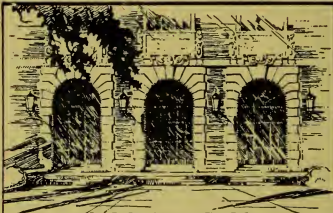




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ENCOUNTER WITH THE CROCODILE.

THE
WASPS OF THE OCEAN.

BY
WILLIAM DALTON.



LONDON
E. MARLBOROUGH & CO.

THE
WASPS OF THE OCEAN:

OR,

LITTLE WAIF

AND

THE PIRATE OF THE EASTERN SEAS.

A ROMANCE OF

TRAVEL AND ADVENTURE IN CHINA AND SIAM.

BY WILLIAM DALTON,

Author of "The Wolf-Boy of China," "The Tiger Prince," "Will Adams, the
First Englishman in Japan," "Phaulcon, the Adventurer," "Lost in
Ceylon," "The White Elephant," "The Nest Hunters," &c.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.

LONDON :

E. MARLBOROUGH & CO., AVE MARIA LANE.

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To

CAPTAIN THOMAS DALTON,

LATE OF

BANGKOK, SIAM.



MY DEAR TOM,

To you, who have thrice circumnavigated the globe, I inscribe this book,—and for *four* reasons.

First, because having been so many years resident beneath the climes in which the scenes of the story are laid, such an inscription seems to me appropriate.

Secondly, because to you, and your great experience of the far East I am indebted for the o'er true incident which forms its back-bone.

Thirdly, as a souvenir of those boyhood days, when you dreamt not of passing a lifetime amid the wilds, or on the waters of far distant lands.

Lastly, to keep fresh in your memory, that although we still remain parted by so many thousands of miles of ocean, you are ever present in the mind of your only Brother, the Author.

WILLIAM DALTON.

LONDON, December, 1864.

DEC 3 098 MARSHALL
Gen. Westcott 2 Nov. 53 Colbeck

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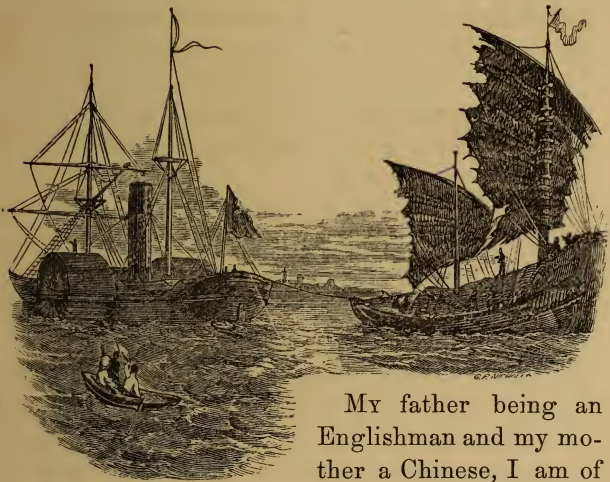
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CHAPTER I.

MOTIVES FOR MY VOYAGE—I MEET WITH TWO REMARKABLE
CHARACTERS.



My father being an Englishman and my mother a Chinese, I am of both nations; and as the first half of my life was spent under the tutelage of Chinese scholars, and the latter under that of an English missionary, I may fairly lay claim to be considered worthy of both, or at least no disgrace to either. But as I am not about to write my biography, indeed nothing but a narrative of twelvemonths' adventure in the land

and on the waters of Siam, and in which I shall not prove to be by any means the *most* important personage, I will at once relate the causes which led me to make the voyage.

My father, Herbert Richardson, had settled in the old and dilapidated, half Portuguese, half Chinese city of Macao, as a merchant, in partnership with the worthy and amiable Chinese, Ching; and in that city I believe he would have ended his days in peace and prosperity, but for a sad and double-edged stroke of misfortune, which, within the same week, took from him both his friend and partner Ching, and my mother, to whom he was most tenderly attached.

O! most sad was this misfortune, and heavily did we feel it; my poor father for a time walked the earth like one demented, while I, by the loss of my dear mother, felt as if one of the walls which supported my existence had been stricken down, leaving me a weak, tottering ruin. Time, however, the soother of all sorrows, brought me relief, and my father, who could no longer endure Macao, resolved to settle his affairs in the East, and return to his native country; a project which gave me much delight; for having received a sound English education from a learned and good missionary clergyman, besides having read most of the best modern books, which my father had procured from England, I longed to visit the dear land of my paternal ancestors.

The day, however, before we could take our departure, must necessarily be distant, for many and complicated were the transactions to be brought to a close; but chief of these were the arrangements to be made with our correspondents at San Francisco, California, and at Bangkok, the capital of Siam; with the latter especially, for as through our agent, or rather agents in that city, my father and his partner had transacted large business matters with the two kings of Siam, a very considerable portion of our fortune was in their hands.

Now, although we were prepared to wait even months for the settlement with the house at San Francisco, by reason of its being a good run of some six thousand miles or more across the North Pacific Ocean, we expected that a few weeks would have brought our arrangements to a close with the house at Bangkok, the latter being in a neighbouring kingdom. As, however, month after month passed away without bringing the expected advices from Siam, my father became terribly alarmed, nay, proposed to proceed there at once.

To such a project, however, I would not listen; for, in the first place, his health would not permit; in the second, it would be for the more advantageous closing of other home transactions that he should remain at head-quarters; and lastly, as although but little more than twenty years of age, I had travelled much—nay, had even made the voyage to Bangkok; and besides, when in that

capital, had made such good use of my Chinese education, that I could speak the Siamese tongue with fluency, my father agreed that I was the most fitted to undertake the journey.

“ But my dear boy,” said my father, “ it may be months before a trader, bound for Bangkok, will put into this port.”

“ It *is* possible ; but even so, I need not wait ; for at this moment, there is, in the inner harbour awaiting for employment, the junk ‘ The Five Social Relations.’ ”

“ Aye—true, lad, I had forgotten her ; she will do ; so let us at once go down to the harbour, and see old Li-Poo, who we shall find on board—that is, if he be not in an opium shop.”

And to the inner harbour we at once went, and there found the good junk, “ The Five Social Relations,” moored some few hundred yards from the shore ; and, moreover, with the signal flying, which showed she was waiting to be hired—either for passengers or freight—so hailing one of the Tankea boat-girls, we made for the vessel.

These Tankea boats, so called because they resemble the half of an egg, are worked by girls—thousands of whom ply upon the river, and thus earn their living, and literally reside the whole of their lives upon the waters of China ; indeed, they are said to be of a race distinct both from the Chinese or Tartars.

Getting on board the junk, we were again for-

tunate, for the finances of our friend Li-Poo being at a very low ebb, he had for the nonce eschewed the opium shop, to look after his own vessel, in order to save expenses till his junk should be employed. Our arrangements being made with this personage, of course including the usual proviso, that although the vessel was to be at my command during the outward and homeward voyage, the crew were to have the privilege of trading upon their own accounts; he promised to have the junk "all taut," and manned ready for sea by that day week.

Having thus arranged matters with the worthy Li-Poo, we re-entered our Tankea boat, and told the girls to pull ashore; but as then, for the first time, my father observed a little Portuguese war-ship steaming into the harbour, towing at her stern a suspicious-looking piratical junk, he told the girls to pull alongside, for such a terror at that time (as indeed they are now), were the pirate junks which infest the neighbouring islands of Lemma and Lin-Tin, that the capture of one of them was hailed by the people of Macao as joyfully as the destruction of a man-eater by the inhabitants of an Indian village.

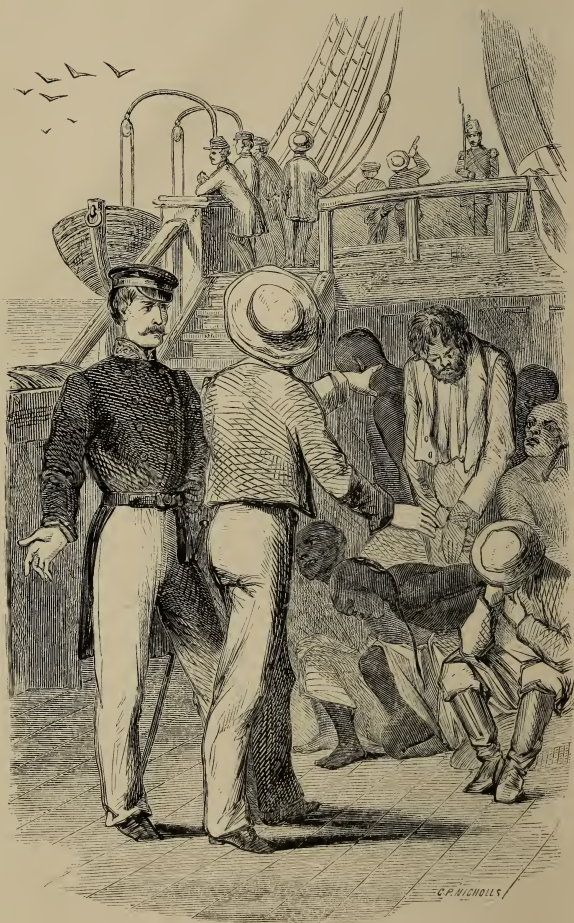
Now, as directly she entered the harbour, the steamer stopped her engines, we pulled alongside, and my father being upon terms of intimacy with her commander, we were speedily admitted on board; but what a sight presented itself—there, huddled together like a cargo on a quay await-

ing stowage, were some twenty half-naked, swarthy savages, corded hands and feet, with eyes gleaming and flashing hatred and revenge, through the most pitiful despair. They were the crew of the captured junk,—Pirates, or as the Chinese call them, “Wasps or Rats of the Ocean.” The sight of these wretches did not surprise us, for pirates we had expected to find, and pirates they were, without doubt; but among, though evidently not of them, for his features were of European mould, was a tall, slim young man, the very picture of abject misery, his hair long, shaggy, and matted; his beard hanging in *clumps* upon his breast, while the colour of his skin declared that it must have been long since it had come in contact with soap and water; moreover, his calico jacket, and loose wide trowsers, were both filthy and in tatters.

“Who can he be,” I pondered—“a European doubtlessly; but nevertheless a pirate, or would he be there, and like the rest, bound hand and foot.” My curiosity being thus excited, I asked the commander.

The reply was—“This fellow, likewise a boy, now below sick in his hammock, we found consorting with the pirates, arms in hand, and thus have treated them as sea-thieves. I believe they are both Englishmen; it is, however, only a guess, for unfortunately, neither myself, nor any of my crew, understand or speak that language.”

“But *Senor*,” said I, “it is scarcely possible



MY FIRST INTRODUCTION TO DICK ORME.

that this poor fellow and his boy can be pirates; is it not more likely they are the victims of these wretches?"

"It *is* possible; nay, even very probable, young Senor," replied the Portuguese captain, "but," he added, "from the information I received before starting upon our cruize after these villains, I firmly believe, incredible as it may seem, that a European was among the villains, and if so, why may not this be the man?"

"Truly it may be; but if it be as I believe, you will have committed a sad outrage upon an innocent man," I replied. With an instinct that my surmises were correct, I turned to one of the pirates, and in his own tongue, demanded—"Who and what was the European there among them?" but as the sullen brute would make no reply, I went close to the prisoner, who had been watching and listening to me while I had been speaking Portuguese and Chinese, and scarcely were the words, "Who art thou, my friend?" out of my mouth, than starting as if a bullet had whizzed by his ear, he exclaimed—

"God be thanked! I have found one person who can speak English; for the love of heaven, my good friend, loosen these cords!"

"But who are you? How comes it that you are among these wretches?" I said.

"Zounds! man, do you take me for a pirate? Is it possible a Christian Englishman could be

found among such scum, otherwise than as their prisoner?" he replied, adding, "Yet appearances *are* against me—so look you! my friend! my story is this: The lad below and I were passengers on board the 'Anne,' from San Francisco to Canton; but when we were, as near as we could make out, about a three days' run from Canton, we were boarded in the night by a pirate fleet; the rest of the crew and passengers were beheaded and pitched into the sea. The ship was manned by the chief of these wretches, who, turning us out of our ship, gave us over to these fellows, who were taking us—where to—or for what purpose, I have not, as yet, been able to make out, at the time we were captured by this captain, small thanks to him for mistaking a born Englishman and a bred American for a yellow-skinned, pig-tailed, China water-rat."

"Ask him, then," said the Portuguese, shaking his head incredulously, when I had interpreted the foregoing, "how it chanced that we found him sword and pistol in hand," which being rendered into English, the prisoner replied—

"Tell the skipper that if half-a-score of savages had their knives at his throat, and offered no choice between handling a sword in their behalf, and having his head sent flying from his shoulders, and that *is* how it happened, it's my belief, he wouldn't have been long making the same choice as myself and companion."

At this reply, the good-natured Portuguese laughed outright, and instantly with his own sword cut the cords; and having, through my interpretation, apologized for the mistake he *now* believed he had committed, ordered his steward to take the poor fellow below, and rig him out in one of his own shore-going suits. As, however, the late prisoner was following the steward down the hatchway, he caught me by the hand, saying—

“Look you, mister—”

“Richardson,” said I.

“Well, look you, Mister Richardson, it’s my opinion you *are* the real material; but just now there are so many more thanks in my heart than I can manage to get through my lips, and so—”

“Come, come, my friend,” said I, interrupting him, “no thanks; you would have done the same for me.”

“Aye, certainly I would, and that’s a *fact*, or my name is not Dick Orme.”

But again stopping him, I said—

“Falling in with these pirates cannot have improved either the state of your clothes-chest or purse, so you will not be offended, I hope, by my offering you a lodging at my father’s house till you can communicate with your friends.”

“From my soul, I thank you,” he replied; “but for the present I must have a care for the sick lad below. But after sundown I will try and make out your anchorage, and accept your offer,

till then, good-bye ;” so saying, he descended the hatchway.

Now, rough and ready as was my Anglo-American acquaintance, both in speech and manner, I had already become so much interested in the man and his fortunes, that I almost counted the hours till sundown. But I was disappointed, for he came not that evening ; nay, nor the next day, and as I was curious to discover the reason, I again went off to the steamer, whose captain told me that both Orme and the lad, his companion, had left the ship a few hours after we had first seen him ; moreover, that the boy being sick with fever, he had taken him to the hospital. This information was sufficient, I would at once go to that building. As, however, I repassed our house, which was on the Praya Grande, and on the way to the hospital, through the open window, I saw a stranger in conversation with my father. I could hear him speaking—the voice was familiar. “ Surely,” I thought, “ it must be Orme himself,” and at once I passed into the room by the open window, when guess my surprise ! to see the wretched outcast of a day or two before, transformed into a tall, robust young man, whose bronzed features, tastefully cut beard and moustache, shirt of dazzling whiteness, grass-cloth neck-tie, white loose coat, *pajãmmas* and large bamboo hat, covered with white silk, might have bespoken one of the most wealthy of the European settlers in the East ; not alone, however, in appearance.

but in gait and bearing was he changed; for now he was seated upon an ottoman, with one leg over the other, and his elbow upon his knee, leisurely puffing a Manilla cheroot, and apparently chatting as confidentially and friendly with my father as if they had been old acquaintances; but as I entered he arose, and throwing the end of his cigar out of the window, clasped my hand—saying laughingly—

“I take it, my friend, you are a *leetle* surprised to find me so much at home in these handsome ‘diggings’ of yours. But then, you see, I’ve seen pretty *considerable* of the world, and that’s the real thing to make a fellow tumble into domesticity—wherever he may be thrown.”

“Nay, scarcely surprised, but really pleased, for I longed, as well as expected, the visit,” I replied, shaking his hand.

“Oh, yes! my friend, you *were* surprised, and that not a little, to find what a good-looking bird a few fine feathers have made out of a scarecrow. However, Dick Orme is Dick Orme, at all times all the world over, and so he has just come to—”

“No thanks,” I said, interrupting him.

“Nay, I did not altogether come to repeat my thanks, for there are some services mere words can’t acknowledge. But well, I’ve come, as I have been telling the captain here, just to accept your offer of free quarters for a time, till I can either send to and get a return letter from Bangkok, or get a passage out there.”

“ Then *you* have business in Siam ?”

“ Aye, aye, friend, and pretty *important* business it is, too, and may our old friend of the brimstone country just have it out with those villainous pirates ; but for whom I might even now have been on the Meinam.”

“ It is a curious coincidence, Herbert,” said my father.

“ A fortunate one for our friend here,” I replied, adding, “ as it seems of so much importance that you, Mr. Orme, should go to Bangkok, I am glad I can offer you a free passage, and shall, I need not tell you, if you know the China seas, be delighted to have you for a companion. Why, what in heaven’s name can be the matter with the fellow,” I thought, when in answer to me, he placed his hands upon his knees, and stared at me without speaking.

“ Is that a *fact* ?” he asked.

I repeated the offer. “ Truly it is ; moreover, I shall sail the morning after to-morrow, if the junk be ready for sea,” I said ; and with a look of great delight he replied—

“ Well then, all I can say, my friend, is, that although it’s a little against my grain to be piling up obligations upon my shoulders, I’ll accept your offer, and trust to fate to enable me, some day or other, to repay you.”

“ Nay, nay, the comfort of a civilized companion among such a surrounding as a Chinese crew, is payment sufficient in all conscience.”

“All smoke, my friend, your good nature won't do away with the *fact*, there *is* obligation; and, in the long run, I object to obligation, for like debt, when you pile it up too high, it licks the manhood out of you.”

“Come, come, Mr. Orme,” said I, wishing to put a stop to the argument. “I offer, and you accept, so there is an end of the matter.”

“Well, well, so be it, my friend; but look you, as we are to be shipmates, just you, for the future, call me ‘Dick,’ ‘plain Dick,’ ‘careless Dick,’ if you choose.”

“Agreed, Dick,” said I, at once to place him at his ease; “but let's be upon equal terms; I am for the future, Herbert, plain Herbert; though mind you, *not* ‘careless’ Herbert.”

“No, no, you don't look ‘*careless* Herbert,’ would that I could say as much for myself; but, after all, I am what God made me, and that *is* careless Dick, as you will not doubt, my friend, if ever you hear my history,” he replied.

And as at that moment the servant brought in the refreshment tray, I said—

“Here is the tiffin, come there is no time like the present, so let us hear that history, for I am sure it must be one of great interest.”

“Nay, nay, not now, it will serve to while away the dull hours in a calm,” he replied, and I pressed him no further.

After the refreshment, we went out together, partly to examine the city, in which Dick appeared to take a great interest, but chiefly to attend the examination of the pirates, who that afternoon were to be given over to the Chinese Mandarin, for although the capture had been made by the Portuguese, the Chinese governor insisted that the subjects of his master, the Emperor, should be judged and punished by himself alone.

The City of Macao, which is built upon a promontory of the island of Sheang-shin, to which it is joined by a narrow isthmus, was the first city in China in which Europeans were permitted to settle. It was given to the Portuguese in the sixteenth century by the Emperor as a reward for their having aided him in destroying a celebrated pirate, of whom his Majesty had long stood in dread. But although the Portuguese have so long held possession of the city, and have greatly enriched it by making it the great depôt for their trade in the far East, the authority of their governor has never been more than nominal, the real power being in the hands of the head Chinese Mandarin, who has ever ruled over both Chinese and Portuguese, with a rod—well, not of iron, but of petty annoyance. Hence the reason the pirates were given over to the Celestial Magnate; and wretches as they were, I yet pitied them, for previous to their being brought into the presence of the Mandarin, they had been so severely bruised with

bamboos by his order that not one among them could stand without upholding.

Not so much pity did Dick feel for the abject wretches ; for when, with an obstinacy that might have passed for courage, they refused to divulge the name of their leader, or give the least clue to his haunts, that personage, giving way to a violent fit of rage, caught hold of the man who seemed to be the chief of the party, and having shaken him till he was breathless, turned to the interpreter, saying—

“ Tell the villain that his real chief is not a Chinese, but a European ; and that although he was in a large war-junk when he attacked the ‘ Anne,’ and disguised like a Chinese, I believe I recognised the rascal.”

“ What words are these that have escaped the lips of this clamorous barbarian ? ” asked the Mandarin, feeling his dignity injured by Dick’s course of proceeding ; and having been informed by the interpreter, he turned savagely towards the hapless pirate, saying, “ Miserable rat, is it under heaven, even villain as thou art, that thou could’st throw such dirt upon the tombs of thy ancestors, as to serve even in thieving under a dog of a barbarian ? ”

“ Such alas ! was the fate of the most miserable and smallest of the great Lord’s slaves,” was the reply.

“ Aye, aye, by heaven, I knew it was so ; I could

not be mistaken," exclaimed Dick, who had awaited the man's answer with suspended breath.

Now, as the great man's hatred of the best of Europeans, was far more intense than his love of justice, or his hatred of the vilest of the murderous crew before him, he was greatly pleased at this answer, and for the additional reason, that to incriminate a European would raise him far higher in the estimation of the Court of Peking, than the capture of half the pirates on the coast, so addressing the miserable man, he said—

"Great have been the crimes of the miserable rat, yet shall they be as if written in water, if by his means the head of this barbarian sea-rat be brought before us, let him, therefore, open his lips."

We were all breathless with suspense, to hear the name of, or some clue to the haunt of this European leader of Chinese pirates, for such a crime was unheard of, and shook us with rage and indignation. Well, at length the trembling wretch did open his lips; but it was only to answer, that he knew no more than that the European was the friend or companion of the Chinese leader, and that, although upon the occasion of the capture of the "Anne," he was in the chief junk, such an occurrence was rare, for he came and he went in so mysterious a manner that none but the Chinese chief knew.

At this answer Dick gnashed his teeth with rage and disappointment; but the Mandarin repeated to the fellow the offer of his life if he would give

him the clue to the haunt of his chief. To this, however, he could or would not make answer; in all probability he could not, for the same inducement being held out to the others individually and collectively, they gave the same reply, and I do not think that among a nest of such diabolical rogues more than one could have been found who would have preferred death to divulging the hiding-place of their chief; and the Mandarin being thus foiled, endeavoured to appease his indignation by ordering them all to be decapitated the next day in the public square—a sentence which was duly carried out.

“Is it possible that a European can have been among such a set of rogues, aiding and abetting in the plundering of the ‘Anne,’ and the massacre of her crew?” said I, as we left the Hall of Justice.

“Possible!” exclaimed Dick, vehemently, “not only possible, but certain, and *that’s* a fact; for though it was the dead of night when we were boarded, the glare of a lantern exhibited to me features that will haunt me to my grave. Aye, aye,” he added, “had I all the wealth in Macao, I would give every cent to be left half-an-hour alone with the man who owns them.”

“Then you *know* the man?”

“Nay, said I so,” he replied quickly, as if he had admitted more than he intended. “Well, well, if I did it is a long story, and will keep till

we have but a plank or two between us and the ocean ; but for the present pardon me, I must now to my patient."

So saying, and without waiting for a reply, this strange creature left and hastened in the direction of the hospital, leaving me pondering whether I had been altogether prudent in offering to make him the companion of my voyage ; for to say the least, there was much about the man that was mysterious, and mystery and mischief run too frequently in couples for me to like it. As, however, upon reaching home, I found the Chinese skipper in consultation with my father, Dick Orme and his affairs soon passed from my mind.

"Li-Poo has come to report the junk ready for sea," said my father.

"Then *I* am prepared to go on board to-morrow."

"So far so good, Herbert, for the recent punishment of the pirates, and the knowledge that the Portuguese war-steamer is just now on the alert, may keep the passage to the Gulf of Siam clear for a time," replied my father, adding, "but your '*compagnon de voyage*,' will *he* be ready?"

"Whether or no, father, wind permitting, I will sail to-morrow ; but I believe he will be here by sundown," I replied.

Then having dismissed Li-Poo, we sat down—I

to receive, my father to give, final instructions respecting my mission. This and other matters occupied us till nearly midnight, so that not until we began to think of seeking our bed-chambers, did it occur to either that Dick had not made his appearance.

CHAPTER II.

DICK ORME: A MYSTERY.

“WHAT vexes you, sir?” said I the next morning to my father, whom I found in what I believed to be a very irritable mood.

“The possibility that your voyage may be unnecessarily delayed by the want of punctuality in this young man,” he replied, adding, rather to himself than to me, “Truly, it is remarkable he should have failed to keep his appointment with us last night.”

“At least, there is much that is contemptible in a man’s breaking his voluntary promise.”

“True, Herbert, true; never break a promise, however trivial, it is a meanness akin to lying.”

“Never fear, sir; but as for this Orme, wind permitting, I sail with or without him, as may be.”

“Still, Herbert, we must not be too hasty in the matter; you have promised to give him a passage, and it is just possible that that boy, in whom he seems to take so much interest, may have something to do with his absence.”

“It *is* possible, but that I can soon discover by

going down to the hospital," and suiting the action to the word, I snatched up my Panama hat and went to that establishment, but there another surprise met me. The boy had been so ill during the night, that Orme had remained by his bed-side ; his sickness, however, proving to be but sudden and temporary, they had both left the hospital a little after sunrise that morning ; why they had left so suddenly, or whither however they had gone, no one knew.

This was very mysterious ; still, with an indefinite notion of finding them, I walked about the town and its suburbs, but more particularly the portion mostly populated by the Chinese, for I thought it not improbable that Orme might have been decoyed by the friends of the convicted sea-thieves, who it was well known had many confederates lurking in Macao. By the way, I may tell you, that piracy in China being regarded as no greater crime than is smuggling, I am told, upon the coast of England, every maritime town and village in the Celestial Kingdom abounds with sleeping-partners, or inactive members or proprietors in the villanous junks which infest the China seas.

This ramble was fruitless, I could hear nothing of Dick or the boy ; and so, after about three hours searching, I returned home, when I found my father in earnest converse with a weather-beaten, sun-burned man of middle age ; but regardless of politeness, for my mind was full of the mysterious dis-

appearance of Dick and the boy, I said, "The mystery is greater than ——"



But, with a glance of deep meaning, my father said, "Truly, Herbert, this is neither the politeness of a Celestial nor of an Englishman. This gentleman is Mr. Olivarez, of the firm of Costa and Olivarez, our San Francisco agents."

For an instant I bit my lip with vexation at being prevented relieving my mind of a mystery; however, it was only for an instant, for I knew my good father too well not to be fully aware that he did nothing without a motive, and so, shaking hands with Mr. Olivarez, I congratulated him upon his safe

voyage, and expressed my delight at seeing him ; indeed the latter was unfeigned, for I had little doubt that he had come in person to settle the large claims my father had upon his house ; but how bitterly was I disappointed when he replied—

“ Many thanks, young gentleman, although I question whether your greeting would have been so warm had you known that I may be the cause of delaying indefinitely that voyage to Europe, for which your father tells me you so greatly long.”

“ Stay, have you intelligence that will affect my father’s fortune ?” I asked with alarm.

‘ Aye, even so, though I trust but temporarily,” he replied, adding, “ the truth is that upon the very eve of our transmitting the sum total of your father’s claim, and that too in hard dollars, as he had requested, we were plundered to an extent that would have ruined us entirely, but for the aid of friends in San Francisco who enabled us to keep our most pressing engagements.”

“ Then,” said I, perhaps rather casually, for the truth is I believed his story to be some subterfuge to evade paying my father, such things not being uncommon, “ may I ask what brings Mr. Olivarez so many thousands of miles, for surely he cannot expect to find the robbers in Macao ?”

“ You are young to suspect so quickly,” he replied sternly, adding, “ Well, the thief, who was no other than a confidential clerk, succeeded in leaving San Francisco, that we *do* know, although

how he disposed of the dollars is to us as great a mystery as how he could carry them away from the store undetected ; for to do this he must have had a waggon and accomplices ; moreover, we knew he sailed for Canton, to which city I followed him by the next ship, but upon reaching Canton, I found that the vessel in which he had sailed had left on her passage to Siam ; so far this news was good, for having agents in Bangkok, I had little doubt of seeing him in that city, hence I chartered a Lorcha to follow, but in these roads falling in with a ship bound from Siam to Canton, we hailed her, and asked if she had spoken with the ‘ Anne,’ of San Francisco.”

“The ‘ Anne,’” I repeated.

“Aye, and *you* can scarcely be more astonished than I was disappointed, to hear that she had been captured and plundered, and all her passengers murdered at sea, and thus ended all my hopes.”

“Then you heard nothing of your clerk, the thief?” I asked breathlessly.

“Nay, what *could* I hear, for the poor fellow, whatever his previous sins, had been murdered by the pirates.”

“But one question, Mr. Olivarez, What was this clerk like, young, old, tall, short?” I asked.

“Tall, red hair, close shaven, and about twenty-five years of age. But why do you ask?”

“Well, a certain suspicion arose in my mind, however, I may not say more till it is confirmed,”

I replied, adding, "but is it not probable he may still be in Canton?"

"Not so. Jasper Brown is too smart a young man to remain long in a port frequented by American captains, and consequently where every arrival would place him in fear of being recognised."

"Is this *Brown* then an American?" I asked, emphasizing the name with delight, that after all it was not my new acquaintance.

"Well—yes—no—or rather half-and-half an Anglo-American, born in England and bred in the States, and so smart a fellow that even after coming so long a distance, I must confess I am only grieved that he has met with such a terrible fate."

"Then you *once* thought well of him?"

"So well that I would have staked my life upon his integrity; nay, even now I believe he was but the cat's-paw of a more designing rogue."

Reader, I had but little doubt that Dick Orme and Jasper Brown were one and the same person, but Mr. Olivarez's reply softened down my indignation at the crime with which he was charged. The conclusion of Olivarez's story was, that *he* had made the voyage to Canton and Macao to so arrange matters with his correspondents in those cities that, in a little time, he should be enabled to recover from the great loss his house had sustained.

"Well—what think you of this robbery?" asked my father, when Olivarez had left us.

“That it is at least possible Dick Orme and the man Brown are one and the same person.”

“My opinion also, and doubtlessly he has changed his name, and allowed his beard to grow,” replied my father.

“And I, father, am confirmed in this belief by Dick’s disappearance from the hospital, which was doubtless to avoid meeting Olivarez,” said I.

“Yet that can hardly be, for how could Orme have known of Olivarez’s presence in Macao?”

“’Tis a mystery; yet not enough to change my conviction of Orme’s being the thief.”

“At all events, Herbert, you are fortunate in having escaped such a precious ‘compagnon de voyage,’” replied my father, adding meditatively, “yet even if he be a rogue, who shall say what may not have been his temptation, for even Olivarez admits that this young man *once* possessed his highest confidence.”

“Yet, sir, did we know his hiding-place, should we not be in honour bound to disclose it to Mr. Olivarez?” said I.

“Perhaps so. Perhaps so; yet, Herbert, we are not thief-catchers, and I cannot but rejoice that he and Olivarez have not met, for however guilty he may have been, the sufferings of the poor fellow on board the pirate-ship have been sufficient punishment. And so,” added my father, quite regardless of the fact that he himself might suffer a con-

siderable loss by Dick's delinquencies, "Let us forget the matter at once," and thus I rejoiced that I had got rid of one who, to say the least, was a very questionable character."

That same day my father accompanied me on board the junk, and having satisfied himself that she was in due order, and every possible care had been taken for my comfort upon the voyage, bade me farewell. But *comfort* in a Chinese junk—such a notion is the wildest of chimeras.

Chinese trading-vessels have generally a captain who might more properly be styled a super-cargo. Whether the owner or not, he has charge of the whole of the cargo, buys and sells as circumstances require; but has no command whatever over the sailing of the ship. This is the business of the ho-chang, or pilot. During the whole voyage, to observe the shores and promontories are the principal objects which occupy his attention day and night. He sits steadily on the side of the ship, and sleeps when standing just as it suits his convenience. Though he has nominally the command over the sailors, yet they obey him only when they find it agreeable to their own wishes, and they scold and brave him just as if he belonged to their own company. Next to the pilot (or mate) is the to-kung (helmsman), who manages the sailing of the ship; there are a few men under his immediate command.

There are, besides, two clerks—one to keep the

accounts and the other to superintend the cargo that is put on board. Also a comprador to purchase provisions, and a heang-kung (or priest), attends to the idols, and burns every morning a certain quantity of incense, and of gold and silver paper. The sailors are divided into two classes: a few called tow-muh (or head-men) have the charge of the anchor, sails, &c., and the rest called ho-ke (or comrades), perform the menial work, such as pulling ropes, and heaving the anchor. A cook and some barbers make up the remainder of the crew.

All these personages, except the second class of sailors, have cabins; long, narrow holes, in which one may stretch himself, but cannot stand erect. If any person wishes to go as a passenger, he must apply to the tow-muh in order to hire one of their cabins, which they let on such conditions as they please. In fact the sailors exercise full control over the vessel, and oppose every measure which they think may prove injurious to their own interest, so that even the captain and pilot are frequently obliged, when wearied out with their insolent behaviour, to crave their kind assistance, and to request them to show a better temper.

The several individuals of the crew form one whole, whose principal object in going to sea is trade, the working of the junk being only a secondary object. Everyone is a shareholder, having the liberty of putting a certain quantity of goods

on board, with which he trades wheresoever the vessel may touch, caring very little about how soon she may arrive at the port of destination.

The common sailors receive from the captain nothing but dry rice, and have to provide for themselves their other fare, which is very slender. These sailors are not usually men who have been trained to their occupation, but wretches who are obliged to flee from their homes; and they frequently engage for a voyage before they have ever been on board a junk. All of them, however stupid, are commanders, and if anything of importance is to be done, they bawl out their commands to each other, till all is utter confusion. There is no subordination, no cleanliness, no mutual regard or interest.

The navigation of junks is performed without the aid of charts, or any other helps, except the compass; it is mere coasting, and the whole art of the pilot consists in directing the course according to the promontories in sight. In time of danger the men immediately lose all courage, and their indecision frequently proves the destruction of their vessel. Although they consider the English mode of sailing as somewhat better than their own, still they cannot but allow the palm of superiority to the ancient craft of the "Celestial Empire."

When any alteration for improvement is proposed, they will readily answer,—If we adopt this measure we shall justly fall under the suspicion of barbarism.

The most disgusting thing on board a junk is idolatry, the rites of which are performed with the greatest punctuality. The goddess of the sea is Ma-tseo-po, called also Teen-how, 'queen of heaven.' She is said to have been a virgin, who lived some centuries ago in Fulkeen, near the district of Fuhchow. On account of having, with great fortitude and by a kind of miracle, saved her brother, who was on the point of drowning, she was deified and loaded with titles not dissimilar to those bestowed on the Virgin Mary.

Every vessel is furnished with an image of this goddess, before which a lamp is kept burning. Some satellites in hideous shapes stand round the queen, who is always represented in a sitting posture. Cups of tea are placed before her, and some tinsel adorns her shrine.

When a vessel is about to proceed on a voyage, she is taken in procession to a temple, where many offerings are displayed before her. The priest recites some prayers, the mate makes several prostrations, and the captain usually honours her by appearing in full dress before her image. Then an entertainment is given, and the food presented to the idol is greedily devoured. Afterwards the good mother, who does not partake of the gross earthly substance, is carried in front of a stage to behold the minstrels, and to admire the dexterity of the actors, thence she is brought back, with music, to the junk, where the merry peals of the gong re-

ceive the venerable inmate, and the jolly sailors anxiously strive to seize whatever may happen to remain of her banquet.

The care of the goddess is intrusted to the priest, who never dares to appear before her with his face unwashed. Every morning he puts sticks of burning incense into the censer, and repeats his ceremonies in every part of the ship, not excepting even the cook's room.

When the junk reaches any promontory, or when contrary winds prevail, the priest makes an offering to the spirits of the mountains, or of the air. On such occasions (and only on such) pigs and fowls are killed.

When the offering is duly arranged, the priest adds to it some spirits and fruits, burns gilt paper, makes several prostrations, and then cries out to the sailors—"Follow the spirits!" who suddenly rise and devour most of the sacrifice. When sailing out of a river, offerings of paper are constantly thrown out near the rudder. But to no part of the junk are so many offerings made as to the compass. Some red cloth, which is also tied to the rudder and cable, is put over it; incense-sticks in great quantities are kindled, and gilt paper made into the shape of a junk is burnt before it. Near the compass some tobacco, a pipe, and a burning lamp are placed, the joint property of all; and hither they all crowd to enjoy themselves.

When there is a calm, the sailors generally con-

tribute a certain quantity of gilt paper, which, pasted in the form of a junk, is set adrift. If no wind follows, the goddess is thought to be out of humour, and recourse is had to the demons of the air. When all endeavours are unsuccessful, the offerings cease, and the sailors wait with indifference.

After the foregoing description, the reader will scarcely desire to make a voyage in a Chinese trading junk. To me, however, who from childhood had been inured to strange scenes, stranger people, and a life of adventure, the companionship of these semi-barbarians, semi-trading, but wholly (by inclination at least) piratical sailors, gave a piquancy to what would have otherwise promised to be but a very monotonous voyage; therefore no sooner had my father bade me farewell, than I became impatient for the breeze which was to waft us round the coasts of China and Cambodia into the Gulf of Siam; but when the hour came for hanging out the night-lantern, without wind sufficient to flutter a sea-weed, I determined to bury my impatience in sleep, and so entering the cabin, a little state-room which had been erected upon the upper deck for my use, I threw myself upon the couch, and speedily became lost to all consciousness, except that belonging to dream-land.

Suddenly, however, a sharp pinch upon my arm awakened and brought me to a sitting position; when, imagine my astonishment at perceiving by the glimmer from the lantern suspended in the

middle of the room, Dick Orme, not as I had last seen him in shore-going costume, but with a large slouched hat, and wrapped in a rough watch-jacket of pilot-cloth.

“*You* here!” I exclaimed.

“Come, come, my friend, why so scared? you invited, and I have accepted the invitation; although if I had been a pirate, matters would have gone queer with you, for when the boat came alongside, there was not a man on deck, and thus it was I came on board without leave, and am here to announce my arrival.”

“Zounds! this is dangerous neglect;” but my surprise was by no means equal to the astonishment of Li-Poo, who entering the cabin at that moment to tell me a smart breeze had sprung up, and perceiving Dick, stood speechless for nearly a minute, and then exclaimed—

“Hi-yaw! hi-yaw! I not know him. How this man come here?”

“Where were your eyes, your ears, or were they both dulled by sleep, you rogue?” I replied.

“Hi-yaw! hi-yaw! I not know,” again exclaimed the old man, expressing, in a species of Anglo-Chinese tongue, called pigeon-English, his astonishment, but to my question he replied with another “hi-yaw,” adding—

“Fader’s son got eyes, got ears, but ’spose eyes not see, ears not hear, Li-Poo know noting.”

“Now, look you, my friend, if you will just

imagine much sleep and more sam-shoo in the noddle of this old 'coon and his men, and a pair of muffled oars to my boat, you'll just about get clear of this fog," said Orme.

"Really, you are both cool and candid," said I, "but may I ask *why* you came on board at night, and especially *why* with muffled oars," much nettled at the man's impudence, and half-inclined to send him ashore under charge of half-a-dozen of the crew.

"You are complimentary, Mister Herbert, but you are right, I *am* both cool and candid. As for your question, that I will answer in good time," he replied; then addressing Li-Poo, he said,— "Now, old gentleman, just you go and get the anchor lifted, for, with the wind which has set in the sooner we leave this harbour the better."

But at this cool impertinence I became so angered that I broke forth—

"What am I to understand by this conduct, sir? Have a care, have a care, if you have any regard for one 'Jasper Brown.'"

"Aye! what! he replied, his face pale with rage or fear, but becoming calmer, he added—

"Hold there, before you say that which I may not pardon even in this strait—and remember I came here upon your own invitation ——"

"Stay,—I invited one Richard Orme."

"And Dick Orme it is who is before you."

"It is false—but in a few words, Mr. Orme—

Jasper Brown—or whoever you may be, if you do not of your own accord quit this junk as quietly, if not as mysteriously as you came, I will have you sent ashore in irons,” I said, and for a moment his breast heaved, his eyes flashed, but subduing his rising passion, he replied—

“Send this Chinese from the cabin, and if you are not afraid to be left alone with me, I will at least satisfy you that your suspicions are unjust.”

“Hi-yaw! what good fightee when can talkee,” exclaimed Li-Poo, who from the fierceness of our gestures evidently thought we were coming to blows.

“Afraid,” I repeated scornfully, adding, however, when at a wave of my hand Li-Poo had left the cabin, “Answer me, are you or are you not Jasper Brown, the run-away clerk of Costa and Olivarez?”

“In a word—yes.”

“Then Mr. Brown the sooner we part company the better, for though in consideration of what you have already suffered, I would not willingly act the part of a thief-catcher, I yet know too much of your antecedents to feel desirous of your companionship.”

For a full minute neither of us spoke, the silence however, was broken by a thin silvery voice, full of emotion, saying—

“Do please listen, Dick is not bad. No, no, he is good, very good.”

As he spoke, the speaker came from behind

a screen, and fell at my feet, looking up imploringly. It was a slim boy in a tattered dress, with a large slouch hat, which shaded very regular features; but so plaintive was the voice, so beseeching the attitude, that notwithstanding my surprise and anger, I could but say—

“Who are you? How came you here, my boy?”

Dick, however, who seemed annoyed at the boy's having come forward, said—

“Little Waif, little Waif, you are my good angel; but for thee, I should have forgotten myself,” and my curiosity now getting the better of my indignation, I said, “Is this the lad who was the companion of your imprisonment among the pirates?” but at that moment the boy fell backwards, apparently in a fainting fit, and Dick, kneeling and holding him in his arms, replied—

“It is—it is; but I told you I had a story: this lad is part of that story; but for heaven's sake help me with water.”

I did as he bid me, and in a few minutes the lad revived; when Dick said—

“My poor little Waif—my poor little Waif, the exertion has been too much for you.” Then turning to me, he said—

“Master Herbert, betray *me* if you will; but for the sake of mercy, give this lad a cabin for the night, and when he is at rest, if I do not convince you in a few words, how unjust is all that you have heard of me, I will willingly seek Olivarez myself

in the morning," and as whatever my feelings were against Dick, I could not but pity the poor boy; I myself went and bargained with one of the sailors for his little dog-hole of a sleeping-place, and Dick laid the lad down; then together we returned to my state cabin, and he related his history.

CHAPTER III.

DICK ORME RELATES HIS HISTORY.

To begin at the beginning, my father was what people call a respectable man, that is, he was secretary to a charitable society, with a sufficient income for his small wants; and, although not large, it *was* sufficient, for he never was in debt or without a small balance at his bankers, and that I take it, *is* being respectable anyhow. Still, however, in common with my mother, he possessed one very grave fault, that of being too indulgent to me, his only son; but that fault brought its own punishment upon the poor souls, for it caused me to make their lives a living purgatory.

As a child, I was ever getting into trouble through my own—well—not wilfulness, but which by the way is as bad—carelessness.

As a boy, I could not remain under one master for a longer period than six months; the reason of that, however, was, that at my first school I formed a friendship with one wild “ne’er do well,” who being expelled, induced me to follow him to

another and another school. When I reached the age of fourteen, my father gave me notice that the following year I must enter his office as his assistant, so that upon his becoming superannuated, I could take his position, a boon the directors of the charity, out of their great respect for their old and valued servant, had promised him; conditionally, that my conduct should warrant such promotion, and great was my father's delight thereat, for he believed me provided for life; and looked forward to a green old age, with grand-children at his knee, and myself honourably fulfilling the position he had marked out. But, heaven forgive me! for destroying his pleasing dreams.

The young scamp whom I had followed from school to school, ran away to sea, not before, however, he had talked to me so much of ships, that I longed to plough the wild waste of waters, which have such enchantment for the young, but which are so bleak and barren to the old. The long and short of it was I *would* go to sea; yes, that was my expression; but, oh! how little I understood its full meaning. So, cost him what it might in money or feeling, my good father, not only let me have my will, but expended the greater part of his little savings in fitting me out, and apprenticing me to a shipowner.

Now, under other circumstances, I might have taken kindly to the sea; but it happened, as indeed, it very often happens, that the skipper

proved a tartar, so upon our arrival at Calcutta, I unshipped myself, and having hidden until the ship had sailed, endeavoured to obtain employment in a merchant's house.

Fortunately, I succeeded; and notwithstanding my salary was but a few rupees a week, I liked my new occupation; unfortunately, however, the kindness with which my employer treated me, aroused the jealousy of a senior clerk, who, by affecting a sincere friendship, by degrees, artfully wormed out of me, not only the story of my young life, but that it was not my intention to remain in India for any length of time; all of which, but I suppose with additions, he conveyed to our employer, who thereupon gave me a quarter's salary and my dismissal, telling me, at the same time, that he would rather part with me then, than after he had taken the trouble to make me useful.

Now, this was a sad blow, for notwithstanding my foolish boast of it being my intention to return to England, I was in fact very sorry to leave my situation; the more so that I had written home to my parents, giving them an account of my good fortune in having at length obtained a settled position, and one that would soon enable me, by hard work, to repay some of the money I had been the cause of their squandering.

Hostilely, however, as the Calcutta merchant had treated me, he gave me a recommendation to the captain of a ship bound to the United States

who, on condition of my acting as a kind of clerk to him, and making myself generally useful, gave me a free passage to New York; in which great city I soon found myself, and in a much better position than I had any right to expect. For that good fortune, however, I was indebted to the captain, who, the very day after our arrival, procured me a situation, and a fair salary in a shipping house, in which he himself had some interest.

So far all seemed "*couleur de rose*," and I believed myself to be on the road to fortune, and to that effect I wrote to my parents; but, alas! the reply came from my mother, who told me that my father had been dead six months. My good, kind father! Oh! how bitter was my sorrow! how poignant my regret, for my ingratitude towards him!

I had, however, one source of consolation, by industry and good fortune, for my employers were very liberal in their dealings towards me, I had saved two thousand dollars. *That*, at least, I would send to my remaining parent, whom my father, partly in consequence of the money he had spent upon me, but chiefly in consequence of the failure of a company in which he had invested his savings, had left in straightened circumstances.

"A right noble resolution too," I could not help observing, being even now more than half convinced that somehow Dick would turn out innocent of the crime laid at his door by Olivarez.

“Nay, Master Herbert, it merited small praise, for it was but purchasing quiet for my own conscience, and that too with money for which I had, perhaps, but too little regard,” he replied, and then continuing—“Now, it so happened, that in a conversation with Captain Crafty, he who had brought me from India, and had so well befriended me upon my arrival in New York, I mentioned my intention of sending this money by means of a bill of exchange upon a London merchant—whereupon the captain, shaking me warmly by the hand, praised me for my intention, and, as I then believed, very kindly offered to put me in the way of almost doubling the amount, and his plan was very feasible. It was to lay out the money in goods, similar to a cargo of which he was about himself taking to London, by which means, and charging me neither commission for his trouble, nor freight, a very handsome additional sum would be secured; and having complete faith in him, I gratefully accepted the offer, and handed over the dollars.”

“Surely that man was not hard-hearted enough to rob you,” I interposed, for that was my anticipation.

“Nay, nay,” he said, “not that, nor do I even now *know* that he did, although I have some misgivings as to whether my mother ever received one cent—however, be that as it may, the captain sailed, and when sufficient time had elapsed for the passage to and fro of the mails, I became on tenter-

hooks of anxiety and expectation for news from my mother, but nearly six months passed before I received a letter—and then from Crafty—telling me she had recently died.”

“That must, indeed, have been a great grief; but tell me,” I added, “what became of those goods? Was the profit realized? Did your mother receive the proceeds?”

“Of that I *now* have my doubts; but at the time, so great was my grief, that I thought but little of the money—nay, rested quite satisfied with Crafty’s account, which was that, in consequence of a glut in the London market, he had sold the whole of his cargo at a great loss, about one half what it had cost; but that he had paid over to my mother, her, or rather, my share of the proceeds, and that being in very straightened circumstances, the sum, small as it was, had at least driven the sting of poverty from her deathbed.”

“That man was a great rogue, believe me,” said I.

“He was—he is, and that’s a *fact*; but I did not think so *then*, for his account to me tallied exactly with another he rendered to my employers, who had a considerable share in the same venture.”

“But this Crafty, did he not return to New York?” I asked.

“No; for upon his arrival in London he quitted the sea, as a profession, and resolved to settle down in England; *when*, however, and *where* I

again met with him will soon follow. The loss of my mother, my only relation, or friend in the world, for a long time preyed on my mind; the more so, as I profanely believed that, but for my past conduct, her days would have been 'longer in the land.' There is, however, a potent medicine for grief, hard work, complete occupation, and to that I applied myself so well that a few years saw me a partner with my former employer. I worked much, and spent little, the sure recipe for making a fortune; but a year of panic came, it killed my partner and ruined me. There is seldom, however, a misfortune to be found that has not hidden in its folds some luck. Thus, in settling the affairs of our late firm, one house was so pleased with my exactness, and the fair state of the accounts which had been kept by me, that they offered me a confidential post, and again I saw before me an opportunity of making a fortune, for the house was that of Costa and Olivarez, at San Francisco. It was the year following the discovery of gold at Sacramento.

"In my new employment, I toiled as of old, and as of old was rewarded by the full confidence of my employers. Nay, so high did I stand in the favour of the senior that but a few months since I was upon the point of marriage with his daughter Josephine."

"Is this, indeed, possible?" I exclaimed, as Olivarez's story passed through my mind.

“It is—but listen,” he replied, adding, “Now, hard as I had toiled, and high as stood my character with my new employers, I possessed one fault, which, as you will see, indirectly ruined both my character and prospects. It was a propensity for gambling—a vice at that period so prevalent in California as to be considered almost venial. Indeed, so common had it become even before the gold discovery inundated the land with a polyglot population, made up of the refuse of all nations, that the Public Council had passed stringent resolutions for its suppression. But to return to my marriage.

“Well, upon the solemnization of the ceremony, it was arranged that I was to become a junior partner, the only consideration being that I should place the whole of my savings (and they were considerable) to the general capital of the firm. Now, listen! One night, but three weeks before the day appointed for the wedding, the whole of these savings were lost at the gaming-table. For a time I was distracted, however, speedily resolving upon my course of action, I at once sought my intended father-in-law, confessed my folly, and told him that it was my intention to leave that country. To my surprise, however, the generous old man not only condoled with me upon my loss, but begged of me to remain in the house, and promised that if for twelvemonths I worked in the interest of the firm as I had hitherto, and during the whole time

refrained from the gaming-table, that with or without money of my own, I should at the end of that period become both son-in-law and partner. And all this astonished me the more, because he had been *the* member of the Public Council who had proposed and carried the resolutions for the suppression of gaming.

“Thus was I once more placed in a fair way of redeeming my fortune, and doubtlessly should have succeeded but for an incident which I will now relate.

“At that time the gold-fever was at its height. Our house carried on a large trade in the purchase of the ore and dust from the diggers, which we shipped to the States, getting in return goods and dollars. Then again we bought cargoes from the merchants of Canton, Shanghai, and Bangkok. From a merchant of the latter city Messrs. Costa and Co. had received a cargo of dye-woods, feathers, cardamoms, sugar, oils, and tobacco, but as the transaction had taken place with the supercargo of the vessel, who, in fact, was a partner in the house at Bangkok, when the cargo had been unshipped, and the vessel nearly reladen with bar-gold, which Messrs. Costa had given in exchange—the balance by the way, being in our favour a considerable sum in hard dollars, it became my business, in the absence of the two partners, to receive him. I did, and from the moment my eyes rested upon him, I believed I had seen him before. That I did

not at once recognise him, you must not be surprised, for it was, and had been for a long time my daily habit to meet with people of all nations, in every variety of attire, and speaking all languages, moreover, he was some sixteen years older and instead of a plain-shaven face, he was now bewhiskered, moustached, bearded, and long-haired. Before, however, I had been very long in his company, I could not help saying—

“Surely, I am not mistaken, it must be Captain Crafty to whom I am speaking.”

He stared full in my face for a minute, then catching hold of both hands, he replied—

“Yes, yes. I am he. But is it possible that I see my young friend, Dick Orme?”

“Indeed, it is,” was my reply, but still thinking of my mother, although so long a time had passed, I said, “But of my poor mother, tell me of her last moments!”

“Nay, nay, lad, not now; this place is scarcely fitting,” he replied, glancing at several Chinese dealers, and some gold-diggers, who were then in the store. “But,” he added, “come you to my lodging at Fink’s hotel, in Montgomery Street, and dine with me, and we will have the whole yarn over,” and seeing the reason of his objection to talk upon private matters just then, I promised to visit him after closing the store.

Now, when he had left, I felt much vexed that I had so hastily promised, for that morning Mr. Oli-

varez had gone for a short stay to Sacramento City, then building, and Mr. Costa was away at his house about ten miles from San Francisco, while I, and an old Chinese coolie, were the only persons left in charge of all the valuables in the store: no slight charge or anxiety just then, for we had in the place the sum of ten thousand dollars in hard cash, the only time perhaps so large a sum in cash had ever been in the stores, and then only by accident; however, a moment's thought, and I resolved to send a note to the hotel postponing my visit till another day, when one or other of the partners should be in the city, a caution you will believe very necessary, when I tell you that San Francisco was at that time so crowded with the choicest rogues and rarest rascals from Europe, Asia, and Australia, that robbery and murder was, not of daily, but hourly occurrence.

“Well, upon this resolve I acted, but when night came, I received a note from Crafty, by the hands of a Chinese sailor, belonging to a large junk, then lying in the bay, a circumstance which, in itself, might have aroused my suspicions, to the effect, that if I desired to see him it must be *that* night, for having concluded his business ashore he intended to sail the following morning.

“Now, as I fancied that our meeting in such a part of the world was providential, and I knew the improbability of its again happening, to resist his

invitation, seemed to be sundering the only link which connected me with my dead mother.

“ I deliberated—and that deliberation caused my ruin. Not an instant should I have swerved from my duty, and even as I examined the locks of the room in which the dollar chests were, and secured the key about my person, I felt a presentiment that something would go wrong; but then I reasoned, the store never had been robbed, and if it should happen that night, my luck would indeed be extraordinary.

So leaving the old Chinese coolie strict orders not to leave the store for an instant till my return, I proceeded to Montgomery Street, and there found Crafty anxiously awaiting my coming, and so absorbing was his story, first of my mother's death, her blessing sent to me, then of his own history—how that he had settled in London, but having failed, had again gone to sea before the mast, had wandered about the world, coming to an anchor sometimes in South America, sometimes in India, China, and lastly, in Bangkok in Siam, between which capital and California he was then trading on his own account, and on that of a partner there settled.

“ Having related his adventures since he had left me in New York, and that too in such a blunt seaman-like fashion, that I did not doubt one word, he pretended to have the affection of a father for me, even so far as begging I would quit Messrs.

Costa and Olivarez and share his fortunes, and but for my engagement with Josephine, I believe I should have accepted his offer. But telling him of that betrothal, he congratulated me warmly upon the meritorious conduct that had raised me to such good fortune, and begged that I would relate the whole of my adventures to him.

“Well, thrown off my guard, I did; but in my great belief in his interest in my welfare, I told him more than was prudent respecting the affairs of my employers. However, touching upon the business of the firm, brought me back to a sense of my responsibility, and I told him that I must there and then return to the stores, whereupon he commended my anxiety, and in a careless, off hand manner, offered to accompany me.

“I accepted his offer; indeed, I could not refuse. But when I had examined the premises, and seen that all was as it should be, he begged that I would sup with him at his lodgings. Had I been prudent, I should have refused, if I did not, however, it was only because I believed that he would sail early the next morning.

“Upon reaching his lodgings, I found prepared a supper, sumptuous even for that riotous city of spendthrifts. But now comes the most serious portion of my story. Having supped, and as I believed very temperately, for keeping my responsibility present to my mind, I drank but one glass of wine; now that that wine was drugged I cannot *positively*

assert, but if not, it was remarkable that before I had proceeded one hundred yards from the hotel, in the direction of my store, I became seized with an overpowering giddiness, and suppose must have fallen; but be that as it may, when consciousness returned, all was dark around me, literally I could not see my uplifted hand. A moment's thought, and the events of the previous night rushed into my mind, and then I knew that I must have been brought there for some sinister purpose. As this terrible conviction came over me, I placed my hand in my pocket to feel for the key of the dollar-closet—it was there, and that comforted me, there had then been no design upon the store; but then again robbery of my person could not have been the object, for my watch, my purse, containing several dollars, were safe. What, then, could be the meaning of all this? I was bewildered. Where was I? I felt my way about the room, as I have said it was pitch dark, without one glimmer of light; still I measured the extent of my prison, it was about six feet square, but I could feel no opening by which I might escape; so I again sat down to think out, if I could, the causes of this outrage. That I had not a single enemy in the country I knew, therefore, it soon became clear to my mind, that if to get me out of the way had been the object of my unknown enemies, it must have been for the purpose of plundering the store.

“ But the key was still in my possession; that,

however, was but a poor consolation, for there was one organized band of thieves, known as the 'Hounds,' at that time in San Francisco, who set locks, bolts, and bars at defiance. But then again, I knew that that villainous crew would rather have quieted me by a revolver, or a bowie-knife, than be troubled by my detention, and so I could come to no conclusion. Well, in the midst of my reverie, I was disturbed by the creaking of hinges, and a stream of light. A door opened, a man with a lantern in one hand, but masked, and a revolver in the other, entered, followed by a companion—

“ ‘Scoundrel !’ I cried, ‘ what means this outrage?’ However, he took no other notice than to bring the shining barrel to a level with my head, and when his companion had put down a basket of cold meat, bread, and a bottle of beer, they both left as they had entered, in silence, leaving me with the reflection that whatever their designs, they did not extend to the taking of my life. Thus I remained that day and the next, without receiving another visit; but about the middle of the third night, at least I guessed it to be night, the door was again opened, and the same men made their appearance. But this time it seemed as if my hour had come, for one of them passed a strong cord round my arms. The other, however, who held the lantern, told me not to be alarmed, that they intended me no mischief, on the contrary, if I would submit to be gagged and blindfolded, they

would soon set me free. Well, I accepted the offer, and they having first performed the pleasing operations which temporally deprived me of sight and speech, led me along what I took to be a long passage, up a flight of steep steps into the open air. I was hoisted upon the back of a horse, which, with a man behind, and another before me, was set galloping. Where to, of course, I then knew not, but in less than half-an-hour we came to a full stop. It was at the sea-side, for having made me dismount, one of the fellows fastened his horse to a tree, and having helped me into a boat, he took sculls in hand, bade me sit in one position, and pulled hastily till the keel grated upon shingle; then having assisted me to land, coolly asked which I would prefer, being shot through the head, and as he spoke he clicked the lock of his pistol and laid its cold barrel against my face, or to be set at liberty. Now, notwithstanding my position, I laughed at the question. My agreeable friend, however, did not seem to regard it as a laughing matter, for in a rough, but evidently disguised voice, he said—

“ ‘ Now, jist look here, my shaver, this choice ain't the thing to be laughed at; but what I mean is this: If so be as you'll promise not to pull this bandage off them eyes o' yourn for half-an-hour, I'll set your hands free, and then you'll do as you like; but if you don't promise, and now I think of it, my pop here carries a mes-

sage a pretty long distance, it doesn't much matter whether you do or not. I'll jist put a bullet through as'll make you considerable blinder than you are now, d' ye see? So jist tell me which you mean, though in the long I take it, it won't make much difference, as seeing if you aint shot, it's about hanged you'll be.'

"I complied, and the fellow at once cut the cord which bound my arms, then having cautioned me again that till he had put his foot upon the opposite shore, and mounted his horse, he would have his eye upon me, he jumped into the boat; but as he pushed her out, he threw a paper towards me saying—

"'And look, you stranger, if you just clap your eyes inside that, you'll see it won't be the onwisest thing you can do to get clear of these diggins in about the click of a six-shooter.'

"I waited at least half-an-hour before I unfastened the bandage, and then, as I had anticipated, saw that I had been brought about two miles across San Francisco Bay, to the little, and then very sparsely inhabited, island of Yerba Buena; nay, the part to which I had been carried was desolation itself, not even a shanty being at hand. The fellow's parting words caused me to snatch up the paper. I opened and found it to be a copy of the 'California Star,' the first newspaper published in that territory, and then but a few months old. My eye ran quickly down the columns of the first

page, but there was nothing that interested me; but at the head of the second was every proof of the ruffian's declaration, that I had but small choice between shooting and hanging, for thus ran the heading—

“GREAT ROBBERY BY A CONFIDENTIAL CLERK.
ONE THOUSAND DOLLARS REWARD!

“Yes, that which I had so much feared *had* come to pass; the stores had been robbed of the whole ten thousand dollars, a weight in silver that must have required a waggon for its carriage; but worse, *I* was suspected, nay, the accused thief, and that too upon the evidence of the Chinese coolie and my absence; and for me that reward was offered. But that I burned with a desire to clear myself in the eyes of my employers and my betrothed wife, I should have been wicked enough to have killed myself upon the spot; but clear myself against such evidence! How? for the pith of it was as follows:—

“There were several locks to the specie closet—they were passed by one key—my key—it was possible; but it was scarcely probable that there was another key in California that would open them, for the locks had been specially made for the house by the most scientific lock-maker in the United States—yet the door had been opened without violence, and by means of a key. That was one strong piece of evidence to my employers, but it was a mystery to me, for the key, as I have

told you, was in my possession, and that had been my comfort in the dark room.

“Then the coolie affirmed that during the day I had been visited by a Chinese sailor, whom he knew belonged to a junk which had been lying in the bay for some time, and had long been suspected to be a piratical craft. That I had quitted the stores in the earlier part of the evening, leaving strict injunctions that he (the coolie) should not open the door to any person but myself, let the business be what it might. That I had returned at a much later hour than was my custom, to go to bed, but that I was accompanied by a stranger, with whom I again went away. That some time after he (the coolie) was summoned to the door, and believing it to be me, opened it, but instead he recognized the Chinese sailor who had visited me during the day, but that from the moment of opening the door he remembered nothing till the following morning, when to his astonishment I was not at my post. My absence alarmed him, for he thought I had been murdered in the streets by some of the rioters; so when that day grew towards its close he dispatched a man to Mr. Costa’s house. When the latter gentleman, not knowing how to account for my absence, ill as he was, came to the store and discovered the robbery. The Chinese porter then calling to mind (it was strange he did not think of this before) his having opened the door, and becoming insensible directly after seeing his

sailor countryman, related the story to Mr. Costa. But as regards that Chinese sailor it was too late, for they found that the junk had sailed during the night—a fact, by the way, that would not under other circumstances have been noticeable, for the Chinaman had been ready for sea some days, and had only been waiting for such a wind as had sprung up during the night. But associated with the suspicion attached to the junk, the visit I had received from one of its crew, that man's stupefying the porter, and my absence, it was at once believed that I and the dollars were on board. As for the stranger in whose company I had quitted the store, he came forward of his own accord, and proved, by help of the proprietor of the hotel, that I had supped at his lodgings, but had left him at a certain hour, which he named.

“Then,” said I, interrupting Dick, “the man Crafty was not the thief.”

“Hold there, my friend, I said not that, nor did I say the contrary, for at the time I knew not what to think; but whoever was the thief, you see the evidence against me was so strong that had I ventured into San Francisco I should, in all probability, have been hanged first and tried afterwards, for Lynch-law had then been some time in vogue.

“Having perused this account of my doings, I threw myself upon the ground in despair; for what could *I* do to exculpate myself? *who* would believe in my innocence? My first impulse was to

seek the nearest shanty and tell my whole story. A little reflection, however, told me the danger of such a course, and so I determined to wander by the waterside, with the hope of finding some timber by means of which I could form a raft that would carry me across the bay to the San Francisco shore. That day, however, and the next, and the next, my wanderings proved fruitless. So, exhausted by weakness—for my only food had been wild fruit, and my bed no other than the rough earth, with heaven's canopy alone for my covering—I desperately resolved to encounter the worst, be it what it might, and so entered the shanty of one of the few settlers then upon the island; and although not recognized, nor even suspected—for the owner had had no communication with the mainland for several weeks—I nevertheless, with a firm belief that truth must ultimately prevail, related my story; and having listened attentively to the recital, when I had concluded, my listener, shrugging his shoulders, said—

“ ‘Now, jist look you, mister, I don't mean to say that I *do* suck in all this tale o' yourn; but mind yer, at the same time I don't mean to say I don't, because before I make up my mind I must have a clincher for one side or t'other.' ”

“ ‘You want proof that my story is true, and you shall have it,' I replied, adding, ‘Mr. Costa's house is some eight miles along the shore, upon the other side of the bay. Well, get me a boat, and

together we will seek the presence of that gentleman, who, sufferer as he is by the robbery, I have little doubt will believe in my innocence.'

" 'Zooks, man, do you mean that you'll just run right into the wolf's jaws?' said he with astonishment.

" 'I mean what I say.'

" 'Then skin me if that ain't just the clincher I wanted, and it's on your side too. So, stranger, we will just pull across, but not till after sundown, for then we shan't be so likely to run across a few people as it's mighty likely you'd object to meet, while this reward is out for your apprehension.'

" Well, to shorten my story, about two hours after sundown, we reached the house of Mr. Costa, with whom my island friend first sought an interview, to inform the old gentleman that I was without. But those few minutes, while I waited near the house, how wretched were they! for although conscious of my innocence, it was terrible that others, for whom I had so great a regard, should suspect me; and surely, I thought Mr. Costa must have felt convinced of my guilt, or he would not have suffered that reward to be put forth for my apprehension, and feeling this, I dreaded the meeting, but resolved to save him the reproach hereafter of having dismissed me from his presence unheard. I said, the instant I entered the room where the good man was sitting alone—

" 'Not a word, sir, till you have heard the cause

of my absence, till you know how foully I have been treated,' and probably comprehending my motive, he remained silent until I had recounted my adventures from the time of my first meeting with Crafty till that hour; then, when concluding, I begged of him to say whether he still thought me guilty. He replied—

“‘Richard Orme, I believe you guilty of nought but neglect of duty; that, however, is crime sufficient, as but for that this terrible trouble would not have happened.’

“‘It is something, sir, that you do me even so much justice; but the great mischief is done—you have believed me guilty, and moreover, published that belief far and wide as witnesseth this,’” I added bitterly, and holding towards him the newspaper.

“‘Not so, Richard Orme, the putting forth that advertisement was the work of my partner, who, in common with the rest of San Francisco, believe you to be the robber.’

“‘Great heaven, sir, how then am I to prove my innocence?’ I exclaimed despairingly.

“‘By bringing to light the real culprit. Listen Richard, *you* have been made the tool of designing villains,’ he replied, adding, ‘But this Crafty, what has been the nature of your connection with him?’

“When I had repeated my history, he said—

“‘That man is the robber.’

“‘Is this, sir, a new thought? if not, why not

have accused him before this advertisement could have been put forth?

“ ‘ For the simple reason that there was not the slightest ground upon which I could bring such an accusation, while your guilt appeared transparent—nay, so convinced of it is Olivarez, that even my belief to the contrary, unsupported by proof, will not save you, for few, if any, but those concerned will give credence to the tale you have told.’

“ ‘ Stay, sir, I will at once seek out this man Crafty, and charge him with the robbery.’

“ ‘ If possible, such a course would be foolish ; but it is not, for the man has sailed from San Francisco.’

“ ‘ Great heaven ! What can I do ? how may I prove my innocence, and the guilt of the real robber ?’ I exclaimed frantically.

“ Listen, Richard, you must remain hidden in this house till the “ Mary Anne ” is ready for sea ; she is chartered by us with a cargo for Canton and Bangkok, and commanded by a friend whom I will see ; and having explained to him my thorough conviction of your innocence, and my suspicion of the real robber, he will be prepared to receive you on board the night before he sails, in the meantime I will prepare a letter of introduction for you to the native merchant of Bangkok, with whom this Crafty is in connection ; and once in Bangkok, you must make your own opportunities for observing

the thief; but that it is this man Crafty, I have other reasons for believing, although what these reasons are, I may not at present explain. Sufficient that while you are seeking to unearth him in Siam, I shall be hunting him in other quarters.'

"'What mean you, sir, is the fellow ubiquitous?' said I.

"'Aye, aye, perhaps so—perhaps so, but rest you contented, for more I may not now say.'

"Well, when my friend the islander had heard sufficient to convince him of the truth of my story, he shook me heartily by the hand, and bade me farewell, and Mr. Costa himself led me to a small room at the top of his house, where I was to remain till the "Anne" was ready for sea. But Josephine, my betrothed, what of her, you will ask.'

"Well, she loved me too well not to believe in my innocence. Proud, however, as her father, she declared that until the guilt of Crafty—if Crafty it were, had been proved clear as sun at noonday, and the world could not by any possibility cast a slur upon my reputation, she should refuse to become my wife—aye, and consider herself as unbetrothed. Now, need I tell you that from that hour I have determined to know no rest until I have again met this man Crafty.

"'But,' I said, 'even supposing you meet with this man, you cannot be sure of proving his guilt.'

"Persevere, persevere, in following the slightest clue, and providence will bring one to a desirable

end,' he replied, adding "but now, my friend, are we to sail together? or are you determined to give me up to this Olivarez, who I doubt not has come to Macao to seek me.'

" 'My friend,' said I, 'from my soul I believe you guiltless, nay more, will do my best to aid you in discovering this Crafty, who I more than suspect must be known to the Siamese merchant at Bangkok, to whom I am accredited by my father.'

" 'His name,' said Dick, impatiently.

" 'Mi,' I answered.

" 'It is—it is the same, and so far I am fortunate,' he replied, adding 'that is supposing when we see this 'Mi,' of Bangkok, we have not to cry 'Arcades ambo.'

" 'But of your companion, the boy—your voyage and your being attacked by the Chinese pirate,' said I.

" 'Ah, you have reminded me of my forgetfulness of poor little Waif—poor little Waif, I must look to him,' and so saying, Dick left the cabin for a few minutes; but upon his return, I proposed that we should sleep and defer the conclusion of his story till the next morning, a proposition which he received by throwing himself upon some pea-jackets upon the floor of the cabin.

CHAPTER IV.

LITTLE WAIF'S HISTORY AND ADVENTURES.

DICK was asleep in a few minutes, but so absorbed had my thoughts become with his story that I could not close my eyes, at least effectually, and as I lay awake, I heard, or thought I heard the voice of old Li-Poo just outside my door. I listened—it was—and in some fear or astonishment, for he continued exclaiming, “Hi-yaw! Hi-yaw!”

I jumped from the couch, opened the door, when my astonishment became as great as that of the old Chinese, who, the only one of the crew on deck, was upon his hands and knees crawling backwards, but with eyes staring in fear of a figure that was moving towards him from the direction of the hatchway.

A figure, yes; but of what? Well, if judged by the leathern trousers, loose pea-jacket, a boy; but if by the pale smooth face, glossy chestnut hair, which had escaped from its confinement at the top of the head, and fell in wild luxuriance over the shoulders of a girl—handsome rather than pretty,



WAIF'S MYSTERIOUS APPEARANCE.

and of some twenty years of age. Well, ghost-like she glided along the deck, beneath the pale silvery light of the moon—aye, and with open eyes, to the great terror of the superstitious Li-Poo, who believed her to be the sea-goddess.

For myself, although at first startled, I soon saw that she was a somnambulist.

That was sufficient for me to watch her narrowly for fear of her coming to harm. To my surprise, however, she stopped suddenly, and absolutely falling at my feet, in plaintive tones earnestly implored of me to save her poor friend Dick from his enemies; humouring her I gave the promise she desired, when, with a shudder, she arose and returned as she had come, slowly down the hatchway into her cabin, not a little to my relief, for I had no doubt that she had been rehearsing in her sleep some terrible scene through which she had passed on board the pirate junk, the real story of which I should, in all probability, soon hear from Dick; however, having first comforted Li-Poo, by explaining the cause of the girl's mysterious appearance upon deck, I returned to my cabin, threw myself upon the couch, and must have slept long and soundly, for when I awakened I found that, taking advantage of a good wind, Li-Poo had set sail, and Dick and his companion, the boy, sitting upon some goods, enjoying the beautiful coast scenery. Of the girl, however, there was now but little appearance, except indeed, the shortness of

stature, and rather feminine appearance, for the pea-jacket was buttoned, and the chesnut locks gathered up beneath a large Panama hat.

“Waif, little Waif, here is our kind friend, Master Herbert, make your obeisance to him,” said Dick, starting as from a deep reverie.

I held out my hand, and the boy took it, half averting his head, as he did so, and thanked me for giving him a passage with his friend Dick; but, although vexed, I could not help laughing, aye, or saying either—

“Come, Master Dick, you have been deceiving me. I know not your reason, but this is not fair sailing. I *have* seen Master Waif before, but then I mistook him for a fair girl with chesnut locks, which reached her waist,” and I related the scene of the previous night.

Dick gave a whistle and a whew! but the red blood mantled in the girl's face as she said, as if anxious to screen her companion—

“Indeed, sir, you wrong my dear friend, it is not with him you should be angered, but me, for he promised not to disclose my secret without my permission.” Then taking her by the hand I led her into my cabin, and Dick having followed, said—

“If you had heard the conclusion of my story last night, you would not have accused me of false sailing.”

“Well, well,” said I, seeing a man coming with

hot tea and edibles, "we will have the conclusion now, and accordingly Dick commenced—

"As I have already told you, I remained hidden in Mr. Costa's house till the night previous to the sailing of the 'Mary Anne.' Then I went aboard under the name of Jasper Brown, and, to my delight, learned from the captain, who knew my real name and misfortune, that Mr. Costa had managed that there should be no other passengers on board but a lady and her niece, indeed, in a commercial point of view, there was little necessity, for the ship was heavily laden, besides carrying a large amount of gold.

"Now, our run across the Pacific to the Sandwich Islands, and from thence into the China seas, was as pleasant as we could have wished, for the captain, poor fellow, was very companionable, moreover, as there were no chief cabin people, we found the society of our steerage passengers, Mrs. Banks and her niece, the two females I have mentioned, help to pass away the time. About these ladies there was one oddity, that is, they were both attired more after the fashion of men than women. For they wore Panama hats, skin jackets, Hessian boots, and withal a leathern belt round the waist. The cause of this, however, you will hereafter hear.

"Let it be said now, Dick, or our kind friend here will have but a poor opinion of little Waif,' interrupted the girl blushing, adding, "My aunt and I had adopted the costume for the safer

travelling among the Indians in California, and having heard much of the danger of the Chinese pirates, we believed we should be safer in such a costume, at least so thought my poor aunt.'

“ ‘Well,’ continued Dick, ‘between San Francisco and Canton, we had pretty smooth sailing, it was not till after leaving the Chinese port that our troubles began. About the fifth day we fell in with a typhoon, which for many hours made us hopeless of life. The ship soon became a mere wreck; about the deck, in all directions, were strewn cables, chains, and broken masts; nearly all our live stock had been killed, and the men were exhausted by incessant labour. We put the ship about to return to Canton; but a dead calm succeeded the typhoon and she lay motionless, as if in mockery at the anxious beating hearts of those she carried. However, there was no help for it, and so in pity for the men’s exhaustion, the captain sent all but barely sufficient to take charge of the watch to their berths.

“ As I have said, when we went below, the ship lay in a dead calm, nay, a silence almost terrible in its effect upon the senses after so much turmoil reigned around, therefore imagine my consternation about midnight to be awakened by an uproar of trampling feet, discordant voices, and to see my cabin illumined by a glaring red light. On the instant I could think of but one cause. The ship must be on fire, so jumping out of my berth, I ran

on deck ; but the scene was demoniac, showers of fire-balls came pelting among us ; every sense seemed attacked—smell, by a fearful stench ; hearing, by the yells of savages, and the crashing noise of stones and iron as they broke through the skylights, or fell heavily upon the deck ; indeed, it was a scene to be understood only by those who have witnessed the boarding of Chinese pirates. The men in charge of the watch had been the first victims, the crew had been fastened down beneath the hatches. The hatchway leading to the cabins of the captain, the ladies and myself, was the only one not on fire, and up that, almost simultaneously had Mrs. Banks, her neice, and the captain, rushed. The latter had, with his revolver, slain one of the savages—to him however, poor fellow, it was a costly shot, for the next instant he fell dead at my feet.

“ How *I* escaped even now seems to me a miracle, for stooping to pick up the pistol, one barrel of which only had been discharged ; I fell forwards, and in an instant a foot was upon my breast, and the next my head would have been severed from my body, but for little Waif, who herself having snatched up the revolver, like a heroine shot the pirate dead.

“ ‘ Heaven forgive me if it was wicked,’ interposed the girl ; ‘ but it was the deed of one bereft of her senses. My good aunt had been slain indeed, I knew not what I did, it was not courage, rather I think an excess of terror.’

“ ‘Baa, baa, white sheep,’ said Dick, laughing, ‘if you want me to believe it wasn’t courage you won’t succeed, and *that’s* a fact. Still timely as it was, that shot would only have saved me from another death ; but for one man (and mark me that man was no Chinese, albeit he was attired in a similar guise) who, speaking a few words to the chief, the latter commanded his men to surround Waif and me, and bind our limbs. No sooner said than done, and we were thrown into a corner like a couple of useless bundles. The scene that followed I cannot describe, although, as you know, it is no uncommon one in these seas. The crew, I believe, without one exception, were murdered and thrown overboard. After this our turn would have come, but again for the interposition of the one man who had saved my life in the first instance.’

“ ‘But *that* man,’ I asked, noticing that his eyes flashed, and his lips quivered with rage as he spoke.

“ ‘Was Crafty.’

“ ‘Impossible ! the European is not to be found ; who could associate with such wretches ?’

“ ‘I tell you it was Crafty, and *that’s* a fact, for by the glaring fire-balls and the light from lanterns, I recognized the features, aye, and though he spoke in the tongue of the pirates, I remembered the tone of his voice. There before me stood the rogue I was seeking, and my impulse was to call out to him, but prudence whispered that to do so would

be to remind the rascal of the maxim of his craft, 'that dead men tell no tales,' and I appeared not to recognise him.'

" 'Then, villain as he is, he saved your life,' said I.

" 'Aye, so it was; but even a villain may have one single touch of humanity in his nature; but,'" continued Dick, 'when the pirates had finished their fiendish work, and rejoiced their eyes and their finger ends by touching the valuable freight, the captain and principal part of the crew, exchanged from their junk to the 'Mary Anne,' the remainder took possession of the former vessel, upon board of which we were then taken, though for what purpose, since they did not slay us, I can't even now guess.'

" 'They would have taken you to one of their haunts upon the coast, there to remain until you had been well ransomed,' I replied.

" 'Aye, aye, perhaps so; however, we had parted company with the 'Anne' but two days, when we were chased by the Portuguese war-steamer, and the rogues knowing escape to be impossible, determined to show fight. So having mustered upon the flush deck, they placed Waif and me in their midst, and offering us weapons, with more energy than politeness, gave us to understand that if we did not do our best against the Portuguese, they would decapitate us and toss our bodies into the sea; so you see, having no alternative, we made a show of fighting; and thus it was we came to be

rated by the crew of the war-steamer with those among whom we were found with arms in our hands. Who rescued us you already know, and now I have no more to say, except that it was a fortunate chance that led Waif to adopt the masculine attire, otherwise—but I dare not think what might have been her fate.'

“ ‘But being thus attired,’ said Waif, ‘I felt ashamed that my real sex should be known to you, or the kind gentleman, your father, at least till you could be told the reason for its adoption. Those reasons I will now tell you; but first you must know something of my history.’

“ ‘Then she added—‘ Who I am, or at least what is my real name, I never knew, nor have I ever known a blood relation. As for the poor dear lady who was slain by the pirates, she was no relative of mine, although by her wish I called her aunt, and in my heart felt towards her as a daughter, for to her I have been indebted from my childhood for motherly affection and some education. I was left a little child, supposed to be about two years of age, at the door of a workhouse, in which place I remained until I reached my ninth year, when Mrs. Banks, who was in business as a milliner and dress-maker in London, applied to the master for a servant girl. I was given over to her, the good lady was alone in the world, for her only relative, a brother, was abroad. Well, pitying the forlornness of her ‘Little Waif,’ as she named me, and by which

and have ever since been called, she sent me to my father's school. Afterwards she began to teach me to do business, and seeing that I was very industrious and willing, she promised ultimately to take me into partnership with her. One day, however, she received a letter from her brother, who informed her he was at Sacramento in California, and making a fortune, and further begged of his sister to go out to him and be his housekeeper. Then I cried heartily; for I feared I should have to leave my dear kind friend; but no, such was not her intention, at least if I would accompany her. Of course I could not refuse, for her presence, wherever that might be, was my world. Well, we sailed and arrived at San Francisco, and from thence proceeded to Sacramento, where we found her brother as he had written. Well to do, and in his home we took up our abode, and were for a time very happy. But alas! in less than twelve months after our arrival he was shot dead in a street brawl. That sad event, unfortunately no very uncommon one in California, caused my aunt to hate Sacramento, and she resolved to return to England. As, however, the property of her late brother, chiefly consisted of goods which just at that time were likely to realize a large profit, she determined to accompany a party of people who were about to travel to the same territory.

“Now, as the journey before us was of great length, and to be made across steep mountains, through wild woods, half-built cities or settlements,

and for the greater part would be beset by wild animals, savage aborigines, and perhaps, by far more savage men from England, Ireland, the United States, China, and Australia, she resolved that we should assume an attire which, if masculine, was at least frequently adopted by the wives and daughters of emigrants upon similar expeditions, as being less cumbersome than the female costume.

“ ‘ Well, quitting the pestilential air of Sacramento, then so deadly even to the thousands of gold-diggers who passed through the city, that none ever remained one hour longer than necessary to transact their business, we took the coach for Marysville, at which place, after eight hours hard jotting, we arrived, at the Indian settlement of Fort Sutter; and although we remained but one night in that place, it was long enough for us to witness some terrible scenes of murder and riot, for in disorder that town was no way behind, but rather in advance of San Francisco and Sacramento; indeed, throughout the journey we scarcely met one of our civilized brethren of the old world or the United States without being reminded how great a curse is the love of gold, and how it has the power to turn God’s children into fiends.

“ Well, leaving Marysville we proceeded to Sparta City, a wooden town near the Sierra Nevada, where we hired mules, by means of which sure-footed animals we traversed a wild mountainous country

infested with large tawny bears, till we reached the hill-girdled city of Weaverville, where, for a short time, we remained to recruit our health, for the air there is healthful and bracing, especially to those just arrived from Southern California.

“ Then leaving Weaverville, we proceeded still farther north, crossing mountains, the paths of which can be trodden alone by mules, by the side of chasms and depths that made it unsafe for us to look downwards, till we reached Eureka, and at that city, as we had been advised before starting, my aunt fully repaid herself for the dangers she had encountered, for she realized a large profit.

“ The object of our going being fulfilled, we returned to Sacramento City, and from thence by steamer to San Francisco, at which place, finding the ‘ Mary Anne’ about to sail for Canton, my aunt took our passage, preferring rather to return to England, via China, than to await a more direct passage ; but reaching Canton, and finding no ship likely to leave for England, we proceeded in the ‘ Mary Anne’ to Macao. What, however, happened before that ill-fated ship reached the Portuguese city, you already know.

“ ‘ Truly, no heroine of romance could have gone through greater dangers or surmounted more difficulties,’ said I, adding, “ but your aunt’s property, surely she transmitted it to Europe before leaving California ?”

“ ‘ She did, and with it a will, under which, in

the event of her death on the passage, I was to claim the whole; but such a document would be useless, for there is none to identify me as the person, and Waif Banks would have her journey for nothing."

" 'Nay, nay, my little Waif, this is not so, Dick Orme can recognize you. Mr. Costa can identify you, at least, when the main object of his going to Bangkok has been realized; he will leave no stone unturned until you have been put in possession of the good lady's property,' said Dick. Then addressing me, he said—

" 'Now, Master Herbert, you have heard both our stories; but I have still to tell you that for two very forcible reasons, this girl and I are as inseparable as a loving brother and sister should be, while trouble or danger threatens either, moreover, we part not under Providence until I have placed her in safe harbour.'

" 'By heaven,' I exclaimed, taking a hand of each, "you are a noble pair, I know not which to admire most, however this day all doubts cease, henceforth let us be, at least until we have each performed our missions, not only fellow travellers, but a united family of brothers and a sister.'

" 'For which proposition I am at least grateful.' But placing my finger on her pretty mouth, I said, 'Nay, no more, it is not a word between brothers and sisters, and so concluded our strange, but satisfactory conference.' "

CHAPTER V.

WE CHANGE OUR COURSE ; DICK RECOGNIZES AN OLD
ACQUAINTANCE.

FOR a month we had been running mid the rocks and channels of those dangerous seas, nay, we had even entered the Gulf of Siam without encountering either of those great terrors of the Chinese and Cambodian coasts—pirates or typhoons.

As, however, we entered the gulf, we ran short of water, and so to replenish the casks, put into the harbour of Pulo Obi, a small island overrun with pigs, ducks, and fowls, and inhabited only by some two hundred Cochin Chinese, who live in very primitive huts, and are, for the greater part, exiles who have been transported from their own country for crimes or offences against its government.

It was, however, a vexatious necessity which compelled us to put into Pulo Obi, for no sooner had we made the harbour, than the crew demanded permission to land and barter tea with the natives for yams and other produce of the island. As,

however, refusal would have been useless, perhaps dangerous, I complied, and we patiently awaited their return with the water casks and their purchases. But to our surprise, they all came on board in exceeding high spirits, but the liveliest of all was old Li-Poo, who, as soon as he put foot on deck, desired to speak with me alone, in my stateroom, a request with which I at once, but wondering as to what was to follow, complied—

“ Well, Herbert, what does the pig-tailed old sea-weed want us to do now ? ” said Dick, laughing as I returned from the conference.

“ Faith it is no laughing matter, for the old fellow, as the mouthpiece of the crew, declares they are one and all determined to run round the coast to Chantaburi.”

“ Chantaburi ? Tut, we won't then, and *that's* a fact, for if I am not out in my reckoning, it will keep us at least twenty days from Bangkok,” replied Dick, adding, “ But why to Chantaburi, Herbert, what is the rascal's object ? ”

“ Very plain, Dick, to make money. You see this Chantaburi divides Cambodia from Siam, whose first king is also the first merchant in his realm, has made it the great depôt for his trade with the Cochin Chinese, and in this town they store all their purchases of gamboge, ivory, spices, and other goods till their ships can carry them to Bangkok. Well, just now the royal stores are overflowing with valuables, which is desired should

be removed to Bangkok before the monsoon sets in, and as their majesties, the two kings of Siam, have not sufficient vessels of their own fit for the service, they have made it known through their mandarins that they are prepared to charter at a high rate any ships or junks they can get, and such an offer our friends think too important to lose.

“But suppose we won't comply; and *I* won't, *that's* a fact.”

“Then,” I replied, laughing at Dick's anger, “the rogues will put us ashore in this island, or send us adrift in a boat; and as *that's* another fact, you will admit that it is better to comply.”

“But what says Li-Poo?”

“That 'spose got no ship, and no can swim, how can go?”

“Are those the old rogue's words?”

“They are; and after all I believe the fellow is right, for he argues, ‘'Spose stop at Chantaburi and take cargo, Li-Poo and his men get muchee dollar, and only lose little time, and little time often get; but muchee dollar not come often to poor sailor man of China.’”

“Whew,” whistled Dick, adding, “then there is no help for us; these Chinese vagabonds must have their will.”

“My own opinion,” I replied; and from that moment Dick's opposition was silenced, for although impulsive and impatient, he was too prudent to venture an opposition against such odds. For my

own part, I think we might have fared much worse ; for as the coast from Cambodia up to Bangkok forms an archipelago of beautiful islands, in many of which are to be found that most valuable of all commodities to Chinese sailors, the *HIRUNDO ESCULENTA*, or edible birds'-nests ; and moreover, it being the proper season of the year for obtaining them, it was to me, knowing these men as I did, a wonder that they did not insist upon coming to an anchor off one of these islands.

These birds'-nests, you perhaps already are aware, are esteemed by the wealthy inhabitants of Eastern Asia, more especially the Chinese, and form the most important ingredient in their most luxurious soups and broths.

They are the nests of the swallow, called Salanga. As for their composition, some say the substance is formed of the froth of the sea, or of the spawn, which is strongly aromatic, while others say that it is a kind of gum collected by the birds on the tree called Calambine. Others assert that it is a vicious humour which the birds discharge through the bill at the season of reproduction.

The best of these nests—and being the son of a merchant who has traded in them largely, I can speak of my own knowledge—are those procured in deep damp caves, and such as are taken before the birds have laid their eggs. The coarsest are those obtained after the young have been fledged. The finest nests are the whitest—that is, those taken

before the nest has been rendered impure by the birds themselves.

The best are white, and the inferior dark coloured, streaked with blood or intermixed with feathers. These nests are gathered twice a year, and if regularly collected, and if no unusual injury be offered to the caverns, will produce very equally; the quantity, strange to say, being very little, if at all, improved by the caves being left altogether unmolested for a year or two. Some of the caves are extremely difficult of access, and the nests can only be collected by persons accustomed to the employment from their youth. What will not the rich pay for the pampering of the senses? What will not the poor Asiatic encounter, what perils will he not undertake, to hear the chink of ever so few silver coins in his girdle?

In the caves of the islands of the Gulf of Siam the danger of collecting these nests is great, yet little to that encountered in the island of Java, from whence a great proportion of them are procured.

In this latter island* the caves are only to be approached by a perpendicular descent of many hundred feet, by ladders of bamboo and rattan, over a sea rolling violently against the rocks. When the mouth of the cavern is attained, the perilous business of taking the nests must often be performed with torch-light by penetrating into the recesses of

* For a full account of the gathering of these edible nests, see "The Nest Hunters." By William Dalton.

the rock, when the slightest trip would be fatal to the hunters who see nothing below them but the turbulent surf making its way into the chasms of the rock.

To fit these nests for the market, the only preparation they undergo is that of simple drying without a direct exposure to the sun, after which they are packed in small boxes, holding a picul, *i.e.*, a measure of about one hundred and thirty-five pounds weight, and in the Canton market the best fetch about £5 18s. per pound.

Now this price which the luxurious Chinamen pay is enormous, for the cost of carriage is very trifling; the profits have therefore always been very large, and the caves where these nests are to be found are of such great value to the sovereigns of the many petty states wherein they are found, that districts producing them have been the frequent cause of wars between the chiefs.

Thus you see, vexed as we might be at any delay, we were by far better off in going to Chantaburi, there to take in a cargo already stored, than if, as these sailors will often do, we had been kept cruising from island to island until a cargo of birds' nests could have been collected. At least, so thought I at the time; but then I little dreamt of the adventures in store for us—but to continue my narrative.

From the time of leaving Pulo Obi, we had been fortunate in keeping a pretty stiff land-breeze with us; and so we kept along hugging close as

possible under the shore till we were within about twenty miles of the island of Semsing at the mouth of the Chantaburi river, when the wind failed us, and we lay in a dead calm, the atmosphere being almost suffocating, and the myriads of flies and stinging gnats that flew and buzzed about us in clouds, became almost unbearable. This lasted till sunset; about that time, however, our hearts were rejoiced by a welcome sea-breeze, which sent us merrily through the water. But night came, and as it would be impracticable to land before morning, we sought our cabins.

“Spanking scenery, and quiet enough to get up a set of reflections upon the past, present, and future of a fellow’s life,” said Dick, as I went on deck in the morning.

“Beautiful, indeed,” I replied, not a little vexed at his coarseness, for a sensation of delight thrilled through my whole being as I inhaled the invigorating perfumed morning air, and listened to the gentle murmuring of the waves as they rippled over the pebble-strewn beach, drank in the silence that was broken alone by occasional scream of the sea-hawk, or the splash of the king-fisher into the water in search of their morning meal, and gazed at the grandeur of the surrounding scenery, the rocks at the entrance of the mouth of the Chantaburi river, which, in the distance, have the appearance of a colossal lion couchant, to whose head, mane, throat, eyes, ears, nothing seems wanting,



till a nearer approach dissipates the illusion, and the lion changes into masses of rudely-shaped stones, and the background filled in with the distant peaked mountains, numbering three hundred, which divide the Siamese territory from Cambodia, and seem to lose themselves in the cloudless azure sky.

Such was the scenery that, for a few minutes, absorbed my attention. As for Dick and Li-Poo, far different were their thoughts, for they both

seemed to be closely examining a Chinese junk of the largest size, apparently freshly painted, with the customary square rigging and two large red eyes in the prow, but flying the royal ensign of Siam, a white elephant upon a scarlet ground, surrounded by a white edging; moreover, manned by a crew of brawny dark-skinned Fo-Keen men, whose eyes seemed stretched towards the river, up which I could now see slowly approaching several heavily-laden boats.

“May I never take another whiff if I haven't seen that Chinaman before,” said Dick, as he tossed the end of a cheroot into the water.

“She is chartered by the Kings of Siam for all that, Dick,” I replied, pointing to the royal ensign.

“May be, may be, Herbert; still I have met her in another latitude, and that's a fact,” he replied, then, as if fully to recall to his mind the where and the when, he commenced another examination. As for Li-Poo, who as yet had not spoken, when he saw those well-laden boats run alongside the junk, and the crew of the latter begin to haul on board bales and packages, he muttered sullenly in his own tongue, ‘May the rats never see the tombs of their fathers; but they have come before us,’ whereupon touching his shoulder, I said—

“Remember the words of the sage—‘a mouse can drink no more than its fill from a river,’ so neither can you, O Li-Poo, take more goods on

board your junk than it will contain, for doubtless, thou avaricious old man, there will be a cargo left for you."

"My younger brother's words are good; but the same sage tells us that we should * 'dig a well before we are thirsty,' and so old Li-Poo will throw himself at the feet of the Governor, and beg for the next cargo before it is promised to another pig; and so saying, he quitted me, and ordering two of his men to let down a boat, got into it, and was soon pulling towards the shore.

"What said the old fellow about yon junk," asked Dick.

"He *means* that yon junk may obtain from the governor, the next and the next freight to Bangkok, and thus he and his men be defrauded of those profits in search of which he brought us here, and for which, in all probability, his men forewent trading for swallows' nests among the islands; but to prevent such a loss, he has gone ashore to endeavour to secure the next cargo before he may be forestalled by this or some other skipper on the look out for employment."

"Now, look you, Herbert, I take it that is all very well, but for his impudence in bringing us here, I shan't cry if it fails, and that's a fact," said Dick, but he added, 'enough of that old rogue, yet touching yonder junk, you may laugh at the notion ;

* "Provide against a rainy day" would be the English equivalent for this Chinese proverb.

but between ourselves, I wouldn't mind swearing that it is the very same which shipped Costa's ten thousand dollars."

"Pooh, pooh, Dick, but even so, how can the knowledge avail you without proof, except it be indeed, to get that luckless body of yours into difficulties once more."

"May be, may be, Herbert, but nevertheless, mark my words, before we leave these latitudes, I'll get alongside her skipper, and though I can't say I remember his features, for the faces of all these Chinese fellows seem to have been struck out with the same die, the same bald pates, pig-tales, and skewed eyes, if it be so, it is queer if I don't screw something out of him that may tell hereafter."

"'Well, well, my friend, as you will, you have the notion in your head, and it is useless for me to gainsay you ; but proceed how you may, for heaven's sake have a care, you will be playing with double-edged weapons, for you know not these fellows as I do ;' and to this Dick made no reply, for little Waif came to summon us to a tropical breakfast, the preparation of which she had been industriously superintending."

CHAPTER VI.

WE JOURNEY INTO THE INTERIOR, AND MEET WITH
SOME ODD ADVENTURES.

“WHY, what misfortune hath befallen thee, O Li-Poo? Has the Governor had thee beaten on the soles of the feet, or thy face slapped* for thy importunities, that thou lookest so chap-fallen?” said I, as the old Chinese entered the cabin.

“Is it not a maxim that when the profits shorten, the face lengthens?” replied he, adding; “The Governor—may the tombs of his ancestors never be swept clean—is not at his place of duty, which should be upon the coast, inspecting the embarkation of the king’s cargo on board the junk of this Chinese water-rat, but in his house at the city of Chantaburi.”

“He don’t want you, he don’t want you, and that’s a fact,” said Dick.

“The rat, the rat, he will get all the cargo, but ‘when the pool is dry the fish will be seen,’ and

* Chinese punishments for minor offences.

when the cargo is landed at Bangkok, the King of Siam may count his profits; not before," replied Li-Poo.

"Mercantile jealousy, the old story, 'two of a trade can't agree,'" replied Dick, adding—"but now, my friend, you find you have brought your pigs to a bad market; take my advice, just clear out of here, and run across the gulf to Bangkok without further delay."

"Me no savey that pigeon. Is old Li-Poo a pig's son, that he should listen to such words? No; a bird can roost but upon one branch; a mouse can drink no more than its fill from a river, so neither can this Fokeen rat take more than his junk (may it sink) will hold; so Li-Poo will wait till the miserable dog has laden and departed, when the governor will learn the real worth of old Li-Poo's junk."

"Then it's a fact you intend to keep us kicking our heels in these waters till you get a cargo, whether the Governor will or not—that's pleasant anyhow," said Dick, half inclined to quarrel—and the Chinese replied—

"Is thy younger brother a mouse, that he should have less profit than the Fokeen rat?"

"Thou art envious, O Li-Poo, but remember the words of the sage: 'The torment of envy is like a grain of sand in the eye.'"

"Would, oh my younger brother! that the sands of a whole desert had been in the eyes of yon Fokeen pig and his crew, before he had forestalled

thy servant," replied the old man, sulkily walking out of the cabin.

"That was answering the old fellow after his own fashion; but look you, Herbert, you'll about as easily find a pig that would be pulled by his tail across the Pacific without squeaking, as to argue or persuade that old fellow to listen to reason."

"You are right Dick, for to use one of their own proverbs, "It would be as fruitless to pour water on a duck's back, as to persuade a Chinese against his will."

"But do you really mean to let him keep us here during his pleasure?"

"Why, what else can we do? Would'st kick against a mountain to the injury of thine own feet?"

"Aye, that would I, if the mountain were an obstinate Chinaman, and so long as I made him feel, think I had the best of the bargain. But," he added, "instead of stopping here, suppose we go ashore and look up old Li-Poo's cantankerous governor, and persuade his worship to give us a passage in yon junk to Bangkok."

"Good—Dick. The attempt is at least worth the trouble; so if the old man will lend us a boat we will try it—but—Waif.

"Will *not* be left here among these savages," interposed Waif, shuddering at the remembrance of her former experience of a Chinese crew.

"Then you, Dick, remain on board, while I, who

have been accustomed to woods and wilds, and savage beasts, will go in search of this Governor."

"That way of fixing it won't do anyhow, Herbert, for I have made up my mind you shan't go alone, and that's a fact. As for little Waif here, I take it she is about as well posted up in these uncivilized parts, as you or I," and as I was about making another objection, Waif said—

"Now no opposition, Mr. Herbert, for as Dick has said, so say I."

"Well, well, so be it," I replied, and then left the cabin to go in search of Li-Poo, but finding the old man in the midst of a knot of sailors, grieving over his disappointment, I touched his shoulder, saying, "Come, Li-Poo, do you forget that a discontented man is like a snake who would swallow an elephant? Cheer up, cheer up, man, for I bring you good news."

"How is this thing possible? What news can my younger brother have, since he hath not left the junk?" he replied, surlily.

"We are going up to Chantaburi city to see the governor, if you will lend us a boat."

"Hi-yaw! Hi-yaw! for what good does my younger brother want to go there?"

"Does Li-Poo forget that I am a scholar, and that I may find words to persuade the Governor, to give you, O Li-Poo, the cargo for which you are pining?"

"Does my younger brother mean that he will

walk into the very jaws of this lion governor, who may kill him, only to do much talkee for the good of his mean servant?"

"Has Li-Poo ever heard any but straight words from the lips of his younger brother?" I replied; and the selfish old fellow, thinking of his own interests alone, was so far from guessing my main object in undertaking the journey, that he almost capered with delight, and at once ordered the boat to be lowered: when, for fear a little reflection might arouse his suspicions, Dick, Waif, and I no sooner saw the sails set, than we loaded the revolvers, which, by the way, we had always kept about our persons, and taking a supply of additional ammunition, got into the boat.

"I have said that our junk was anchored off the island of Semsing, which is at the mouth of the river. Well, there are two channels round the island, and as the tide was running with great rapidity, we had little time to talk or make observations, our greatest attention being required to keep the boat from stranding; but when we had passed fairly round Semsing, we were swept into the middle of the river, and thenceforth floated at our ease.

"The entrance to the river presented a desolate scene; the ground was low and marshy, teeming with pestiferous weeds, and alive with millions of large, croaking frogs; but, with the exception of a crane, which, alarmed at the appearance of our

boat, would every now and then thrust its head through the grass, and having satisfied its curiosity, fly across the river, nothing living was to be seen till we rounded a point covered with lofty cocoa trees, and then we came in sight of a small wooden hut, which was supported some twenty feet out of the river by four cocoa trees. The door of this quaint little residence was reached by a ladder, the bottom rounds being immersed in the water, and to one of which at that time was secured a canoe.

“I take it yon hut upon stilts is the country house of a retired monkey, who has chosen the position for the benefit of his health,” said Dick.

“If so, there is the animal himself,” said Waif, pointing to a small dark object, which, with its back towards us, and its crouching position, had more the resemblance of a monkey than a man.

“Yes, there he is, and that’s a fact; let us hail the beast,” said Dick; but catching, I suppose, the sound of our voices, the object turned towards us, and disclosed the features of a man, and one, too, so much excited either with astonishment or rage, that, unable to speak, he grinned, chattered, and shook his fists at us.

“It does not seem to be giving us a civil welcome, whatever it is,” said Dick, laughing.

“He is motioning to us to go back,” said I.

“Yes, there can’t be any doubt about it; but

he'll be considerably disappointed," replied Dick, adding, as the man disappeared within the hut, "Ha! the small party means mischief."

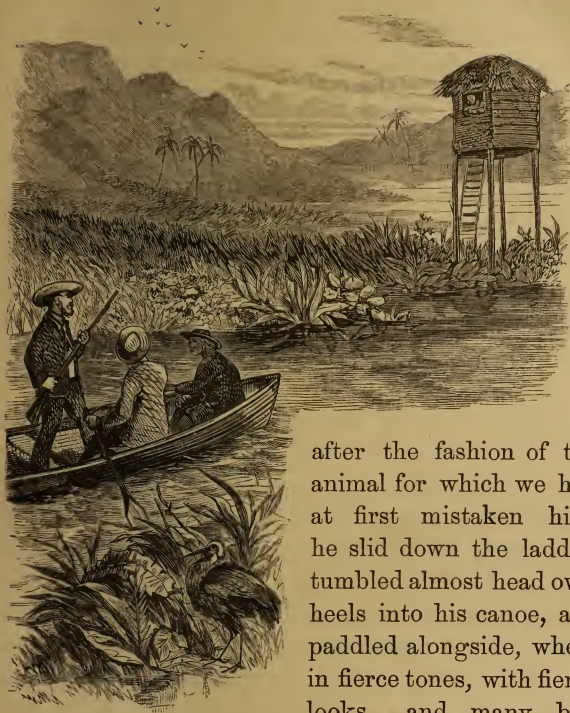
"He has run in for his gun, Dick. Let us back the boat out of reach of its fire," said I; but almost immediately the little object appeared at the door of his hut, carrying a couple of muskets, one of which he stood against the doorpost, and with the other he began to take a deliberate aim at our boat.

"Lie down," said I. Waif complied instantly, but Dick replied—

"Figs and Fillibusters! No; the innocent is more likely to knock himself over with the recoil than to injure us."

"But," said I, falling in the bottom of the boat, "he is taking deliberate aim at us."

"That's just why the critter won't hit us;" but as Dick spoke a bullet passed within an inch of his head, when, altering his opinion, he exclaimed, "Hilloa! it's in earnest you are, is it? Very well, my little Fillibuster, you shan't have it all your own way;" but jumping to my feet, and catching hold of the revolver which he had cocked, I said, "Stay, Dick, we are in the wrong; the fellow is, perhaps, a Government official, who is perched up there to watch the river." Then I called to the little fire-eater in Siamese that we were friends. This seemed to appease him, for shouting in reply to us to remain where we were, the next minute,



after the fashion of the animal for which we had at first mistaken him, he slid down the ladder, tumbled almost head over heels into his canoe, and paddled alongside, when, in fierce tones, with fierce looks, and many bel-

licose gesticulations, he cried out, 'It is Klang, Customs' officer and Reporter-General of the river, who speaks; but what rats are these, who dare set at defiance his authority, by passing up the river without his permission?'

" 'Then, O Klang,' said I, unable to help smiling at the airs of the ferocious little 'paper tiger,' 'no-

thing could be more fortunate than this meeting, for we are traders from China, on a mission of importance to the Governor of Chantaburi, whom it is doubtless impossible we can hope to find without the aid of the excellent officer Klang.’

Now, whether the sight of the many-barrelled pistol which I held in one hand while speaking, or the two bright dollars which I exhibited to his astonished eyes, influenced him, I am unable to vouch, but certainly his tone suddenly changed, for, adopting the manner of speech of his countrymen towards their social superiors, he smilingly replied—

“There can be no doubt that as the master benefactor has affairs with the Lord-Governor, he may have permission to go up the river; neither can there be a doubt than since the master has so generously *lent* Klang two pieces of silver (and, Buddha be praised, it is a large sum) that it is Klang’s business to go with the master to the Lord Governor. I receive the master’s orders.”*

“Then let the worthy Klang come into our boat, his own canoe he can fasten behind,” said I, and without further ado the old man complied, and we proceeded on our journey up the river; and a very monotonous journey it would have been but for old Klang, who kept chatting in his own tongue, till Dick, who could not comprehend one word, and

* With the phrase “I receive your orders,” every Siamese concludes his address to his superiors.

had exhausted his patience and raised his curiosity to a feverish height, said—

“It’s a funny old magpie, but what has it been chattering about all this time?”

“About the story of his life, Dick, and an odd one it has been. He has been stationed in that hut for twenty years, with an income from Government of about two shillings a month; but had we passed up this river, and presented ourselves to the Governor, without the old fellow having first announced us, he would have been dismissed from his house and office.”

“Thank heaven, then, we have not succeeded in perpetrating so much mischief upon the poor fellow,” said Waif.

“To that I cry, Amen, Waif; for he has neither kith nor kin, with a prospect of a future as solitary as his past, which has indeed been dreary, for during the whole time of his residence in that hut, he has had no friendly relations with humanity. His means of existence have only been his small salary and the donations of occasional passers by, but still he counts his life a happy one, for he is learned in herbs, and at home in the paths of the forest, in which he knows where to find roots and yams, upon which he chiefly exists, except when he happens to have enough ammunition with him, and the luck to fall in with a bear, a wild pig, partridge, or jungle fowl.”

“A real right down squatter’s life, too, though

with a little too much of turnpike keeping, and not enough of sporting about it, for my liking," said Dick; but then as through an opening in the dense foliage of the trees, the tall and beautiful spire of a watt, or temple, burst suddenly upon our view and proclaimed the vicinity of the town of Chantaburi, we ran ashore, and securing our little craft beneath the shade of some lofty tamarind trees, we sent Klang in his little canoe to announce our arrival to the head man and Governor of the town.

Chantaburi is situated at the foot of one of the long range of mountains which separates the kingdom of Siam from Cambodia, and it is to the barrier thus formed by nature, the Siamese are indebted for their safety from the inroads of the predatory and more than half-savage Annamites, or Cochin Chinese.

This province of Chantaburi is remarkable not less for the number of its savage beasts than its natural curiosities. In the north is a mountain called "The Mountain of the Stars," from the top of which the natives assert that every star may be seen of the size of the sun, and in the bowels of which are to be found vast quantities of precious stones. In the eastern portion there is a thirty-mile range of mountains, at the top of which are prosperous plantations of coffee. Not far from where we had moored our boat, and upon a high hill, were the fortifications and the

governor's house, which is built upon a soil so impregnated with metallic oxides, that it is of a deep purple colour, and is frequently used for paint. Again, at a short distance, is the hill celebrated by the Siamese as the "precious stone mountain," and in which are found the topaz, the ruby, the garnet, the sapphire, and other gems.

After an absence of about two hours, the old man returned, very greatly to the delight of my companions, but of Dick in particular, who, after having very patiently, but very uselessly, listened to Klang as he unfolded his budget of intelligence, said—

"Come, Herbert, just interpret all this."

"Bad news, Dick, very; the Governor, who should be personally inspecting every boat-load of the cargo now being taken on board the junk owned by Li-Poo's rival, has neglected his duty, and gone into the interior upon a rhinoceros shooting expedition."

"Whew," whistled Dick; "it's my luck, and that's a fact; but," he added, "among these respectable savages ashore, can't we find one who would give us a lodging for the night; if so, in the morning we could follow in the trail of this Governor, which, to my thinking, would be better than returning to old Li-Poo's junk."

"Your plan is good, Dick; but Waif,—what is to become of her in the mean time?"

“Oh, never fear, my friend, Waif isn't butter that will melt under the sun, nor sugar to be dissolved by a rain-storm and— as for danger, why, I take it, she has had about as much experience of that as either of us.”

“Dick is right, Herbert,” said Waif, “where you go, I go; but he should have told you his real motive for not caring to go back to the junk.”

“Well, the fact is, Herbert, I have grave doubts as to the good intentions towards ourselves of that amiable old semi-savage, Li-Poo, though being a gratis passenger, I did not quite like to give expression to them before,” said Dick bluntly.

“Pooh, pooh, the Chinese is an honest meaning old fellow, altho' he may be a little crotchety,” said I.

“Well, Herbert, it may be 'pooh, pooh, and the old fellow may be square enough, but as for his crew—why, Dick Orme would rather not trust himself among them again till we can take them the Governor's warrant to ship a cargo, for without that, it is my opinion, that it will be many a long day before they will run across to Bangkok.”

Now I knew it would be useless to question Dick's opinion. Moreover, being somewhat inclined to think with him, and having no objection to a day's ramble in the interior, I asked Klang if he could take us to the house of some native, who for

a dollar would give us a night's lodging; and, as he not only replied in the affirmative, but offered to lead us to the residence of a Government official, we at once left the boat and followed him to a large wooden building, raised from the ground by several pillars, the space underneath being occupied by pigs and poultry. It was some short distance from the town, and in a small plantation of mangroves, plantain, cocoa-nut, and tamarind trees. The owner, a very hospitable fellow, was one Ma, a kind of secretary to the Governor, and who, hearing that we had business with his master, and believing it to be of a very different nature, and of far greater importance than it really was, placed three small cupboard-like rooms at our service, and moreover set before us an excellent repast.

Whether, however, my reader would like to partake of the hospitality of a Siamese of tolerable respectability, he may judge when I tell him that these people take their meals seated upon a mat or carpet (guests are seated upon the floor in front of the door, which is esteemed the place of honour), the dishes are on great brazen vases, with a cover, over which a red cloth is placed. The meat is cut in small pieces, and the rice is kept apart in a large, deep porringer on one side of the floor, while a great basin of water is on the other, having in it a drinking cup. The guests have neither knives nor forks, but use a mother-of-pearl spoon to dip into the various dishes of which the repast is composed.

After having eaten a sufficiency, they drink pure water or tea. To help themselves one after another from the same plate, to drink one after another from the same cup, is the custom.

Well, having made our short and silent meal—(for be it observed, that in Siam social repasts never last longer than a quarter of an hour, during which a dead silence is preserved)—and the wife of our host, who had presided, having left the room, we were entertained with tea and tobacco for about an hour, and then conducted to our respective rooms.

CHAPTER VII.

WE CATCH A SACRED MONKEY, WHICH PROVES A
FRIEND IN NEED.

AT sunrise we were aroused by our host, who set before us a capital breakfast of tea, fruits, rice, and some delicious cakes, which I believe are peculiar to this country, and are made as follows:—

The rice is dressed without water or steam; it is then sprinkled with condiments, consisting of ginger and other spices, after which it is divided into small parcels, which are wrapped up in plantain leaves, and in four-and-twenty hours a sweet vinous liquor exudes, when the cake is fit for eating; but if kept longer they become intoxicating, and if distilled, produce arrack, which, subject to a redistillation, gives a strong and fragrant drink.

As during this meal we learned that the Governor was not twenty miles in the interior, I expressed to our host a desire to go immediately in search of his Excellency, and the worthy man very readily offered us the use of one of his master's elephants,

and a mahout, or driver; moreover, he at once arose to have the animal got ready for our service, but at the same time pointing to Waif, whom from her dress he mistook for a boy, he politely signified that should Master* Rat be afraid to go with us he might remain behind at his house till our return. This offer, however, "Miss Rat," as the Siamese would have called her had he known she was a girl, of course declined. Our host, however, not only took the refusal in good part, but invited us to go and see the howdah made ready for our reception.

"The fellow's a wizard; it is just what I was about to propose, Herbert; for, look you, I have never seen an elephant except at a show, and so should like to see this one and examine its fixings before I venture my carcass so far above terra firma," said Dick, and then the host led us through a small plantation at the back of the house towards the animal's stable. Now, as Dick and Waif, who were some few yards in advance, suddenly came up to a mound of earth about four feet high and twelve in diameter, Waif shrieked and started backwards, but Dick, pulling out his revolver, placed it at full cock, and was about to fire at some object on the earth, when, alarmed at his rashness, I called out—

"Hold, Dick! In heaven's name what is the matter?"

* Intended as a respectful prefix; a youth of the lower order would be called "you rat," of the middle class, "Master Rat," or "Miss Mouse;" of the nobility, "Father," or "Mother."

“Snakes—regular varmint, and that’s certain!”

Still I held his hand, so that he could not pull the trigger, and lucky it was that I prevented his firing, for one of our host’s slaves came up with a dish of milk and eggs, which he placed down near the palings, and in an instant a couple of venomous cobras thrust forth their heads and became busily engaged in breaking the eggs and lapping the milk.

“Dick,” said I, “let us rejoice that you did not kill either of these reptiles, for it would have given mortal offence to our host.”

“Yes, that’s right enough; but just to think of this nigger’s bringing two such vermin a breakfast fit for a Christian; but anyhow these are queer diggins, and that’s a fact,” replied Dick, who, by the way, did not change his opinion when I told him what I must repeat to the reader. That between the white ant and the cobra-di-capello, the natives of the wild parts of Siam have a very uncomfortable time, for of all reptiles the cobra is the most destructive to man; and of all insects the white ant is the most destructive to his houses and goods.

Of course you are aware that the white ants build very remarkably constructed hills, which are pierced with innumerable galleries and chambers within. Now, for some time after the erection of these mounds, the mould is soft and plastic. While the hill is in this state, it is frequently the case that it will attract the attention of some cobra and his

wife, who may be on the look out for convenient lodgings. Well, having found the hill or mound in its softened state, the reptiles at once begin to cave out for themselves space of sufficient size, and take possession, to the disgust of the industrious ants, who very speedily decamp.

As I have said, this is a very common event, so that when a native finds one of these fresh-made ant hills near his dwelling, he watches warily for traces of the cobra being in possession, and having satisfied himself of that, instead of taking means to destroy the reptiles, he and his neighbours set to work to construct a strong fence all round the mound, which they set so thickly with thin bushes that it is impossible for either Mr. or Mrs. Cobra to escape, and thus they would speedily die of starvation, but for the superstitious belief of the natives, who being forbidden to kill snakes, for fear that one of their deities might chance to be within them, make it a religious duty to supply the reptiles each morning with milk, eggs, and other dainties, and that too at such a regular hour that, punctual to the minute, the cobras may be seen peeping out of their respective holes in anticipation of their breakfast. And such had been the case with the two reptiles which had alarmed Dick and Waif.

“And a very queer story it is,” said Dick, when I had concluded my explanation; “but,” he added, “The mound is large and the cobra is so small that it could easily hide itself to the great danger of

some unconscious nigger, so by what token do the natives judge whether the reptile has taken possession of the hill?"

"I know not for certain; but both Hindoo and Siamese have a firm belief that wherever a snail is to be seen, it is upon the track of a cobra, for whom it acts as a water-carrier," I replied, adding, as I saw the howdah, a great roofed basket fixed upon the back of the elephant, "But come, our conveyance is prepared, let us hasten forwards."

"Hilloa, is our old acquaintance going to accompany us?" said Dick, as he saw old Klang come round from the other side of the great beast.

"It would seem he is to be our guide, Dick," said I, adding to the old man, "Surely the many duties of the worthy Klang will not permit him to assume the mean office of our guide?"

"My master's words are good; it is true the office is a mean one for Klang; but he must perform it, for it would be at the cost of his worthless life that he permitted Farang* strangers to approach the presence of the Lord-Governor unannounced," replied he, with an ominous shake of the head.

Then the cushions being arranged and the driver mounted, Waif, Dick, and I clambered into the howdah, and led by Klang, who, upon a little sure-footed Siamese pony, rode in front, hatchet in hand,

* Christian.

ready to clear away obstructing jungle, we set forth upon our journey.

Now, although so much has been written about the elephant in books of Eastern travel, and you, reader, have, in all probability, been much bored by such accounts, for your better understanding of our progress upon that short expedition, I must add one paragraph of information upon that most useful of brutes.

Without the aid of the elephant, it would scarcely be possible to traverse the woods and jungle of Siam. He makes his way as he goes, crushing with his trunk all that resists his progress; over deep morasses or sloughs he drags himself on his knees and belly. When he has to cross a stream he ascertains the depth by his proboscis, advances slowly, and when he is out of his depth he swims breathing through his trunk, which is visible when the whole body is immersed. He descends into ravines impassable by man, and by the aid of his trunk ascends steep mountains. His ordinary pace is about four to five miles an hour, and he will journey day and night if properly fed. When weary he strikes the ground with his trunk, making a sound resembling a horn, which announces to his driver that he desires repose.

In about three hours, when we had travelled some fifteen miles through wood and jungle, we again came in sight of the river, and upon its bank, within a very few yards of the water's edge,

we continued our march, and now that for a time we were clear of the woods, Klang rode a little ahead.

We had not, however, continued in this order of march more than half an hour, when the old Siamese brought his pony to a stand still, and when the elephant was sufficiently near, he said to me in something a little above a whisper—

“Klang can get crocodile’s eggs—he waits the master’s orders.”

“Where?” I asked, quickly glancing around, for I did not care to come too suddenly upon a nest of those dangerous reptiles.

“Your servant can see them there,” he replied, pointing to a mound of mud left by the retiring waters, adding patiently, “I await the master’s orders.”

“What is the bother now?” asked Dick; and when I told him, he replied—

“Bah! of what use are the eggs of such vermin to decent white people?”

“They are esteemed to be a great luxury in this part of the world, Dick.”

“A luxury! well, well, it’s no matter; tell the old fellow to go ahead, and I’ll help him if it is only to get out of this washing-basket, and exercise my legs a little,” he replied.

“But look you, Dick,” said I, “the sport may be good, but remember it will be no child’s play if the old reptile catches us.”

“Tush,” replied he contemptuously, “not much of that I guess, when the danger is all on one side.”

“Now, Dick, help me down,” said Waif, when he had reached the ground.

“Help you down,” he replied laughingly; “Lord love the girl, not if I know it. No, you are better where you are, for you are out of the way of making a tiffin for a crocodile.”

“You won’t?” she replied. “Well, then I’ll just get down by myself;” and there and then she would have kept her word had I not very earnestly begged of her to remain where she was. Then, however, she only complied when I told her we would not go out of her sight.

Klang, however, scarcely cared about our accompanying him, for when upon dismounting, I told him we intended joining in the sport, he begged that we would keep in the rear, and with our pistols in our hands at full cock. “For,” said he, “my masters have no horses, and the crocodile runs fast.”

We obeyed, leisurely following the old custom-house officer, who now seemed to be endowed with all the agility of boyhood, for alighting from his pony, but still holding it by his rope bridle rein, he walked about the mud mound examining every inch of ground with the greatest minuteness, but smoking his cheroot the whole time. Suddenly, however, he took the cheroot from his

mouth, placed it in a hole in the lobe of his ear, and falling upon his knees, began to dig at the mud with his hands, all the time however, keeping his eyes and ears open for the old mother crocodile.

“He is an astonishing old ‘coon’ anyhow, but he’s found the eggs,” exclaimed Dick, as we saw him untie the scarf from his shoulders, and by knots and twistings, convert it into a pocket for the reception of the eggs, each of which was about twice the size of the egg of a goose.

When, however, he had secured twelve or thirteen in this manner, he gave a shrill cry of terror, and leaping upon the pony’s back, urged it forward—too late however—for the plundered and enraged reptile had caught the poor beast by one of its hind legs, and was fast dragging it backwards towards the water.

“Now, Herbert, a steady aim, and follow this,” and as Dick spoke, he fired, the bullet passing within a few inches of Klang’s head, struck the reptile so forcibly above the snout, that it let go its hold.

It was an exciting moment; the pony was down upon its side half-dead with extreme terror, and the crocodile, as if aroused to consciousness of its real enemy, was in full chase of the old man. I fired, but missed, and the brute would most assuredly have overtaken Klang, but for one good

telling shot from Waif, who cleverly sent a bullet between its shoulders.

“It’s but little more custom-house duty you’d have done but for that shot, my friend,” said Dick, as the old man came up to us.

“True, Dick, but we are not safe yet, the brute is still alive,” I replied, as I sent another bullet at the reptile, which, not more than half stunned, lay lashing its huge tail; indeed it took another and another shot before we could kill it.

“Look you, Herbert, it goes to my heart to see yonder poor beast in such agony,” replied Dick, pointing to the pony, which lay upon the bank, writhing and plunging its legs, more, however, I believe from intense fear than from the wound in its leg, and equally did Klang feel for his horse, for turning to me, he begged that I would shoot it, and so finish the poor animal’s misery.

“Nay, that will I not, the beast may get over this terror.” The old man, however, persisting that it could not recover, I lent him my weapon, and with it he closed his friend’s career.

“A pretty mess we’ve made of this bout,” said Dick, when we were once again in the howdah.

“Yes, a dozen eggs, at the cost of a horse and the great risk of at least one life,” said I.

“The horse and Klang are to be pitied; but as for you two—well it was a cruel thing to seek to rob the crocodile of her eggs,” said Waif.

“Aye, what’s that? Now look you, Miss Mouse,

or Master Rat, as these saffron-coloured niggers would say, if you stand at all in fear of that big cat, ill-humour, you will suppress such strong opinions," said Dick.

"Well," she replied, laughing, "and if I, who proved the best shot of the party, haven't a right to an opinion, pray who has, Mr. Dick?"

"I say again, beware of the big cat, Miss Mouse, for that taunt is just a deal worse than your opinions about the killing such vermin as these crocodiles," replied Dick, as seriously as if he intended what he said.

"Well, I take it," said Waif, imitating Dick's nasal twang, "it isn't pleasant by a great deal for a couple of young men to be beaten at a shooting match by a chit of a girl;" and thus bantering each other we continued our journey in search of the Governor, who as poor Klang, who had now to walk instead of ride, informed us, would be found in a forest which we were entering as he spoke.

Keeping as nearly as possible in a straight direction, the elephant who, by the way, well understood his business, forcing a path for us through the dense underwood, we at length came to what had once been a small river, but the water of which, now at that dry season, under the influence of the sun, had become little better than thick mud.

"When we have crossed this ditch, we will come to a halt, and have our tiffin, Herbert," said Dick,

and as I repeated this to Klang, the old man proposed to remain on that side and gather some fruits which he would bring to us.

Accordingly we passed through the mud, not forgetting to keep our eyes open for crocodiles, and when we came to the other side again descended from the howdah, and having sent the elephant to browse amongst some tall grass, we sat down upon a small hillock to partake of the cakes and boiled rice, which before starting, our host had very thoughtfully placed in the howdah; but we were without water, that had been forgotten, and so we sent the mahout again across the mud to search for some, if it were only a gourd full.

But scarcely had the man returned to the opposite bank and entered among the trees, than we were startled by the report of a pistol or gun-shot.

“Old Klang is attacked by a tiger,” said I, jumping to my feet, and clutching my revolver.

“Yes—that’s a *fact*, let us lend him a hand,” said Dick, also arising from the ground, and preparing to follow; but at that moment we saw Klang and the Mahout coming out of the wood, followed by a disorderly regiment of little chattering, screaming monkeys.

“They have attacked the monkeys,” said Waif.

“Have they? Faith I take it the comical little imps have attacked them,” replied Dick, and he was correct, for now as Klang and the Mahout came rushing at full speed through the mud, we could

hear the latter exclaiming, "Ling! ling! ling!" (monkey, monkey, monkey).

Well, away came the two Siamese, and at their heels followed literally hundreds of screaming little monkeys.

Now, awkward as it must have been for the two fugitives, the scene was so comical, men being chased by a herd of little animals, who, as the former with breathless haste stumbled and scrambled through the muddy river, kept chattering, screaming, shaking their paws, and doubtless making use of the most diabolical epithets used in the language of monkeydom, that instead of attempting to alarm the animals by a shot or two, we stood holding our sides with laughter. But onwards came the men, and after them followed the animals, whose turn, however, it became to fly as soon as Klang had touched the shore, for in his terror, or perhaps in his anger at the disgrace of being chased by monkeys, a disgrace he must have felt the more from seeing how we were entertained, without asking my leave he snatched the revolver from my hand, and discharged three barrels one after the other among the animals, two shots told, felling a like number of monkeys, that, however, was enough, for, alarmed at the reports and the discomfiture of their relations, the rest, like cowards as they were, turned tail and fled back across the river into the woods.

"Shame! O Klang, to kill the monkeys," I said,

attempting to look serious when the old man had fired.

“ Monkeys ! They are devils ! ” he replied.

“ Pooh, pooh, O Klang, they are but monkeys. ”

“ Monkeys ! ” he replied, seriously, “ what words are these of my master, for surely he knows that monkeys are men,—not very good-looking to be sure,—but still they are our brothers. ”

It was a queer reply, but did not excite my surprise, for I knew that he had but given utterance to what is a common saying, if not a belief among the Siamese, who have a tradition that if the monkey does not speak, it is from prudence, dreading lest the king should compel him to labour for him without pay. Nevertheless, Siamese tradition saith that a monkey once spoke, and was moreover so brave and clever generally, that being sent as generalissimo of an army to fight a band of giants, he, with one kick, split a mountain in two pieces, and thus (although *how* I cannot understand) finished the war with honour.

“ See, see, ” exclaimed Waif, “ how one poor creature is suffering—how cruel to fire upon them. ”

“ Then it will be a mercy to put it out of its misery, ” said Dick, pointing his pistol at a little animal which was rolling about in the mud, and screaming as if with pain.

“ Nay, that you shall not, ” replied Waif, and off she ran towards the monkey, which, regardless of

its attempts to escape, she caught up in her arms and brought to us, and which I no sooner saw than with delight I exclaimed—

“This is, indeed, a prize.”

“Then prizes are very plentiful in this latitude, I take it, for the little animal is but one of some thousands out yonder,” replied Dick, pointing to the forest.

“Hiloa, is that respectable old party gone mad?” cried Dick, pointing to Klang, who had fallen down in an attitude of prayer before the little beast, and kept uttering, “Buddha be praised—Buddha be praised—it is a Pajee.”

“Come get away, old gentleman, do,” cried Waif, who was soothing the monkey as if it had been a child, and was endeavouring to reset its leg which had been broken by the bullet. But Klang kept gazing with veneration upon the little beast, and muttering the same words, till Waif, getting very impatient, said, “Mr. Herbert, do take this old person away, or I shall never set the poor creature’s leg.”

“You can’t move him against his will, for he is worshipping the beast,” said I.

“Worshipping!” she repeated with disgust.

“The unnatural old heathen,” exclaimed Dick; “but,” he asked, earnestly, “Herbert, are you making fun of us, or is it a fact?”

“True, upon my honour, Dick; did you never hear of a white monkey?”

“ Well, I have, and how that some of these Eastern niggers, worship 'em ; but then this creature is not white, but a whitey-brown.”

“ Nevertheless it is an Albino, or white monkey, and we must get its leg cured and take care of the animal.”

“ Now, look you, my friend, and you *have* been my friend ; still I can't stand a fellow whose head seems turning to this kind of heathenism, for if so be, you are not going to—pah ! worship this beast yourself ; to take care of it is to encourage niggers like this old party here ; so look you, if you don't agree to its being shot, or at least turned adrift again, I don't see how we can go along together very comfortably with such a difference of opinion.”

“ May difference of opinion never alter friendship, Dick,” I replied, laughingly.

“ Aye, but it will, if it comes to be in such a matter about a pug-faced monkey.”

“ Now, hold there, and just listen Dick, like a reasonable being,” said I, adding : “ Have we not come out here for the express purpose of meeting the Mandarin Governor of Chantaburi ? ”

“ Well, and so we have ; but what has that to do with this little brown pug-face ? ”

“ All, I tell you, for from these Asiatics you can get nothing without a present. Now this white monkey is a present for which the Governor will give us everything we ask, even to half his fortune,”

said I. Whereupon Dick scratched his whiskers for a few minutes, and replied—

“Well, that does alter the case, and so there is an end of that transaction ; but,” he added, “suppose Waif washes its face a little, it may make it a shade or two whiter.”

“A very good thought, Dick,” replied Waif, and away she took the animal, whose leg being now bandaged, was free from pain, to a small pool, and a very comical scene ensued, for while she endeavoured to wash it, the beast made as much noise as a human baby under similarly obnoxious circumstances.

As for old Klang, who nothing doubted that it was not for fun, but from a religious feeling, that Waif washed the little monkey's face and hands, danced about very joyfully, and when she gave the little brute into the hands of Dick, who facetiously handled it as tenderly, aye, and as awkwardly, as if it had been a baby (by the way, it was a monkey baby), he pulled off his white linen scarf, and handed it to Dick, who there and then wrapped it about the animal's body and head, so that its face, hands, and feet could alone be seen, and with this comical creature sitting in our midst in the howdah, we proceeded on our way.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE STRANGE JUNK, DICK'S SUSPICIONS AND DARING RESOLVE.

ANOTHER hour's travelling, and the intense heat had become almost unbearable. Klang and the mahout looked longingly forward to a shady forest just before us, while Waif, Dick, and I resigned ourselves to our fate, expecting nothing less than sunstroke; nay, even the elephant lagged in his pace, when Klang uttered an exclamation of joy.

"What does that old person mean? Has he caught sight of this sporting Governor?" said Dick, hanging out of the howdah with the monkey in his arms.

"He is examining the carcass of a rhinoceros," said I, observing Klang standing pensively gazing upon the body of one of those huge beasts, which was lying across our path, pierced with innumerable sticks or darts of bamboo.

"Why stops the worthy Klang to gaze at a dead beast?" I asked, annoyed that our journey should be interrupted.

“Has not the master eyes to see that this animal has been killed by the hunters, and that the Lord-Governor has pitched his tent in the forest till the cool hours?” replied the old man, pointing towards the forest, through which to my joy I believed I could perceive something that resembled a tent.

“Then onwards with all speed, or we may even yet meet our fate from the sun before we can reach yon cool shade,” said I, and the mahout and Klang goaded the elephant to double the speed he had been travelling for the past hour, and as we went Dick said—

“Now, look you, Herbert, is it the custom to make bamboo pincushions of the beasts in this country? for that brute never died by bullet or arrow.”

Nevertheless, Dick, that animal fell by the hands of regular hunters, whose custom it is in the forests of Siam, when they don't use fire-arms or nets, to attack the brute armed with solid bamboos, one end of which is hardened by fire and then sharpened. When a sufficient number of these spears are ready, and they have discovered the haunt of a rhinoceros, they, by loud noises and clapping of hands, invite the animal to come forth. This he usually does, opening and shutting his huge mouth when the hunters attack him from the front and in the rear, and having, with a nimbleness you would find it difficult to imitate, driven the spears into his throat, the whole party take flight, leaving the poor beast, who in his

great agony throws himself upon the ground, and struggles so violently that he speedily becomes exhausted from loss of blood. Then the hunters again come forward, and have no difficulty in despatching him.

“That’s how they hunt in these parts, is it? Well, it requires some pluck to meet the great brute after that fashion; still it’s unnatural and cruel; if they want to kill the beast, why don’t they do it in a Christian-like fashion, with a rifle bullet?”

We soon reached the entrance to the forest, and there, about five hundred yards ahead, through a wide avenue of great trees, we could see the tent; but Klang being now assured that his surmise was correct, and that it was the Governor’s camp, begged that we should remain where we were until he had first announced our arrival to the great man.

Now the old man went upon his errand in anything but good spirits—nay, trembling with fear—for the reception he might meet. Upon his return, however, which was in less than half-an-hour, he capered about us very gleefully, saying—

“Let the master rejoice; his servant has prayed of the Governor to receive the stranger, and the great lord has consented. Will my master come now? I await his orders.”

“Certainly I will. We will, Klang; but how is this, surely the Lord-Governor could not be so inhospitable to three strangers, who have come so far

to wait upon him, as to make any difficulty of so small a matter."

"Truly, my master, a white ant might have moved a mountain before the Lord-Governor would have permitted the eyeballs of the Farangs (Christians) to rest upon his great person if Buddha had not bestowed upon them the Pajee."

"Then it is the white monkey, and not the Governor, we have to thank," said I.

"The white monkey! What about the little beast?" interposed Dick, who was just then assiduously endeavouring to prevent the animal from scratching his face with its claws; but when I told him that it was probable the monkey would prove our best friend, he patted the creature upon the head patronizingly, and told it he wouldn't quarrel with it.

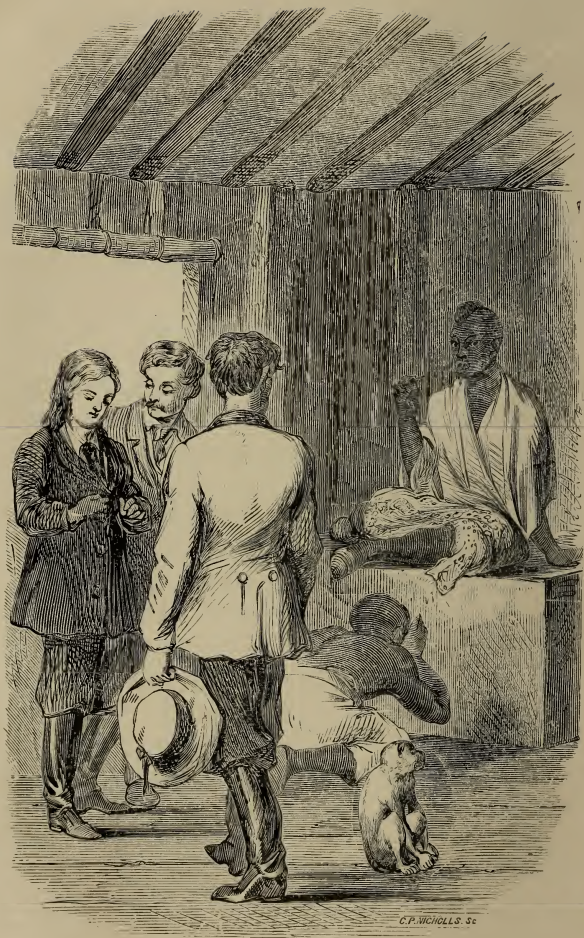
Well, we descended from the howdah, and leaving the elephant in charge of the mahout, proceeded to pay our respects to the Governor, whom we found sitting upon a large stool, surrounded by some twenty servants, who were all lying upon their stomachs, slavishly and anxiously watching every movement of his lips. But this Governor and his attendants, how shall I describe them? Well, it will not be exaggerating to tell you that the scene presented the appearance of twenty very superior-looking, well-formed, barely half-attired, tailless monkeys, paying homage on their stomachs to one whom they might just have elected their king.

The Governor, a description of whom will do, not only for his crawling slaves, but for the whole of the males of his race, was a young man of dwarfish stature, but apparently herculean strength, with the high cheek bones and flat sprawling nose of the Malays, and the oblique eyes of the Chinaman, of meek impassible countenance, olive-coloured skin, beardless chin and face, a small roly-poly-shaped head, shaven all but a well oiled and combed coarse brush-like tuft, black teeth, shining through a pair of highly crimsoned lips, and being a man of rank, very long nails at the ends of his fingers.

This worthy wore a *pagne*, which is the principal garment made of embroidered silk, and which encompassed the lower part of the waist, a portion of the thighs, and was tucked in at the back. This garment, a white cloth which hung about his shoulders, and a pair of slipper-like shoes, formed his entire costume.

The dress of the slaves and attendants may be more easily described, for with the exception of the *pagne* or white cloth around the waist, they were all "in puris naturalibus."

The magnate was sitting supporting his body upon his wrist, but with the right arm unnaturally distended, with the elbow forced inwardly; an attitude which is considered the very acmé of gentility by all persons of consequence, who are trained from childhood to place their elbows



THE WHITE MONKEY PROVES INDEED A PRIZE.

in that very painful, and to Europeans, graceless position.

As we entered, he took a cheroot which he had been smoking from his mouth, and placed it in his cigar-holder, which, as with Klang and the whole of his race, was a hole bored in the lobe of his ear, and I suppose that action was the signal for the commencement of business, for Klang, throwing himself upon his stomach, crawled to within a foot of the great man's pedestal, and slightly lifting his head, said—

“The Farangs await to receive my lord's orders.”

“But where, O Klang, is this sacred pajee which Buddha has vouchsafed to discover unto these most fortunate Farangs?” asked the mandarin, and this being the opportunity for which I had been waiting, I whispered to Dick, “Now, but with due reverence, bring forth the monkey.”

“Reverence! tarnation, the crittur has bitten my arm through to the bone,” replied Dick, and simultaneously the savage little beast, finding the cloth in which for a few minutes he had been wrapped in order to introduce him in proper form, loose, leapt into the middle of the floor, and sitting upon his tail, gnashed his teeth and chattered savagely at the mandarin. The latter, however, not at all discomposed, but with a countenance expressive of intense satisfaction rather than reverence, arose from his stool, and

then made a profound obeisance to the little beast, who comically enough, by way of acknowledgment of the courtesy, clutched his Excellency by the tuft on his head, till he cried out with the pain. His Excellency, however, having partly by persuasion, but more by force, removed the unfriendly paw from his head-tuft, beckoned to two of the attendants, who immediately arose, and having made their obeisances to the animal, very carefully, and with great show of respect, marched his monkeyship out of the tent to one of the elephants, and, as I afterwards saw, packed him and a special attendant in the howdah ready for travelling, and this small farce having been performed, the great man addressed me in the politest of tones, saying—

“How is it possible, O noble Farang, thy servant can find a reward sufficiently great for such a present?”

Now, whether he expected that I should make a large claim upon his finances by way of a reward for the discovery of this animal, which he rated so high, I don't know, but I believe so, for when I replied that all we required was a free passage across the Gulf of Siam to Bangkok in the Chinese junk chartered by him for his master the king, and a small share of the government patronage for Li-Poo and his crew, he evidently considered that he had the best of the bargain, for with a joyful countenance he not only complied with my requests,

but invited us to return with him, and remain as his guests till the junk had completed her lading, and was ready for sea. This invitation we very readily accepted, for once having grown suspicious of Li-Poo's worthy crew, we did not care to return to their junk, the more especially as should they become aware of our intention of crossing the gulf to Bangkok in the opposition ship, the lawless rogues would, in all probability, have detained us on board against our will.

Well, as soon as the great heat of the day began to decline, we made the best of our way back to Chantaburi, and proceeding at once to the Governor's house, where we were each provided with a separate room for the night, and, be not surprised, reader, a tame rat each, the business of this animal being to remain during the night upon the "qui vive" for lizards, mice, or even any of its own kind, who not having had the benefit of his education, still retained its predatory habits.

Apropos of these animals. "Set a thief to catch a thief" is an honoured maxim, and in Siam in the houses of the chief people, it is no rare thing to see a large pet rat parading the apartments, and occasionally running up its master's legs to be petted and caressed.

These *pets*, as I have said, are kept expressly to free the house of other vermin of their own race, and so well are they trained to this use, that in houses where they are thus domiciliated, the rooms

are never, at least for any length of time, pestered by their own near kinsfolk, or even their more distant relatives—mice.

Early the next morning I was visited by the politest of slaves, who desired that I would follow him to the presence of the Governor, who had important news for my ears. I complied, and was speedily in the Hall of Reception—and in close converse with the great man. We had, however, but just finished our conversation, when Dick very unceremoniously forced a way past the slave at the door into the hall, and seeing me, said—

“Zounds man, but I missed you from your room, and thinking some scurvy trick had been played you by these saffron-faced gents, I made up my mind to run the gauntlet of every room in the house—but here you are, all safe and sound, so there is an end of that transaction.”

“Very kind, but useless, Dick ; but I have good news. The governor sent for me to say that the king’s cargo being shipped, and the junk having been reported ready for sea, he intends making a visit of inspection on board, and desires that we will accompany him. for the purpose of choosing our berths in his presence.”

“To which I cry, ‘Hurrah!’ but is it a fact that we are to ship ourselves to-day?”

“Nay, we do not sail till to-morrow, and for this reason—his Excellency is so pleased with the Chinese skipper’s alacrity in shipping the King’s cargo that

he and his two subordinates have agreed to take part in a festival of rejoicing which the Chinese will give to-day upon the island of Paknam."

"The foul fiend take their festival! If ready for sea why not sail at once?" said Dick, angrily.

"Pooh—pooh! Dick, you are selfish. A little good cheer after their labours will do *them* good, and us no other harm than delaying us at the most a few hours."

"Look you, my friend, this festival may be to your liking; but it is not to mine, for Waif will not go, and without her I won't, and that's a *fact*."

"But if we offend the Governor by a refusal, we may chance to lose our berths aboard the junk," said I, and Dick admitting such a possibility, reluctantly agreed to go with us, and we at once left his Excellency, promising to be ready to accompany him in a couple of hours.

When, however, punctual to the moment, we had taken our seats in the barge between the Governor and his two subordinates, the former, be it remembered, sitting aft in state, and the two latter in the prow, and we had reached within a few yards of the junk, Dick was seized with his old doubtings about her.

"I tell you, Herbert, I have seen that craft before."

"Nonsense, Dick, it must be mere fancy, for all these junks of the same class are as like as peas in a sack."

“ Not so, for sometimes they are painted after one fashion, and sometimes after another, and I tell you it’s just because she’s not the same colour as when I saw her before, and because she has been fresh painted, that a something in my head, may be instinct, persuades me I know her, and I *do* know her, and that’s a *fact*.”

“ Well, well, Dick, and supposing you have seen her before, I have seen some thousands of such craft over and over again.”

“ Aye, that’s likely enough, but look you, if it be the junk I mean, it’s just a stroke of luck I didn’t expect to find.”

“ Then what do you take her for ?” I asked.

“ The ——,” and he whispered the name of the junk in which it was supposed the stolen dollars had been taken from San Francisco, adding, “ but not a word of this to our saffron-coloured friend yonder. Then as we passed under the bows he stood up to look through one of the great painted eyes, but in an instant he sat down, exclaiming, “ *it is her, and that’s a fact*.” What it was, however, that had convinced him, I could not then ask, for we had to move from our seats to permit the officials to ascend the side, when, however, we reached the deck, he said—

“ *It is a fact, Herbert, for through that eye-hole I saw the yellow phiz of the Chinese vagabond who was at San Francisco with her.*”

“ Not possible, Dick ; yonder is the skipper,”

said I, incredulously, and pointing to a short fat man, who was then with due forms and ceremonies receiving the Governor.

“It is my belief that fat fellow is no more the real skipper than you or I,” he replied, adding, “and if I don't prove there is a foul wind brewing somewhere before I quit this junk, my name is not Dick Orme.”

“Nonsense, Dick, why all this mystery; but if you have any real cause to suspect foul play, let me just put the Governor upon his guard,” said I.

“No, Herbert, not yet; but then our conversation was interrupted by the Governor, who, calling me forward, introduced me to the fat captain, as the chief of the three passengers, it was his Excellency's will, he should convey to Bangkok; and then, notwithstanding that person of ‘full measure,’ as a Chinaman would have called him, welcomed me with much oily politeness, it occurred to me that Dick's suspicions were not groundless, for there was a sinister expression about the man's features that bespoke much to me who so well knew the Chinese character. Still, as we could bring no charge, nor indeed suggest any reasonable grounds of suspicion, we tacitly determined to await results patiently, and so, without a word, accompanied the Governor over the vessel.

Now, not only did his Excellency inspect the unpleasant holes which were to be our berths, but, with the curiosity of his race, he insisted upon

looking into every corner of the junk. This curiosity was, however, nearly the cause of what I now believe, would have proved a very awkward affair to at least some parties on board, for coming to one particular cabin, the door of which was secured from the inside, the Governor, in very angry tones, desired that it should be thrown open for his inspection, whereupon the skipper prayed of his excellency to desist. This, however, he would not do, and a long wordy battle took place, and the skipper finding he was likely to get the worst of the contest, threw himself upon his stomach after the abject fashion of the Siamese, when making a report to their superiors, and in doleful tones, said—

“May the smallest of hares—the littlest of little beasts, open his lips and humbly tell the great Lord why the door of this cabin is fastened, and be permitted to live?”

“The mouse may speak,” was the generous reply; and one word from the fat rogue, made paler the saffron-coloured visage of the governor, who, without one word of reply, ran up the hatchway, and to the farthest end of the deck.

“That mysterious word which so frightened his Excellency, was ‘cholera,’ a disease which most Asiatics believe to be infectious, and from which the skipper said one of his crew was at the time suffering beneath in the cabin, hence the reason of its door being secured.”

“It’s my belief there is something worse than cholera by many chalks locked up in that cabin,” said Dick, when I had explained to him the cause of the Governor’s hasty departure.

“And so I believe, Dick; but come, his Excellency has had enough of this junk, and is preparing to get into his barge,” said I, but placing his hand upon my shoulder, Dick said determinedly—

“I don’t quit this craft till I’ve tried to make out a something, and that’s a fact. I have my berth, and I will stick to it, so Herbert, just you make some excuse for me to the Governor—aye, and for Waif also, for she won’t go without me.”

“You are an obstinate fellow, Dick,” said I, “but as the Governor was by that time over the side, I left him, and taking my seat in the barge, told his Excellency that drinking and making merry being particularly obnoxious to my friends, they prayed of him to permit them to remain on board the junk, and to my surprise, he assented without a murmur; the true reason, however, for his taking quietly so serious an offence as the refusal of his hospitality was his great anxiety to get away from the junk, so as soon as the Chinese skipper and his two chief officers had joined us, the signal was given, and we were in two boats speedily pulled across to Paknam—a little island which curiously bears the same name as the first town you reach on entering the Meinam. From which cir-

cumstance by the way, and the word 'onam,' meaning water in the Siamese language, it is supposed the name must have some relative signification to the position of the two villages.

CHAPTER IX.

WE ACCEPT AN INVITATION AND ARE PLAYED A
TERRIBLE TRICK.

Now as early that morning the Chinese skipper had sent the junk's cook to the island with a young pig, some ducks, fowls, various sauces, condiments, and a large pan of samshoo (a spirit distilled from rice), upon our arrival we found the feast already prepared, and for an Asiatic pic-nic laid out upon the grass in a very stately fashion, but as if the fragrance of the viands had not been sufficient to excite the appetite of his guests and of his Excellency in particular, as soon as we had taken our seats, that is, squatted down upon the ground, the attentive captain handed to each person a small cup of nam-phrick, a sauce used by all classes as a provocative of the appetite, and compounded of bruised pepper, prawns, garlic, onions, brine, citron juice, tamarinds, and gourd seeds, and certainly its effect as a stimulant must be very astonishing if I may judge from the subsequent gastronomical performances of the assembled party; but it had a two-fold effect, for it also created a

simultaneous and general thirst that could only be allayed by samshoo, and by such quantities of that inebriating and poisonous spirit, that their Excellencies not only lost all control over their legs, which, in defiance of all decorum, got unshipped from beneath their bodies, and every now and then would dart about in fitful startings, but they became absolutely unable to sit upon the grass without holding, or at least supporting themselves with one hand,—and all this I was enabled to observe, as notwithstanding the very urgent pressing of the Chinese captain and his mates, I scarcely wetted my lips with the hateful liquor.

Then resuming for a few minutes the dignity of his official position, the Governor made a speech, in which he complimented the Chinese skipper upon his alacrity, and the admirable manner in which he had shipped the king's cargo, and promised him very great rewards in the shape of extra payment upon his arrival at Bangkok, but at the close of his speech, he became very merry, and punching the Deputy-Governor who sat nearest to him, insisted upon his singing the song of his lady Chin.

Now, whether Mrs. Deputy-Governor bore the common name of Chin, I know not; but the song is a great favourite with the boatmen on the Meiam—a translation of which I will now quote from Mr. Neale's excellent book*—

* "A Narrative of a residence in Siam."

I.

A happy and reckless youth I am,
As I ply my boat on the deep Meinam,
My song shall end, and my song begin,
In praise of thee, my darling Chin.
Begin with the head, and end with the toes,
My praise shall be strong as the tide that flows.

II.

Who that has seen has e'er forgot
Thy pretty hair tied in a sweet knot ;
And prettier still than the tuft of hair,
Thy brow un wrinkled by grief or care.
Begin with the head, and end with the toes,
My praise shall be strong as the tide that flows.

III.

The eyebrows black, I'm sure that each
Is as shiny as any fine healthy leech ;
No elephant, white, black, short, or tall,
Can boast of such eyes so long and small.
Begin with the head, and end with the toes,
My praise shall be strong as the tide that flows.

IV.

As for thy nose, I'm certain that,
None other has one so wide and flat ;
And the ebony's bark in its core beneath, 't
Was never so black as thy shiny teeth.
Begin with the head, and end with the toes,
My praise shall be strong as the tide that flows.

V.

Complexion of gold, and a high cheek bone,
 Such treasures with pride would a Princess own.
 Right proud am I to woo and win,
 Such a lovely bride as my darling Chin.
 Begin with the head, and end with the toes,
 My praise shall be strong as the tide that flows.

VI.

Thy frame is as light as the forest stag,
 And as strong and firm as a rocky crag ;
 Thy feet and toes (the more good luck),
 As pretty and broad as the web-footed duck.
 Begin with the head, and end with the toes,
 My praise shall be strong as the tide that flows.

VII.

My life I'd give a prize to him
 Who produces a wife like thee can swim ;
 Or paddle with skill a heavy canoe,
 'Gainst the mightiest wind that ever blew.
 Begin with the head, and end with the toes,
 My praise shall be strong as the tide that flows.

The chorus of this song, which so fully gives the Siamese estimate of female beauty, was loudly given by the assembled party ; and, when it was finished, the Chinese captain again urged me to drink to Chin's health in a cup of samshoo, and this time unfortunately I could not refuse, for I was also urged by the Governor and the singer, who would have esteemed a refusal an insult. Well, I com-

plied; but almost instantly my brain grew dizzy, and I fell backwards senseless. I need scarcely say that the spirit in my case had been drugged; not an uncommon ruse with Chinese thieves; but how shall I describe the scene around when I recovered from its poisonous effect.

Of all those who had been merry making, none were left upon the island save myself and the three officials; these latter, however, were all still wrapped in profound sleep; but the mandarin's barge, the Chinese captain's boat, his junk—where were they? *non est inventus*. No; between the island and the distant shore of Chantaburi, at least the part visible from Paknam, the sea was clear, and neither boat nor junk thereon. Now were Dick's suspicions verified; that Chinese captain was not what he seemed; he was a pirate, and a glorious booty he had obtained through the carelessness or credulous simplicity of the Governor and his subordinates, for that neither the fat rogue or his junk would ever be found at Bangkok, or the King of Siam set eyes upon his rich cargo, I felt as certain as that the heavens were above me. But Dick and Waif, where were they? alas! either murdered or kidnapped to be sold as slaves. And, in a paroxysm of rage and grief, I threw myself upon the earth and impotently wept. But, as the thought occurred how foolish it was to grieve or enact the madman while action alone could rescue me from that desolate island, I arose, and seeing the stupid inebriated

pigs, whose folly had caused all the mischief, I felt marvellously inclined to kick them. But again, I knew their kicks were to come, and I pitied them, for degradation and death by torture would in all probability be the award for the folly which had lost the king so valuable an argosy.

Nay, their terror upon returning to their senses would be sufficient punishment, and so it proved; for, awakening with wild and haggard looks, they stared at each other; but, when the truth of their position dawned upon their soddened brains, the subordinates gave a shriek and gnashed their teeth with chagrin and rage; the chief, however, recovering from his first surprise, with true Asiatic apathy, exclaimed—

“Thy name be praised, O Buddha, whose will it is to punish him who is but a hare, a mouse—the littlest of beasts in thy sight.”

So apostrophising he squatted down upon the grass, and bowed his head upon his breast as resignedly as if the king’s executioner had been behind him prepared to perform his office. Then one of the subordinates, who hitherto had not been sufficiently conscious to notice my presence, with the utmost simplicity of manner, addressing me, said—

“Tell us, O Farang, didst thine ears hear, or thine eyeballs see, that which the rogues were doing while that poisoned samshoo had possession of our manhood?”

“What words are these—how could thy servant see or hear—after the Lord-Governor had insisted upon his taking from the water-rat the cup of poison?” I replied. And the Governor, turning to the questioner, said sharply—

“Hast thou the brains of a pig, O Cha, to ask this question; for, like our unworthy selves, was not this Farang in want of his senses?”

And at this reproof the other held down his head.

Then, knowing that action would be better than recrimination or despondency, I took the Governor's hand, saying—

“It is not wise to forget our manhood even in grief and disappointment. Arise, let us to the water's edge and await till we can hail some passing ship.”

“Alas! these are the words of one innocent of crime. My brother has betrayed no trust; he has not merited death. No; better to die upon this island in unknown misery than by a public death and disgrace to bring shame upon the heads of those we love,” he replied.

But determined to arouse him, I said—

“Truly, these are the words of a mouse, for a man in his prime should fight against despair. Remember, O Governor, that the most fortunate of destinies, like the brightest of skies, are at times clouded, but it is only for a time, so let my brother resolve to live here till his fortunes become clearer

if he will ; but to live, he must find food, therefore let him cast aside his despair, and help his servant to cut timber that we may find shelter from the sun, and food that we may support ourselves.”

Thus shamed into action, he replied—

“My younger brother has the courage of a lion, and the wisdom of a sage ; his words are good ; in this island, if we would live, we must not despond ; let him lead the way.”

And so saying, he arose and followed his two subordinates and myself towards the sea shore.

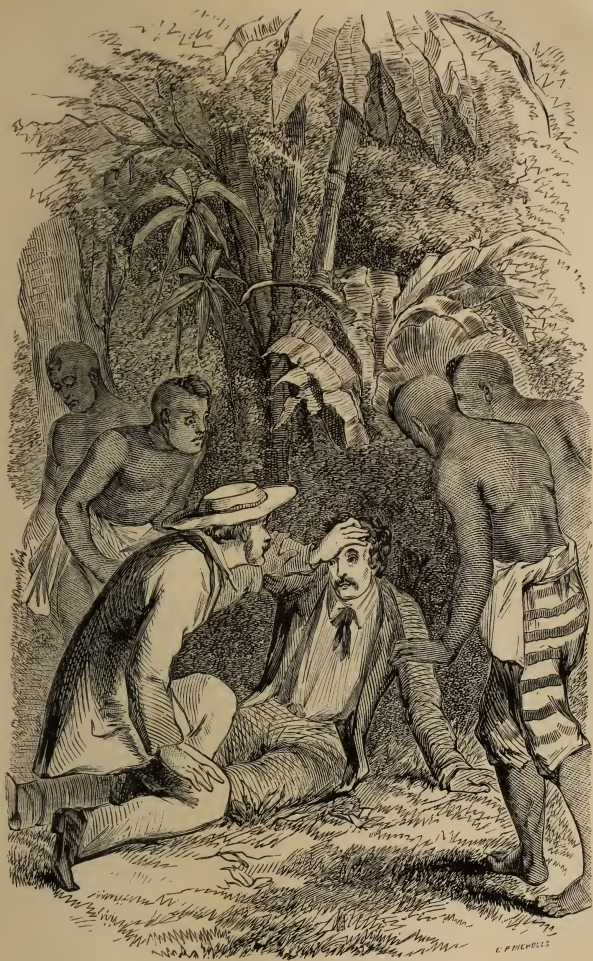
“There we shall find both food and shelter,” said Cha, pointing to a belt of trees some distance ahead.

“True, O Cha,” said I, and forward we went ; but when that worthy, who was some yards in advance, had nearly reached the spot indicated, he started backwards with an exclamation of surprise.

The Governor and I ran forwards to see the cause ; when, imagine our astonishment at seeing stretched at full length just under cover of the foliage of some short stumpy trees—Dick asleep !

“Buddha is great !” cried the astonished Governor ; “but this thing cannot be. He is like my brother’s friend ; but it is not possible, for did he not pray to be left in the junk of the water-rats. No ; this thing is not.”

And in spite of his eyes he again shook his head incredulously. As for myself, not in the least doubt-



AN UNEXPECTED DISCOVERY.

ing the truthfulness of my vision, I seized the sleeper, and shook him till he opened his eyes, when seeing me, he first placed his hand upon his forehead, and stared earnestly for a minute, as if to make sure he was not deceived, then jumping upon his feet, and taking both my hands, exclaimed—

“Is it possible that the villains spared you—you are not dead !”

“No, Dick, not dead at all, and *that's* a fact,” I replied, mimicking the emphatic pronunciation of his favourite words ; “but,” I added, “art sure you are not a ghost, my friend, for little did I expect ever to see you again ?”

“Well—certainly I am not a ghost, for I feel mortal hungry, and that's a proof, I take it ; but,” he added, bitterly, “my poor little Waif—dear little Waif—what has become of thee ? Oh ! would the villains had made me walk the plank that I might have escaped this misery.”

“Nay, Dick, that is selfish, for while she lives there is hope that we may rescue her.”

“That she does live is my dismay, for better the cruelest death than for her to live a week in such company.”

“Come, come, my friend, it is no time for desponding,” I said, hoping to cheer him up, adding : “but how chanced this ; how did you escape ? I am impatient to hear.”

“It is a short story, Herbert,” he replied, adding, “Well, you know that my object in de-

clining to come with you here was that, during the absence of that sham skipper—for sham I still believe him—I might be enabled to make observations sufficient to bring the whole nest of thieves to justice. So as soon as the two boats which held your festival party had left the side, Waif and I leisurely, and with apparent carelessness, strolled over every part of the junk, and that, too, without hindrance from any one of the crew, who as their superiors were ashore, and it was the last day at anchor, began to enjoy themselves after their own fashion. Lynx-eyed, however, as I believed myself, I could discover nothing more suspicious than the closed cabin; therefore, wearied with our, or rather my, search (for Waif had walked about with me only because I feared to leave her for an instant among such a nest of savages), we sat down upon some bales and amused ourselves with conjectures as to what part you might just then be taking in the performances on the island.

The crew were distributed about the deck; some lying in indolent repose, some gambling, others drinking samshoo, but all more or less amusing themselves after their own hearts; but, as the sun began to descend beneath the horizon, the wind wafted sounds to our ears, which told us plainly how uproarious the joviality of your island had become, but these sounds had an instantaneous effect upon the lazy crew, for they began to whisper to each other,

then they arose and pretended to occupy themselves with various little matters, but all the time keeping their eyes fixed upon the island. Then three or four of the ruffians, more anxious than their fellows, passed by us as if to get a few feet nearer the shore, and their faces being turned from us, Waif pressed my hand, and I could feel she shuddered as she said, in a whisper, 'My dear friend, these men are awaiting some signal; we are lost.' 'Nay, Waif, fear not; for, like us, these fellows are but weary of waiting the return of the island party,' I replied. But 'Dick,' she said, 'be not deceived: I have no more fear than yourself, and I know that you must have recognised in one of these men one of the pirates who boarded the "Anne."' Well, finding by this that the girl was fully aware of our fearful situation, I said, as I thrust my hand into my breast pocket, and clutched my revolver, 'Keep a brave heart, Waif, for we have still our hope in God, who may even now rescue us; but, stir not an inch from my side.' And the little heroine replied, 'Fear not for me, Dick; there is yet a chance—see, there are people on the Chantaburi shore; we can both swim, let us make a bold plunge for the land; for once in the water the pirates will scarcely dare to follow, being in sight of the town.' It was a brave suggestion, a plan after my own heart, and would have succeeded—"

"It must have succeeded," said I, interrupting

him; "for, providing she could swim, once in the water the pirates would not have ventured to fire for fear of exciting the suspicions of the people ashore; but why oh! why, did you, fail?"

"Why did we fail; simply because we couldn't help it, and that's a fact," he replied petulantly, adding, "for, you see, one of the rascals, who was hidden behind some bales not far from us, suspecting what we had been planning, gave a sharp whistle, and almost before I could tighten my grasp of the pistol, my eyes were bandaged, and I was made up into about as pretty and tightly-corded a parcel as ever was turned out of a store, and pretty soon stowed away too, in the hold, where I lay in an agony of anxiety for the fate of Waif, and in momentary expectancy of finding myself lowered over the side into the mouth of an alligator, for I have known these villains go 'angling for such brutes with human bait before now."

"Your sensations must, indeed, have been frightful," said I.

"Well, they were not altogether comfortable, and that's a *fact*; but, apart from my fear for Waif, they were yet more agreeable than when I found myself upon the island in San Francisco Bay with the 'California Star' in my hand, reading the account of the robbery, the description of my person, and the reward offered for my apprehension, for it was only my life that was at stake, and that,

look you, at least as far as I know at present, hasn't saved itself up into such a very valuable property that its loss should make me whimper like a girl. But," he added, "about an hour after they had so literally bundled me into the hold, I heard the plashing of oars, by which I knew that some of the social party had returned, although, after what had happened to myself, I did not expect to hear either your voice or the Governor's. As soon as the rogues had fairly got on board, there commenced a great uproar and a continued jabbering of their villainous language; but, notwithstanding the din, I could hear that the greater part of the crew were weighing anchor, setting sails; in fact, preparing to escape as quickly as possible with the king's cargo; and, as I thought of Waif,—of you,—of myself, and the poor deceived Governor here, I almost cried with rage to think I had not acted upon my early suspicions and told him. But, to continue. When the junk had been put under weigh I was carried, in bundle shape as they had first packed me, up the hatchway, and thrown head foremost upon the deck with such violence that for an instant I was stunned. But coming too, I again heard the jabbering, although this time much more distinctly, for a ring of the pirates stood around debating as to the most prudent disposal of my person. The arguments *pro.* and *con.* seemed to run very high; but I believe I recognised two of the voices.

Nay, I can swear to one—albeit, he spoke in Chinese, or some such tongue, of which I know not a word. It was Crafty's. Oh! how my blood coursed through my veins at the sound; on the instant I was about to defy the rogue,—to charge him with the robbery of the dollars, and my own ruin; but then, thought I, if I do, I am a dead man, so I kept silent; for, do you see, I take it that even at present he hasn't an idea that I suspect him of purloining the money I sent to my poor mother, the robbery of the dollars at San Francisco, or the plunder of the 'Anne.' Oh! no; he thinks that, in my mind, he is still the friend who helped me to a situation."

"It is well for you, Dick, that it is so," said I.

"Aye, may be, for had he suspected the truth, I take it I should not have been in this world now. But to finish my story. When the rogues had come to an arrangement as to my disposal, Crafty and some others went below, so that I should not recognise them, and I was unpacked and the bandage taken from my eyes; but for what purpose, cogitated I, as I saw myself hemmed in by the horde of half-naked wretches, now no longer in the guise of peaceable merchant sailors, but armed after the fashion of Chinese pirates, with long, glittering knives? Certainly I expected instant death; such, however, was not to be, for two of the stoutest of the fellows throwing a cord around my chest, just under the arms, lowered me into a boat, and cutting

the rope by which the little craft was fastened to the junk, they sent me adrift without oar or sail; but fortunately, at least, since I have found you, the land wind which helped the pirates to escape with the cargo, sent me on to this island, when fastening the boat yonder as you see (it was about a hundred yards farther onwards) I came ashore, intending to look out for the house or hut of some decent savage; but sitting down to rest beneath this tree, I fell asleep from sheer fatigue of mind and body. However, it is lucky I drifted here, and moreover that we have the boat, and the sooner we rig her out with paddles, for which some of the smaller branches from these trees will answer very well, the better, for if we ship ourselves at once and get across to the town, we may yet be in time to put the people upon the rogues' track, for I take it there is no manner of doubt they will run down to Singapore with the cargo.'

And Dick at once set about looking for branches that might serve the purpose of oars, while I proceeded to interpret his story to the Governor.

CHAPTER X.

OUR VOYAGE UP THE MEINAM; WE ARE MADE PRISONERS ON OUR ARRIVAL AT THE CAPITAL.

“THE water pigs!—the sea-rats! But they must have given a large sum to their Talapoins for the choosing of a day fortunate enough to make such a mouse of Luang,” replied the Governor, as I concluded the interpretation of Dick’s story. But when I made known my friend’s proposition, his Excellency and his deputies trembled with fear. The former, however, replied—

“It is true these water thieves have made thy three servants very little beasts, indeed less than hairs in their own eyes, and of so small value that their lives may not be valued at a single tical; yet they are not so foolish that they would throw their own heads in the dust.”

“The noble Luang’s words,” said I; “are those of a mouse, not a man; his fears are devouring him, for is he not still the Governor, who can send forth armed junks after these thieves?” but, de-

terminated not to be moved from his position, he replied—

“My younger brothers may be tired of their lives, and take them in their hands as offerings to the slaves of Chantaburi, who to appease the great King for his loss will send their heads to the foot of his royal seat; but Luang and his brothers will remain on this island till the royal wrath has been softened by the Lord Chaa-Fa, who is his near relation.”

“But,” said I, “this island is near the mainland, and the people of Chantaburi cannot fail to come here to look for their governors.”

“My younger brother is wise, yet in this thing his words are not good, for he knows not that this island is but rarely visited by the people of Chantaburi.”

“But now will they come here to search for their governors?” said I.

“It is not so, the people know not that we came here, but believe that we were in the junk of the water-rat. It is, therefore, good that we should remain till the cloud of royal wrath has passed over.”

And so positive was he in his manner that I desisted from further persuasion, and went to assist Dick, who was upon his knees busily fashioning two branches into oars.

“He won't come with us, won't he? Well, then, take it he must remain where he is,” said Dick,

when I repeated to him the result of my conversation.

“But come, lend a hand, Herbert, for the sooner we get across to yonder town the better,” he added, pushing one of the branches towards me.

“No, Dick, we will not return to Chantaburi, for even if we escaped being seized by the natives, who to appease the king will doubtlessly lay their hands upon us, we should run no small risk from Li-Poo and his crew, who will be in no good humour at the pirate’s success.”

“Whew! there is some reason in that,” said he, chagrined at being checked in his hopes of a chase after little Waif; then he added, “But look you, Herbert, I won’t stop on this island while there is a chance of finding our way along the coast, although it be only in that cockle-shell of a boat, for to my thinking it’s better to run the risk of being drowned like a civilised white man than to live after the fashion of a wild beast, upon roots, fruits, and herbs.”

“My notion, exactly,” I replied; and then, without another word, we worked at the oars till they were completed, set up a mast, which, aided by the Siamese, we rigged out with a sail woven from rushes collected near the spot.

Thus having prepared our vessel, we gathered a store of fruits, for instance, mangos as big as a child’s head, and which have the taste of peach; tamarinds, guanans, which are about the size of

moderate sized apples, and taste like strong strawberries ; bananas, which the Siamese call elephants' teeth, and which, after exposure to the sun, taste like dried apples ; and a few jacks, a melon-shaped fruit, with a grey skin, and full of pips or kernels the size of pigeons' eggs, which when roasted taste like chesnuts. These fruits, and a few gourds filled with water, which completed our victualling stores, being placed on board, we bade farewell to the Governor and his subordinates. The former, however, with tears in his eyes, prayed that if ever we reached Bangkok, I would seek out the great mandarin Chaa Fa, and pray of him to secretly send a junk to the island for the relief of his unfortunate relation Luang.

Well, having satisfied the poor Governor that I would seek his relative, we put out to sea with the intention of hugging the shore the whole voyage ; but although for some six hours we made tolerable way, the attempt was mad-headed, for such a cockle shell of a boat could not have lived a minute in one of those violent whirlwind squalls which are so common and set in so suddenly in the gulf of Siam. Fortunately, however, we had not to undergo such an ordeal, for before sundown we fell in with one of the junks which trade between Canton and Bangkok, the good-natured master of which, seeing so small a craft struggling to make way against a dead head wind hailed us, and finding we were making for Bangkok, offered to take us on

board, an offer we very gladly accepted, and thus, in a few days, we reached the bar of Siam, where greatly to our vexation, we were compelled to ride at anchor till the captain had been ashore and obtained permission of the authorities for the vessel to enter the mouth of the Meinam river, a form which, if not complied with, would have rendered the skipper liable to imprisonment, and his cargo to seizure and confiscation.

This caused us to be delayed the half of that day, and the whole of the next night. The following morning the skipper returned on board, and with him came an elderly man, short, but very stout, who, from his gait and attire, I imagined to be a merchant of Bangkok, who had met the junk at the very mouth of the river with the hope of making an advantageous, if not an exclusive bargain with our skipper for his cargo, and such proved to be the case, for directly he came on board, passing Dick and myself, who were sitting upon a cask aft, without a word or apparently a glance, he commenced haggling with the skipper, who held before him a list and description of the articles on board.

“What is the old fellow making all that ado about?” asked Dick.

“Driving a bargain for the whole cargo.”

“No bad hand at that either, if we may judge by those sharp little eyes of his, one of which, all the time he has been talking to the skipper, has been turned round the corner taking our measure.

“Hush! Dick, he may understand English,” said I, and my surmise was correct (as I afterwards understood), for failing to come to an arrangement with the captain, he waddled up to where we were standing, and having made an obeisance, he asked in a very broken dialect of our own tongue, if we were English, and what was the object of our being in that land. To which I replied that we were English, and that my purpose in coming to Siam was to visit a certain merchant of Bangkok, named Mi. At the latter name I fancied he started, but he replied—

“It is a long distance. May your servant ask what great affair can have brought his younger brother from England to Siam to visit the merchant Mi.”

“You are a trifle out in your reckoning, friend. It is from Macao we have come. At the name of Macao, I again fancied he started a little, at least there was a curious twitching about his lips.”

“Yes,” I said, “my friend speaks the truth, we do hail from Macao, and I am the son of the merchant Richardson, whose late partner Ching being dead, seeks to settle his affairs with the merchant Mi, who is his agent at Bangkok;” but seeing that this information discomposed the worthy Siamese more than ever, and fearing to hear of the death of Mi, or at least that some calamity had happened to him, I added, “but can any evil have befallen the worthy Mi?” At this question, for some reason or

other, his countenance became brighter, and he replied—

“It is not so, thy servant can answer for the worthy Mi, who is in health, and will doubtless have his heart full of joy at the sight of the son of his friend, the merchant Richardson,” he replied, adding, “It is fortunate for my master and his servant that they have met, for they can journey up the Meinam together to the house of Mi.” So far the meeting was satisfactory, and the old gentleman became very jovial and chatty, asking a thousand questions about Macao, and the state of business there; but at length, looking me full in the face, he asked with more of earnestness than politeness in his manner—

“How is it possible that the son of the great merchant Richardson, whose dollars are countless, is found endeavouring to cross the gulf of Siam in a boat not large enough for a monkey?”

This was a home question, and not easy to answer, for I wished to avoid mentioning our adventures at Chantaburi for fear of being arrested by the government officials, either as an accomplice or a witness, and which would most assuredly happen, did even the small share we had unfortunately taken in that transaction transpire.

“I take it, my friend, you have heard of such a thing as people being cast away at sea before now,” interposed Dick.

“Were my brothers cast away upon the island

of Paknam, near Chantaburi?" asked the old fox; and from the very tone of his voice I believed he knew more than we dreamt; but, still upon my guard, I replied by another question.

"Did the worthy Sing (the captain of the junk) tell my elder brother where he picked us up?" Then with an air, and in tones intended to invite confidence, he replied—

"My younger brother is right; but is not his servant the friend of his friend Mi, and why should he fear to utter the truth?"

"But look you, my friend, as you seem to know all about it, what is the necessity for asking questions?" said Dick.

"Thy servant is but a hair, a small beast; but his ears have been open to the talk in Bangkok of the dogs of mandarins who laughed in their sleeve while the rats of the ocean ran away with the great king's cargo."

"Has this news reached Bangkok so soon?" I asked, with astonishment.

"Truly it has; brought by the king's own steamship of war which put into Chantaburi on its run from Singapore to Bangkok," he replied, adding, "but my brothers were more fortunate than the mandarins."

"Wherefore?—what mean you?" I inquired.

"The mandarins (and the dogs merited greater punishment) were thrown into the sea without their heads."

“Has that been ascertained?” I asked, breathing more freely now I heard that the poor fellows were not suspected of being alive, or at least on the island.

“Can my brother doubt it?—are the sea-rats mice that they would have spared their worthless lives?” he replied.

“My brother is right; there can be little doubt that the mandarins have been punished,” I replied, adding: “But, Luang the Governor, has he not powerful relations in Bangkok?”

“The mandarin Chaa Fa is most powerful, and he is brother to the Governor,” he replied, but asking eagerly, “Why does the son of the merchant ask this? Would he have speech with the illustrious Chaa Fa?”

Fortunately, however, at that moment the sound of a horn startled Dick, who stared very hard at the fort of Paknam, near to which the junk was just then being moored, as if to discover the cause, and the merchant observing his curiosity said—

“Does not my younger brother know that every day at this hour that horn is blown throughout every town and village in Siam to set forth to the world that the first king has just finished his chief meal (dinner)?”

“A queer custom, too. But,” still examining the fort, Dick added, “this nutshell here, do you call it a fortification? Why, it wouldn’t hold out a

day against a regiment of school boys, and that's a fact."

But at this observation the old merchant, although too polite to make a reply, turned away his head in disgust; for, to a native of Siam, Paknam is a model, the very pink of fortresses—albeit, to Europeans it must be a miniature in size—a toy in strength. The fort itself, which is circular, is placed in the centre of the entrance to the river, upon a small island between two fortified embankments, and is ornamented by a pagoda which arises from the middle, and is mounted with two tiers of old guns, which, in the event of being used, would prove far more fatal to the men who served them than to the enemy. But what matters, if the unwarlike natives of Siam, who have a legend that it was founded by a god, who even now watches over it, believe it would be an impregnable defence against all the armies of Europe. Let us hope it may never be tried. However, seeing the old man was about going over the side (for we had anchored for the night) I said—

"The worthy merchant is leaving the junk, he lives at Bangkok, will he not therefore remain on board and proceed with us up the river to-morrow?"

But he was now evidently in a sulky humour, for he replied—

"My younger brother is wise, he locks up his own secrets; but his servant is no less so."

And with these words he descended into the little boat, and was paddled ashore by two of the crew.

“I wouldn’t trust that old hunks with a dollar out of my sight,” said Dick, watching the boat.

“You are hard upon the old gentleman, Dick.”

“Why, look you, Herbert, he is too smart by half; and because he failed to pump out of you all about the Governor Luang, he is sulky. He wants to know more than would be good for us, and that’s a fact.”

I was of the like opinion, but I said not so to Dick, for fear he might make an open display of his dislike, for a certain bluntness of speech and manner, which bordered upon offensiveness, was not the least of Dick’s failings; and lucky was my forethought, for as we were getting under weigh the next morning, the old gentleman came on board to become our fellow-passenger to Bangkok.

Then commenced our voyage up the mighty Meinam (mother of waters), which taking its source in the mountains of the Chinese province of Yunnan, flows for 800 miles, till it rolls its magnificent tide into the Gulf of Siam; and with the exception of the clouds of musquitoes which pestered us with their buzzing and stinging, and the monotonous noise of the drum-fish, so called from its habit, while following in the ship’s wake, of keeping up a continuous sound of tom-tom, it was an agreeable relief from

the stormy Gulf, for in place of a dreary expanse of sea, we had banks fringed with bamboo, mangroves, and tall graceful palms; then, as we ran along one side or the other, and the river is so deep that a large vessel may keep quite in shore, beneath the overhanging branches of the trees we could see semi-nude humanity of all ages, men, women, and children, crawling near the water's edge. Then through the green foliage every now and then peeped the sharp-roofed bamboo and palm-leaf huts (erected upon poles, some six feet from the ground, with ladders, the uppermost rounds of which were placed near the door, and the lower in the water, so that they served for moorings for the boats), or the tiled-roofed white-pillared shade or rest house in the garden of some watt (temple).

That evening we anchored off Paklat-Boon, a fortified town, no very great distance from the capital, and the next day we arrived at Bangkok, the aquatic city of an amphibious people.

This remarkable town consists of 80,000 floating houses, and a population of 400,000 Chinese, Burmese, Arabs, Indians, Siamese, and a few Europeans.

There are of course residences on shore, but it is of the floating houses, of the chief public way—in fact the Regent Street of Siam—that I would now speak.



Instead of omnibuses, horses, carriages, this great water thoroughfare is thronged with boats of various forms. Its shops are lines of small houses of wood, with palm-leaf roofs resting on bamboo rafts or floats, all along each bank, rising and falling with the tide. They have each a small platform before them, and the whole front is open, exposing the neatly arranged shelves and counters of goods. Mostly from China—silks, muslins, chests of tea, lacquered ware; and also the products of Siam—ivory, deer-horns, skeletons and skins of tigers and leopards, snake and shark skins.

The skeletons and the snake skins are exported to China for medical uses. Some of these houses are tin and leather shops, these being generally combined; some are eating houses, with strings of peppers, dressed poultry, and slices of fresh pork, suspended invitingly in front. Most of them are the dwellings as well as business places of their proprietors—some are solely dwelling houses; and many wealthy persons, who have their dwellings on the solid ground, have a floating shop in front. Canoes and boats are fastened to the projecting platform; little children are running about them, or playing on their very edge, and almost at every turn some member of the family may be seen taking a bath, by dipping buckets of water from the river, and pouring it over their persons without any change in their usual attire.”

As we passed along this water-street of the Siamese, Dick and I stood upon deck gazing at the panorama before us. When, however, we came about midway, and near the mouth of one of the canals, which intersect the land city, Dick, pointing to a cluster of boats, manned by girls, and awaiting hire, said—

“ Let us hail one of those lasses and go ashore, Herbert.”

“ Nay, we may not, Dick, till the junk comes to an anchor, and the Government officials have been on board to examine the cargo and the junk’s papers,” said I.

“ One night will make very little difference ; if my brothers are wise, they will stay on board to-night, and at sunrise their servant will bring the merchant Mi with him,” interposed the Siamese.

“ That is sound advice, Dick, even if we were allowed to go ashore, for we should never find this man Mi without a guide.” said I.

“ Bother,” replied Dick ; adding—as he saw the Siamese hail the rowers of a large gaily painted barge, the middle of which was covered with basket-work of wattled bamboo, painted and water-tight, one end being closed with a wooden screen, and the other with a silk curtain—“ But, look you, old saffron-face is going ashore.”

“ Perhaps so ; but then he is known only to have gone down the river to meet us, and that is his family carriage doubtlessly ; for almost every Siamese, be he rich or poor, keeps his floating carriage.”

Then the old merchant having again begged of us not to quit the junk, till he sent for us in the morning, spoke a few words to the Chinese skipper, and disappeared over the side, and we continued to move down the river, but now at a much slower rate, indeed it seemed wonderful that we could move at all, in the midst of such a scene ; for in addition to the numerous houses which I have described, and which were arranged in double rows like streets, there were many thousands of boats, barges,

junks, and vessels of all descriptions, and for all purposes.

The largest junks were of a thousand tons burthen, and, like that in which we were, square-bottomed, with sides of heavy planks, and the bow left open for the express convenience of the wind, the waves, and the water-gods, and a resting-place for the anchor, which is made of wood as heavy as iron. There is a large opening in the sides for the taking in and out of the cargo, but which when at sea is closed by gates which fall into grooves. The stern is built up into platforms of cabins, and three heavy naked sticks, without yards, form the masts. The most important concomitant of all these junks, is its joss-house, or temple, with an ever-burning lamp before the god. Then to assist its progress it has too large eyes in front, for, say the Chinese, " 'spose no got eyes, how can see ? "

Passing these trading junks, which were waiting for the south-west monsoon to carry them out to sea, we were every now and then in fear of capsizing one or other of the crowd of small boats, in each of which, either running with, or struggling against the tide, sat a man, woman, or girl, whose weight brought the edge of the little craft to within an inch of the water; but our fears were causeless, as to drown a Siamese would be as difficult as to drown a duck; nay, when one of these boats is upset, instead of helping the man, woman, or child who has become submerged, the

people upon the platforms, before the floating houses, or in other boats, enjoy a hearty laugh at their expense.

Then we would pass the large dwelling boats of respectable people, with their sides open, curtained or with venetian blinds, the state-barge of some noble, with its thirty or forty crimson jacketted and capped rowers, its many bright coloured silken banners, its bows and stern gilded and wrought into the fashion of a dragon, or some fabulous animal; and its luxurious owner upon a Persian mat, in the middle, beneath the rowers, who were divided into parties fore and aft, reclining against a triangular pillow, munching the "betel" mixture, which he would every now and then take from the golden box by his side; and his ears drinking, to him, the delicious sounds of his private band of musicians, who, as the rowers loudly exercised the privilege of a noble's servitors of loudly vociferating, played upon their gongs of China, sweet pipes of Laos, or the wind instruments of Siam.

This noble having passed, next came an half-egg shaped tankea boat, with a couple of Chinamen, one in the bow the other in the stern, with their loose garments, and broad-brimmed conical-crowned bamboo hats, carrying a cargo of ribbons, needles, and other small wares. Then again, a wandering cook, seated among his plates and pans, with a complete cooking apparatus on board, and all kinds of viands cooked and ready for cooking. Then a woman vending the betel-nut mixture; in short, traders, large and small,

men, women, and children, industriously and anxiously plying afloat, as many and as varied vocations, as may be seen in the densely-populated trading districts of every large city. But by the time the junk had reached her place of destination, it was dusk, and tired of our lonely watching upon deck, Dick and I went into the cabin to partake of hot tea, rice, and pork; after which we threw ourselves upon the mats, and fell fast asleep. Awaking, however, in about two hours, we went upon deck to catch the night-breeze. But we had by our sleep missed the intervening period between day and night on the Meinam, and the effect was magical, for the great turmoil had become hushed, the sun had disappeared, not even the buzzing of a mosquito was to be heard, and Bangkok sat gently upon the water, beneath a sky illumined with countless lanterns of every shape, size, form, and colour. Every house, boat, mast, and even the surface of the river, was illumined, for it was the last night of one of the great festivals of the Chinese. But, a Chinese festival, and upon so large a scale in Siam! How is that possible? perhaps asks the reader. I will tell him. It is a fact but little known, and less noticed, by Europeans, albeit, it is well worthy the attention of even such exalted personages as philosophers and statesmen, that the Chinese population is vastly increasing in every land where there is money to be made. They have ever been an industrious race, but of late years they have become intensely migratory. The great wall of China is a myth,

it neither keeps the nations within, nor their enemies without. As is frequently the case with their own mighty rivers or great canals, the race has outgrown itself, and is for ever bursting its embankments.

The Chinese have a great history, a past which they love and revere, and notwithstanding the contempt in which they are held by more warlike Europeans, they possess all the elements of a great people. Those elements are fast consolidating, settling as it were into a great whole, whose power may some day shake many of the numerous possessions of Europeans in the East. The love of commercial travel has founded the greatness of many nations, and the Chinese are to be found in swarms in every settlement in the East. This over-running of the Chinese, and its possible consequences, must, I think, have occurred to Sir John Bowring (it has long been observed by commercial travellers) who gives us an admirable and note-worthy picture of the ways and doings of Chinese emigrants.

“The extraordinary diffusion of the Chinese emigrants over all the regions, from the most western of the islands of the Indian archipelago in the Straits settlement—in Siam and Cochin China, and now extending over a considerable portion of Western America, particularly in California, and reaching even Australia and Polynesia—is one of the most remarkable of the events of modern history, and is likely to exercise a great influence on the future condition of man; for the Chinese do not migrate to mingle with

and be absorbed among other tribes and peoples, they preserve their own language, their own nationality, their own costume and religious usages, their own traditions, habits, and social organization. Though they intermarry with the races among whom they dwell, the Chinese type becomes predominant, and the children are almost invariably educated on the father's model, the influence of the mother seeming almost annihilated. And though the Chinese frequently acquire large fortunes, great influence, and sometimes high rank as a consequence of their prosperity, the ties that bind them to their country seem never to be broken; and the tides of population flow Chinaward with every south-western monsoon, to be replaced by a stronger stream when the monsoon of the north-east sends the junks on their wonted way towards the south. It is estimated that in the kingdom of Siam there are more than a million and a half of Chinese settlers; in the city of Bangkok alone there are supposed to be two hundred thousand. In fact all the active business appears to be in their hands. Nine out of ten of the floating bazaars which cover for miles the banks of the Meinam, are occupied by Chinamen; very many of them are married to Siamese women, for a Chinawoman scarcely ever leaves her country; but the children are invariably educated to the Chinese type; the tail is cultivated if it be a boy, and the father alone seems to model the child's nature and education. Yet that strong parental affection which has been remarked as one of

the characteristic virtues of the Chinese, is almost invariably exhibited. Fathers are constantly playing with and carrying about their children, encouraging their gambols, teaching them to observe, pleased when they are noticed by strangers, and generally deeming their children objects of pride and pleasure. With rare exceptions the Siamese women are well-treated by their Chinese husbands. They seem to be inspired with a greater love of labour, occupy themselves more busily with domestic concerns, and generally appear to improve under the influence of the foreign element. The Chinese not only occupy the busiest and the largest bazaars, but their trading habits descend to the very lowest articles of barter; and hundreds of Chinese boats are vibrating up and down the river, calling at every house, penetrating every creek, supplying all articles of food, raiment, and whatever ministers to the daily wants of life. They penetrate to, and traffic with, the interior, wherever profits are to be realized. As a community they are nearly isolated from the Siamese, though professing, for the most part, the same religion. They have their own temples, and carry on their worship of Buddha, not according to the usages of the priests of Siam, but following the customs and traditions of China; and their Buddhism, as in China itself, is held in subservience to their reverence for the teachings and writings of the Chinese sages—Confucius, Mencius Sze-mat-ze, and the ancient teachers of their native land.

“The signs over their warehouses, shops and

houses, are all written in Chinese—in the Chinese language they carry on all their correspondence, nor do I remember an example of a Chinaman being able to write, though they almost all speak, the Siamese language. Over their doors are the same inscriptions one is accustomed to see in China, such as, “May the five felicities dwell in this abode.” The moral aphorisms—the fragments of poetry which are suspended on the walls in China, written on scrolls or tablets, always in pairs, decorate the houses of the Chinese established in Siam.”

To resume my narrative. Dick and I stood looking upon the scene till its brilliancy began to fade ; the oil was burning out ; lamp after lamp became extinguished, when I proposed that we should seek our cabin and sleeping mats ; as, however, we were entering the cabin, the plashing of oars fell upon our ears.

“It is a queer hour for a visit from other than river thieves,” said Dick.

“River thieves they are. Let us arouse the skipper,” I replied ; but the same sounds had also alarmed the Chinese captain, for both he and his officers came forward ; and, flourishing their knives above their heads with a great show of gallantry, shouted to the boat’s crew—

“What dogs are these who would disturb peaceable traders in the small hours ? If ye be thieves, take care for your miserable lives, for we are prepared.”

And, having delivered themselves of these words, they stamped their feet upon the deck valorously, though,



from the tremor of their voices, I believe they were quaking with fear. But, at the reply, it was our turn to quake, if not with fear, certainly with indignation; for, although long and formal, it was to the effect that they were police and soldiers of Bangkok who had been sent by no less a person than the Phra Klang, or foreign minister, to secure the bodies of two Farang rogues who had helped a Chinese pirate to run away from Chantaburi with a valuable cargo belonging to the king.

“Hiloa! Herbert, did you hear that? the fellow means us, and that’s a *fact*,” said Dick.

“There can be no doubt who they mean; but we

must escape their clutches, if we swim for it," I replied, about to cross the deck and jump into the river from the other side; but the Chinese, terrified at the sight of the officials, who had now sprung on board, and fearing the consequences to themselves should we escape, surrounded us, and in a minute so tightly corded our arms that we could not move them; but my tongue was at liberty, and I demanded to know the meaning of such an outrage; but the chief of the party, in reply, ordered me to hold my peace, and threatened that, if I did not, he would have us gagged and carried into the boat; and, as we had no alternative, and the man spoke as if he intended what he said, we complied.

"For this fix we have to thank that saffron-faced old fox," said Dick, as the boat touched the bank.

"Perhaps so, indirectly; but this outrage is an accident, a mistake; the old fellow has been indiscreetly talking about us in connection with the Chantaburi robbery; it has reached the ears of the officials, and they have arrested us upon suspicion; but never care, Dick. I will endeavour to send a message to the merchant Mi, who will satisfy the government that we are not the rogues they suspect, and we shall speedily be at liberty again."

"Well, Herbert, that may be *your* opinion, but it is not mine; any how, I object to being boarded and lodged even for an hour with a crew of half-naked, saffron-coloured, brush-headed monkeys like these; but," added Dick, "mere talking won't set us free, so

we had better hold our peace, or these fellows will perhaps take it into their heads that we are conspiring to upset them."

And such, I believe, to have been their thoughts ; for, before permitting us to land, they coupled us together by ropes, the ends of which secured our arms, and in this fashion we were driven like beasts before them to a low wooden den lighted by one small lantern ; the glimmering of which was just sufficient to deepen the horrors of the place. I have seen the prisons of China, and heard of the terrible Gokuya of Japan, but the den to which we were taken beggars description. As, in that fearfully celebrated hole of Calcutta, the space was barely sufficient to hold the number confined there, the prisoners were all secured to each other by one long iron chain, to which we were also fastened ; there was, however, this difference between it and the Calcutta hole, there was just sufficient room for the inmates to squat down on the humid earth.

"The heathen rascals ! do they mean to keep two decent white men in this hole ?" said Dick.

"It *is* horrible, Dick ; still it can't be helped," said I ; but, addressing the chief of the police, I threatened to have him punished for the outrage. At that he smiled grimly, and left the place, securing the door from the outside ; indignant, however, as we were at having been brought to such a place, our misery was but small compared to that of our fellow prisoners ; a description of whom may interest my readers.

CHAPTER XI.

WE ARE ARRESTED ON SUSPICION OF A CRIMINAL OFFENCE, AND PLACED IN PRISON.

OF the companions of our imprisonment that night I can give but a general description. Crude, however, as it may be, it will be sufficient to give an idea of the laws and punishments of criminals in Siam.

Well, one, the youngest and best looking, was a young mandarin, who, having been convicted of a treasonous crime, was to suffer death the following day; being, however, a noble, his *privilege* was to be put into a sack and be beaten to death by clubs in a public place; a mode of execution also practised in Ava.

Another was a Buddhist priest who, having broken the vow of celibacy, had been torn from his wife, and was then awaiting the punishment of his crime; which was to be stripped of his yellow robes, be flogged till the blood came forth, after which he was condemned to cut grass for the royal elephants for the remainder of his days; a punishment in Siam esteemed the most infamous, and from which the culprit is never redeemed.

Then there was a gang of coiners, who, having been convicted, were sentenced to the following punishments:—He who had worked the bellows, to have his right hand fingers chopped off; he who had shaped the coin, to lose his right hand; while those who had impressed the king's mark were to suffer the loss of their right arms; and these penalties are commonly practised in Siam, for coining is so common that it is supposed that more than one-tenth of the silver coin in circulation is spurious. But, barbarous as are these punishments, we must not forget that, but a few years since, for the same offence in England death was awarded.

Then there was a man who, having run away with the wife of another, had been caught, and was then writhing beneath the pain caused by his having that day been branded upon both cheeks with a hot iron.

Again, there were two poor wretches who, having been convicted of stealing from a temple a golden idol which they had melted down, were awaiting the execution of their terrible sentence, which was to be burnt alive.

Then there was one man who had been convicted of killing a relation; his sentence was to be beheaded, and afterwards his body to be impaled and left to be devoured by birds of prey.

For the rest, they were chiefly debtors, waiting to be redeemed by the payment of their debts; and petty rogues who, chained up at night, are in the

morning laden with irons and chains round their necks, waists, wrists, and legs; some even have to bear in addition the heavy wooden collar, or *cangue* of China, and in this state, under an escort of police armed with muskets and bamboo staves, they are led to the public works, where they are made to labour till the hour again comes round for their being chained up.

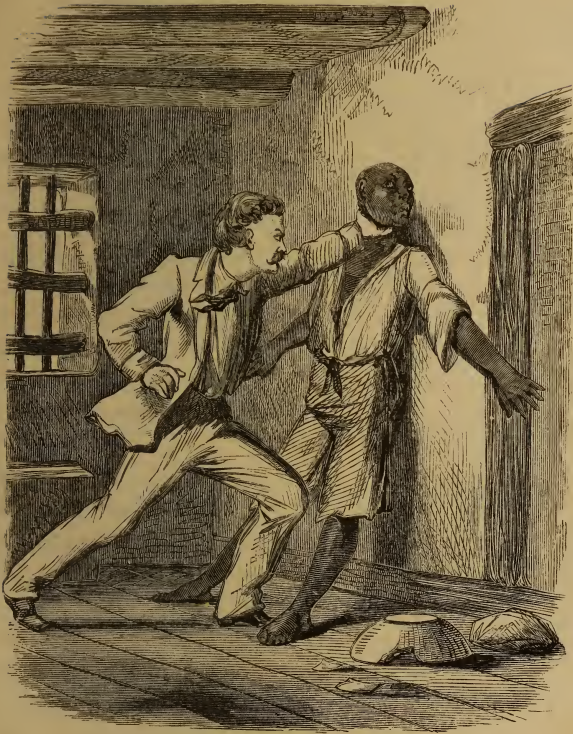
After the foregoing description of my companions, I need scarcely tell you that it was not the most agreeable way of spending a night; still, we did sleep even there; but then, I believe, exhaustion had more to do with it than either courage or a philosophical resignation to our fate; but the worst had to come; for in the morning, when the police came, some to lead the poor debtors about the streets, and others to conduct the petty thieves to the public works; and, as we thought, to take *us* before the minister who, we were told, had commanded our arrest, Dick and I were parted; he being taken, as he afterwards told me, to a smaller but more comfortable cell near the place to which they conveyed me, which, by the way, was a strong room, the window of which looked out upon the Meinam, and from which I had the consolation of seeing that there were many prisoners worse off than myself: namely, a number of poor wretches (debtors), each of whom was suspended over the river in a kind of large bird-cage, and in pitiable misery, kept moving about from one side to the other of the cage as if to escape from the

burning sun which scorched them. But for another reason was I more fortunate than those poor prisoners ; for, while they were indebted to the small charity of passers-by for every atom of food, my meals, such as they were, were supplied to me regularly by a literally dumb waiter ; for, say what I would—coax, bribe, or threaten—he would do nothing but grin.

For a whole week was I kept in this vile duration ; when being half frantic, more I believe, from want of a companion than the confinement itself, I one day watched my opportunity, and squatting upon the floor with my head in my hands, as if in deep contemplation, I awaited till my dumb friend had entered the room, and closed the door after him, then suddenly springing forward, and catching him by the throat, declared I would strangle him if he did not tell me by whose orders I was thus incarcerated, and how long I was likely to remain there. Then, loosening my hold so that he could just speak, he piteously whined—

“ Would the terrible Farang (Christian) sea-rat slay his servant who is but a mouse, a hare, the smallest of the king’s slaves ? ”

“ Then speak, thou dog, and promise to tell this minister, whoever he may be, that ordered the outrage to be committed upon me and the other Farang, who are no sea-rats, but honest Englishmen and merchants, that we demand to be taken before him to answer this stupid charge brought against us by some rogue.”



And the poor fellow, as if astonished at the smallness of my demand, replied—

“The worthy Farang shall be obeyed. I receive his orders, for the great Phra Klang has this day returned to Bangkok.”

By this reply I discovered that the cause of my

many days' incarceration had been the absence of this Phra Klang from the capital; but, as it had only been by force that I had obtained this information, by way of enlisting the man's sympathies in my favour, I told him who and what I was, the reason of my visit to Bangkok, and, what was more satisfactory, concluded by promising him a handsome present in dollars as soon as I had received my liberty and had found the merchant Mi. This evidently removed from his mind his suspicions of my being one of those terrible pirates of whom all honest Asiatics upon the sea-board entertain so great a horror; for, bending his body forward, he backed out of the room with a smiling countenance, and a promise to exert himself in my behalf.

The man honestly kept his promise, as we shall see, for early the following morning, as I sat gazing from my window at the swarms of shaven-pated, shorn-eye-browed priests, each in his yellow cloak and scarf, with iron pot slung around his neck, and talipat-palm-leaf fan in his hand, so that his attention might not be distracted from his sublime contemplations, even while he was there with his pot for the express purpose of receiving contributions of food from passing devotees, I was aroused by the entrance into my dungeon of a native, whose garb, but chiefly gait and manner, bespoke him to be of at least some rank.

At his entrance I bent my head forward, a salutation which he acknowledged only by a frown and an

angry gesture. I suppose he expected the poor prisoner would crawl towards him on his stomach, after the Siamese fashion; if he did, he must have been sadly disappointed, for with my heart full of indignation at the outrage that had been committed upon two, or at least one British subject, and assuming him to be the minister who had been the cause, I demanded to know whether the slave had conveyed to him my message, but with a provoking smile upon his countenance, he replied in English—

“The Farang is bold; does he not know that his life is in the hands of the great King of Siam?”

“The minister of the king, if he be one, utters foolish words, for he knows that the life of no subject of England can be in his master’s power,” I said. But he replied—

“It is the Farang who speaks foolish words, for it is only the *honest* subjects of England who are beyond the power of the great king. Sea-rats are vermin, and to destroy them is good,” he replied, adding, “but the Farang has said that he is not a sea-rat, but an honest trader; can he prove his words? for he who charges him with being one of the rogues who stole the king’s cargo at Chantaburi, is not a mouse, but a man who is known to the king and his minister, and whose words have been found straight and good.”

“Who is this rogue?” I asked, indignantly.

“It is not good that he who is charged with a crime should reply to one question by asking

another," he replied; and knowing that it would be useless to insist upon an answer, I at once told him my name, my object in visiting Bangkok, and the story of our adventures; excepting, of course, the fact that the Governors were still alive; and in conclusion referred him to the merchant Mi. But at that name he started a little, and asked earnestly—

“Has the Farang ever seen this Mi?”

“We have never met; but that is of little matter, for the merchant Mi has received letters from my father telling him that I should arrive.”

“Then the Farang has letters with him from the merchant Richardson?”

At this question I was confounded; such proofs of my being my father's son would have been indisputable, yet all my papers were in a trunk on board Li-Poo's junk. This accident I related to the Siamese, adding that it was probable that even then the old Chinese and his junk might be in the river; but with an incredulous smile, he replied—

“A rogue is not to be known by his own tongue. The Farang may be a sea-rat, or he may not; if he be a sea-rat, may he not have met the real son of the merchant Richardson, killed him, and with his name have come to Bangkok for the purpose of imposing upon the merchant Mi, who is a good man. It is a pity—it is much pity,” and that is all I could obtain from him, except that as he quitted the room, he said—

“Time finds out all things. If the Farang be

not the son of the merchant Richardson, he *must* be a sea-rat ; and if he *be* a sea-rat, boiling oil shall make him tell where the other sea-thieves have hidden the king's cargo," and thus he quitted, leaving me burning with chagrin and indignation, and lamenting the unfortunate disaster at Chantaburi, which had caused me all this trouble. As for the threat of the trial by boiling oil, I regarded that but little, for being a British subject, it would be a long time, and only after the most convincing proofs of guilt, that the government would dare proceed to such extremes.

Apropos, however, of these trials by ordeal, Van Schenten, who lived in Siam eight years in the seventeenth century, alike with Sir John Bowring and other modern travellers, prove that for centuries the habits and customs of the Siamese have undergone but little change.

In criminal cases, when the crime is not fully proved, say both ancient and modern travellers, the Siamese believe they have many ways of discovering the truth ; sometimes the informer is obliged to plunge into water and remain there ; others are forced to walk over burning coals, to wash their hands in burning oil, or to eat charmed rice. Sometimes two poles are fixed in the water ; the two parties plunge in, and the one who remains longest between the two poles gains the law-suit. When forced to walk over burning coals, a man presses their shoulders, and if they get across without being burned their innocence is

considered proven. As to the charmed rice, it is prepared by the law-doctors, who also give it to the counsel; if he can swallow it, he is pronounced innocent, and his friends bring him back in triumph, his accuser being punished severely.

CHAPTER XII.

WE ARE SET AT LIBERTY, AND RECEIVE AN INVITATION
FROM THE MINISTER.

NOTWITHSTANDING the threat with which the Siamese noble quitted me in the morning, a little before sundown, my acquaintance, the quondam dumb gaoler, entered my prison with a smiling face, and presented me with a note superscribed "To the Farang Reekardson." It was from the great Phra Klang, minister for Foreign affairs, couched in eccentric English; but to my satisfaction, clear enough for me to understand that the charge against me being withdrawn, I was at liberty to quit the prison. Moreover, it contained an invitation for me to visit his Excellency at his own palace, to which my friend, the gaoler, was charged to conduct me.

Delighted at thus unexpectedly obtaining my liberty, and astonished at the great man's condescension, I at once resolved to accept his invitation, having little doubt in my own mind, that I should find in his Excellency and my visitor of the morning, one and the same person. But then I thought of Dick.

Well, his freedom should be my first care; but "speak of a certain personage and he is sure to appear," so on the instant, Dick himself stood before me, but seeing the slave, he clutched him by the throat, saying to me—

"Run for it, Herbert, run for it."

"Pooh, pooh, Dick, you will hurt the poor fellow, unhand him; why should I run while I am at liberty to walk? and I put in his hand the Phra Klang's letter, which having read, he removed his hand from the man's throat, and in stupified amazement, exclaimed—

"Well, Herbert, I have made a fool of myself, and that's a *fact*; but," he added, "this is how it happened. After chafing up and down a bit of a hole like this for a whole week, sometimes threatening, at others endeavouring to bribe the fellow who had me under lock and key, but all without avail, for he would listen to no proposition for my escape, this morning it occurred to me that the rogue had often regarded, with admiration and wonder my six shooter; and taking that to be the best bait, I offered to make him a present of it if he would leave the door unlocked for half-an-hour. Well, the rogue grinned and objected for a time, but at length accepted the offer, and, moreover, told me where I should find you; so away I came, and finding the door open, I began to think I had made a smart bargain, when hang the saffron-faced 'coon, I find he has the best of it, for while higgling with me he must

have had about his person the order for my release.”

“ Well, well, Dick,” said I, endeavouring to sooth his anger, “ you have been outwitted, and that’s not agreeable; but you have your liberty, and that’s worth all Colt’s store of revolvers, and there is an end of it; but come let us at once to the house of the Phra Klang.”

“ Well, Herbert, as I have no mind to go back to that hole just now, I’ll postpone settling my account with that fellow; but as for forgetting or forgiving him, till I get back the weapon, I won’t, and that’s a *fact*.”

To argue with an angry man is but a foolish waste of time; and so making no reply, I told the slave to guide us to the minister’s house, which he gave us to understand was at the other end of the city, and the next minute we stood in the streets of Bangkok.

Bangkok, the great, royal, angelic city; the beautiful, the uncaptured, as the natives proudly term it, is situated in a semi-circle of the serpentine Meinam, and has two canals running through it; the one from north to south, the other from east to west, crossing the city at right angles. The houses are for the greater part built of light bamboos, roofed with the leaves of the Atap palm, and for the middle classes—or, of wood; while it is those only which belong to the king and the nobility that are built of stone. As for streets, at least land passages, they are few and

far between, and these few so narrow that two persons can scarcely walk abreast: but the following description will give you a notion of the city through which we had to make our way.

“The highways of Bangkok are not streets or roads, but rivers and canals. Boats are the universal means of conveyance and communication. Except about the palaces of the two kings, horses or carriages are rarely seen, and the sedan of the Chinese appears unknown in Siam; but a boat is a necessary part of a man’s household—to its dexterous management every child is trained—women and men are equally accustomed to the use of the oar, the paddle and the rudder. From the most miserable skiff, which seems scarcely large enough to hold a dog, up to the magnificently-adorned barges which are honoured with the presence of royalty—from the meanest canoe, hewn out of the small trunk of a tree from the jungle, up to the roofed and curtained, the carved and gilded boats of the nobles—every rank and condition has its boats plying in endless activity, night and day, on the surface of the Meinam waters. A great proportion of the houses float on large rafters, and are sometimes seen moving up and down the river, conveying all the belongings of a family to some newly selected locality.”

As for the people themselves they are amphibious, and for ever paddling, diving, and swimming, as if the water was their native element.

There are streets, or rather passages, on the land;

as we fought our way through these, as best we could, among grunting pigs and snarling barking dogs, we suddenly came upon a group of poor creatures, men, women, and children, but all laden more or less with chains—followed by an officer.

“What heathen brutes these Siamese must be, to treat any of God’s creatures after this fashion,” said Dick.

“Aye, Dick, and only for being in debt; but then debt in this country, like poverty in Christian lands, is placed upon an equality with crime. If a man cannot satisfy his creditor, he becomes a slave, and there is no redemption but paying the money; moreover the road to ruin is scarcely to be avoided but by the very lucky few, for the legal interest upon borrowed money is thirty per cent.; yet the vilest part of the law of debtor and creditor is, that a man not able to pay his debts, may sell his wife or children.”

Apropos of this vile law, Pallegoix, the French Bishop of Siam, who has written the most complete History of the country, gives us the following bona fide contract between a debtor and creditor.

“Wednesday, the 6th month, the 26th day of the moon, of the era 1211; the 1st year of the cock; I, Mi, the husband, and I, Kok, the wife, bring our daughter Ma, to be sold to Si, for eighty ticals, or to be taken into his service in lieu of interest. If our daughter Ma should take flight, let me be seized and be required to restore her. I, Mi, have placed my signature as witness.”

This is terribly demoralizing; however, Sir John Bowring intimates that slavery is not so *very* bad after all in Siam, and that slaves are better treated than servants in England; for he writes “Masters cannot ill-treat their slaves, for they have always the remedy of paying the money they represent; and he must be a very worthless character who cannot get somebody to advance the sum;” further he adds, “In small families the slaves are treated like the children of the master; they are consulted in all matters, and each man feels that as his master is prosperous so is he. The slaves, on the other hand, are faithful, and when their master is poor will devote every coin they can beg or steal to his necessities; and as long as he will keep them, will pass through any amount of hardship. Seldom do you see such attachment between masters and paid servants in England.”

Truly a very specious argument in favour of domestic slavery, but one I hope that may not convert Englishmen into the belief that such an institution is otherwise than hateful.

The led prisoner, however, to whom our attention became most drawn, was a young man, who coming after the others, was followed by another officer, and continued at intervals during his walk to call out to the passers by, “Behold! be warned by me—take care—my house caught fire, and thus am I punished.” And so curious was I to know the history of this poor fellow, that our guide went

forward amongst the crowd to inquire, and upon his return, said—

“It is Si, the son of the merchant Mi, whose house has been burned, and as the father has fled, the son is suffering the punishment in his place.”

“Well, such a proxy may be the law of these heathens, but it is queer justice; yet,” added Dick, as if the thought had suddenly occurred to him, “this may concern us, but you especially, for I take it this Mi may be the very man to whom you are consigned.”

“Truly it is possible; but look, Dick,” I added, pointing to a vast number of bats which darkened the horizon, “the coming of these vermin betokens the approach of night, it is too late for a visit to the minister, let us therefore at once proceed in search of this Mi.” But to my question whether he knew the merchant’s residence, the slave replied—

“Thy servant is but a mouse, he knows little of the merchants of Bangkok, although it is true that he has a brother whose house is frequented by many, but especially those given to the use of opium-smoking.”

It was a strange answer, but, still such as it was, might prove useful, and so I desired that he would conduct us to his brother’s house; but shaking his head, he said—

“Is thy servant a dog, that he should bring upon the son of his mother the wrath of the great king?”

By this reply I knew that his brother was the keeper of an opium-smoking and gambling house, and so, if discovered, liable to a very heavy punishment; but also knowing that the police were very lax, and by reason of their eyes being blinded by dollars, rarely made a discovery, I saw that the man's object was to make me offer a bribe for the favour I required. I offered to double the amount I had already promised him, whereupon he led us down to the water's edge, along which we proceeded a considerable distance, till coming to an open space or esplanade, our guide stood still to gaze for a minute upon a large iron cage suspended some ten feet from the ground, and which was worn and almost falling to pieces with rust; and having gazed for a minute, he fell upon the earth before it, muttering a Buddhist prayer; aroused, however, by our impatience to proceed, he arose, and as we walked onwards related to me the following story, which, as it affords an illustration of the utter barbarism in which the Siamese are steeped, I will translate.

"This cage is a monument to the terrible vengeance of the Kings of Siam, and I never pass by it without a prayer to the memory of a good master. But this is thy servant's story," he said, adding—

"I am a Laosian by birth, and our country had been at war with the then King of Siam. Alas! my master, the Prince of Laos, was defeated, and with all his family and slaves, thy servant among the number, was brought to Bangkok. The news of the

arrival of the prisoners caused great joy to the Phra Klang and the other ministers, who at once began to rack their brains to discover the most cruel mode of torture. But as if to mask their intentions by a show of generosity, they first pardoned the slaves. Would, however, that the fiends had taken thy servant's life, for to this hour he sees before his eyes that terrible vision, which he saw when released ; then in that cage were nine of the sons and grandsons of the king, all of whom, to the innocent little children, had heavy irons around their necks, waists, and legs ; the youngest, with smiling faces, and in ignorance of the fate which awaited them, laughed gaily in the faces of the fiendish crowd that were there to scoff. The elder princes, though with sad countenances, sat with manly resignation, contemplating the ruin of their house, and their approaching doom.

Then there was the fiendish array in readiness for the torture ; a large iron cauldron, for heating oil, which in a boiling state was to be poured upon the body of the old king, after it had been cut and mangled with knives. On the right of the cage stood a large gallows, from which, upon a hook, the aged king was to be suspended, after having been tortured. In front of the cage was a long row of triangular gibbets, each having a spear, upon which were to be seated the wives, sons, and grandsons of the monarch ; and upon the right of the cage again, there was a large pestle and mortar, in which some of the victims were to be pounded—such was to be the fate of that royal family

—but the gods intervened, for the king died of grief, and his eldest son escaped before the day of execution. Of the others—alas! that I live to relate it—they all suffered. But this is my brother's house, let the noble Farangs follow;" and as he spoke he ascended the ladder of a large but low wooden house, built upon poles on the muddy banks of the river. We followed; but upon reaching the top of the ladder we came to a hall, or space, between an inner and an outer door, and there he bade us wait, till he had communicated with his brother. In a few minutes he returned with his relative, who, to my question whether the merchant Mi frequented his house, or whether he could inform us of his whereabouts, replied—

“How can it be, that while all the city, ashore and afloat, are talking of the great merchant Mi's misfortunes, that the Farangs have not opened their ears?”

“What misfortune is this of which my brother speaks,” I asked in alarm, adding, “is then the rogue who burned down his house, and permitted his son to receive punishment in his place, the same Mi—the agent for the European merchants of Macao?”

“Some small bird has poured the truth into the ears of the Farang—it is as he says—the two Mi's are the one Mi. But my brother has not spoken all the truth, for he says Mi burned down his house, when it was known that it was destroyed by the fire-devil, at the instance of the demon of ill-luck, who was envious of the good man's prosperity.”

“ Will my brother speak to the purpose? where is this man Mi? if he does not open his lips his servant will make it known to the Phra Klang, that he keeps a house which the laws forbid,” I said, threatening that which it was far from my intention of doing. It had the desired effect, for although with a side glance of no very amiable description at his brother, for having brought to his house such troublesome visitors, in the most abject manner he replied—

“ Did thy slave’s life hang upon his words, he could but speak the truth. He knows not where the miserable man is now hidden, but if the worthy Farangs will enter their slave’s hut, they may hear words from men who know Mi.”

And having interpreted all this to Dick, by way of taking his advice, he said—

“ Look you, Herbert, it is the toss up of a dollar which to do, go in, or remain out.”

“ Then it shall be in,” said I, and the next minute we had passed the inner door, when Dick, who had never before been in an opium house, exclaimed—

“ I take it, if this isn’t Pandemonium, it’s nowhere else, and that’s a fact.”

And well might he draw such a comparison, for the room was very long, wide and high, and lighted by paper and horn lanterns, fancifully wrought, and of different colours. Around the wood walls of the room were piled, thick, but luxuriously-soft cushions, against which were reclining semi-nude men of every rank, above the lower classes, and in every varied



stage produced by opium smoking. The glistening, the leaden, the haggard, and the far-sunken eyed; the novices, the initiated, and the man whose intellect and frame had become a wreck from the pernicious habit; from the beginner, whom two or three whiffs would send into the slave and coward's elysium of delicious sensual repose and forgetfulness of his real manliness, to the old habitué, who required twenty or thirty to bring about the same state, and from whose mouth the pipe was seldom long absent.

We sat down against one of the cushions, and

watched the doings of this pleasant company ; many there were in groups playing cards, but these even, would, after a few yawns, throw themselves backwards upon their cushion, and take from the attendant, who was ever moving from guest to guest the hubble-bubbling cocoa-nut-shell, which was half filled with water, and which he held with one hand, and presenting the tube with the other to the guest, who taking one or more whiffs, fell backward in a state of torpor, and this pleasure as the miserable beings call it, was continued the whole time ; for as fast as one fell into his extemporized elysium, another would recover and crave a fresh whiff.

“ I tell you what, Herbert,” said Dick, when we had been sitting in the room about half an hour, “ we had better clear out of these diggins, or mayhap you or I will be taking a whiff ; for if there were not something tempting about the stuff, these poor wretches wouldn’t be doling out their lives, inch by inch in this way.”

“ Nay,” I whispered as I caught the name of Mi, mentioned by a man near me, “ we must remain here for a time, we shall discover something yet.”

But Dick heard me not, his attention was directed to a man just then coming through the doorway into the room. The new comer’s features came beneath the light of an overhanging lantern.

“ It’s old saffron-face himself—now I’ll find out why we were locked up for a week, or my name’s not Dick Orme,” said he.



“ Or at least learn something of Mi.” said I.

And we both arose; but no sooner did the old gentleman’s eyes light upon us, than he suddenly wheeled about, and in an instant he had disappeared.

“ Hiloa! that don’t look honest; let’s follow, Herbert, quickly, or we shall lose him yet.”

We gave chase, but although we almost flew down the ladder, and kept him in sight, nay, were close at his heels, the nimble old fish no sooner came to the river, than, old as he was, he turned a summersault into the water—and to our chagrin we had lost him.

“The varmint, he takes to the water like an otter; it’s no good, Herbert, we shan’t trap him to-night,” exclaimed Dick, as he stood the very picture of vexation and astonishment.

“Farangs no good at catchee Siam man in water,” said our guide, who had by that time come up to us.

“No, that’s a fact. But look you, Herbert, we must sleep somewhere, so suppose we turn in here for the night,” said Dick, pointing to a large barge which was moored close at hand.

“Not so, Dick, if this native can find us a better lodging,” said I; and putting the question to the slave, he offered us a room in his own hut, and thither we at once went.

But previous to seeking our sleeping mats, we consoled ourselves for our disappointment in losing the old merchant, with a couple of dishes of hot tea. Dick, however, scarcely felt consoled, for after a long and moody pondering, he said—

“Only to think, Herbert, that an old fellow like that should so easily have outrun two young fellows like us. Bah! I believe these Siamese are all born ducks, otters, or some such water creatures.”

And I can verify the justness of Dick’s observation, for on one occasion I witnessed a sight, which in more enlightened countries than Siam, would be considered equally strange. It was that of a young child, sporting in the water as in its native element, with all the buoyancy and playfulness of a fish. Its evolutions

were astonishing, sometimes rolling over with a rapid motion, and apparently no exertion, then turning round like a hoop, by bending its face under as it lay on its back, and throwing its feet over its head. It floated like a cork, with no apparent motion of any of the muscles; occasionally allowing itself to sink, till only half the head could be seen, then diving, it held its face under water long enough to alarm those who were ignorant of its powers, and yet when it came up, appeared to breathe as easily as though it had suffered no suspension of respiration. From its actions and countenance it was evidently delighted with the exercise, nor did it evince either fatigue or the least apprehension, nay, it even cried at being taken out of the river. This child was a singular object both in and out of water. It was three years old, very small, could neither speak nor walk, was very defective in sight, would take nothing but its earliest provision—in fact appeared quite idiotic, and had exhibited the same fondness for the water, and peculiar feats in it, from the first year of its age.

CHAPTER XIII.

TRAVELLERS MEET WITH STRANGE BEDFELLOWS; WE
GO ON A VISIT TO A GREAT MAN'S HOUSE.

IT is a proverb that travellers meet with strange bedfellows. That night it was verified, for about midnight I was aroused by my companion, who, as he lay stretched upon his mat, exclaimed—

“Hiloa! my friend, who are you?”

“Who's who, Dick?”

“Listen, Herbert, there is some fellow in the room.”

“Nonsense, it is fancy; go to sleep, Dick.”

But hearing the sounds of “*Tokey, Tokey, Tokey,*” I knew what had alarmed him, and so I added, “It is only a *Tokey.*”

But Dick was not so easily appeased, for getting upon his feet he ran to the door, and called loudly for a light.

“Dick, are you mad? you will alarm the whole quarter;” but very angrily he replied—

“Look you, my friend, get up, for though I don't know what a *Tokey* may be, as it crawled across

my face just now it seemed to be about the size, and as damp as a young crocodile."

At this I arose, and directly afterwards the guide entered the room with a light, and although he and I both laughed, Dick caught up his boots and threw them one after the other at a large reptile, which, now terrified by the light and the noise, was running rapidly along the wall screaming "*Tokey, Tokey.*"

"Ugh! the beast!" exclaimed Dick, in disgust at the failure of his aim. But seeing that he was really afraid of the harmless, although disgusting reptile, the native and I chased it from the room, and having then examined every hole and corner to see that there were no more of them, we again lay down to sleep.

"Pooh! pooh! Dick, an old traveller like you, and to be afraid of such a thing," said I.

"All very well for you, my friend, who may have come across the thing before—that makes all the difference; but what is the beast called?"

"As you have seen," said I; "it is a large species of lizard, and called the tokey from the sound it makes; and repulsive as it is to look at from its having a double tongue, its name is a proverb among the natives, for a double dealer or two-faced person; it is not disliked, for the Siamese believe that in addition to the service it performs by driving away other vermin, it announces the hour.

"Well, Herbert, I've seen 'coons, 'possums, bears, wild cats, and snakes, but never such a varmint as that before; and though it may be as smart as you

say, and serve the niggers in this country as a clock, it will be a long time before you'll coax me to like it for a bedfellow; but the queer noise it makes! why I took it for a human being."

"Ah! the Siamese tell a wonderful and by no means agreeable story about that noise. They say that the reptile, feeling his liver grow too big, makes the cry of '*Tokey*' to call to its help another insect; which, obeying the call, enters the tokey's mouth, and eats the liver; and, having thus relieved its friend, returns by the way it entered."

"It's not a pleasant legend, and that's a fact; but," he added, with a yawn, "enough of the brute for the present."

And the next moment Dick, who possessed the valuable faculty of sleeping at will, was fast locked in the arms of Somnus. I followed his example, and we both slept till late in the morning, when we were aroused by the native, who entered the room with hot tea and rice cakes, of which, after a plunge in the river, we partook, and then set out under his guidance for the great mandarin's house.

The journey, like most journies in Siam, having to be made by water, the native had procured a good sized canoe; and so, once again, we were upon the busy, bustling Meinam among the floating traders, whose various cries rent the air with the noise; but, even above the din of humanity, was the noisy caw-cawing of the clouds of crows; birds so audacious in Bangkok that they devas-

tate gardens and eat all the ripe fruit; carry away chickens, and all eatables exposed to the sun; they enter houses by door or window; will steal cakes and plantains from the hands of children; will raise up the covering of pots and pans, and carry off their contents, not only for present use, but to be stored for future supply. They conceal their robberies in the roofs of houses or in the hollow trees, and often assemble to make war upon jays, pigeons, and less courageous birds. Of the food that is given to dogs, cats, poultry, the crows invariably steal the largest portion. No doubt they destroy many nuisances in the shape of insects and animals more annoying than themselves. If you fling a stone among them their number only increases, and they salute you with a tenfold clamour; if you kill one, a thousand come to inquire what you are doing; and, instead of getting rid of the plague of their presence, you augment it a hundred-fold.

Well, we had passed through the din of noises about two miles up the river, and had reached the mouth of a large canal, when our farther progress was arrested by a funeral procession. This consisted of a large barge wherein, upon a platform, was placed the coffin. This barge, followed by an immense number of boats containing the relatives of the deceased, was on its way to the cemetery where the burning was to take place. We reverently backed our boats, and rested till the procession had passed; as, however, it is desirable that my readers should be made acquainted



with the solemn as well as the amusing customs of this strange people, I will take the opportunity of telling them something about their funeral ceremonies.

When a person is at the point of death the talapoints (or priests) are sent for, who sprinkle lustral water upon the sufferer, recite passages which speak of the vanity of earthly things from their sacred books, and cry out, repeating the exclamation in the ears of the dying :—“Arahang ! arahang !” (a mystical word implying the purity of Buddha from human desires). When the dying person has heaved his last breath, the whole family utter piercing cries,

and address their lamentations to the departed :—O father benefactor! why leave us? What have we done to offend you? Why did you eat the fruit that caused the dysentery? We foretold it. Why did you not listen to us? O misery! O desolation! O inconstancy of human affairs!" And they fling themselves at the feet of the dead, weep, wail, kiss, utter a thousand tender reproaches till grief has exhausted its lamentable expressions. This last sad scene being over, the body is washed, coloured with turmeric, and rubbed with quick lime; then wrapped in white cloth. The arms are raised as if in adoration, and a piece of gold or silver placed in the mouth. Quicksilver and honey are poured down the throat, after which the body is placed upright, a tube from the mouth is passed through the roof of the house to carry off the offensive effluvia above, holes are made in the feet in which bamboos are placed to convey the deposits which descend. The coffin in which the body is placed is covered with gilded paper and decorated with tinsel flowers; a dais is prepared, ornamented with the same materials as the coffin, but with wreaths of flowers and a number of wax lights. After a day or two the coffin is removed, not through the door, but through an opening specially made in the wall; the coffin is escorted thrice round the house at full speed, in order that the dead, forgetting the way through which he had passed may not return to molest the living.

The coffin is then taken to a large barge and placed

on a platform, surmounted by the dais, to the sound of melancholy music. The relations and friends in small boats accompany the barge to the temple where the body is to be burned. Being arrived, the coffin is opened and delivered to the officials charged with the cremation, the corpse having in his mouth a silver tical (2s. 6d.) to defray the expenses. The burner first washes the face of the corpse with cocoa-nut milk; and, if the deceased have ordered that his body shall be delivered to vultures and crows, the functionary cuts it up and distributes it to the birds of prey which are always assembled in the cemeteries.

Supposing the body is destroyed by fire, when the burning is over the relatives assemble, collect the principal bones, which they place in an urn,* and convey to the family abode. The garb of mourning is white, and is accompanied by shaving of the head.

The funerals of the opulent last for two or three days; there are fireworks, sermons from the talapoints, nocturnal theatricals, where all sorts of monsters are introduced; tents are erected within the precincts of the temples, and games and gambling accompany the rites.

But to resume my narrative: the funeral procession having passed, we entered the canal, up which we paddled for about a mile, when, quitting the

* Frequently these are moulded into a small idol or figure of the deceased, and gilded for future preservation.

boat, we landed in what I suppose must have been the leading land street of Bangkok.

It was a narrow covered passage, some miles in length, and formed by closely-joined shops of the Chinese, but so low that a man of greater than the average height of the Siamese (five feet three inches) could not walk without stooping. When we had passed about midway down this passage, we came upon another and shorter, by which it was intersected; and, turning down this, in a few minutes we reached an open space, at the furthestmost side of which stood the kalapan's palace, and in this place the native left us, while he went to announce to the great man our arrival.

"Why, hang me, if those old 'coons aint going to play shuttlecock!" exclaimed Dick, looking earnestly and with surprise at some thirty or forty grown men standing in a circle; in the centre of which stood one, and he apparently the senior, with a shuttlecock in his hand.

"Aye, and why not, Dick; it is a very good game, too, as they play it," I said, laughing at Dick's astonishment.

"Well, Herbert, I see no reason against it, except that in the parts where I have travelled it is the custom for young men to leave off hoops, peg-tops, and marbles, when they go into coats; but," he asked: "do they use their hands, for I can't see a battledore among them."

But, as he spoke, the man in the circle com-

menced the game by producing his battledore, and the shuttlecock, once in the air, the others produced their battledores, by means of which, to Dick's utter astonishment, they kept the toy flying from one to the other for about twenty minutes without permitting it once to touch the ground. But the Siamese battledore—what is it? Well; the sole of the foot; and they use it with surprising, nay, almost scientific agility. The shuttlecock once thrown into the air, the next player watches till it nearly reaches the ground, then wheeling quickly about, he lifts up his right leg, and so twists it that the sole of the foot strikes it upwards again, and it is received after the same fashion by the nearest player, and thus sometimes for nearly an hour will expert players keep the toy flying from one to the other.

“ Well, Herbert, it's a smart trick and that's a fact; but I guess not worth a fellow's putting his ankle out of joint,” said Dick, who had been attentively watching the game, and lost in his admiration of the smartness had given his own ankle a severe twist by unconsciously making the attempt; but, as at that moment our guide returned, we left the players, and followed him to the Phra Klang's house.

This house, or palace, was a newly erected stone building, situated in the midst of extensive gardens which were surrounded by a wall. Passing through the gateway we entered upon a large open court-yard, paved with marble, and ornamented with large flower

vases, and great stone figures of men and animals. Passing the open front, which was supported by stone pillars, and about which were a great number of attendants and slaves, we reached the hall of audience. This was a large apartment, with several floors or platforms, ascending one above the other. Here, however, I must digress just to explain the reason for this very curious arrangement.

In no other country in the world are the people in such a state of abject slavery as in Siam; in no other country is so much deference paid to superiors—in fact, there is scarcely such a thing as equals—for, from the tankea girl to the first king, the grades are infinitesimal. For instance, in a family, if a younger brother presents anything to his elder, he falls upon his knees to deliver it; if a person meet another, but the shade of a grade higher in position, he must lower his head, so that it be not so high as those of his superior; indeed, if a man of any rank makes his appearance, all his subordinates seat themselves upon the ground with their feet hidden from his view; hence, in the Minister's Audience Chamber, the floors were arranged one above the other, so that no man should be placed upon an equality with his superior. Indeed, so rigorously is this principle carried out, that death would be awarded to the man who should, either in a house or a ship, walk in the room or the deck above the head of a great personage; in this custom, however, as in many others, the

Siamese have either borrowed from or taught the Burmese. But to return to the Audience Hall.

The Phra Klang, who was attired in a silk jacket, with a yellow sash of the same material, and wide trousers, was sitting upon the uppermost floor or platform, chewing betel, to which he occasionally helped himself from a golden box, while a slave upon his knees held a large fan, by means of which every now and then he would force a current of air into his noble master's face. About the floors in various directions, with their legs tucked beneath so as to hide the feet, and their elbows resting upon the ground, were some twenty retainers, or more probably subordinate officials; for, as we entered the room, his Excellency appeared to be giving them orders; but whoever they were, they could have been of no great rank, for the moment the Phra Klang saw us, he beckoned to us to seat ourselves upon a couple of chairs, which were placed upon the platform, next only in descent from the one upon which he was sitting.

Upon entering the hall I at once recognised in the Phra Klang the noble who had visited my prison, at which, although not greatly surprised, I was much pleased, for I had little doubt that he could help me to find out the merchant Mi, whom I now *more* than suspected to be a rogue.

As it was in English that he bade us both welcome, so in my own tongue I thanked him for having released us from our unjust incarceration; but, be-

fore mentioning the name of Mi, I asked for what purpose his Excellency had condescended to invite me to his presence.

“ My friend,” he replied, “ is a stranger in Siam ; bad people to answer their own ends came to me, the Phra Klang, and declared that he was one of the thieves who stole the royal cargo ; thus I ordered him to be seized and imprisoned ; but, since discovering that my friends were innocent, I released them, and now desire that they shall not return to their own countries without learning how great is my grief for what they have suffered, and that I am endeavouring to find the rogue, their enemy, who, by his false words brought this trouble upon them.”

“ But this rogue, Excellency, who is he, and what motive had he thus to persecute two strangers ?”

“ Who, O my friend, shall divine the motives of a rogue ? but for his name, it is Mi—the merchant Mi.”

“ Pardon, Excellency, but it is not possible, or at least there may be two Mi’s ; the one I seek is an honest man, and the friend of my father,” I replied, incredulously.

“ Let my friend open his ears, and he will no longer doubt,” he replied, adding, “ When the robbery of the royal cargo became known in Bangkok, great was the consternation at the impudent crime, and large were the rewards offered for the discovery of the thieves ; but there seemed to be no clue to them, till one morning, as I was about setting out for

Ayuthia upon the king's affairs, a great merchant, esteemed by all of high character, besought of me to give him a private interview before my departure. This request was granted ; when, falling upon his knees he said that, having gone to Paknam, at the mouth of the Meinam, to meet a certain junk then expected to arrive from Canton, he had found on board two men whom the captain had picked up in the gulf, and that he had discovered them to be companions of the thieves who stole the royal cargo."

"Then it was that saffron-faced old rogue after all, Herbert," said Dick ; but not noticing his remark, I said—

"But, O Excellency, did not this wicked rogue say that we were Farangs and Europeans ? If so, we should not have been seized, for was it not known in Bangkok that the thieves of Chantaburi were Chinese ?"

"The rogue did say that my friends were Farangs ; but that strengthened my suspicions against you, for it is known that the Farangs were with the Governor when he went on board the pirate junk. Thus," continued his Excellency, "when the merchant left me he took with him an order to the chief of the police to go on board the junk to seize and carry you to separate places of confinement, where you were to remain till my return from Ayuthia. Need I say—my commands were obeyed."

"No, and that's a *fact*, anyhow," interposed Dick,

with a shrug of his shoulders; the Phra Klang, however, not noticing the interruption, resumed, "Upon my return to Bangkok, I determined at once to see and examine you; but as I was leaving my house, your gaoler came to me and repeated the history of your adventures; but although there was much in it that seemed like truth, I know that rogues are artful, and so at once visited you, when having listened to your story, which corresponded with that which you had told the gaoler, and observing your honest manner of speech, I had one half belief in your innocence; but when you referred me to Mi himself, telling me at the same time that to your knowledge you had not seen him, and that he had received letters from your worthy father, the merchant of Macao, desiring him to be prepared to receive you, and give over to you the monies due, I almost believed in the other half, but still I determined to see your friend here, and listen to what he had to say. I did, and so exactly did he repeat the same story, that I determined upon your release; but I resolved also to have the man Mi brought before me, for, believing in your innocence, I knew that the fellow Mi must have intended to rob you; in order to do which, when he had received your father's letter, he laid the scheme to meet you at the mouth of the river, so that before you could reach Bangkok, he might find some means of getting you seized and placed in prison, there to remain till he could settle his affairs, and quit the city before you could demand your money.'

“Great Heaven! is it possible this man can be so great a rogue?” I exclaimed.

“It don’t require much credulity to believe that; but did I not take his measure long ago?”

“My friend,” continued the minister, “there are bad men everywhere; but this Mi is a great rogue, for he is nowhere to be found; his goods have been sold, his house burned down, and he himself has escaped.”

“And we have had our journey here for nothing,” said Dick.

“But worse than all, Dick, my father will be half ruined by this man’s roguery,” said I.

“Buddha may not have so written; the king’s arms are long and many, they will yet reach this thief, who, wherever he may be, must still be rich,” said his Excellency, adding, “But let my friends have patience, this house is large, and will hold them till the rogue is discovered.”

“If your Excellency means that for an invitation, and I take it you do, why I am not the man to say no in this fix,” said Dick.

“Such an offer, O Excellency, is like the gift of water to a man dying of thirst,” said I; and the minister arose to conduct us to the inner apartments; but when I asked him if he knew of such a mandarin as one Chaa Faa, he laughed, saying—

“Truly, there is but one Chaa Faa, and he is thy servant.”

“Is it possible that your Excellency can be he?”

“Thy servant is Chaa Faa; but for what reason does my friend ask this question? for truly he can know nothing of Chaa Faa.”

“Then,” I said, in a lower tone, “has your Excellency a relation one Luang?” and at the name he started, as if I had administered to him an electric shock; but recovering himself, he signified to me to be silent, and follow him; and not a little astonished at his mysterious behaviour, we complied.

He led us from the Audience Hall to a long passage at the back portion of the house, upon either side of which was a range of rooms. Into one of these, which was of moderate size, and furnished very gorgeously after a mixed Asiatic and European style, he invited us to follow him, and when the slaves had brought in the tea, in what I took to be, and now believe was, a service of pure gold, and had, by his Excellency’s command, left the room, he said—

“My friend has named one for whose head a large reward is offered. Does he know aught of him?”

“Well, Excellency, I take it, we *do* a little; but since we did not come to Siam to earn blood-money, we had better say nothing about him.”

“Luang,” and the Klang whispered the name, “is a near relation of thy servant.”

“Then, look you, Mister, it isn’t quite natural for you to offer a couple of decent white people a reward for his head?” said Dick; who, after his hot-headed

manner, was acting upon a misconception; but the astonished noble merely said—

“What words are these? Is the Farang mad?”

“Pardon,” I interposed, “my friend misunderstands your Excellency; he believes you are the enemy of Luang, whom, like me, he would save; but,” I added, quite confident of what would be the reply. “If the relative of the noble Klang were alive and suffering a dreary imprisonment, would he stretch forth his powerful hand to rescue the unfortunate man?” and I was not deceived, for seriously, almost solemnly, he said, as a tear started in his eye—

“My friend, you have poured a soothing balm upon a great wound. Luang is my brother, and were I sure that he had not passed to the world of shadows, I would search him out were he even across the farthest seas; but is that so? Does my unfortunate brother live? Let my friend open his lips.”

Whereupon, I at once related the Governor’s adventures upon the island, and made known his request that his brother would send a junk to his rescue. And in the exuberance of his joy and gratitude, the noble Siamese not only repeated his request that we should take up our lodgings in his house, but that we should regard it as our own in all things.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE LADY WITH THE CROCODILES.

“WELL, my friend, we might have fallen into worse diggings than these,” said Dick, as we were shown into the rooms appropriated to our use—a suite of three, handsomely furnished after a mixed European and Siamese fashion, and which opened upon the garden.

“True, Dick, and to use your own phrase, that’s a *fact*, for we are without money, Mi has decamped, and I may be a couple of months before I can get a remittance from Macao,” said I. But it was full three months before I heard from my father.

The time, however, was not badly expended, for we obtained an insight into the manners and customs of the Siamese, besides met with incidents which led to very desirable results; but I am digressing.

Well, the morning after our taking up our lodgings in Klang’s house, that noble told us he should be absent from home the whole of that day and the following, partly upon the king’s affairs, but chiefly touching the matter of his brother, the ex-Governor,

and the capture of the rogue Mi; but he very earnestly begged that, until his return, we would upon no account leave the house; and monotonous as was the prospect, we complied with the request.

Late in the evening of the third day, as Dick and I were about going to rest, he returned, and then told us that on the following day we might witness one of the most important domestic ceremonies of his nation; for that the time having arrived for his eldest son to quit home and commence his education under the talapoins of a neighbouring temple, on that day would take place the “shaving of the tuft.”

“Which means planting a shoe-brush on the young ’coon’s head,” said Dick, when we were alone; and in this instance he was doubly correct, for in the first place the tuft strongly resembles, at least, a hair-brush; and secondly, the Siamese boys are termed young ’coons.

“And a very important ceremony too, Dick,” said I, “for until it has taken place, no boy may be sent to a Pagoda to be taught reading, writing, and religion.”

“No great loss either, my friend, if a fellow may judge from the illiterate appearance of all the idle yellow-robed priests I have seen.”

“No matter, Dick, it is the law of the land—it is an institution that every man born in Siam must serve a portion of his life as a priest; and although any may quit once, if they ever re-enter, they must remain priests for life.”

“And that’s the reason, I suppose, that there are so many thousands of begging bonzes to be found in Bangkok.”

In the morning, just after we had left our baths, we received an invitation from our host to take our morning meal with him. This, to our surprise, was served as nearly as possible after the European fashion ; indeed this worthy, for a Siamese great man, was far in advance of the majority of the natives of his own rank ; for, not only did he speak fluently two or three European languages, but desired, in all that was compatible with the climate and the superstitions of his countrymen, to follow our customs.

“My friends open their eyes. They did not think to see so much of Europe in the house of a Siamese,” he said, with a self-satisfied smile, at our surprise.

We candidly confessed that we did not, and he added—

“Ah ! Asia very old ; so old, go to sleep ; but it wake up now and learn from its son Europe ; it’s only foolish old people that can’t take lessons from their children ; but,” he added, “my friends have not seen my garden and cook-house—cook-house got chimney, just same as Europe.”

And, as much to gratify our host’s pardonable vanity as to satisfy our curiosity, I expressed a desire to walk through the garden, when, as we had concluded our meal, he at once arose and led us

to the entrance of his ornamental grounds ; but there he left us to ourselves, promising to rejoin us after he had transacted some business in connection with the coming festival of the day.

“ Smart fellow, and that’s a *fact* ;” he’ll do some good for his country, he will, if they will only let him, some of these days,” apostrophized Dick ; adding, however, as he caught sight of a low wooden building, which, but for the solitary exception of a tall chimney, was more like a barn than a house ; “ but if yonder’s the cook-house and chimney, of which he is so proud, I take it he has much to learn before he licks the Europeans in taste.”

“ Now, Dick, you are hypercritical ; it is at any rate the first chimney in Siam, and that must be a great stride.”

“ Well, certainly that’s a *fact*—but still it’s a long walk to Europe, and he’ll have to take a good many great strides like that before he gets there, I guess.”

“ But these gardens, the shady groves, the gravel walks, the neatly-trimmed trees, yonder fountain, remind one of Europe.”

“ Well, I can’t say that it does or it does not ; for do you see, Herbert, I have been away from Europe many years ; and, when I was there, I only saw the gardens of ‘ Gray’s Inn,’ the ‘ Temple,’ and ‘ St. James’ Park ;’ and I thought them more jolly to play in than to stare at ; but then, you see, I’m not sentimental, and that’s a *fact*,” replied

Dick, and that was all the opinion I could get from him ; and thus we walked and talked for about half an hour, when, passing a grove of trees, we came suddenly upon a large pond or basin. Then, however, we stood still.

“ Let us retrace our steps, Dick ; we are trespassing ; this must be the Ladies’ Garden,” said I, pointing to the figure of a woman who was reclining upon the very edge of the water. But, as we turned, Dick exclaimed—

“ Your six-shooter, Herbert ; for heaven’s sake, quick.”

“ Unfortunately I had the weapon with me ; it had never left my pocket. I pulled it forth ; but my excitable companion snatched it from my hand and fired it in the midst of half a dozen young crocodiles ; one of the animals, which was near to the female, received a ball which sent it over screaming and lashing its tail furiously. Dick ran forward and fired another ball with similar effect, crying, with delight—

“ Hurrah ! for old Kentucky, she’s saved !”

And then, as a heroine of romance, the rescued lady should have fallen fainting in her deliverer’s arms ; but no ! she arose, and, with the aspect, and almost the roar, of an enraged tigress, before Dick was prepared, rushed upon him, pulled him to the ground, and with flaming eye-balls flourished a knife over him ; astounded, however, as I was at this extraordinary return for our services, I ran behind her, and,

catching hold of her wrists, pulled her arms behind her. This permitted Dick to get upon his feet, when more astonished than alarmed, he said—

“Hold tight, Herbert, but don’t harm her; the poor creature’s a lunatic.”

And that Dick’s opinion was right there could be little doubt; for, applying to us the most opprobrious epithets in the Siamese language, she declared she was the Princess Ma, adding—

“Know dogs, and sons of dogs, that it is your princess who is before you, and whose dear friends and companions you have slain; but for these crimes you shall be boiled in oil.”

Nay, so fearful were the punishments that she recapitulated, that we shuddered with horror at their very description; but her struggles to get free were so great that my strength was failing. Just at that moment, however, we saw the Phra Klang, and several of his slaves, coming towards us. He called to her by name, and marvellous was the effect, her rage became instantaneously softened.

“She is harmless; my friend may give her her liberty,” said Klang.

I obeyed, and in an instant she fell at his feet, and with tears coursing down her haggard cheeks, implored his pardon if she had offended; adding, not a little to our surprise—

“For nought but the murder of the best of her dear friends would have again filled thy servant with the evil spirit.”

“The poor woman’s madder than ever. I have but this minute rescued her from the jaws of yon reptile,” said Dick.

“It is an unfortunate day, for my friends have slain this poor creature’s chief and dearest companion—the crocodile—but doubtlessly it was by mistake,” replied the Phra Klang; and at the reply Dick gave a sharp short whistle, and looked very earnestly in the minister’s eyes to see if there were not symptoms of madness to be found therein also.

But the Phra Klang then led the poor creature away, asking us, however, as he did so, to return to our own rooms, where he would soon follow, which he did in a few minutes, when he said—

“My friends have seen the gardens, do they think them like those of Europe?”

“Well, do you see, sir, they are and they ain’t; they are as far as the laying out goes, but then they ain’t as far as them reptiles, and they won’t be till you get them cleared out of that pond.”

“Have the Europeans no pet animals, of which they make friends, and with which their ladies and children fondle?” asked the minister.

“Yes, they have. But then, you see, they ain’t given to crocodiles, but more civilized creatures, like canary birds, spaniels, Italian greyhounds, and cats,” replied Dick.

“And the nobles of Siam make pets of crocodiles, and their women and children feed and fondle with them.”

“ Well, sir, I don’t object to that ; for every man has a right to ride his own hobby, so long as he don’t run over his neighbour ; but as for crocodiles—why—it’s a matter of taste, and that’s a *fact*.”

“ There is more merit in taming a free savage of the forest than a slave in your household,” replied the Phra Klang ; “ but,” he added, “ my friends would like to hear the story of the poor woman, whom by mistake they have nearly killed with grief. Let them listen.”

And he said—

“ Near the close of his life, the late king sustained a great loss in the death of his daughter, the Princess Ma. O ! sad was the loss, and great the grief of the empire ; but the urn received the ashes of the princess, and the wounds in the millions of hearts began to heal ; before, however, they had time to close, the governor of the province sent the news to Bangkok that a young woman, who had been for two days and a night in a trance, upon recovering declared that she was the Princess Ma, and that the nation had been falsely persuaded that her highness was dead.

“ At first the governor laughed at and pitied the poor creature ; but when, to prove her assertion, she solemnly maintained she could enumerate every article that had belonged to the princess, he became so alarmed at the effect her declaration might have upon the people, that he at once sent the poor creature to court.

“ One of the dead princess’s brothers was appointed to examine her ; when, to his highness’ astonishment, she not only enumerated and described the possessions of his late sister, but again solemnly persisted that she herself was that princess : for, although that then she was very fair, previous to her trance she was very dark, and would have still continued so, had she not during the trance been transformed by some mysterious power, her enemy. At all this the king and prince became so much enraged that they ordered her to receive thirty lashes and be put to the torture.

“ But,” said the Phra Klang, “ do my friends know what torture means in this land of Siam. Let them listen :—That used for the head consists of two flat pieces of wood ; the head being placed between these pieces, the ends are gradually drawn together so tightly as to force the eye-balls from the socket, and cause an effusion of blood from the ears. Smaller pieces are placed between the fingers and drawn together so as to cause blood to start from the finger nails. Such are some of our minor tortures. Well, the torture was applied ; and lashes given in the presence of hundreds, but she suffered all like a heroine, without a groan. And two days after this, when asked if she still persisted in her declaration, she replied—‘ I have told you ; I do tell you again I am the princess.’

“ Again and again were the tortures applied, but always with the same result. Knowing she

was mad, I interceded, pleaded for her before the king, and his majesty would have pardoned her, but a talapoin of the royal household believing her to be superhuman, and that some terrible event was about to happen, told the king the sacred books contained a prophecy that, whenever such a person should arise, the kingdom of Siam would pass to another nation; and this, turning the king's wrath to despair, his majesty called a council to devise fresh punishment.

“The assembly advised her immediate decapitation, with the extermination of her family; but again I interceded, and she was sentenced to receive ninety lashes, and then to be sent adrift upon an open raft on the sea. But, at the last moment, the talapoin who had told of the prophecy repented, and pleaded for the poor creature, saying to the king—‘For who can tell whether this be the person of whom the books speak,’ and this allaying the royal wrath, the poor creature was condemned to grind rice in the king's kitchen during the remainder of her existence; and, for a few years during the lifetime of the king she remained in that state.

“Upon the accession, however, of his present majesty, the first king, I begged her as a present; it was granted, and from then till now, she has lived in these gardens in a house inhabited but by herself and two female slaves—her sole occupation being the feeding and playing with my pet crocodiles. It was her bitter sorrow at the death of one

of her friends that brought back for the first time since she has been here, a relapse of her madness."

It is indeed a melancholy history, and may the noble Klang be rewarded for his goodness; but as the report of a musket and the sounds of music announced the commencement of the important ceremony of the day, he ran forward without making answer.

But the festival of "the shaving of the tuft."

Well, although Dick and I played no very important part in the ceremonies, the latter, which lasted three days, were sufficiently curious to deserve description.

The chief and first portion of the ceremony took place in the great room. A species of altar was erected of bamboos, with seven steps of ascent, which were carpeted with banana leaves; each of the steps was also ornamented with grotesque figures of angels, and animals in clay, paper, or other material. Upon the lower steps were vessels of gold, silver, and porcelain, filled with choice meats and rare fruits. Upon the upper steps were garlands of flowers, and leaves of tinsel, gold and silver, upon which rested a fresh cocoa-nut; and at the foot of the altar were placed nine chandeliers, holding wax candles.

The room itself was crowded to excess with the relatives and friends of the gorgeously-dressed and be-jewelled youth, who, while his head was being washed by one of the officiating talapoins, must have suffered in the drums of his ears, from the

music of the band around him, which consisted chiefly of relatives, who were performing upon a variety of instruments, ingenious enough in their way, but crudely representing guitars, violins, flutes, drums, large and small, and cymbals; without naming several others, which it would be as useless to describe as it would be impossible to understand, without seeing them.

Well, when the barber (a profession, by the way, which next to a doctor, takes the highest rank in Siam) had performed his share of the operation upon the head of the young noble, and the talapoin had washed it, we were startled by the sound of three muskets. It was a signal, for on the instant, the noble youth seized one of the lighted candles, and walked three times round the altar; having done this, each of his nearest relatives seized a wax-light, and simultaneously blew them out over his head, so that the smoke enveloped his forehead. Then the cocoa-nut was presented to him, and having partaken of the milk, he was formally presented with a cup of coins of considerable value; and as thus the ceremony was brought to an end, the band commenced and filled the apartment with sounds that no stretch of courtesy could call music.

In the evening there was a concert, and dancing; but the music, unlike that of the noisy band of the morning, was soft and harmonious; but then it came from the sweet pipes of Laos, instruments

made of bamboo reeds, eight feet in length; moreover they were played upon by the Laosian wives of the Phra Klang. But of these sweet pipes, strange dances, and interesting Laosian wives and their lords, let us listen to Sir John Bowring, who says:—

“On visiting the houses of the high nobility, I have been often asked, ‘Will you see the dances?’ ‘Will you hear the singing?’ ‘Will you listen to the music of Laos?’ And groups of meek-eyed, gentle, prostrate people have been introduced, to exhibit the movements which rather resemble the graceful positions of the ancient minuet, than the friskness of the European ‘light fantastic toe.’ Sometimes they hold garlands of flowers, which they present in graceful varieties of attitude. Sometimes torches or candles are moved about in centric or excentric orbits. The songs—they are generally tales of love—are often pathetic and pleasing. They are sometimes accompanied by music, at others the songs and the music are heard alone. Bishop Pallegoix, who is well acquainted with the Laos people, speaks of their music as very sweet, harmonious, and sentimental. Three persons will form a melodious concert—one plays the bamboo-organ, another sings romances with the voice of inspiration, and the third strikes in cadence the suspended tongues of sonorous woods.

“The Laos organ is a collection of sixteen fine and long bamboos, bound by a circle of ebony,

where there is an opening for the aspiration and inspiration of the breath, which causes the vibration of a number of small silver tonguelets, placed near a hole made in each bamboo, over which the fingers run with great dexterity."

But of these Laos ladies themselves, how sad is the contrast between them and Englishwomen, for the same personage in describing them, says:—

"I have seen the Laos women of the highest ranks, sent for by their lords, to gratify my curiosity (fie! Sir John, to have permitted this thing). They have crawled into the presence, and with bowed head waited tremblingly for the commands of their husband. Their dress is more graceful than that of the Siamese women, especially their mode of arranging and adorning their hair, which was sometimes ornamented with fragrant white flowers. They wore the 'pagne,' which is the universal costume of Siam—a sort of light scarf passed over the shoulders and covering the breast, and a handsome silk tissue encircled the waist; no shoe or sandal was on the feet, and the legs were uncovered to the knees; though there seemed an anxiety to conceal the feet beneath their garments when they crouched down."

This entertainment, for such it was to us, was but one of many in which we partook. For after a lapse of two months we were still partaking the Phra Klang's hospitality, and with the exception of vexation at the non-capture of Mi, and my anxiety to receive

a letter from Macao, the time had passed pleasantly enough.

There had been plays, concerts, games, and moreover there had fallen in two of the annual festivals, and we were looking forward to another, the greatest of the great—viz., that of the Inundation of the Meinam, when the First King would proceed in state, and, like another Canute, command the surging waters to retire, for his good people had had enough of them.

But a word or two, reader, about these festivals, of which, in Siam, there are almost as many as in China and Japan.

The occasion of some of these is curious, and their origin piques one's curiosity. Among them may be named—

That when the king sends to the talapoins presents of fruits and flowers, but more particularly odoriferous woods for the cleansing of the teeth.

Another, when the king keeps within doors for three days, and a mock-king is invested by the people, with temporary sovereignty, and whose majesty sends out his ministers to catch what they can in the bazaars or open shops; and even confiscates junks that arrive during his reign. His sham majesty proceeds to a field in the town, and makes some furrows with a golden plough; leaning against the branch of a tree, he places his right foot on his left knee, and is bound to stand on one leg, as evidence of his legitimacy. Hence this popular

title of King Hop. A variety of vegetables are scattered in his presence, and a cow being brought in, whatever she first eats is pronounced likely to be scarce, and the people are advised accordingly.

“The whole of this farce,” speculates Sir John Bowring, “is probably intended to throw scorn upon popular influences, and reconcile the subject to the authority of a real king, but I am of opinion that its origin is far deeper, nay, to be dug out of that fountain of many superstitions—Buddhism.”

Upon another of these holidays, the king makes a royal progress, attended by his officers of state, to the great Pagodas, and presents new dresses to the talapoins.

Again, there is a festival of “the Angel of the River,” whose forgiveness is then asked for every act by which the waters of the Meinam have been made impure. Offerings are made of little rafts of plantain leaves, bearing lighted tapers, and ornamented by flags and flowers.

Then during another of these festivals, called Phapa, nightly processions take place to the Pagoda, and alms and offerings are left by boys and girls for the bonzes, while they are supposed to sleep; they are awakened by stones and bricks flung against the doors of their cells, when, as if exasperated, they turn out to scold the invaders of their repose, but are soothed by the gifts they bring, and the young people return home with shouts of laughter and singing.

There is another, called the Jingatana, when a cord made of dog-grass is taken to be blessed by the talapoins. This cord being fastened round the walls of the city, at a signal given by the astrologers, successive bursts of artillery are heard, which are supposed to frighten giants and plague-demons, who are known to attack the city on that particular night.

CHAPTER XV.

WE HEAR SOME GOOD NEWS, BUT NOTHING OF WAIF.

At length the long expected letter from my father arrived. It was in the month of August, the day before the festival of the Inundation of the Meinam.

Dick and I were alone, and in no very lively mood, for we had been conversing about little Waif; and speculating as to her probable fate, and the apparently small chance of his attaining the object for which he had made the journey to Bangkok.

Then in proportion as the receipt of that letter raised my spirits, so did it depress Dick's, who, jealously regarding the avidity with which I opened it, said—

“ Well, Herbert, I'll just take a stroll down to the pet crocodiles ; for, though I am not naturally envious, the sight of those reptiles 'll just prevent my going crazy at the thought that now there is no person in the world that cares enough for Dick Orme to write him a letter.”

“ Pooh ! pooh ! Dick, that's selfish, indeed ; sit

down, man ; who knows, I may have good news even for you."

Strange to say, on the instant, I caught sight of his name in my father's letter, and I added—

" Look you, Dick, I am a wizard ; I have news for you."

" That's a *fact*, is it ?" he asked, incredulously.

" Aye, that it is ; but rest you quiet, and I will read the whole."

Then, having first carefully taken out of the envelope, and placed in my pocket a "letter of credit," or bill, upon a Bangkok merchant, I began, my father (God bless his dear handwriting) says—

" Your letter, my dear Herbert, came upon me like a voice from the grave ; it has recalled me to life, or at least any regard for life, for it found me mourning your death."

" Pardon me, my friend, that was rather premature, wasn't it ?" said Dick ; but, not heeding him, I continued to read—

" For although, when three months had passed without bringing me the intelligence of your safe arrival, I had sad and troublesome visions of typhoons and pirates before my eyes, I still had hope, till the arrival in port of Li-Poo with the intelligence that you and a young man and woman who, in a very mysterious manner, had made themselves your fellow passengers (of course, I now from your letter know who and what were these

passengers) against his advice, insisted upon going ashore at Chantaburi."

"The rascally old varmint—"

"Tut, Dick, don't interrupt, but listen," and I continued to read—

"When, having made friends with the Governor, you had with his Excellency gone on board a junk, which, although chartered for the king of Siam, turned out to be a pirate, and that the captain of the latter, after the custom of his fellows, had decapitated you all, and then sailed with the king's cargo. Imagine, my dear Herbert, my sufferings upon hearing this corroborated, as it seemed to be, by the captain and crew of another ship; who, although he knew nothing of you, brought the news of the piratical seizure of the king's goods to Macao."

"Well, that fib wasn't so tall as it seems, for no doubt the old rogue suspected that we had been murdered."

"Stay, Dick, let me finish," I said, then began reading again—

"As for Li-Poo, when he found what had happened, for fear of being seized by the people on shore as an accomplice, he made the best of his way out of the harbour, and having stayed for a time among the islands, and procured a cargo of birds' nests, he brought them to Macao."

"Now I take it, that *was* smart trading, for he did not make the voyage for nothing," interposed Dick.

“But, my dear boy, the receipt of your letter repays me for my sufferings. Aye, and makes me think less of the affair of the rogue Mi. But respecting that man, Herbert, remain in Bangkok while you believe there is any hope of recovering the money which he holds of ours; for, although its loss will not ruin us, the sum is a very large one.”

“That is all touching me immediately,” said I; “but now comes your turn, Dick.”

“Then, while you read that, perhaps I had better take a turn with the crocodiles, for I take it there is not much good to be said about me in that quarter.”

“Pooh! man, be quiet, sit down,” and I read—

“You have done well, my boy, in befriending that young man Richard Orme, for apart from the abstract of his story which you gave me in your letter, I have reasons for believing that, whatever may have been the appearances against him, he is innocent; moreover, such is also the belief of his late employers.”

“Is that a *fact*, Herbert?” he asked, anxiously.

“Read for yourself, Dick,” I replied, giving him the letter, which he read aloud, as follows:—

“A few days, Herbert, after you had quitted Macao, Mr. Olivarez again called upon me to make some further arrangements about his debt to us; and, when the conversation turned upon the robbery of the dollars, and the absconding head clerk, to my

surprise he declared that, whatever had hitherto been his suspicions as to the guilt of Orme, they were now removed, for his partner, Mr. Costa, had in a recent letter to him (and he showed the letter to me) told him that the old Chinese porter, having been arrested on suspicion of purloining some goods from the stores, had declared that Orme was innocent; nay more, that he himself had been the means of letting the thieves, with whom he had intrigued, into the stores. But this is all; the name of the robber or anything more is not written in Mr. Costa's letter; for, as the Chinese only made this confession upon the very eve of the mail's departure, the worthy man knew no more; this, however, he lost no time in imparting to his partner, Mr. Olivarez, thinking it probable that gentleman might meet with the unfortunate Orme."

"God of heaven be thanked! for at least those whose good opinion I crave more than the whole world *know* me guiltless," exclaimed Dick, adding, "but how deep must have been the scheme of that cunning rascal Crafty."

"Dick, let me congratulate you, for you are once more happy; as for Crafty, leave him to heaven and his own conscience, and his punishment will be heavy enough."

But, returning my grasp, he replied with solemn earnestness—

"My friend, the heaviest portion of my trouble is removed; but the loss of my employers will not

be lightened until this rogue Crafty is found and made to disgorge a portion of his plunder."

"The search for him will prove a wild goose chase, indeed, believe me," said I.

"Nevertheless, Herbert, I have a conviction in my own mind that I shall light upon him yet."

"Well, Dick, may it prove so; but here comes our noble host," said I, as that personage made his appearance through the window from the garden, and observing that his step was lighter, and his countenance brighter and less thoughtful than usual, I said—

"The illustrious Phra Klang has met with some unexpected good fortune."

"The words of my friend are good; but has he not also heard good things, for he has received a letter from the head of his house."

"May heaven be thanked! the news *is* good, for thy servant's parent is in health, and has been rescued from a great trouble."

"That is good, Buddha be praised! but the king has had good fortune by the same ship that brought my friend his letter."

"May thy servant's ears be permitted to drink in this news which hath delighted the king, for it must be great as well as good news to give pleasure to so exalted a personage," said I.

"Buddha could have granted no better fortune, may his name be praised," he replied, adding, "for

the thieves have been discovered and the royal cargo retaken."

"Hurrah!" exclaimed Dick, wildly; "the rascals are taken; but Waif—little Waif—where is she?"

And the good-natured, kindly-feeling noble, who had heard of Waif's story and Dick's great sorrow, changed countenance as he said—

"Will my friend pardon his servant for having raised his hopes so high?—alas! in his own joy he forgot the sorrows of others."

"What mean you, sir?—did you not say the sea-thieves had been taken?" interrupted Dick, sadly disappointed; and the noble replied—

"Thy servant said not those words; for alas! the rogues have escaped."

And he then told us by what means the cargo had been recovered. It was as follows:—

"One of his Siamese Majesty's ships of war having put into a Dutch harbour in the Pacific, her commander recognized in a junk lying at anchor the same vessel he had seen lading at Chantaburi. Knowing that she should have been on her voyage to Bangkok, his suspicions became aroused, and he framed an excuse to visit her skipper. Accordingly he went on board, and at once saw sufficient to convince him of the robbery that had been committed; at the time, however, he appeared to take no particular notice. When midnight came he returned with a strong force, but the rogues had been too sharp for him; for,

although he found the cargo, the skipper and crew had very wisely decamped under cover of the darkness ; an occurrence at which the king's captain was pleased rather than otherwise, for it saved him the trouble of carrying so many passengers to Bangkok."

"The cowardly dog, was he not punished for permitting the rascal to escape?" I asked. And Dick said—

"But that captain, my friend, saw he nought of the girl Waif, or the man Crafty? nay, he must have seen both."

"The delight of the king's captain at the opportunity of performing so important a service for his master, blinded him to anything but the cargo ; and, without loss of time, he manned the junk from his own crew, and brought her into the Meinam."

"True," replied Dick, thoughtfully, "the fellow was thinking only of his own gains and probable advancement, still I must see and question him."

"It will do little good ; still my friend may shortly see the captain, for the junk will soon be up to Bangkok."

So saying the Phra Klang left us.

Poor Dick ! this new grief and disappointment entirely neutralized the pleasure my letter had caused him, and for the whole of that day he remained gloomy and thoughtful.

The next day was to take place the festival of the Inundation of the Meinam ; and, as a large barge with many rowers was placed at our service by the minister, who himself had to attend the king, we left the palace at an early hour for the river. The distance was not long ; but on the way we had to pass the two wats or temples in which resided, nay, I believe, were worshipped, the sacred white elephants ; and, as these animals were then being prepared for the king's use, we remained to examine them and their trappings. But a word or two about their highnesses, for they form the most sacred of all the institutions of Siam. In Ava they are honoured, and the king's greatest title is " The Lord of the White Elephant ;" but, in Siam, the animal is literally worshipped, and frequent have been the wars between the kings of Pegu and Siam for the possession of these beasts.

In the annals of Siam, about the year 1547, is considered the most fortunate of epochs, for then the king of Siam was in possession of several white elephants. Now, this superfluity becoming known to his majesty of Pegu, that warlike personage begged a couple of his royal brother ; but, meeting with a refusal, he invaded Siam with 900,000 men, 700,000 war elephants, and 15,000 horse, and all for the sake of two white elephants ; however, once in Siam, the Pegu king indemnified himself for his trouble by seizing four.

The reason this white beast is held sacred is, that

it is supposed to be the incarnation of some future Buddha, hence the reason that the lucky discoverer of one of these animals is in Ava ennobled and pensioned. The beast makes his first entrance into the capital in great state, attended by the chief nobility, and is received by the king in person, who then and there confers upon it a title. The animal again, as in Pegu, has a palace, and a great number of officers and slaves, who give him his food in gold and silver vessels.

The reverence of the Siamese for these animals is extraordinary. Indeed nothing can equal their veneration for the animal; the king, at least, must have one as a palladium for his own life and the prosperity of his empire.

“If the elephant dies the king loses all the merit acquired in nourishing him; he is himself likely to die the same year; hence the great pains taken for his health. This elephant has the title of Chau p’aja, answering to *grandees* of the first class among the Spaniards; they take rank immediately after princes of the blood.

“One who should call him by his proper name would be severely punished; he lives in a kind of palace, with a numerous court of officers, guards, valets, &c.; he wears a kind of diadem on his head, and gold rings on his tusks; he is served in golden vessels, and fed on sugar cane and delicious fruits.

“When he goes to bathe, a numerous *cortege* ac-

companies him ; one keeps time with music, and another holds over him the red parasol of state, used only by high dignitaries. His officers may not withdraw from his presence without a profound salutation ; when sick, the king's physicians attend him, and talapoins visit him to pray for his cure, and sprinkle him with holy water. In spite of all these attentions the white elephant is often in a bad humour, and many a time would kill its attendants, the talapoins, if they did not keep a respectful distance from the trunk and tusks of his lordship. Sometimes they are so savage that they are obliged to cut off their tusks. Every evening his or their excellencies are entertained with music until they go to sleep.

“ When *the* white elephant dies, the king and court are in great affliction, and give him funeral honours according to his rank. It is said that sometimes he has public audiences, when presents are made to him, which, if he accepts, proves that the donor has much merit ; if he refuses them, it is evidence he is not favoured of heaven. Then, the man who captures one of these animals is ever after exempt, with his posterity, from all taxation and vassal service.”

But enough of these sacred white elephants, which, by the way are, except in very rare instances, of a light mahogany colour, with a few white hairs. Well, quitting the brutes, we were speedily afloat on the Meinam, and in the midst of the great

doings, solemn, merry or ridiculous, and a very exciting affair it was.

The opening and leading event of the day, namely, the laying the royal command upon the waters to retire, was performed by one hundred talapoins, who made their appearance in gilded barges. I did not, however, notice that they were more successful than the royal Dane; but then probably they were no more disappointed than the thousands of merry-makers who look forward through the whole year for the ceremony, for it is one of the most ancient of their institutions, and its observance remains intact as it did when in 1600 the old traveller De Couto saw and thus described it:

“ The king comes out of the city, accompanied by the whole of the nobility, in barges richly gilded and covered with ornaments, with great display and noise of musical instruments. They proclaim that the king is about to order the waters to disperse, and this is the grand festival of the year.

“ A mast is raised in the middle of the stream, adorned with silken flags, and a prize suspended for the best rower. All the contending boats put themselves in trim, and at a given signal start, with such cries, and shouting, and tumult, as if the world was being destroyed; the first who arrives carrying off the prize. But in the contest there is terrible confusion—boats running against and swamping each other, oars tangled and disentangled in a disorder admirable to look at from around. So that the

people are not so barbarous, but that they imitate the ancient Trojans (as in the same manner, Eneas, when he arrived in Sicily, had the festival of his galleys, giving precious prizes to the most alert); and when these Siamese have won the prize they return to the city with such rejoicings, shoutings, and tumultuous music, that the noise shakes both the waters and the land. Then the king having returned to the city, the people say he has driven back the waters, because these heathens give to their kings all the attributes of God, and believe they are the source of all good."

In addition to the sights named by the old traveller, were fighting fishes, small bellicose creatures, which attack their fellows with great ferocity—bristling their fins and exhibiting the greatest excitement; one of these seeing its reflection in a glass, will violently advance head foremost against its shadow.

Then again, as in China, there were men with large bowls, containing crickets, which they goaded into fighting each other, by stirring them up with little sticks. Then again, there were old fellows and young fellows flying kites of all shapes and sizes: the fun being to send up your own kite, after the fashion of a falcon, and so bring down your adversary's kite.

The chief of these amusements and games took place upon the river; numbers, however, of people on shore in the streets were busily engaged in cock-

fighting; and for this cruel sport the Siamese have (although it is forbidden by law) almost as great a mania as the natives of the Philippines, who will not unfrequently give a moderate fortune for a favourite bird, and stake their all upon its prowess in a single battle.

Now amongst the amusements and great doings of such a day as I have described, confirmed indeed must have been the melancholy of a man that could not have found at least a temporary lethe for his sorrows; so before we had been a couple of hours upon the river Dick had become enlivened, if not so hilarious in spirit as the merry-makers around us; but as, according to the old adage, one can have too much of a good thing, so towards evening we became heartily tired of the day's fun and amusement, and directed our rowers to bend their course homewards, or at least to the spot where we had taken the boat.

Now, as from our first starting in the morning we had kept, although slowly, a straight course up the river, that we might get a good sight of something of everything that was going on, we had got nearly through the water-city, into the clearer portion of the Meinam, which led through a wild country to the ancient capital of Ayuthia, and therefore the rowers had to make the best of their time in order to reach the landing-place before sun-down.

In this endeavour, however, they failed; for so

crowded was the river, with boats, barges, junks, and even houses, which, as if taken with the same recklessness as the people, had broken from their fastenings, and in their straying away, would every now and then bump against each other to the uproarious delight of these fearless and undrownable people, that it was night before we had made half the distance, and dark enough, too, for the junks to have hung out their lanterns. Well, we had steered clear of these dissipated houses, which had gone astray during the recklessness of the day; we were, however, not so fortunate with the other craft, for when we had reached as near as we could make out, within a mile of our destination, and were passing a large junk, that had apparently arrived that day from the Gulf, the chief of our rowers called out to us to sit steadily, but the caution came too late, for the next instant a long narrow canoe, which must have been pulling with great velocity across the stream, ran into our bows with such violence that we were suddenly shot round as if we had entered a whirlpool.

From that concussion we received no more than a fright; it was not so, however, with the canoe, for she was capsized, and her crew thrown into the water.

“Let us lend the poor fellows a hand,” said Dick, snatching an oar from the nearest rower, and holding it in the direction of one of the capsized men; but to his chagrin the men in the water, as

well as our own rowers, only laughed, as while swimming they righted the boat, and in about three or four minutes were manfully pulling towards the junk.

“They are smart fellows, and that’s a *fact*, for none but born porpoises, ducks, or something of that kind could perform such a trick as that,” said Dick.

And we should have passed onwards without further notice of the incident, but that as the men reseated themselves, and, rare occurrence, helped one of their party into the boat, who gave some hasty directions, I recognised the voice.

“Stay, rest on your oars,” I said to the rowers; then to Dick, “Did you not recognise that voice?”

“No.”

“But look now, Dick; see, the light from the lantern is upon their faces.”

And looking, Dick instantly exclaimed—

“By heavens, you are right, Herbert. It is that old rattlesnake, Mi. Let’s after him.”

“Not so, my friend; it would be useless, and even dangerous.”

“But look you, Herbert, I won’t let the old ’coon slip this time, and that’s a *fact*,” he replied determinedly.

“No, neither will I, if it can be helped; but to make sure of our game we must be cautious.”

Then addressing the chief of our rowers I told him that the merchant Mi, for whose capture the

Phra Klang had offered a reward, had gone on board the junk, and bade him, if he would earn the reward, to go ashore, and return as speedily as he might with a posse of the river police, or soldiers.

“That’s neat, too,” said Dick, laughing, as with the simple reply of, “I await the master’s order,” the fellow turned a summersault out of the boat into the water, and swam ashore.

CHAPTER XVI.

WE AGAIN FIND WAIF, BUT IN STRANGE COMPANY.

ANXIOUSLY we awaited our messenger's return, meanwhile closely watching the junk by the sole light of her own lanterns.

The difficulty of keeping watch was rendered the more difficult from our pulling nearer in shore, in order that our hanging about might not attract attention on board.

"Then the old snake has not left Bangkok after all?" said Dick, musingly.

"No, nor will he; for where can he so well hide as among this wilderness of boats and houses?" said I.

"It's my opinion he is going to leave now, and that if we remain here long enough, we shall see yon junk get under weigh, and slip down the river with the tide."

"Aye, may be, may be, if we permit her; but we won't, Dick."

"There is many a slip between the cup and the

lip, Herbert; if you had taken my advice, you would just have made a bold dash on board the junk."

"And in the morning our heads would have been floating about like two stray cocoa-nuts." "No, no, better as it is, Dick, for these half-naked fellows are difficult to catch, and when you *have* caught them—"

"About as hard to hold as greased snakes," he interposed.

"Not a bad simile for a Yankee, Dick; but look, yonder come our troops," said I, as some twenty soldiers, led by our messenger, came down to the water's edge, and seated themselves in one of the large official barges.

"Soldiers, are they? Well, I should have taken them for a score of half-strangled apes, poor fellows," said Dick; and to a certain extent he was justified in the remark, for nothing can be more absurd than the change which the kings, in their love of Europeanizing their troops, have effected in the dress of a portion of the army; for instead of the free and appropriate attire for such a climate, and the habits engendered thereby, the poor fellows were stiffened in the neck by a collar, their heads weighed down by a shako, their waists brought in by a tightly-buttoned coat, over which were slung cross belts, and legs encased in white trousers.

Scarcely had these warriors dipped their paddles in the water, than our messenger, to avoid an unnecessary plashing, crawled rather than plunged into the

river and swam back to us. He told us that the soldiers would follow in our wake, so we at once pulled towards the junk as silently as if the oars had been muffled.

As the two boats reached the side of the junk, almost simultaneously, there was a slight splash in the water near us.

“What’s that?” I asked, involuntarily.

“Well, I guess that old snake’s smelt a rat, and has been too much for us; for he’s a smart fellow that,” replied Dick.

“No, no, it is not possible; see there is not a soul on deck,” said I; and the next minute Dick, I, and the Siamese troops, all stood on board the junk, the crew of which, alarmed by the noise of their muskets as they rattled upon deck, came forth from all quarters, trembling with fear and indignation, but regardless of their chattering and menaces, the Siamese officer at once placed his men round the deck, telling them to fire at any person who should attempt to quit the junk and swim ashore.

This movement, which was but the work of an instant, was quite sufficient to call forth the worst fears of the Chinese captain, who, by the light of his lantern, seeing that he had been boarded by the king’s troops, in the most abject manner and tone, desired to know of what crime he had been guilty, that he should be thus treated.

“If my brother is not guilty, why does he fear? —the great king is just—but what words are these?”

Has he not the rogue Mi, the merchant, hidden in his junk?" replied the officer, mildly.

"My elder brother's words are unjust, for his servant knew not that the name of the old man who came on board was Mi, or that Mi was a rogue."

"My brother is wasting his words and throwing dust in the eyes of the great king's officers. Let him lead us to the dog's hiding place," replied the officer, whose rage, however, may be better imagined than described, when the captain replied—

"Certainly, it was an unfortunate day when thy servant was born—the old rogue Mi, if that be his name, no sooner heard the plash of oars, than he left his friend and swam ashore."

The rage of the Siamese became unbounded; he caught the Chinese by the tail of his head, and I verily believe would have beaten him to death, had I not interfered and begged of the officer to permit him to answer me a question.

"If my brother is not guilty of hiding this rogue, how came he on board this junk?"

"Truly, the sea goddess, to punish her servant, must have made him take two Farangs on board at Singapore."

"But these Farangs, they are still on board—lead us to them," said I, for a strange thought passed through my mind at that moment.

"Truly, it is good that those who have done the evil should bear the punishment," and with a malicious smile upon his countenance he led us to the one

large cabin, the door of which he at once opened without ceremony.

The cabin had originally been built and furnished for some person of consequence, for its interior abounded with relics, though faded, of luxury, if not magnificence. It was large and lofty, the walls and ceiling were painted and decorated with Japan and gold, which was relieved by pictures and tablets, whereon were written choice extracts from the writings of the great Chinese sages, with circular mirrors of highly polished steel, and the windows were festooned with curtains of silk embroidered; then in niches made for the purpose, were vases of the choicest porcelain, and a gilded image of the god Fo, before which stood an incense lamp, but which, wonderful to relate, was not then burning. The floor was covered with mats and carpets of the long yellow-haired skins of the Yak or Tartar bull, and the furniture, chairs, tables, and ottomans, which were of rosewood, inlaid with coloured pearls, crystals, metals, and porcelain, were covered with rich silk. The general effect of the whole being heightened by the light from half a dozen lanterns of variegated colours.

This cabin, or rather state-room, seemed to be partitioned at one end by a japanned pannelling hung with silken curtains; near to which, along the side, was a couch, upon which seemingly, in deep sleep, lay a man, whose dress bespoke him to be a European; but whose face was covered with a musquito curtain.

“But what right had we thus to intrude on this man’s privacy?” I must confess that as the door stood open, and that question came in the minds of both Dick and myself, we stood abashed at our own impudence.

“These may be nigger manners, but they are not European nor American; we have no right here, and that’s a fact,” said Dick.

The Siamese officer was less punctilious, for asking the skipper if the Farang yonder was the friend of the rogue Mi, and being answered in the affirmative, he marched a couple of his men within the cabin, and gave the word to “ground arms,” which they did with such “pomp and circumstance,” that as the stock of their muskets fell upon the flooring, the vases and other ornaments sprang upwards as if with affright.

“By heaven, there is a woman beyond that partition,” said I, hearing a faint shriek.

Dick, however, heard me not, for his attention was fixed upon the man who, aroused by the falling of the muskets, had jumped to his feet, and drawn from his vest a revolver, the bright barrel of which glistening in the faces of the Siamese, he fell backwards several paces.

“It is he—the villain!” exclaimed Dick, and almost at a single bound the man was dashed backward upon the couch, and the pistol was in the hands of Dick, who, as he held him down, and shook him by the throat, said—

“Rascal! villain! where is the girl?—where is she? Answer on the instant, or I will blow your brains out!” but for a moment Crafty (for it could be no other) stared in Dick’s face, regardless of his imminent danger, and as if stunned with surprise.

“Speak, villain—again, I ask, where is the girl?” said Dick.

“Stay, madman! remove your hands, you will throttle me,” gasped Crafty, who, when Dick had loosened his hold, added—

“The girl is safe, but what—”

“Stay, rascal, this is not enough—where is she? Is she unharmed—unhurt?”

“Dear Dick, dear Dick, she is,” and then the cause of the shriek was explained, for to our astonishment little Waif came forth from her cabin, which was behind the partition I have named.

I ran forward, and catching hold of her hands, exclaimed—

“Waif, Waif, dear Waif, is it possible? But how?—why?—what means this?—how have the villains treated you?”

“Aye, Waif, tell us, for upon your answer depends the life of this wretch,” said Dick, without leaving Crafty.

“Dick, I am unhurt, uninjured; but release your hold of that man, or I will answer no more questions,” she replied, pointing to Crafty, adding, “but for him I should have been murdered or worse—unhand him.”



DISCOVERY OF WAIF IN THE CABIN.

“Villain! that answer saves your life for the present; said Dick, still holding the revolver near his head.

“Stay, madman—listen,” said Crafty.

“Dick, Dick, for my sake I implore of you—”

“Waif, Waif, how is it possible *you* can plead for this man? whatever service he may have performed for you, he is nevertheless a villain, but for whom I might now have been a prosperous and happy man,” replied Dick, adding, “Now, Herbert, tell those Siamese fellows to take him ashore;” but Waif, stepping forward, said imploringly—

“Herbert Richardson, as you would not have me die of grief—of shame, save this man from these Siamese.”

“Nay, did I wish it, the thing would be impossible, for these soldiers know that he is in connection with the rogue Mi.”

“A truce to this, Herbert; tell the Siamese that this is the fellow who plundered the king of his cargo at Chantaburi,” and, shall I say it, in spite of Waif’s tears and prayers, I obeyed; and so delighted was the officer with such an unexpected prize, that in another instant, he and his men were busy binding the arms of their prisoner. Crafty submitted patiently, only saying to Dick—

“Richard Orme, you will live to regret this outrage.”

“Outrage—rascal, is it an outrage to give over to justice the man who purloined the dollars he professed to convey to a poor widow; who took advantage

of my feelings of gratitude to him for a former service rendered to plunder the stores of dollars, and thus ruin my reputation for life?"

"Is this all? Do you charge me with nothing more?" asked the rogue, with provoking coolness.

"Aye, with instigating, and helping to carry out the plunder of the 'Anne,' and the murder of her crew and passengers,—of the robbery of the king's cargo at Chantaburi,—of being a pirate and a sea-thief."

"Richard Orme, your injuries or fancied injuries have made you mad, and you will live to regret, as I shall live to forgive this outrage."

"Bah! thou art a coward as well as a pirate; but your career is at an end, and that too, more by the aid of Providence, than any means of mine; still, if less than the devil I take you to be, now that your ill-gotten wealth cannot avail, you will make restitution of the sum, the purloining of which, through my carelessness, has blasted my prospects in life;" but with an earnestness that to those who knew not the man who was speaking, might have passed for injured innocence, Crafty replied—

"Again, I say thou art mad, Richard Orme; as heaven is my witness, I took no part in that dollar robbery; and, as for wealth, whether well or ill-gotten, I am well-nigh as poor as thyself."

By this time, however, the patience of the Siamese officer became exhausted, for he regarded his prisoner as the means of securing him a heavy

reward, and so giving the word to his men, Crafty was led forth from his cabin; but to our surprise, Waif was about to follow.

“Stay! whither go you, Waif?” said I, taking her hand.

“Whither he goes I go; it is my duty,” she replied, mournfully.

“Great Heaven! Waif, what possesses you? What can have happened since we parted? in a word, why and wherefore all this mystery?” said Dick, sternly. Then she sat upon an ottoman, and covering her face in her hands, sobbed aloud—

“Heaven guide me—I know not what to do.”

“Dear, dear Waif,” I said, again taking her hand. “I implore of you to explain how it is, you are so strangely changed? We lost you—wept for you! We have sought, and found you, and yet you seek to shield the villain who has caused us all so much misery!” But for a minute she sobbed again, and then taking Dick’s hand, she said—

“Dick, we have been friends, dear friends; you have protected and loved me as a brother.” But he spoke not, his head was bowed down with grief—nay, he threw aside her hand, when, wild with conflicting emotions, she said to me—

“And you, Herbert Richardson—”

“But for this, could have loved you more than as a brother,” I replied—grief, jealousy, call it what you will, surprised me into an avowal that otherwise

would never have been made. The confession startled her.

“Is this indeed so? Then am I trebly wretched?” And as the tears coursed down her cheeks, she took a hand of each, saying—

“But, my friends, my dear, dear friends, have patience—hope, trust in me;” but again dashing her hand aside, Dick said—

“Stay—girl—tell us the cause of this grief, what means this mystery, and why—O why, your great interest in this villain, this man, who has been the bane of my existence, and but to effect whose capture, as you well know, I had never seen this wretched country?” But again she took his hand, saying—

“Ask me not, for I dare not, will not tell you; sufficient that, bad man as he is, he saved my life—he protected me from all.”

“But himself—strange infatuation,” I interposed, bitterly; but not noticing the interruption, she continued, “Moreover, I am bound to protect him, for he is—but I will say no more.”

“Nay,” said I, “say it out—your husband, Waif! this villain, this pirate, O God! is it possible.” But Dick, subdued by her excitement, her agony, took her hands in his, saying—

“Is it, indeed, as Herbert has said, my poor dear Waif?” but she shrank from us both, as she said—

“Ask me no more. I have already said too much.” Then gazing at us earnestly, with an hysterical sob, she added, “but these looks, these doubtings, they

are cruel—they will kill me; but, let me implore of you to stay me not—let me follow those men, for where they take him, will I go.”

“Fortunately, it is too late, they have quitted the junk,” said Dick, as we heard the plashing of oars, and she wrung her hands in bitter misery.

“Waif, dear Waif, you know not your friends, the sad scenes, the misery you have endured, since we parted have made you—”

“No, not mad, Dick, God forgive me; but I wish I was,” and tears flowed down her cheeks; and Dick now quite softened, placed his arm round her wais, and kissing her cheek, said—

“These tears, dear sister, will relieve you; but come, come, let us quit this junk, we have a home in the lund-town.”

But to end the narration of the very painful adventures of that night on board the junk, we led Waif on deck, and finding the barge at hand, and the rowers ready, we took our seats, were pulled ashore and in a very short time, were beneath the roof of the Phra Klang's house.

The minister, upon his return from the long and tedious state business of the day, had been informed of the affairs which had detained us; nay, he had himself ordered the guard to visit the junk, and had anxiously awaited to hear of the capture of so celebrated a rogue as the chief robber of the king's cargo; for into such a personage had our messenger magnified Crafty; but seeing we were accompanied

by a young and pretty woman, his Excellency's curiosity knew no bounds. Greatly, however, to his disappointment, we merely told him that Waif was our lost friend, whom we had rescued from a pirate, and for whom we begged his hospitality.

That, however, was enough, for with a delicacy worthy of a European gentleman, he suppressed his curiosity, and sending for one of his Laos wives, recommended Waif to her charge, while she remained beneath his roof.

CHAPTER XVII.

WE ARE TAKEN BEFORE THE KING, WHO EXAMINES
CRAFTY AND WAIF.

AFTER the Phra Klang left us that night Dick and I exchanged scarcely a dozen words. No; for, although our minds were similarly occupied in endeavouring to fathom the extraordinary conduct of Waif, and each longed to listen to the other's opinion, both dreaded to broach the subject, for fear, I believe, of having his own worst surmises confirmed.

Such being the state of our minds, it was little to be wondered at that the next morning we arose from our beds feverish and unrefreshed. But why should I, Herbert Richardson, take such an interest in the fortunes of this stray sheaf of humanity; this orphan girl; this Waif thrown up on the waters of life? Why, indeed?—but then who can detect the earliest germs of love?—is not the heart proverbially wayward and beyond the management of the head? does it not become frequently filled with the tender passion ere the head is cognizant of the fact—

indeed, only reaches to that knowledge by coming in contact with some such spark as jealousy, or even anger? Nay, do not the latter passions sometimes surprise us with the knowledge that we are really in love? But be that as it may, I was scarcely aware of my real feelings towards Waif till her abduction at Chantaburi; nor then as, when meeting her in the junk, I learned, or rather firmly believed, she belonged to another, and was irreparably lost to me; for wide apart as were their ages, and antipodean as were their natures, I could not doubt that the lawless villain Crafty had forced her to become his wife. Such were my thoughts as we sat the next morning awaiting Waif to join us at the morning meal. To drown them I said—

“I fear me, Dick, we have altogether lost that cunning rogue, Mi.”

“Aye, pardon, Herbert; I am a selfish brute, for in my exultation at the capture of that scoundrel Crafty, I had forgotten your deep interest in the taking of the lesser rogue.”

“It is the toss up of a dollar which is the greater, and which rogue the lesser, of the two.”

“Well, Herbert, perhaps you are right; for, though there may be a distinction, I take it there is very little difference between them; but,” he added, as we heard the sound of footsteps, “here comes Waif, who, reticent as she is about herself, may at least give us some information about this fellow.”

I started up from my seat to receive her ; for now I hoped that we should hear from her own lips some solution of her own mystery ; but instead of Waif, it was a slave from the women's apartments.

“ It is from Waif—she is ill,” said Dick, hastening forward, and taking a note from the slave, he opened it. There were but a few lines in pencil, but they were sufficient to cause me much anguish, and greatly anger Dick, who, throwing it upon the table, said—

“ This infatuation—madness ; that scoundrel seems to hold possession of her very soul. She cannot—she dare not—meet me till the fellow is released.”

We had, however, no time to comment upon this very singular missive ; for after delivering the paper, the slave quitted, and the Phra Klang entered the room.

“ Let my friends rejoice,” said he, “ for they have captured a great rogue, and great will be their reward, for the king is generous.”

“ This is but poor consolation in our present trouble, Excellency, for we have lost one for whose loss the generosity even of a king cannot compensate us,” said I.

“ My friend must not despond ; for, though the empire is large, and has many hiding holes, the king's soldiers and spies are countless ; and, have the eyes of the lynx, the subtlety of the snake, and

the legs of the ostrich ; so that even the cunning rogue Mi cannot long remain hidden."

" Look you, my friend, all that is true enough, as regards the man Mi, but the pirate has robbed us of that which all the soldiers in the king's army can never recover," said Dick.

" Buddha be praised ! then must the loss of my friend be very great," exclaimed the minister opening his eyes wide with astonishment.

" It is the affection of one who was as a sister to us," said I ; and the good man, comprehending our meaning, replied—

" Miss Mouse, the Farang girl ; do my friends grieve for her ? Has, then, this pirate made her his wife ; but, if so, what matter, my friends need not grieve, the rogue will soon be killed, and they can have her back again."

But, unwilling to enter into argument or further explanation with our worthy host upon such a subject, we shook our heads ; again mistaking the meaning of the action, he said consolingly—

" Well, suppose my friends not like that, they can buy a Laos sister, or wife each, for one hundred ticals."

" Well, that's a cool way of putting it, too ; but it is not the custom in our countries," said Dick ; adding, I believe, for the express purpose of changing the subject—" Has your Excellency reported to the king our capture of this great thief ?"

" The king, the divine Buddha, who dwells at

the head, has heard with his ears, and the good news has delighted his heart, and pleased him with the two noble Farangs, whom his majesty commands to the golden presence this morning, that he may himself first examine in private the charge against the great thief; for, although the king himself is the plundered person, so just is he that he would not punish even a devil unjustly."

"Then, Excellency, we had better prepare ourselves for this audience," said I; and the minister, bowing his acquiescence, he left the room to give orders for one of his great barges to be made ready for our reception and passage to the palace.

Having arranged our toilets to the best of our abilities, we left the Phra Klang's house and went on board the barge, and were speedily on our way to the royal palace, which we reached without meeting with any incident worthy of note. Yes, there was one. When midway between the house of the Phra Klang and the palace, we passed a spot of the otherwise crowded Meinam that was boatless and houseless; the water looked lone and solitary; nay, so strange, that I asked the minister "Why that spot should be avoided?" but he replied not; a shudder seemed to run through his frame.

Afterwards, however, I discovered the following tragic history, which, as it will serve for another illustration of the terrible power wielded by these Asiatic despots, I will relate—

“ Some years before, one of the greatest nobles headed a rebellion against the reigning monarch, even going so far as to cause himself to be proclaimed king, and assuming the insignia of royalty. Chiefly, however, by the aid of Mr. Hunter, an English official, then resident in Siam, and who brought into play the guns from an English ship-of-war, upon the rebels, the latter were defeated, and their chief taken prisoner.

“ The punishment, however, of the rebel leader Peer-si-pi-poor, was to come. The wretched criminal was condemned to have his eyes put out by the application of searing irons, and then placed in an iron cage, which was suspended just so high above the waters of the river that the unfortunate captive, by stretching his arms through the close iron bars, could barely manage to touch the ripple of the waters with the extreme tips of his fingers.

“ Here, without food or raiment, with no protection from the fierce sultry heat of the noontide sun, with his brain racking and burning, and suffering from the acutest agonies that thirst can impart, did that unhappy culprit listen to the cool rippling sound of these waters, for one drop of which, like Dives of old, he prayed to wet his parched and withered tongue. How earnestly did that man pray for death; and that dark angel, at all times too ready to come unbidden, kept aloof, and mocked his misery for three long days and nights.

“ Mr. Hunter—how bitterly must the good man have regretted his interference in behalf of such a savage—at length undertook to petition the king that, at least, the man might at once be put out of his misery, but the brutal monarch gave a stern refusal, and the miserable rebel lingered in his agonies till at first raving madness, and then death, came to his relief.”

It should, however, be chronicled in favour of the people, that, abject slaves as they are, they execrated the king for his wanton, hellish cruelty. But to resume my narrative—

About a mile beyond the scene of this terrible execution we landed near to three remarkable monuments to the memory of a leash of Siamese soldier kings. These monuments are of great height and size, and stand upon pedestals of black granite, which are so marvellously carved, gilded, and inlaid, that they form one of the chief sights in Bangkok.

Not far beyond these monuments was the palace royal, a large stone building, surrounded by a lofty wall of more than a mile in circumference.

This royal abode, however, more resembles a town, for it is made up of many various buildings, magnificent temples, government offices, stables for the royal elephants, an arsenal for the manufacture of fire-arms, apartments for the ladies, of whom it is said there are three thousand, a

theatre, to which the people are sometimes invited, and other buildings too numerous to name, but the entrances to most of which are guarded by huge monsters carved out of solid granite.

Now, when we had passed the gates, we found ourselves in the midst of a great multitude of soldiers, slaves, and officers of various grades; but through these the rank of our conductor effected an easy passage; for, as he approached, they fell aside and upon their stomach, forming a lane. But an interview with an Asiatic despot should be heralded by a flourish of trumpets; such a flourish indeed as met the English ambassador Crawford, upon a similar occasion.

The reception, says the latter, took place in the Great Hall of Audience, a magnificent apartment, richly painted in vermilion, decorated and gilded, the walls and ceiling of which were bespangled with sparkling stars. The throne and its appendages occupied the whole of the upper end of the hall. The first was gilded all over, and about fifteen feet high; it had much the shape and look of a handsome pulpit. A pair of curtains of gold tissue upon a yellow ground concealed the whole of the upper part of the room except the throne, and they were intended to be drawn over this also, except when used. In front of the throne, and rising from the floor, were to be seen a number of gilded umbrellas of various sizes. These consisted of a series of canopies decreasing in size upwards,

and sometimes amounting to as many as seventeen tiers. The king, as he appeared seated on the throne, had more the appearance of a statue in a niche than of a living being. He wore a loose gown of gold tissue, and by his side lay a golden baton or sceptre.

The general appearance of the hall, the prostrate attitude of the courtiers, the situation of the king, and the silence which prevailed, presented a very imposing spectacle, and reminded us much more of a temple, crowded with votaries engaged in the performance of some solemn rite of religion, than the audience chamber of a temporal monarch.

Imposing as all this must have been, Mr. Crawford has omitted the thrilling sensation caused by the 'coup de théâtre' generally performed on the occasion of giving audience, and which so impressed a more recent traveller in Siam, that he says—'On our first entry I could perceive nothing but a very magnificent curtain, worked entirely of gold and silver tissue, which stretched across the room; presently the soft notes of a remarkably sweet-toned organ reached our ears; and, as the symphony gradually swelled into the beautiful cadence of one of Mozart's masterpieces, the curtain drew aside by degrees, and revealed to our expectant eyes the corpulent and half-naked body of the mighty and despotic King of Siam.'

How different *our* reception. No grand hall; no splendid throne; no music, and to all appear-

ance, no mighty Asiatic despot—without, indeed, it can be that mild-looking, very stout personage in an uncomfortably light hybrid uniform, part Asiatic part European, who is sitting near a table of English make in a library furnished in European style, and who smiles rather than frowns, as upon entering his presence we bend our bodies forward instead of following the example of the Phra Klang, who, great as he was in his own palace, now crawls in the dust at the feet of his master.

Yes, this personage was the clever, accomplished second king, whose praises it has been the fashion of all recent visitors to his court to sing, as a prince who, measured by his countrymen, is a hundred years in advance of his time, and of whom an American missionary said, as far back as 1837:—

“Chow Fa Noi is the probable successor to the throne; and, in fact, is now entitled to it, rather than the present monarch, who is an illegitimate son. Should he assume the government, Siam must advance from her present lowliness and semi-civilization. No man in the kingdom is so qualified to govern well. His naturally fine mind is enlarged and improved by intercourse with foreigners, by the perusal of English works, by studying Euclid and Newton, by freeing himself from a bigoted attachment to Buddhism, by candidly recognising our superiority, and a readiness to adopt our arts.”

Well, on this occasion, desiring to be something

more than a mere puppet of state, moreover perhaps feeling a great curiosity to see and examine for himself this robber, who had so impudently run away with his merchandize, the king had chosen to take into his own hands, at least in the first instance, the office of judge or magistrate, and that, too, in his Europeanized library ; but, although his majesty had for the nonce cast aside his regal dignity, his minister, the Phra Klang, was no less the slave in form and fact, for the royal lips had no sooner signified that he might speak, than he said—

“ The *Phra ong* (Divine personage), the mighty and august king, commanded the attendance of the two Farangs. They are present, and await his orders.”

“ It is well,” replied the king ; “ but this Farang thief—where is the dog ?”

“ I, a dust-grain of your sacred feet, have obeyed ; the dog is without, and awaits the sentence of the sovereign of the earth,” replied the minister, crawling backwards out of the room to fetch the accused, who was speedily introduced between two officers, who made him kneel at the feet of his majesty.

“ But the Phra Klang told us of a girl, the sister of these Farang merchants, his friends. Let her be brought hither,” said the king.

“ The slave of the high and mighty has heard the royal word ; he has put it on his brain, on the

tuft of his head,' replied the minister, again crawling backwards from the room."

But now, reader, as I have only put these big-sounding, grandiloquent phrases into the mouth of the minister, to give you a notion of the almost blasphemous form of speech, in which the king is addressed by his officers, I will relate the remainder of the interview in plain unvarnished English, leaving it to your own imagination to supply the tedious verbiage in which it was clothed, and of which I have given a very fair specimen—

But the prisoner. Well, his countenance and bearing was marvellous for one who stood charged with a crime which, by the law of every nation, must consign him to the gibbet; not a feature was ruffled; not a muscle seemed to move, and to the glances of hatred and vengeance shot at him by Dick, he seemed to return a look rather of pity than indignation or fear; indeed, when the Phra Klang returned and commanded Dick to repeat his charges against him, he but smiled, confidently, as if he were about listening to some pleasing story.

Dick obeyed, and related the story of his adventures, particularizing those in which he knew, or believed Crafty had figured; charging him with purloining the money he had sent to his mother; the robbery of the dollars in San Francisco; being engaged in the attack upon and plunder of the 'Anne;' and, lastly, and most important to the Siamese ruler, being one of the real leaders of the

pirates who had stolen the royal cargo at Chantaburi. To all of which the king, having listened very attentively, made reply—

“ Buddha be praised! the world will be happier when it is rid of so great a rogue,” adding, sternly to the prisoner: “ But what answer hath the dog to make to these charges ?”

“ That the young man is bereft of reason, O king; for none but a madman would bring such charges without proofs, and without proofs the meanest magistrate would not condemn the humblest of slaves,” was the firm reply.

“ How!—does the rogue deny his guiltiness of these crimes ?” said the king.

“ Of each and all. Moreover, great king, the accusation has fallen upon me as a thunder-bolt from heaven. My heart is crushed by a mountain of ingratitude, for to this young man have I behaved as a parent.”

For a moment Dick was astonished at the reply, but he answered—

“ Hypocrite as well as thief. Did you not purloin the money with which I entrusted you for my mother ?”

“ It is a foul charge; what proof have you ?”

“ Truly, there should be proof of all these charges,” said the king; but alas! my intemperate friend possessed no proof—at least of charge the first: and, with a sigh, he replied—

“ True, thou cunning rascal, I have no proof of

that ; but the robbery of the dollars, the sacking of the ' Anne,' and the murder of the crew."

" Alas ! your majesty, it is as I have said, this young man has suffered a great injury, and it has made him mad," interposed Crafty ; but, regarding neither the words nor the look of malice which had accompanied them, Dick then related the details of the charges ; but the king shook his head ; there was no proof positive, for Dick could only affirm that he had recognized Crafty's voice, and believed that he had seen him in Chinese costume during the attack of the ' Anne.' Then his majesty, turning angrily to the Phra Klang, said—

" How is this ? that our time should be wasted ; didst thou not say that many were the proofs of this man's crimes ; yet, now he is brought before us, they vanish as water through a sieve."

" The dust at thy feet, O divine monarch ! knew nothing of what happened out of thine empire, it was of the cargo robbery thy slave spoke," replied the minister ; and the faces of both the king and Dick became brighter, for here was a charge of which he was unquestionably guilty, and the king, addressing the prisoner, said—

" Our minister's words are good. What hast thou to say, thou dog, to prove thine innocence of that sacrilegious and blasphemous robbery?"

But still unabashed, Crafty replied—

" Shall it be recorded of a great prince, whose boast and endeavour it is to follow the wise institu-

tions of Europe that, in a moment of even justifiable anger at a great loss, he commanded an accused and friendless man himself to prove his guilt of a charge which he denies ?”

The rogue had touched a sore point, and the be-Europeanized despot replied—

“The rogue speaks well; it is not for him to prove his innocence, but for the accuser to make clear his guilt.”

“This time the cunning rascal shall not escape,” said Dick; and then seriatim he related every circumstance that occurred on board the China junk after I had left him till the moment of his being cast away in the boat; but again Crafty, with a glance of pity towards him, said—

“Alas! great king, it is as I have said; the great injuries this young man has received have afflicted him, for although he has spoken, and doubtlessly with truth, of his treatment by the vile sea-rats, he has not proved that thy servant was among them.”

“Scoundrel! have I not said that I heard *your* voice?” interrupted Dick; but his majesty was of a different opinion, for, with a doubting shake of his head, he replied—

“That this man is a rogue there can be little doubt; nevertheless, the young Farang has not proved it sufficiently, for he saw him not. The eyes may be trusted, but not the ears, in such a case as this, for as well might he distinguish one

particular fish in the ocean, or one white ant in a million.”

“But our sister, the young girl of whom thou hast heard, O king! She whom this fellow has kept with him from the day of the great theft—surely she can speak to his identity,” said Dick.

“That is good, the girl *must* know; let her be brought forward,” replied the king.

“May the dust beneath thy feet speak and live?”—but his majesty, with an impatient gesture, signified to the Phra Klang to be silent and obey; and, without another word, the snubbed minister crawled backwards from the presence; but, after an absence of a minute or two, he returned, accompanied by Waif; and Dick exultingly exclaimed—

“Now, rascal, in the presence of this poor injured girl, what have you to say?” but to our utter confusion, Crafty, addressing the king, replied—

“My life, O king, depends upon the words of this girl—let her speak.”

Then kindly, but sternly, the king said—

“Let the Farang girl open her lips, and speak without fear of any in this presence.”

For an instant Waif fixed her eyes upon Dick and I, as if in agony, but catching the eye of the prisoner, she, I thought timidly, but at length firmly, said—

“I have heard, O king, that the people of Siam

are admirers of gratitude. May it prove so now. This man saved my life, and I am called upon to utter words that would destroy his; this may not be; those words shall never be spoken."

"Miserable girl, what strange infatuation is this?" exclaimed Dick; but the king, interrupting him, said kindly—

"Thou art a heroine; still nought that thou couldst have said would have injured this man; for by the laws of Siam no woman can give evidence in important affairs."

"Then for what purpose was I brought into your Majesty's presence?" she asked.

"That from thy words some clue might be gained to some of the other thieves," replied the king; adding, "there can be little doubt, although there is no *proof*, of this fellow's guilt;" and Crafty, who expected to be at once set at liberty, smiled pleasantly; but when the king added, "What knowest thou of the great rogue Mi, who is even now hiding from justice, and with whom it is said thou hast long been in connection?" his cool courage seemed to fail him, for with a tremulous voice he replied—

"Is it possible that the great king, whose justice is in the mouths of all, would punish the robbed for the crime of the robber?" but his majesty, now fairly perplexed, replied—

"Who but Buddha alone could distinguish between two rogues so much alike?"

“Alas! O king, then must thy servant leave it to Heaven and time to establish his innocence; yet know that this merchant Mi is the cause of all my present misery; for he held in his possession many thousands of dollars, the produce of China goods, that I had entrusted to his honesty, but with which, in common with the monies of other traders, he has decamped.”

“Hold, rogue,” said Dick; “the old rascal was on board the junk but a few minutes before we so fortunately lighted upon you.”

“That is true; how can’st answer this? for what purpose did he visit you?” asked the king; but Crafty, who had now recovered his self-possession, and knew the vantage ground upon which he stood, replied—

“Again, O king, am I the victim of *mere* suspicion. I saw naught of Mi; indeed, it is not possible that he could have been on board the junk, for is it reasonable that the thief would visit his victim, that victim, too, who had travelled from California to claim his own, and from whom, at that time, it was the rogue’s object to escape?”

“There is truth in these words; but if the man Mi *was* on board, surely the girl must know; let her make answer,” said the king, addressing Waif.

With breathless interest we awaited her reply, and firmly she said—

“I saw him not—I have never seen him; and

this I declare on the faith of a Christian ;” and astonished and disappointed as we were, we could not doubt the truth of her reply, for now there was no evasion ; and again the king, but more perplexed than ever, said—

“Truly there is much suspicion, but no proof of this man’s guilt ; nay, it *is* even possible that he may be the victim :” and I believe the king would immediately have ordered his liberation, but for Phra Klang, who said—

“Great rogues have great cunning, but the most cunningly woven web of crime may be unravelled by time ; therefore, O divine monarch, the dust of thy feet would pray that this fellow be kept in prison some time longer ; for I have received information that your majesty’s officers have obtained a clue to the hiding-places of some of the pirate crew who committed the robbery at Chantaburi, and they may prove much, either for the guilt or innocence of this man.” And this seeming an easy solution, at least for the present, of the difficulty, the king commanded Crafty to be taken back to his prison, there to remain until further orders.

Thus ended this extraordinary examination, and we returned to the house of the Phra Klang. Most bitter, however, was Dick’s indignation at the conduct of Waif ; but for whom, he asserted, the rogue would have been convicted. In that, however, he was wrong ; for, as the reader has seen, no evidence that she could have offered would

have been available, for she was among those whose testimony is excluded by the laws of Siam.

By the way, the list of the excluded is extraordinary. Among them are blind and deaf people, goldsmiths, braziers, vagabonds, shoemakers, beggars, drunkards, gamblers, potters, women who have been married three times, clerks, orphans, players, and many others too numerous to mention.

CHAPTER XVIII.

WE MEET AN OLD FRIEND AND HEAR IMPORTANT NEWS.

A WEEK had elapsed since the examination before the king; still no satisfactory intelligence had been received from the chief of the party sent in search of the pirate crew. This suspense was mortifying in the extreme to Dick; for his failure in proving Crafty guilty of the crimes alleged against him had but increased his hatred and desire for vengeance.

As for Waif, she would not see us. To all our entreaties, sent by one of the slaves, that she would join us, she returned a point-blank refusal. No. She had determined to remain in the women's apartments until the fate of Crafty had been decided; a determination the more vexatious and tantalizing inasmuch as it deprived us of all chance of discovering her real connection with the pirate.

Then, as regarded my own special interests, the rogue Mi, notwithstanding the prosecution of a rigorous search, was still at large, hiding, it was

supposed, among the lowest haunts of the floating city. Again, the absence from Bangkok, nearly the whole of the week, of the Phra Klang, upon some urgent business, had left us to ourselves, the most unpleasant of companionships, for each had a separate grievance, which, although springing from a like source, diverged into two such opposite sets of opinions, that we had some difficulty in bearing each other's society. My thoughts were bent upon Waif, and her mysterious unhappiness; Dick could think of naught but Crafty and vengeance; as for Waif, he regarded her as lost and worthless: thus we mutually avoided all mention of the very subject upon which our minds and thoughts were most intent.

It was a dreary week, as monotonous as a calm in the tropics; however, even that was brought to a close by the return of our host, who, about the eighth day after his departure, entering our apartment with a light step and a cheerful countenance, bade us prepare for some merry-making that was to take place during the afternoon, in consequence of a fortunate event that had happened in his family; and so pleased were we at any event that would serve to arouse us from our monotony, that we did not even ask what the fortunate occurrence was that had given him so much joy.

Towards the hour appointed for the feast, for feast and concert it was to be, the guests began to

arrive. Dick and I were among the last who entered the reception room.

This apartment was not the same in which we had witnessed the ceremony of the "shaving of the tuft," but smaller and more compact, yet, as in all Siamese rooms, having one portion raised higher than the rest, from which it was divided by a high balustrade, or lattice-work. Behind and through the interstices of the latter we could just catch a glimpse of the ladies and children of the household, most of whom, attired in their yellow silk scarfs, and heavily laden with golden chains, bracelets, armlets, anklets, and rings, were seated just behind the lattice-work, through which they seemed to be intently peering.

As for the entertainment, it was novel, if not quite suitable to ears rendered fastidious by the sounds of European music. The band was numerous, men and boys, and the sounds they sent forth loud and noisy. During the music, slaves handed round to the guests eatables and drinkables. The former consisted chiefly of fresh fruits, preserves, and confectionary; the latter of such mild and temperate beverages as the milk of the cocoa-nut and tea, which were served in cups of rare and costly porcelain. But of the entertainment itself—enough. The cause of its being given was left to our imagination until at least an hour after the commencement of the music.

Dick and I were nervously watching the lattice-

work, more narrowly perhaps than politeness would have warranted; nay, forgetting that my companion had affected to have neither thought nor care for Waif, I said—

“She is with the ladies of the family; she must be behind that lattice, Dick.”

“She may, or she may not; but it don’t signify, and that’s a *fact*,” he replied coolly; but at the same moment the Phra Klang arose from his seat, said a few words to the band, who at once struck up a joyous merry air, while simultaneously a new guest entered the room; but regarding neither those to his right or his left, he fell upon his hands and knees, and crawled straightway up to the minister, whose affection being stronger than his love of ceremonial, inherent as it is in the very nature of the Siamese, took him by the hands, and leading him to a seat one step lower than his own, said to the astonished guests (who, by the way, were what Europeans would have called a select circle of friends and relatives)—

“Buddha be praised! Let all my friends and relatives rejoice, for my brother is restored.”

It was our old acquaintance, the ex-Governor of Chantaburi; and, doubtless, with Dick and I, the guests were glad to see him restored; but even powerful as was the host, they dared express no such feeling, for he, whom they regarded as little less than a divinity, the king, had placed the governor under ban, nay, had even offered a reward

for his head; until the minister, seeing their consternation, added—

“Pardoned by the Phra Ong (king), who, in consideration of his misfortunes and misery, has restored him to his government.”

This being the cue for which the born and bred toadies had awaited, they crawled to the feet of the brothers, and in terms which no European would have offered to any person upon this earth, congratulated them both.

This ceremony being over, the Phra Klang commanded the musicians to rest upon their instruments, when the Governor approaching Dick and me, thanked us, after his fashion, for having been the means of his deliverance. The Phra Klang then said—

“Let my brother tell these noble Farangs how, that next to Buddha and the divine king, it is to them he owes his life.”

The Governor obeyed, but in his own tongue, which I interpreted almost sentence by sentence to Dick. His narrative, however, contained no incident of interest that is not already known to the reader, except that although by the intercession of his brother the king had pardoned him, he would not restore him to his governorship. But his Excellency no sooner found himself on board the steamer which the Phra Klang had sent to the island, than remembering the white monkey with which we had presented him, he directed her

course to Chantaburi, where, fortunately, he found the beast still under the care of a faithful servant, who had hidden it till an opportunity should offer of his taking it to the Phra Klang. Well, overjoyed at this unexpected piece of luck, the Governor sailed for Bangkok, and, by his brother's influence, having obtained an interview with the king, found, as he had anticipated, the little beast an immediate passport to royal favour; for so delighted was that small divinity at the gift, that he at once re-appointed Luang to his old government.

Now, that the king was so pleased with the sacred animal was not to be wondered at, for although on the royal establishment there were two white elephants and one white cock, there was no white monkey. Moreover the chief of the talapoins had said, "Long shall be the life, and prosperous the reign of the king upon whom Buddha shall vouchsafe to bestow a white monkey;" for there can be no doubt that such an animal is the incarnation of some Buddha, past or future.

Luang having concluded,—again and again I congratulated him upon his fortunes, and he sat down abashed, as if their weight was too much for his modesty. But his brother, the minister, then said—

"It is true, my brother has been most fortunate; but however clear the stream, the spring from which it flows must not be forgotten; my friends were that spring, so he brings them good news."

“Has he discovered any of the rascal crew who can prove the guilt of the cunning thief Crafty?” asked Dick.

“That is so, it is true,” replied the minister; adding, “My brother, on his return from Chantaburi to the mouth of the Meinam, touched at an island in the gulf, upon which were found starving, and upon the point of dying, two men, whom, in the name of humanity, he took on board the steamer and fed. But when these fellows saw before them the injured and unfortunate Governor of Chantaburi, they threw themselves at his feet, and confessed that they had been of the pirate crew. Then they further confessed that when they were discovered by the captain of the Siamese war-ship they fled in the night into the interior, where the whole crew remained together for a few days, but ultimately, for their safety, parted, and went in different directions.

“These two, however, managing to get service on board a small junk which was bound for Pechaburi, a town upon the opposite side of the Gulf of Siam, were wrecked upon the island where they were ultimately picked up by my brother.”

“But these rascals, what know they of the thief Crafty?” asked Dick.

“Of him, they have as yet said but little, yet enough for my brother; for they declare that a European was among them, who was connected

with a merchant in Bangkok, and that he was with them at the boarding of the 'Anne,' and at the time of the robbery of the king's cargo at Chantaburi."

"My good friend," exclaimed Dick, with savage pleasure, as he caught both hands of the minister, "this is enough in all conscience. I shall yet live to see the scoundrel hanged."

As, however, at that moment a talapoin stalked into the room, and squatted down upon the platform, just beneath that upon which the brothers were seated, the Phra Klang, who evidently did not relish Dick's grasp, politely shook him off, saying—

"That is true—yes; but my friend forgets this is the hour of joy; moreover, although the rogues are taken, it is in the power of Buddha alone to prove their guilt, and award their punishment; and that he is allwise and just, my friend will hear if he will listen to this holy man, who will tell him that the artifices of a wicked man having brought a poor scholar into a dreadful series of misfortunes, by which he was about to be executed for a murder, God, in His own good time, brought the real rogue to light."

"What gibberish is this?" asked Dick, with disgust.

"Be seated, Dick, for yonder old priest has been sent for to tell us a story," said I.

"Does it bear upon the rogue Crafty, or the

fellow Mi? If not, I can't see how it will interest us, and that's a *fact*."

"Perhaps it may, but be quiet," said I; whereupon Dick became seated and patient, in the entire belief that the old man's story had reference to our special affairs; and the old talapoin, in a very clear voice, told the following story.

CHAPTER XIX.

A STORY WITH A MORAL—THE POOR SCHOLAR AND
THE GINGER-MERCHANT.

IN the city of Yung Kien in China, there once lived a scholar of the name of Wang, whose whole family consisted of his wife Lew, and one daughter. Though not rich, Wang possessed a competence, and being desirous of taking a degree, gave up the greater part of his time to study and contemplation.

Sometimes, however, by way of relief, he would stroll in the fields, accompanied by a few friends. Upon one occasion he had been taking this diversion, which lasted till the evening; but upon taking leave of his friends before going home, he partook with them of more bumpers of wine than was his usual custom. Alas! that he did so, for upon reaching his house, and finding at the door two of his servants in a great passion with a ginger merchant named Lin, who demanded more money than they had paid him for his ginger, Wang, in angry tones, addressed the dealer, saying—

“Go thy ways, thou dog, for thou hast been already too well paid.”

“Nay, this is not so; these slaves would rob me of my fair payment, and it is ill done for you, a scholar, who ought to have a great and generous soul, to be so hard with a poor man,” replied the dealer, who was known to be an honest man. But Wang, heated with wine, exclaimed in a great passion—

“Thou rascal, how dare you talk to me thus!” And so saying, the intemperate man gave him a push that sent the ginger merchant upon the earth without sense or motion; but perceiving what he had done, and fearing that he had killed the man, Wang became seized with a dread that soon dissipated the fumes of the wine, and by the help of his slaves, he carried the poor man into his hall, where, after a time, and by the aid of hot tea, which they poured down his throat, he recovered.

Upon the ginger merchant recovering his senses, Wang was so pleased at his escape from what might have proved a great evil, that he treated him with wine, and presented him with a piece of silk; after which, as it was now getting dark, the old merchant took up his basket and departed for fear that he should not be able to cross the river before dark; when so delighted was Wang, that he ran into the inner apartments, and having told his wife the whole affair, that amiable lady begged of her husband to sit down, while she mixed him a bumper of

hot wine that should soothe his mind and recover him from the effects of his fright.

Alas! when man thinks he is most blessed, then his real miseries happen; so when by the help of the hot wine and the happy smiles of the amiable Lew, Wang had been raised into a state of beatitude, there suddenly came a loud thumping at his door.

Then his heart bumped against his breast, like a battering-ram against the walls of a fortress; but seizing a lamp, he ran to the door—he opened it—when lo! there stood, upon the step, Tche, the master of the ferry-boat, holding in his hand, not only the ginger merchant's basket, but the piece of silk, which Wang had presented to that person upon his departure.

For a moment Wang stood astonished, not knowing what to believe; but how like a clap of thunder sounded Tche's voice, when, with a wild and haggard look, he said—

“What a dreadful affair, O Wang! have you fallen into. You are absolutely lost! What! a scholar like you to kill a poor trader!”

“What is that you say?” jerked out the trembling scholar; but the terrible Tche replied—

“You *don't* know what I mean, *don't* you?”

“Well, then, do you know this silk and basket?”

By this time the scholar had recovered a little from his fright, and he said—

“Know them? To be sure I do; they belonged

to one Lin, a ginger merchant; but how did they come into your hands?"

"Oh, that is easy to explain; but listen, thou bad man," replied Tche, adding, "It was dark when a man of Han, named Lin, wanted a passage in my boat; he had hardly got in before he complained of a violent pain in his chest, which reduced him to the last extremity; then telling me it was the effect of blows which you gave him, he put the basket and silk into my hands, saying—"These will be a proof when you prosecute the affair, which I conjure you to do." When these words were uttered he expired; his body is still in the boat, which I have brought into your port at the entrance to the river."

At this poor Wang was at first overwhelmed with fear; but, recovering, he said boldly—

"How? this thing you relate is not possible!"

"Is it not, thou bad man? well, then, send one of thy slaves to look within my boat," replied Tche.

Wang did so; and the slave returning, declared that the body was in the boat; and then Wang, in a state of distraction, ran into his study, and bringing with him a purse holding twenty taels, said—

"Master, I hope you will keep the secret, and I will tell you the whole affair. I must own that I had a hand in this unfortunate affair, but more

through imprudence than malice ; we are both natives of the same province, and therefore, I flatter myself, you will treat me like a fellow-citizen. Would you ruin me for love of a stranger ? Is it not better to hush up this affair ? If you will, I will pay you well. Take, then, the body, and throw it in some by-place ; it is a dark night, and no person will see you."

"What words are these ? I know of no place ; neither do I wish to be an accomplice in the murder," replied Tche.

But the agonized Wang said—

"You know very well, O Tche ! the sepulchre of my father—it is very near—and is a place not at all frequented ; besides, the night is very dark, and there is no fear of meeting one soul by the way ; be, then, so kind as to fetch the carcass from your boat."

"It is a likely plan," returned Tche, to the delight of Wang, who there and then placed the purse in the hands of the waterman ; but the latter, feeling its lightness, said scornfully—

"How ! here is murder in the case ; and you think to get out of the scrape for so small a sum ? It was my good fortune that conducted this man into my boat ; heaven has given me an opportunity of changing my condition for a better. No ; this business is worth at least one hundred taels."

Now, so anxious was Wang to get rid of the

affair, he made no reply, but ran back to get the remaining money; he could not, however, raise in all more than sixty, but that satisfied Tche, who said—

“I will not take advantage of your misfortune; but as you are a scholar, and may some day be a mandarin, I will do it.”

And so saying, Tche, accompanied by one of Wang's slaves, named How, set off and disposed of the body in the sepulchre, and so the affair ended—at least so thought Wang. As for Tche, he sold his boat, and, with the scholar's money, opened a shop.

How true are the words of the sage that “Misfortunes ride post and succeed one another,” so in a short time Wang's only and darling little daughter became seized with a malignant disorder, and soon lay in the last extremity. A friend, however, calling to see the mother and father, told them that there lived in the neighbouring city a physician who was celebrated for the cure of such disorders. Whereupon Wang at once dispatched his slave How to the learned doctor; but he came not in time, for the child died. Indeed, the slave got drunk by the way, and did not return till the next day, when so agonized was Wang at his child's death, as he believed through the negligence of How, that he caused the latter to be beaten nigh unto death.

It was a sad thing for the poor scholar that How

did not die of his wounds, for a few days after he had recovered from the effects of his beating, the officers of justice entered the house, and seizing Wang, dragged him at once before a mandarin, who asked him what reply he had to make to the charge of murder brought against him by How.

“Alas ! sir, you, the representative of heaven, will not listen to my accuser, who is one of my slaves ; who, being beaten for a great fault, has formed this design of ruining me,” replied Wang.

The slave, however, not only persisted in the charge, but declared where the body was buried, and desired that the mandarin would order it to be exhumed. Of course, the judge could not do otherwise than acquiesce, and lo ! the skeleton was brought before him ; when, rising from the judgment seat, he said—

“The crime is plain ; let this miserable scholar be put to the torture, and made to confess his guilt.”

But poor Wang begging for, and obtaining, permission to speak, said—

“By this skeleton it would appear the man must have been killed long since ; then why did my accuser so long delay in bringing this charge ? Is it not reasonable, O father and mother of justice ! to believe that this slave has procured these bones to fix the murder upon me ?”

“Certainly, these are reasonable words,” replied the mandarin; but then the cunning slave produced Wang’s neighbours as witnesses, and they proved that, on a certain day, the scholar had violently beaten the ginger merchant.

After this evidence, Wang became so pale, and gave such contradictory answers to questions put to him, that the mandarin ordered him to be beaten with bamboos till he confessed; which, from his great agony, he very speedily did; for, so great was his pain, that he answered “Yes,” to everything.

The confession being made, and taken down in writing, the mandarin said—

“Now, dog, though it is no longer doubtful that you deserve to die, yet, as no relation of the deceased is now present to demand justice, your execution shall be delayed for some time, to see if one of them does not make his appearance.”

And, after this, the poor scholar was taken to prison.

Well, for six months Wang remained incarcerated; but, at the end of that period, believing himself about to die, he sent for his wife to condole with him. The amiable Lew attended, and remained with her husband, until night coming on the gaolers insisted upon her leaving the prison. Then she returned to her house, and shutting herself in her apartment, gave way to the most violent grief. But

suddenly hearing a great noise among the slaves below, she descended; and, as she did so, to her astonishment, she met the terrified people running and exclaiming—

“A ghost! a ghost! a ghost!”

But what was more surprising, he whom they had taken for a spirit was running after them calling—

“Are you all mad? I come to make your master a visit, and you take me for an apparition.”

“Fo be praised!” exclaimed Lew. “What—who art thou?”

And the ghost replied—

“Truly, I am no other than the ginger merchant, who, some time ago, the hospitable Wang entertained, and afterwards sent away with a present of a piece of silk, and in return for which, since I have been fortunate in trade, I have come to offer the master Wang a few trifling presents.”

“Then you are no ghost? You are the ginger merchant?” replied the greatly-relieved Lew.

But here one of the slaves in his fright cried out—

“Let my beloved mistress beware, for this is the ghost of the ginger merchant, who, having come by the knowledge that thou art endeavouring to get our master out of prison, has assumed this shape to embroil his affairs and complete his destruction.”

But the Lady Lew, not regarding the speech of her slave, said—

“Certainly, as far as I can apprehend from your discourse, there is no reason to believe you have arisen from the dead.”

And then she related the whole of the misfortunes that had happened to her husband. At which the good man, in the greatest consternation, replied—

“Is it possible there should be so great a rascal under heaven as this waterman Tche? When, on that night I left Wang, I went directly to the ferry; the waterman, seeing the piece of silk in my hands, demanded from whence I had obtained it, and not fearing any roguish design, I told him the whole story. Well, after we had crossed the river, I gave him my basket by way of payment, and I sold him the piece of silk, because he offered me a handsome price for it.”

“Thanks be to Fo, then; I know my husband is innocent,” cried Lew, adding: “but whence obtained he the body, which he affirmed to be yours?”

The ginger merchant, having considered for a moment, replied—

“Ah! madame, now I recollect that, while I was in the boat relating my story to Tche, a body floated by us. But, lady, there is no time to lose; let us at once proceed to the mandarin.”

Now, the Lady Lew at once ordered a handsome

dinner for the good old man; and, while he was eating it, she drew up a petition; for, belonging to a learned family, she could write elegantly; and, when this was prepared, she sent out for a chair, and, attended by the old man and some slaves, proceeded to the Palace of Justice.

When the mandarin was seated, the lady and the old man cried out—

“The innocent is oppressed with slander!”

And at the same time she presented the petition; which the mandarin having read, he turned to the ginger merchant, saying sternly—

“How can this be possible? Has not this woman prevailed upon you by presents to play the part of the murdered man?”

Old Lin, however, having prepared himself with many witnesses as to identity, they were called forward, and the judge, being satisfied, ordered the officers of the tribunal at once to search out Tche, the waterman, and How, the slave, and bring them before him in the afternoon.

Now, the mandarin directed that the two rogues should be induced to come to the tribunal of their own accord, and without being told that the ginger merchant had come to life again; and this they succeeded in doing by the following cunning method: Tche, who had now become a seller of stuffs, they told that the mandarin wished to make some good purchases of him. How, the slave, was told that sentence being that day to be passed upon his

master, his presence was necessary, and the vile slave, transported with joy, immediately followed them.

But, upon reaching the tribunal, imagine the consternation of the two rogues at the sight of the old ginger merchant, who, seeing Tche, said—

“ Well, Mr. Boatman, how have you done since the day that I sold you the piece of silk and the bamboo basket? Have you prospered?”

But the rogue hung down his head in confusion and dread, for he knew the justice of heaven was at hand. As for How, when the mandarin said, pointing to Lin—

“ Dost know that man? But I see you do. Then, thou dog of a slave, what has thy master done that thou and this water-rat should contrive his ruin?”

He answered—

“ Nothing is more true than that my master killed a man, for I saw the body, and helped to bury it; although I should not have disclosed it had not I conceived a mortal hatred against him for beating me.”

And the slave spoke truthfully as far as he knew, for he believed all he said.

“ How, thou vile dog, dost still persist!” exclaimed the mandarin; and he would have put the slave at once to the torture but for Tche, who, thinking to get his own punishment mitigated, fell at the feet of the mandarin; and, having repeated the whole story of his

practising upon the too great credulity and fears of Wang, ended by crying—

“Take pity, O father and mother of justice, upon a poor wretch who had no other design than to get a little money.”

“How! thou wretch, is it possible thou canst expect mercy when thou hast been the means of bringing an honest man to the brink of destruction. No; it is my duty to free the city of so dangerous a plague.”

And he concluded by sentencing Tche to be beaten till he expired; and the slave to forty blows, from which he also expired, for heaven would not allow so vile a fellow to live; and thus ended the troubles of Wang;” and I may add the real story, for that which the talapoin afterwards recited very didactically was the running summary or commentary with which Chinese story-tellers interlard or append to their tales. It ran as follows:—

“From that time Wang learned to moderate the heat of his temper; if a poor man came to him, he received him with affability, and showed his readiness to assist him; in short, he came to a resolution to labour in good earnest to attain his degrees, and was ultimately received to the degree of a doctor.

“As for magistrates, there is a great deal of reason to say they should not be too precipitate; for instance, in the case of Wang, the main point was to examine into the artifices of the waterman; if the dealer in ginger had not happily arrived, and if, through too

much haste they had not postponed the punishment of Wang, the slave who had accused his master would not have thought he had slandered him; the wife would not have imagined her husband had been innocent of the murder, and the accused person himself, not have known he had been unjustly oppressed, much less could the judge have had the least knowledge of the matter."

Then, addressing himself especially to the Phra Klang and his brother, the talapoin concluded by saying—

"Let benevolent magistrates, as they ought, have the same compassion for the people as the father has for his children, and they may learn from this story both in what manner they ought to conduct themselves, and what faults they should avoid."

When the talapoin, who to his vocation of priest added that of a professional story-teller, had concluded, refreshment was again served round, and the music struck up. After which some of the Phra Klang's Laos ladies entered and entertained us with their sweet pipes: this brought the amusement to a close, and we returned to our own apartment, not a little to the satisfaction of Dick, whose mind was dwelling upon Crafty; but greatly to his joy, before we sought our sleeping mats, the minister sent us a message that we must be prepared to accompany him early in the morning to the palace of the second king. But anent this royal personage, whose title

must sound strange in the ears of Englishmen, I must say a few words.

“ Well, then, the rank of Second King of Siam has nothing in it in common with the Tycoon of Japan, who is, in fact, the lieutenant *over* the real Emperor, the sacred Mikado—the Seljuk Sultans, who ruled nominally as lieutenants, but were in fact the rulers of the helpless Caliphs—or, indeed, of any other of the imperial puppets so plentiful in history. No ; it is an institution peculiar to Siam, and I am of belief not a very stable one, notwithstanding the very favourable view presented to us by Sir John Bowring, who thus describes the office and the *personnel* of the present reigning second king :—

“ He is not charged, as in the case of Japan, with the religious, as distinguished from the civil, functions of government, but exercises a species of secondary or reflected authority ; the limits of which did not appear to me to be at all clearly defined. His title was formerly *Uparat*, but it is now *Wangna*, literally meaning the junior king. He is said to dispose of one-third of the state revenue, and to have at his command an army of about 2,000 men. He is generally a brother or near relation of the king. The present *Wangna* is a legitimate brother of the first king, a cultivated and intelligent gentleman, writing and speaking English with great accuracy, and living much in the style of a courteous and opulent European noble ; fond of books and scientific inquiry, interested in all that marks the course of civilization.

His palace is of nearly the same extent as that of the first king. In it is a building which he makes his principal abode, and which has the accommodation and adornings of a handsome European edifice. He is surrounded with the same royal insignia as the first king, though somewhat less ostentatiously displayed, and the same marks of honour and prostration are paid to his person. He has his ministers corresponding to those of the first king, and is supposed to take a more active part in the wars of the country than does the first king."

That his second majesty's position is neither stable nor all "couleur de rose," would seem evident from the fact that, although afterwards restored, the late king abolished the office; and, moreover, the present second king occupies his time not so much with affairs of government as in reading English novels, and in scientific and mechanical pursuits; of his proficiency in which he is so proud, that over his workshop he has the words—

"CLOCKS AND WATCHES REPAIRED HERE!"

CHAPTER XX.

DICK'S ENEMY ESCAPES, AND WAIF RUNS AWAY.

Now that two such important witnesses had been found, there was little doubt that Crafty was a doomed man, and richly he merited his fate. Still it was with pain I observed the almost fiendish, or at least unchristian delight of Dick. Awakening earlier than usual—indeed, I much doubt whether he had slept at all—he jumped up, and, rubbing his hands gleefully, as if he had been going to a merry-making instead of the dooming of a fellow-creature, said—

“Can there be in this world a luxury greater than gratified revenge? How light my heart feels at the prospect of this scoundrel's doom.”

“Shame, my friend, shame! such a speech should not have passed the lips of a Christian man. Moderate this unholy delight; your reputation has been cleared, surely that is much. Leave, then, this poor wretch to heaven, his own conscience, and that justice which must overtake him.”

“Now, look *you*, Herbert,” he replied, fiercely;

"I *may* be in the wrong, perhaps a little unchristian-like, still I *am* only *what* I am, and being no more, feel that I could joyfully give half my future life, be it short or long, for the pleasure of seeing this fellow hanged."

"Again I cry shame, Dick; but your brain is overwrought; you have too much heart in you to do anything of the kind."

"Wrong again, Herbert. But how can you judge of my feelings, especially by your own; for between us there is little in common. What are you? The only son of a rich father, whose past can have had but few regrets, and whose future, as far as all sublunary things may be, is mapped out so enticingly that you can look forward to it with longing and pleasure. What am I? A waif, a stray, who, finding himself suddenly cast friendless upon the world, toiled and struggled till he had made friends, and stood upon the very brink of fortune, when all was snatched away, and a good name blighted by a cunning rascal. How, then, I repeat, should you know the miserable processes by which my mind has been wrought to its present—"

"Morbid and unhealthy state," I said.

But at that moment the Phra Klang made his appearance in the path near the window of our room, and so portentous seemed his countenance that I exclaimed involuntarily—

"What, in the name of heaven, can bring our host here at this early hour?"

“There is something wrong, and that's a *fact*, replied Dick; but, with instinct quickened by his fears, he added, as the minister entered the room: “The villain Crafty has broken his prison—he has escaped—is it not so?”

“My friend is right; the Farang rogue *has* escaped,” was the reply.

Dick, rendered speechless by his great rage and chagrin, sat down and buried his face in his hands.

“But,” said I, “when—how did this happen? Are the gaolers so easily bribed? for by no other means could he have escaped.”

“Is it in Siam alone that gold makes traitors and unfaithful servants? No; it happens all over the world,” he replied, adding: “But even gold would have been useless without the aid of the Farang girl; the sister of my friends, who has been bewitched by this rogue.”

“Waif! little Waif! *she* help the rascal to escape!” cried Dick, in an agony of astonishment. “No, no; it is not possible; there is some jugglery here.”

“Does not my friend know that nothing is impossible to a woman?”

But, interrupting the minister, Dick said—

“The girl was in your custody; in the custody of the ladies of your house. How, then, could she do this thing without the aid of your own servants?”

The Phra Klang replied with dignified anger—

“The girl had coins; with those she purchased the aid of a female slave, who happens to be a sister of the gaoler, whose honesty could not resist a portion of the money—she bribed him.”

“The scoundrel should be hanged for his treachery; but—but the girl Waif—where is she?” said Dick.

“Gone with the slave; they have fled together.”

“How long since?”

“Three hours; not more.”

“Then,” said Dick, turning to me, “why loiter we here? let us put ourselves upon their track; they cannot be far away.”

“Dick’s impetuosity, however, was stayed by the minister, who, placing his hand upon my friend’s shoulder, said kindly—

“My friend is impatient and angry. Let him rest quiet, for the Farang rogue and girl will soon be retaken by the king’s officers, who even are at this time seeking for them among the river houses.”

“As well might they search for a needle in a bundle of hay,” muttered Dick.

“Then, if the chances of the native officers, who know every hole and corner of this city, are so small, what would be ours, Dick?”

“Greater, Herbert; for the natives, every man among them, are subject to a complaint that would affect neither you nor me—bribery; but,” he added,

“be it as it may, I will endeavour to discover their hiding place; *you* may follow or not, as you will.”

It was a churlish reply; nevertheless I did accompany him; but, as I had anticipated, it proved but a wild goose chase; for, although one of the best and most cunning of our host's slaves went with us as a guide, we discovered no traces of the fugitives.

It was late when we returned to the Phra Klang's house. The good-natured minister was awaiting our coming—indeed, he had news for us.

“My friends have not succeeded. How was it possible, when the officers of justice have failed? No; the rogue and the girl were cunning as serpents, and quick as the fleeting deer in their movements, for such good use have they made of their time that already they are on their passage to Singapore.”

“Then, their track *is* discovered?” exclaimed Dick.

“My friend is right; a clue has been found, but it cannot be followed.”

“Certainly it can; it shall, if it lead half through the world,” said Dick.

“My Farang friend utters child's words; it would be like following a shadow in the water,” replied the minister. “For,” he added, “they are on board a steamer which left Bangkok the instant they embarked.”

“But how know you all this?” asked Dick, with an incredulous stare.

“The girl—the slave girl,” replied the minister, “who assisted my friend’s sister to bribe the gaoler has been found; she saw them go on board; moreover, she had on her person this writing. See,” he added, holding before us a paper folded in the form of a note.

“It is the handwriting of Waif,” said Dick; “the little traitoress, I could kill her.”

“Nay, Dick,” said I, “not that language. But what says she?”

He put the note in my hand. There were but two or three lines; more than enough, however, for both Dick and me, who, from that moment, regarded the girl as utterly, hopelessly, lost to us. They ran—

“MY DEAR FRIENDS,

“I cannot thus part from you for ever without a prayer that, however my conduct may have pained you, or whatever it may seem, you will at least endeavour not to think badly of poor little Waif.”

As I read this aloud, Dick’s eyes were filled with tears, but he spoke not a word. As for myself, the lines once read, I stared at the paper stupidly, confusedly, as if it had been impossible for my brain to take in its full meaning. Luckily for both of us

there was a little postscript which turned our thoughts in a different direction. Thus it ran—

“The merchant Mi has gone to the ruined city of Ayuthia, with the intention of ultimately effecting his escape to the Laos country.”

“The Laos country,” I repeated, and the Phra Klang, catching at the words, said—

“Yes; it is reasonable to believe he has fled there; for it is the refuge of all the rogues and bankrupts of Bangkok, who, when once within that territory, are safe from the laws of Siam.”

“But,” said I, “it is possible we may overtake him at Ayuthia before he can succeed in reaching Laos.”

“My friend is right; it is more than possible; it is very likely, for Ayuthia is a good hiding-place, and the journey from thence into the Laos country is attended with too many perils to be encountered, when Ayuthia may answer the same purpose.”

Then Dick, with his usual impetuosity, proposed that we should set out the next day for Ayuthia. But the Phra Klang said—

“Not so; it would not be wise. For even were there no other difficulty, two Farangs travelling together might excite the suspicions of those of his friends they might meet by the way (and this fellow Mi has many) who would certainly caution the rat, that you had discovered a clue, and were upon his track.”

“Well, there *is* something in that.”

“Let my friend rest quiet; he is too impatient,” said the minister, angered at the interruption. “The great king,” he added, “goes shortly in procession to the holy foot of Buddha; thousands of pilgrims will attend the royal progress. Let my friends accompany the pilgrims, where they will pass unnoticed; for, among the multitude, they will be as drops in the great ocean.”

And, as this advice was very good, at least we could do nothing better, and, moreover, the minister told us that the procession would start from Bangkok in a couple of days, we rested content.

But this holy foot. Well, it is now, and has been since the commencement of the seventeenth century, a Siamese institution.

There are similar foot-prints of Buddha in Ava and in Ceylon; indeed, I believe that it was the jealousy of the Siamese Buddhists that led to the discovery of the foot-print in the latter country; for, until 1602, they were blessed with no such relic, while their kindred, the Burmese, were in possession, not only of a foot-print of the deity, but of one of his teeth, which, by the way, the people of Ava yet keep enshrined, and it forms the point to which at certain seasons of the year pilgrims from all parts of the empire direct their steps.

Great was the glory which the possession of two such relics as a foot-print and a tooth of Buddha shed upon the crowned heads of the Emperors of Ava, and proportionately great was the envy and regret of

his rival, the Emperor of Siam, that he, the Lord of many White Elephants, all probable incarnations of Buddha, should be relicless. The god, however, at length took pity upon his royal devotee, for in the year 1602, news was brought to the King of Siam that a print of the god's foot had been discovered at the base of a mountain near Ayuthia. His majesty immediately despatched his *savants* and chief priests to make an examination, and they having, to his majesty's delight, declared the imprint to be a true relic, he at once erected the magnificent monastery which now stands there. Of this monastery, and the holy relic, both so rarely visited by Europeans, the French Catholic bishop gives us the following interesting description:—

“At four o'clock we reached the magnificent monastery of Phra-bat, built on the declivity, but nearly at the foot, of a tall mountain formed by fantastic rocks of a blueish colour. The monastery has several walls surrounding it; and, having entered the second enclosure, we found the '*abbe-prince*' seated on a raised floor, and directing the labours of a body of workmen. His attendants called on us to prostrate ourselves, but we did not obey them.

“‘Silence!’ he said; ‘you know not that the Farangs honour their grandees by standing erect.’

“I requested he would appoint some one to conduct us to see the vestige of Buddha, and he called his principal assistant (the *balat*), and directed him to accompany us. The *balat* took us round a great

court surrounded with handsome edifices, showed us two large temples, and we reached a broad marble staircase with balustrades of gilded copper, and made the round of the terrace, which is the base of the monument. All the exterior of this splendid edifice, which takes the form of a dome, terminating in a pyramid, a hundred and twenty feet high, is gilt. The gates and windows, which are double, are exquisitely wrought. The outer gates are inlaid with handsome devices in mother-of-pearl, and the inner gates are adorned with gilt pictures representing the events in the history of Buddha.

“The interior, however, is yet more brilliant ; the pavement is covered with silver mats. At the end, on a throne ornamented with precious stones, is a statue of Buddha, in massive silver, of the height of a man ; in the middle is a silver grating which surrounds the holy of holies, the foot-print of Buddha. The latter, however, is not very distinctly visible, for it is covered with rings, ear ornaments, bracelets, gold necklaces, and other jewels, which have been placed there as offerings by rich devotees.”

CHAPTER XXI.

A HOT PURSUIT INTO THE INTERIOR; THE KING'S
PROCESSION.

THE reader may wonder at the readiness with which Dick forebore, even at any risk, his pursuit of Crafty, and agreed to accompany me to Ayuthia in search of Mi. It must, however, be remembered that without money it is as difficult to travel in the East as in Europe. Again, even had he possessed that necessary, it would have been impossible to have overtaken the rogue, for the ships of the King of Siam but rarely run down to Singapore, and the European traders, chiefly Americans, who, making the same voyage, touched at Bangkok, were few and far between.

Thus, notwithstanding his unconquerable hatred and desire of revenge, he was compelled to leave further pursuit to chance. True, had I been prepared to charter a junk for Singapore, he would gladly have accompanied me; but then I had made the voyage to Bangkok as a matter of business; and as a man of business I was resolved to carry it out, for I felt assured that, although the man Mi had

caused it to be given out that he had fled to avoid the consequences of bankruptcy, if I could hunt him up, I should find that roguery, and not misfortune, had been at the bottom of his failure—nay, that he was even then richer than ever, if only by the amount, and it was a large one, that he had saved by evading the payment of his liabilities. Then, though last not least, Dick's own good heart would not permit him to let me make what might prove a dangerous journey alone. But to record the incidents of that journey.

Upon the morning of the festival, the Phra Klang, prior to leaving us to take his usual position by the side of the first king, gave into my hands an official document which empowered me to command the aid of any of the subjects of Siam in the arrest of Mi, or being presented to a mandarin, would enable me to place him in safe custody. Moreover, he commanded one of his officers to procure us two seats in the barge of one of the king's attendant nobles; and, thus provided, we set out from his house.

The scene upon the river was indescribable; its bosom literally swarmed with boats and barges, all of which were more or less ornamented with gildings, flags and ribbons; and, to such an extent that, with the exception of the passage cleared especially for the royal procession, scarcely a foot of the water was to be seen.

Of course in the procession were some of every class; the monarch himself and his courtiers in mag-

nificent attire, the lesser nobles, rich merchants, women, children, and beggars, all attired in their best suits, with bracelets, ear-rings, and other ornaments of gold, silver, or the inferior metals, as best suited their circumstances.

The barges and canoes belonging to the royal suite proper, were arranged and classified in rows; and it was in one of the fifth of the latter that Dick and I were placed. As, however, we were somewhat later than the hour appointed for the front rows to take their seats, and await the coming of the king, and dense crowds of people were still moving towards the river, we feared we should have some difficulty in reaching our boat. But such was not the case, our guide knew his duty too well; for, flourishing a large bamboo cane to the right and to the left, and calling aloud to the meaner people to give room for the friends of the great and powerful Phra Klang, he speedily whipped a lane through the submissive crowd, along which we passed to the barge of a noble of the fifth rank, and which we found awaiting us by the orders of the minister.

It was a large boat, handsomely gilded and painted; the sides for that especial occasion being hung with fresh cut flowers, which were arranged gracefully in festoons. The crew, some twenty, were dressed, or rather semi-dressed, alike, in a kind of livery. The boat itself was luxuriously fitted with cushions of gilded velvet; upon a pile of which sat the owner, almost a youth, who received us courteously, and



beckoned to us to place ourselves upon either side of him.

When we had seated ourselves, the rowers, by dint of great exertions, pushed the barge into her proper rank, and there we were kept waiting till his majesty should arrive and take the lead; but we were grateful for the delay, occupying our spare time in making, upon the invitation of the young noble, a tolerable repast; and this was necessary, for the king having once taken his position at the head, no man dared to eat until his majesty should set the example.

Scarcely had we concluded our meal, however, when the shrill sound of trumpets announced the approach of royalty. For a few minutes every head upon the river was bent downwards ; but a signal being given from the royal barge, the trumpets screamed, and amidst the noise of Laosian pipes, some other indescribable wind instrument, and the noise of innumerable tom-toms and gongs, the procession of more than sixty thousand boats of various sizes and manifold decorations merrily set forth.

The tide being against us the whole distance, it was, notwithstanding the energetic and manful paddling of the crew, nearly five hours before we came alongside of the ancient city of Ayuthia, at which place Dick and I disembarked.

As for the royal procession and the pilgrims, they continued on their way to Sha Rua, a place some few miles farther in the interior, where they were to disembark and travel by land to the sacred mountain.

I have said that the occasion of these great doings was to make a pilgrimage to the print of Buddha's foot—it was ; but it was more. It was to make votive offerings of gold or other coin, according to the circumstances of the pilgrim, into a certain sacred cave, in commemoration of the day, when, according to tradition, gold and silver mines were first discovered to exist in Siam.

But of Ayuthia, the royal city, once the terrestrial

paradise of the East, and from its numerous canals and magnificent buildings, called by old travellers the "Venice of Asia," and of which that veracious voyager Mandelsloe writes—

"The city of Judda is built upon an island in the river Meinam. It is the ordinary residence of the king of Siam, having several very fair streets with spacious channels regularly cut. The suburbs are on both sides of the river, which, as well as the city itself, are adorned with many temples and palaces; of the first, of which there are above three hundred within the city distinguished by their gilt steeples, or rather pyramids, and afford a glorious prospect at a distance. The houses are, as all over the Indies, but indifferently built, and covered with tiles. The royal palace is equal to a large city. Ferdinando Mendez Pinto makes the number of inhabitants of this city amount to four hundred thousand families. It is looked upon as impregnable by reason of the overflowing of the river at six months' end."

Like most of the capitals of Asiatic monarchies, royal Ayuthia has had its glories dimmed by the invader. Its conquest, however, could have been no easy matter; for, when in the sixteenth century the king of Pegu made war upon his brother of Siam, the Portuguese chronicler tells us—

"He marched with majesty and greatness exceeding that of all the kings in the world; for at night he and his host never rested except in beautiful houses, gilded and decorated, and prepared anew

every day for their reception. They brought with them from Pegu the timber, the furniture, the roofs, the doors, and every needful thing, which were sent forward on elephants, who were accompanied by more than two thousand workmen; such as blacksmiths, carpenters, locksmiths, painters, gilders and others, who built, furnished, and adorned the habitations. They had forges, too, so that, on the king's arrival, handsome palaces awaited him, with numerous apartments, verandahs, boudoirs, cooking establishment, with arrangements for his women; and the palaces were surrounded with strong fortifications, and the king was served in vessels of gold and precious stones, and he had horses and elephants for his special service, and a triumphant car worked in gold—all making an infinite machinery. When he came to a river, a branch of the Meinam, the greatness and the display exceeded that of Xerxes when he crossed the Hellespont to the conquest of Greece. They were twenty-five days travelling over high mountains in order to find a passage. There were 25,000 Siamese to defend the place where it was determined to cross; and the Burmese, having placed 30,000 men under the command of Soares, a Portuguese, they forced their way across the river, and marched to the attack of the Siamese capital, which was defended by 600,000 men, having two years' provision within the city."

Again, in 1751, the royal city was attacked by the predatory Burmese and utterly destroyed. All that now remains of its former greatness are the ruins of

temples and spires, and even these are almost lost in the jungle which has grown up around.

Modern Ayuthia, which takes rank as the second town in the kingdom, and contains a palace, which is visited once a year by the king, is near the ancient site, and in general appearance is like Bangkok, although much smaller, with a floating population, whose chief employment is agriculture, fishing, and shopkeeping. It is to this place that the principal traders and dealers of the capital escape, in order to pass away a portion of the hottest season of the year.

Now, as when we arrived at Ayuthia, we found that the greater portion of its inhabitants were out on the water waiting till the king had passed, in order that they might fall in the rear of the procession, our guide hailed a hack boat that was waiting for hire at the mouth of one of the streams which passed through the city, and in this we were paddled with great rapidity towards the place where the guide intended that we should take up our lodgings; as, however, we approached a shallow near some large paddy fields, one of the boatmen gave a signal to the other, and in an instant the boat swung round and darted across to the other side of the stream, and the men, who had hitherto been using their paddles vigorously, worked at them as for dear life's sake.

At this our guide, who was a person of some dignity, and of course of much higher rank than the boatmen, addressed them angrily, demanding

their reason for pursuing such an eccentric course.

The answer was simple and satisfactory ; the spot was infested by crocodiles, and the day previously two boatmen had been seized and eaten by the reptiles.

“ But the charmers ! How is this, that the slaves employed by the great king for the protection of his people, have not caught and destroyed the vermin ? ” asked the guide ; but the reply silenced him, for one of the boatmen said—

“ How is it that my master knows not that on this day the charmers may not work ? ”

And then in silence, we pursued our way. But the reader would like to know something of these eccentric professionals. Well, in Siam there is a class termed crocodile charmers. These men, it is said, in company with others carrying ropes and spears, go to the spot which the reptile is supposed to frequent, and by the performance of certain ceremonies invite the animal to come forth.

When it makes its appearance the charmer jumps on its back, and gouges its eyes with his fingers, at the same time his companions get into the water, and taking advantage of the brute’s blindness, so encompass its throat and legs with ropes, and pull it about that, becoming exhausted, it permits itself to be dragged ashore.

Now, this is a bold and curious method of taking so vicious a reptile ; but it is vouched for by the best

of authorities on Siam, Bishop Pallegoix, who affirms that many of the natives of his own flock are eminently clever in this sport, and that he has himself seen as many as fifty crocodiles in a single village so taken, and bound to the uprights of the houses.

The people of Cambodia, however, have a still more curious method of taking these reptiles. Their river boats carry hooks which, by being kept in motion, catch hold of the crocodiles; then, during the reptile's struggle to escape, a knot is thrown over its tail, the extremity of its tail is cut off, and a sharp bamboo passed through the vertebræ of the spine into the brain and the animal expires.

But to resume my narrative. An hour's toiling at the paddles brought us to the great bazaar, which consisted of a long double line of floating shops; which, by the way, were all closed, for I suppose the owners were on their journey to the sacred foot-print. Passing between, we at length came to the water front of a large watt, the lower steps of which were washed by the river.

This watt was a conspicuous, and even a beautiful, building. It stood in some twenty acres of ground, about which, irregularly sprinkled, were salas or resting places for the priests, and pagodas. The latter were for the greater part of considerable height, and consisted of three or four steep roofs, each as it rose above the other diminishing in size. The effect of these roofs, as they glittered beneath the sun, was

exceedingly pretty and varied; one, for instance, being of gold, with white and green borders, and the next a green field with golden borders.

Near to the watt stood a large convent, from the front of which down to the river was a flight of steps, upon which was affixed a pole for the fastening of the boats belonging to the inmates. When our boat was running abreast of the steps, the guide stood up in the bow, and, as he threw a cord across the pole, said—

“Let the noble Farangs rest till their servant has announced their arrival to the chief of the house, for it is here they will find both food and lodging while they remain in the royal city.”

“But, my friend,” said I, “how is it possible we can seek a lodging here, for is it not a temple—a holy place set apart for the uses of the talapoins?”

“My master is right; it *is* a temple, and may be profaned by few who wear not the garment of Buddha; still the Phra Klang is a man of power, and he has commanded that the doors of this temple be opened to his friends.”

“But why did the Phra Klang choose a holy house for our lodging while here?” I asked.

“That the Farangs might watch without being watched. That, like a tiger, they may spring out upon the rogue Mi, who may have many friends in Ayuthia.”

“Then, it is certain this rogue is hiding in this city?”

“Truly,” was the sententious reply, “there is nothing certain, save death; but let my master have patience; and, by the aid of Buddha, his slave will unearthen this old rat.”

And, so saying, he sprang from the boat, up the steps, and entered the convent. His communications, however, with the inmates must have been short, for almost before I had interpreted our conversation to Dick, he returned, and asked us to follow him to the presence of the chief talapoin.

The dignitary of Buddha was sitting upon a stool at the furthest end of a large apartment or hall, surrounded by a bevy of priests of inferior rank, each being attired with the yellow toga, and bearing the fan, from which they are never separated; the latter being made of the talipot palm, caused the Portuguese to give them the name of talapoins. The colour yellow, which is worn by the priests of Buddha throughout all the kingdoms of the farthest East, is said to have been adopted from its resemblance to that of gold—the most precious of metals, and, therefore, the most fitting emblem of Buddha.

As we entered we made a respectful obeisance, after our European fashion, and one of the priests, with an angry frown, begged of us to prostrate ourselves, which we of course declined; but neither to the surprise nor dissatisfaction of the aged dig-

nitary, who commanded his subordinate to hold his peace.

“For,” said he, “thou art ignorant that the Farangs pay homage to their chiefs by remaining upon their feet.”

Then addressing me, he added—

“The slave of the great Phra Klang has brought a letter from his master, in which he desires that we shall aid the noble Farangs to the best of our power in discovering the hiding place of a great rogue.”

“Such is the mission of thy servants, O holy man,” I replied, holding before his eyes the document or warrant given to me by the minister for the apprehension and safe keeping of Mi, which having examined, he said—

“It is good—very good; the Phra Klang, our friend, shall be obeyed; the Farangs are welcome to the hospitality of this holy house, and they shall have the desired aid; but this rogue has many friends in Ayuthia, and it will not be good for you to quit this house till his hiding-place has been found.”

I was then about to thank this benevolent-looking old gentleman, after the grandiloquent style of the far East, but he cut short my speech by saying—

“The Farangs have had a long journey and need refreshment. Their thanks are expressed by their eyeballs—words are not necessary.”

Then, addressing one of the attendant priests, he commanded him to lead us to our apartment.

This room, which we reached after traversing several long narrow passages, was lofty, of oblong shape, and contained several recesses, in which were placed gilded images of Buddha. The floor was comfortably matted, with here and there pieces of thick, and though now faded, once costly, carpets, upon which we seated ourselves and awaited the coming of the promised refreshments.

“The old fellow is civil enough, to be sure,” said Dick, when the viands were placed smoking before us; “but, as we are strangers, no doubt it is to serve his own interests somehow.”

“Come, come, Dick, that was a churlish observation,” said I, adding, as I saw that his gaze was fixed upon the wall of the room, “What now, man? but true, you have never seen such paintings before.”

“Ugh!” he exclaimed, shrugging his shoulders. “Surely these Siamese niggers are worse by many chalks than the red men. Is this a torture chamber?”

“Nay, these are but representations of the tortures reserved for the wicked after death in the Buddhist hells, although it was from such pictures that many of the old travellers gathered their notions, which they afterwards promulgated in Europe, of the cruelty of the Chinese and other Buddhists.”

“Well, Herbert, that’s a relief anyhow; still the

sight of these things don't increase our appetite," he replied.

The pictures which had so startled my companion were a series of representations of sinners undergoing every description of horrible and prolonged torture that the human mind could conceive, or that priests and artists could devise; but then a belief in these punishments forms an important element of the Buddhist system. This is exhibited in Siamese literature, and may be seen from the following ode:—

“Human tortures are not one hundred-thousandth part equal to the tortures of hell. He who is condemned by the king of hell will be exceedingly tormented.

“His sin has brought to pass that he is confined in a dungeon, bound to a beam with chains, on account of his sin in unmercifully binding others with fetters. They stretch him on a heated iron plate, they stab him, his blood gushes forth, he dies, and is born again seven times in a day.

“Being greedy of rewards, he feared not to lie; his tongue shall be plucked out, because he judged unjustly.

“When he was a judge, he threatened in order to extort money; having received which, he held false evidence to be good. Assuredly after his death he shall not escape punishment; he did not pronounce judgment in accordance with the truth,

therefore will he be subject to hell for a long period.

“He was blind to crime ; he despised the institutions of his ancestors ; therefore dogs, as large as elephants, vultures, and ravens, shall devour his flesh.”

Very terrible were the pictures which startled Dick. For instance, there was one whose crime in life had been good cheer. He was represented as a skeleton tormented by devils who were around exhibiting luxurious dishes, which he could not reach.

There was a drunkard chained to his back to the sands beneath a burning sun, with water at hand which he could not reach.

There was a liar being punished by three demons, one of whom was lacerating his upper jaw, another the under jaw, and the third pulling out his tongue by the roots.

Lastly, a miser who had refused to clothe the naked, was being stripped of his skin by a number of demons.

About sunrise, on the morning after our arrival at the convent, we were awakened by the ringing of bells and the beating of drums. The deafening, discordant sounds startled Dick, who exclaimed—

“Hiloa ! What’s ado ? Is the house on fire ?”

“It’s all right, Dick,” said I ; “it is only the

priests announcing to the people of the neighbourhood that they are about setting out with their pots to collect alms."

And then I further explained to him that each talapoin before setting forth would take his bath, visit the temple, and recite a few passages in the Pali tongue; and, having thus prepared himself, would go his round, and continue upon the tramp till his pot was filled with rice, fish, vegetables, and cakes; after which, he would return to the convent, select the best of the food for his own use, and distribute the remainder among their attendants.

They pass the rest of the time till half past eleven, the hour of their second repast, in smoking, drinking tea, and conversing with each other upon things sublime."

"Or contemplating new tortures for the wicked, I suppose," said Dick, looking at the pictures upon the wall. "But, Herbert," he added, "Dark must be the practices, and darker the minds, of men who can contemplate, much less originate, such horrors."

"Yet," said I, "self-abnegation, mortification of the flesh, and abstention from vice of every kind, is the vital element of their religion."

They may kill no living thing; and, so forcibly is this principle enjoined that, as they walk, they will keep their mouths closed for fear of swallowing even animalculæ. Good servants have been known to quit their masters rather than destroy vermin, and good

nobles will frequently purchase live fish that they may have the merit of throwing them back again into the sea. Nay, a priest is forbidden to wash himself in the dark, for fear he might kill some insect.

“Then at least, to judge from these pictures,” said Dick, “their practice is better than their theory; but how, if so many virtues are enjoined, is it that they practise that master-vice—laziness? for truly they are the most indolent race under heaven.”

“Nay, Dick, the principle and canker-worm of Buddhism is in abstention; it does not so much enjoin to virtue as to abstain from sin; and so numerous are those sins that their names would fill a moderate-sized dictionary; for instance, it is a sin for a Buddhist priest to kill, steal, boast of his own sanctity, destroy a tree, drink intoxicating beverages, eat rice after midday, use perfumes, sit in a place higher than his superior, keep gold or silver, speak of anything but religious matters, sing songs, play upon musical instruments, wink in speaking, work for money, buy, sell, walk the streets in a non-contemplative mood, cultivate the ground, breed any kind of bird or animal, plant flowers, speak one thing and mean another, besides some hundreds of other acts which are named in one of their sacred books.”

“Enough in all conscience to break down with terror the hearts and brains of the most determined upon a life of virtue; but has not Buddhism its bright side?”

“Aye, Dick; for, notwithstanding its selfishness,

it is the best religion in Asia—at least in one important particular—for it is only in those countries where it largely obtains, as for instance, China, Japan, Ava, and Siam, that women are not mere slaves and toys, but free to mix and associate with the other sex.”

CHAPTER XXII.

WE OBTAIN A CLUE TO THE ROGUE MI.

WE had enjoyed the hospitality of the talapoins a full week, during which period, although Dick and I, under the advice of the superior, never once quitted the precincts of the convent, the slave our guide, had regularly each day left us to prowl about the new city and the ruins of the ancient one, in order to hunt up information as to the whereabouts of Mi.

For a week his endeavours were fruitless; and, sanguine as he had at first been about his success, we could clearly see by his chap-fallen expression that he had begun to despair. Success, however, generally crowns the efforts of the persevering; and so upon the morning of the seventh day he came into our apartment with a swagger of self-confidence.

“Buddha be praised! Let my masters rejoice, for their servant hath discovered the hole of the old rat.”

“This is good news; but where is the old fox hiding?” I asked.

“In a house at the other side of the city; but,” he added: “if my masters would secure him, they must follow at once, for the old fellow, or some of his friends, may suspect that his hiding-place is discovered.”

“Good advice, my friend; but how are we to get there? Will the good fathers of the convent lend us their boats?”

“The boat which brought my masters here is still at the water steps, and the boatmen awaits their orders.”

“Good; I had forgotten; then lead forward,” said I, quite forgetting Dick could not understand one word of what had passed.

“Hiloa! Herbert,” said he. “What is all this about? Where are you going in such a hurry? Has the fellow brought good news?”

“Yes, at least so far as it goes; but hasten, Dick, the hiding-place of old Mi is found.”

“I am right glad, and that’s a fact,” said Dick; adding, as he prepared to follow, “but the dollars, Herbert, the dollars, have they been found?”

“No; but without doubt we have a clue to them, if the old fellow has not made away with them,” I replied; and in a few minutes more we were again upon the river, and fast paddling up the stream; not, however, without some qualms, as occasionally we passed a crocodile sunning itself upon the sand.

“How did you manage to ferret out this old fox?” I asked, as we were approaching the suburbs of the new city.

“Caught him in his own trap. Did my master know he had a son?”

“Yes; he who was punished for his father’s crime of setting his own house on fire.”

“Yes, my master is right. He is the same. Well, although old Mi disappeared, no person knew where, the young man, after his punishment, was known to set out for Ayuthia, so I thought ‘where son go, there we find father.’”

“Then, are they both here, now?” I asked.

“Yes; son come first, to wait till father could come, when they both meant to go to Laos together; but the father was so long coming, and the son left so long by himself, that he smoke opium all day—all night—pipe never out of his mouth. So, when Mi comes, he finds his son like a paddy-bird in the face, all bones and dying; and he could not go on to Laos, but stop here.”

“But,” I asked, “how did you discover the old man?”

“My master knows that I watched all day all about; so this morning I see an old man come out of a great house, near to a betel-vendor’s, and, as I thought I had seen his face in Bangkok, I went to betel-vendor. He told me the old man was going to fetch a talapoin to attend his son, a young man who had been living

in that house some time, but was then dying of opium."

"By heaven," I said, half vexed that I had discovered the man; "the old rogue has, then, some good in him yet."

"Old Mi have some good in him!" said Dick.

"Aye, Dick," and I repeated the story.

"Well, Herbert, it is not pleasant to arrest the old fellow under such circumstances; but the dollars—the chance of discovering something about Crafty."

"True, true, Dick; we may not leave our task unfinished when so near its completion."

"See that house? There my masters will find their enemy," suddenly cried out the slave, pointing to what appeared to us to be a large double, but low, wooden building which stood at a short distance, and was partly hidden by some tall jungle and the bend of the river.

"Is it so? Then let the men rest upon their paddles," I said, "till we have reconnoitred the place."

"True, my masters must not approach the house till dark, for fear the old rogue may recognise them."

"Till dark!" I repeated, somewhat chagrined at the delay, for it was then morning.

"Yes; and here, at the betel-vendor's, my masters may rest and take refreshment," replied the slave; and in a few minutes more we had quitted

the boat, and were squatting upon the floor of the house of the betel-vendor, who seemed not a little astonished at such an unexpected visit from two Farangs.

This delay was tantalizing ; however, as for prudence sake it was necessary, it was better than risking a coup de soleil by remaining upon the river beneath a burning mid-day sun, the only protection against which in these waters is by fastening a cloth around the head, and every now and then saturating it with water.

The betel-vendor was a jolly little fat man, very talkative and very attentive, for scarcely had we seated ourselves than he placed before us a boulis of hot tea. By the way, would any of my lady readers learn how they take tea in Siam, let them know that the water is boiled in copper pots lined with tin, or of red earth, which, although not japanned, is tasteless. These pots are called boulis. In making the tea they are very precise. The pot is first rinsed with boiling water to heat it. This being done they put in one pinch of tea, and then, not only fill the pot with boiling water, but pour it over the outside, by which means they procure a better infusion. The tea being made, they but half fill the cup, adding boiling water till nearly the whole taste of the tea has vanished ; and, instead of sweetening it with sugar, they place a piece of candy in the mouth and suck it as they drink. Then, again, when they have had sufficient, they

turn the cup upside down, and for a very good reason, for it is a mark of ill-breeding to refuse anything offered; and, if they left the cup upwards, the host would again pour tea into it. Another strange fashion is that, although the host helps the visitor, he but *half* fills the cup; for were he to fill it, the latter would regard it as a sure hint that his room was more regarded than his company—literally, that he was not again to place foot in that house.

During the tea-taking the betel-vendor kept a profound silence, as, by the laws of Siamese politeness, he was bound to do. No sooner, however, had we finished than he resumed the conversation with an apology for the absence of his wife, at the same time telling me the cause.

“What did he say?” asked Dick.

“That he is sorry that his wife is absent.”

“Is the poor woman ill?”

“No—yes—that is, he says ‘she is before the fire.’”

“Before the fire!”

Dick might well be surprised, for he knew not till I told him, the singular custom attendant upon the accession to a family of an infant member. As speedily as possible after the occurrence has taken place, the mother is laid before a large fire, where she is compelled to remain for weeks.

It is a barbarous usage, but “so universal,” says Sir John Bowring, who, by the way, finds it

difficult to account for the origin, “so strong the prejudice in its favour among high and low, that the king himself has vainly attempted to interfere; and his young and beautiful wife, though in a state of extreme peril and suffering, was subjected to the torture, and died while ‘before the fire’—a phrase employed by the Siamese to answer the inquiry made as to the absence of the mother. A medical missionary told me he had lately been called in to prescribe for a lady who was ‘before the fire;’ but, ere he had reached the house, the patient had died, and both body and funeral pile had been removed. There seems to be some mysterious idea of purification, such as in some shape or other prevails in many parts of the world associated with so cruel a rite.”

This Siamese custom is truly barbarous; it is, however, scarcely more so than that practised upon a similar occasion by the higher civilized and more accomplished people of Japan.

In that land, some months before the birth, a girdle of red crape is bound round the future mother’s body, where it must remain till the event has taken place, when it is removed with much ceremony and parade—as, indeed, it is first placed. But then she is not freed from her sufferings, for she is then put in an upright sitting posture upon the bed, and fixed by bags of rice, which are placed beneath her arms and at her back, In this cruel position she is compelled to continue for nine days and

nights, most sparingly fed, and kept awake the whole period, lest by falling asleep she should in some way alter the prescribed position.

“Faith the customs of both these Pagans are so barbarous, there is little choice between them,” said Dick.

“Perhaps you are correct, Dick ; yet the Japanese have in their favour the fact that but few of their women die under the ordeal ; moreover, they have at least a pretty legend for its origin, which runs thus—

“Once upon a time, when the Mikado of Japan, who was then the sole sovereign, was preparing for a great war in the Corea, he died, leaving a widow, who was in weekly expectation of becoming a mother. But such a heroine was the lady that she bound the girdle round her, and prayed to the gods to postpone the event ; after which, attired in armour, she took her husband’s place at the head of the army, and led them against the Coreans, whom she conquered. In reward for which she was not only permitted to reign for the remainder of her life, which lasted one hundred years, but the women of Japan, in remembrance of her, for ever after adopted the girdle.”

“Well, Herbert,” said Dick, “the legend is amusing enough ; but it sounds very much as if it had been made to account for the custom instead of being the cause of it. But, look you, don’t you think

you could get some information from this man about his neighbour, the old rogue Mi?"

"A good thought, Dick, I will try."

Then, addressing our host, I said—

"My worthy friend has ears and eye-balls. Has he used them in the direction of the large house in the jungle at the bend of the river?"

But I suppose he must have expected the question to be accompanied by a silver token, for he replied cautiously—

"The noble Farang is curious—does he wish to enter that house?"

"He does; to visit an old man who is now living there."

"Does the noble Farang not fear that old man may be an astrologer? it is said so by the boat people of this river."

"If he be an astrologer, why should I fear him?"

"He has a buffalo grazing among the jungle near his house."

This reply, making me impatient, I said—

"Come, let my friend give all the information he possesses, and he shall be rewarded; as for the buffalo, I fear the beast no more than the man."

"Does not the noble Farang know that if the old man be his enemy he may receive him well, but he will first reduce the buffalo to the size of a pea, and then cause him to swallow it in tea, when the beast will grow to its full size and kill him?"

“These are the words of a child, not a man; the people of Siam believe in this foolish superstition, but the Farangs laugh at it.”

But a dollar, which I at the same time placed in his palm, produced more effect than words.

The touch of silver rendered him instantaneously communicative, for, with eyes glistening with delight, he replied—

“The noble Farang is generous; he has overwhelmed his servant with kindness. Let him listen. That which he will hear is but little, but it may be much to him if this old man be his enemy. The old house at the bend of the river,” he continued, “was once the hunting lodge of a great mandarin, who used to reside there whenever he accompanied the great king to Ayuthia. That mandarin died, and now for a long time it has been going to ruin, for none of his family would live in it. Well, some moons since, one night, as I was going to my sleeping mat, I was startled by a loud thump at the door.

“Buddha be praised!” cried I, “who would disturb a poor old betel-vendor at this hour of the night? For know, O noble Farang, thy servant did not doubt that it was some robber; it could not be a tiger, for with the thumping a voice had called out—

“‘If this be the house of one Sit, the betel-vendor, let him open his door.’

“‘It is the house of Sit, the betel vendor,’ said

I, in my fear, not waiting for an answer to my first question. 'But who art thou who would disturb Sit at this hour?'

"'Is it possible the worthy Sit does not remember the voice of his relation, Ma?' replied the voice; whereupon laughing at my own fears, I at once withdrew the bolt, and Ma stood before me.

"'The worthy Sit,' said he, 'is surprised at seeing his relation at this hour; but, as he has just made a toilsome journey from Bangkok, and at present has no sleeping place but a boat, it could not be helped.'

"'My worthy relative is welcome,' 'but Sit is curious to know what business has brought him from the great city, and the service of his master.'

"'Oh! that is soon told,' said he. 'My master has bought the deserted house at the bend of the river, and, as the worthy Sit has possession of the key, I am here by the order of my master to beg of him to open the doors for him.'

"'This is, indeed, great news; but when will the new owner come himself to take possession?' I asked.

"'Even at the present moment he is waiting in his boat,' he replied; and so indignant did thy servant feel at being called upon at such an hour for such a purpose, that he rudely said—

"'My relative's master is a pig; does he take Sit for a mouse, that he is to be ordered about when he should be asleep?'

“But Ma replied, with the dignity of a great noble—

“‘It will not be wise for the worthy Sit to refuse, lest he should be bamboozed within an inch of his life;’ and, as he spoke, he pulled forth a letter from the great noble to whom the house belonged and placed it in my hands. The characters were few, but they ordered me to give the bearer immediate possession of the house at the bend of the river; and, as I had no alternative but to obey, I at once followed Ma down the ladder, and, taking my boat, proceeded with them to the house.”

“Did you see the master?” I asked.

“Yes; but by the pale light of the moon, and what thy servant saw of him he did not like; for, although young, indeed not much more than a boy, he was so pale, of such spare measure, and so weak and tottering in his steps, that there could be no doubt that he was a great opium smoker—a vice, Buddha be praised! which has never been practised by thy servant or any of his family.”

“But, since then, you must have seen this young man frequently,” said I.

“The eye-balls of thy servant have never rested upon his features, for the young man has not once left the house.”

“At least, you have heard his name, and the reason for his shutting himself up in that lonely house?” I said.

“Of his name I was long ignorant; for, although Ma would often come here to purchase betel, and thy servant, being naturally curious, would make many endeavours to find out all he could, he could learn nothing; for, about all concerning his master, Ma was silent as the grave. Truly, the artful fellow must have had a great secret, and have been well paid to keep it; but even the fox at times forgets its cunning and gets caught. So it was with Ma, as the noble Farang will hear.”

“But of the old man; it is of him I would know,” I said, getting tired of his prolixity.

“Let my master listen,” he replied. “About one moon since Ma came to purchase betel, but he desired so much more than he had been accustomed to buy at one time, that I could not refrain from expressing my gratification at having found so good a customer; and so giving him a quantity for his own use, I said—

“‘The worthy Ma must accept this insignificant present, for truly he has brought me such a customer that fortune never before sent to this shop.’

“‘My relation is generous, and must be a worthy man, for he is grateful; but the service I have hitherto rendered him is small compared to what is to come; for three mouths use more betel than two,’ he replied.

“‘Three?’ said I, ‘then must the old house recently have received another inmate?’

“When, thrown a little off his guard, he replied—

“‘Truly, my relation has guessed aright; my master’s worthy father has come from Bangkok.’

“‘It was a fortunate day that brought another customer to Sit, for he is sadly in want of them; may their lives be long, and their occupation of that house no shorter,’ said I.

“Then believing Ma was inclined to become a little more communicative, I invited him to my inner apartment, and gave him a cup of spirit and a dish of hot tea, after which he said, as if talking to himself—

“‘Truly has the sage said, “that the fortunes of some men grow out of the misfortunes of their fellows.’

“‘Has any mischance happened to my relation?’ I asked, and he replied—

“‘The worthy Sit was just now rejoicing that he had found more customers, and prayed that they might remain at the old house.’

“‘Surely there was no harm in such a wish,’ I said, fearing that I had given him offence.

“‘There is no harm in the wish,’ he replied, ‘but that the wish may be realized is the good fortune of Sit, and the bad fortune of his relation’s masters.’

“How is that possible, O Ma?’ said I.

“Having pondered for a few minutes, as if con-

sidering whether he should tell me anything more, he replied—

“ ‘The worthy Sit is not an old woman or a young girl, who cannot keep his own council, therefore let him listen.’

“ ‘When my young master took possession of the old house, it was with the intention of residing there only until his worthy father, who was traveling, could join him, when they were going into—’

“ ‘Where?’ said I.

“ ‘Bah! I am a mouse,’ he replied, adding: ‘Further.’

“ ‘Further?’ I repeated, my curiosity being greatly disappointed.

“ ‘Truly so,’ he added; ‘but further than—than—I can’t tell. However, upon my old master reaching the house, he found his son so ill that he has determined to remain with us till his recovery. But alas! that will be a long time, for the young man is dying.’

“ ‘Buddha forbid!’ I exclaimed.

“ ‘Truly my relation is afraid of losing a customer; one way or the other he will lose him; but,’ he added: ‘the worthy Sit is curious, and his curiosity has been gratified, will he now in return tell his relation where he may discover a physician who can cure a man dying of opium smoking? and, having done so, for a good sum, keep his tongue silent?’

“ ‘I burned to know the name of this father and

son, but hitherto had not the courage to put the question, but suddenly I thought of a plan, and I replied—

“ ‘Certainly there are few such trustworthy physicians in the new city of Ayuthia. One, however, is known to thy servant, who will immediately go in search of him. But what is the name of the patient I am to tell him he is to visit, for surely one cannot offer so great an offence to a wise and learned physician as to ask him to attend a nameless person?’ But he replied—

“ ‘My worthy relative is making a sand-heap into a mountain. Let him conduct me to this physician, and I will lead him to his patient, who, at his own pleasure will give or refuse his name.’ ”

“Then you did not discover the name?” said I.

“No; at least not at that time, nor did I ask directly again; but, leaving my shop in the care of my wife, I at once accompanied Ma to the physician, from whom I afterwards endeavoured to find out the name. But, if the old man did know, he must have been paid to keep the secret; for, although he could do no good to the patient, he received as much silver as if he had restored him.”

“That was bribe sufficient, no doubt,” I said, for I knew that in Siam the medical system was based upon “No cure, no pay.”

Apropos of medical science in Siam—

“When a person is ill, the doctor is sent for, and the first inquiry is ‘Can you remove my complaint?’ After deliberation or examination, the reply is generally in the affirmative. Then the negotiation commences as to the sum to be paid for the cure, and the amount is settled by written contract, the doctor always demanding two wax candles for an offering to the god of medicine, and six salungs (equal to 3s. 9d.) for the cost of medicines. If the patient’s health improve under the doctor’s care the visits continue; if the doctor think the case hopeless, his visits cease, and there is an end of the contract.”

There are said to be two medical schools or systems in Siam contending for the mastery—the Indian and Chinese—and it would be difficult to say which is the most crowded with follies and superstition. Here is a Siamese recipe, which seems to combine the nonsense of both. It is a prescription for what is called “morbific fever.”

“One portion of rhinoceros horn, one of elephant’s tusk, one of tiger’s, and the same of crocodile’s teeth; one of bear’s tooth, one portion composed of three parts bones of vulture, raven, and goose, one portion of bison, and another of stag’s horn, one portion of sandal. These ingredients to be mixed together on a stone with pure water; one half of the mixture to be swallowed, the rest to be rubbed into the body; after which the morbid fever will depart.”

“But,” said I, “all this took place a moon

ago. Have you not heard of these people since ?”

“ To that thy servant is coming, if the noble Farang will have patience.” Then he continued—
“ Last night, about two hours after sundown, when upon my sleeping mat, dreaming of my profits and losses during the past week, I was aroused by a clattering at the door, and the voice of Ma calling to me for aid. Well, angry at the intrusion, I cried out as I withdrew the bolts—

“ ‘What misfortune can have fallen upon my relation, that he should come thumping at the door of an honest man at this hour ?’”

“ Let the worthy Sit arouse himself and come to the help of my master, or his business will suffer a loss of two good customers,” cried Ma, trembling with fear.

“ Ah ! is it so ? then why has their paid servant Ma, run away like a coward ? for truly, while he has been coming, the deed may have been done—it takes but little time to kill a man,” said I.

“ I am not a warrior, I have never been a mountain-splitter, a tiger of war,* like Sit ; but hasten, O my relative ! or the poor people will be slain.”

“ So, although I had no liking either for a broken head, or even for these people, fearing to lose two such good customers, I took up my gun, which I always

* Chinese synonyms for a soldier.

kept loaded, ready for any prowling tiger, stuck my long knife in my girdle, and followed Ma in my own boat. We soon reached the house. But Ma had been frightened without cause, for lo! there upon the platform of the house stood the old man in close conversation with the dreadful robber; and the sight so angered me, I cried—

“Thou coward, thou son of a pig, for what purpose do *you* come to honest people's houses, awakening them at unseemly hours?” but the foolish fellow seemed beside himself with surprise.

“It is true, O Sit!” said he, “that I am in the clouds, for that man, who is now so friendly with my master, but an hour ago thumped at the door, and being admitted, no sooner let his eyeballs fall upon my master than he held up his fist, calling him a rogue, a cheat, and a robber; and threatened to kill him. But as at that moment the stranger got into his boat and went away, and the old man angrily called upon Ma to come into the house, I turned my own boat, and with the anger of a famished beast in my breast, paddled away, with a determination that, whatever might be my loss, I would have nothing more to do either with my relation or his masters; for I believe they are all rogues. And now the noble Farang has heard all that his servant has to tell.—Is he satisfied?”

“It is a strange story—yet enough to convince me that this old man is he whom I seek; but, my

friend, know you whether the stranger is a man of Siam or a Farang?" said I.

"Thy servant knows no more than that which he has said," was the reply.

I then repeated the story to Dick, who after long pondering, said—

"Well, Herbert, it *is* a queer story, and there is little to be made out of it; save that this mysterious old gentleman can be no other than our friend Mi, and the young opium-drunkard, his son, the youth we saw led about the streets of Bangkok city."

"Surely, Dick, it is something to be certain that we are on the right track. But who, think you, was the stranger who accused Mi of robbery?"

"Well—I take it, he is some saffron-coloured trader, whom the old fellow has cheated of his money and goods."

"And so do I, Dick;" but I thought more, although I did not think it prudent to tell Dick, at least at that time.

Then, as there yet remained several hours before we could prudently pay our visit to Mi, we passed the time in playing Siamese chess; a game, by the way, I had learned in China.

CHAPTER XXIII.

SET A THIEF TO CATCH A THIEF.

WE continued our game till night-fall; when we heard the splash of oars in the water, and the grating of a boat against the house-ladder.

“It is the Phra Klang’s slave,” said I; and the words were scarcely spoken when that worthy, who must have sprung up the ladder with the quick and stealthy footsteps of a cat, entered the room.

“The sun has gone, the moon has not come, the slave awaits his masters’ orders,” said he.

“Good,” said I; “we will follow. Will the worthy Sit accompany us to witness the hunting out of a rogue?” but to my surprise, “mountain-splitter” as he had been, he replied—

“Is thy servant a pig, O Farang, that he should always be putting his nose in the affairs of others? No—Sit will remain in his own house.”

“Then,” said I, being determined that he should go with us, “the worthy Sit will call down upon his miserable body the anger of the Phra Klang,

who will have him bamboosed within an inch of his life."

This threat, and the production of the minister's document, which commanded any and every person upon whom I might call for aid, to assist in the capture of Mi, had the desired effect, for with a tremor at the sight of the paper, he muttered—

"The words of the old sage are true, one might as well attempt to kick away a mountain with one's foot as to resist the will of fate. Let the Farangs, who are befriended by the great minister lead, their servant will follow." And almost before we had seated ourselves in the boat, Sit was in his own little canoe, prepared to paddle after us.

We were but a short time reaching the house. It was, as I have said, large and low, and there was a platform which stood out and hung over the river. Like most houses in Siam, there was a ladder from the platform to the water, but unlike however, any other I had ever seen, this ladder was drawn up.

"The old fox has made his house into a fortress; we cannot reach that platform without capsizing the boat," said Dick.

"Let us try the land side then," I replied.

"Hist!" whispered the slave, producing from the bottom of the boat a rope-ladder, adding, "let my masters help to keep the boat steady."

This we did by holding by the poles which supported the platform, and in an instant, with one

end of the rope-ladder in his hand, the slave ran up the pole like a monkey. Once upon the platform, he had no difficulty in making fast one end of the ladder, and very speedily Dick, I and the betel-vendor stood upon the platform. But, stealthily and softly as we had clambered up from the boat, we made noise enough to alarm the inmates of the house; for through the openings of the jalousie blinds came the deep tones of a voice—

“Be not alarmed, my son, it is naught but the wind; but if otherwise, it matters not, for but *one* person knows Mi is here, and even *his* hours are numbered.”

“Nay, my father, it was not the wind, but the footsteps of rogues that fell upon the ear of thy son,” was the answer, in enfeebled tones.”

“The mind of my son shall be set at rest,” replied the other.

At the moment I observed the glimmer of a light through an aperture. I peered within. It was a large, low room, scantily furnished, and lighted by a small lantern, which was suspended from the centre. Upon a couch on the farther side of the room lay the youth we had seen in the streets of Bangkok suffering the punishment for his parent's crime of burning his own house, but singularly altered. Who can picture to the mind of Europeans an Asiatic dying under the baneful opium poison. Nearly nude, his body presented a miserable spectacle, a mere skeleton, emaciated, deprived of

every atom of nervous energy, yet with every fibre in a state of agitation. His ghastly yellow cheeks sunken, the eyes wild, and with the glassy glittering of a semi-madman fixed upon his father. The old man's back was turned towards me; when, however, he moved, I at once recognized the merchant who had boarded the junk at the mouth of the Meinam. But there was no time to lose, for now I saw that he had been loading a pistol, and was coming towards the platform.

"Beware, Dick, the old fellow is coming to open the door; he has a pistol in his hand," I whispered.

"All right, my friend."

Then the door creaked upon its hinges. We pushed forward quickly; there came a flash, a report, and a ball whistling over our heads.

"That was a vicious shot, old gentleman," cried Dick; and in an instant Mi was upon the floor, struggling hard, but ineffectually, to escape from my friend's grasp.

"Rats—robbers—" he exclaimed fiercely; but lowering his tones into a whine, he added, "take all, but save the poor boy."

"It is *thou* who art the robber, the false agent, the swindling merchant Mi, of Bangkok;" but interrupting me, he exclaimed—

"Ah! what dog is this? What words are these? Who dares accuse the Mandarin Pau of robbery?"

"Stay," said I; "these falsehoods are useless;

thou art neither Pau nor Mandarin, but Mi, the rogue merchant who fled from Bangkok with the goods and money of his clients, the friend and partner in crime of the Farang Crafty."

"The Farang Crafty," he repeated, thrown off his guard, "has *that* dog set thee upon my track?"

"Crafty? What says he of that rascal?" asked Dick; but not noticing the question, I said—

"It is not so; that rogue knows not that we are here."

"Then," he replied surlily, "let the Farang Richardson hold his peace, for I will answer no questions, even if he tear me limb from limb. What *is* done—*is* done."

"Mi is obstinate, but the Phra Klang possesses the means of making him speak;" and I held before him the minister's warrant.

This had the desired effect; the sight of the document called up all the horrors of his native prisons and punishments; his tone became humble, nay imploring, and he said—

"The Farang is young, brave, generous; he would not torture an old man, or deprive a dying boy of his parent. Restitution shall be made to him; neither he nor the merchant Richardson shall suffer loss—" but suddenly he exclaimed—

"Devils—thieves—you have slain him; he is dead—my son—my only son."

The wretched youth, who all the time had been silently watching the scene, had made an effort to

come to the aid of his parent, but rising from his couch had fallen to the ground.

Quitting the father, I ran to the son, and lifted him to the couch, and finding that the youth had fainted, I called to the men who had remained without upon the platform to bring water. The slave and Sit obeyed, and in a few minutes the invalid was restored to consciousness.

“The young Farang is generous; he has saved the son, he will not destroy the parent, without whose care the boy will die,” cried the old man, as the youth opened his eyes and looked around.

“Heaven,” said I, “rewards all according to their merits; Mi has been a great rogue, why should he not suffer punishment for his crimes?”

“My son—my son. What will become of him if his father suffers?” again cried the miserable old man, and with anguish so unselfish that I could have forgiven him; nay, I had already determined upon a compromise, and I said—

“Let Mi make restitution of the sums he has stolen from the merchant Richardson; let him explain his connection with the great rogue Crafty, and he may yet escape the punishment he so richly merits.”

“Alas! the first is not possible, for thy miserable servant has been robbed of all—”

“This subterfuge,” said I angrily, interrupting him, “will not avail you. It is known thou art still possessed of wealth.”

“It is not so.—It is not so—for thy servant has been plundered by a greater rogue than himself.”

“Beware! old man—beware! Have I not already warned you that falsehood would not avail you?” said I; but so earnestly did he make the declaration, that half believing him, I added—

“How is this thing possible? Could a man without wealth have purchased this house, and paid large fees to a physician? moreover, would such an one venture upon so distant a journey as the Laos country?” But if possible more impressively than before, he replied—

“By the life of that son, whose death would leave thy servant a blank, a thing desirous alone of annihilation, he still declares that his words are straight. How is it possible he would attempt to deceive one who holds over him the power of life or death—nay, even the life of his son, the last of his race?”

“Then, if the words of Mi are straight, why does he not at once declare *when* he was robbed, and by whom?”

This question seemed to cause him some dread, for he looked around nervously; and seeing that he feared to speak within hearing of the slave and Sit, who had remained, I ordered them to return to the platform. When they had obeyed, he said in whispering tones—

“My master spoke of the Farang Crafty.”

“I did; was it that rogue? Is he here?” I asked

eagerly; and then he related to me a piece of rascality, the substance of which was as follows:—

Crafty and Mi had been in partnership; the former making voyages, the latter remaining in Bangkok. The nature of their joint transactions he did not then tell me; sufficient however for the reader. Crafty in his last voyage had met with some mishap that rendered it necessary for the firm to disappear as quickly as might be from Bangkok; accordingly he wrote from Singapore advising Mi to realise the whole of their stores.

As we have seen (but remember that at the time I took the old man's story granted), the old man did this, and that too the more readily that he held in his hand monies and goods of several merchants (my father among the number) for whom he acted as agent. And so far Mi acted to the satisfaction of his partner. When, however, that worthy came to Siam he was somewhat disappointed to find his share of the plunder somewhat difficult to obtain; for Mi had transferred a large proportion of the goods into dollars, which he forwarded to Laos. The remainder he disposed of for paper bearing the signature of a certain European merchant, or rather fence to a large amount. For some time both remained in Bangkok. When, however, the mishap of imprisonment overtook Crafty, Mi managed to make his escape with the papers which represented not only the money he had sent on to Laos, but that in the hands of the aforesaid European merchant. But then he

sought to excuse himself for this breach of faith towards his partner in the belief that that worthy's future career was already provided for by a paternal government, which had him under lock and key.

Fortune, however, as if resolved on punishing a breach of that honour which the adage tells us exists among thieves, not only threw open his prison doors, but supplied a clue by which Crafty traced the amiable Mi to his house at Ayuthia. The rest of the story must be given in the old man's own words.

"Oh! my master," said he, "how like a messenger from the devils below that rogue came upon me last night; for how was it possible that I, who had so artfully managed all things, could expect such a visit? but it was a stroke of fate, and I submitted."

"Truly, my friend," said I, "it seems there was but little else left for you to do. This fellow knew your secret, and, moreover, the value that your body might be to him, could he but send or take it to Bangkok."

"True," he replied. "The noble Farang is right; the rogue held my life, more, the life of my son in his hands, and I had no choice; so regarding his hard words and menaces as if they had been the rustling of the wind, I bade him welcome to my house. But the fellow was unreasonable, all the Farangs are; he became violent, clutched me by the throat, and threatened to drag me at once with him to Bangkok city, if I did not at once place in his hands the papers which would enable him to claim

the whole of the sum in the hands of the European merchant."

"You complied?"

"I did—and so appeased the rogue; but—but *my* turn came (here the old man gnashed his teeth), for I invited him to a dish of tea, which he accepted, swallowed—and *then*, O my master, old Mi no longer mourned that the fellow had plundered him, for his retribution was to come."

"What mean you, rascal?" I exclaimed, as a fearful thought crossed my mind.

"What should thy servant mean but that Buddha would speedily bring down punishment upon the head of him who could plunder the aged and the dying," he replied. "But," he added, "the noble Farang has heard the story, and can no longer doubt the poverty of his servant, who will be without money, at least until he is fortunate enough to reach Laos, from which place he will send, in dollars, the sum which is owing to the merchant Richardson, of Macao;" but judging, I suppose, from my countenance that I should not be inclined to part with him upon such easy terms, he added—

"But the Farang doubts his servant; he would have the money now—he shall."

"How? Said you not that one half of your plunder was at Laos, and the other—"

"It is true," he interrupted quickly, "the other has been stolen by the rogue Crafty. But that man

is in Ayuthia, and my master and his friend may take the papers from him."

"You old rascal, do you take me for as great a rogue as yourself?"

"Thy servant said not so; but this man is the enemy of my master's friend, and is even now within reach of their hands."

"But," I exclaimed, "am I a mouse, that I should believe this rogue would remain about here an hour after he had obtained his object in coming?"

"My master is unwise to doubt; again I tell him the Farang sailor is still in Ayuthia;" and lowering his voice he added, "even now he is in the great ruined pagoda of the old city."

This intelligence, if true, was important. How important the reader may divine when I tell him that neither by night nor day was Waif absent from my thoughts. Still, however, having a suspicion that the old man *might* be planning some scheme to escape from us, I said—

"Are not the words of Mi as crooked as his actions; how then can I believe him?"

"Mi is now but a slave, for he is in thy power; the noble Farang was kind to his son, therefore he would serve him. The Farang sailor is the enemy of Mi, and therefore he hates and would destroy him. But it is night, and my masters cannot now go to the pagoda; Mi's house is their own. Let them sleep till the morning, when they can leave one of their

people to prevent the poor old man from running away, while they go in search of the rogue Crafty."

"Well, so be it," said I; for I had now no doubt as to his truthfulness; moreover, I felt sure that with so many of our party in the house, he would not venture upon any trick.

Then I interpreted to Dick, who had been standing by the old man's side the whole time, the substance of our conversation. A thrill of delight seemed to run through his frame.

"God be thanked!" he cried; "This rascal will speedily be in our power."

"But Waif, Dick? What of her?"

"Name her not, Herbert. Name her not," he replied bitterly; and upon that subject I did hold my peace, for fear that we might not agree in our opinions. Of course he concurred in my plans for the morning; he stipulated however, that we should set out upon the expedition with the first streak of daylight.

"Had we not better tie this old rogue up?" said he, when I proposed that we should stretch ourselves upon the mats to sleep; but to this I objected; and so it was arranged that the Phra Klang's slave and Sit should take turn and turn about as his gaoler, or rather watcher. The precaution, however, was unnecessary; for, accompanied by the invalid youth, it would have been nearly impossible to escape, and without the boy he would not have stirred to save his life.

CHAPTER XXIV.

A DISCOVERY ; A STRANGE TALE.

WE had proposed to set forth at daybreak ; so restless, however, was our sleep from the excitement of the previous day, that when we awoke we found the sun shining resplendently.

“Hiloa, Herbert, the rogue will escape us yet,” cried Dick, jumping to his feet.

“True, let us start at once,” I replied, following his example, but scalding my mouth in the attempt to swallow a dish of boiling tea which Mi’s servant had prepared.

“The noble Farangs need not fear, the man Crafty will not escape them. They will certainly find him at the great pagoda,” said Mi, but with so much malice in his tone and upon his face, that I asked—

“How can you *know* this? What mean you by these words?”

“Let the Farang be satisfied ; his servant has spoken, it is enough, he will not eat his own words ;” and with that ambiguous reply, sulkily delivered, I

was obliged to rest contented, for he would give no other.

“But this pagoda, *how* may we distinguish it from the others?”

“This man,” he replied, pointing to the Phra Klang’s slave, “will lead my master to the very steps.”

“Nay,” I replied, “he will remain here, my friend, until we find whether the worthy Mi has been playing us false or true; for as he has done the one or the other, will depend his freedom or the prisons of Bangkok.”

“My master still doubts the honesty of his servant; it is not good, for if he has committed *one* bad, he is not *all* bad, as you will see,” he replied, adding, “suppose the slave not go, the betel-vendor can lead you to the very steps of the pagoda.”

This suggestion was obvious; so applying to that worthy vendor, and finding him willing to undertake the duty of guide, we at once descended to the boat, and were speedily paddling up the river.

When we had made about two miles, the betel-vendor, who was some yards in advance in his own canoe, stopped, and, pointing to an enormous spire, which in the distance appeared to reach the very heavens, he declared it to be the building for which we were in search, accordingly we at once pulled into the sand bank.

“Now, Dick,” said I, “let us land.”

We did; but to our surprise the bank seemed

nothing but a narrow ridge of sand which divided the river from an enormous lake.

“Land, do you call it?” said Dick, laughing, “as the Irishman said, the deuce of a bit of land can I see but what’s all water.”

And he was correct, for as far as the eye could reach were vast fields of paddy, so deeply covered with water that the pagoda, which stood in the middle, a distance of at least two miles, could be reached alone by boats or elephants.

There was but one course, which was to haul the boats from the river over the bank into the paddy fields. This we did with little difficulty, and when they were relaunched, made for the pagoda, which we reached in about half an hour.

It was a large pyramidal building of enormous height, but in a state of decay rather from neglect than age; attached to this religious pile stood a convent or monastery in almost equal decay.

“See,” whispered Dick, pointing to a canoe secured to the door-ladder of the house; “that is proof the place is tenanted.”

“Hush,” I returned, in the same low tones, as we almost noiselessly forced our boat to the ladder, which was mid-deep in water, and the next minute we were both standing in the outer room, a low, large apartment, which had once probably served the purpose of common room for the talapoins. There we stayed to listen and look around. We could hear no sounds that betokened the place to be inhabited. A

minute's examination of the rooms, and I discovered a door which led to another apartment. At the same time I thought I heard a groan. I placed my finger upon my lips, for I was afraid that Dick would speak.

Creeping nearer the door, we listened with breathless anxiety. In a minute there came another groan—a shriek. I could bear the suspense no longer.

“There is some person in deep suffering,” said I.

“Dying,” said Dick; and I was about to try the door, but it opened with its own accord, and there, haggard and pale as death, a woman stood before us.

“Waif!” we both exclaimed, less in surprise at discovering her to be in that house than in horror at her altered appearance.

As for the poor girl, for an instant she was literally dumb with astonishment; recovering her presence of mind, however, she clasped her hands, and in an attitude of prayer exclaimed—

“God be thanked! for from Him alone could such help have come in this terrible hour of need.”

“Waif—dear Waif!” exclaimed Dick, taking her in his arms, “for mercy’s sake speak—what means this? Tell us, has the villain dared—is that rogue—”

But, starting from him, she said—

“Stay, Dick; my friend, my brother—name him no more.”

“Still that insane fit!” exclaimed Dick, adding

sternly : "But it is of no use, Waif, now, for we *know* the rascal is in this house."

"He *is*, Dick, for now I have no secrets from you. But he is no longer accountable to *man* for his sins, whatever they may have been."

And, as she spoke, she threw open the door of the inner apartment, where, upon a couch motionless, but with features distorted by severe physical sufferings, lay Crafty.

"Great heaven, he is dead!" exclaimed Dick.

"Murdered—poisoned by that old rogue Mi!" I exclaimed, as the old man's story of the cup of tea rushed through my mind.

"I thought so; it *must* have been poison. Oh! his *agony* through the night has been terrible; but how know you this, Herbert?"

"Come, come, Waif; dear girl, this is no place for you," said Dick, taking her hand and attempting to lead her to the boat; but, resisting, she said—

"And leave *his* body in this savage place? Nay, Dick, it is impossible; but," she added: "the assassin, Herbert, know you ought of him?"

"Come, come, dear Waif; this is no time for questioning. Come with us at once; we will leave one of the boatmen here in charge of the body until we can send for it," I replied; and this satisfying her, we left one of the men in the house, and then made the best of our way back, not to the house of Mi, but to the monastery.

On the way we both forbore to question her; but

upon reaching our old lodging, Dick, who could bear the suspense no longer, said, with somewhat of his old sternness—

“Waif, for heaven’s sake, tell me in what light we are to regard you. What was your interest in that bad man? *Were* you his wife? *Are* you his widow?”

With what fearful interest I awaited the reply—

“Dear Dick and Herbert,” she said, taking a hand of each, “since he is gone, I am free to tell all I know—listen.

My story,” she continued, “must begin at the time that Dick and I were contemplating our escape from the junk at Chantaburi ; but how can I describe my feelings at finding myself in the hands of pirates—the consciousness that I was at their mercy would have made death welcome ; then the fear for your life, for I had but little doubt that they would kill you as a necessity to their own safety—but I cannot, I *will* not, attempt to describe my feelings at that hour.

“Well, the wretches led me into the chief’s cabin ; and, having tied my wrists together, there left me under the charge of two savages, who by the way, I suppose, of amusing themselves at my terror, would, every now and then, pass their naked knives across my throat, to signify what would be my fate. These fellows, however, must have exceeded their orders ; for when, in about half an hour, their chief entered the cabin, he angrily commanded them to release me. But *that* chief, Dick—a cold shudder

ran through my veins as my eyes lighted upon his well-remembered features—”

“Who was he—the rascal Crafty?” interrupted Dick.

“Not so; but the Chinese captain of the pirates who boarded the ‘Anne,’ and murdered my poor aunt,” she replied, and tears rolled down her cheeks at the remembrance.

“It was, then, as I said at the same time, Herbert; but,” he added: “was not Crafty on board? for I swear I heard his voice.”

“Patience, my dear Dick, for you will soon know all,” she replied, adding: “but, to my astonishment, arch villain as the Chinese was, with a kindly gesture, he motioned to me to be seated; and, as he left the cabin, although I could not understand one word of his speech, I gathered from his tones and gesticulations that if I remained quiet I had nothing to fear for myself, but I feared for you, and should have followed them to the deck and upon my knees begged your life, had I not seen that which caused me to tremble from head to foot.

“It was a box, Dick, a travelling trunk which had belonged to my poor benefactress. I could not be mistaken, for on the lid, in large letters, were the words—

‘*Eliza Banks, London.*’

“The sight of this trunk for the moment chased even you from my thoughts, and I stood gazing at it with a terrible and absorbing interest, at length, however, I was aroused by footsteps, and though, in the midst

of these terrible pirates, I felt a sensation of relief—the new comer was an Englishman.”

“Crafty!” exclaimed Dick.

“Yes; but I knew him not *then*; but to continue my story. My first feelings of surprise fairly passed, the thought rushed through my mind that an Englishman at large must surely be one of the crew. I shrank backwards loathingly; noticing this, he advanced, and, taking my hands in his, said earnestly—

“‘Fear not, my pretty maid, you are as safe in this cabin as in the home of your parents. To *me*, you are indebted for your life.’

“But more alarmed than before, I exclaimed—

“‘Unhand me, wretch, for now I know thee.’

“‘For what?’ he asked, earnestly.

“‘One of the murderers of that poor lady, my friend, my benefactress; for the man Crafty, the thief of San Francisco, the enemy of Richard Orme.’

“‘Stay, I implore you,’ he cried, passionately. ‘I had no hand in the death of that poor woman. I would have saved her, as I saved you and the young man of whom you speak.’

“His manner gave me courage, and I said—

“How may I believe this, when you have again decoyed us on board your junk, for you are the real chief of these wretches?”

“‘This is not so; I am but the creature of circumstances, although I have had, and thank heaven still have, the power to serve you both.’

“‘Then, if this be so, put us ashore at once.’

“‘Both, no. The young man, yes,’ he replied; ‘but,’ he added, ‘first tell me your relationship to her whom you call your benefactress.’

“‘That,’ said I, ‘is soon told; but Richard Orme, is he not now perhaps being tortured by the wretched Chinese.’

“‘No; that I have prevented; more, he has been sent ashore in a boat by himself.’

“‘Great heaven, without me!’ I exclaimed; and, covering my face with my hands I wept; for then I felt my utter loneliness, the terrible reality of my position; but, again taking me tenderly by the hand, he said—

“‘Waif, dear Waif, have patience, you have much to hear; fortune has much in store that you but little anticipate.’

“I had been shocked that, notwithstanding my dress, he had discovered my real sex, but that he also knew my name, startled me. I stared at him aghast, exclaiming—

“‘For heaven’s sake, man, tell me who you are.’

“‘Your friend, Waif; perhaps your best friend,’ he replied, adding: ‘but your history—relate it briefly, if you like, but truly.’

“His unceasing earnestness aroused my own curiosity; moreover, I felt the necessity of conciliating him, so I related the story of my life—at least, the leading incidents—down to that day. He listened

with wrapped attention; only exclaiming at intervals—

“ ‘ Poor girl—poor child !’

“ But, when I spoke of you, Dick, he knitted his brows, and he clenched his hands—indeed, he appeared to be undergoing some suffering, from which he could only find relief in saying, with a terrible earnestness that alarmed me—

“ ‘ Girl, girl, what is your connection with this young man? Are you lovers? Have you engaged to become his wife?’

“ The question, the dictatorial tone in which it was put angered me, and I answered—

“ ‘ What right have you to put this question?’

“ ‘ Answer me, girl, for it vitally concerns us both; how, you shall learn perhaps too soon.’

“ And then my own curiosity made me reply—

“ ‘ No, we have been friends; he has been my protector, my brother, nothing more—can be nothing more.’

“ ‘ Is this so? do you know your own heart, girl? Do you know the nearness of kin that such fervent friendship bears to love?’

“ ‘ I do; but I shall not answer any more questions,’ I replied.

“ But one more, girl; and, as you would be saved from a life of misery, answer truly. Do you love another?’ ”

At this portion of the narrative I, Herbert

Richardson, felt my heart palpitate heavily, and I asked anxiously—

“What answer made you, Waif?”

“A true one, Herbert. It was, ‘I do!’ and she continued, “At the reply, Crafty started, joyfully exclaiming—

“‘Thank heaven for this, girl: you have escaped a great misery.’”

“‘How! what mean you by these strange words?’ I asked.

“But imagine my astonishment at his reply—it was—

“‘RICHARD ORME is your brother!’”

As Waif repeated this, she seized Dick by the hand, saying—

“‘Dick, dear Dick!’”

At this revelation I stood stupified with amazement.

“Aye,” replied Dick, “no wonder, for it is the tallest lie I have heard this many a day, especially seeing that I am and ever was an only child. But,” he added, “what on earth could have been—”

“It *is* wonderful,” she replied earnestly, “it is a strange story; but it is true, Dick, indeed it is.”

“Well, well,” he replied, laughing; “if you can prove this, you will be just about able to square the circle, or make me believe myself to be the son and heir of the King of Timbuctoo, and that’s a *fact*.”

“Nay, Dick, dear, I am serious—very serious—listen to me.”

And so greatly was Dick's curiosity aroused, that he held his peace, when Waif resumed her story—

“My surprise,” said she, “at Crafty's declaration of relationship was no less than your own now ; and, I suppose it was depicted upon my face, for he said—

“‘Girl, you are incredulous—you disbelieve—you think I have some purpose to serve by this statement ; it is not so—listen to me.’”

“Aye, aye, of that there is little doubt,” interrupted Dick.

“Nay, you are impatient, Dick,” replied Waif, adding : “Well, he then related the history of his connection with you up to the time of his leaving New York in charge of the goods which he was to sell in London for your mother's benefit. Coming to that point, he said—

“And now, girl, as I believe in a world to come, and hope for pardon of my sins, my purpose in accepting that charge was honest. I had no thought of fraud—nay, nor any necessity, for my own share of the cargo with which the ship was freighted was very considerable—enough, indeed, I found, when I had converted it into cash, to have kept me in competence the remainder of my days. But fate willed otherwise ; for ere I had been in London six months, a tempting offer inclined me to become a partner in a shipping house. About the same time that I entered upon my new career, I married the Widow Orme, your mother.”

Here Dick exhibited his surprise by a low and prolonged whistle.

Taking no notice of this, Waif continued—

“ ‘Yes,’ he repeated, ‘I married Richard Orme’s mother ; but alas ! unfortunately, although with the best intentions, I induced the dear excellent woman to invest her little fortune, which, upon our marriage, I had caused to be settled upon herself, in the same house. Bred at sea, and knowing little else but navigation and rough trafficking with semi-savage people, I readily left the financial management of the concern to my partner. A few months, however, soon showed me that I had become the ready victim of misrepresentation. My partner had long been hopelessly insolvent—so deeply, indeed, that even my fortune and my wife’s, had it even been used for the purpose of buoying up the sinking house, would have been as two drops in the ocean. But I was not to have even that poor consolation, for the rogue fled the country, leaving me and my wife penniless beggars. I was arrested and detained in prison many months. From this durance I ultimately escaped by becoming a bankrupt. Who can imagine the real horror of even a debtor’s prison to one who, like myself, had been used from childhood to a roving life ? Thus, when the bolts and bars were withdrawn, and I sniffed the free air of heaven, I could not quarrel with fate for having beggared me ; and with a light step and a lighter heart, I hastened to my wife’s humble lodging. Oh ! the joy of freedom ; even

in the midst of poverty, there was happiness in store, for on reaching home, I was to gaze, for the first time, upon my new-born child—that child was yourself—what a compensation for the past; but still envious fate had not presented to me her bitterest cup! No; for at the very threshold of my lodgings I was told that my wife had that day passed away for ever! For a time I was distracted—mad! and in my insanity cursed the child! You, Waif, were the cause of that new and greatest stroke of misfortune.’”

At this point Waif halted, and sobbing, said—

“But I will not go on, Dick. Dick, it is too much even for you.”

“My poor dear mother!” exclaimed Dick, as the hot tears rolled down his sun-burnt face. “But, but,” he added, “proceed, dear girl.”

“Well,” she continued, “I had but one course left open to me, and that was to go again to sea; it was, indeed, my only chance of an existence. But, heaven forgive me! in my wicked hate of what I deemed the cause of my great trouble, I resolved to leave it—the child—you, Waif, at the door of the neighbouring workhouse, a strange provision for an only child, still the only one I could make. To obtain a ship was for me no great difficulty; so as first mate of a merchantman I made voyages to South America, India, China, in truth all over the world. In a few years I once more obtained a ship of my own, and then pricked by conscience, and discovering in my heart a strong yearning towards the deserted little one, in my

first visit to England I sought the workhouse ; after some difficulty, I had the unspeakable happiness to find that my girl was alive—nay, that she was living with a Mrs. Banks. Obtaining that lady's address, with half-frantic delight I hastened to clasp my child to my arms. But how justifiably was I punished for my crime of desertion ! The cup of pleasure was again dashed from my lips ! I heard that the girl had left London with her mistress, for California.

Thus desponding, but with a faint hope that we might meet even in that distant region, I went to sea again. This time I was bound for Shanghai, with the hope, and a fair prospect too, of realizing a considerable sum. But ill-fortune again overtook me. When off the Ladrone* we were becalmed, and thus helpless, were surrounded by a flotilla of pirates, or "Wasps of the Ocean," as the celestials call them.

Unarmed, assailed by stink-pots, gingals, and many hundreds of savages of the Fokien coast, resistance would have been madness ; thus I surrendered at once, and the pirate chief pleased at the ease with which he had obtained so good a booty, most *mercifully*, in his own opinion, offered me and my crew the choice between instant death or taking service with him. Life was dear to us all ; and besides, it was at least probable that some

* Pirate infested islands in the Chinese seas.

chance of escape would present itself, and so we became pirates. Some chance of escape I have said—yes, doubtlessly, the opportunity might have happened had we been permitted to remain on board the same vessel, but the wily Chinese at once cut off that hope by sprinkling us among the fleet. He retained me alone on board his own junk. In this way a career of crime was forced upon me. But with shame let me add that I glided into it too easily, my losses, troubles, and miseries soured my disposition, and set me at war with all more prosperous and honest men. In a few months, encouraged by the profits I obtained, I entered thoroughly, heart and soul into the foul business, and this so pleased the Chinese chief, that he not only gave me a separate command, but introduced me to the Bangkok merchant, who was in fact the real owner of the pirate ships and the employer of the Chinese chief.”*

“This man I need scarcely tell you,” said Waif, “was the rogue Mi.”

Resuming her repetition of Crafty’s narrative, she continued—

“This Bangkok merchant,” he added, “delighted at getting into his service a European skipper, offered me a partnership on terms that obliterated entirely any compunction left within me at my new career.

* This system of co-partnership between the Chinese pirates and certain great native merchants in the chief cities of Siam and China, is by no means uncommon.

Thus I not only acted in connection with the Chinese chief, but took the lead in every expedition; warily, however, changing my vessel from time to time, so that I must have seemed ubiquitous to the merchant mariners who trade along the coast of China, or between the Celestial Empire and California.

“Like the old European mariners, however, I blended fair trading with piracy, for I went nominally as super-cargo with that freight of dye-woods feathers, &c., which was consigned to Costa and Olivarez at San Francisco. While transacting business with that firm, I learned the large amount of specie they kept in store; but solemnly I declare that for Richard Orme’s sake the dollars should have remained untouched, at least as far as I was concerned. But alas! unfortunately, *most* unfortunately for poor Richard, Messrs. Costa and Olivarez’s porter was a fellow-countryman of my Chinese colleague—nay, one of his agents, one of many he has planted in different firms in various cities at which he touches from time to time. This man imparted to the Chinese chief the information about the dollars; a council was immediately held, the robbery was planned, and the part I was to play was allotted. For a time I refused to have anything to do with it; but all objection was useless, the threat of exposure, ruin, instant death, hung over me, and I succumbed—”

“The hypocritical villain,” exclaimed Dick, passionately.

“Nay, nay, Dick,” replied Waif, “my poor father could not help himself. It was with tears in his eyes that he said—‘But although I knew that I was ministering to Richard Orme’s ruin, I still resisted joining in the plot until I had extorted a promise that his life should be spared, and, moreover, by the aid of two of my own men, I afforded him the best opportunity in my power of escaping from San Francisco. But of that affair I have little more to say, except that by the agency of the Chinese coolie the robbery was dexterously done, and the dollars were removed in one large waggon.’”

“What,” I exclaimed, interrupting Waif, “a waggon load of silver removed from the midst of a city without attracting attention, impossible !”

“Not only *possible*, Herbert,” cried Dick, impetuously, “but it *must* have been so, for although San Francisco then consisted of but a few huts, the inhabitants were selfishly bent upon their own interests alone; gambling, murder, and robbery were rife, and from fear, or sheer carelessness, people cared not to interfere in the affairs of others. In a sentence, the place was one long continued scene of greed, drunkenness, and feverish excitement during which any robbery might have been perpetrated in open day, providing the proper custodian were not present. Of those dollars I was custodian, and being absent from my post, the real criminal, and that’s a *fact*.”

“Come, come, Dick,” said I, “this despondency is sheer folly.”

“Cease, cease, these self-accusations, dear Dick,” said Waif, “for, as you will find, all will come right in the end. But,” she added, “to continue my poor father’s narrative. He next said—

“During our short stay in San Francisco, the Chinese chief and I learning the intended departure of the ship ‘Anne,’ and the course she was to take, we marked her for our prey. How we succeeded in capturing her you know but too well. You know not, however, that it was I who saved Richard Orme’s life—aye, and yours also, although, at the time, I knew you not for what you were. No; it was not until after you and he had been transferred to the Chinese junk, and among the ship’s luggage I saw the trunk bearing the name of Banks, the lady with whom you had sailed from England for California, that I discovered what I had lost—a daughter, the only child, whom I had once deserted, and for whom I had been so long searching.

“Once more the cup had been snatched from my very lips, and I became frenzied with despair. I was terrified and like a coward, for it seemed that a Nemesis was upon my track. But my disappointment served not to soften my heart. No, the greed of gold was too strong upon me; I continued my piratical career.

“Reaching Bangkok again, the merchant Mi, who had

received information of the king of Siam's want of a ship to carry his goods from Chantaburi, suggested that expedition to me and my Chinese colleague. We accepted the mission, and by means of a letter of introduction to the Governor, obtained by Mi, succeeded in getting the cargo into our hands. But joy and vexation, like twin children, crossed my path in the forms of yourself and Richard Orme. I knew that if he saw either the Chinese chief or myself, he would recognise us, and so I should not only lose the cargo, and perhaps my life, but the last chance of securing my daughter. Hence the story of the cholera in the junk, when the Governor came on board, and the reason that one cabin door was locked, for that cabin held myself and the Chinese chief, while the mate, a fat celestial, passed for the nonce as skipper. Hence, also, the plot which resulted in the festival on the island of Paknam—but greater, grandest of all results, in the securing to me my long lost daughter."

"As he concluded, he embraced me affectionately. Love however, grows not spontaneously. To me he was but a father in name—a pirate in reality—worse, the man who had ruined your good name and prospects, Dick, and with such feelings, I shrank from his caress.

"Observing this, he thrust me aside passionately, exclaiming—

"'Girl, you hate me! but you have good cause!' nevertheless, he continued, in a more subdued tone, 'It is in your power to reclaim me! Waif, you are

now in my power, but that is naught ! Express but the wish, and you shall go whither you will ! Make your choice ! Go, and leave me to continue this career, or stay, and at the first opportunity I will quit this life, and return to England. Decide, girl, my fate is in your hands ! ”

“ Dear, dear Waif, what answer made you ? ” asked Dick, anxiously.

“ Father,” I said, “ and I can no longer doubt that you *are* my father, Heaven has miraculously thrown us together, and what God has willed I cannot. but obey. But Heaven has also willed me to be the means of your repentance, of your quitting this sad—this wicked life.”

“ My darling child,” he replied, with delight. “ It shall be as you say. I will at once, at least with all speed, quit this odious life ; for I shall now have something to live for. Come, come, girl, look not so sternly at your poor old father, for all will yet be well. In England we will lead a good life—aye, and a pleasant one too, for it will be strange indeed if my daughter does not hold her head as high as any lady in the land, with the fortune I can give her.”

“ Father,” I replied, “ this must not—shall not be—every coin of thine would carry with it a separate curse ! No, make restitution, disgorge thy ill-gotten wealth, and then I will accompany you to our native land, and, if necessary, work my fingers to the very bone to help support you ! ”

“Tut, tut, girl,” he replied, angrily, “you know not what you ask. You know not the full meaning of the word poverty. Youth, health, strength, and hope cannot—but enough of this now. You shall have your choice; but it must be on our return to Bangkok that you make it.”

And seeing from the passion he was then in that further remonstrance would be vain, I held my peace on that subject. But suddenly a thought passed through my brain, and I said—

“Father, I am in your power, and must go whither you will; but upon one condition only will I willingly—nay, joyfully accompany you.”

“That condition,” he replied, with astonishment depicted upon his face.

“That,” said I, “within the next few hours you will write a full account of the dollar robbery at San Francisco, that my brother Dick’s reputation may be cleared at once and for ever.”

“Noble Waif,” I could not help exclaiming.

“You are a darling, and that’s a *fact*,” exclaimed Dick, kissing and embracing her with a bear’s hug. “But Waif,” he added, in solemn seriousness, “did he do this?”

“He did Dick, willingly; and from that moment until now, I have never parted with the document—see here it is.”

And so saying, she took from her bosom a paper which she placed in my friend’s hands. To describe the delight with which Dick perused that paper, and

afterwards kissed and hugged Waif in the quality of his new-found sister would be no easy task, while to repeat Waif's story of her after adventures here, would be to make an anti-climax. Thus I will leave its relation to another chapter.

CHAPTER XXV.

WAIF'S FURTHER ADVENTURES.

“ I AM all anxiety, dear Waif,” said I, “ to hear your adventures after the Chantaburi affair.”

“ And I also,” said Dick, as he carefully folded and placed that valuable document so lately attained within the breast pocket of his coat.

“ Well,” she continued, “ quitting Chantaburi the pirates bent all sail for Bantam in Batavia, where they hoped to find a good market for the King of Siam's gamboge, ivory, spices, rattans, and other valuables. It was a dreary run, for we fell in with one of those dead calms which you are aware so commonly precede the monsoons—nevertheless, dreary as it was, it brought me some consolation. It gave my father time for reflection—nay, even repentance, for he promised me that at Bantam he would find some opportunity of quitting his piratical companions. But man proposes, God disposes.

“ Two days, however, after we had put into that

port, and while negotiations were going on for the sale of the cargo, a Siamese war ship entered the harbour. How or why her captain's suspicions were aroused, I know not; but he came on board the junk and put questions to the pirate chief that aroused their fears—fears, indeed, that were soon verified by my father, who, going ashore, discovered that the captain of the war ship had only deferred the capture of our junk until the next day, that he might the more easily secure her crew and chiefs.

“To escape would have been impossible, so closely was the junk watched, and to fight equally so. Fortunately, however, there happened to be in the harbour, like ourselves, under the guise of an honest trader, a consort pirate, and to this it was determined to escape, indeed, there was no choice between capture and speedy punishment, or liberty with the loss of vessel and cargo. As you may imagine, to such wretches, the alternative was galling; but they accepted it, and so under cover of darkest night we, or at least the chief, myself, and a greater part of the crew, quitted our junk, went on board the consort, and at early day-break drifted out to sea, much, I have no doubt, to the chagrin of the worthy Siamese war captain the next day. We reached Singapore without any mishap, and from that place I believe my father wrote to Mi, the merchant of Bangkok informing him of the failure of the nefarious expedition.

“After a short stay at Singapore, long enough, in-

deed, only to refit and take in water, we sailed for the Gulf of Siam. Arrived there, my father and I quitted the junk, and taking a passage in a river boat, proceeded up the Meinam to Mi's house at Bangkok. That worthy received my father with all courtesy; nor did he exhibit any ill-humour at the loss he had sustained by the failure of the Chantaburi business, and what was equally astonishing at the time, he sympathized with my father's desire to quit his piratical life, and promised also, within a few weeks, to hand over his share of their partnership. He could not do it sooner he said, because he had, for better security, sent the greater part of his valuables to Ayuthia. In the meantime, we were hidden in a house which belonged to the old gentleman at another part of the city. But lo! one day Mi's house took fire, and he fled, at least so it was reported, to Laos, the refuge for the destitute, or rather for rogues. However, instead of leaving the city, he came to our house, where he remained until he believed the hue and cry after him, as a fraudulent bankrupt, was over. Then he told us that he had a manned junk on the river ready to take him to Ayuthia, from which city he could easily escape to Laos. He further proposed that we should accompany him, and as my father believed that if he quitted him he should lose his share of the partnership, he agreed.

“Thus, at night we went on board that junk from which Mi escaped, and wherein you sent me for the first time, after our parting at Chantaburi. What

followed that incident of the junk on the Meinam, I will not recapitulate. The scene before the king is too painful—sufficient, that I believed I was doing my duty.”

“But,” asked Dick, “how did Crafty escape from the king’s prison?”

“By woman’s wit—by a daughter’s duty,” she replied, adding, “I told my story to the Phra Klang’s chief Laos wife—I told her that I desired to save a father’s life; and, woman-like—are women not alike the world over?—she herself bribed the governor of the prison, and by aid of one of her confidential slaves my father and I went on board—a junk then proceeding to Ayuthia—for to this place my father would come, feeling confident that he would here discover old Mi; and, unfortunately, he did discover him, and so met with his death. But no more of this! It is too—too painful,”—and so, with the tears coursing down her cheeks, she concluded her strange narrative.

CHAPTER XXVI.

NEMESIS.—MY WOOING.

WHEN Waif had finished her narrative, we besought her to seek some repose in a chamber that the good talapoins had prepared for her. Fortunately excessive trouble and grief brings with them a compensating fatigue, so the dear girl slept well that night; and the next morning she could hear not only without pain, but gratefully, that during the night, Dick and I, with the aid of the talapoins, had consigned the remains of her father to their last resting-place.

The previous night I had listened with an all absorbing interest to her wonderful narrative; I must confess, however, that interest was purely selfish. But my excuse must be that I was brought up a man of business. Now my chief business in Siam was to secure the monies belonging to our house which old Mi had in his possession; those monies I shrewdly suspected had been transferred to Laos, and, if so, Mi must have had papers representing

them. Moreover, the old man had declared that Crafty had robbed him of papers; if so, where were they? why had not Waif alluded to them? Of this I was thinking as we sat at our morning meal, when curiously, at least so it seemed to me at the time, Waif, as if divining my cogitations, exclaimed suddenly—

“The papers—the papers. In the selfishness of my grief I have forgotten them.”

“What papers?” I replied mechanically.

“Yesterday morning,” she replied, “my poor father sought out Mi. On his return, wan, pale—great Heaven, how pale—he threw himself upon the couch, when calling to me, he said—‘Waif, dear girl, I have never felt like this before: I am dying, girl. May Heaven pardon my great sins.’ Then he fainted; but recovering after an interval of several minutes, he said, as he placed a packet of papers in my hands—‘When I am gone, hasten to Bangkok, seek out the young merchant Herbert Richardson, and give him these papers, for to him they are of vital consequence’—then, with the words, ‘Waif, my daughter—Richard Orme—Pardon’ he—passed away.”

“But those papers,” I asked, my mind dwelling upon my own interests rather than upon her grief.

“Pardon, Herbert,” she replied; “in my trouble I knew not what I was about. I left the papers in the pagoda, beneath his couch.”

And now a weight was lifted from my mind, for I

surmised that the papers were safe ; and so, indeed, it proved, for shortly afterwards one of the younger talapoins, who had helped at the interment the previous night, entered the room with them in his hand, saying that he had found them beneath the dead Farang's couch.

With what delight I received them the reader may imagine, for now my business in the interior of Siam was virtually at an end, an end too that had been brought about almost miraculously. Nor was Dick's delight much less ; grasping the priest's hand, he cried—

“I am beginning to get a little ‘posted’ up in you half-nigger gentlemen after all. You are a smart people, and that's a *fact* : now in my country the smallest boy or the tallest man wouldn't have parted with such documents without a quid pro quo.”

Shortly afterwards we took leave of the good monks, not forgetting, by the way, to promise their house a good contribution when we should reach Bangkok, and made our way back to Mi's residence. But what a scene presented itself. We had quitted it a house of despair ; it had now become the house of death. The son had died the miserable and inevitable death of the opium drunkard ; the father had surrendered to apoplexy, accelerated by a paroxysm of grief. For, wretched sinner as was the old man, he possessed one virtue, the love of his son. For that son he had trained and cultivated the love of gold into a ruling passion. For that son he had lived : with

that son he died—peace to his memory. Better far that it should have been so, than that he should have been handed over to the terribly cruel laws of Siam.

On our return journey to Bangkok we met with no incident of note; but on reaching the Phra Klang's residence that minister received us with what the French would call distinguished consideration, and placed a large portion of his palace at our disposal while we should remain in the capital. Hearing the story of our success, his joy knew no bounds; first, for our own sakes, whom he regarded as his own friends; secondly, because by hunting down (as he called it) the Farang pirate and the old rogue Mi, we had done the two kings and people of Siam good service. Nay, he even went so far as to offer us a fresh introduction at Court, and patents of nobility; but finding that neither Dick nor I fully appreciated his offer, he consoled himself for his disappointment by offering, in the name of the two kings, to divide between Dick, Waif, and I the whole of Mi's confiscated property, so soon as it should have been seized by the proper authorities.

But regarding all the old man's wealth, with the exception of the sums owing to our house at Macao, as so much blood-stained plunder, I stoutly refused to accept of more than my own dues. Waif did likewise; nay, shuddered with horror at the proposition that she should hereafter live upon any portion of her father's ill-gotten wealth. But Dick—well, I must confess it—was less punctilious.

“I take it, Herbert,” said he, “that if you had been battered to and fro till you looked as miserable as a shuttlecock without feathers, had been once or twice ruined, and lastly driven across the globe at your own expense to look after your reputation, your nose would not be too fine to scent the real value of good dollars. I guess, too, I have well earned all I shall get and that, as the real owners won’t get them, they’ll be about as much use to me as they will to their twin majesties the kings of Siam.”

“Very well,” said I, “every man is best acquainted with his own conscience; take the money if you will.” And, once for all, I may inform the reader that he did take a sum handsome enough to give him no small importance among the merchants of San Francisco.

Now it is proverbial that all governments are slow in the transaction of such business as the restitution of property, but in Siam the snail-like pace with which they proceed is tediousness almost to torture. Thus it was nearly three months before we could obtain a settlement of our monetary matters. Truly, during that period we fared most sumptuously, at the Phra Klang’s expense, but then we burned with anxiety to get away, so that about the commencement of the fourth month, when they were completed, it was with no little delight we bade the hospitable minister farewell, and embarked for Macao.

Happily we reached the Chinese city without

meeting with any incident of importance to the reader.—But, stay.—It is to be hoped that what was interesting to Waif, must be no less so to the reader. Well, then, during the run along the China coast—may be for want of something to do—may be from the association of a few months—or, perhaps, and which is most likely, because I felt that I could not occupy my mind with better thoughts. I took a remarkable interest in Waif's future; indeed, as in the cooler part of the day we would sit beneath the deck awning, I could talk of naught else.

“My *future*,” she said roguishly to me one evening, “why, doubtlessly it will be passed with my brother Dick, his wife and children, whom I shall teach to love their old maiden aunt as Desdemona did Othello, for the dangers through which I have past.”

“It is of *our* future that I would speak; and that, too, in solemn seriousness, dear Waif,” I replied; and it was the first time I had ventured so near the real subject of my heart, for you must know that having been so busy all my life with other matters, I felt myself ridiculously nervous in love affairs.”

“*Our* future,” she replied, with a serio-comic air, “why then I must ask you a question, Herbert, what can *our* future have in common?”

“Everything,” I said; “but seriously, dear girl, why should they not be passed in common?”

“Herbert,” she replied seriously, and placing her hand upon my shoulder, “it would be foolish, nay, cruel and ungrateful to pretend that I do not under-

stand you, that I have not long expected this moment. But, listen, for I am serious,—it cannot be.”

“But,” I exclaimed, starting as if I had been shot, “Why not?”

“Simply because you are a rich merchant’s son.”

“And you,” I said, with more impetuosity than was my wont, “would become a rich merchant’s wife, which would make us equal.”

“Herbert, think no more of this. Am I not a pirate’s daughter?”

“Are you not glorious Dick Orme’s sister?”

“Yes, and she is showing it too, and that’s a *fact*,” said Dick, coming from behind a loose sail.

“Eavesdropping, for shame, Dick,” said Waif.

“Yes, that’s a *fact*, too, and I am glad of it, for I can now give the lie to the old proverb, ‘that listeners hear no good of themselves.’ But, look you, my friend, as my sister says, you must think no more of this, and I’ll tell you why, in a few words. You see, Waif, as she has just proved, is not the girl to sneak into any family without the consent of its head. To speak even more plainly. Your father is a gentleman, and rich, and I reckon it would be about as easy to persuade oil and water to mix upon comfortable terms as to obtain his consent to the marriage of his only son with one who is at the same time the daughter of a pirate and the sister of a runaway clerk—a clerk, too, whose name has been gibbeted all over California as that of a rogue.”

“Dick!—Dick!” I cried, “no more of this—it is cruel. Believe me, you know not my good father. His consent will never be wanting.”

“Prove that to me, Herbert, and you shall have mine; and there’s my hand upon it,” said Dick.

“But *you*, dear Waif,” I said, taking her hand, what say—what promise you.”

“I promise nothing,” she replied, coquettishly, for you have heard by Dick’s words that he relies upon my being a dutiful sister. But now, dear Herbert,” she added, “no more of this—at least,”—and she hesitated.

“Until we reach Macao,” I added.

Thus, dear reader, did I pop that most momentous question in a man’s life.

CHAPTER XXVII.

FROM MACAO TO CALIFORNIA.

IT would be difficult to describe my father's joy at once more seeing me in Macao; for being an experienced traveller through the seas and interior of China and Siam, he fully understood the great perils and risks of the journey I had undertaken; moreover, my last letters having failed to reach him, he had given up all hope of again seeing me. Of course he speedily recognised Richard Orme, and gave him a cordial welcome, nor was he much surprised at seeing him return with me. But his astonishment at seeing with us a pretty, graceful girl—the prettier and the more graceful, since that she was attired in the light, elegant, and costly costume used by Anglo-Chinese ladies,—was almost ludicrous.

“But this—this lady!” he stammered out.

“Oh!” I said, “I beg, your pardon, father; Miss ——;” but I also stammered, for I noticed a tremor creep over Waif, and Dick knit his brows and compressed his lips.



THE HAPPY RESULT.

“I beg your pardon, Herbert,” said my father, interrogatively, “Miss, whom did you say? I did not catch the lady’s name.”

“My sister, dear sir, my sister,” said Dick, coming to the rescue.

“Your sister,” replied my father, almost rudely, but recovering his self-possession, he handed her to a couch, saying, “Welcome, Miss Orme, for your brother’s sake.”

“You seem astonished that I have a sister, sir,” said Dick.

“Well, well, yes,” stammered out my father, “from what I remember of your history I do, but then my memory is bad now; it has been affected by a recent illness.”

“Do you remember, sir, that when I first came to Macao a prisoner, on suspicion of being a pirate, I had a boy with me.”

“Yes—yes,” replied my father, “I remember hearing of that; but, pardon me, Mr. Orme, what has *that* boy to do with *this* lady?”

“Much, sir.”

But my father looked more astonished than ever; seeing which, Dick added—

“For the boy is the girl, and the girl is the boy. They are one and the same—and that’s a *fact*.”

“Indeed, how can that be?” and, having cogitated for a minute, he said, “by-the-bye, true; I remember old Li-Poo told me the boy was a young woman, and that you ran away with her at Chantaburi.”

“Whew,” whistled Dick; “she is my sister, sir; and we went ashore at Chantaburi to escape from Li-Poo’s rascality.”

“Nay, nay,” said I, “you must not malign old Li-Poo. How do we know he intended to be a rogue?”

“Well, well, Herbert, we don’t know he *didn’t*, and that’s the same thing, or near enough; but we won’t quarrel about the old coon.”

“But, Miss Orme,” said my father, still confused, “How came she with you?”

“Dear sir,” cried Waif, arising from the couch, “I can endure this no longer. My brother has told you but half the truth. Know me for whom I am. Richard Orme is my brother—my half-brother; but I also am the daughter of Crafty, the pirate merchant.”

“God bless me,” exclaimed my father. “Poor girl, poor girl. He is a bad man for a father.”

“He is dead, sir!” interrupted Waif, as tears stood in her eyes.

“Dear girl,” exclaimed my father, now with somewhat of his old energy and clearness of brain. “What a sad thing that so good a daughter should have had so bad a father! I am sorry—very sorry I have said anything to hurt your feelings. But cheer up—you have a good brother—a brother who has come out of the fire of trouble, misery, temptations, unscathed—I will be a father to you!”

“Thank you, sir, from my very soul, for those

kind words; would that they in California could say the same of Richard Orme."

"They can say the same—they do say the same, and they only long to have the opportunity of righting you before the world, and reinstating you in your old position—nay, in a better."

"You have poured balm into old wounds, sir. I feel them closing—they will heal now," cried Dick, shaking my father warmly by both hands. "But," he added, slowly, emphatically, "do *all* say this?"

"Aye, aye," replied my father, "every one—even Josephine Costa. There now, you see I know all."

"Thank God!" exclaimed Dick, "I am a man again, and that's a *fact*."

That night the slumbers of all were lighter and happier than they had been for many a long month previously. The next day, in the presence of Dick and Waif, I recounted to my father, in detail, the whole of our adventures since we had left him. My poor parent listened attentively, but more especially to the part Waif had played, and at the conclusion said—

"Poor girl, dear girl, noble girl! How greatly we are indebted to her. How can we repay her?"

"I could propose a means, sir," said I.

"You—you, Herbert! How?"

"I would not give the dear girl unnecessary pain; but she has no reason to be proud of her name, sir."

"No, no; true, she has not; but that is no fault

of hers, Herbert. Let us forget it—let us forget it, boy.”

“That will be best accomplished by changing it.”

“Changing her name. How Herbert?”

“Herbert, I charge you, do not”—began Waif; but interrupting her, I said—“It is *my* turn now, Waif, for we are in the city of Macao, not running through the China seas.”

Then turning to my father, I added—

“By giving her my name, sir; in a sentence, dear father, I have asked her to become my wife.”

“Well, Herbert, well,” interrupted my father.

“And she has refused.”

“Refused you, Herbert,” exclaimed my over fond father, who deemed his son worthy of any woman living. “Why, why, has she refused?”

“Because your consent was wanting.”

“Good girl, good girl. But I have not been asked.”

“You are asked now, father. I ask it of you.”

“My dear boy, I give it freely. I could wish you no better wife. But what says the dear girl herself?”

“My word was pledged, dear sir. I can now no longer refuse,” was the frank and characteristic reply.

“But what says her brother?” added my father.

Dick, who was literally overjoyed, and could not conceal his emotion, replied—

“Faith, sir, I can scarcely speak,—your kindness

has turned my tongue into a fountain : see it's running out of my eyes."

"Nonsense, Dick," said Waif, laughingly, "I know you object to Herbert for a brother-in-law."

"Do I, you chit," replied Dick, in the same vein ; "no, I take in that now the sooner you are Mrs. Herbert the better ; for then there will be an end of *one* transaction. But look you, Waif," he added maliciously, "no contract is a business transaction without being dated. Come, don't blush like an untravelled school-girl—name the day when it's to be."

"That will I readily," she replied ; and oh, how anxiously my heart beat ; but it almost ceased beating, as in reply to Dick's "When?" she replied—

"On the day that you are united to Josephine Costa, in San Francisco ; not before, dear old brother. No, sir, I will not trust *you* out of my sight without a wife to take care of you."

"Waif, dear Waif," I began reproachfully ; but my father, interrupting, said—

"It is a good and equitable arrangement. I am desirous for many reasons—business ones included—to see Costa and Olivarez in San Francisco ; so Herbert, when our affairs are wound up here, we will take California en route to England. It will only be an extra run across the Pacific : no great affair, you know, to old travellers like you and me."

"Whatever I felt I was obliged to acquiesce, for I could see my father had set his heart upon witnessing Dick's marriage with his old friend's daughter. As

for Dick himself his heart was too full to speak ; and so, to hide his emotions, he merely thrust his hands into his trousers pockets, and whistled.

Having shown my readers where I found, and how I wooed my wife, I must bring my story to an end. Well, then, my father and I having wound up our affairs in China, we all set sail for San Francisco, in which city Dick was rapturously received by all his own friends, who, by the way, fêted him as no man can be fêted, except in the gold regions ; and within a month after our arrival, Waif and Josephine changed their surnames in the great church of San Francisco—for what others the reader may easily guess. After a stay of six months in California, my father, Waif, and I came to England—to London—to the very house, in fact, beneath the roof-tree of which I have so many months been penning the story of my travels and adventures in the lands and waters of the Golden Dragon and the White Elephant.

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