KAI WANG;

A TALE OF SOUTHERN CHINA.

CHAPTER VI.

That remarkable man, Kai Wang, who cunningly devised the wonderfully ugly images before which half of the Chinese swarming millions daily prostrated themselves, had long since mastered the English tongue—indeed, save for an occasional lapse into the flowery style of his people, he used better grammar than many whose lives had been spent within the confines of old London.

In fact, the Oriental pagan had been around the world, connected with the English and American embassies, and discovered a thousand facts connected with his country's backward position in the race of nations.

Perhaps he had also learned that poor old China would never amount to a row of pins until her people began to recognize the truth, and think less of their gods and their dead ancestors, occupying their minds more with the present and future conditions.

Some people may even be so uncharitable as to question the genuine nature of Kai Wang's desire to lead his people in better ways, but it must be remembered that the Mongolian race does almost everything from the opposite standpoint taken by Christian nations, and, seen through Chinese spectacles, Kai Wang's procedure was the most rational in the world; he believed that by making his idols more and more hideous he could by degrees smother the desire for worship. Larry had argued in vain—Larry, who, recognizing the perverse nature of John Chinaman, believed the Celestials adored ugliness even as other nations worshiped beauty, and that by the time the genius of his friend produced a masterpiece of hideous deformity, before which all other monsters must hide their diminished heads in shame, the Chinese empire would rise up as a man and plunge deeper into their idolatry because of it.

And Larry had long since concluded that a native of the Flowery Kingdom was about as tough a specimen of the genus homo, when it came to argument, as could be found.

He now turned the search-light of his intellect upon the elucidation of the new problem, and in his most diplomatic manner besought Kai Wang to relieve the suspense by which he was well-nigh overwhelmed.

Thus adjured, the master mechanic of the idol manufactory broke the mysterious silence that had brooded over him since Larry's homecoming, and proceeded to pour out a tale that might have made a Munchausen blush for envy.

Larry knew how to sift the sand for shining particles of precious gold, even as might an experienced Balleret miner, and by thus reducing to plain English the magnificent court language which the accomplished Kai Wang dispensed by the yard, the result might be summed up briefly as follows:

Kai Wang had a visitor during his absence.

This in itself was not so strange, for there was seldom an hour of the day that the front office of the god-maker was not occupied by some representative of a Chinese trading company desirous of holding a monopoly of a certain brand of brass or china deity in favorite use among the communities of their section—indeed, many a time since Larry's secret advent under that hospitable roof a clash had occurred between rival claimants, and once it had even been necessary to call in the imperial police to quell the disturbance, which threatened to wreck the stock in trade of Kai Wang, and have the offenders haled before the yamen, or court of justice.

Fancy this thing in the presence of such an assemblage of gods as the most famous joss house in all China could not boast; evidently there are times when reverence is due the graven image, and others when the great joss only represents so much money invested in more or less precious metal.

This visitor who dropped in upon Kai Wang was no ordinary individual; he came not to spend his hoarded taels for a monstrosity that was warranted to scare all lesser devils from out his domicile, if properly propitiated.

When Kai Wang first mentioned the fact that his caller was a Russian, Larry's ears became more than ever alert, and his nostrils dilated much after the manner of the thoroughbred war-horse as it scents the well remembered odor of battle smoke.

Just then, after his recent experience in the Forbidden City of Peking, a Russian acted upon Larry as the sight of a head is said to influence the valiant Irishmen who visit Donnybrook Fair; he had an overpowering desire to hit hard.

Instinctively he knew who this Russian was, and thought he could suspect the motive of his visit.

Thank fortune he turned up just an hour too late, since the valuable documents, signed and sealed by the wretched Emperor in due fashion, were being snugly deposited in the safe of the British consul's office at that identical time.

So much for the sleuthhounds of Peking.

It had taken them as long to track Larry to the house of Kai Wang in Canton as Avis consumed in her journey from London through the Suez Canal, around India and the Straits of Malacca, up the China Sea. In this respect they bear some resemblance to some of our own wonderful detectives who consume so much time in pursuing an ignis fatuus, and quibbling over minor points that concern only their standing in the case, that the criminal reaches the uttermost parts of the earth ere they discover that he is a badly-wanted individual.

The diplomatic representative from the land of the Neva knew what manner of reputation Kai Wang had among his fellows as a shrewd, up-to-date man of the times, and instead of brusquely demanding whether it was true that the other sheltered a wounded foreign devil, he beat around the bush, approaching the subject half a dozen times much as a lightweight boxer might dance up to his antagonist and then drop back again without ar exchange of blows; because the coveted opportunity was hardly ripe.

By degrees the Russian became confidential, and sought to sound Kai Wang as though desirous of ascertaining just where his sympathies lay in the diplomatic battle that was on between the party of the Dowager Empress and that represented by Li Hung Chang and the puppet Emperor.

But Kai Wang refused the bait, knowing full well where Count Petroskey's sympathies lay, since the Empress favored the Russians, while the progressive party, led by the grand old viceroy, lately home from his triumphal tour of the world, was dead set upon cultivating more intimate relations with the Anglo-Saxon race.

Baffled after a long period of fencing, the representative of the Czar finally found himself compelled to grow bolder.

He hedged himself in with rare cunning, so that there was always an avenue of escape, and then he launched forth.

Kai Wang actually showed signs of emotion when repeating the wonderful story of how the present Emperor, having outlived his usefulness in the eyes of the potent power behind the throne, might some day in the near future be secretly deposed or disposed of—it mattered very little which—and a new Pharaoh be placed upon the throne who would not know Joseph—otherwise Kai Wang. A wise man usually gets 'n out of the wet, and it behooved the rich maker of premium gods to foreswear his allegiance to the fortunes of Li Hung Chang, now on the downward grade, and form a new alliance with those in the confidence of that remarkable woman whose word was really law in the vast provinces of the empire.

Startling as this announcement might seem, it was, as wise Kai Wang well knew, but the forerunner of the supreme demand up to which the astute Russian led by graduated stages.

When he believed the proper time had arrived to spring his mine, he did so with a considerable display of fireworks.

He informed the merchant that suspicion had been aroused concerning his loyalty—that it was even said he had been in league with those who were arrayed against their real sovereign, the Empress, and concerned in an attempt that had been made some time in the last moon to smuggle the prisoner Emperor away, so that he could head an insurrection against the authorities. Kai Wang's experience as an aide to the great English fighter, General Chinese Gordon, during the famous Tai-Ping rebellion, had made him an authority in such weighty matters.

Finally, it was also suspected that he had been harboring one of the base conspirators, a dangerous foreign fanatic, who would set all China by the ears if allowed his own sweet will, and whom the authorities desired to suppress, smother, cause to disappear.

Then came the demand—would Kai Wang prove his loyalty to the Queen Dowager by delivering up the body of this pernicious mischief maker, together with what seditious documents he might perchance have upon his person, so that the seeds of rebellion might not be scattered broadcast and bring about serious disasters?

About this time it may be assumed there was a smile that was childlike and bland upon the disguised features of the little wearer of the yellow jacket.

Larry could appreciate a joke, and he felt greatly flattered at the discovery that he was an object of so much solicitude to this high and mighty representative of the Great Bear. The recollection of the precious papers that reposed so snugly within the consulate safe gave him still more solid satisfaction; they might do with him as they pleased, physically; but his work could not be disturbed; he felt very much as did Bismarck when his enemies at home began to disturb him, even to hostile threats. "They may hang Bismarck, but I am content if the rope will only bind united Germany closer to the Prussian throne," he boldly declared, to the admiration of a patriot-loving people.

Kai Wang refused to commit himself—the yawning trap was too evident, and he was ready to meet the emergency; indeed, long ago he had discounted this very climax.

He solemnly declared his enemies had prevaricated; some rival house desired to injure his great and ever-growing trade in the favorite forty-five cash family gods which, thanks to him, had been placed at such a low figure that it was now possible for each and every household to have one or a dozen of these beauties in every room.

His actions were ever open and aboveboard to all men—he had of late been honored by the presence under his roof of a powerful, though slightly eccentric mandarin from one of the provinces about Kwangsi, who was more deeply concerned with regard to the purchase of a cargo of household gods which he could retail at a profit to the villages in his jurisdiction, than in any change of dynasty; indeed, it was quite immaterial in his section who reigned, since one ruler cost them in tithes and taxes just as much as another, and they had never been fully recognized since the "long-haired" rebels overran the southern country.

The Russian being unable to accomplish his purpose either by cajolery or threat, finally retreated in disgust, but Kai Wang never for a moment suspected that in so doing he gave up the quest.

Russians are not built that way—they seem to possess some of the persistent qualities that mark the pursuit day and night of the gaunt, gray wolf of the Siberian steppes, once upon the trail of game.

The leader of Cossacks was sure to be heard from again, nor would he leave the habitation of Kai Wang unwatched.

"You have returned — the news is communicated speedily to His Excellency. Perhaps this night there will come to my humble abode a swarm of miserable vermin who live by the knife; but what need have I to fear when my watch dog never sleeps—the electric current which charges every window and door so that no man dares seek an entrance twice. But as for you, my illustrious brother, perhaps it is even time you sought the protection your flag will throw about you."

Which was a gentle way of intimating that Kai Wang doubted his ability to hold out longer against the combined forces of the opposition, and would be relieved if Larry were able to take his future into his own hands.

"Yes," declared the sapient and shrewd little mandarin, "I shall have to skip by the light of the moon; but remember, oh wise and sagacious Kai Wang, I go, not because this Russian blunderer inspires me with such a thing as fear, since I have only contempt for his lack of sense; but my promise is given to stand by Dr. Jack's widow, and even, if necessary, to aid and abet her in the mad design of entering where angels fear to tread—the inner sanctuary of the walled city of Peking—so that she may weep over the spot where those devils of Black Flags wound up the earthly career of the noblest Roman of them all, prince of good fellows and bravest of the brave."

Larry was improving—a little more study of Oriental methods and he could give odds to the most seductive flatterer whose lips had ever come in contact with the Blarney stone.

Whatever the purveyor to the worshiping demands of a credulous public thought of this bold avowal, he made no sign, nor did Larry doubt that when the time for action came, bold Kai Wang, Gordon's old aide, would be found as willing to dare all in the service of Dr. Jack's widow as he had been to accomplish great things for that hero himself.

Larry had not studied him these weeks for naught. Though disdaining to show any haste in the matter of decamping, the little dude was quite ready to make a change in his Chinese address.

He had heard such amazing stories of these adroit Celestial thieves and thugs, who could steal a sheet from under a man without arousing the sleeper, that he believed he would rest easier if surrounded by people of his own race.

The disguise was removed, and Larry was as happy as a schoolboy at being again free to stir his thoughts by sundry affectionate forays in the direction of his ears; nobody would ever suspect what agonies he had suffered at being deprived of this privilege, and also the chance to suck the head of his cane.

He had made a small package of his belongings, and was ready to accept Kai Wang's guidance, for the merchant had solemnly promised to spirit him away without the knowledge of those spies who might be about, when the silence of the night was suddenly broken by a chorus of shrill cries in front of the repository of idols, and the clamor was of such a nature that it was easy to believe an angry mob had taken possession of the narrow street.

(To be continued).

WIFE ATE DOG'S MEAT.

A remarkable charge was made against a husband the other day at the Marlebone, (London), Police Court. His wife was granted a separation order. Mrs. Bryant, wife of a draughtsman, living at Ranelagh road, Leytonstone, said her husband had kept her so short of money that on one occasion she actually had to eat dogs' food. On several occasions she declared he had concealed himself in the dark and then jumped out upon her to frighten her, besides which he had tried to strangle her, had kicked her, and smacked her, and had set a dog upon her.

HEALTH

PNEUMONIA.

Though modern medical science has decided that pneumonia is an infectious disease that fact need not terrify if one take a little trouble to learn something about the disease. It is produced by a special microbe the existence of which is so common in the mouth of even healthy individuals that it is considered almost as a normal inhabitant of the upper part of the digestive tract. One reason why the saliva of a human being is likely to prove fatal to animals if injected subcutaneously is because the special property of the germ is to produce pus whenever it gains entrance directly under the tissues. It does not produce a purulent inflammation in pneumonia, because it lies on the mucous membrane of the lungs, but does not gain an entrance into the tissues. Sometimes it finds its way into the blood but does not produce serious results unless the patient is much run down.

From these facts it can be seen that the problem of the method by which pneumonia is contracted is exceedingly difficult. The presence of the germ is not sufficient alone to produce the disease, but there must be a certain predisposition on the part of the patient, followed by the deposition of this germ on a mucous membrane.

Though the method of the distribution of the disease is not known definitely it is acquired by mingling with crowds at a time when one is extremely tired, or when, for some reason or other, the interval since taking food has been longer than usual.

Dr. Anders, who is an authority on climatology, says in an article on lobar pneumonia:—"The coincidence of existing low temperatures, high barometric pressure, the direction and velocity of the wind and maximum mortality from pneumonia is so uniformly constant as to suggest a close and direct relation between their combined influence and the progress of mortality from pneumonia. "But," he adds, "the major influence exerted by the seasons, however, is probably not direct, that is, by a lowering of the bodily temperature resistance due to the low temperature, high barometric pressure, direction and velocity of the wind, etc., but indirect, namely, by bringing about that effective element in the causation, concentration and increased virulence of the specific poison in consequence of closed doors and windows and lack of free ventilation."

From these facts we see that we may procure immunity from pneumonia by healthy living, and that sanitary conditions are needed rather than protective serums. The Japanese give us a lesson in this, for they are essentially a people who live in fresh air and sunshine. Personal cleanliness is another factor in the prevention of tuberculosis and pneumonia, which are house diseases.

GENTIAN AS A CURE FOR MALARIA.

The root of gentian, often used as a tonic, is considered in many malarial countries a remedy against intermittent fever. Especially is this the case in Corsica in that section of the island near the town of Aleria, which is infested with malaria. The inhabitants recently protested violently against the introduction of quinine on the part of the medical authorities, declaring that they would not abandon the remedy which had been used among the islanders for centuries, namely, the gentian root either powdered or simply masticated. Tancret declared that he has extracted from this root a hitherto unknown substance, which belongs to the chemical classification of glucoses. This he calls gentiomcrina, and experiments in the laboratory prove that it possesses the same deleterious action upon the malaria bacillus as does quinine. Here, then, we have another example of how popular instinct often anticipates with certain sureness the discoveries of science.

AIR AND SKIN.

If people would only realize that air is the chief food of the skin, they would understand how very important a constant supply of it is to health, and, therefore, to the looks. Small wonder that when we go a railway journey we are semi-asphyxiated owing to the manner in which our fellow-travellers insist on shutting both windows. If people would only accustom their lungs to receive constant instalments of fresh air, there would not be a half nor a tenth part of the susceptibility to chill and catarrh that now exists.

APENDICITIS.

Now-a-days there is a tendency to operate on every case of appendicitis. All we can say is that is is as great a mistake to rush hastily for a surgeon in such cases as it is to put off sending for the physician when the patient is ill. Hundreds of cases recover with operation, and some few only get better after an operation has been performed. In the simpler cases medical treatment alone is required, but this must be carried out with extreme care and watchfulness.

HOW PRIESTS LIVE IN SIBERIA.

The best paid clergy in Siberia get about $600 a year, while the poorer clergy have often to beg for their bread. They have much to do. There is always a service between four and five in the morning. There are two other services in the day. There must be a service on the birth of a child and at the death of anyone in the parish. All new buildings, schoolhouses, bridges, and boats must be blessed; children beginning at a school term are blessed, and in time of pestilence or peril there must be continuous prayer. All priests must fast 226 days in the year, and monastic priests are never to eat meat. A priest cannot indulge in theatre-going, drinking, card-playing, or dancing.

CARE OF YOUR UMBRELLA.

Umbrellas should always be set to dry open, with handle on floor. If allowed to dry shut up the moisture stands so long at the top it rots the silk and rusts the wires. Do not keep an umbrella in its case or rolled when in the house, as the silk, thus tightly creased, soon cuts into holes. In rolling up an umbrella for its case grasp the ends of the frame rods tightly with one hand near the handle, and roll from the opposite end with the other hand; unless the frame is thus held in place, it is twisted and loosened in the rolling process.

POLICE COURT AT A TAVERN.

The only place in the country where the police court business is conducted at a public house is at Blofield, Norfolk, England. This has been going on for 100 years, and the brewers have made no charge to the authorities for the use of the room. A new court house is now ready for occupation, and the magistrates are leaving their old quarters with a feeling of regret.

Housekeeper: "Do you love children?" Applicant: "It all depends on the wages, ma'am!"

TRIALS OF A YOUNG HOSTESS.

"Mary, bring Dr. Preachit some more jelly."

"Shure, mum, an' I spilt the whole lot on the pantry floor, mum, and yez has eat all I could scrape up, mum."