Yes, sir; he is," replied Jo's acquaintance, who was a deputy United States marshal, engaged in searching out illegal Chinese residents of the Eastern District.

"What is your name?" asked the man behind the desk, now turning to Jo.

"Joseph Lee," was the reply.

"Native of China?"

"Yes, sir."

"How long have you been in this country?"

"About eight months."

"Where?"

"Hatton."

"What have you been doing there?"

"Studying."

"Never lived in S——?"

"No, sir; but—"

"Never mind your buts. Haven't you been employed in Charley Wing's laundry in S——?"

"Certainly not. I am a student, and—"

"This isn't your picture, then?" said the United States commissioner, at the same time holding out an enlarged photograph of a scene in a Chinese laundry.

Jo took it, and to his amazement recognized himself, prominently in the foreground, and engaged in ironing as though that were his trade.

"Yes, sir," he answered. "This seems to be a picture of me; but—"

"That will do," interrupted the commissioner sharply. "Now let me see your certificate."

Jo had a certificate of identity, to which was attached a photograph of himself as he had looked when about to leave Hong-Kong. This certificate had been furnished by an American consul-general in China; and, as he had been warned always to keep it about his person, he now was able promptly to produce it.

"Um, um," muttered the commissioner, as he glanced over the paper. Then aloud he added: "This appears to be a certificate of identity issued to one Li Tsin Su, student, unable to speak English, and so forth. You speak English fluently, declare your name to be Joseph Lee, and admit the correctness of this picture of yourself at work in a Chinese laundry, a photograph, by-the-way, that does not in the least resemble the one attached to this certificate. Thus, your case seems to prove itself beyond need of further investigation, for you don't appear to be anywhere near as sharp in matters of deception as most of your tricky countrymen. I rather think you won't find America a congenial sphere for your future studies. Marshal, remove the prisoner, and retain him in custody until such time as the next personally conducted excursion is ready to start."

"This is an outrage!" protested poor Jo, struggling furiously in the viselike grip of the man who had taken him in charge, "and I shall appeal—"

"Shut up!" growled the officer, "and come along quiet, or you'll only make a bad matter worse."

With this he hustled his indignant but helpless prisoner from the room at so breathless a pace that he could utter no further word of protest.

A half-hour later saw our unfortunate lad stripped of everything found in his pockets and lodged in one of the city prisons, in company with several of his countrymen, all of the coolie class, who were awaiting orders from Washington for their deportation to China in accordance with the provisions of the Chinese Exclusion Act of the United States.

CHAPTER X

WHAT HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO CHINA

Of course, the telegram purporting to come from the Chinese secretary of legation, by which Jo had been lured to New York, was a forgery; nor had either of those intrusted by him to the bogus messenger-boy, who delivered it, ever been forwarded to its address. Thus, Jo's Hatton friends had no idea that he had left S——, but supposed him to be there in company with Mr. Wang. They were well satisfied that this should be so for a time, and Rob was especially glad; for whenever he met any of the muckers they were sure to call out:

"Say, saphead, where's yer Chinee? Don't yer dare let him out, for fear he'll get hurted? Yer scared to be seen on the street with him, that's what's the matter! Yer needn't be, though, fer we wouldn't tech him with a ten-foot pole, specially if yer'd muzzle him and lead him by a chain, same as they do all the other big monkeys. Bet yer don't know where he is! Bet he's got woozy and runned away! He'd better stay away, too, or we'll fix him good!"

So, for about a week, Rob was not sorry to have his friend in a place that promised a greater safety

than Hatton. At the end of that time, however, the Hinckley family began to wonder why they did not hear from their young guest, and Rob wrote him a letter, that he sent to the hotel in S——. It was promptly returned, with a note from the proprietor stating that the Chinese lad only had stayed in his house one day, and then had disappeared, but that a telegram for him lay unclaimed in the office.

Mr. Hinckley at once sent for this telegram, which proved to be from Mr. Wang, dated at Boston, stating that he should be unable to revisit S——, and advising Jo's immediate return to Hatton. It was a week old. Upon this Mr. Hinckley telegraphed to Washington, only to receive word that Mr. Wang was travelling in the South and would not be back for a month. Inquiries for the missing lad were now set on foot in every direction, but no clew to his whereabouts could be found; nor was it for long months after his disappearance that its mystery was cleared away.

In the mean time, much as our Hatton friends were troubled by their young guest's unexplained vanishing, their attention was largely diverted from it by news from China that Dr. Hinckley was seriously ill. The first intimation of this came in a letter that told of his failing health and of his plan to seek its restoration through a visit to America.

"Won't it be fine!" exclaimed Rob, "to have them here? Father 'll be sure to get well as soon as he sights the Connecticut Valley. Its air always has made a new man of him."

For a whole day he revelled in these happy anticipations. Then came the fateful cablegram that in a moment swept away his light-heartedness and changed the whole current of his life. It was from his mother, and was in the private code that his parents had prepared when they left him in Hatton. In all the years since then he had been obliged to refer to this code but twice; for people living on small salaries cannot often afford to send messages costing several dollars per word, with both address and signature to be paid for at full rates. The present message that had been flashed from far-away China, across Asia, under the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea, and the Mediterranean, across Europe and under the Atlantic, read as follows:

"Syntax, Boston.—Fable, garnet, hazel."

The word "Syntax" had, from the first, been registered in the Western Union office at Boston, to save the expense of cabling the name of the State in which Hatton was located, and it meant, "Rev. William Hinckley, Hatton," to which address the despatch had been forwarded at an extra charge of twenty-five cents.

"Bring the code-book, quick, Rob!" exclaimed Mr. Hinckley, as this message dropped like a bomb-shell into the quiet circle gathered in the pleasant parsonage parlor that evening. Rob had been studying his lessons for the next day, his uncle was reading, and Mrs. Hinckley happened to be writing a letter to China.

In a few seconds the boy had dashed up-stairs and was back with the alphabetically arranged code-book.

"Fable?" said his uncle, and Rob, turning to the F's, ran his finger hastily down the long column.

"Oh!" he gasped, "Fable means, 'Mason too ill to travel.'"

"Garnet?" continued Mr. Hinckley, huskily.

"Garnet means, 'Wants to see Rob before he dies.' Do you believe it can be as bad as that, Uncle Will?" and a choking sob rose in the boy's throat.

"First find the meaning of 'Hazel,' and then we will talk about it," replied Mr. Hinckley.

"Hazel," replied Rob, in another moment, means, 'Send Rob to us at once.'"

"Oh, Rob! my dear, dear boy!" cried Mrs. Hinckley. "It is terrible for you, and it is going to be dreadfully hard to give you up, for you have become as our own son."

"But we must give him up, and that at once," said her husband, sorrowfully, "since the meaning of this despatch cannot for a moment be misunderstood. Mason's illness must have taken such a sudden turn for the worse that his life is endangered. They evidently hope, though, to prolong it for some weeks, at least, or Fanny would not send for Rob. She knows that he cannot, under the most favorable conditions, reach her in less than a month."

"But in case of the worst, she would want Rob with her," suggested Mrs. Hinckley.

"In that case she would come to him, for, with

Mason dead, there would be nothing to keep her in China."

"That's so," said Rob, hopefully. "I hadn't thought of that. When do you think I can start, Uncle Will? I suppose we'll have to telegraph all the different companies to find out which of them sends out the first steamer."

"That would be expensive and take time," replied Mr. Hinckley. "I believe we can do better. The Post-Office Department keeps track of the sailing dates of all steamers that carry mails, in order that letters may be despatched as often and as quickly as possible. So, though our post-office must be closed by this hour, I will go over to Postmaster Garrett's house, and see if he hasn't a printed slip giving the sailing dates of Pacific steamers for the next few weeks. While I am gone, you and your aunt can be getting your things together ready for packing."

With this Mr. Hinckley was about to leave the house, when his wife said:

"Why, William, those post-office notices are always published in the Boston papers, and there is yesterday's lying on the table."

"So it is!" exclaimed Mr. Hinckley, picking up the paper as he spoke. "How stupid I am! Yes, here is the very thing we want: 'China and Japan, *via* Tacoma, mails close 5 P.M. on the 6th, steamship *Oriental*.' That is to-morrow, and it means that mails will be taken on the evening express which reaches Albany about midnight. There it

meets and makes part of the New York night express for Chicago. From Chicago they will go to St. Paul, and then, by way of the Northern Pacific Coast, Limited, to Tacoma, reaching there on the 10th, which undoubtedly is the *Oriental's* sailing date. At any rate, Rob, so long as you go with the mail you are bound to be travelling the quickest possible way. To catch the Boston express, you must go to Albany by the noon train to-morrow. I shall go with you that far, and we will make all your ticket arrangements there."

Thus, within fifteen minutes from the time that fateful cablegram found Rob Hinckley quietly studying lessons for the morrow, and expecting to do little else for many months more, school had become a thing of the seemingly remote past, and he was a traveller bound on a journey that would take him half-way around the world. Moreover, the earlier details of this journey were already planned, and he was to set forth within a few hours. It is no wonder that he got but little sleep that night, nor that he was up at daylight packing his trunk and sorting out certain cherished possessions that he meant to distribute as keepsakes among his boy friends.

He went to school at the usual hour, but only to announce his departure to the masters, say good-bye, and collect his books. The head-master requested him to wait a few minutes and accompany him to the great hall where the entire school assembled for morning prayer. There, to Rob's embarrassment, he was conducted to a seat of honor

on the platform, from which the master gave notice of his coming departure, stated its sad cause, said some very flattering things about Rob himself, and then asked the school to join him in an earnest prayer for their young friend's safety during the tremendous journey he was about to undertake, and that at its end he not only might find his dear father alive, but restored to health.

At the conclusion of this prayer tears stood in Rob's eyes and in those of many of his young friends as well. He wanted, before leaving, to say good-bye to the whole body of his school-mates, as he did not expect to see any of them again; but he did not exactly know how to do so, and was immensely relieved when the head-master further said:

"Robert is to leave Hatton by the noon train to-day, and in order that his friends here gathered may have the opportunity, which I am sure they desire, of bidding him farewell and seeing him off, all classes will be dismissed at eleven clock."

As a result of this thoughtful provision, for nearly an hour preceding the departure of the Albany train the little Hatton railway-station presented one of the liveliest scenes in its history, and Rob was greatly affected by the innumerable evidences of esteem showered upon him by his school-mates. When the train finally pulled out, with our lad waving his hat from the rear platform of its last car, it was to an accompaniment of a hurricane of cheers and farewell shouts.

"Who is the most popular fellow in Hatton?" cried the leader of the academy rooters.

"R-O-B, Rob! H-I-N-C-K-L-E-Y, Hinckley! ROB HINCKLEY! Hi-ho! Hi-ho! GOOD-BYE!" was the answer shouted forth in tremendous chorus by every boy and girl present; and this was our young traveller's final farewell from the place that seemed his home more than any other in all the world.

For three days after leaving Albany, Rob journeyed swiftly and without untoward incident past Buffalo and Chicago, up into the great Northwest, through St. Paul, amid the vast wheat-fields of Minnesota and the Red River valley, over the limitless prairies of North Dakota, through the "Bad Lands" bordering the Little Missouri, and into the incredibly rich copper regions of Montana. Then came the dreadful day on which he lost his train, and with it all hope of catching the only advertised steamer to leave the "coast" for a week. It happened at Helena, where the train was to remain for fifteen minutes; and Rob, tired with being so long shut up in a car, decided to take a brisk walk into the town. He wanted to see something of the place, and needed the exercise.

So he set forth, walked as far as he dared, allowed too narrow a margin of time for his return, missed his way, and finally regained the station only to see his train pulling out from its farther end. For a second he could not believe his eyes. Then he ran madly after the disappearing cars, screaming for

them to stop. Even in the blindness of his excitement a moment of this effort convinced him of its folly, and he halted on the edge of the platform, while two great, scalding tears, that he had no heart to repress, coursed slowly down his cheeks.

CHAPTER XI

ACCEPT A KINDNESS AND PASS IT ALONG

"Is it as bad as all that, my boy?" asked a kindly voice at Rob's elbow; and the lad, turning quickly, looked into the sympathetic face of a United States army officer, whose khaki uniform was faced with red.

Captain John Astley, commanding Battery Z of Field Artillery, returning from leave in the East, had been placed in temporary charge of a body of recruits ordered to Vancouver Barracks, near Portland, Oregon, which was his station. He had stopped at Helena *en route*, to pick up a few more newly enlisted men, and, being at the railway-station that morning, was attracted by Rob's running and shouting after his rapidly vanishing train. Captain Astley was tender-hearted, as are all brave men; and, noting our young traveller's genuine distress, he impulsively stepped forward to inquire into its cause. As he saw tears on the lad's cheeks, he knew it must be serious, for Rob did not look like a fellow from whose eyes tears could easily be extracted.

"Yes, sir," replied poor Rob, who, longing for sympathy in this moment of distress, was moved by the kindly face of the stranger to unburden his heart

of its load of trouble. "It is about as bad as it can be, for my father is dying in China, and my only chance of seeing him alive lay in catching the *Oriental*, which sails from Tacoma to-morrow evening. Now I have lost her, and there won't be another steamer of that line for nearly a month. Besides, my baggage is on the train just gone; and my pocket-book, with my tickets and all my money, has gone with it, locked up in my suit-case."

"That does seem a rather serious situation," said Captain Astley, gravely, "but perhaps it won't prove irremediable, after all. I've noticed that things looking the darkest at first view often brighten upon closer inspection. Suppose we sit down for a minute and see what light can be thrown into this darkness."

When Rob had accepted this friendly invitation, and the two had seated themselves on a near-by baggage-truck, the elder man continued: "To begin with, let us know each other. I am John Astley, Captain of Artillery, U.S.A., and stationed at Vancouver Barracks, to which place I must proceed by to-morrow morning's train. I wanted to go on to-day, but, unexpectedly, was detained at the last moment, and came to the station to hold over my luggage. I must confess that I was much annoyed at this detention, but if it affords me an opportunity of helping you out of your trouble I shall not regret it."

"Thank you, sir," replied the lad. "My name is Rob Hinckley. I am the son of a medical mission-

ary, stationed at Wu Hsing, on the Si Kiang, in China, where I was born; but I have lived for the past fourteen years, and gone to school, in New England. I have passed my preliminaries for Yale, and should have entered next fall if the news of my father's serious illness, and his great desire to see me before he died, had not altered all my plans. Now, by my own carelessness in walking too far, while the train waited here, I not only have lost it, but probably have lost my only chance of ever seeing him again."

"Isn't there a steamer of some other line—the *Empress* from Vancouver, the *Yusen Kaisha* from Seattle, or the Pacific Mail from San Francisco—that you can take within a few days?" suggested Captain Astley.

"There is one from San Francisco in about a week, but, you see, my fare is paid through to Nagasaki by the Tacoma line, and I'm afraid I haven't money enough to buy another ticket. Besides, I should have fare from Tacoma to San Francisco to pay, and hotel bills. Then, too, my pocket-book, with money, tickets, and everything, has gone off on that train. I thought I'd be extra careful, and so locked it up in my suit-case before starting out to walk."

"I hope you still have the key," said Captain Astley, seriously, but with a twinkle in his gray eyes.

"Yes, sir; I've got that. I don't see, though, how it is going to do me much good, seeing that I

haven't money enough to take me even to Tacoma. There's another thing I've just thought of. My trunk is checked through to Nagasaki by the *Oriental;* and as my suit-case has the same name on it, probably some one will be kind enough to put it on board the steamer. So there isn't much chance that I shall ever see it again."

"Oh, I guess there is, provided the telegraph still is in order, and I know it was working a few minutes ago."

"I haven't even money enough to pay for a telegram," objected Rob.

"So it is doubly fortunate that I happen to have a few pennies left over from my last month's pay," laughed the captain.

"But I am a stranger to you, sir, and you don't know that I am honest enough to repay you, even if I ever get my money back," objected Rob, flushing with the embarrassment that money troubles always cause those not used to them.

"Haven't you just told me all about yourself?" suggested the captain, gravely; "and can't I read 'honesty' written on every feature of your face? Besides, one must always be willing to risk somethink in an investment from which he hopes to gain rich returns in the form of self-satisfaction. So it's all right, every way you look at it, and I think we'll buy the use of a west-bound wire for the next half-hour or so."

Thus saying, Captain Astley led the way to the telegraph-office, into which Rob doubtfully followed

him. There the former first persuaded the station-agent to wire the conductor of the train that had brought our young traveller thus far, an inquiry concerning him and his ticket. Then he wired the Pullman conductor to look after Rob's suit-case and deliver it to the station-agent at Tacoma, to be kept by him until called for by Captain Astley.

"I put it that way," explained the latter, "because the Tacoma agent knows me, while he doesn't know Robert Hinckley; and, as we are going on together to-morrow, it won't make any difference which of us receives the bag."

A third despatch was sent to the Tacoma agent of the steamship company, notifying him that unforeseen circumstances prevented Mr. Robert Hinckley from sailing on the *Oriental*, requesting him to hold over a trunk marked Hinckley and bearing Nagasaki check 907, and asking him to meet the following day's Coast Limited at the Tacoma station, with money to refund the price of the forfeited ticket.

"I don't know whether or not he will do that," said Captain Astley; "but perhaps he will, seeing that he is pretty well acquainted with me. At any rate, it is worth trying for. You may send the replies to these messages up to the X Hotel," he added, turning to the operator.

"But I am not staying at the X Hotel," objected Rob, remembering how very elegant and expensive that establishment had looked when he passed it a half-hour before. "I can't afford it."

"Not as my guest?" asked the army man.

"I don't see how you can think of doing so much for me," blurted out Rob. "I never heard of any one being so kind to a perfect stranger."

"My dear lad, I once was a boy myself, and continually getting into scrapes, from which kind people, as often as not entire strangers, helped me out. So you see I now am only repaying a small portion of the debt I owe to those who were good to me. Besides, I am fond of boys, especially of boys who behave themselves as gentlemen, and am delighted at the prospect of having one as a travelling companion, even for a short time. So don't you fret any more over the incurring of obligations; also, never hesitate to accept whatever good thing is offered you in this life, for the bad you'll have to accept, whether or no."

"All right, sir," replied Rob, smiling happily, as he now could well afford to do. "I will gratefully accept all the kindness you offer, and pass it along to some other fellow, whenever I find one in a trouble out of which I can help him."

"Good!" laughed the captain. "And now that we understand each other, let's go up to the hotel for breakfast."

Owing to the efforts of this Heaven-sent friend, Rob's troubles, that had seemed so overwhelming, melted away like frost before the warm breath of a cloudless sun. While they were at breakfast, a message was received from the train conductor that Robert Hinckley, accidentally left behind at Helena, had paid full first-class fare through to Tacoma, and

on the strength of this the Helena agent provided our lad with a ticket to that point. The Pullman man wired from Spokane that Rob's baggage was in his keeping, and would be handed over at Tacoma according to instructions. They did not hear from the steamship agent; but on the following day, when our travellers reached Tacoma, after crossing the coast range by aid of the superb Stampede Tunnel, and having been whirled down the western slope, through the magnificent fir forests of Washington, they found that gentleman awaiting them at the station. Here, also, they found Rob's trunk and his suit-case.

The steamship agent explained that, while he could exchange an unused ticket for one good by the next ship of the same line, he was not allowed to refund money already paid for passage. "However," he added, turning to Rob with a smile at the latter's clouding face, "owing to the fact that I was notified in time, I was able to sell your room to a gentleman who, finding all first-class accommodation engaged, had taken second-class passage rather than wait for another steamer. He, of course, was glad to pay the difference in price, and so I am able to refund half the cost of your ticket, if you feel that you cannot wait for our next ship."

Rob hesitated, while he made a rapid mental calculation.

"Take it," advised Captain Astley, and come with me to Vancouver Barracks. There, at least, we can

save you a hotel bill while you are waiting for another steamer."

So our lad accepted the money, surrendered his steamship-ticket, purchased another to Portland, Oregon, rechecked his trunk to the same point, and a few minutes later found himself, still in company with his army friend, speeding to the southward on the same train that had brought them to the coast.

His first act, after they were again under way, was to refund the money expended in his behalf for telegrams and hotel expenses in Helena. Much to his relief, Captain Astley accepted this without demur, it being one of that officer's pet theories that no gentleman will place another under a pecuniary obligation against his wish, even to the extent of a five-cent car-fare.

In the mean time the latter had learned all that was worth knowing of Rob's history, of course including his recent experiences in connection with Chinese Jo. When he discovered that his young companion could talk Chinese, he said:

"I wish we were to be together long enough for you to teach me, as I believe the time is not far distant when a knowledge of that language will prove a most valuable addition to an army officer's mental equipment."

Finally they reached Portland, where, before the train had stopped, an orderly was in the car saluting and handing his captain an official envelope.

"By Jove!" exclaimed the latter, as he tore it open and glanced rapidly over its contents; "here's a hot

shot from a masked battery, and perhaps it may mean that you and I can— But never mind now. We'll talk it over in quarters this evening. Orderly, get these traps out; look after Mr. Hinckley's trunk, and see that it is sent over to the barracks with the rest of the luggage. You wait in the ambulance, Hinckley, while I get the men started, and I'll rejoin you within a few minutes. Great Scott! but this, surely, is great news!"

CHAPTER XII

FROM THE GOLDEN GATE TO THE PEARL RIVER

"I WONDER what that despatch can be about," thought Rob, as he sat in the comfortable ambulance which, drawn by two big army mules and with its curtains rolled up, was used as a carriage by the officers of the post. "He was as excited as though war had been declared against somebody or other; but I haven't heard that we are likely to go to war with any one. Perhaps it's Indians, though, and, if so, there's sure to be something about it in the paper."

Thus thinking, Rob beckoned to a passing newsboy and bought a copy of the *Oregonian*. Diligently as he searched its columns, he could not find a word about Indians. Nor were there any war rumors, and he was more than ever puzzled, until his eye lighted on the heading:

"Battery Z ordered to the Philippines."

Yes, that was it, and Rob began to feel very lonely as he read the brief announcement to the effect that Battery Z was to leave Vancouver Barracks at once for San Francisco, where the transport *Logan* was already waiting to take it on board.

"That knocks my chance of spending a week, or

even part of one, at the barracks," he said to himself, "and I did want to so much. I don't suppose I ought to go over, even for a night, because Captain Astley will be too busy to bother with me. It looks as if he had already forgotten me, for I must have waited here an hour, and I shouldn't blame him if he had."

Just here Rob's sombre reflections were interrupted by the cheery voice of Captain Astley, who sprang into the ambulance from the opposite side and ordered that it move on.

"Hello, Hinckley!" he cried. "I beg your pardon for leaving you so long, but I have been rushed breathless by most unexpected orders that have completely upset all previously arranged plans."

"Then you really are going to Manila?" asked Rob.

"How did you know? Oh! it's already in the paper, is it? Yes, and we've got to move out of here in a hurry—to-morrow, if we can, or the next day at the latest. So I've been arranging about trains and a lot of things that had to be looked after on this side of the river. But, before I forget to mention it, how would you like to go along with us?"

"I!" cried Rob, too surprised to answer the question.

"Yes, you. I wired to the Presidio for permission to take with me Robert Hinckley, our Chinese instructor, and it is granted, provided he pays his own mess bills. They will come to something less than two dollars per day during the voyage from San

Francisco to Manila. From there it is only a couple of days' run over to Hong-Kong; and by going with us you can beat that Tacoma ship by at least a week. Besides, you won't have any fare to pay between here and San Francisco. What do you think? Is it a go, and may we count on you as a fellow-passenger aboard the good old *Logan?*"

"I should say you could!" cried Rob, even more excited than the captain himself. "I never heard of such a piece of undeserved good-luck. Of course, I'll go with you, and feel everlastingly obliged to you for the chance, besides. Only, I don't know how I ever can repay such kindness."

"Nonsense!" exclaimed the other. "I thought we finally had settled that question away back in Montana. But here we are, and for the next few days you'll have enough to do to knock all thoughts of gratitude out of your head, for I am going to appoint you my A. D. C. Perhaps you don't know what that is, so I'll tell you. An A. D. C. is a chap who, in active service like the present, has to work twenty-five hours out of the twenty-four, and gets no thanks for anything he does. Do you want the job?"

"Yes," replied Rob, happily, "and I'd take it if it were twice as hard."

So our lad joined the army, and for the next two days, from early morning until late at night, he was about as busy as a boy well could be — helping the captain pack, writing his letters, running hither and thither with orders, and doing whatever was given

him to do, with a cheerful promptness that won for him the good-will of all hands.

At the end of that time he found himself in company with a number of officers occupying the rear car of a long troop-train on which was loaded Battery Z—men, horses, guns, and all—headed southward, up the broad Willamette Valley, and starting on their thirty-six-hour run towards the city of the Golden Gate. On the following day they skirted for hours the base of grand old Shasta, one of the mightiest and most beautiful of American mountains. Then they ran down the exquisite valley of the Sacramento, which they first saw as a brook and at last crossed as a mighty river pouring a turbid flood into San Pablo Bay. A little later came San Francisco, with the bustle and anxious excitement of debarking, marching through the city, and re-embarking, this time on the great, white transport that was to bear them away in the track of the setting sun, across seven thousand miles of Pacific waters.

In all this time Rob, while fully intending to write to Hatton concerning his adventures and change of plans, had not found a minute when it seemed possible to do so. Not until the *Logan*, with her crowded passenger-list, including civil officials, military officers, troops, government school-teachers and other employés, and her vast miscellaneous cargo of live-stock, guns, ammunition, machinery, and stores of every description, had got so far out to sea that the Farallones were only a blur on the

horizon behind her did it occur to him that he had neglected his last opportunity for sending back a message until he should reach the distant Hawaiian Islands. Then he sat down and wrote a long letter that he was able to mail eight days later at Honolulu, but which did not reach Hatton until a full month from the date of his departure. In the mean time Mr. Hinckley had cabled to China that Rob would sail by the *Oriental* from Tacoma on a certain date, and when finally he learned of his nephew's changed plans, it did not seem worth while to cable again, as the lad was already due to arrive at Hong-Kong, and so could tell his own story.

Rob enjoyed every minute of his twenty-four hours' stay in beautiful Honolulu. He was enchanted by its wealth of strange flowers, its tropical foliage, and by the many new fruits that he now tasted for the first time. He drove out to the Pali, the frightful mountain precipice, five miles back from the city, over which, in the old savage days, King Kamehameha I. drove to their deaths an army of his enemies. He experimented with surf-riding on a slender board at Waikiki beach, ate poi, which he didn't like, and enjoyed poha jam. He wanted to climb Diamond Head and to visit the great sugar plantations of Ewa and Waialua; also he would dearly have loved to sail to the island of Hawaii, one hundred and fifty miles away, and gaze upon the mighty volcanoes of Kilauea and Mauna Loa; but there was not time, and all these had to be left for another visit.

The next chance for going ashore came two weeks later, when the *Logan* stopped for a few hours at the lonely but lovely island of Guam, destined a few years later to become a most important way-station of the American Pacific cable. After Guam came five days more of uneventful sailing, and then Manila Bay, with Corregidor Island standing sentry at its entrance.

"I wonder what Corregidor means?" asked Rob of Captain Astley, as they stood together gazing at this outpost, from which the first warning gun had been fired when Dewey's fleet slipped through the gray of dawn into Manila Bay.

"Some one told me," replied the army man, "that in olden times every Spanish city was governed by a regidor, assisted by councilmen, one from each division, or ward, called corregidors. So if we were to Americanize the name we would call it 'Alderman Island.'"

"Or 'City Father Island,'" laughed Rob.

It was intensely interesting to sail up that broad, mountain-bordered expanse of water, and recall the stirring events of May-day, 1898, when Dewey and his men did the same thing, only with the terrible difference that at any moment they were liable to run into a deadly nest of torpedoes. As they approached the head of the bay they saw Cavité on the right; then the shipping anchored in the roadstead; and then Manila itself lying on both sides of the sluggish Pasig, the old walled city on the right and the more modern town on the left as they faced them.

At Manila, Rob sorrowfully parted with the comrade whom he first had met in far-away Montana, and who ever since had been at once dear friend, guide, instructor, and pupil; for a steamer, on which he promptly engaged passage, left for Hong-Kong the day after the *Logan's* arrival.

During the month they had spent together Captain Astley had so assiduously devoted himself to the study of Chinese that now he possessed a fair working knowledge of the Southern or Canton dialect, while every man in the battery, thanks to Rob, could express himself with a certain fluency in pidgin (business) English. All of them were on hand to see their young instructor off, and as the launch that was to carry him to his new steamer backed out from the crowded landing, their farewell cheers reminded him of Hatton, and he felt quite as lonely as he had on that first day of his eventful journey. Now, too, that he no longer had friends and regular duties to divert his mind, and with China only two days' sail away, all his anxiety concerning his parents came back with redoubled force. Would he find himself fatherless?—or would the dear face still be there with its smiling welcome? So impatient was he that the two days between Manila and Hong-Kong seemed as long as any previous two weeks of his journey, and he found himself straining his eyes for a glimpse of the China coast hours before there was any possibility of sighting it.

Finally, a number of high, rock-bound islands came into view. Then the ship, passing through a

narrow entrance between two of them, threaded a tortuous, strongly fortified channel that opened into the broad, splendid harbor of Hong-Kong. On the right was the recently acquired British territory and new settlement of Kowloon, with wharves, drydocks, godowns, and barracks. On the left rose Hong-Kong island, with the fine city of Victoria nestled at the base of a peak eighteen hundred feet high and climbing its wooded slopes. The moment the ship dropped anchor amid a fleet of great merchant steamers and men-of-war flying the flags of all the maritime nations of the world, Rob signalled one of the innumerable sampans, "manned" by Chinese women, that swarmed alongside. He already had learned that a Pearl River steamer would leave for Canton within an hour, and so anxious was he to reach his destination, which still lay some two hundred miles beyond that city, that he was determined to go on by the very first conveyance. For this reason he had his trunk and himself taken by the sampan directly from one steamer to the other, and in a short time, without having gone ashore at Hong-Kong, he found himself again under way, on board the side-wheeled, American-modelled steamer *Fatshan*, bound for Canton, eighty miles distant.

As Rob sat on deck watching with fascinated interest the queer-looking junks with lofty poops, low prows, and sails of matting, the sampans, Chinese guard-boats, and numberless other quaint craft slipping to and fro over those placid inland waters, with sails outlined against the dark background of the

Tai-Mo-Shan Mountains, a stranger sitting near him remarked:

"Beautiful, isn't it?"

"Yes," replied Rob, promptly. "I don't believe there can be a more fascinating river-scene in all the world."

From this the two easily drifted into conversation; and at length the stranger, who proved to be a business-man from Amoy, said:

"New to this part of the world, aren't you?"

"Yes," replied Rob; "it all is new to me now, though I was born here; but my parents took me away nearly fourteen years ago."

"Indeed! May I ask where you were born?"

"Wu Hsing, up on the Si Kiang."

"You don't mean the place where the missionaries were killed the other day?"

"Missionaries killed!" repeated Rob, mechanically, and with blanching cheeks. "How were they killed? How many? What were their names?"

"Killed by a mob of natives, as usual; but the city tao-tai and fifteen of the ringleaders were executed yesterday in Canton, so everything is quiet up there now. Their names? Why, I don't seem to remember; but all who were at the station were killed. Nobody escaped. Of course, none of your friends were there, though, seeing that you moved away so long ago."

"My father and mother were there," groaned poor Rob. And for him the light of life seemed to go out with the setting sun that just then sank from sight in the blood-red waters of the Dragon's Mouth.

CHAPTER XIII

IN THE WORLD'S MOST MARVELLOUS CITY

STUNNED by the terrible news he had just heard, Rob sat silent, trying to think of all that it meant to him, while his new acquaintance, shocked at the unexpected result of his chance remark, tried in vain to console him. It might not be so bad as reported, he said, for such things always were exaggerated. Probably, Rob would find that his parents had escaped and were safe in Canton. Perhaps the massacre had extended only to native Christians, as often was the case; or, it was more than likely that the Hinckleys had been warned of the outbreak in time to leave Wu Hsing before it took place.

"They couldn't leave," answered Rob, "for my father was too ill to travel." Then, wishing to be alone with his great sorrow, the lad abruptly rose and went to his state-room, which he did not again leave that night.

As it was not advisable for the steamer to reach Canton before sunrise, she stopped about ten o'clock and remained at anchor until daybreak, when she again was got under way. An hour later Rob was wakened from a troubled dream of fighting, killing, and burning by such a confusion of yells, splashings,

and other strange sounds that he rushed out on deck with the idea that his dream had become a reality. Once in the open he gazed upon a scene unique and unparalleled. The steamer was slowly making her way against the swift current of a turbid river, along the water-front of the most marvellous city in all the world. She was moving amid a vast collection of floating craft, from fine, English-built Chinese war-ships and foreign gun-boats down through junks of all sizes, stern-wheel "kick-boats" propelled by man-power, gorgeous mandarin-boats gay with fluttering flags, house-boats, flower-boats—which are floating palaces in which men of wealth give expensive dinners—silk-boats, rice-boats, and produce-barges from up-river; fishing-boats, duck-boats, long, slender—paddling-canoes known as snake-boats, besides thousands of sampans and slipper-boats, that ply for hire in any capacity, and on which half a million of people are born, live, and die, in many cases without ever setting foot on land.

So poor are these sampan dwellers, and so greatly is the supply of their labor in excess of the demand for it, that they struggle with one another for the chance of making even a single "cash," which is valued at one-tenth of a penny. In the present instance scores of sampans, propelled by sweeps or sculling-oars, were racing towards the *Fatshan*, their occupants screaming, gesticulating, firing off crackers, and beating gongs to attract the attention of her passengers. All these craft looked exactly alike, and were about twenty-five feet long by eight feet

wide. Each had a small, open deck forward, on which a man, standing and facing the bow, rowed with a pair of sweeps. There was an arch-roofed house amidships, and aft of it a covered deck occupied by a woman, who worked a long sculling-oar, by means of which she both steered and propelled the light craft. Not one of these boats was painted, but all were colored alike with pungent smelling Ning-Po varnish.

From every sampan peered round-faced, solemn-eyed children, boys and girls, all wearing pig-tails and dressed alike, and looking alike, except that the smaller boys generally had bladders, squares of cork, or billets of a light wood fastened to their shoulders to keep them afloat in case they fell overboard. The girls were held to be of so much less value that for them life-preservers were not thought of. Whenever these children were more than four or five years old they helped, or attempted to help, their parents with the oars, while those of younger age took care of the babies.

In the rush towards the steamer of these queer-looking and queerly manned craft they were in constant collision, smashing recklessly together, apparently striving to overturn one another, or to push their rivals out of the way. If one succeeded in making fast, others would hold on to her until the single grass-plaited rope would break, and all would be swept astern in the swift current, their crews screaming and shaking fists at one another as they went.

It was bedlam and babel, sea-fights and water-sports, commercial rivalry and insanity, all mixed into one grand helter-skelter of confusion; and yet. so far as the interested spectators could note, no one was drowned, nor even hurt, though, apparently, no one would have cared a snap if every one else had come to serious grief.

The Chinese passengers from the lower deck of the *Fatshan* swarmed into such sampans as succeeded in making fast, their queer-looking luggage, done up in matting, was pitched after them, and away they went as though each second was too precious to be wasted. Such of the foreign passengers as were tourists or globe-trotters, visiting Canton out of curiosity, were engaging guides to show them the sights of the wonderful city, and arranging for sedan-chairs, in which they were to be borne on the shoulders of coolies through its endless miles of swarming streets.

There are no wheeled vehicles in these granite-paved thoroughfares, and no beasts of burden, for the broadest and most important street of Canton is but eight feet wide, while in most of them a tall man standing in the middle may touch the houses on either side with his extended finger-tips. From these threadlike passages, packed with blue-clad, yellow-visaged humanity, and reeking with filth, open the narrow portals of shops whose contents would dazzle an Aladdin. Each dim doorway is barred against the entrance by a tiny altar, from which ascends, never-endingly, the incense of smoul-

dering joss-sticks; but once the uninviting entrance has been passed, the visitor finds himself in another world.

The interior is scrupulously clean, and its perfumed atmosphere is that of quiet elegance. He is met by smiling attendants clad in silken garments and shod with noiseless felt, who bow profoundly before him, at the same time cordially shaking their own hands in token of welcome. They invite him to be seated in wonderfully carved chairs, lined with silken cushions, and darkly lustrous with the polish of ages. Tiny tables of marvellous inlay are set before him, and from them he is invited to drink of amber-colored tea served in egg-shell porcelain. Afterwards the hidden wealth of the establishment is brought forth, piece by piece, for his inspection, and it is intimated that these things are for sale, though he never is urged to purchase.

Or he is conducted from room to room, lighted from interior courts and filled with the most exquisite specimens of human handiwork known to the world. Here are silk embroideries of a beauty, delicacy, and texture not found elsewhere, exquisitely carved ivories, startling designs, boldly executed in lacquer, gold, and silver, jade, crystal, and precious stones. Here are feather-work and brass-work, priceless porcelains and cloisonné, softest crêpes and gossamer linens, black wood furniture graved with the painstaking skill that workmen of the Western world bestow only upon precious metals. All these things, and an infinity of others equally

desirable, are passed in slow succession by the deft-handed attendants before the fascinated gaze of the foreign visitor, until he longs for the wealth of a Crœsus, and is only withheld from purchasing to the full extent of his means by memory of the grim customs officials who so surely await his home-coming.

From these places where things are sold the sight-seer in Canton is borne away to places where things are made, or to temples, pagodas, and execution grounds. Perhaps he is permitted to enter the yamen of some wealthy mandarin, and, merely by passing through an enclosing wall of buildings, finds himself transferred in a minute from the filth and squalor of the narrow street, with its swarms of jargon-yelling coolies and leprous beggars, dimly filtered light and overpowering smells, into a place of sunlight and clean air, a fairy-land of trees and flowers, of singing birds, shaded walks, and plashing waters, of quiet and coolness, strangely attractive architecture—a place of gratified senses and restful luxury.

But none of these things was for Rob Hinckley—at least, not on this occasion, for instead of being a sensation-seeking tourist he merely was a sorrow-stricken lad, friendless in a great, pitiless city, well-nigh penniless, and desperately uncertain which way to move. He turned sick with apprehension as he gazed from one side of the steamer to the bund, or landing-place, where gangs of half-naked coolies grunted and sweated under their burdens of freight,

or from the other to the yelling sampan crews ready to fight for a cent's worth of patronage. To him they resembled the myriad occupants of a gigantic ant-hill, and appeared equally lacking in human sympathies.

Rob was faint from the exhaustion of his almost sleepless and supperless night, and at length realizing his most pressing need, he sought breakfast in the saloon. From this he returned to the deck a half-hour later, refreshed and strengthened, but still as uncertain as ever regarding his next move. Then all at once his uncertainty vanished, for the very first object that caught his eye as he stepped outside was that which is most dear and most beautiful to all Americans, especially when seen in a foreign land—the flag of the stars and stripes. It was at some distance up the river, blowing out strong and free, high above the only clump of trees in view, and besides it no other flag was visible.

In Canton, while most of the greater nations own their legation buildings, the United States is satisfied to lodge its representative in rented quarters. To offset this humiliation, so far as lay in his power, the American consul-general had raised a noble flagstaff, so much taller than those of his neighbors that the starry banner flown from its top was the most conspicuous flag in all Canton. Now it waved a friendly greeting to poor Rob, filling him with renewed hope, and bidding him come to it for aid in this time of trouble.

Nor did our lad hesitate to accept its invitation;

but, noting the general direction to be taken, he ran down the gang-plank and plunged boldly into the seething mass of blue-clad humanity thronging the narrow thoroughfares of China's greatest city. A little later, guided by occasional glimpses of the flag as he went, he had gained a bridge spanning a canal that separates the city proper from the Shameen, a beautiful, tree-shaded island on which stand the foreign legations, dwellings, and business houses of Canton.

At the city end of this bridge was a barrier having two wrought-iron gates, one large and one very small. As the latter stood hospitably open, Rob was about to pass through it when the Chinese gatekeeper hurriedly flung open the other, at the same time respectfully informing him that it was reserved for Europeans (all white foreigners in China are known as Europeans), while the little gate was for the passage of such natives as are allowed on the Shameen.

The incident was trifling, but it wonderfully restored the self-confidence of our young American, and as he walked proudly through the big gate, which was closed with a slam behind him, he felt quite ready to face and defy the whole Chinese nation. Turning up a shaded and well-kept walk lined with substantial houses, each standing in its own grounds, he again sought for a glimpse of the flag, but in vain, for the foliage above which it waved was so thick as to hide it from below. In this dilemma Rob approached a gentleman who stood at

a front gate, in company with a group of Chinese, with a view of inquiring his direction to the American consulate. As he drew near he overheard the gentleman, who looked like an American, say loudly, slowly, and very distinctly:

"I've told you over and over that I don't understand one word you say, and unless you can speak English there is no use of your trying to talk business with me. You wanchee catch one talkee man—sabe?"

"Perhaps I can help you, sir," said Rob, stepping up at that minute. "I understand and speak some Chinese."

"If you only can and will, I shall be ever so much obliged," replied the American, "for I am quite sure these fellows have something important to communicate. But I am a new-comer here, without a word of the lingo, and our interpreter has not yet put in an appearance this morning."

So Rob talked and interpreted with the result that a few minutes later the situation in question was fully understood by both parties, and the Chinese departed quite satisfied.

"If I only could talk it as you do!" said the gentleman, enviously. "Won't you step inside for a cup of tea?"

"No, I thank you," replied Rob. "I only stopped to inquire my way to the American consulate. I want to see the consul-general on most important business."

"Then I am very sorry to say that he has gone to Hong-Kong, and will not return for a week."

"Oh!" cried Rob; "what shall I do? Perhaps you can tell me something about a reported massacre of missionaries at Wu Hsing. Did it really occur?"

"I believe it did, though that was before I came out; but I hope you hadn't any friends there."

"My father and mother were there."

"You poor fellow! That, indeed, is a bitter blow. May I ask your name?"

"It is Hinckley."

"Not a son of Dr. Mason Hinckley?" inquired the other, eagerly.

"Yes."

"Then you needn't worry any more, for Dr. Hinckley and his wife left for America just before the outbreak, and are a long way towards the land of safety by this time."

CHAPTER XIV

A TURN OF FORTUNE'S TIDE

For a moment Rob's heart beat quick with joy and his face became radiant; then it clouded again as he said, quietly:

"I think you must be mistaken, sir; for I received a cablegram in America that my father was too ill to travel, and longed to see me before he died. That is the reason I am now here."

"No," asserted the stranger, whose name, as Rob afterwards learned, was Bishop, "I am confident there can be no mistake, for I saw Dr. and Mrs. Mason Hinckley in Hong-Kong. I was newly arrived, and had gone with an acquaintance to arrange for a lot of stuff to be taken aboard the Canton boat. While we were there, another boat of the same line came in from the upper Si Kiang. She had but two European passengers, a lady, and her husband who was so weak from illness that we assisted him to a carriage. My friend knew them slightly, and after they were gone he told me that they were a missionary doctor and his wife from Wu Hsing, that their name was Hinckley, that the doctor had been critically ill, but had most unexpectedly rallied, so that he was able to travel, and that they were to leave

for the States on the *China*, which sailed that evening. All this was distinctly impressed on my mind by the news of the Wu Hsing outbreak, which came a week later, and I was glad to remember that two at least of the possible victims had escaped in time."

Rob listened breathlessly to these details, and, when Mr. Bishop finished speaking, he exclaimed: "They are alive, then, and safe! If I only had known, and stayed quietly where I was! Do you remember the date, sir, on which you saw them in Hong-Kong?"

"Yes, it was the 10th of last month."

"The very day on which I was to have sailed from Tacoma, and they must have sent another cable after I left Hatton. It's all right, though, and I am too glad to care about anything else."

"It is too bad that you have missed each other, and still are on opposite sides of the world; but I suppose you will follow them by the next homeward-bound steamer, and so rejoin them inside of another six weeks. I envy you, and only wish I had a prospect of again seeing the States within the same number of months."

"I expect your chance is several times better than mine," laughed Rob, who for the moment was too light-hearted to give a serious thought to his own awkward predicament. "I would go quick enough if I could, but I haven't the money even to pay my fare to Hong-Kong. So it looks as if I'd have to stay here until I can earn the price of a ticket back

to where I have just come from. Do you happen to know of any one who could give me a job?"

"I can't say at this moment," replied Mr. Bishop, regarding the lad keenly as he spoke; "but I may think of some one. Where are you staying?"

"Nowhere. I only came on this morning's boat, and my baggage still is on board."

"Then suppose you get it up here and stay with me for a day or two while you look around. I've a big house, with plenty of room, and shall be glad of your company. Besides, I expect you can help me a good deal with my Chinese studies."

"All right, sir," assented Rob, promptly accepting this proposition, "and I'll be back inside of an hour."

With this our lad hurried away, saying to himself as he went: "I believe I must be one of the luckiest fellows in the world, and only a little while ago I thought I was one of the most miserable. My biggest bit of luck, though, was having Jo come to live at Hatton and teach me Chinese, for that seems about the most valuable accomplishment a fellow can have out here. I do wonder what became of him."

Rob crossed the canal bridge, went out through the big gate, that promptly was opened at his approach, and turned down Heavenly Clouds Street with the assured air of one who had resided in Canton all his life. Then he received a shock, and at the same time proved himself to be one of the very newest of new arrivals in that crafty city of poverty-

sharpened wits. On a bit of straw matting, spread above the granite flagging of the narrow roadway, lay a child three or four years old, apparently in the very grasp of death. Its eyes were closed, its pale features were distorted as though by a spasm; it was gasping for breath, and its hands were tightly clinched, while its poor little body was only partially hidden beneath a bit of ragged, blue cloth. Beside the dying child knelt a mother, bending over it and rocking her body to and fro in an agony of grief, while tears streamed from her eyes. She, too, was clad in rags, and evidently was in the last extremity of poverty, since she had not even a kennel in which to conceal her dying child from the curious gaze of the swarming street. No one stopped to speak with her or to offer her the slightest aid in this time of her sore distress; and as Rob, with swelling heart, gazed on this pitiful picture, he said to himself that all Chinese were brutes and unworthy the name of human beings.

"Can't something be done for them?" he asked of a passer-by, and speaking in Chinese; but the man only laughed and hurried on without answering. Then Rob spoke to the woman herself, but her grief was too great to permit her to take heed, and she only stroked the face of her dying child with gestures of despair. At this, feeling powerless to aid her by any other means, Rob drew a silver dollar from his pocket and gently laid it on the mat beside the little sufferer. Then he hurried away.

While he was within sight the woman did not

alter her position nor offer to pick up his gift. Only when he had disappeared, and the stealthy hand of a street urchin was about to close over the coveted coin, did she snatch it from the mat, spring to her feet, deal the would-be thief a stinging box on the ear, pick up her opium-drugged child, and serenely walk away, well satisfied with the success of her carefully planned tableau. When Rob returned that way he wondered what had become of the dying child who had so excited his sympathies, and it was only on the following day, when he again saw them at the same place, going through the same performance, that he realized how he had been duped.

On that first morning he transferred his belongings from the steamer to the house of his newly made friend, who told him that, as there was nothing in particular for him to do just then, he was free to go where he pleased. So he strolled to the river-front of the Shameen, where from one of the tree-shaded benches, placed at intervals along its length, he watched the wonderful life of the river, with its swarming junks and sampans. After a while, attracted by a huge white-and-yellow nondescript-appearing craft, moored in the stream at some distance above where he sat, he walked in that direction for a closer view. He had proceeded but a few steps when he was more than ever puzzled to note that above the object of his curiosity floated an American flag, while he also could see the grim muzzles of enormous guns protruding from various parts of its superstructure. It evidently was a ship of some kind,

and also a man-of-war; but to Rob's eyes it was of even stranger appearance than the closely packed acres of Chinese craft surrounding it. He finally decided that it must be a wreck, resting on the bottom of the river, since its deck appeared to be but a few inches above the turbid waters, and he wondered why its crew, sauntering back and forth beneath the awnings, did not exhibit more concern.

While Rob thus was puzzling, a young man, wearing the uniform of an American naval officer, walked briskly up to where he was standing, and signalled a sampan.

"Can you tell me, sir," asked our lad, addressing this officer, "what American ship that is out there, and how she got wrecked?"

"Wrecked!" repeated the other. "What do you mean by wrecked? She looks all right to me. Is anything the matter with the old packet?"

"Of course, I don't know much about wrecks," replied Rob, a little nettled by the officer's tone, "but if a ship sunk to the bottom of a Chinese river, nearly ten thousand miles from home, isn't wrecked, then the word must mean something different from what I think it does."

"But she isn't sunk. She's floating all right, and showing fully as much freeboard as she did when we brought her across the Pacific, nearly two years ago. Monitors always look that way, you know."

"Monitor! Is she a monitor?" cried Rob, who never before had seen one of this peculiarly American type of war-ship.

"To be sure. She is the United States monitor *Monterey*, one of the finest of her class, and, with the exception of her sister-ship, the *Monadnock*, now at Shanghai, the most powerful fighting-machine now afloat in Asiatic waters. Wouldn't you like to go aboard and take a look at her?"

Of course, Rob gladly accepted this invitation, and, entering the sampan with Lieutenant Hibbard, was sculled out to the floating fortress, which always lies off Canton, providing a safe-refuge for foreigners against a storm of wrath such as sometimes sweeps over that turbulent city. She is at the same time a most effective peace-keeper, since the Chinese know as well as any one that her powerful guns could within a few hours lay their metropolis in ruins.

The *Monterey* is famous as having been the first ship of her class to cross the Pacific to Manila, where she added such strength to Dewey's handful of warships as to render his position there impregnable.

On gaining her side Rob found the rail to be quite two feet above water, instead of only a few inches, as he had supposed. He also found her to be of great breadth of beam, with wide sweeps of unencumbered deck, both forward and aft. Safely below the water-line he found roomy, well-ventilated quarters for officers and crew, as well as ample engine, coal, and ammunition spaces. He marvelled at her huge guns, polished until they shone, mounted fore and aft in steel turrets of a strength and construction to defy the most powerful of modern missiles. At the same time, these could be revolved at will,

by a mechanism so delicate as to be controlled by a finger. Rob took tiffin with the officers of the ward-room mess, whom he entertained with news from the States and from Manila, and when, late in the afternoon, he again was set on shore, he felt that his first day in Canton, in spite of its clouded beginning, had been one of the very happiest and most interesting of his life.

That evening Mr. Bishop, whom our lad regarded at once as friend and employer, found leisure for a long conversation with him, during which he said:

"As you probably know, one of the most valuable railway concessions in China, that for a line from this city to Hankow, on the Yang-tse-kiang, nearly a thousand miles due north from here, has been granted to an American syndicate. Another concession, for a line from Hankow to Pekin, was granted a year earlier to the Belgians. These two railways, meeting at the metropolis of Central China, will form a grand trunk-line, extending nearly two thousand miles north and south through the very heart of the empire. The Belgians already are at work on the construction of their line, while the Americans have made their surveys and are ready to begin construction. I am an American engineer, employed by the syndicate, and, as a preliminary step to my further work, I am about to undertake a journey of investigation from here to Hankow, and, possibly, on to Pekin. My plans for this journey are so nearly completed that I could start tomorrow; but I have not as yet secured a satisfac-

tory interpreter. Will you accept the position? The trip will be long, and to a certain extent dangerous, but the pay will, I think, be sufficient to carry you from Shanghai to America after our journey is completed. What do you say? Are you ready to plunge into the heart of China, and bury yourself from the world for the next two or three months, or do you prefer to remain here and look for some easier job?"

CHAPTER XV

IN THE HEART OF UNKNOWN CHINA

THAT Rob accepted Mr. Bishop's proposition goes without saying, for he was an American boy, and, as such, was filled to the brim with a genuine love of the adventure and excitement attending explorations in strange countries. Thus, two days after the offer was made, he found himself a very important member of an expedition setting forth from the great southern city of Canton and bound for the far north. Two months later, a junk, flying the American flag and having on board our travellers, drifted with the tawny flood of the mighty Yang-tse-kiang (Son of the Sea River) along the crowded water-front of Hankow, a city of such commercial energy that it is known as the Chicago of China.

During the weeks that had elapsed since they left the last traces of Western civilization at Canton, they had seen no white man nor heard a word of English, except such as they spoke to each other. They had travelled by sampan up the North River and the Wu Shin, across the province of Kwang-tung, to the head of navigation at Ping-Shih. Here they had engaged coolies to transport their luggage, camp outfit, and provisions over the "carry," thirty

miles long, across the Nan-Ling Mountains, to Chen-Chow, a quaint, old, walled town, marking the head of navigation on the Yu-tan River, a branch of the Sian Kiang, which in turn flows northward into the Yang-tse. There they had once more chartered a junk; and, always accompanied by a couple of slim, light-draught Chinese guard-boats, had sailed, poled, or drifted across the great inland province of Hu-nan, which is half again as large as the State of New York.

Although always using their boat as headquarters and for the transportation of supplies, the two Americans had travelled most of the way by land, on foot, on pony-back, or in sedan-chairs borne by coolies. They had slept in temples, examination-halls, tea hongs (warehouses), in official yamens, and occasionally, but never when they could help it, in crowded, vermin-infested taverns, always surrounded by throngs of excited spectators, who poked holes through the paper windows or widened cracks in the floors of overhead rooms to gratify their curiosity by peering at the ridiculous-looking barbarians.

While crossing the Nan-Ling Mountains they had traversed a portion of one of China's great national highways, constructed thousands of years ago, and apparently never since repaired. Originally fifteen feet of its width was paved with large, flat stones, four feet square, and from one foot to eighteen inches thick. Many of these stones had disappeared, no one could tell how, nor where to, leaving gaping and bottomless mud-holes to entrap the unwary.

The remaining blocks were deeply hollowed by the bare feet of millions of burden-bearing coolies and scored with wheelbarrow grooves. This great highway was formerly lined along its hundreds of miles of length with temples, tea-houses, rest-houses, and shops; but such of these as have not disappeared are now in ruins, and serve only as haunts for highwaymen, lepers, and beggars.

In the remote past the several states or provinces of China were independent kingdoms, waging war upon one another; and even to this day the inhabitants of each province regard the people of those adjoining as "foreigners." So they fortified themselves against one another, and our explorers were so fortunate as to come across one of these fortifications. It was a high and very thick wall of masonry, having battlements and massive gateway, surmounted by a watch-tower, built on a boundary-line across the highway, where the latter occupied a narrow valley. The hills on either hand were low enough to be easy of ascent, but the impregnable wall reached only from side to side of the valley.

"What's the matter with walking around an end of it?" asked Rob, staring at this triumph of defensive architecture.

"Nothing at all, that I can see," replied the engineer. "Only, I suppose, no Chinese ever would think of doing so."

Again the road led over a high, arched bridge that once had crossed a stream; but the stream had altered its course and gone elsewhere, perhaps hun-

dreds of years ago, since no trace even of its bed now remained. But because the road went over the bridge the cargo coolies, grunting beneath their burdens, continued to toil up the steep ascent and down the other side, without ever a thought of making a new path around it.

"I won't climb over it, at any rate," declared Rob. So he and the engineer walked around; their own coolies followed them like a flock of sheep, and those on the bridge stared in amazement at the barbarians who thus dared depart from established custom.

Although other American engineers had preceded our travellers through this country, the foreigner was still such a novelty that they were viewed by thousands of people who never before had seen one, and who crowded about them in embarrassing throngs. At the same time they never were ill-treated nor even molested; for the Chinese, unless roused to a blind fury by wrongs, real or fancied, are the most peaceable and courteous of people. To be sure, our friends nearly always were spoken of and addressed as "fan kwei" (foreign devils); but this was because the natives never had heard foreigners called anything else.

To Mr. Bishop's surprise he discovered, or rather Rob discovered for him, that many of the Hu-nan people, instead of being opposed to the construction of a railway through their country, were desirous for its coming. Not on account of the facilities it would offer for travel and the transportation of their

products, but because it was rumored far and wide that it would pay liberally for such graves as must be removed from its right-of-way. Formerly, and even now in certain districts, the grave problem was, and is, one of the most serious encountered by the projectors of Chinese railways. Finally it was made a commercial proposition, and the railway companies agreed to pay for such graves as came within their lines at a rate of eight taels (about eleven dollars) apiece. Now, such of the Chinese as understand this arrangement are more than willing thus to turn their ancestors to profitable account.

As the dead are not collected in regularly established burying-grounds, but are scattered about in fields, gardens, or wherever it is most convenient to place them, and as the entire country is thickly sown with these precious relics, no line can be so run as to avoid them. Consequently they must be bought up and removed. For some time Rob could not account for the great anxiety shown by the natives to learn the exact location of the line. Finally, however, he discovered that those persons having graves known to be on the line could raise money on them in advance, while such as had none proposed to borrow or purchase a few ancestors at places so remote as to be beyond a possibility of disturbance and rebury them in more profitable locations.

In the cities of Siang-tan and Chang-sha, both on waters navigable by large Yang-tse junks, our travellers found shops equipped with foreign goods, and notably with American flour, prints, and canned

foods, though they did not meet an American nor a European in either place. This discovery was of particular interest to Mr. Bishop, as the appearance in those remote localities, and under existing conditions, of these goods promised a vast extension of similar trade upon completion of the railway he was about to build.

Thus the entire trip had proved intensely interesting, and its results were so highly satisfactory that, as it drew to a close with their near approach to Hankow, our explorers already were preparing for another journey from that point to Pekin.

Much as they had enjoyed the one just ending, they were not sorry to see European buildings in the mission compounds and along the bund at Hankow, and it was good to hear their own speech once more. It also was good to sit down to an American table, eat home-cooked food, and, above all, to sleep between sheets in American beds. But with all these things to be enjoyed came two disappointments. Rob's lay in the entire absence of the letters that he had hoped to find awaiting him at this point. From Canton he had written both to his uncle and his parents at Hatton, requesting answers to be sent to Hankow, but the eagerly expected letters had not appeared. A number awaited Mr. Bishop, and in them lay his disappointment, for certain of them contained news that rendered it necessary for him to return at once to Canton. Thus he must give up the proposed overland journey to Pekin.

"It is too bad!" he exclaimed. "There is so much I want to find out about that northern line, its construction, the nature of the country it traverses, the feeling of the people regarding it, and a dozen other things. Now I must indefinitely postpone the trip, and so remain in ignorance of many things most important for me to know."

"I wish I could go for you," suggested Rob.

"That is an idea worth considering!" exclaimed the engineer. "And I don't see why you shouldn't collect the very information I want. You are pretty well broken into the work by this time. But would you dare travel another thousand miles through China, alone, and in view of the rumors of trouble that we have been hearing lately?"

"Of course I would," replied Rob, scornfully. "I can't see but what it is just as safe to travel here as in any other country, especially when one knows the ways of the people and their language as well as I do."

The conversation on this subject was long and earnest, but at its conclusion it had been decided that Rob Hinckley, provided with ample funds, should travel as special commissioner of the American railway syndicate from Hankow to Pekin. From the latter city he would return by rail and sea to Hong-Kong, where Mr. Bishop would meet him and receive his report.

"By that time," said the latter, "your pay surely will amount to enough to carry you to America, with a substantial surplus besides."

The only condition made by our lad was that, upon

his arrival in Shanghai, Mr. Bishop should cable to the States for information concerning Rob's parents, and should transmit the same to Pekin, there to await the latter's arrival.

A couple of days later the companions who had travelled so far and endured so much together separated, the engineer to proceed by steamer down the Yang-tse-kiang to Shanghai, and thence by ship to Hong-Kong, and Rob, so confident in his own resources as not to dream of dangers that he could not overcome, taking train for the north over the short section of Belgian railway already constructed. It carried him to the border of the province of Honan. Across this province and to the Hoang-ho, or Yellow River, he made his way successfully, though not without encountering many difficulties during the following month. Then his real troubles began, for no sooner had he crossed the great river, which, on account of its frequent devastating floods, is called "China's Sorrow," than he found himself on the edge of a fierce "storm of wrath" that threatened to sweep over the entire empire.

An almost unprecedented drought had prevailed over the whole of the vast plain of northern China for nearly three years. For two years there had been no crops, and now the same dreadful condition was promised for the third. Everywhere were starving, desperate people, who, in their ignorance, attributed their woes to the evil influence of foreigners, and especially to the missionaries, who sought to overthrow the gods of the country.

The priests taught that the angry gods thus were punishing the unbelief of the people, and that prosperity never would return to their land until every foreigner was driven from it. Thus it happened that the inhabitants of three provinces were rising against missionaries and railway-builders, robbing and killing all who did not fly in time, burning and destroying their property, as well as that of all native converts to the new religion. At the same time they were making pilgrimages to the shrines of their own gods, and imploring them to once more send the life-giving rains.

Rob heard rumors of these things, but, believing them to be exaggerated, refused to turn back. So he pushed doggedly ahead, ever nearing the storm-centre. Finally, late one day, as he approached a walled town in which he expected to obtain lodging for the night, he suddenly found himself beset by a mob of frantic rain-dancers, who rushed upon him from a sacred grove by the road-side. The slender escort of soldiers that had thus far accompanied our lad instantly took to their heels, leaving him alone to face the hundreds of yelling demons, who firmly believed that, if they could take his life, the act would be pleasing to their insulted gods.

CHAPTER XVI

"FISTS OF RIGHTEOUS HARMONY"

THE people of China have suffered much at the hands of foreigners, and, in their ignorance of everything beyond their own line of vision, imagine many grievances that really do not exist. Once China was the foremost nation of the earth in arts, literature, commerce, and all that goes to the making of what we call civilization. She invented, used, and forgot a thousand things that the Western world is only now discovering. She was sufficient unto herself, and desired only to be let alone.

But the Western nations would not let her alone. They insisted upon forcing their unwelcome trade into the country; and, moreover, upon conducting it themselves, according to their own ideas. When she resisted their demands they took possession of her seaports, destroyed her forts and war-ships, placed their own steamers, protected by gunboats, on her rivers, monopolized her coasting trade, and even appropriated as their own, large slices of her territory.

Thus, while England holds the island of Hong-Kong, together with two hundred square miles of the opposite mainland, Shanghai, and Wei-hai-Wei,

besides controlling the trade of the great Yang-tse Valley, Russia, on the north, has seized Manchuria, Germany occupies the province of Shan-tung, Portugal has for three hundred years been established at Macao, and France, the chief aggressor, already in possession of Anam and Tonquin, is making insidious but certain progress northward through Yunan, with covetous eyes cast in the direction of Canton, where she already has gained a foothold. Japan owns the great Chinese island of Formosa, and only awaits a favorable opportunity for seizing the opposite mainland province of Fu-Kien, while even Italy has laid claim to a Chinese port and "sphere of influence."

All these foreign nations, together with Americans and Belgians, are building, or are proposing to build, railways in China, and all of them, with the further additions of Canada and Sweden, are overrunning the bewildered country with missionaries of clashing denominations, each one of which teaches that it only is right, while all the others are wrong. Some of these foreign teachers even go so far as to interfere with local governments, taking upon themselves the office of magistrate, administering the laws according to their own interpretation, and always in favor of their own converts, and at the same time demanding to be accorded all outward forms of respect due only to mandarins.

On the other hand, the great mass of Chinese, groping in the darkness of the Middle Ages, burdened by densest ignorance, steeped in superstition,

robbed by their rulers to the extreme of poverty, and forced to unceasing toil from long before daylight until long after dark every day of the week throughout every year of their joyless lives, are taught by their priests, and by others of their own race to whom they look for guidance, that all their sorrows, including floods, famines, and plagues, are caused by the foreigners who are spreading over their country with the ultimate intention of seizing it and subjecting its people to their own barbarous customs. They are told that these same foreigners sweep the rain-clouds from one portion of the sky to cause droughts, and gather them at another to produce devastating floods, and that they poison wells to bring on plagues. They are made to believe that the "foreign devils" collect Chinese children in asylums, homes, and hospitals for the sole purpose of extracting their eyes, to be used in enchantments; that every railway-sleeper, and the foundations of every Christian edifice, are laid upon living human bodies; and a thousand other tales, equally monstrous but equally terrifying.

To remedy these evils the people are invited to form themselves into associations, and thus gain strength for the destruction of the hated foreign devils, or at least to drive them back into the sea, whence they came. For the benefit of those who can read, pamphlets setting forth these views are written, printed by the million, and distributed throughout the land; while the minds of the more ignorant are inflamed by pictured posters illustrat-

ing the horrors perpetrated by foreigners, and posted broadcast in every direction.

To these invitations a Chinese readily responds; for there is nothing in which he more greatly delights than to belong to an association of any kind or for any purpose. Thus societies for the exclusion of foreigners have sprung up like mushrooms, especially in those coast provinces where foreign influences are most noticeable; and strongest of them all is the great I-Ho-Chuan, or "Fists of Righteous Harmony" Society, sometimes called "The Great Sword Society," but known to the world at large as "Boxers," a name first used by the missionary correspondent of a foreign journal. The motto of this society, as borne on its banners, is, "Protect the empire! Exterminate foreigners!"

During the initiation of its members they fall into trances, and believe that, while in this state, the spirits of departed heroes enter their bodies. After that they are pronounced invulnerable to sword or bullet, and are declared to be possessed of magic charms that no enemy may withstand.

In 1898 the Boxer movement was checked by the sudden declaration of China's young emperor, Kuang Hsu, in favor of sweeping reforms based upon Western ideas. These he proceeded to carry out with unsuspected energy, deposing corrupt officials in all parts of the empire, and replacing them with others who had been educated abroad. He issued edicts intended to revolutionize the army, the navy, the time-honored but senseless methods of literary

examination, and the manner of collecting taxes, which, if obeyed, would place his people upon the upward path of progress so recently and so successfully trodden by Japan. There is no doubt that the Emperor was sincere in his avowed determination to lift his distressed country from the depths to which it was sunk; and had he remained in power the awful Boxer uprising of two years later never would have taken place. But his enemies were too strong; and, after a few months of praiseworthy effort, the young reformer was overthrown by a powerful palace clique, headed by his great aunt, the Empress Dowager, and composed of the high officials whom he had removed from office. They forced him to sign a decree announcing his own abdication of the throne, and again the Empress Dowager, China's worst enemy, assumed the reins of power.

At once all reform decrees were repealed, the old order of things was restored, and hatred of foreigners was preached more loudly and more bitterly than ever. A new life was infused into the Boxer movement, which from that moment spread like wildfire over the northern provinces, until in the summer of 1900 it reached its height. During that dreadful summer mission stations everywhere were looted and destroyed, while their unfortunate occupants were driven out to be killed or cast into loathsome prisons, from which death was their only release. Christian converts were massacred by scores and hundreds, railroad property was destroyed, and

railroad employés suffered the fate of missionaries. A rumor to the effect that all foreigners, including members of legations, had been driven from Pekin, was generally believed; as was another, stating that every foreign resident of Tien-Tsin had been killed. Above all, it was understood that the Empress Dowager was in full sympathy with the movement to rid her kingdom of foreigners, and would render every assistance in her power to those engaged in the effort.

Such was the condition of affairs in north China when, in the early summer of 1900, the young American, Rob Hinckley, on a peaceful mission to Pekin, suddenly found himself deserted and alone in the presence of a mob of crazed fanatics, intent upon taking his life. Our lad did not know why they wished to kill him; for, since leaving the Yang-tse River, he had found an ever-increasing difficulty in comprehending the dialect spoken by the common people, until at length it had become wholly incomprehensible. Thus he knew almost nothing of the Boxer movement, nor of the awful state of affairs existing in the country between him and Pekin.

He, however, instantly recognized the danger of his present position, and, clapping spurs to the jaded pony he was riding, he dashed away in the direction of the nearest city gate, with the mob in full cry at his heels. The distance was short, and Rob was within fifty feet of the outer gate, with a good lead of his pursuers, when all at once it oc-

curred to him that he was about to jump from the frying-pan into the fire, since once within the city walls his enemies could close all exits and hunt him down at their leisure. With this he pulled his pony so sharply to one side that the animal, already exhausted to the point of dropping, stumbled and fell, flinging Rob to earth over his head. As the lad scrambled to his feet he was amazed to hear in English a shout of—

"Keep on to the gate! It's your only chance!"

Although he could see no one in that direction, the voice seemed to come from the gateway itself; and, as his madly yelling pursuers were now close upon him, Rob accepted the advice so strangely given and darted forward on his original course.

A few minutes earlier a young Chinese, clad in the uniform of an officer of imperial troops, stood at a narrow loop-hole in the watch-tower above the city gate, gazing listlessly outward over a vast expanse of flat, parched, uninteresting country. He had carelessly noted the approach from afar of Rob's little party, whom he supposed to be ordinary native travellers, and had only been aroused from his apathy by the yells of the rain-dancers, as they raised the cry of, "Death to the foreign devil!"

"They must be mistaken," thought the officer, "for there can't be any foreigners left in this part of the country." He watched Rob's flight with ever-growing interest, and was about to descend from the tower so as to meet him at the gate when the young American attempted to change his pony's

"HIS MADLY YELLING PURSUERS WERE NOW CLOSE UPON HIM"

course. Then the watcher uttered the surprising call that again altered Rob's determination, and in another moment he was springing down the flight of stone steps leading to the outer gateway. As he reached it, Rob had just entered, and was starting across the barbican towards the inner gate.

"Stop!" shouted the young Chinese. "Come here quick and help me!"

Rob hesitated only the fraction of a second and then did as he was bidden. The Chinese was straining at one of the two massive, iron-bound doors of the gateway, and in another moment Rob was adding every ounce of his own strength to the effort. It yielded slowly, and its hinges creaked rustily as it swung heavily into place.

"Now the other, quick!" exclaimed the stranger, and with an effort that nearly started blood from their swelling veins the two young fellows closed the great valve in the very faces of the frantic outside mob that flung themselves bodily against it mad with baffled rage. They could not open it, for a stout iron bolt had dropped into place as the gate was closed, and nothing short of a cannonade could now force an entrance.

"Follow me!" said the Chinese, huskily, and panting from his recent exertion, at the same time turning up the narrow stairway leading to the watch-tower, and Rob obeyed.

The latter was full of perplexity at finding in this out-of-the-way place a Chinese who not only spoke English, but apparently was willing to endanger him-

self to rescue a foreigner from a mob. So quick had been all their movements since he darted through the gateway that he had not yet obtained a view of his rescuer's face, and, of course, had not been able to question him.

In the tower, at the top of the stairway, he found his strange companion taking a quick view of the raging mob below. As he stepped to his side, the young Chinese turned and stared him full in the eyes. For a moment they regarded each other in amazed silence. Then a simultaneous exclamation burst from their lips:

"Rob Hinckley!"

"Chinese Jo!"

CHAPTER XVII

LEAPING INTO UNKNOWN BLACKNESS

To the friends who had been so mysteriously separated many months earlier, and on the other side of the world, their reunion at this place and under such conditions was bewildering and incredible. They could scarcely believe the evidence of their own eyes. The last time Rob had seen Jo the latter had been shorn of his queue, while now his hair again hung in a long, glossy braid. For a moment they stood clasping each other's hand, after the fashion of the West, and staring without speech. There was so much to be said that they could say nothing. Then they were aroused to a sense of imminent danger by the sounds of ascending voices and hurrying footsteps on the stone stairway. Evidently the present was no time for explanations.

"Quick, Rob! Go up there and hide," whispered Jo, pointing, as he spoke, to a rude ladder leading into the darkness of an upper loft. "Stay there till I come or I cannot save you."

Even as he spoke, Jo turned to the stairway as though about to descend, while Rob sprang to the ladder.

A Chinese soldier was so close at hand that he

would have gained the room and caught sight of the fugitive had not the young officer arrested his progress with the stern inquiry:

"What is going on below? Are you all mad or drunk with the juice of poppies? Cannot I meditate in peace without being disturbed by the howlings of you swine? How dare you come up here without orders? Answer me, dog, and son of generations of dogs, before I cause you to be beaten with a hundred blows!"

The terrified soldier, who held a petty office, corresponding to that of corporal of the guard, recoiled from the presence of his angry superior, who, if he had chosen, could have him beaten even to death, and, kotowing until his forehead touched the stones, answered:

"Know, your honorable excellency, that the outer gate has been closed without knowledge of any in the guard-house, and beyond it many persons, mad with anger, are clamorous for admittance. It is a mystery; and before opening the gate I came up here for a look at the outsiders, to make certain that they are not enemies.

"Closed, pig? How can it be that the gate is closed without orders from me, the keeper of the gate? This thing must be examined into," cried the young officer, with every appearance of extreme anger. "Let it be opened without delay. But first come with me and look at these outside howlers. It may be, even as your stupidity suggests, that they are men from Chang-Chow, who have ever been un-

friendly to this city because of its greater prosperity."

This was said to give the soldier an opportunity for seeing that no other person was in the room, which fact he would report to his comrades.

As they examined the furious crowd besieging the gate, Jo exclaimed, even more angrily than before:

"Those be no Chang-Chow men, but our friends and own people. They are the dancers, who, together with the good priests, pray constantly for rain, and who went out to the shrine of the holy rain-god but an hour ago. Ah, but you shall smartly suffer for closing a gate of their own city against them. Hasten and open it again if you would have the setting sun behold your worthless head still upon your wretched shoulders."

Thus saying, the young officer spurned the trembling soldier with his foot and followed him down the stairway. In another moment the great gate was opened to the torrent of frantic humanity that rushed in demanding to know what had become of the foreign devil whom they had seen enter only a few minutes before, and where the soldiers had hidden him. Also why they had closed the gate in the very faces of his pursuers.

"Give him up to us," shrieked the priests, "that we may kill him, for doubtless it is he who keeps away the blessed rain."

The denials of the guard that they even had seen any foreigner, or that they had closed the gate, were so little heeded by the clamorous throng, that it

might have gone hard with them had not Jo secured a hearing by firing a shot from his revolver, a weapon that he alone of all those present possessed.

"The guard has not seen the foreign devil or surely they would have arrested him," he cried, in the awed silence that followed his shot. "Nor did they close the gate, for they would not dare without my orders, and I gave none. Nor could one man, not even a foreign devil, close the gate unaided, since it often has been tried and they have proved too heavy. Only by magic could he have done this thing, and by magic must he have blinded the eyes of the soldiers so that they did not see him pass them into the city. But your priests have magic as well as the foreigners, and by means of it he may be discovered. Let us then again close the gate that he may not escape, and search for him in every quarter of the city. When he is found let his head promptly be cut off, before he has time again to use his magic. Thus shall the city be purified and the wrath of the rain-god be appeased. Protect the empire! Exterminate foreigners!"

With this rallying-cry of the Great Swords, Jo led the way across the enclosed space separating the inner from the outer gate, past the guard-house, where his soldiers spent their waking hours in gambling with long, slim Chinese cards and piles of beans, and on into the narrow streets of the city. There he was so active in the search that was maintained, until stopped by darkness, that he gained a notable reputation as a hater of foreigners. Thus by his

prompt action were Rob's enemies so completely thrown off his track that not once was his real hiding-place approached or even suspected.

In the mean time he, intensely wearied by hours of confinement in that hot, dusty loft, grew vastly impatient of inaction. He was hungry and parched with thirst; no sound penetrated his prison, nor any ray of light. He had no idea of the passage of time, and imagined it to be much later in the night than it really was, when he was startled by a sharp "Hist!" that seemed to come from the top of the ladder.

Too wary to answer it, he only listened, with senses all alert, for something further. Then came a whispered "Rob," and he knew that his only friend in that part of the world was at hand.

"Crawl here on your hands and knees," whispered Jo. "Don't let your boots touch the floor, for the guards below are wide awake and listening to every sound. That's right. Now put on these felt boots. Leave your own behind, and follow me without a word."

Rob obeyed these instructions in all but one thing. His boots were of heavy English leather, lacing high on his ankles, and had been procured in Hankow. They were very comfortable as well as durable, and he could not bear the thought of exchanging them for cloth shoes with felt soles, especially in view of the amount of walking ahead of him if he made good his escape. So, though he put on the pair provided by Jo, he tied the others about his neck, and, thus equipped, noiselessly followed his

friend down the ladder to the room below. From this room a narrow doorway opened on the broad parapet of the city wall. Towards this door they were making their cautious way, when suddenly the hastily tied strings of Rob's heavy boots gave way, and they fell to the stone floor with a clatter that awoke the echoes.

Our lad uttered an exclamation of dismay as he groped about the floor to recover his lost treasures; but it was drowned in a tumult of shouts from below. At the same time a scuffling of feet on the stairway proved that the alarmed guard were on their way to investigate.

Jo, knowing nothing of the boots, could not imagine what had happened, and called from the doorway that he already had reached:

"Never mind anything! Come on, quick, for your life!"

But Rob, having found one boot, was determined to have the other, for which he still was feeling over a wide area of floor space. At length his fingers touched it; but as he triumphantly rose to his feet a dark, heavily breathing form, brandishing some sort of a weapon, confronted him. The next instant he had sent the overzealous guard reeling backward with a swinging blow from the heavy boot just recovered, that took him full in the face. With a yell of combined pain and fright, the soldier pitched down the narrow stairway, carrying with him the comrades who were close at his heels. Before the confused heap could disentangle itself, our

lads had fled through the doorway and were speeding like shadows along the top of the lofty wall.

As they ran they heard behind them a shrill screaming and a furious beating of gongs. Then from the tall drum-tower in the centre of the city came a deep, booming sound that could be heard for miles. The great drum that is only sounded in times of public peril was arousing the citizens and sending them swarming from their houses. Torches appeared not only in the streets but on the wall behind our flying lads. Then, to Rob's dismay, others began to gleam in front of them. To be sure, these still were a long distance away, but they gave certain evidence that flight in that direction must come to a speedy end.

"What is the use of running any farther?" asked Rob. "We'll only fall in with that torch-light procession all the sooner. Seems to me we might as well stop where we are and see about getting down off this perch."

"There's only one place to get down," answered Jo, "and it still is ahead of us. Run faster! We've got to reach it first."

So the fugitives put on an added burst of speed, though to Rob it seemed that they were only rushing directly into the arms of the advancing torch-bearers.

Suddenly Jo exclaimed, breathlessly, "Here's the place!" and then, to Rob's dismay, he took a flying leap off the parapet into the gulf of impenetrable blackness lying on the outer side of the wall.

For a moment the young American turned sick with the thought that, despairing of ultimate escape, his comrade had chosen death by suicide, and now lay lifeless at the foot of the lofty battlement.

Then came the familiar voice rising from some unknown depth, and calling on him to follow.

"Jump, Rob!" it cried; "you'll land all right, the same as I have."

Even with this assurance our lad hesitated to leap into the darkness. He knew that the wall was at least fifty feet high. There was at its bottom no moat filled with water, into which one might launch himself with safety. "Nor is there any pile of feather-beds, that I know of," he thought, grimly.

From both sides lines of torches were steadily advancing, while up from the city rose a tumult of angry voices. Only in the outside blackness that already had engulfed his friend was there the slightest promise of escape.

"I suppose there's nothing else to be done," he muttered, setting his teeth and bracing himself for the effort. "So, here goes!"

With this he sprang out into space and instantly vanished.

When, a minute later, the advancing lines of torch-bearers came together at that very point, they were bewildered and frightened by the absolute disappearance of those whom they had thought to be so surely within their grasp.

Certainly the magic of the foreign devils was stronger than their priests had led them to believe.

CHAPTER XVIII

A SUPPER OF SACRED EELS

The great plain of northern China is composed of alluvial matter extending to an unknown depth, reddish-yellow in color, and possessed of wonderful fertility. When wet it packs closely; and later, under the influence of a hot sun, it bakes like clay. During seasons of drought it pulverizes to an almost impalpable dust that is blown by fierce winds into ridges and heaps like snow-drifts. These are piled high against obstructing walls, so that sometimes buildings standing in exposed situations are completely buried beneath them. Such a drift of fine sand had formed in an angle of the city wall, along which our lads fled; and Chinese Jo, knowing of it, had selected this as a point for escape.

Thus, when Rob, with many misgivings, leaped into unknown blackness, he had not dropped more than twenty feet when he struck a steep slope of soft material down which he slid with great velocity amid a smother of choking dust. The next thing he knew, Jo was pulling him to his feet, and bidding him make haste to get away before their mode of escape should be discovered by the torch-bearers, who now swarmed on the wall above them.

So the lads ran, with Jo acting as guide, across cropless fields, climbing over useless dikes, and stumbling through dry ditches, until a black mass, dimly outlined against the sky, rose before them. As they drew near, this resolved itself into a clump of trees, which, from experience already gained in China, Rob knew must be a sacred grove. It was, in fact, the very grove from which the frantic rain-dancers had streamed in pursuit of him a few hours earlier. Now it was silent and deserted, even the ancient temple of the rain-god, standing in its centre, being empty of priests or worshippers.

Finding the door of this temple open, and hearing no sound within, the fugitives made a cautious entry into the sacred precincts. Here their attention was attracted by a faint glow coming from a heap of embers on an altar that stood before a gigantic image of the rain-god himself.

While endeavoring to get a closer view of the idol, Rob stumbled and pitched forward, thrusting his outstretched hands into an invisible but shallow tank of water. He uttered a yell of affright as he withdrew them and sprang back. "It's a nest of snakes!" he cried—"slimy, wriggling snakes!"

"Hush!" admonished Jo, listening intently; but there was no sound, save of a slight splashing in the as yet unseen water.

"If there were any priests here your racket certainly would have roused them," he said. "But, as nobody seems to be stirring, I expect we've got the

"THE FUGITIVES MADE A CAUTIOUS ENTRY INTO THE SACRED PRECINCTS"

place to ourselves. Close the door while I make a light, so that we can see where we are."

From the floor the speaker gathered a few bits of unburned joss-paper that he laid on the faintly glowing altar embers and blew into a blaze. Though this lasted but a moment, it served to show some half-burned candles standing behind the altar, one of which Jo lighted from the expiring flame.

By this faint light the lads discovered a number of crude figures of men and beasts ranged on either side of the rain-god, while a pool of water glittered at their feet. In it squirmed a score or more of eels, emblems of the god, among which Rob had thrust his arms.

"There are your snakes," laughed the young Chinese, "and with them plenty of water to drink, if you are thirsty."

"Goodness knows! I'm thirsty enough, and stuffed full of dust besides, but I wouldn't drink that water, with those things in it, not if I was dying of thirst."

"I would, then," replied Jo, who was too thoroughly Chinese to be fastidious; and, to prove his words, he scooped a handful of the water to his lips.

"It isn't very good water," he acknowledged; "but perhaps we can find some that is better where this came from."

A short search revealed a well just back of the temple, and from it, by means of a section of hollow bamboo attached to a long cord, they drew a plentiful supply of water that was much purer than that

in the tank, and was not visibly contaminated by eels, snakes, or any other unpleasant creatures.

"My! what a blessed thing water is!" exclaimed Rob, after a long pull at the bamboo bucket. "I don't wonder that the people of a burned-up country like this pray to a rain-god. Now, if only we had something to eat we'd be well fixed to move on."

"That's easy," replied Jo, reaching into the tank and drawing forth a large, squirming eel as he spoke.

"Eat a snake!" cried Rob, in a disgusted tone. "Not much! I won't!"

Jo smiled as he cut off the eel's head and proceeded to skin its still wriggling body, which he divided into short sections. Wrapping each of these in green bamboo leaves that he procured from a clump of the giant grass growing beside the well, he buried them in the hot sand of the altar, and raked over them a lot of glowing coals.

While he did this, Rob, with the aid of a lighted candle was examining the strange figures that occupied the interior of the temple. All at once, from somewhere behind the great idol, he called out, "Look here, Jo! He's hollow!"

Going to see what was meant, the young Chinese found his friend holding the candle above his head and pointing to a small door, standing slightly ajar, in the back of the image. It was so perfectly fitted that, had it been closed, no trace of an opening could have been discovered.

Climbing to the place, they easily opened the door, and through the aperture thus disclosed crawled into

the very body of the rain-god. They found themselves in a space large enough for them to stand up or to lie in at full length, but filled with a confused litter of garments, masks, banners, and other paraphernalia of the priestly trade.

"It's the biggest kind of a find," said Jo, evidently much excited over this discovery, "and it gives me an idea; but I must eat before explaining, so let us go to tiffin."

The cooked eel, which Rob still insisted was nothing more nor less than a snake, looked and smelled so good that the latter's desperate hunger finally persuaded him to taste a morsel. Then he took another, and a few minutes later, gazing thoughtfully at a small heap of well-cleaned bones, he asked Jo if he didn't think they might cook a few more eels while they were about it. An hour later he declared that he had eaten one of the best meals of his life, and was altogether too well content with their present situation to think of travelling any farther that night.

Jo readily agreed that they should spend a few hours where they were, as he wanted time to think out a plan of escape, and believed that for the present this temple was as safe a place as they were likely to find. So, while they removed all traces of their presence, Rob arranged the priestly vestments they had found inside the rain-god into a sort of a bed, and a little later, lying on this, each of the lads gave the other an account of his adventures since they had parted in far-away America. Rob's story we know,

as we do that of Jo up to the time of his commitment to prison in New York, charged with being a Chinese laundry-worker who had illegally entered the United States.

"I was kept there two weeks," he now said, "and treated worse than a dog all the time. They would not allow me to write or telegraph to you or any of my friends, and finally carried me off at night in a prison-van, together with a dozen coolies gathered from different parts of the country, who hated me because I had cut off my queue. After that we travelled handcuffed together, two and two, in a crowded immigrant-car, to San Francisco, where we were locked up in a filthy shed until a steamer was ready to sail. On our journey to that point we got very little to eat, but what we had was fairly good. The food given us in the shed was bad, but what we got on the steamer, where we were put in the hold, without being allowed to go on deck during the whole voyage, was simply rotten.

"The ship was under contract to deliver us at Shanghai; but when she anchored off Woo-Sung and they began to transfer us into a launch that would take us to the city, fourteen miles farther up the river, we were in such a horrible condition that the other passengers objected to having us on board. So we were set ashore at Woo-Sung and told we might walk the rest of the way.

"I was so sick and weak that, after we had walked a few miles, I gave out and laid down by the roadside. There, I suppose, I should have frozen to

death, for it was bitter cold, winter weather, if a farmer had not found me and taken me to his house. My father afterwards made him a rich man for it. He fed, clothed, and kept me until I could get word to some friends in Shanghai, after which, of course, I was all right.

"Finding that my father had been transferred to Pao-Ting-Fu—between here and Pekin, you know—I went there; and when he heard how I had been treated, he was so angry that he swore he'd do everything in his power to drive foreigners out of China. He did drive a good many from his own district, especially railroad people; but when the Great Swords began killing them, he drew the line and said that that was going too far. One day a Boxer army came along with a lot of missionaries, whom they proposed to burn to death in the city temple. My father told them they must give up their prisoners to him, and when they refused he ordered out his own soldiers, killed a lot of the Boxers, rescued the missionaries, and sent them under guard to the coast. For that he was recalled to Pekin, and Mandarin Ting Yuan was put in his place. Last week that man turned over fifteen missionary people, some of them women and little children, to be tortured and put to death by the Boxers of Pao-Ting-Fu."

"But what were you doing all this time?" asked Rob, his face paling at thought of these horrors.

"I had obtained a commission as captain of imperial troops, and was sent down here, where I have been ever since."

"You haven't seen any missionaries killed, have you?" demanded Rob, anxiously.

"No, and I don't think I should have, without trying to save them, in spite of the way I was treated in America. But I received orders from Pekin only yesterday not to oppose the Boxers in any way, no matter what they did. I was up in that watch-tower wondering what I ought to do if any missionaries should come this way, when I saw the rain-dancers chasing you. Of course, I didn't recognize you; but the moment I discovered you were a foreigner I knew that I couldn't stand by and see you killed without making an effort to prevent it."

"Didn't you know who I was until we stood together on the watch-tower?" asked Rob, curiously.

"No. I had not time for a good look at you until that moment. Even then I couldn't at first believe it really was you; it seemed so utterly impossible that you could be in China."

"What do you propose to do now?"

"Stay with you until I get you to a place of safety."

"But you will lose your position in the army if you leave your post."

"Yes."

"And perhaps be shot as a deserter."

"Quite so."

"Aren't you almost certain to be killed if you are found in company with a foreigner whom you are aiding to escape?"

"Yes."

"And you are willing to risk your life, besides throwing away your career, for the sake of one of the very people who treated you so shamefully when you were in America?"

"It is a saying of the ancients," replied Jo, "that friendship shines among the brightest jewels in the ring of life; also, that life without friendship is as a barren fruit tree, and that for a true friendship life itself is not too high a price to pay. Therefore, may I not risk, and gladly, a life of little value, to save that of one who, though he is of a people who ill-treated me, is also the best friend I have in all the world? Did he not, even when we were strangers, fight to save me from abuse? and can I do less for him now that we are friends? So it is foolish for you to ask questions, since it is assured that until I can leave you in a place of safety your enemies are my enemies, your friends are my friends, and wherever you go there go I also."

"Then," said Rob, who was greatly affected by these words, "let us stay right where we are until morning, for I want to think over all you have told me."

After this the lads did not talk any more, but a few minutes later were sound asleep inside the very rain-god to which one of them would have been sacrificed had he been caught in that vicinity a few hours earlier.

CHAPTER XIX

AN EXHIBITION OF THE RAIN-GOD'S ANGER

MONGOLIANS, including Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans, can get along with less sleep than any other of the world's people; and Jo, in spite of having travelled and learned to speak English, still was a true Mongolian. Therefore, he awoke quite refreshed after two hours of sleep, and, moving with the utmost caution, so as not to arouse Rob, he left their strange hiding-place, carefully closing and fastening its door behind him. Then he swiftly made his way back to the city, where he skirted its wall to the farther side, and forced an entrance through a now dry culvert or water-gate. After showing himself at the several guard-houses, that, if necessary, he afterwards might be able to prove his presence in the city that night, he went to his own quarters, where he made preparations for a journey. He ordered a horse to be brought, saddled, and ready for travel, and sent for his lieutenant, a man who, though older than he, was possessed of so little influence as still to be under the orders of his junior.

To this officer Jo turned over command of the guard, telling him that he considered the escape of the foreign devil, who had eluded them by the exer-

cise of magic arts, to be an event of such grave importance that he was about to report it in person at Pao-Ting-Fu, and possibly to Pekin itself. The young captain named these places in order to throw possible pursuit off the scent, for he had decided to carry Rob in exactly the opposite direction, or back over the way he had come, to Hankow. Having thus arranged affairs to his satisfaction, he set forth at sunrise, riding by way of the very gate through which Rob had made so hasty an entrance the day before.

Jo was ready to leave the city a full hour earlier than this, and wanted to do so; but even greater authority than his would be insufficient to open the gates of any Chinese city before sunrise, and so he was forced to await that hour.

Once in the open he rode with all speed, hoping to reach the temple of the rain-god before any worshippers should appear, and while Rob still slept. In this, however, he was disappointed, for, though he reached the temple in advance of the priests who served it, and who, having joined in the pursuit of the foreigner, had been forced to spend the night in the city, he was dismayed to find a certain number of worshippers kotowing and burning incense before the great image. These were wretched farmers from the near-by country, who, having no work to do in their burned-up fields, and with death from starvation staring them in the face, had come in desperation to the only source they knew of from which aid might be asked.

Another company of these people, who reached the place at the same time with Jo, were provided with fire-crackers, with which they proposed to arouse the god's attention if he should happen to be asleep. A bunch was exploded as soon as they entered the temple, and to their awed delight the efficacy of this proceeding was immediately apparent, for the image of the rain-god trembled, and a muffled sound came from its interior. Evidently the god, who alone was all-powerful in this emergency, had been asleep, but now was awaking to the gravity of the situation. With heads in the dust, the worshippers humbly bowed before his image and implored his aid. Loudest of them all was the young officer who had forced a way to the very front of the assemblage.

His prayer was in Chinese, of the mandarin dialect, which no one present, except he, understood. Strange as it was to the ears of his fellow-worshippers, it also contained words of another tongue still stranger, that their ignorance did not permit them to recognize. Thus Jo was able to call out, under guise of a prayer, and undetected:

"It's all right, Rob. I am here, and we are safe so long as you keep quiet."

At this point some one at the back of the temple uttered a loud cry, at which all the bowed heads were raised. Jo looked up with the others, and, to his dismay, saw the great right arm of the god slowly lifting as though to impose silence upon those who persisted in annoying him with their unwelcome clamor. At this phenomenon the super-

stitious spectators gazed in breathless suspense, and when the arm suddenly dropped back into its former position they sprang to their feet.

They were not so much frightened as they were awed; for in China it has often happened that the gods have seemed to enter certain of their own earthly images, and by well-understood movements or sounds have caused these to express their will to the people. It was reported that the very image of the rain-god now under observation had been thus favored, and upon previous occasions of grave importance had made motions of the arms or head that only the priests could interpret. So the people now waited in terrified but eager expectation.

Nor were they disappointed; for no sooner had the arm dropped than the head of the image, which was big enough to hold a man, was seen to be in motion. It certainly was bending forward and assuming an attitude benign, but so terrifying that the awe-stricken spectators instinctively pressed backward. As they gazed with dilated eyes and quaking souls the great head was bowed farther and farther forward, until suddenly, with a convulsive movement, it was seen to part from its supporting shoulders and leap into the air.

The crash with which that vast mass of painted and gilded clay struck the stone pavement, where it was shattered into a thousand fragments, was echoed by shrieks of terror as the dismayed beholders of this dire calamity plunged in headlong flight from the temple. Never before in all the annals of

priesthood had been recorded a manifestation of godly anger so frightful and so unmistakable. From this time on, that particular temple of the rain-god was a place accursed and to be shunned; for if after this warning any person should enter it, he would be crushed to death beneath the body of the idol, which surely would fall on him.

So the people fled, spreading far and wide the dreadful news, and only one among them dared return to the temple and brave the rain-god's anger. This one, of course, was Jo, who, startled and alarmed by what had taken place, had fled with the others. But he had paused while still within the shelter of the grove, and, flinging himself to the ground for concealment, had allowed the others to pass on without him. When all had disappeared he arose and returned to the temple. As he reentered its dust-clouded doorway he was confronted by a spectacle at once so amazing and so absurd that for an instant he gazed at it bewildered. Then he burst into almost uncontrollable laughter.

The image of the rain-god already had acquired a new head, dishevelled and dust-covered, to be sure, but one endowed with speech as well as with motion, and which, when Jo first saw it, was violently coughing.

"I say, Jo Lee," called out a husky voice from this new feature of the giant image, "I think it was a mean trick to go off and leave me shut up in that beastly place. I mighty near smothered in there, and I don't suppose I ever would have got out if

an earthquake or something hadn't happened. It almost shook down the whole house, and it knocked the roof off as it was, nearly burying me in falling plaster besides."

"It isn't a house," explained Jo, laughing hysterically in spite of his habitual Chinese self-control. "It's the image of a god. Don't you remember crawling into it last night? I don't know how its head happened to tumble off, but I expect you did it yourself. And now you have managed to give it a new one, a hundred times more useful but not half so good looking. I never in all my life saw anything so funny, and if you only could see yourself, you'd laugh, too."

"Maybe I would," replied Rob, with a tone of injured dignity; "but if you were as battered and choked as I am, you wouldn't laugh—I know that much. Of course, I remember now all about this thing being a god, only I was so confused when I woke up that I forgot all about where I was. I only knew that there had been an explosion of some kind, and that I should smother if I didn't get out. I could see a little light up above and tried to climb to it by some ropes that I found dangling. Two of them gave way slowly, while a third was so rotten that it gave way mighty sudden. Then came the earthquake and an avalanche of mud that nearly buried me; but I managed somehow to climb on top of it, and here I am. Now I want to get down and out, for I don't like the place."

"All right. Drop down inside, and I will open the door."

Accepting this advice, Rob withdrew the head that had looked so absurdly small on top of that great image, and in another minute slid out of the open doorway far below, in company with a quantity of débris.

"Whew!" he gasped. "That was a sure enough dust-bath. Now let us get outside and into an atmosphere that isn't quite so thick with mud."

"Wouldn't you rather remain in here and live than go out and meet a certain death?" asked Jo, quietly.

"Of course; but, even so, we can't always stay shut up in this old rat-trap."

"No, but it will be safer to leave at night, and also we have much to do before we shall be ready."

"Have we?" asked Rob. "What, for instance?"

"It is my plan that you should travel as a priest under a vow of silence, until we reach Hankow, while I go as your servant. If it is agreed, then must your head be shaved in priestly fashion, your skin must be stained a darker color, and we must obtain garments suitable."

"That's all right, so far as the priest business is concerned, if you think I can act the character; but you are way off when you talk about going to Hankow, for I am not bound in that direction. You see, I have just come from there and am on my way to Pekin."

"But the road to Pekin is filled with danger."

"So is the road to Hankow. I ought to know, for I have come over it, and I am certain, from the posters I saw displayed in every town, that Ho-nan is a Boxer province by this time. Besides, Hankow is twice as far away as Pekin."

"It is reported that all foreigners in Pekin have been killed."

"Including members of the legations?"

"So it is said."

"Well, then, the report can't be true. In the first place, the foreign ministers would have called in troops of their own countries for protection upon the first intimation of danger. In the second place, to kill a foreign minister is to declare war against that minister's country; and I don't believe that even the Chinese government is so foolish as to declare war against the whole world. At the same time, if there is to be any fighting I want to be where I can see it, or at least know about it, which is another reason for going to Pekin. Besides, I must go there, for it is in Pekin that I am to get news of my mother and father. Only think, I don't even know for certain if they are alive. If you didn't know that about your family, wouldn't you want to go where you could find out?"

Jo admitted that he would.

"By-the-way," continued Rob, "speaking of families, I thought you had a wife. Where is she? Are you going to take her with us to Pekin? Wasn't she awfully glad to see you when you got back from America?"

For the second time that day the young Chinese laughed. "Yes," he replied, "I have a wife. I think she is in Canton, for that is where my father left her when he came north. No, I am not going to take her to Pekin. No, she was not glad to see me when I came back from America, for she has not yet seen me."

"If I had only known your wife was in Canton, and where to find her, I should have called," said Rob, soberly.

The idea thus presented was so absurd that Jo laughed again as at a good joke, for in China no man ever calls on the wife of another.

CHAPTER XX

ROB MAKES A STARTLING DISCOVERY

FINDING Rob determined to go to Pekin, Jo yielded, though with many misgivings, and at once began preparations for their dangerous journey. Thanks to the general terror inspired by the fall of the rain-god's head, the lads were secure from interruption so long as they remained in the temple. Having thought over his plan the evening before, Jo had brought with him from the city a number of things necessary to carrying it out. Among them were shears and a razor, with which he removed every trace of hair from Rob's head, after the fashion of the lamas or priests of Buddha. Then his whole body, from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet, was tinted yellow with a dye that would have to wear off, since it never could be washed away. He was further disguised in priestly robes of yellow, and, worst of all, was finally obliged to give up his cherished boots in favor of sandals, which of all forms of foot-wear he most despised. For head-covering he was given a priest's huge straw hat, as large as a small umbrella.

As neither of the lads was sufficiently expert in "making up" features to change Rob's wide-open

eyes into oblique slits, he submitted to the wearing of big, round, shell - rimmed, smoked - glass spectacles, found among the temple properties. Another thing there obtained was an inscribed iron tablet that had hung upon the breast of the rain-god, and to carry this to Pekin was to be the ostensible reason for their journey in that direction. Also the silence with which Rob was to conceal his ignorance of the northern dialect was to be explained as being imposed by a vow not to speak a word, even in prayer, until he had safely deposited that holy tablet in the great Pekin temple of the rain-god. The only bit of property formerly belonging to him that he was allowed to retain was his revolver, which, together with a belt full of cartridges, was concealed beneath his robe.

As their changed plan was to carry them in the very direction Jo had announced his intention of taking before leaving the city, he decided to maintain his character as an officer of imperial troops, escorting the priest, rather than to assume that of a servant, as he at first had proposed. Thus he would be able to ride horseback, carry weapons in plain sight, and disburse money for many comforts that a priest's servant could not obtain.

With these preparations completed, our lads waited impatiently for darkness, and no sooner had it descended than they set forth, exercising great caution in leaving the temple grove, but after that travelling as briskly as Jo could walk. The latter insisted that Rob, being unused to sandals, should

ride his pony, while he proceeded on foot until they could beg, borrow, steal, or buy another.

They had gone but a few li, or Chinese miles, each of which equals about one-third of an English mile, when they heard the steady beat of a horse's hoofs, accompanied by a grinding noise as of machinery. After listening until he located the sound as coming from a field at one side of the road, Jo crept softly in that direction. He quickly discovered a horse, attached to a long, wooden beam, travelling in a monotonous circle, and thus lifting an endless chain of earthen jars full of water from a deep well. Each, as it came to the surface, emptied itself into an irrigating ditch, and then went down to be refilled. All this was simple enough, and did not particularly interest Jo, for he had seen hundreds of just such irrigating plants in operation all over the great plain. Heretofore, however, a prominent feature of the outfit had been the man or boy who, armed with a bamboo whip, had kept the horse awake and at work; but here no human figure was to be distinguished. At the same time, there was a sound of blows, delivered at regular intervals, each of which inspired the horse to fresh exertion. Finally, becoming convinced that, in spite of the blows, there was no person in the vicinity, Jo went closer to determine their origin. At the machine he found working a scheme so practical, simple, and ingenious as to arouse his admiration—a section of stiff but springy bamboo, and a stout cord fixed on the beam to which the horse was attached. That was all.

Three revolutions of the beam wound up the cord and sprung back the bamboo. At the beginning of the fourth revolution the cord suddenly was slackened, and the liberated bamboo struck the horse a blow across the hind quarters. Nor did these blows always descend at the same point of the circle or at regular intervals, since their frequency depended upon the speed of the horse, who, being blindfolded, was thus made to believe that he was at the mercy of some constantly alert though invisible person.

So impressed was Jo with the ingenuity of this contrivance that he went back to persuade Rob to come and see it. The latter did so, though somewhat unwillingly, not caring to waste time over Chinese inventions just then; but when he had approached close enough to the horse to discern its markings, he exclaimed: "Hello! That's my pony! The very one I was riding yesterday when the rain-dancers got after me. And here he is, being made to work all night by an infernal machine. I never heard of anything so disgusting. Here! whoa, you beast! You have done the tread-mill act long enough, and now we'll put you to a better service."

Thus it happened that the very ingenuity of this inventor of perpetual motion, by which he gained a few hours of sleep, also caused him a heavy loss; for, had he been on hand, Jo would have bought the horse from him at his own price, while Rob would not have appeared on the scene at all.

As no saddle could be found near the tread-mill, Jo was forced to ride bareback until they reached

a town where one could be purchased. At this same town they slept a few hours, during which their horses also rested and were liberally fed on beans and chopped bamboo grass. Our young travellers were again on the road by sunrise, and after this they pushed ahead with all speed for the greater part of a week, riding early and late, but taking long rests in the middle of each day.

Although as a priest and an officer of imperial troops they were suffered to pass, without delay, many points at which any other class of travellers would have been detained for rigorous examination, they met with ever-increasing evidences of trouble as they advanced northward. Everywhere they came across dead bodies, ruined buildings, and occasionally whole villages swept by fire. Everywhere people gazed on them with suspicion or fled at their coming. They heard of the great Boxer army gathering near Pekin, and encountered numerous small bodies of armed men hastening to swell its ranks. Also they came into constant contact with prowling bands of starving peasantry. Several times, in order to escape from the latter, our lads joined themselves to one or another of the Boxer companies, and remained with it until the immediate danger was passed. Then, on the plea of urgent haste, they would push ahead.

Finally, when thus travelling with a company who would have hacked them to bits had they discovered their identity, they crossed the Hu-Tho-ho (the river that goes where it pleases) and approached

the walled city of Cheng-Ting-Fu. In this city stands a Roman Catholic cathedral, built of stone, and having a massive square tower that looms like a great fortress above the low roofs of the surrounding temples and native dwellings.

In this stronghold were many foreign refugees, priests, nuns, and Belgian engineers who had been engaged on the railway running south from Pekin; also several American missionaries who, wounded and plundered of everything, had gained this asylum barely in time to save their lives.

For more than a month the great gate of Cheng-Ting-Fu had been kept closed to all companies of friends and foes alike, only a little wicket being occasionally opened for the passage in or out of one or two persons at a time. In addition to this precaution, which was taken by the Chinese authorities of the city, the foreign refugees inside the cathedral were compelled to remain hidden behind its stout doors for fear lest their appearance on the streets should excite the local population to acts of violence. On the sandy plain beyond the city wall was a large and ever-changing encampment of Boxers thirsting for foreign blood, undisciplined soldiers, highwaymen, and outlaws of every description.

Upon reaching Cheng-Ting-Fu our lads, wearied by a day of continuous riding, felt that they could go no farther that night. In fact, there was no place for them to go to nearer than the city of Pao-Ting-Fu, a long day's journey away, so bare had this section of country been swept of inhabitants.

At the same time, they regarded with dismay the prospect of spending a night amid the horrors and dangers of the lawless outside camp, where robbery and murder were committed unchecked and unpunished at all hours of day and night.

"We must try to get inside the wall," said Jo, in a low tone, "for if we stay out here it is pretty certain that neither of us will live to see another sunrise."

With this they turned their jaded ponies towards the city gate and rode to it, followed at a short distance by a small crowd of pig-tailed cut-throats, who only awaited a favorable opportunity for making a rush upon them. So desperately hungry were these wretches that they joyfully would have killed even a priest and an imperial officer for sake of the meagre food-supply represented by the animals they rode.

At the gate Jo's demand for admittance was at first received with stout refusal by a guard who gazed carelessly at the travellers from behind a small, heavily barred opening. Fortunately, Jo still had money with him, and a handful of silver, temptingly displayed, finally unclosed the coveted entrance. As the wicket opened, the starving rabble, seeing their prey about to escape them, made their threatened rush; but Jo, leaping to the ground and calling on Rob to get the horses through the gate, held them at bay with his revolver. Only one minute was necessary, for the ponies, as though aware of their danger, scrambled

through the narrow wicket like cats. Rob followed close at their heels; Jo, firing one shot over the heads of the crowd for effect, sprang after him, and the gate was slammed shut, not again to be opened that night.

Even now the officer of the guard, who had yielded to a silver influence, dared not give the strangers the freedom of the city; but, under threat of again being thrust outside, compelled their promise to spend the night in a temple to which he would conduct them, without attempting to leave it before morning. Also, they must not hold communication with a soul outside the temple walls, and they must depart from the city at sunrise.

When Jo had given this promise in words, and Rob had assented to it by nodding his priestly head, they were conducted to the temple selected as their lodging under an escort of soldiers detailed to act as their guard during the night. On their way the travellers, thus cautiously welcomed, gazed curiously about them at the sights of the beleaguered city, and especially at the grim walls of the great cathedral uplifted above its houses. Especially was Rob affected by this ecclesiastical fortress, which at that very moment was giving safe shelter to persons of his own race.

As they passed it he stared hard at a row of narrow windows, with the hope of seeing an American face, but none presented itself until the last window was reached. In it was dimly outlined the form of a woman who turned upon the passers-by a face

expressive of hopeless weariness. She gave them one listless glance and then stepped from sight, but that fleeting view caused Rob Hinckley to utter a choking exclamation and to reel in his saddle until only a supreme effort saved him from falling. He had seen his mother.

CHAPTER XXI

THE REFUGEES OF CHENG-TING-FU

THE malady with which Dr. Mason Hinckley had lain critically ill at Wu-Hsing was of so strange a nature that, directly after the cablegram calling Rob to his supposed death-bed was sent, it took a surprising turn for the better. As he longed for a change of air and scene, and felt that with them a full recovery of health might be effected, he decided to resign his position at Wu-Hsing and, with his wife, travel as far as Nagasaki. There they would meet the steamer on which, as they had been notified by cable from America, Rob was coming to them, and the reunited family would spend together a delightful holiday on the lovely Japanese coast.

So they set forth full of hopeful anticipations, and travelled down the Si-Kiang to Hong-Kong, where they were so fortunate as to find the *China* on the point of sailing for San Francisco by way of Nagasaki. At Hong-Kong they told an acquaintance who assisted the invalid to a carriage that they were going to Japan to meet an American steamer; but in the confusion of the moment he understood them to say that they were going to

America, and so reported to Mr. Bishop, who, in turn, repeated the story to Rob a few weeks later.

In the mean time, the doctor and his wife journeyed to Nagasaki, the former so gaining strength with every mile of the voyage that upon reaching Japan he deemed himself to be practically a well man. Thus they were prepared to give Rob a most joyful surprise; but when, only three days after their own arrival, the *Occidental* steamed into Nagasaki harbor, they were met by the bitter disappointment of finding that their boy was not on board. From the purser, as well as from the gentleman who had taken Rob's cabin, they learned that somehow he had missed connection and had been left behind. After that the anxious parents waited in Nagasaki a month, boarding every incoming ship from the States, but without finding their boy or hearing a word from him. They had written to Hatton immediately upon their arrival, and finally from there came the cable message, "Rob, transport, Manila."

What could it mean? Why had their boy gone to Manila? Where would he go from there? Where was he now? How in the world did he happen to be on board a transport? Had he enlisted in the army? These and a thousand other equally puzzling questions presented themselves, but no one of them was accompanied by an answer. They had received news of the murder of missionaries at Wu-Hsing. Could Rob have reached there in time to become involved in the trouble? If so, was he alive or dead? They no longer could remain in

Japan, but must return to China where news might more readily be obtained. So they sailed for Shanghai, from which place they sent letters of inquiry to Manila, Wu-Hsing, Hong-Kong, and Canton.

Then ensued another month of anxious waiting, during which Dr. Hinckley, now restored to perfect health, received from Pekin a fine offer to become missionary medical director for the province of Shan-Si. It was an offer that he gladly would have accepted but for his uncertainty concerning Rob.

At length came a letter from Canton informing the anxious parents that their boy had been there a month earlier, but almost immediately had joined an expedition that was to traverse the interior from that point to Pekin in the interests of an American railway syndicate.

Again did the puzzled parents ask each other questions concerning the erratic movements of their son that neither could answer. Finally, Dr. Hinckley said:

"It is useless to worry ourselves any more about the boy, since it is evident that he has passed entirely beyond our reach. He is in God's hands, and that there is some good reason for the apparent strangeness of his actions will sooner or later be made plain. Let us be thankful that he is alive and in the same country as ourselves. Also, we now can accept that offer from Pekin, where, as it seems, we are most likely to meet him."

So the bewildered but still hopeful parents took steamer from Shanghai to Tien-Tsin and rail from

there to China's capital, at that time a wonderland of mystery to the greater part of the outside world. From Pekin they travelled south to Cheng-Ting-Fu, which then was the extreme terminus of railway construction, and here Dr. Hinckley left his wife, while he should go on by horseback to Tai-Yuan, the capital of Shan-Si, and prepare their new home.

Then, almost without warning, came the terrible Boxer uprising, sweeping over the northern provinces with the fatal speed of a storm-driven prairie-fire. From every direction were heard reports of murder and outrage—some of them simple relations of actual happenings, others gross exaggerations based upon fact, and still others pure inventions, but all equally terrifying to the handful of foreigners within the walls of Cheng-Ting-Fu. A little later refugees, bearing evidence of the terrible sufferings through which they had passed, began to straggle in. Some told of the beheadings and burnings to death in Pao-Ting-Fu on the north, and others of the frightful tragedies enacted in Shan-Si on the west, by orders of the infamous governor, Yu-Hsien, credited with being the originator of the Great Sword Society, and who was the most vindictive hater of foreigners in all China. The Shan-Si refugees reported that one day in Tai-Yuan this monster personally superintended the beheading of forty-five foreigners, men, women, and little children, besides a much larger number of native Christians; and on hearing this, Mrs. Hinckley lost all hope of ever

again seeing the husband who had gone to prepare a home for her in that very city. Also, she mourned for her boy, who, if he had carried out his reported intention of traversing the interior provinces to Pekin, must have been overtaken by this same all-devouring storm of wrath.

Although the southern end of the railway as far as Pao-Ting-Fu was kept open by the Chinese for the transportation of their own troops, it was reported that everything north of that point, including the telegraph-line, had been destroyed. Thus Cheng-Ting-Fu, with closed gate and surrounded by enemies, was cut off from all news of the outside world. Only rumors drifted in, and these were of such a nature that the handful of refugees facing an almost certain death in the cathedral believed themselves to be the only foreigners left alive in northern China.

Such was the state of affairs on that evening of early summer when Mrs. Hinckley, hopelessly weary of life, happened to glance from one of the cathedral windows just as a yellow-robed priest was passing along the narrow street. She turned quickly away, for, of all Chinese, the priests had been most active in persecuting foreigners, and she never saw one without thinking that he might be the murderer of either her husband or son.

An hour later the "boy" who brought in her light supper of tea and toast laid something else on the tray beside it, and disappeared without having spoken. For a minute Mrs. Hinckley did not notice

the strange object, but finally it caught her eye, and she picked it up. It was a narrow strip about six inches long, cut from the dried leaf of a talipot palm, the material used instead of writing-paper in certain Buddhist temples. Characters traced on the smooth surface with a sharp stylus, afterwards are rubbed with lampblack, which brings them out in bold relief. In the present case, to Mrs. Hinckley's amazement, she found the strip of palm-leaf to be a letter written in English, and beginning, "My own dear mother!"

The poor woman uttered a stifled cry, and a blur so dimmed her eyes that for a moment she could read no more. Then it passed, and she eagerly scanned the following message, written on both sides of the slip:

"I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw you at the cathedral window. How did you get here? Where is father? I am the priest who rode past on horseback with a guard of soldiers. Am safe and on way to Pekin. They will not let me come to you, nor even leave this temple where I am spending the night under guard. I must go on at sunrise, when they will put us out of the city. Jo is with me. Perhaps I shall again pass window, so please stand in same place on chance. I will come back to you from Pekin quick as possible. Don't worry a single little bit about me, for I am all right. Your own loving Rob.

"Send an answer by the one who gives you this."

Over and over did the happy mother read this

message from the boy whom she had been mourning as dead, until she knew every word of it by heart.

Then, on a leaf torn from her journal, she wrote with lead-pencil an outpouring of love, joy, and anxiety such as only a mother situated as she was could write. She begged Rob to be careful, for her sake, and warned him of the danger of going to Pekin, though she added that if his father still were alive that city would be the most likely place in which to obtain news of him. She said she should remain near the window all night for fear of missing her boy when he again passed. Then the servant came for the untouched tea-tray, looked at her inquiringly, and she only had time to sign: "Ever your own devoted mother," fold the note, and slip it into his hand ere he again left the room.

The shock of seeing his mother in that dreadful place, when he had supposed her to be safe in America, was so great that Rob had been on the point of proclaiming his amazement aloud, when Jo, always keenly on the watch for some such slip on the part of the pretended priest, checked him.

"It is but a little more to go," he said in Chinese, so that all who heard might understand him, "and then the holy one shall find a place of rest. He is very weary," added Jo to the officer of the guard, "and his vow of silence sits heavy upon him."

"Yet he does not look so old," replied the officer.

"It is true that he is well preserved, and may give us the joy of his presence for some years to come; but mere looks cannot restore to age the lost

"HE WAS ABLE TO GAZE CALMLY AT HER WHEN THEY ONCE MORE WERE ESCORTED PAST THE CATHEDRAL"

strength of youth. I pray you, therefore, find for him a place of quietness, where he may have a season of rest undisturbed."

Thus it came about that a small building of the temple to which our lads were conducted was set apart for them, and orders were given that no other person should enter it that night.

When they were alone, and Rob had explained to Jo the cause of his excitement, he added: "And now I must go to her for a long talk."

It took Jo some time to persuade his friend of the impossibility of what he proposed, and that to attempt it would only endanger all their lives, including that of his mother.

"Then," said Rob, finally convinced, "I must write, and you must somehow manage to get the letter to her."

The letter was prepared with the only materials that the temple afforded, and by the liberal use of money Jo got it sent to its destination and had the answer brought back. After that, much as Rob hated to leave his mother behind, he had the sense to realize that she probably was safer in the cathedral of Cheng-Ting-Fu just then than she would be anywhere else in north China. Also, what she had written concerning the possibility of gaining news of his father in Pekin made him more than ever desirous of reaching that city.

Jo warned him against the danger of allowing any sign of recognition to escape him in case he again saw his mother; so he was able to gaze calm-

ly at her the next morning when they once more were escorted past the cathedral, and she stood at the same window watching eagerly for him to pass. She, too, realized the danger to him of any show of interest on the part of a foreigner; and no one could have guessed from their faces, as they exchanged farewell glances, that thus a mother and son, with a full knowledge of the perils besetting both, were parting, perhaps forever.

CHAPTER XXII

A CHARGE AND A RACE FOR LIFE

THERE is but one gateway to the walled city of Cheng-Ting-Fu, and this opens on the west. Consequently, it was on this side that most of the Boxer rabble, who longed for an opportunity to loot the valuable mission property within its walls, were gathered. Their object was to starve the stubborn city into submission, and they watched always for the opening of its gate in token of surrender. If our lads had been willing to leave their ponies in the city, they could have been let down from the wall on an opposite side and made good their escape on foot. This, however, they would not do, for without horses the long journey still before them, through a region swarming with footpads, was practically impossible. So they issued from the wicket, which instantly was closed behind them, sprang into their saddles, and turned northward, hoping to ride for some distance unnoticed in the shadow of the lofty wall.

But this hope was doomed to a quick disappointment, for almost instantly they were discovered, and a crowd of men were seen running so as to head them off.

"We've got to ride through them," said Rob, "and shoot down any one who tries to stop us. I will go first, and do you follow close. Don't fire a shot until my pistol is empty; then I'll drop behind and reload while you clear the way. It's our only show for life, Jo. Come on!"

With this Rob wheeled his pony and dashed at full speed straight at the swarming encampment, with Jo close at his heels. It was a glorious charge, that of two against a thousand, but it could not have lasted a minute had the latter been anything save a wretched rabble, unprovided with fire-arms and without leaders. As it was, they were scattered like chaff by the madly racing ponies, the few who attempted interference were shot down, and three minutes later our lads, still yelling with excitement, drove through the last of their enemies and found themselves safe on the open plain.

"After that experience I would undertake to ride through the whole Chinese army with twenty American cow-boys," boasted Rob, as he reined his panting steed down to a walk.

"Of course, it might be done," answered Jo, quietly, "only it would be well to consider that an army is made up of soldiers provided with guns, and that even a Chinese bullet sometimes finds its mark."

"I beg your pardon, old fellow! It was a mean thing to say," cried Rob, contritely. "I ought to be ashamed of myself, especially when I remember how splendidly one Chinese, by the name of Jo Lee,

rode through that howling mob only a few minutes ago. But Americans can't help bragging, you know, and I surely am an American."

"If they do brag," replied Jo, "it is because they have so much to brag of, while my poor country has so little."

"Your country has a history older than that of any other nation on earth," said Rob, consolingly; "and you invented more than half the things that go to making the civilization of the world, such as the compass, and printing, and gunpowder, and ever so many more; for I remember our history teacher telling us about them. He said the civilization that started in China thousands of years ago had been spreading westward from this country ever since: first over Asia, then over Europe, and finally over America. 'At length,' he said, 'the great wave of enlightenment has swept across the Pacific, and again is making itself felt on the coasts of Asia. Japan already is uplifted by the flood, and China, now at the lowest ebb of her fortunes, will soon feel the life-giving influence of the rising tide.'

"I remember it particularly," continued Rob, "because, of course, I always was interested in everything about China; but I never realized just what he meant until I came back and saw what a splendid country this has been and what a splendid country it could be again. Why, Mr. Bishop said that China's wealth of coal and iron alone is sufficient to make her one of the greatest nations of the world."

"I expect your teacher was right when he said that China was at the lowest point of her fortunes," remarked Jo. "I don't see how she could very well sink any lower, and she will stay down just so long as the Empress Dowager lives and rules the country. She hates foreigners, and is bitterly opposed to progress, reformers, and changes of any kind. It is certain that she is encouraging and helping on this Boxer uprising, for if she wanted to she could have it put down and stamped out within a week. I told you of my orders not to interfere with them, no matter what they did, and while we were charging through that encampment just now I caught sight of a Boxer banner on which was written: 'By Official Decree: Exterminate Foreigners.' They never would dare display such a flag if they didn't really have official backing, and in China to-day the only 'official' whose word is law is the Empress Dowager."

"I don't see how you found time to read what was on a flag," said Rob, "or even to notice it. I didn't see a thing except the crowd, that looked like so many wolves snarling at us, and especially those who tried to stop us. If it hadn't been for our pistols they would have got us sure. I only hope we didn't kill any of them."

"Why?" asked Jo. "They were trying to kill us, and if we don't look out," he added, sharply, "they will do it yet."

Thus saying, he pointed over his shoulder to a rapidly advancing cloud of dust, moving from the direction of the Boxer encampment they had so

recently charged. The dust-cloud hung above a road that ran parallel to the direction they were taking. In fact, it was the road over which they now would be riding had the bare fields that they had chosen instead been covered with their usual crops. That they could not see the horsemen raising the dust was because the highway along which the latter were moving was a "low-way," worn by generations of travel, scoured by floods in winter and swept by the strong winds of summer until it was many feet below the level of the adjoining land.

Jo was convinced that the dust-cloud was raised by horsemen, because of its volume and its rapid advance. That they were enemies was almost certain, since they came from the direction of the angry encampment; and he believed them to be endeavoring to cut off Rob and himself, because otherwise they, too, would be riding across the open fields instead of ploughing through the smothering dust of the gully-like road.

Our lads had allowed their ponies to walk for the last mile or so, but now they urged them forward at a brisk "lope," for they were determined that no man nor body of men from that encampment should get in advance of them if they could help it. Every few seconds one or the other of them glanced over his shoulder at the dust-cloud, to see if they were gaining on it, and finally Rob uttered a shout of: "Here they come, helter-skelter, and enough of them to eat us alive if they catch us! Now we've

got to make time. Great Scott! They've got guns, too!"

The horsemen, having discovered that their object was suspected and that their prey was likely to escape, had left the sunken road and now were streaming across the fields in open and hot pursuit. Also, just as Rob glanced back, one of them fired a shot, though where the bullet went to, no one knows. Certainly, it did no harm to our friends, but the shot itself filled them with dismay, as it showed their present pursuers to be better armed than any of the vagrant bands they yet had encountered.

"I believe they are imperial cavalry!" exclaimed Jo. "Yes, I am sure of it," he added, a moment later, as he detected a triangular, yellow pennon fluttering from a lance borne by one of the pursuing horsemen. "They must have been sent out from the city and must have some reason for suspecting us. I wonder if it has become known that we communicated with your mother? That would be a sufficient cause for beheading us both if we are caught, so we must not be."

"I won't be!" declared Rob, clinching his teeth and urging his pony to greater effort. "I'll die first!"

On they swept, mile after mile, over the parched land and under a blazing sun. How they longed for rest and water and shade and coolness; but none of those things were for them so long as that deadly pursuit was kept up. It did not seem to

gain on them, but neither did it lose ground. To be sure, some of the cavalry-men straggled, so that they came on in a long, irregular line, but a group of half a dozen leaders kept well together.

A river came into view, and Rob wondered what would happen when they reached it. He began to think he didn't much care so long as he could get a drink of its water. All at once he almost jumped from his saddle, for from beyond the river came a sound both startling and familiar, such as he had not heard since leaving America. At Cheng-Ting-Fu he had seen the torn-up track of the recently constructed railway, but he had forgotten it, as he also had the fact that a portion of it, somewhere to the northward, still was in working order. Thus, for a moment, he could hardly believe to be real the sound that came echoing across the Hsuho. It was the sharp whistle of a locomotive calling for brakes, and as our lads plunged down the steep river-bank they saw a train of open "gondolas" slowly backing towards the stream on the opposite side. They also saw a crowd of people evidently awaiting its coming.

For half a mile they forced their nearly spent ponies across the sand and gravel of the dry river-bottom. Then appeared a channel so shallow as easily to be forded. Directly from this rose the steep farther bank, and in an effort to climb it Rob's exhausted steed fell and rolled to the bottom, while Jo's pony refused even to attempt the ascent.

Rob disentangled himself from the struggling

beast, and gained his feet, bruised but sound in limb. As he stood up a yell of triumph came from across the narrow water, and a quick glance showed that the pursuing Chinese cavalry-men were close at hand. At this same moment Jo sprang from his exhausted pony.

"We must run," he cried, "and mix with the people on the bank. Perhaps we can hide in one of the cars."

So the lads, one still in the yellow robes of a priest, and the other in the dark-blue blouse with red facings, full trousers, and short boots of imperial troops, dashed up the bank together and ran towards a throng of soldiers now crowding aboard the cars, as though they, too, sought passage on the train.

As they began to push their way into the crowd, one of the soldiers, staring hard at Rob, uttered an ejaculation that caused Jo to turn and look at his friend with sudden dismay. In the haste of leaving their ponies and running for the train he had not noticed that Rob had lost both his priestly head-covering and the great, shell-rimmed spectacles that had proved so complete a disguise. Now, without them, though he still was tinted yellow and robed as a priest, there was no mistaking him for anything but a foreigner, and "fan kwei" (foreign devil) was what the soldier had just called him.

Others, attracted by the man's exclamation, were turning to look, and at the same moment came a loud shouting from the rear. Those who had chased

our lads so persistently all that morning were close at hand.

For an instant Jo's heart sank like lead and he believed they were lost. Then like a flash came a thought of one thing that they still might do.

CHAPTER XXIII

STEALING A LOCOMOTIVE

Jo's plan was communicated to Rob in a few breathless words as the lads dashed up the track towards the head of the train. The crowd of soldiers, not yet understanding that they were fugitives, and awed by the sight of Jo's uniform, parted before them, only stupidly wondering at their haste. Rob's mind instantly seized the possibilities of Jo's suggestion, and as they ran he gasped:

"You get aboard, Jo, while I cut it loose. Persuade the driver to start her. Never mind me. I'll climb aboard somehow."

Even as he spoke, Rob turned in between the locomotive and the foremost car, which already was filled with Chinese craning their necks over the side to see what was going on. Fortunately, there were no patent couplers to be dealt with, and no pneumatic tubes, for on this primitive train brakes were applied by hand, while the connections were simple link-and-pin affairs that any one could understand. Rob pulled the pin and scrambled across the bumpers to the opposite side of the train. As he did so his flowing priestly robe caught and was torn from

his shoulders, leaving him fully revealed in unmistakable European costume.

Instantly there arose a yell of "Fan kwei!" from the soldiers in the car above him, but a sudden shot from his pistol cut it short and sent those who were uttering it tumbling over backward in pell-mell consternation.

The locomotive already was moving as Rob ran forward and sprang into the cab, where he was just in time to break up a most startling tableau. The Chinese engine-driver, with hand on the open throttle, was cowering beneath the threatening muzzle of Jo's cocked revolver. The latter's back was turned, and behind him, with an uplifted bar of iron, crept the overlooked fireman. In another instant the blow would have fallen, and the whole course of Chinese history might have been changed; but, as it was about to descend, Rob caught the unsuspecting man by his convenient pig-tail and jerked him violently backward, while the murderous bar clattered to the iron floor of the cab. The next moment Rob had bundled the fireman overboard, and the locomotive sprang forward as though relieved of a clogging weight.

A tremendous clamor of yells and shooting rose from behind, while half a dozen bullets splintered the wood-work and shivered the glass of the cab; but no one was hurt, and no one minded the fusillade except the poor engine-driver, who was scared almost white. Rob sprang on top of the coal in the tender and waved his pistol defiantly above his head; at

the same time shouting derisive farewells to the baffled soldiers, many of whom were hopelessly running after the vanishing locomotive. He remained there until these dwindled to the size of distracted ants wandering aimlessly about a ruined hill, and then he returned to the cab, where Jo still remained on guard.

"I say, old man," cried the young American, speaking loudly to make himself heard above the roar and rattle of the on-rushing engine, "this beats anything I've struck in China yet. Isn't it the greatest bit of luck in the world? and isn't it fun running off with a locomotive? I never before stole anything worth speaking of, and I'm glad my first burglary is something worth while. I don't suppose it comes under the head of burglary, though. Perhaps we'd be called sneak thieves, only I hardly like the sound of that, either. How would highwaymen do, or stage robbers, or land pirates. That's it, Jo; we are land pirates who have just captured a ship and made her crew walk the plank, and now—"

"I'm hungry," interrupted the young Chinese, who, never having read any pirate stories, didn't know what his companion was talking about, "and thirsty," he added, looking longingly at the faucet of the tender's water-tank.

"So am I," shouted back Rob. "Make your slave there slow down a bit, for we're in no hurry anyhow, and I'll get you a drink."

As the speed with which they had started began to slacken, Rob suddenly added:

"Great Scott! There's another thing I hadn't thought of. Stop her, quick, Jo! We've got to cut that telegraph-wire, or they'll run us off the track at the first station. What a chucklehead I am!"

Before the locomotive had come to a stand-still the active young fellow was off and was swarming up a short, iron telegraph-pole near the track. Thus it was owing to his prompt action that a hurry message at that moment clicking into the Ting-Chow station, a few miles ahead, was interrupted after the words, "Look out for engine; open—" Probably the sender at Hsu River would have added, "derailing switch," and then proceeded to give enlightening particulars of what had happened, if he had been allowed the opportunity; but he was not, and the Ting-Chow operator was left to think what he pleased. The latter, however, had been warned that for some unknown reason an engine might be expected from the south, so he side-tracked and held a train of empty cars that was just about to proceed in that direction. Thus he left an open track for our friends, and saved them an awkward if not disastrous meeting.

Without knowing whether he had cut the wire in time to prevent mischief or not, Rob returned to the locomotive, got a big, satisfying drink of water from the tank, chucked a lot of coal into the furnace, assumed a new disguise in shape of the cap, jumper, and overalls of the engine-driver, which he calmly appropriated to his own use; and as the great,

swaying machine again sped forward over the shining rails he reopened conversation with his comrade.

"How far is the line open?" he asked.

"To Pao-Ting-Fu, at any rate," replied Jo, "and perhaps some distance beyond."

"That's the worst place between here and Pekin, isn't it?"

"Yes; the Boxers are in complete control of the city, and more foreigners have been killed there than at any other point in this province."

"Then it won't be good for our health to stop there too long."

"I should think not!"

"How far is it from Pao-Ting-Fu to Pekin?"

"About three hundred li."

"That's about a hundred miles—three or four days if we have to walk it, two days if we can steal a couple of ponies, and less than half a day if we only could carry this old rattle-trap the whole distance," mused Rob. Then, again speaking to Jo, he said:

"Ask your friend what's wrong with the road beyond Pao-Ting-Fu?"

Jo did as requested, and after a short conversation with the frightened engine-driver reported that two bridges had been destroyed, one at Ting Shing, about half-way between Pao-Ting-Fu and Pekin, and the other at Lu Kow, only a few miles from the capital.

"The first would be enough to stop us," said Rob, gloomily. "What other damage has been done?"

"He says not much, only a rail torn up here and there."

"Well," said Rob, "we might as well play this game for all it is worth; so, suppose we make the operator at the next station telegraph for a car with a dozen or so of rails on it, and a gang of track-layers, to be ready for us at Pao-Ting-Fu. Sign the message with the biggest name you can think of in this part of the country; say it is a matter of life or death to the Emperor himself for this engine to get as near Pekin as possible in the shortest possible time. It will be an awful bluff, of course, but bluffs sometimes work when you least expect them to. At any rate, we won't lose anything by trying. Hello! There's a station now, and a train headed this way on the siding. Lucky for us that it waited here, for there's apt to be trouble when two trains meet on a single track. I hope it doesn't mean, though, that they have heard of our coming. You run in and do your best with the telegraph man, while I stay here and keep this chap from getting busy. Better tell the agent, or whatever you call him, to rush that train out in a hurry, so its hands won't come rubbering round us for news. See if you can't pick up something to eat, too, for I am starving. We'll run up and take in water from that tank while you are gone. I'll make our friend here sabe somehow what I want him to do."

Rob's bluff worked to perfection. The waiting train pulled out the moment they had passed the siding switch, and went on its southward way with-

out carrying a suspicion of anything having gone wrong. Rob got his tank full of water without trouble, and had hardly done so when Jo reappeared, hurrying towards the locomotive. He was followed by a boy bearing a basket full of cooked rice and Chinese cakes. The young officer had ordered the few employés of the station about with such a lordly air that they had obeyed him without question.

"Did they know we were coming?" asked Rob, as the engine again gathered headway.

"Yes," replied Jo. "They had received part of a message, telling them to look out for us. Then it was cut off, and they were a good deal troubled at not hearing a word from the south since."

"Good!" cried Rob. "We cut the wire just in time then."

"Yes. I told them I saw somebody destroying the line, and said I thought he was a Boxer."

"So I am," laughed Rob, munching a Chinese sweetcake as he spoke. "But how about the message to Pao-Ting?"

"Oh, he sent it off all right. That is, I suppose he did. Anyhow, he seemed a good deal impressed by the name I signed to it."

"What name was it?"

"Yu-Hsien."

"What! The governor of Shan-Si! The big man of all the Boxers! You didn't have the cheek!"

"I did, though," declared Jo, stoutly; "and if it don't get us what we want at Pao-Ting, there isn't another name in all China that would."

They were barely out of sight of the station before they came to a bridge across a small river. Here, as the telegraph-line was strung on it within easy reach, the locomotive was brought to a stand-still, while Rob again tried his hand at wire-cutting. Jo leaned from the cab to watch him, thus relaxing for a minute his close watch of their useful prisoner.

As Rob came back, calling out: "Let her go again, I'm aboard," Jo turned to give the necessary order, only to discover to his consternation that the engine-driver was nowhere in sight. In vain did they search through the cab and its tender, in the water-tanks, and even under the coal. In vain did they look up and down the track, at the bridge on both sides, even staring down into the water twenty feet below them. The man had disappeared, so far as they could discover, as absolutely as though the ground had opened and swallowed him.

"Well," remarked Rob, in a melancholy tone, "that beats anything I ever experienced. We certainly have got the old wagon to ourselves now, and the question is, what shall we do with it?"

"I say run it," replied Jo. "I've watched him until I know how to start and stop, and how to go slow or fast. I'll do that part if you will keep up the fire, and I don't believe there is anything else to be looked out for."

"All right," agreed Rob, "go ahead. I don't like it, and I expect we shall come to grief; but I can stand it if you can."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE TIMELY EXPLOSION OF A BOILER

GREATLY depressed by the unexplained disappearance of their Chinese engine-driver, our lads, ignorant of everything connected with machinery, set themselves the hazardous task of running a locomotive. They got it started without difficulty, and ten minutes later were running at tremendous speed over the level line that extended without grade or curve as far as they could see. While Rob shovelled coal until his back ached and his face was as black as that of a negro, Jo occupied the engine-driver's seat and anxiously stared ahead. Neither of them spoke, for the strain on their nerves was too great, since each knew that at any moment they were likely to be blown up, flung from the track, or sent plunging through some weakened bridge. They were facing death in a dozen forms, but stuck to their posts without flinching, for they knew that a like fate, absolutely certain, awaited the unprotected foreigner who should be caught attempting to cross those plains on foot.

So they drove on, mile after mile, dashing past the station of Sing Yang without a pause or even a

"SO THEY DROVE ON, MILE AFTER MILE"

slow-down, and shortly before sunset came within sight of the gray walls of Pao-Ting-Fu.

"Shut her off, Jo. We've done the act so far all right," said Rob, speaking jerkily and with ill-repressed excitement. "Now comes the real danger. What a crowd there is about the station. There's an engine, though, with a single car attached. See! Waiting up by the tank. Perhaps our bluff has worked! Steady! Here they come!"

The stolen locomotive had come to a stop at the lower end of the station platform, panting as though exhausted by its long run, and a group of Chinese officials were hurrying to meet it.

"Where is his excellency, Yu-Hsien?" asked one of these, peering with an expectant air into the cab.

"He is following on a special train," replied Jo, promptly; "but I am his representative, sent ahead to prepare the way for him. Is the track-repairing car ready, as the governor requested? If not he will cause the officials of Pao-Ting to suffer the same 'bitterness' that has gained him fame among the foreigners of Shan-Si."

"It has been prepared according to the most noble governor's desire," replied the official, hesitatingly, "but—"

"Let us, then, go to it," interrupted Jo, stepping from the locomotive as he spoke and starting up the platform.

Rob followed him closely. As he left the cab he caught a glimpse of a begrimed, dishevelled, and nearly naked man crawling from beneath the tender.

In an instant it flashed across him that this was their lost engine-driver. Looking back a moment later he saw the same figure following them.

They in the mean time were being conducted towards the agent's quarters in the station-house, where refreshments had been prepared for Governor Yu-Hsien.

"If he were but here," remarked the official spokesman, deprecatingly, "of course, everything would be at his disposal; but we have been so expressly ordered not to allow the passage north of any save troops or mandarins of the highest rank, that we are at a loss how to act."

"Am I not a representative of one of the greatest mandarins of the empire?" demanded Jo, fiercely, "and am I not come to prepare the way for him? Has it not already been told to your dull ears that upon his reaching the imperial city within two days depends the very life of the Son of Heaven?" At this august name every one present, excepting Rob, and including the speaker himself, made a deep reverence.

"The Emperor is no longer in danger, since the ocean-devil army has been driven back, and now is being cut to pieces by his own invincible troops," boasted the official.

"What do you mean?" asked Jo. "No such news has come to the ears of his excellency the governor."

"It is nevertheless true that from the ships gathered off Taku bar thousands of ocean men were landed to go to Pekin. They travelled by the road

of iron-fire, restoring the track, even as you now propose to do. Slower and slower they moved, being beset on all sides by sons of the Great Sword. Beyond An-Ting they could not go, for there they were met by imperial cavalry from the South Hunting Park, and turned back in disorderly flight. Hundreds were killed, and hundreds more are being cut down at this moment. All their guns and banners are captured, and it is certain that not one of them will escape alive. The ocean devils still on their ships have threatened to fire on the Taku forts, but they dare not do it. General Nieh has made answer that, with the firing of the first shot, every foreign devil in Tien-Tsin and Pekin will be put to death; for so commands an edict from the imperial city."

"What has all this to do with us?" inquired Jo, pretending not to be at all affected by this startling news. "The governor of Shan-Si must pass in spite of everything. Let him be delayed by so much as the fraction of an hour, and those whom he will hold responsible may well tremble in their shoes."

"Is not the man with the black face, standing by your side at this moment, a foreign devil?" suddenly demanded the official, ignoring Jo's threat and pointing an accusing, clawlike finger at Rob.

"No," answered Jo, stoutly. "He is a native of the Middle Kingdom; but he comes from the far south, where he was born. Also, he is wise in the science of iron-fire, and has been sent on in advance of the great governor to make safe his way. If you

should harm so much as a hair of his head, the vengeance of Yu-Hsien would be swift and terrible as that of Heaven itself."

"*He is yang-kwei!*" (foreign devil, northern dialect) cried a voice from the back of the room, and Rob, turning quickly, caught a glimpse of the begrimed engine-driver whom he had seen crawl out from under the tender and who afterwards had followed them.

At the same instant he, together with every one in the room, was hurled violently to the floor, the walls of the building were blown in as though they were of card-board, and the city of Pao-Ting-Fu was shaken by an explosion so terrific that its inhabitants ran shrieking from their houses into the streets.

Some of the occupants of the station-agent's room fled from it unharmed, while others, and among them our lads, more or less bruised by falling bricks or tiles, crawled out from the débris and made exit more slowly. Only one remained behind, crushed to death beneath a heavy roof-timber, and he was the engine-driver, killed, in the very act of denouncing Rob, by the blowing up of his own locomotive. It had been left with a roaring fire behind its closed furnace door and very little water in its boiler.

"Are you hurt, Rob?"

"Nothing to speak of. Are you?"

"No."

"Then what do you say? Shall we take advantage of the confusion to light out? Things

seemed to be getting pretty hot for us when that blessed old engine interrupted the proceedings."

"What do you mean? Run away? No, indeed!" replied Jo, earnestly. "Things are just as we want them now. Don't you remember that I was telling them what Yu-Hsien would do if they interfered with his plans? He is the head Boxer, you know, and just now the I-Ho-Chuan are credited with being masters of magic. Wait till I speak to these big men."

The official, or, as Jo called him, "the big man," who had been foremost in examining our lads, was excitedly chattering with one of his fellows when Jo and Rob stepped up to him.

"You are alive and not harmed?" he gasped at sight of them.

"Of course we are not harmed," replied Jo. "Did I not tell you that we are the servants of Yu-Hsien? and do you think he would harm his own?"

"Is this terrible thing the work of the great Boxer?"

"Certainly it is. I warned you how it would be. He has killed one who defied him, that you may have evidence of his strength; and if you still go against his wishes your own sons will shortly erect a new ancestral tablet."

"It is true, most honorable one," admitted the frightened official, humbly; "and we are not so dense but that we can learn the lesson thus plainly stated. Tell us, then, how we can serve you, and thus appease the wrath of the mighty Boxer, that he may not visit further destruction upon us."

"Give us the slight thing for which we asked: a few rails, a few track-layers, and a fresh engine, that we may go about our work and prepare the way for our master," replied Jo, boldly, "then shall all go well with you and with this city of Pao-Ting, which otherwise might be bereft of its walls by the next exhibition of Yu-Hsien's wrath."

So superstitious are the Chinese, so dreaded were the mysterious incantations of the I-Ho-Chuan, and so unnerved were the officials of Pao-Ting-Fu by the explosion of a few minutes before, that they yielded to Jo's demands.

A locomotive attached to a car holding rails and a gang of coolies had been made ready in anticipation of Yu-Hsien's coming. This train, standing by the water-tank, at a distance from the scene of explosion, had remained uninjured, and now was placed at the disposal of our lads. They were told that for fifty li the track still was in good condition; after that they could readily repair it with the means at their disposal, until they came to the great bridge at Cho Chou, which had been hopelessly destroyed.

So our young adventurers left the officials of Pao-Ting-Fu, promising them that Yu-Hsien should be informed of their efforts in his behalf, and were thankfully seen to disappear in the gathering twilight.

"Well!" exclaimed Rob, who had not spoken during all these negotiations, heaving a great sigh of relief as they pulled out from the deadly neighbor-

hood. "Our bluff worked, after all. But, take it all around, it was about as close a call as I ever want to experience."

"Yes," replied Jo. "I never expected to be saved from sudden death by the blowing-up of a boiler."

That night they remained on board their new locomotive at the little town of An-Su-Hsien, where Jo procured for each of them the red hats, sashes, and shoes worn by Boxers. At daylight they again were under way, and, though they were obliged to stop a dozen times to replace missing rails, they had reached Cho Chou, only forty miles from Pekin, before dark. Here they were able to hire horses that by late afternoon of the following day had carried them within sight of the far-extended walls of the great Chinese capital. Beyond the wall rolled dense clouds of smoke, as though the whole city were on fire, while distinct above all other sounds rose the sharp rattle of musketry, mingled with the deeper roar of heavier guns.

At these evidences of strife our lads drew rein and looked inquiringly at each other. After all, was the city of Pekin a good place for a young American and a Chinese who had befriended him to enter at that moment?

"Yes," said Rob, at length, "I think we will keep on, only we will give up our horses here. I don't see that we will be any worse off, in any event, inside the city than where we are. There is fighting going on, to be sure, but it must be between our friends and our enemies. If the former are getting

the worst of it, then they need our help; while if the fight is going the other way, we have nothing to fear."

"I wonder," remarked Jo, bitterly, as they moved slowly forward on foot," which side will prove friendly to me, or will all prove enemies of the Chinese who has befriended a foreigner?"

CHAPTER XXV

IN CHINA'S CAPITAL CITY

China's capital, the great northern city of Pekin, is situated on a plain one hundred and twenty miles from the sea, and near the eastern base of a low mountain-range known as the Western Hills. It is divided into two nearly equal parts, the northern being the Manchu, or Tartar City, while the other is called the southern, or Chinese City. The northern city is surrounded by a vast brick wall ten miles in length, fifty feet thick at the base, sixty feet high, and forty feet wide on top, pierced by nine massive gateways, two on the north side, two on the east, two on the west, and three on the south. These last open into the southern city, which is of about the same size as the other, and also is surrounded by a lofty wall having seven gates. In the southern city, standing in the middle of a forty-acre park, is the great Temple of Heaven, in which the Emperor alone may worship.

In the centre of the northern, or Tartar City, and occupying one-eighth of the enclosed space, is located the Forbidden City, surrounded by a fifty-foot wall of red brick coped with tiles of imperial yellow. This wall has but four gates, and within it are the

yamens, or palaces of high-rank mandarins, besides parks and pleasure-grounds. Inside of the Forbidden City is yet another, known as the Imperial City, strongly fortified, and containing the palaces, pleasure-grounds, lakes, and lotus ponds of the imperial family.

While Canton, in the far south, has been called the most wonderful city of the world, Pekin is almost as remarkable, although in an entirely different way. Canton streets are noted for their extreme narrowness, and those of Pekin for their width, some of the latter being one hundred feet wide. In Canton there are no wheeled vehicles and no beasts of burden, while Pekin streets swarm with blue-covered, two-wheeled carts, very heavy, and drawn by large, fine-looking mules, two-coolie jinrikishas, bullock-carts, wheelbarrows loaded with passengers or freight, pushed by one coolie and pulled by another, long caravans of shaggy, two-humped camels, besides innumerable riding ponies and donkeys. Also, in Pekin, may occasionally be seen the smart European brougham, drawn by a high-stepping American horse, of some wealthy mandarin, though most of those who can afford to ride prefer to do so in sedan-chairs. Of these chairs, those used by members of the imperial family are roofed and curtained in yellow, those of the higher-class mandarins are red, those of the next lower grade are blue, and so the descent is continued through green to black, while mourning chairs of every class invariably are white.

In Canton a large proportion of the houses have

two stories, while in all directions tower lofty, six-to-nine-storied pawn-shops, looking like flat-topped grain elevators; but in Pekin all dwellings and shops, even including the imperial palaces, have but a single story. The only buildings in all the city that exceed this height are the pagoda-like Temple of Heaven, the great drum-tower, the great bell-tower, the fortified gate-towers surmounting the city walls, and certain foreign establishments belonging to missions, legations, or business firms that have been erected since 1900.

Pekin is well provided with wide breathing spaces in the shape of temple and palace grounds, and shade trees are fairly abundant throughout the city. Most of its broad avenues are unpaved, and it is visited by suffocating dust-storms at certain seasons of the year, while at others it wades through fathomless mud.

In 1897 the capital was connected with Tien-Tsin, eighty miles away, and with the sea by rail, but the track was compelled to end two miles outside the southern wall. In 1900 came the great Boxer uprising, the siege of the foreign legations in Pekin, and the capture, occupation, and terrible punishment of the city by the troops of nine foreign powers. These retained possession for a year, during which time they carried the railroad into the very heart of the city, largely increased the area of legation "concessions," established a clean-swept neutral zone three hundred feet wide around the legation territory, paved Legation Street, built commodious

barracks for the foreign troops that were to remain as permanent legation guards, and erected handsome legation buildings; while the United States and Germany took possession of and will permanently control a quarter of a mile of the city wall adjoining their legations. After a year of foreign control Pekin was restored to its Chinese rulers, and the self-exiled imperial court returned to their capital city. During 1903 a number of large foreign buildings, including a European hotel, banks, hospitals, chapels, schools, etc., were erected, and many more were projected for this year (1904). Electric lighting on an extensive scale, as well as electric trams, are already planned for. The Pe-Han (Pekin-Hankow) Railway, over a portion of which our lads travelled, and which was wholly destroyed by Boxers immediately afterwards, has been restored and the track extended southward to the Yellow River. Beyond this construction is being so rapidly pushed from both ends that the completion of the whole line is promised by 1906.

Thus China's capital, rudely roused by foreign guns from the sleep of ages, is now awake and in a fair way speedily to take a prominent place among the progressive cities of the world.

None of these things were thought of, however, on that June day of 1900 when Rob Hinckley, accompanied by his stanch friend, Chinese Jo, hesitatingly approached the great city; for at that moment it was shadowed by the darkness of despair. The tidal wave of Boxer uprising had reached and

overwhelmed it. The I-Ho-Chuan were in complete possession, and Pekin, with its teeming population, its accumulated wealth of years, and, above all, with its hundreds of hated foreigners, diplomats, missionaries, business men, and legation guards, lay at their mercy. They had nothing to fear from imperial troops, for these, always in sympathy with their movement, already had begun to co-operate with them in their killing of Christian converts, their burnings and their lootings. Bolder and bolder they became, wilder and wilder grew their excesses, until shortly before the arrival of Rob and Jo they had started fierce conflagrations in all parts of the city, had destroyed two Roman Catholic cathedrals, and were regularly besieging a third with cannonade and rifle-fire. In this great fortress, and within its spacious, wall-enclosed grounds, ninety foreigners, forty-three of whom were French and Italian marines, and more than three thousand native converts had taken refuge. For sixty days this isolated stronghold of Christianity was shelled and bombarded with cannon-ball and rifle-bullet; but it held out to the end, and stands to-day a monument to the heroic endurance of its defenders. The attack on it had been begun three days before the arrival of our lads, and the sounds of heavy firing that had so aroused their anxiety was the cannonade directed against its walls.

With many misgivings they skirted the southern city, which seemed a seething caldron of riot and flame, and sought an entrance to the Tartar City

through one of its western gates. Here, to Jo's great satisfaction, he found, in the officer of the guard who examined them, an acquaintance not only willing to admit them, but of whom he could ask questions. Believing Jo to feel even more bitterly than himself concerning foreigners, this officer did not hesitate to give him the very latest news. He confirmed the report heard at Pao-Ting-Fu of the defeat and driving back towards Tien-Tsin of the combined American and British relief expedition, under Admiral Seymour, told of the siege of the northern cathedral, and, most startling of all, informed Jo of the imperial edict, issued that very day, ordering the destruction of every foreigner within the walls of Pekin.

"Already," he said, "have the invincible troops of Jung Lu entered the city, and with them are the Kwang-su tigers, under the terrible Tung-Fu-Hsang, who thirsts for foreign blood as does a babe for its mother's milk. To-day they are placing guns to command the legations, and to-morrow at four o'clock, if the ocean devils have not left the city, they will be attacked and killed like rats in their holes."

It was fortunate that Rob failed to comprehend what the officer said, for he could not have listened unmoved as did Jo. That the latter did so was because he was not quite certain that he did not approve of the plan for driving all foreigners from China. Foreigners expelled Chinese from their countries, so why should not his people in turn expel for-

eigners from China? Still, he did not express any views on the subject at that time, but changed the topic of conversation by asking the officer if he could tell him where his father might be found.

For a moment the latter hesitated, and his face assumed a peculiar expression. Then he said: "Did you not know that his excellency Li Ching Cheng had been given a position on the Board of Punishment? It is doubtless at the yamen of that illustrious body that you will find him."

Thanking the officer for his courtesy, Jo and his companion took their departure, and, making their way through alleys and the quieter streets as remote as possible from conflagrations and all scenes of disturbance, they finally reached the yamen of the Board of Punishment, which corresponds to what in an American city would be a combined court-house and jail.

A main entrance through the street wall led to a court, reached by the descent of several steps. This court was surrounded by low buildings, occupied as offices of the board, and in its centre was a pond of water. As no person of whom they could ask questions was to be seen here, our lads passed on to a second or inner court that opened from the first. It also contained a stone-bordered reservoir of water, and was surrounded by fantastically ornamented buildings. In one feature that was immediately noticeable, these low buildings differed from any other that Rob ever had seen in China. They were provided with cellar-like basements, divided

into small compartments, from each of which a little, grated window opened into a tiny outside well-hole.

About one of these well-holes stood a group of half a dozen Chinese officials, towards whom Jo made his way, intending to ask them where his father might be found. As he drew near and was about to speak, he glanced downward to see what so had attracted their curiosity that no one of them had turned at his approach. What he saw was a human face, tortured and livid, pressed against the grating, and straining upward in mute agony. The man was supporting himself by hands clinched about two bars of the grating, and evidently was standing on tiptoe.

Rob, looking over Jo's shoulder, also saw the awful face, and for an instant wondered at the black line that seemed to cut it at the uplifted chin. Then it flashed across him that this was a line of black water, slowly but surely rising, and that in another moment the man would be drowned. And no one dared try to save him, even were it possible to do so, for he was a condemned prisoner suffering one of the innumerable, ingeniously awful forms of Chinese capital punishment.

"What was his crime?" asked one of the fascinated spectators of another.

"He was that member of the Tsung Li Yamen who, before circulating the palace edict, '*Feng yang jen pi sha*'" (whenever meeting foreigners, kill them), "dared alter '*pi*'" (kill) "into '*pao*'" (protect).

"It is enough, and his punishment is righteous," declared the other.

Rob did not quite understand this, but Jo did, and, seizing his comrade's arm with so fierce a grip that the latter winced, he dragged him from the awful scene. As they gained the street he whispered, in choking voice:

"From this moment I am with you and with the foreign people, until the Empress is overthrown. Let us get to your legation."

"Was it any one you knew?" asked Rob, not yet comprehending.

"He was my father."

CHAPTER XXVI

WAR CLOUDS

China, in her ignorant self-confidence, and goaded to desperation by foreign aggressions, was defying the world. Not only was she killing missionaries, together with their converts, wherever found, and putting to shameful death such of her own people, from highest mandarin to lowest coolie, as dared lift a hand to save them or speak a word in their behalf, but by imperial order Chinese troops were preparing to attack foreign ministers in their own legations. Thus China deliberately was about to commit the gravest of international crimes. For some time the foreign ministers, foreseeing the dangers of the apparently uncontrollable Boxer uprising, had been calling upon their respective governments for protection. In response an ever-increasing fleet of war-ships was gathered off the mouth of the Pei-ho, which was as near as they could approach to Pekin. From those ships which first arrived a mixed force of marines, four hundred in all, and representing eight nations, was sent to the capital to act as legation guards, and the train that brought them was the last to reach Pekin for many weeks.

These marines arrived on the first day of June,

and forty-five of them immediately were detailed to protect the great northern cathedral, while twenty more were sent to the compound of the American Methodist Mission. A week later the Empress Dowager returned to Pekin from her summer palace in the Western Hills. From that moment the situation grew so rapidly worse that the ministers again telegraphed the foreign fleet to send at once a strong force for their further protection.

In response to this urgent request Captain McCalla, the senior American naval officer with the fleet, declared that he should start for Pekin the next day. The British admiral, Seymour, promptly proposed to join him, and other commanding officers entered so heartily into the project that on the following morning, when the expedition started by rail from Tongku, the nearest landing-point, it comprised 2066 troops. Of these 112 were Americans, 915 British, 450 Germans, 312 Russians, 158 French, 54 Japanese, 40 Italians, and 25 Austrians.

This force, made up of sailors and marines, well provided with light artillery and rapid-fire guns, set forth in high spirits, expecting to reach Pekin that very night, or, at any rate, within twenty-four hours. Nine days later saw them still twenty miles from their destination, short of ammunition and food, encumbered with two hundred wounded men, cut off from their base of supplies by the destruction of the railway behind them, as well as in front, unable to communicate either with Pekin or the outside world on account of the telegraph-line hav-

ing absolutely disappeared, while couriers with despatches were caught and killed as fast as sent out.

From the beginning they had been harassed by hordes of Boxers, and now they were confronted by five thousand imperial troops, including a strong body of cavalry, armed with modern rifles and well supplied with artillery. Under the circumstances a farther advance was impossible, and a retreat was ordered. At the end of another week the unfortunate expedition reached Tien-Tsin exhausted, demoralized, and sadly depleted in numbers, but having learned the bitter lesson that no small force of foreigners, no matter how brave and well-armed, could traverse the interior of China against the wishes of the Chinese.

During the absence of this expedition the fleet of war-ships lying off the Taku bar, at the mouth of the Pei-ho, had been strengthened by numerous additions. The Taku forts had been captured after six hours of fighting, and an army of ten thousand troops had advanced to the relief of the foreign portion of Tien-Tsin, which was being besieged by Boxers from the walled city of Tien-Tsin proper. Now the allied foreign troops turned their attention to this stronghold and set about its capture; but it held out for three weeks, and did not fall into their hands until the 14th of July.

But let us return to the middle of June and the city of Pekin, where a handful of foreigners, cut off from all communication with the outside world, were anxiously but confidently awaiting the coming of

the McCalla-Seymour relief expedition. All sorts of rumors were afloat concerning its progress and position, and one of these so persistently asserted that it would reach the city by the very evening on which Rob and Jo entered Pekin that many persons ascended the city wall near the American legation, and remained there for hours, straining their eyes for a sight of the expected troops. But they did not come; and as the sun, transformed to a blood-red ball by the smoke from many conflagrations, disappeared in the lowering west, the disappointed ones returned to their homes doubly weighted with anxiety.

After dinner that evening two guests sat with the United States minister and his wife, earnestly discussing the situation. They were an American tourist and his daughter, who, not realizing the danger of their position, had lingered one day too long in Pekin, and then, owing to the sudden destruction of the railway, found it impossible to leave. The subject of their present conversation was a note from the Tsung Li Yamen (Chinese State Department) received by the minister a few hours earlier. It declared the situation in Pekin to have reached such a stage that the authorities could not undertake to protect the ministers longer than twenty-four hours from the date of the note, which also urged their departure, under Chinese escort, for Tien-Tsin.

"Are you going to accept that proposition?" asked the tourist.

"Frankly, I don't know," replied the minister.

"Certainly we cannot leave within the time limit specified. It won't do for us to abandon the missionaries, and they declare they will not desert their converts, whom we, of course, could not take with us."

"What means of transportation should we have if you did decide to leave, now that the railway is no longer in operation?"

"We have demanded carts, boats, provisions, and that a member of the Tsung Li Yamen high in authority shall accompany us. This, of course, is playing for delay, that we may have more time in which to hear from Seymour's expedition. It is now four days since the last word came from it, and we must know its position before starting. No, I don't believe we will leave within twenty-four hours, though some of my colleagues think differently and already are packing their effects."

"My daughter and I will not try to carry out anything but our hand-bags, which can be made ready at a moment's notice," said the tourist.

"You are wise. I shall attempt to carry very little myself, and my baggage will consist largely of state papers, which already are packed for transportation."

"Then you are pretty certain that we will go sooner or later?"

"Yes, sooner or later, for the city is growing untenable. The hour of our departure probably will be decided by the morning advices from the Tsung Li Yamen. If no word should come from them,

Von Ketteler, who does not agree that it is necessary for us to leave Pekin, declares he will go to them and demand satisfactory guarantees for our safety."

"It will be a bold thing to do."

"Yes, it will, especially as Von Ketteler recently incurred the additional ill-will of all Boxers by personally beating with his stick one of them whom he caught parading Legation Street in the full regalia of his infamous society. He is a brave man, but, unfortunately, he regards the Chinese with a contempt that will, I fear, lead him into difficulties."

At this moment a servant announced Lieutenant Hibbard.

"Excuse me, sir, for disturbing you," said this individual, after he had saluted those present, "but it seemed best to report a rather peculiar case. Two young Chinese, wearing the Boxer uniform, have just been arrested, and are now held by the guard at the gate. They demand an interview with the American minister, and, curiously enough, both of them speak English remarkably well—at least, so the corporal of the guard says, for I have not yet seen them myself."

"Are they armed?" asked the minister.

"Yes, sir. That is, they were armed with revolvers, but, of course, those were taken from them."

"Very well, let these English-speaking Boxers be brought in, under guard, and we will hear what they have to say for themselves—unless this young lady objects to their presence," he added.

"Oh no, sir; of course I don't!" exclaimed the

girl, who hitherto had listened in silence, but with intense interest, to the conversation between her father and the minister. "I want ever so much to see a Boxer whom I can be certain really is one."

In another minute the prisoners, guarded by two heavily armed marines, were ushered into the room. "Pretty tough-looking characters, aren't they?" asked the lieutenant of the girl, by whose side he had taken a position as though to protect her in case of trouble.

"Yes," she replied, hesitatingly. "But do you know," she added, in a low tone, "the face of one of them seems very familiar. I mean the one with the queue."

"Oh, all Chinamen look alike," replied the officer, carelessly. "I've seen a hundred that you'd think were twin brothers of the other one, the tougher of the two. I expect he has murdered more converts than he could count."

Just here the minister, who had stepped for a moment into his office, returned, and at once proceeded to question the prisoners.

"I am told that you speak English; who are you, and why do you come here?" he asked.

"Are you the American minister?" cautiously inquired the one whom the lieutenant had indicated as being the tougher-looking of the two.

"I am."

"Well, then, we've come to tell you that the American and British relief expedition you are expecting has been attacked by more than five thou-

sand imperial troops. It has been badly cut up, and now is in full retreat towards Tien-Tsin."

"Impossible!" gasped the minister.

"It is true, sir; and if you leave this city to-morrow in the hope of reaching Tien-Tsin you will be killed as soon as you pass the city gates. An edict was issued from the palace to-day for the extermination of all foreigners in Pekin, and an attack on the legations will be begun at four o'clock to-morrow afternoon."

"Who are you?" demanded the startled minister, "and what proof can you give that your astounding statements are true?"

"I am an American, of course," replied Rob, in a tone expressive of surprise that any one should question his nationality, "and my friend here is a son of Mandarin Li Ching Cheng, recently a member of the Tsung Li Yamen. He was put to death a few hours since for having tried to protect foreigners instead of killing them. My friend and I got acquainted in the States, where he was being educated, and—"

"His name is Joseph Lee!" cried the American girl, no longer able to restrain herself, and springing to her feet in her excitement. "I knew I had seen him before!"

"But who are you, sir? What is your own name?" interrupted the minister, sternly.

"Hinckley," replied Rob, but not withdrawing his eyes from the flushed face of the girl; and, speaking to her, he added: "I knew you and your father as soon as I saw you, Miss Lorimer, but I thought

that perhaps you wouldn't care to recognize us in this costume."

"As if any one could!" cried Annabel Lorimer. "I am sure you wouldn't recognize yourself if you could see how horrible you look. Even now I only recognize your voice. Should you have known him, papa?"

"No," replied Mr. Lorimer, staring hard at Rob; "and I am not certain that I do even now."

"Is your first name Robert?" asked the lieutenant of marines; "and were you ever on board the United States monitor *Monterey?*"

"Yes, my name is Robert Hinckley. I was aboard the *Monterey* about four months ago, and you are Ensign Hibbard," was the reply.

"He's all right, sir!" exclaimed the lieutenant, turning to the minister. "I know him well, and can swear that somewhere about him he's got a skin as white as mine."

"Well," said the minister, his stern face breaking into a smile, "I'll take your word for it, Mr. Hibbard, but even you must acknowledge that its whiteness is pretty effectually concealed at present. Mr. Hinckley, I am much pleased to meet you, especially as you must be a son of Dr. Mason Hinckley, whom I long have counted as among my friends. But the news you bring is of such momentous character that I must ask for further details, even before extending to you the hospitalities of the legation. Will you and your friend sit down and kindly tell us everything that you know concerning the situation?"

CHAPTER XXVII

CHINA DEFIES THE WORLD

THE startling news conveyed to the American legation by our lads was transmitted to all the other ministers that same night, and it at once put an end to the preparations for departure. It was further discussed at a meeting held the next morning, when it was determined that their only chance for safety lay in remaining where they were and defending themselves to the best of their ability. It had been hoped that some members of the Tsung Li Yamen would attend this meeting, but none appeared. The German minister, Baron von Ketteler, thereupon reaffirmed his intention of going to the yamen and demanding a conference. Moreover, to show his contempt for the Chinese, he declared that he would go unarmed and unescorted, save by his official interpreter, Mr. Cordes.

No entreaties served to deter the brave but obstinate man from his mad enterprise. Entering his sedan-chair, which he had furnished with cigars and reading-matter to aid him in passing the time if he should be compelled to wait at the yamen, he set forth, followed by his interpreter in another

chair, and preceded by a Chinese outrider attached to the legation.

Just before their departure the American minister had requested Rob Hinckley, who, still disguised as a Chinese, might traverse the streets without detection as a foreigner, to proceed to the Methodist Mission, nearly a mile away, and warn its inmates to make ready for a speedy retreat to the legation grounds. Jo also was asked to go out and make special note of what the people of the city were saying.

So the two lads set forth, going by way of Instruct the People Street, called by foreigners Legation Street, past the Hôtel de Pékin, in which the Lorimers were staying, and where Rob wished he might make a call. From there they held their way eastward to Ha-ta (Great) Street, which they found thronged with citizens and soldiery. They walked slowly up this broad avenue, paying close attention to scraps of conversation, until they came to Filial Piety Alley, into which they should have turned to gain the mission compound by the shortest route.

Instead of so doing, they hesitated, attracted by a decided and excited movement towards the north of the swarming populace. Involuntarily, they joined it, and continued to make their way slowly up Ha-ta Street, until they had nearly reached the Pai-lou, or wooden arch, that spanned the middle of the roadway, just below Tsung Pu Alley. At this point they saw two sedan-chairs, preceded by an outrider in the livery of the German Legation, come

from the Street of Permanent Peace into Ha-ta Street, and turn north ahead of them. As they halted in their walk and stood watching this little procession, Jo was saying:

"In case of serious trouble, Rob, I believe I could do more good outside in the city than if I were to stay shut up in a legation. There, also, I should always be an object of more or less suspicion, on account of being a Chinese. Of course, I sha'n't leave you unless it seems best to do so; but if we are separated, don't forget the old academy call."

"Do you mean the 'Hi-ho' call?"

"Yes; and isn't it queer that it should be the same as the first two names of the I-Ho-Chuan?"

At that instant the sharp report of a rifle rang out a short distance up the street. For a moment it was followed by a deathlike hush. Then pandemonium broke loose. Other shots were fired in quick succession, and the street populace, transformed into a howling mob, swarmed towards the scene of tragedy, yelling like demons: "Kill the foreign devils! Kill! Kill! Kill!"

A horseman fled before them. Two sedan-chairs were dropped by their terrified bearers, who also took to their heels. From one of the chairs a man leaped and ran for his life, but from the other came neither sound nor motion. In it sat Baron von Ketteler, the Kaiser's representative in China, shot to death by a Chinese officer of imperial troops. To-day a magnificent memorial arch of marble spans the busy roadway above the spot where he was killed.

"Come!" gasped Rob, as he realized the awful nature of the tragedy. "That shot is China's declaration of war against the world. We must warn the mission!"

With this our lads darted into the near-by Tsung Pu Alley. At first their progress was impeded by people running in the opposite direction; but in a couple of minutes these had been left behind, and they were free to hasten on at full speed. All at once a foreigner, hatless, haggard, and bleeding, dropped from a low compound wall into the alley close beside them. Behind him sounded the fierce cries of a pursuing mob.

"It is the interpreter!" exclaimed Jo. "Go with him and get him to the mission! Take the first right and second left. I will lead those who are after him another way. Quick! Good-bye!"

Rob instantly comprehended, and started after the fugitive, who now was staggering from weakness caused by loss of blood. At sight of the lad's Boxer uniform the man tried to beat him off, but on hearing the words in English—"It is all right! I am American"—he submitted to Rob's guidance.

As they hurried around the first right-hand turn they came face to face with a Boxer armed with a spear. Without giving him time to recognize them, our young American sprang upon him, knocked him down, took away his weapon, and left him in a state of dazed uncertainty as to what had happened.

After running a little farther the fugitives paused to listen, but could hear no sounds of pursuit. Jo

had succeeded in diverting it to another direction. Then they proceeded more slowly, the wounded man leaning heavily on Rob's shoulder. Curious faces peered at them from dark portals as they passed, and more than one whom they met turned to give them a wondering look; but Rob's uniform and spear protected them from interference, and finally they reached a side gateway of the mission compound. Here the wounded man fell in a faint, but the American marine on guard sprang to his aid, and, recognizing in Rob's voice that of a fellow-countryman, assisted him to carry the German inside.

"Call your officer, quick as you can," ordered our lad, as he knelt beside the wounded man and dashed water in his face. "It is a matter of life or death for us all."

In another minute Captain Hall came running to the post, and in a few words Rob explained who he was and what had happened, at the same time exhibiting a proof of identity given him by the American minister.

"He sent word," continued Rob, "for all foreign inmates of this compound to pack up immediately and be prepared to retreat to the legation at a moment's notice. Now I will leave this wounded man in your care, for I must hurry back and let him know what has happened. Can you let me have one of your men to identify me at the Italian barricade across Legation Street? If I go alone I am afraid they won't let me pass, for they were ugly and threatened us when we came out."

"Certainly. Turner, go with Mr. Hinckley, and see him safely past the barricade."

"This is a rum go," said the marine, as they left the gate and hurried towards Ha-ta Street. "I've done a lot of funny things in the Philippines, and seen a lot more in China, but I'm blessed if ever I expected to safe-conduct a bloody Boxer through the streets of Pekin."

"Perhaps he is safe-conducting you," replied Rob, indicating, as he spoke, a group of Chinese soldiers wearing red Boxer hats, who were regarding the marine with very ugly looks.

"I don't know but what you are right," admitted Turner. "They do look wolfy, and I almost wish I had another pukka Johnny along to come back with me."

"I'll come back with you if you will go all the way to the legation with me."

"Done! The cap'n didn't say how far I was to escort you. He only said, 'past the barricade,' and maybe there's more than one by this time. But what's the matter with riding? We'd get there twice as quick. Hi, there, 'rikisha coolie. You wanchee catchee one piecee dollar? You makee go ossoty Melican consoo house. Savvy?"

"All litee sojo man, can do," was the reply; and a big, double jinrikisha, drawn by two coolies and pushed by two more, rolled up to where the Americans were standing. Even on the eve of open hostilities the thrifty Chinese of Pekin were perfectly willing to make an honest dollar by serving their enemies.

Jumping in, they set off at a great pace, the 'rikisha men yelling at the top of their voices for pedestrians to clear the way, and not hesitating to knock right and left those who failed to heed their warnings.

Acting on Turner's advice, Rob took off his red hat, and, sitting as low as possible, was partially screened from observation by the marine, who held himself very straight and sat well forward. The guard at the Italian barricade made a motion as though to halt them, but Turner, yelling to his coolies to keep on or he would jab them with his bayonet, called out:

"It's all right, Dagoes! Official business! Can't stop! So long! See you later!"

Then they bowled up Legation Street at a rattling pace, clattered over the imperial canal bridge, and in another minute were at the American Legation. Five minutes later the electrifying news of Baron von Ketteler's assassination had been told.

"That settles it!" cried the minister, who was a veteran soldier of the great American civil war. "Now we know exactly where we stand. The Chinese have declared for war, and they shall have war to their hearts' content. As for us who are in Pekin, we will stay right here and fight for our lives. If we are wiped out, the Chinese nation will cease to exist shortly afterwards. Even if we survive to be rescued, the punishment visited upon it for this day's crime will be one of the bitterest in history. But now we haven't a moment to lose. Are you

willing to return to the mission with an order for its inmates to set out for this place within half an hour?"

"Of course I am, sir," replied Rob.

"Then go, and come back with them. I will at once notify the German Legation of this terrible happening, and advise that they send a squad of marines to bring back their wounded interpreter. God bless you, lad! I am glad to have you with us in this time of our trouble."

"And I, sir, am mighty glad to be here."

In less than an hour after Rob's report to the minister a long procession of refugees issued from the mouth of Filial Piety Alley, and turned into Ha-ta Street, where it was watched by crowding thousands of impassive Chinese. First came twenty American marines, hardy-looking fellows, bronzed by long service in the Philippines, under command of Captain Hall. These were followed by the American women and children of the mission and one hundred and twenty-six Chinese girl pupils of the mission school. Then came Chinese Christian women with their children, followed by a large body of Chinese men and boy converts. After them marched a stern-looking group of German marines, bearing and guarding a stretcher, on which lay the wounded legation interpreter whom Rob had been so instrumental in saving. The rear was brought up by a body of resolute - appearing missionaries armed with rifles and revolvers. With these marched Rob Hinckley, no longer disguised as a Boxer, but

clad in the costume of his own people, and bearing himself with the self-confidence of one who had undergone a long experience in affairs like the present. The Chinese converts numbered over one thousand, and every member of the long procession was laden with food, clothing, household effects, or whatever portable things they had considered of greatest value.

At the Italian barricade on Legation Street it was met by the remaining marines of the American guard and escorted to the legation. Although the streets were crowded with Chinese soldiers, Boxers, and citizens, no attempt was made to interfere in any way with the flight of these refugees, and that afternoon they were quartered within the spacious walls of the British Legation compound, where all foreigners, except those already sustaining attack in the Roman Catholic cathedral, were gathered for protection.

Here was a scene to beggar description. Streams of carts, and swarms of coolies laden with provisions, baggage, and household effects, were pouring in from every direction. The numerous low, one-story buildings of the legation were being assigned to different nationalities, or set apart for specific purposes. Men, women, and children, diplomats, soldiers, missionaries, railway engineers, bank clerks, customs employés, servants, and coolies, speaking every language under the sun, dogs and ponies, rapid-fire guns, jinrikishas, carts, and wheelbarrows, furniture, bedding, provisions, cases of wine, barrels

of beer, and a thousand other things, all were mixed in apparently inextricable confusion.

At precisely four o'clock General Tung-Fu-Hsang's soldiers from Kwang-su opened fire with a sharp volley of musketry from the city streets, and the siege of the Pekin legations was begun.

CHAPTER XXVIII

FIGHTING SIXTY FEET ABOVE GROUND

ALTHOUGH the heavily walled compound of the British Legation, which during the siege sheltered four hundred foreigners and as many more Chinese Christians, or nearly one thousand persons in all, was the stronghold of the defence, the lines occupied and held embraced a wide outside area, both to the eastward and on the south. Beyond the imperial canal, just east of the legation, stood an extensive collection of buildings enclosed by a wall, forming the yamen, or palace, of Prince Su. On the first day of the siege this was seized and occupied as quarters for the hundreds of school-girls and native Christians whom the missionaries had refused to abandon. It was defended by the Japanese, assisted by the Italian and Austrian marines, and though it was subject to many fierce attacks and an almost continuous bombardment that set its buildings on fire a dozen times, it never was given up.

Besides this outpost, the American, Russian, German, Japanese, and French legations also were held, as was the Hôtel de Pékin of M. Charnot and his brave American wife. It was strongly fortified with sand-bags, and sent out to its guests, who had

taken refuge in the British Legation, three meals a day with unbroken regularity during the siege. A large portion of Legation Street also was included within the foreign lines. On it stood a grain-shop, in which were found eight thousand bushels of wheat and several tons of rice, together with eleven one-mule mills, ready for grinding. As there were in all some three thousand persons to be fed, this food supply proved invaluable.

At first an Austrian captain, named Thomann, by virtue of seniority, assumed command of the defending force; but on the second day of the siege, he having proved himself incapable, the supreme command was, by unanimous consent, given to Sir Claude Macdonald, the British minister. Captain Thomann was killed a few weeks later during an attack on the Su Yamen, and now one of the streets of Pekin bears his name.

Under Sir Claude's intelligent supervision all the details of housing and feeding three thousand people, of preparing and placing fifty thousand sand-bags, of hospital and sanitary arrangements, and a thousand other things, were quickly systematized and placed in the hands of carefully selected committees. The work of fortifying the legations was given over to a young American missionary engineer, while the actual duty of defence was distributed according to nationality.

The British Legation compound, including the northwest angle of the whole line, was left to the resident inmates—ministers, attachés, missionaries,

etc. The Su Yamen and northeast angle were intrusted to the Japanese, aided by Italians and Austrians. At the southeast angle were French and Germans, the latter occupying a section of the great city wall, from which, however, they ultimately were driven. On the southwest were the Americans and Russians, in their own legations, with the former holding their own section of city wall. This position, in spite of continuous shelling and repeated assaults, was held by American marines to the end; and, commanding, as it did, the entire legation area, it proved the key to the situation.

On the 1st of July, or after ten days of siege, during which time the Chinese fire of rifle-bullets, solid shot, and shell had been maintained almost without intermission from one quarter or another, thirty-five of the defenders had been killed and nearly twice that number were in the hospital. The Germans had been driven from their section of the wall, the French Legation had been destroyed, and several sorties, made for the purpose of capturing or at least silencing certain particularly annoying Chinese guns, had proved unsuccessful. In all this time no news had been received, nor had it proved possible to send any out; and it was not probable that the desperate plight of the Pekin legations was even known to the outside world.

The bright spots in this gloom were that there still was plenty to eat and to drink within the lines, the defences were constantly being strengthened by additional sand-bags, which the ladies and Chinese

women were turning out by the thousand, the plucky Japanese still held the Su Yamen, and American marines still maintained their position on the wall. Also, very early in the siege the latter, dragging their Colt's automatic gun up to their elevated post, had made a raid along the top of the wall for a quarter of a mile, driving the Kwang-su troops in wild confusion before them, and mowing them down by hundreds.

Now, however, the Chinese, profiting by this sad experience, had advanced a series of brick and sandbag approaches, against which the Colt proved ineffective. At the end of the last one the Chinese had erected a small tower, only a few feet from the American barricade, and commanding it. From this, while protected against a return fire, they hurled down huge bricks upon the defenders, who were unable to reply. At the same time the American position, isolated since the Germans on the east had been driven from their wall, was exposed to a galling fire from both directions. The situation thus had become critical in the extreme; for, if the Chinese could succeed in forcing this position, the legations would lie at their mercy.

The top of the wall at this point was reached from the inside by two ramps, or sloping walks, that led upward like the two legs of a letter A. One of these was controlled by the Americans, whose barricades were at its upper end, while the other was in possession of the Chinese.

From the outset Rob Hinckley had cast his lot

with the American marines, largely on account of his liking for Turner, the sharp-shooter, whose acquaintance he had made on that first memorable day of the siege. On the morning of July 3d these two had come down from the danger post for a much-needed rest after a forty-eight-hour tour of duty on the wall. At sunset they were to return to the almost untenable barricades. In the mean time, they slept like logs until late in the afternoon, when they were awakened to partake of a meal of cold boiled mule "beef," rice, hard bread, and tea.

"Look here, young man," said Turner, pausing for a moment in his hearty eating, "I don't see why you should go up on that old rockery again tonight. You ain't 'listed, and don't have to."

"I have to just as much now as I did at first," replied Rob, quietly, "and you didn't say anything against it then."

"Things have changed. We seemed to have some show then, with the Germans to look out for one side; but we haven't any now, and I don't see how we can hold the place through another night. You've noticed that the Chinks always get busier at night than in the daytime, and now they are right on top of us."

"The only wonder to me is that they haven't cleaned us out long since," said Rob. "They certainly have fired shots enough to destroy an army, let alone a couple of dozen men, which is as many as we ever have had up there at one time."

"It is a funny business," admitted Turner, "and

I have puzzled over it a good deal myself. Do you know what I think? I believe that heavy firing from the Ha-ta tower is all a bluff and is mostly done with blank cartridges. If it isn't, we ought, by rights, to have been swept off the wall like puff-balls in a gale, long ago. There's another thing. It looks to me as if about nine out of every ten of the Chinks' rifle-shots must be fired straight up in the air, same as we kids used to do on Fourth of July. At night, when they fire most, I believe they all shoot into the air, 'cause you never hear of anybody getting hit at night, and they sure shoot to beat the band. Looks like they were only trying to scare us or kill us by keeping us from sleeping—I don't know which."

"Speaking of the Fourth of July," said Rob, "do you remember that to-morrow is the Fourth?"

"Sure, and I'm wondering if I'll live to see it. Somehow I don't feel as if I would."

"Oh, pshaw! Don't talk that way!" exclaimed the young volunteer. "You'll live to see it, and plenty more like it, only a heap happier. I felt blue myself this morning, but now, after a day's sleep and a good stuffing of mule, I feel all right."

At this point the conversation was interrupted by the entrance of Lieutenant Hibbard, who said:

"Well, boys, we are in for it! Word has gone out that we've got to capture those barricades to-night and sweep the wall clean as far as the Chien Men gate. There's a squad of Tommies going up to help us, and if we don't do the trick this time I

am afraid it will be all up with the whole shooting-match. Of course, Hinckley, you don't have to go unless you choose."

"Of course I do have to go, Mr. Hibbard!" cried Rob, hotly. "I should be too ashamed ever to call myself an American again if I didn't; and if we don't carry those barricades I hope I'll never come down again alive. What time do we start?"

"Orders are to assemble on the wall as soon as it gets dark enough to go up the ramp unnoticed."

"All right, sir, we'll be there," said Turner, "and I *know* I'll never come down again alive if we don't get the Chinks on a run. We have got it to do, that's all."

An hour later, in the dusk of evening, a little group of twenty Americans and as many British marines, all of them picked men, crouched on the lofty wall listening to the earnest but low-voiced words of Captain John Meyers, U.S.M.C., the gallant officer who was to lead the charge that would mean life or death to every foreigner then in the city of Pekin. He did not speak more than a minute, but what he said filled every man who heard him with the spirit of a hero. When he had finished he leaped the barricade and started down the wall, with every man of his little party striving to gain his side.

The Chinese tower, from which they had been so harassed, went down like a card-house before their on-rush. A scattering volley of rifle-shots came from the barricade, but the Chinese were too com-

pletely taken by surprise to make a stand; even the Kwang-su savages, who never before had known defeat, fled in dismay before that charge of yelling Americans, whose rifles seemed to pour forth a continuous and inexhaustible stream of deadly fire. The Chinese fired a few shots, hurled a few spears, and then ran for their lives, darting from one barricade to another, but never allowed to pause, until such of them as were left alive gained the safe shelter of the Chien Men tower, a quarter of a mile away.

As the jubilant Americans streamed back towards their own barricades, where ten of their number had been left on guard, Rob Hinckley, proudly bearing a Chinese banner that he had captured, gave utterance to his joyful excitement in the old academy yell with which Hatton boys announced their victorious return from hard-fought ball-games. "Hi-ho! Hi-ho! Hat-ton Hi-ho!" he shouted, and to his amazement the same call came back like an echo from far beneath him in the underlying southern city. "I wonder if it can be Jo!" he thought, and shouted again; but this time there was no reply.

There were no dead Chinese, nor any wounded, for a detachment of Russian marines, who had charged up the Chinese ramp after the Americans and British had swept by its upper end, had followed them, pitching every dead or wounded Chinese whom they discovered over the parapet and down into the southern city. When these Russians met the returning victors they reported that they had found

"THE SAVAGES FLED IN DISMAY BEFORE THAT CHARGE OF YELLING AMERICANS"

two dead Americans and carried them back to the barricades.

This news suddenly quieted Rob Hinckley's jubilant shoutings, for instantly he recalled Turner's foreboding, and realized that he had not seen nor heard him since that first mad scramble over their own barricade. Now he shouted: "Turner! O Turner!" but there was no answer, and when they reached the American post his worst fears were confirmed. Turner and another marine, named Thomas, had been shot and instantly killed in the brief space between the two barricades. Here, too, had Captain Meyers received a spear wound that he disregarded until the affair was ended. Then it sent him to the hospital, where he remained for weeks. One of the British marines was found to be slightly wounded, as was one of the Russians; but these were the only casualties that the legation defenders were compelled to pay for the most important victory of the entire siege. By it they had gained a clear quarter of a mile of wall that they never afterwards gave up, and which remains to this day American Legation territory.

CHAPTER XXIX

JO HEAPS COALS OF FIRE

TURNER, crack shot of the American marines and one of the best men in the corps, was buried. Rob laid a wreath of flowers, twined by Annabel Lorimer, on his coffin, and then went back to the wall, where he was on guard duty at the eastern barricade. A drizzle of rain had fallen since early morning. The Fourth of July of 1900, as celebrated by Americans in Pekin, had not been a particularly happy or enjoyable day.

When Rob relieved the man who had taken poor Turner's place on guard, the latter said:

"There's some chap down below there in the southern city who has bothered me a good deal. He keeps calling out, 'I-ho!' or something of that kind, every few minutes, and has been at it for more than an hour; but I can't get a sight of him or even locate him."

"Like this?" asked Rob, at the same time leaning over the parapet and uttering clear and loud the Hatton Academy call.

"Yes, that's exactly it," answered the marine. "How did you know? There he goes now—"

The answer had been prompt, but still no one

likely to have given it could be discovered. While they watched and speculated a Chinese arrow came flying up from some unseen bow, and fell on the wall just within the barricades.

"It was only a trick to get a pot shot at us!" exclaimed the marine, disgustedly; but Rob picked up the arrow, wrapped around which he found a sheet of thin paper. It was, as he had hoped, a note from Jo, that read as follows:

"Dear Rob,—Don't worry. Everything will come out right side. You have plenty friend in Pekin, among them Prince Ching, who tells that the spirits of air are protect you, and orders them fired at. I have fire-gun at Ha-ta tower, but only blank cartridge. Make plenty noise, and all body is please. Many big gun cannot be use, for fear shoot over and kill Chinese on other side. Now say can starve you out. If you want send letter Tien-Tsin, drop it over wall same place to-morrow, sun dark, and I take it."

From the foregoing it will be seen that Jo's ability to write English was not equal to his conversational fluency in that same tongue; but his letter was readily understood, and gave great satisfaction to the few persons in authority among the defenders, who shortly afterwards were made acquainted with its contents.

Repeated efforts had been made to get news of their situation to the outside world, but thus far all the messengers had been captured or turned back. Now, with renewed hope a despatch, descriptive of the situation in Pekin, and imploring speedy relief, was prepared and given to Rob Hinckley for transmission.

At sunset he again stood at the appointed place on the parapet, and with the first gathering of dusk a low but distinct call of "Hi-ho!" came up to him from the dark shadows at the foot of the lofty wall. His tiny message, folded in oiled silk and weighted with a bit of brick, already was attached to a thread, by which it was promptly lowered. Then came a slight jerk on the thread, and he pulled up the broken end to satisfy himself that the little packet really had been taken.

After this incident the siege dragged wearily on, with frequent skirmishes and constant firing on both sides, but with no decisive advantage to either. The death-list received almost daily additions, and the hospitals became filled to overflowing. To the heats of the summer season were added flooding rains that necessitated a constant repairing of washed-down defences. Thus weary days lengthened into tedious weeks, and the weeks formed themselves into an unbroken month of siege, before anything hopeful happened. Then came a white flag from the Tsung Li Yamen, with a note signed "Prince Ching and others," asking for a cessation of firing that negotiations for the departure of the foreigners might be renewed.

This proposition being accepted, active hostilities on both sides were suspended for a period of three weeks. During this interval the inmates of the legations were as closely confined to their lines as ever, and hardly a day passed without more or less rifle-firing.

In all this time there was no word from Jo, nor any proof that the precious message intrusted to him ever had been delivered. There were rumors, filtering through Chinese sources, that Tien-Tsin had been captured, and that a great foreign army was marching towards Pekin; but these rumors could not be verified, and as firing on the legations, especially at night, was again begun, the situation appeared more hopeless than ever.

Shortly before daylight, on the 10th of August, a furious fire was directed against the legations, beginning at the southwest, or Russian corner, and rapidly extending around the entire circle. While it was in progress, Rob Hinckley, who again was stationed on the wall, thought he heard the signal cry of Hatton Academy coming from the direction of the Ha-ta watch-tower. The noise of the cannonade and the rattle of musketry were so tremendous that he could not be sure, but he ventured an answering cry, and then breathlessly listened. Yes, there it was again, not loud, but distinct, and apparently close at hand. Rifle-bullets from the Ha-ta tower were sweeping the wall and thudding against the tough bricks of the shelter behind which crouched the Americans.

"Don't shoot, men! I am going out!" cried our lad. As he spoke he leaped the low barricade and ran to the outer parapet, from which the call had seemed to come.

"Jo!" he shouted. "Jo! where are you?"

"Here I am, Rob," came in feeble tone, and in

another moment the young American had found his friend crawling weakly in the partial shelter of the parapet, but at the very end of his strength.

Somehow Rob got him behind the barricade, where he lay panting.

"What is it, old man?" cried his friend, bending anxiously over the exhausted and pitiably emaciated figure. "Are you sick, or wounded, or what? Did you get through to Tien-Tsin? Are troops on the way?"

Jo's eyes were closed, and he barely breathed; but his lips moved, and Rob caught the whispered words:

"Army most here. Look, leg bandage, Rob, dear friend—"

That was all, and Chinese Jo never spoke again. The last great, self-imposed duty of his life had splendidly been performed, but at what expense of suffering never can be known, for in the turmoil of the days immediately following his heroic death he was forgotten. Afterwards General Gasalee, commanding the relieving army, could only say that he had given several despatches to as many messengers, with the hope that at least one of them might be got through. The one borne by Jo was found hidden in a blood-stained cloth bound around one of his legs. It was a brief note from the commanding general, stating that an allied force of twenty thousand men, British, American, Japanese, and Russian, were fighting their way towards Pekin, and making such steady progress that they expected to

be at Tung Chou, only twelve miles away, on the 12th, and to reach the capital by the 13th or 14th.

This, the first reliable news received from the relieving army, was hailed with extravagant joy by the long-imprisoned inmates of the British Legation, and for hours the bulletin-board on which it was posted was surrounded by a dense throng of all nationalities, many of whom could not read English, while some could not read at all, but all anxious to see the blessed words that promised them speedy safety.

The story of Chinese Jo's bravery was told from mouth to mouth until all knew it; and when, that evening, his poor, emaciated body, covered with mute evidences of his sufferings in the form of livid scars and unhealed wounds, was laid to rest in the legation grounds, his funeral was the most largely attended of any during the siege. Although it was not a military funeral, the guns of his own countrymen, firing upon those he had given his life to save, thundered a requiem alike for him and for the dying era of Chinese national life that was about to close.

Again Rob Hinckley and Annabel Lorimer stood together at an open grave, and as they turned away at the conclusion of the simple but solemnly impressive ceremony of committal, the latter said, with tear-choked voice:

"I think he was the bravest boy I ever knew."

"He certainly was," replied Rob, "and also he was the best friend I ever had."

When Sir Claude Macdonald first read the welcome despatch from General Gasalee, and at the same time heard that its bearer was dead, he exclaimed: "What a pity he could not have lived to take back a plan of the city walls, showing the best place of entrance!"

A little later this regret became generally expressed, but it did not reach Rob Hinckley's ears until the day after Jo's funeral. Immediately upon hearing it, he went to the American minister and offered his own services as a messenger to convey any desired information to the approaching army.

At first the minister refused his consent. "The southern city, as well as the country between here and Tung Chou, is crowded with the enemy," he said, "and for a foreigner, or even for a native messenger, to attempt a passage through them would be to court an almost certain death."

"My friend gave his life for us," replied Rob, simply, "and he was a Chinese who had been badly treated by Americans. What he did any American ought to be willing to do. Besides, I believe I can get through. He taught me how to travel in China as a Chinese, and now, if ever, is my chance to profit by his lessons. Please let me go, sir. If I am killed, it will only be one life lost; if I get through, the information I can give about the water-gate may save thousands of lives."

That night a Chinese beggar, apparently old and on the verge of starvation, clad in the filthiest of

rags, and with a scanty, unkempt queue coiled in slovenly manner about his half-shaven head, hobbled, by aid of a stick, towards the low water-gate, under the Tartar City wall, that carried off the surplus water of the imperial canal. This gate nominally was closed by iron bars, and in times of flood was impassable; but now there was little water flowing through it, and it was only choked with black mud. Above it was that section of the city wall held by American marines.

Fumbling in the darkness of this almost-forgotten water-gate, the beggar found a bar so rusted and worn by age that he could force a way through. When he emerged on the other side of the wall he was covered with black, vile-smelling mud. It rendered him so disgusting an object that even a Chinese could not tolerate his presence, and, whenever he approached one with a whining plea for alms, he was driven away with blows and curses. Thus he wandered on from group to group, through many streets, until he came to a gate in the eastern wall of the southern city that was guarded by a troop of Chinese cavalry. These amused themselves by teasing him, until, at length, one of them, tired of the sport, said:

"Oh! Put him outside, and let the old bag of bones go to the foreign devils. They will stuff him full of bullets and make him fat."

So the gate was opened a little way, and the beggar was thrust through it at the points of a dozen spears, some of which pricked him cruelly.

Thus driven from the city, he continued his way, walking more strongly now than he had before, over the great stone road leading to Tung Chou.

With sunrise there was borne to his ears the startling sounds of heavy firing in the east, the boom of field-artillery, the rat-tat-tat of machine-guns, and the sharp, volleying crash of musketry. Then came the roar of a heavy explosion, and he felt the earth tremble as though from a distant earthquake. Fugitive Chinese soldiers, many of them wounded, began to appear and hurry past him. A little later, as they threatened to throng the highway, he withdrew to a cluster of ruined mud-huts marking the site of an abandoned village. Here, desperately weary, he flung himself on the ground, and almost instantly fell asleep. An hour or two afterwards he awoke and cautiously peered from his shelter. The highway was deserted, and, regaining it, he again pressed on towards Tung Chou.

At length, the city wall was so close at hand that he could hear bugle-calls sounding beyond it. As he eagerly listened to the familiar notes, a rifle-shot came, without warning, from a ruined village similar to that in which he had rested. The beggar was spun half-way round, and felt a stinging sensation in his right shoulder. A moment later half a dozen Japanese soldiers, forming a scouting party, sprang from the ruins and ran towards him, laughing at the sorry figure he cut. One of them drew a pistol and was about to put him out of the misery indicated by his appearance, when, to their amaze-

ment, he shouted to them in a language that they knew to be English:

"I am American! Take me to General Chaffee!"

After a parley he managed to make them understand, and shortly afterwards he stood in the presence of the stern-featured, keen-eyed American commander.

"Well, sir! Who are you? What do you want?" demanded the general.

"I have just come from Pekin with this plan of the walls, sent by the American minister, and my name is Robert Hinckley," was the reply.

The words were hardly uttered when an officer, who had been writing in another part of the room, sprang to his feet and confronted the disguised lad with incredulous eyes.

CHAPTER XXX

THE CAPTURE OF PEKIN

Captain John Astley, of Z Battery, Light Artillery, U.S.A., had thought often of the lad who had crossed the Pacific with him, and when he received the order to proceed with his battery to China he wondered if, by any chance, he should again meet his young friend. In the rush of events that followed Rob was quite forgotten, until a strange coincidence brought his name so prominently to the front that it was mentioned almost daily. Captain Astley even hoped to find the lad in Pekin, and had anticipated the joyful recognition that would accompany their meeting. Now, therefore, as he sat writing in General Chaffee's temporary headquarters, near the Tung Chou gateway, blown up by the Japanese that very morning, the name uttered by the Chinese beggar under examination instantly attracted his attention.

"I beg your pardon, general," he said, "but this person has just mentioned a name well known to me. Have I your permission to question him?"

"Yes; question all you please," replied General Chaffee, who already was absorbed in the plan of Pekin walls and the accompanying description of

their weak points that had so opportunely come to him.

"Can you possibly be the Rob Hinckley who crossed the Pacific to Manila in the transport *Logan* last March?" asked the artillery officer, eagerly, of the wretched-looking figure that, trembling with weakness, stood before him.

"I am, sir; and you are Captain John Astley, of Battery Z," was the reply.

"Good Heavens, Rob! It seems impossible; and it is absolutely incredible that any human being could be so completely disguised and so utterly changed. How in the name of—? But I won't ask a question, though I am nearly choked by a thousand that are clamorous for utterance. There is a dear friend of yours somewhere outside, and I must bring him in, so that all of us may hear your story together. General—"

Here the speaker said a few words to the commander in so low a tone that Rob could not catch them, and hastily left the room.

In less than a minute he returned, accompanied by an excited but puzzled-looking gentleman, clad in semi-military uniform, who, hastily saluting the general, turned immediately to where Rob still was standing.

"Here he is, my boy!" cried Captain Astley, exultingly. "Your own daddy! We found him in Shanghai fretting his life out over his lost family, and brought him along as battery surgeon. But, hello! What's the matter? Why don't you rush

into each other's arms? Do you need an introduction?"

Father and son were staring curiously at each other.

"Is it possible that you are my own little Rob?" gasped the former.

"Are you really my father?" interrogated Rob, gazing doubtfully at the white-headed man who now was said to be the same young, dark-haired parent that had bidden him farewell in America years before.

"If you are Rob," continued Dr. Hinckley, huskily, tell me what has become of my wife — your mother. Is she alive or dead?"

"She is alive and safe in Cheng-Ting-Fu."

"Thank God! Thank God!" cried the overjoyed man, with tears rolling down his cheeks. "But, Rob— Good Heavens!"

With this he sprang forward and caught the lad, who was tottering and evidently about to fall. Loss of blood from his wound, strain, excitement, and exhaustion—all had done their work—and everything swam before his failing sight as his surgeon-father gently laid him down.

The next day, when the relieving army, which had fought its way mile by mile from the distant sea, made its final dash for Pekin, Rob Hinckley followed it in an ambulance, tossing and muttering incoherently in the unconsciousness of a high fever.

Within the city the excitement on that memorable 13th of August was intense. Foreign guns

thundered against its massive walls and stout gates from noon until dark, while from the lofty battlements swarms of Chinese sharp-shooters replied with so furious a rifle-fire that none dared cross the death-swept zone.

Inside the walls the bombardment of the legation defences was continuous all that day and all through the night that followed. Nor were the besieged foreigners silent; but through the long hours the baying of their Nordenfeldt gun, the vicious barking of their Colt's automatic, the growl of "Old Betsy," the Chinese six-pounder that they had found and converted to their own use, and the sharp yelping of their rifle-fire were heard unceasingly.

During the morning of the 14th the bombardment of the city was continued, the Japanese being held at bay outside a stoutly defended eastern gate, which they only succeeded in blowing up and carrying after dark that night. At the same time the Russians were caught in a death-trap at the next gateway on the south, where they easily had forced the outer gate, but could make no impression upon the inner. Here their chief of staff was killed, and many of their men, before they extricated themselves and retired to a safe distance.

After that the Americans tried the same entrance, stormed it, scaled the lofty wall, charged down the inner ramp, gained possession, opened the gate, and found themselves inside the southern city. From this point they fought their way through a net-work of alleys and streets, swarming with Chinese rifle-

men, to the water-gate beneath the Tartar wall, concerning which Rob Hinckley had furnished them with information.

In the mean time the British column, assigned to a gate still farther south, had the marvellous good-fortune to find it undefended. So they simply marched in, traversed the southern city, taking possession of the Temple of Heaven *en route*, made their way to Rob's water-gate, waded through its mud, and, to their own amazement as well as that of every one else, found themselves not only in the heart of Pekin almost without having fired a shot, but within the lines of legation defence as well.

The first officer of the relieving army to pass through the water-gate was Major Scott, of the 1st Sikhs, and with him were four of his men. Then came General Gasalee and his staff, followed by the Sikh regiment, the 1st Bengal Lancers, a detachment of Welsh fusileers, a field battery, the Hong-Kong regiment, and a detachment of Royal marines.

A few minutes later came the Americans, cheering their flag and their weary comrades, who for two months had held the wall. They also came through the famous water-gate that Chinese blindness had failed to obstruct. General Chaffee led the way, and he was followed by five hundred marines, the 14th and 9th regiments of infantry, two Hotchkiss guns, and Battery Z.

The siege of the legations was ended, the relieving army was in possession of Pekin, the Empress Dowager, together with the Emperor and the whole

imperial court had fled, and the ill-advised, savagely brutal, but long-continued effort to drive foreigners from Chinese soil had come to an ignominious ending. Had China been united, the struggle might have been prolonged for years, though it never could have succeeded; but China was "a house divided against itself." Out of the eighteen provinces only three took part in the movement, the others being either opposed to it or indifferent as to its outcome.

The Empress Dowager, who hated the very idea of reforms based upon foreign models, was opposed by the Emperor, who desired them. The prime-minister, Prince Tuan, bitterly anti-foreign, found his schemes opposed by Prince Ching and the ever-politic Li Hung Chang. The bloody Kwang-su general, Tung-Fu-Hsang, who thirsted for the blood of foreigners, was thwarted in his plans for their destruction by the more wary General Jung Lu, who ordered his troops not to kill any more than they could help.

So Pekin fell, almost without a struggle, and for a year afterwards the city was misruled and looted by foreign soldiers, who destroyed many of its most beautiful structures and carried away its most precious works of art. From it also they ravaged the surrounding country, sending out punishment expeditions to kill, burn, and destroy in every direction.

In the mean time the American troops had been followed into the city by a train of the biggest army wagons ever seen in China, each drawn by six huge

mules, and by a number of four-mule ambulances, one of which brought Rob Hinckley. From it he was transferred to a hospital, where he lay for weeks with no knowledge of his surroundings or of what was happening about him. Then one day he opened his eyes and looked into the face of his mother.

Of course he knew that this was a dream, for all things were but dreams with him now, so he wearily closed his unreliable eyes and went to sleep. The next time he opened them he again saw his mother's face, bending lovingly, but oh! so anxiously, over him. This time the dream lasted until she gently kissed his forehead, and he heard her say: "Please, dear God, don't take him from us!" Then he knew that he was awake and must make haste to get up, because it troubled his mother to have him lie there. Besides, it was very silly not to be able to raise his hands. A little later it occurred to him to wonder if he were in Cheng-Ting-Fu, or, if not, how it happened that his mother had come away from so safe a place into one so full of danger as Pekin.

By-and-by they told him all about the expedition that, accompanied by his father, had been sent down the road from Pekin, how terribly it had punished Pao-Ting-Fu for its murder of missionaries, and how it had gone on to Cheng-Ting-Fu to find all the foreigners who had taken refuge behind its brave walls safe and unharmed. He learned of his parents' joyful reunion, and how they had hastened back to Pekin and his bedside. Gradually,

too, he was told the thrilling story of his father's escape from the dreadful city of Tai-Yuan, of his perilous wanderings through Shan-Si and Ho-nan, until finally he found himself on a branch of the Han River, down which he floated for many nights in a skiff to Hankow. From there he was taken on a United States gun-boat to Shanghai, where he met Mr. Bishop, the engineer, and learned that his boy had plunged into the very heart of the storm of wrath then centring about Pekin.

During his days of convalescence, while Rob was learning of all these things, he saw much of the Lorimers, who had refused to leave Pekin until assured that the lad, to whom they felt they were so largely indebted for their own safety, was himself out of danger.

Then the two families left the city in which they had suffered and endured so much, and travelled together over the reconstructed railway to Tien-Tsin, where they took steamer for Shanghai. There Rob found his trunk, together with the money due him for services rendered, that had been forwarded from Canton by Mr. Bishop. He also found several letters from the engineer, who had learned so highly to appreciate the lad's pluck, manliness, and ready resource during the long journey they had taken together that he now offered him a permanent and well-paid position on the proposed American railway.

About this same time Mr. Lorimer, who was president of a great American life insurance company, offered Dr. Hinckley the post of chief medical

examiner in China for his company, which was about to extend its operations into that country.

It is almost needless to say that both these offers were promptly accepted, and before the Lorimers took steamer for America and the last stage of their eventful journey around the world, Dr. and Mrs. Hinckley were already settled in the Shanghai house that was to be their future home.

Rob left them there when he went to Canton to assume his new duties; but he rejoins them in July of each year, when father, mother, and son go together to Japan for a happy month among its life-giving mountains.

The strong friendship cemented between Annabel and Rob during those terrible Pekin days has since been maintained by means of frequent letters, and both await with eager anticipations the autumn of 1904, when the Hinckleys are to revisit their own country and join the Lorimers on a trip to the World's Fair at St. Louis.

In talking it all over, Mrs. Hinckley often exclaims: "How wonderful are the ways of Providence!" and whenever Rob hears her speak thus, he adds:

"Yes, mother, and how splendidly were the designs of Providence carried out by Chinese Jo!"

THE END