KAI WANG;

A TALE OF SOUTHERN CHINA.

CHAPTER IX.

When he threw away his priestly disguise Larry Kennedy had no intention of letting his caution go with it.

The knowledge that he had enemies without number in this imperial city of China was a fact that could not be discounted, a fact that haunted the little man day and night, so that he was not likely to let it pass out of his mind even when apparently in the midst of friends.

Those who are best acquainted with Chinese ways have the greatest respect for the cunning of the Celestials, and Larry's experience thus far had taught him that when dealing with such shrewd schemers no one was really safe until he had thoroughly cleared the woods.

When he entered the hotel, it was with the idea of bodily taking up his quarters there, thus giving his enemies to understand that he no longer had cause to fear them; they could draw whatever conclusions they pleased from his action, he did not care the snap of his finger, though naturally they would consider that his new course was brought about by his having jettisoned his cargo—relieved himself of the papers which were the cause of his troubles.

The very first person Larry set eyes on after entering the hotel was the Englishman to whom they had intrusted the documents but a couple of hours before.

Lord Rackett was comfortably stretched out in a chair and smoking a prime weed.

He looked the picture of contentment.

Larry, though not at all suspicious by nature, could not but wonder what brought him there.

How could he help it if his mind went back some years to stirring scenes in the harbor of Valparaiso, where this same bold Briton, furious because Dr. Jack interfered with his plans for a fortune, and stung with Jealousy, since he had been a suitor of Avis Morton before she ever met Evans after the bull fight at Madrid, had done his level best to make her a widow, and failing in this laudable endeavor, had even descended to the miserable work of having her kidnapped and carried to his steam yacht, from which she had been rescued only through the gallant endeavors of Dr. Jack and his friends.

Yes, such stirring scenes, together with others equally as exciting, in which the English bulldog had had a hand, flashed athwart Larry's memory as he saw milord comfortably installed in the building where Avis, secretly mourning for her lost husband, had taken up her abode.

Could it be that Plympton——. No, perish the unworthy thought! The Briton had professed such devout contrition for the pain and trouble his conduct in the past had given Avis, and was so zealous in his desire to make the amende honorable that Larry was compelled to believe him sincere.

Perhaps, as was quite natural, he had lodgings at the hotel himself; or it might be such a common centre proved the attraction for many foreigners after the dinner hour, a sort of vantage ground where they could meet and exchange views upon the grave questions of the time concerning Russian, German and British concessions in the awakening empire; or it might be the internal affairs of China, connected with Li Hung Chang, the weak Emperor and that most remarkable woman in the case, the Dowager Empress, in relation to whom new and startling surprises were of daily occurrence.

So Larry throttled the first feeling of distrust that caused a fluttering of his pulse.

Friends were too scarce under the flag of the yellow dragon to despise this hearty good-will offered with such ardor.

Lord Rackett chanced to set eyes on him at about this moment.

Down came his feet from the chair where they had been resting, Yankee fashion, and immediately he sprang erect, advancing toward the other with eager, outstretched hand, and a broad grin upon his glowing face.

"By Jove! now, this is a pleasure! It was difficult for me to place you, in that beastly toggery of a yellow-jacket mandarin, but now I have no trouble whatever—only your appearance makes me squirm, d'ye know, as I remember some very deucedly unpleasant facts connected with the past, which I had hoped to entirely forget."

Larry accepted the proffered hand, but with the caution of one whom experience had taught wisdom; these giants had such a grip and seemed utterly unconscious of the pain they caused in squeezing a set of tender digits.

Larry was a two-faced fellow—that is, he had a way peculiarly his own of picking up his affectation at will or tossing it aside when the occasion demanded manly qualities. It seemed to be an amusement for him to pose as a little Piccadilly swell; nor did he often neglect a favorable opportunity to strut and pose in this attitude when he had nothing better to do.

So now he cocked his monocle into his right optic, and gave milord his hand in the most excruciating as well as the latest absurd high grip, all of which quite tickled Plympton.

"By Jawve! glad to see you, my deah fellow. Assure you I am delighted to assume my ordinary attire—widiculous garb, that mandarin affair—beastly feeling—solemnly declare I felt uncommonly like one of the mummies, ye know, such as came from the Pyramids. Pwesume you put up at this establishment; quite an honor to English enterprise, by Jawve!"

"As you say, it is something of a building for this part of the country; but I have my own private lodgings," returned the other.

Larry thought he detected a gravity in his manner that was unusual—at any rate, after his recent exciting experiences he was just in the mood to take the alarm.

"Do you know—are you aware that she is under this roof?" he asked, pointedly.

"She told me so herself, you remember," replied the other, composedly.

"Ah! then you may have come here with the intention of seeing my fair cousin?"

Lord Rackett glanced hurriedly around, and there was enough of mystery in his action to set that valiant little heart of Larry's thumping at an unusual rate against his ribs.

He scented action in the air, and mentally groaned to remember that whatever was coming he must meet it alone, deprived of the sturdy arm and daring spirit upon which he had been so accustomed to lean.

"Pardon me for acting as I have done, but it seems to me as though there is danger in the very air we breathe, and in China it is never safe to assume that the very walls themselves have not ears."

Confusion! you alarm me, you do, by Jawve, now. But, pway, do not hesitate, Lord Wackett, but proceed. What's up?"

That covered the whole question, as it were, in a nutshell—what was up?

"I became anxious and thought it only right I should see Mrs. Evans again. You spoke of her resolution to again enter the Forbidden City in order to look upon the spot where her husband was cut down, and to assure herself, as it were, that the very last chance for hope in his case had become exhausted. I have determined to accompany you to Peking and share your venture, if you will allow me."

Larry was struck in a heap by the unexpected offer, it was so generous, so noble, for no man could be better acquainted with the danger than Lord Rackett, who showed such a willingness to take his life in his hands.

In dealing with such a man, Larry could no longer maintain his studied affectation, which he cast aside as easily as one does a top coat when the sun shines toward the zenith.

"That is good of you, my dear fellow. Years ago you tried your level best to make my cousin a widow, and now that she seems to be one through no fault of yours, by Jove, you are ready to risk your life in the endeavor to find Dr. Jack, if perchance he may still be in the land of the living. Demme, it's simply remarkable, that's what it is!"

"At any rate, that's just what I mean to do. I told you words were cheap, and that deeds spoke louder. That devilish past has given me many a pain, and I'd be beastly glad to wipe it all out, and feel myself clear of the stain."

The glow of manliness in his eyes touched a sympathetic chord in Larry's heart.

They shook hands again.

"I accept your offer and appreciate the motives that urge you to make it. God willing, we shall know the worst before long. It is useless trying to influence Avis against undertaking this desperate move—she is a woman who dares anything when the man she loves is in question. But I have felt the need of a strong arm, and I welcome you as a comrade in time of necessity."

Which was a very clever speech on the part of Larry, more given to saying ridiculous things than words of wissom.

Lord Rackett showed positive signs of satisfaction—his blooming countenance took another shade of red, and there was a firm look about his mouth that spoke well for his newly-made resolutions.

"That was one of the things I came here to tell her," he remarked.

"Then you had another?" queried his companion.

"Yes. After you left I had a visitor—perhaps you can guess who he might be?"

"Ah! yes, the Russian, to be sure?'

"Count Petoskey it was. You see, it was already known that she had been at the office of the consul, and they jumped to conclusions as to her mission; he also mentioned you, and this gave me an idea they had penetrated even that very clever mandarin disguise."

"Quite likely," murmured Larry, as his hand involuntarily toyed with the treacherous little puffs of blonde hair deep set on his jaws, and which he had reason to believe had been the means of his betrayal; "in fact, I am positive that what you say is true, for a howling mob congregated in front of Kai Wang's door, and shouted themselves hoarse in demanding that I appear and have my hair cropped in the prevailing Chinese style—the head to go with it."

"Ah! I see; and, declining this favor at their hands, you picked up your bed and walked, which showed remarkably good sense on your part. But, as I remember, you were always able to take care of yourself, as well as do some thinking for others."

This throwing of bouquets at each other was all very well, and doubtless had some effect in drawing the two strange comrades closer together in the bonds of friendship, but all the same it was not business, and shrewd little Larry knew it.

So he "returned to his mutton," and took up the case at the point where it had been dropped.

"What did he want, this minion of the Czar?"

"The papers, of course."

Larry uttered a cry of alarm.

"What cursed assurance! But these Russians would not hesitate to claim the sun by right of first discovery. Of course, you declined to grant his favor?"

How confidently he said this! The other noticed it and showed his pleasure.

"You may be certain I did. He tried specious arguments to prove the documents belonged to him; they failed to work. Then he showed me a commission from the Dowager Empress, giving him full authority to seize those documents wherever found, and confiscate them in the name of the empire."

Larry emitted a low whistle.

"Carried it pretty far, I should imagine."

"Correct, my boy. He found me stubborn, and began to use violent threats. I gave him one minute to apologize or be thrown from the door."

"That cooled his ardor?"

"Like a bucket of ice-water down his back. When he saw me start to take off my coat he came to his senses and withdrew his offensive remarks."

"Oh! if I had only been there to see it all."

"We went into argument again, and he became heated once more, though careful to refrain from personal insults. I snapped my fingers in his face and told him that was all I cared for any threats—the papers were upon British territory and would be defended against any and all comers. He went away mighty hot under the collar, I assure you."

That Lord Rackett rather enjoyed the situation, the broad smile upon his face testified; it is not every day that a sturdy Englishman finds a chance to get in a fair blow at a representative of the mighty rival power that crowds the interests of the British empire in China and along the Indian borders.

"But—such a desperate man, backed by the authority of so bold a ruler as the Empress of China, might not hesitate to even sack the consulate—of course concealing his hand in the game," spluttered the troubled Larry, but the other continued to smile.

"Ah! yes, that same thought occurred to me, d'ye know. Strange how great minds move in a similar channel—eh, Larry, my dear man?"

"Then you took precautions?" eagerly.

"That I did."

"And locked the safe?"

"Better even than that—called upon the captain of Her Majesty's gunboat Hornet, who chanced to drop in, having business at the consulate, for a guard of marines, and there is a cordon of blue-jackets stretched around the building that will hold it against any force Petoskey could bring to the front."

Larry waved his topee wildly above his head.

"Good for you!—that's the true spirit—checkmate Petoskey, my boy! I think he will have to go to school again and take a few more lessons before he finishes this game. I tell you, it relieves me to know those papers are safe."

"You value them highly."

"Why not? They are worth millions to Avis, and represent what Dr. Jack gave his own precious life for. I endured considerable rough work myself in their interest, and feel a decided concern in their safety, as should you and every other Anglo-Saxon in China. They stand for our victory over other foreign interests."

"Well, worry no longer about them, since they are safe from any attack."

"By Jove! now, I am glad to hear you say that; but we should continue to be on the alert. It was Jack's policy never to underestimate a foe."

"And deuced good policy, too; but, d'ye see, I'm unable to understand what this fellow could do to secure the papers."

"Being outgeneraled in regard to force, he will next try diplomacy—these Cossacks are great on sly tactics."

"But we are not babes in the wood, that he can play with us. With force a dead letter, how could he lay hands on the documents?"

Larry threw up both hands.

"Ask the wild winds or the sad sea waves, they can tell you as easily as I; but, all the same, I feel, I know, Petoskey is never the man to stop at trifles; and something tells me it won't be long before we discover he is far from having gone to sleep. Here comes a yellow flunky looking for you, I imagine, Lord Rackett."

"Oh! yes, the fellow who brought up a card a deuce of a time ago, with a request for an immediate interview."

He turned and spoke with the Celestial servant of the caravansary, and when Larry once more set eyes upon the florid face of the Englishman he instantly discovered signs of new apprehension there.

(To be continued).

PERSONAL POINTERS.

Interesting Gossip of Some Prominent Actors on the World's Stage.

Admiral Alexeieff, late Russian Viceroy in the Far East, owns a pet bear named Musca, to which he is immensely attached. It used to accompany him in his flagship wherever he went.

The State coach used by the King of Spain is drawn by eight pure white horses, with white plumes and white harness. Plumes wave from each corner of the coach, while a crown ornaments the centre .

The young King of Spain is an expert in the use of the sword. When quite a little child wooden swords were made for his use, and with these he would fence with the young nobles who were appointed to play with him; his marvellous ability was even then most noticeable, and he is now perhaps the most expert Royal swordsman in Europe.

Of her many treasures, Queen Alexandra values most a modest milk-jug of earthenware, which she keeps in the boudoir attached to her dairy at Sandringham. It was given to her by a poor dying girl, whose latter days had been soothed by the tender nursing and sympathy of the Princess Alexandra. When the Queen entertains any very exalted guest at afternoon tea in her Swiss chalet, it is from this humble but priceless jug that she pours the cream.

Sir Harry Johnston, the famous explorer, once escaped from a very tight corner in Africa by a queer stratagem. A score or two of murderous natives had surrounded his tent, into which, before rushing it, they sent an envoy. The envoy was told that small-pox was in the camp, and a wretched albino was sent out as an awful example. In five minutes the scared tribesmen had vanished. As Sir Harry well knew, they feared the "white disease" more than all the inventions of Maxim.

Lord Wolverton is one of Fortune's prime favorites. Eighteen years ago he was a poor man comparatively, with an income of a few hundreds a year, which he spent pleasantly enough in travelling in remote regions and hunting big game. Unexpectedly his elder brother died unmarried at the early age of twenty-seven, and he succeeded to the title and an income of $250,000 a year. Equal fortune attended him in marriage. Lady Wolverton is a sister of Lord Dudley. Like her husband, she is extremely devoted to yachting.

Mr. Thomas Hardy, the novelist, spent part of his early life in an architect's office, and he has made two of the characters in his novels architects. Mr. Hardy's mother died recently in the thatched cottage, built more than a century ago, where he was born and spent his boyhood. He was quite a little boy when his mother gave him a copy of Dryden's "Virgil." She took great pains with his education, and had him taught Latin when he was twelve years old. At fifteen he received his first lessons in French from a governess.

King Leopold's "morganatic" Queen was formerly Mme. Vaughan. She is said to be a very beautiful woman. Originally a barmaid at Bordeaux, she met the King accidentally in Brussels, and was privately married in the palace at Laeken not long after. It was for her that he built the beautiful villa at Villefranche, where he spends so much of his time. Nominally owned by Baroness Vaughan's brother, it is kept up in regal splendor; there are several motors in the garage, and King Leopold's magnificent yacht, the Albert, manned by an English crew, is always at the disposal of its occupants.

When Lord Dufferin was Viceroy of India he was presented with a novel paper-knife. One day the Maharajah Holkar of Indire paid him a visit at the Residency, and asked for his ivory paper-cutter as a remembrance. Lord Dufferin consented, the Indian potentate left, and the Viceroy saw him some months later, when Holkar introduced a fine young elephant into the room. A pile of newspapers lay at Lord Dufferin's side; the animal went up to them, cut them neatly with his tusks, which had been purposely sharpened, and laid them in a neat heap on the floor, ready for perusal.

Sir John Brunner, who celebrated his birthday the other day, is looked upon as one of the commercial kings in the British House of Commons. He is head of the largest manufactory in the world, and is deeply interested in science and education generally. He rivals Mr. Carnegie in the number of free libraries, town-halls and scholarships which he has so generously given, especially in Cheshire, the Northwich Division of which he represents in Parliament. He urges that the young men of the day should be given a scientific education, and says that every penny he has in the world comes "from the application of science to commerce."

Sir William White bears the proud unofficial title of Father of the present-day British Navy. A Director of Naval Construction, a post which he resigned in 1901, after occupying it for sixteen years, he designed some 250 warships, representing an outlay of $5,000,000, including the cost of their 2,000 big guns. Born at Devonport in humble circumstances he became a shipwright's apprentice, and made the most of the splendid opportunities which the Admiralty offered to these youths. His genius carried him up the ladder with a rapidity that amazed his fellow-workers, and at the early age of forty he succeeded to the high and responsible post of Chief Constructor.

VERY LIKELY.

"What do you consider the best foundation," asked the amitious youth, "on which to build a successful business?"

"Rocks," promptly replied the multi-millionaire.

ANIMALS WITH FALSE TEETH.

Have Been Treated by Dentists to Their Great Benefit.

Some few years ago Judge Woodfall, of England, was called upon to decide a case brought by a lady, who sued a naturalist for failing to provide her fox with a set of false teeth. As it is customary for ladies to make pets of foxes, or for foxes to suffer from lack of molars, the case promised to provide some features uncommon in the general run of County Court litigation, but those present who expected the court to coruscate with the witty remarks of judge and counsel, who should have revelled in the possession of such a peg upon which to hang their witticisms, were doomed to disappointment, for it speedily transpired that the fox in question had long since given up the ghost and that the teeth were to be supplied sclely in order to give a more realistic appearance to the skin that was to be turned into a boa.

Although the race of reynard has yet to pay a visit to the dentist for professional treatment, canine and equine patients have both been treated by the profession, and have greatly benefitted by their visits. Thus, in 1901, Mrs.. Jeffefferson Seligman, of New York, had her $4,000 saddle-mare, Anna, fitted out with eleven teeth, which enabled the animal, that could not eat before the operation, to masticate its oats with a relish that it had long been a stranger to. It is interesting to note that the equine patient was treated with the same consideration as a human being, the nerves of the teeth operated upon being deadened with cocaine prior to being filled with gold where the fillings were likely to show, and silver where they did not.

A New South Wales shepherd living at Hargreaves, near Mudgee, having a valuable pedigree ram which found great difficulty in masticating its food owing to the loss of teeth, provided the animal with an artificial set that undoubtedly served as useful a purpose as the four gold teeth set with diamonds that graced the mouth of a seven-year old Gordon setter that was exhibited at the Ladies' Kennel Club show in New York in 1902.

This dog, by the way, is by no means the only canine patient that dentists have had to deal with, as can be gathered from the fact that early in the year before last Beauty Steel, a prize Boston bulldog, was in the dental chair three hours, while Mr. Beardsley cleansed the cavities in two of his lower front teeth, filled them with gold, and put on gold crowns. It may be mentioned, for the benefit of would-be canine dentists, that the doctor in this instance secured his safety without the aid of anæsthetics by stuffing a towel into the dog's mouth.

A CHRONIC GRUMBLER.

Grumpy at his best is not a companionable man, but when unusually disturbed in his mind, stomach, or liver he is simply a social terror. He loses all regard for the amenities of life, and is an animated frost moving through the warm currents of society. One of the men with whom he can get along the best is Jolly, but there are stages of his depressions when Grumpy would do his worst to stir up a row with a saint. Grumpy and Jolly met the other morning, with this result:—

"How do you do?" inquired Jolly, cheerfully.

"How do I do what?" growled Grumpy.

"I mean, how are you, of course."

"How am I what? Explain yourself."

"Oh, you've got one of your fits, Grumpy. How do you feel?"

"I feel satisfied with nothing. I feel that 99 per cent. of the human race are fools, that marriage is a failure, that our social organization is a huge farce, and that the man who is willing to live his life is entitled to an everlasting reward."

"See here, old man, your spleen's out of order. The whole scope and extent of my curiosity was to ascertain the state of your health."

"Oh, only that? What in creation do you take me for? I've had forty doctors, and all of them put together can't answer your question. You want to know offhand from a layman what these forty professional healers have failed to tell me, though I have paid out enough to make the whole kit of them comfortably well off. You're old enough to know better."

"Good morning," said Jolly, as he moved away, with as great a show of anger as he could ever make.

"Nothing of the kind," shouted Grumpy. "Deuced beastly raw, cold, drizzling morning. A case of pneumonia in every breath. You don't seem to understand your language, Jolly. When you feel able to express yourself correctly and intelligently, come round."

A PRINCE OF SILENCE.

Sir Henry Peyton was famous a generation or two ago for his gray team and his lack of small talk. It is related, in the "Life" of the second Earl Granville, that Sir Henry once honored a pretty Englishwoman with the seat on the box of his coach for a sixteen-mile drive.

Half way he opened his lips for the first time:

"Woolly weather for coach horses, my lady," he remarked.

On another occasion he fairly outdid himself. His health was being drunk enthusiastically at an agricultural meeting.

"Thanks," said he, and drank their health in return.

Sitting down, he kicked his neighbor, Lord Jersey, and muttered:

"I didn't say too much, did I?"

PROOF.

She—And you really think Agnes married him for his money?

He—There can't be any doubt about it. She preferred him to me.