KAI WANG;

A TALE OF SOUTHERN CHINA.

CHAPTER IV.

Lord Rackett was eager to hear the particulars, and Avis soon gave a hasty sketch of the tragedy, as well as the bold exploit that led up to it.

"By Jove! Who but Dr. Jack would ever have dared enter that holy of holies, and force an audience upon the Emperor? It fairly takes my breath away in admiration of his exploit. I doubt if there lives another foreigner who has ever penetrated the defenses of the mysterious Forbidden City."

Larry made an inarticulate sound, and again beat himself proudly upon the chest.

"Ah! yes, you were with him, but then you are more mandarin than foreigner, Larry, my boy. What is the matter with the little bantam?" he continued, aside, to Avis; "you spoke of his having been badly injured in the melee. I trust his voice is not gone; that would be a calamity we could ill afford," he added, smiling.

Then Avis for the first time remembered Larry's vow with regard to remaining dumb until she gave him the privilege to speak, and hastened to remove the embargo.

"It is fortunate you saved the papers, Larry, as they maye be of immense value to poor Jack's wife. I take it you want advice concerning their disposition, and the security this office of the Crown may afford."

Then Lord Rockett proceeded in a thoroughly business-like way to carry out just what the consul would have done had he been present.

And Avis had the assurance that the precious papers were safe under the British flag, where all the machinations of the rival Russian syndicate, or even the scheming of the Chinese party, headed by the Dowager Empress, would be unable to break the seal that bound them.

This finished, to even doubting Larry's satisfaction, Lord Rackett returned to the desperate adventure within the sacred walls of Peking, and begged the little man to describe it for him.

Here flattery got in its fine work again, for Larry could not resist the temptation to once more indulge in a flight of oratory after his unusual enforced abstinence.

So he told it all.

The Englishman's eyes flashed at mention of the battle royal, and his hand opened and shut with the eagerness a soldier experiences when hearing of lost opportunities for gaining glory.

"You could not have selected a more unfortunate time for the venture," he declared; "for some months—in fact, ever since the Dowager Empress resolved to again take up the reins of government in China—there have been mysterious goings on, and it is daily a mooted question among us foreigners down here in Canton as to whether the Emperor is still alive, or some userper sits in his place. Chinese politics are equal to a Chinese puzzle, and few understand them at all. Little the people care who rules. Go back a few hundred miles and interview the masses—you will be surprised to learn that not more than one man in fifty knows there has been a war with Japan, and even that benighted individual labors under the impression that China wiped the 'foreign devils,' as they call even the Japs, off the face of the earth."

"I am sorry to hear you say the Forbidden City is guarded to an unusual extent, as it makes my task the more difficult," said Avis, slowly.

Milord looked at her curiously.

"Pardon me, I don't quite understand. With the papers safe beyond all chance of seizure, your work is certainly done. What else have you in mind?"

"I must see the spot where Jack fell, and assure my wretched heart of the awful truth. Nothing less will suffice."

"But, my dear lady—that would take you inside the Sacred City, where no woman of your race ever yet penetrated!" he gasped.

"Then it is time some one did. At least such a fact does not daunt me."

"Good heavens! This is dreadful—you will no doubt meet with the same sad fate that befell your brave husband. These Black Flags and the Emperor's bodyguard are sworn to show no mercy toward those whom a fatal curiosity tempts to cross the barrier surrounding the palace island."

"While I do not allow myself to believe such a fate is in store, its contemplation cannot alarm me."

Such resolution astonished the consular agent.

"By Jove! I no longer wonder at the stupendous failure I made in my stupid attempt to win what belonged to Dr. Jack. You surely have imbibed his fearless spirit. While I am forced to admire, still my judgment condemns your scheme as sheer madness, and I sincerely hope you will abandon it," he said, warmly.

At the same time he knew she would not—such natures are not easily discouraged, and the influence brought to bear in order to change her plans would have to be more powerful than he could muster just then.

So they fell into a natural conversation regarding matters connected with the case.

Lord Rackett knew Kai Wang well, and had been in the weird shop of the idol-maker of late, although Larry was not aware of the fact.

The Englishman even confessed that he had taken a shy at fortune in the shape of investing some of his spare money in shares of a grand projected enterprise which he had now every reason to believe was the very one Dr. Jack had carried to a successful end, though at such a fearful cost.

Somehow this seemed to be a bond connecting his fortunes with those of the others, and Larry's scruples were rapidly taking flight.

After all, now that Plympton had come to his senses and gained dominion over his baser passions, he was considerable of a man, Larry concluded, shrewdly; there was a bluff manner about him that somehow impressed one with his rugged honesty, and having settled this matter to his own satisfaction, the little man resolved to take things as they came; surely no great harm could befall Avis while such a wide-awake watchdog as himself hovered about.

"Beware of Petoskey—when the Russian Bear begins to suspect he has been outgeneraled through Anglo-American pluck and business sagacity, there will be a hot time in the old town. You know he is hand-in-glove with the old Empress," was the solemn warning Plympton gave.

"Yes; we had good reason to know it, by Jove," said Larry, immediately, and then went on to narrate an exciting episode that had happened to himself and Dr. Jack, while prospecting the region in dispute, whereby they came very near being overwhelmed by an organized attack, presumably from bandits and lawless thugs, but the sound of heavy Russian oaths after a hot fusillade had told them the real animus of the assault, besides producing a pleasing impression that their lead had winged the rival schemer.

"Doubtless he suspects something of the truth, and as he may be laboring under the impression that you hold the papers, it wouldn't surprise me if he organized a scheme to secure possession of them. Once they are in this safe, it would mean war for China and the bombardment of her ports by British ironclads if they should be tampered with. If I can serve you, Mrs. Evans, call upon me. No task will be too difficult to prove how thoroughly is my regret for the wretched past. Meanwhile, I shall perhaps be able to protect you in a measure. So, good-by. Larry, away with your last tinge of suspicion and put full trust in me."

CHAPTER V.

Somehow Avis felt better after this interview with the Canton consular agent; she knew he represented the whole armed power of Great Britain in the Eastern seas, and that there could be no stronger arm raised up in her behalf; even the onward rush of the White Czar's legions was stayed by the mailed hand England raised when she said, "This far may you come, but no further."

Perhaps she might, if given her choice in the matter, have preferred a stranger, but something within her heart seemed to whisper that Lord Rackett was as sincere as a man could be in his desire to make amends for the wretched past, and that under such circumstances it might prove an exceedingly good thing their running across one who had so deep an interest in their fortunes.

At any rate Larry mentally thanked Heaven those papers were safe at last.

The possession of them had given him the nightmare for weeks, and he would have been ashamed to have confessed how many times he woke up under the strong impression that some Chinese thief—than whom there is no more adroit rascal under the sun—was in his frail bamboo apartment intent upon purloining the documents, and how on each occasion he had, pistol in hand, crawled around in the dark, bent upon executing summary justice upon the wretch when found—which never happened, of course.

Their stay in the British consulate had been so prolonged that it was now growing dusk.

Still the faithful coolies waited, and the man who drew the jinrickshaw stood near by; they obeyed orders to the letter; and having been told to wait, they would have been found there when the smiling face of Phoebus arose again in the east, if not relieved before.

Larry had mapped out his immediate plan.

His first duty was to see his cousin safely to some caravansary, where she could be made comfortable, and come in contact with the families of foreigners whom business chained to Canton.

Then he meant to return to the habitation of the illustrious Kai Wang, in order to arrange his affairs and prepare for departure.

True, it would undoubtedly add to his perils to appear once more in his true colors, but he believed the time had arrived to throw aside the mask and remain at the side of Dr. Jack's widow.

The little man scorned danger, being possessed of valor far in excess of his size, and snapped his fingers at the powers that be, which might be set down as the emissaries of the woman behind the throne, together with the powerful influence of the Russian "promoter."

So he saw Avis comfortably housed, and then entered his vehicle for the return ride. Lucky for him the shadows had taken possession of the native quarter, so that he was compelled to hire a couple of linkboys to run ahead of the jinrickshaw in order to light the way and do his pretended rank justice; had it been broad daylight some sharp eyes might have discovered that the autocratic little mandarin sported a pair of small side whiskers, the blond hue of which was hardly in keeping with what is considered good taste in a Chinese grendee.

Fortune seems to extend a sheltering wing over some of its protegees, and Larry had on more than one occasion found reason to believe he was favored above the common run of men.

It was a peculiar as well as ridiculous sensation, this being whisked along through the throngs of pig-tailed Celestials, and preceded by those two runners bearing flambeaux; but the effect was heightened in Larry's mind by the ever-present fact that he was sailing under false colors, and that these fellows who got out of the way of his lordship, and bowed so humbly as he passed, would have taken a fit could they have suspected the amazing truth.

Kai Wang was evidently glad to again shelter such an illustrious personage under his humble roof.

Larry, who prided himself on being a reader of human nature, and who had spent much of his spare time while recovering from his wounds in studying the idol-maker, jumped at once to the conclusion that it was more than anxiety concerning his absence that caused Kai Wang to greet him so effusively.

Something unusual had occurred while he had been gone; yes, Kai Wang, who had nerves of steel, and had faced many a crisis with the proverbial coolness of an iceberg, was actually showing signs of excitement.

Perhaps the coming of Avis had something to do with this change—the advent of her charming personality in the game, and the prospect of possible harm befalling Dr. Jack's widow, even as it had the valiant representative of the great syndicate—this would account in a measure for the trembling hand and troubled look with which Kai Wang met his guest—but there was more.

And Larry, who made it a rule never to allow any mystery to get the better of him, immediately concentrated the whole force of his powerful intellect upon the question.

The establishment of Kai Wang was in close juxtaposition to a pagoda or temple that reared its pinnacle aloft after the fashion of Chinese mosques in general.

Doubtless it was very convenient for the priests to run in at the back door and replace any frail god that had suffered the fate of all idols made by human hands; besides, on extraordinary occasions they could borrow the more weighty deities Wang had in stock, and thus make a showing far beyond rival temples.

It sometimes pays to live in close juxtaposition with one whose abilities run in the line of supplying the crying needs of an idol worshiping community

During his convalescence Larry had made a study of these things, as viewed from behind the curtains of Kai Wang's chambers, and as the windows were always open he had the weird singing service of the priests, and scented the peculiar smoke of burning joss sticks, not unlike the sweet odor of tuberoses, until he had grown to like it.

Even now he could hear the strident voice of the black-robed disciple of Confucius as he harangued the almond-eyed Celestials who prostrated themselves before the great joss of the temple; and this, with the penetrating odor of incense that floated in through the back window, seemed combination enough to give the situation all the romantic interest one could expect or desire.

So inspired by this and the curiosity that in common with all Eve's children he inherited through woman, Larry proceeded to exert his powers upon the heathen, and discover why Kai Wang's face had such an unusually lengthy look, while a furtive gleam appeared in his slanting eyes.

(To be continued).

A BAD HABIT.

"Could yer give a poor man a quarter ter git a bit to eat?"

"See here, fellow, you're the same man I gave a quarter to yesterday."

"Say, boss, don't folks in your set eat dinner every day?"

IN THE GAME.

Mamma—"Ethel, what do you mean by shouting in that disgraceful fashion? Look how quiet Willie is!"

Ethel—"Of course, he's quiet; that's our game. He's papa coming home late, and I'm you."

AFTER THE SERVICE.

The Minister—"That was a rather long sermon I preached this morning, my dear. Do you think it met with the approval of the congregation?"

His Wife—"I suppose so, Abner. I noticed they were all nodding."

DEAD SURE NOW.

"The doctors have finally agreed upon the cause of Jenkins' illness."

'They've held another consultation, eh?"

"No; a post-mortem."

NATIONS WERE RUINED

COUNTRIES LOST THROUGH MAN'S CARELESSNESS.

Cause of the Sahara Desert — Alaska Is Becoming a Deadly Swamp.

There are some countries in the world that have so much vitality that they will survive any number of plagues, fires, famines, and the like, while others have been ruined by insects and animals, and lost forever through man's carelessness.

The criminal negligence of our ancestors caused a beautiful forest, in which Europe might be lost, to become a giant desert of sand. This desert is the Sahara. In the days of the Carthaginians it was a forest, as all North Africa was a forest for hundreds and hundreds of miles back from the coast. The ancients needed timber for building purposes, and for fuel, so they cut down the forests and planted corn in place of the trees.

When the Romans came upon the scene, and extended their Empire over North Africa, they cut and cut until the forests almost disappeared, and the land for miles around became a barren waste. Nature, finding herself so badly treated by man, began to have her revenge. The rain fell in torrents and worked the soil from the hills and

SWAMPED THE VALLEYS.

Year after year, and century after century, the whole of North Africa suffered from terrible inundations, and finally the Sahara, owing to the fact that there were no forests left to absorb the moisture and allow it to descend gradually into the sea, became a sun scorched desert.

Even to day, nations cut down valuable forests, and leave the land to the mercy of winds and storms. If this sort of thing continues, matters go constantly from bad to worse, and, in the end, the map is disfigured by another blot upon its surface.

Take Alaska as an example. Hundreds of giant trees lay stretched across its landscape, and the land beneath them is becoming a deadly swamp.

The trees were felled many years ago by laborers in the employ of the Western Telegraph Company, who had made up their minds to run a wire from the States, through Alaska, across Behring Straits, and then via Siberia to Europe. Thousands of men were employed to carry out the scheme, and they cut a wide avenue through open country and primeval forests of some 1,000 miles long.

Three parts of the work had been completed when Cyrus Field came upon the scene with his project for a telegraph cable under the Atlantic. This ruined the Western Telegraph Company's idea, which had given employment to thousands of men, and

COST HUGE SUMS OF MONEY,

and their telegraph trail has been abandoned.

Instead of restoring the damaged forests, America allowed them to be left half-demolished with the felled trees scattered in all directions. Unless something is done to remedy the evil, time will unbalance Alaska, and the total damage will then be beyond any computation.

Swet briar and gorse have turned enormous tracts of fine grazing in Tasmania into semi-stagnant marshes, while New Zealand lost its finest rivers by allowing watercresses, planted years ago by a too enterprising farmer, to sweep along the banks unchecked, carrying irretrievable ruin in its train.

Hundreds of thousands of the finest grazing acres ever possessed by the Argentine Republic have been lost forever by European thistles imported into the country in cheap wheat seed. The farmers did not take the trouble to pick the seed over, but planted it as it arrived. The result was that the wheatfields became covered with thistles growing to nearly eight feet high. It was too late to stop the ravages of the quick-growing weed, and the fields had to be abandoned. To-day they are nothing better than impenetrable thickets harboring wild birds and beasts of prey.

Man's carelessness has damaged Australia to an incredible extent. Less than fifty years ago a large number of Indian-bred ponies of Patagonia were imported into the country, and

THEIR COATS BROUGHT RUIN.

Seeds of the now known Bathurst weed were carried by them in their long hair from Patagonia to the Australian fields. The seeds took root, and spread rapidly, utterly ruining the pastures.

Plague has alwyas threatened India with destruction, and millions of lives were lost before the Government attempted to stop its ravages. Some time ago they came to the conclusion that it would be wise to inoculate the natives against the plague with Haffkine serum. They proposed to inoculate the entire population of the Punjab, some six million persons, and laid aside a sum of $270,000 for the purpose. If this had not been done, India would have been decimated by plague in the long run in much the same way as London was decimated.

The oil-fly is ruining the olive plantations of Southern Italy. Up to the present time the loss to the country is roughly $30,000,000, and the Italians are alone to blame for the appalling condition of the olives. For years past they have shot and entrapped every kind of bird, large and small, with the result that Southern Italy is practically free from members of the feathered tribe, and the oil-fly, in consequence, increases and flourishes unchecked. Now there is a scheme on hand to import into the country thousands of birds, from the wren upwards, to decrease the toll taken yearly by insects.—Pearson's Weekly.

PETS OF BRITISH SOLDIERS.

One Regiment Had Emu and Kangaroo, Another a Snake.

No less than thirty regiments in the British army have pet animals attached.

The dogs of the "Fighting Fifth" and "Jack," the retriever, of the Twelfth Lancers, march with their companies when on active service, and have taken part in more than one battle. The drum horse of the Seventh Hussars—presented by the late Queen Victoria—marches proudly at the head of the men, with white tail and main flowing.

"Billy," the goat of the Welsh Fusiliers, is better known, and is a very showy soldier indeed, as he struts along in all the glory of scarlet coat, with white facings, and the badge and crest of the regiment on his forehead. The Queen's Own Hussars has also a goat.

A deer is the pet of the Seaforth Highlanders. "Antony," a little donkey, attached himself to the Twenty-sixth Battery while in India and became an established favorite, marching, eating and drinking with the men. A pet bear was the mascot of the Gloucester regiment, but becoming ill tempered had to be shot.

The Lancers of New South Wales have an emu and a kangaroo. "Peter," the goose, became the pet of the Grenadiers while in Canada. The lame bird limped up to a sentry on night and held up a hurt foot for his inspection. He attended to the wound, and the bird thereafter refused to leave the camp, so the soldiers adopted it.

When the Devonshire regiment was in India, a snake was for many months adopted as a pet, and, though poisonous, it never attempted to hurt any member of the company. When the men returned to England this uncanny pet was left behind.

INSTEAD OF A CROWN.

Do You Know How the Sheet of Foolscap was Named?

Everyone who has to do with paper recognizes foolscap as a sheet thirteen by sixteen inches. This is used as a standard size all over, officially and commercially. The paper derived its name in a curious manner.

After the execution of Charles I., Cromwell and his staff, in organizing the Commonwealth, made all possible efforts to remove everything which had anything to do with the old monarchy. The paper in official use up to that time had, as a watermark, the king's crown; and, when Cromwell was asked what he should put in the place of this crown, to show his overwhelming dislike to everything concerning royalty, he directed a fool's cap to be put in the place of the crown.

This was done, and, when Charles II. ascended the throne of England, it was at first forgotten to replace the cap by something else, and then, too late, the king was afraid to do anything to recall things dangerous to touch, and so it was neglected, and the fool's cap may be seen as a watermark on nearly all official papers.

TRUE IN HIS CASE.

First Kid — When pa gives me a lickin' it always hurts him worse'n it hurts me.

Second Kid — Aw, they jist say that.

First Kid — But my pa's got the rheumatism.

SOCIETY GOT INTO HIM.

"I hear you're getting into society," said the friend of the successful man.

"No," replied the poor man, brushing aside a pile of his wife's bills. "Society is getting into me."

SEEING HIM OFF.