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"Accordingly I sought out Lowan and after due precautions unfolded the whole conspiracy, and he, cunning dog that he was, commended me highly for my devotion to the throne and promised to overwhelm me with riches if my story should prove true. The discovery of such a plot as this would mean for him a viceroyalty at least. The emperor did not forget those who served him well. The Son of Heaven was the cornerstone of wisdom, the fount of all human intelligence. To encounter the glory of his august smile was to enter the radius of paradise. Lowan had visions—visions.

"Well, we arranged our plot so nicely that the conspiracy was nipped in the bud. Most of the ringleaders were apprehended and many of the rank and file, but Kung, the brain, the soul, of the society, escaped.

"With him alive, even though crippled and a fugitive, I knew that it was but a poor life I carried about with me, though you may take it for granted that I had so arranged matters with Lowan as to appear still a faithful servant of the society. And here again I wish emphatically to add that I offer no apology for this subterfuge. It was a case of committing a foul murder or laying bare this monstrous plot. There was no middle way, no half measures. It was kill or be killed. I chose that which I considered the wiser course, though I have taken leave to doubt the wisdom since. Kung was a diabolical miscreant, absolutely devoid of pity or conscience, a man who never allowed one touch of humanity to interfere with his plans. Curses on his yellow face and his pig eyes! I see those eyes now. They peer at me through the window, they glare up at me from this paper as I write, they haunt me in my dreams! Kill him! Kill him!

"Well, Lowan was as good as his word. He paid me well and smuggled me safely to Hongkong. From thence I went a round of the islands, and when I came back I believed that the Society of the Hidden Meaning was a thing of the past. True, Kung had escaped, but most of the other leaders had been taken and summarily executed. This, so I thought and hoped, meant a death blow to the organization. Presently I was to be disagreeably surprised.

"I had returned to Shanghai from a trip to the Philippines, and on the second day of my arrival, about 10 in the evening, as I was going down to my ship, a cooly sidled up to me and slipped a paper into my hand. I guessed instinctively what it meant. I remembered all too vividly the last time such a thing occurred. I was rather glad of the night.

"However, I drew near a lamp and opened the missive. It was a square sheet of black paper, in the middle of which was the vermilion sign of the society. So the snake had been only scotched after all.

"I turned round and discovered the cooly by my side.

"'Well?' I said.

"'The master waits,' he answered.

"My first impulse was to ignore this command, make my way to the ship and fortify myself. And then I thought of the man beside me and wondered what his orders were. Acting quickly, for a sudden thought had come, I put out my hand to seize him, but he sprang back so sharply that I was foiled in the attempt. Looking about me, I thought I saw two shadows farther down the road.

"I now realized that this was a serious business, that the society, under the indefatigable Kung, had been reconstructed and that I was suspected. I knew, moreover, that to be suspected was equivalent to condemnation. The Society of the Hidden Meaning had a short way with traitors real or imaginary.

"Again I looked about me, and the two shadows seemed to be nearer. The cooly still kept a respectful distance but he continued to repeat, varying the repetition slightly: 'Come, follow. The master waits.'

"'I will,' said I, 'but first I must go to my ship.'

"'The master cannot wait,' he replied. 'The ship can.'

"'It is imperative that I should go.'

"'It is imperative that the master be obeyed.'

"I cursed the master for all that he was worth, but noting my hesitation, the man grew bolder.

"'You must come,' he said.

"'Tell the master that I will see him hanged first!'

"His reply to this outburst was a low whistle, and out of the shadows glided two forms. As they approached the fellow grew bolder, and I saw the blade of a knife flash as he raised his hand. With a cry he sprang at me, mingling with his curses the words 'death' and 'traitor.'

"The attack was so sudden that I had only time to throw up my arms, into one of which, as I received his charge, he buried his knife. That is why my left hand hangs so limply now. And with my right I drew my revolver, and as the other two men rushed upon me I fired hastily, bringing one to the ground. I fired again and again, but in my excitement missed the mark, and the two men, muttering excited curses, began warily to close in upon me, when the sound of voices down the road reached my ears. Immediately I cried aloud, 'Help! Help!' An answering shout came back and a clatter of feet. Then, cursing bitterly, my two assailants flung their knives at my head and with a bound disappeared into the night. Luckily, four Englishmen making their way down to the river had heard the firing and hurried forward. Had it not been for their opportune arrival, Kung would have had the satisfaction of counting me among his many victims.

"From that day to this I have never known a moment's peace. The getting away from Shanghai was but a small thing. Go where I might, Kung's myrmidons were at my heels. I knew this, and I had to guard against it, consequently for years I have not dared to trust even my own shadow. I soon learned that the society was on my track and that Wooching, the son of Mang-wah, one of the council who had perished in the futile plot against the throne, had been requisitioned by Kung as the avenger of the society.

"I knew Wooching slightly. He was an exceedingly intelligent and desperate man, one who had lived some years in Australia and as a consequence spoke English with remarkable fluency. For their purpose the society could not have chosen a better sleuthhound, for not alone did he bring an exceedingly clever brain to bear upon his task, but he had likewise a personal

"With a cry he sprang at me."

grievance to avenge. With what callous, cold blooded earnestness he has pursued his work you know. It was he who killed your mother. It was he who, frustrated in his attempt on you, slew your uncle's horses. It is he who will kill me. He is the man who will kill you unless you kill him first. It is from him and his associates that I have been hiding these many years. It was he whom you saw that day upon the platform at Winchester. He will pursue his course as surely as the sun in heaven unless you intercept him. Buoy yourself up with no false hopes. I tell you there can be no peace for you with him at large. Wooching must die. You must kill Kung.

"It is unnecessary for me to enter into any further detail, but you must not fancy that I was always the arrant coward you knew. My pitiable condition is the result of a weary growth. Once I never dreamed of turning my back to the enemy. On the contrary, I went in search of him. But this fiend never sought the light, and gradually the strain wore down my nerves. I fled from place to place, but could not shake him off. Numberless traps were set to catch me, but by good luck I managed to escape, though once a knife found its way to my leg and gave me this cursed limp.

"When I wrote to your mother from Australia, I had every intention of coming by the ship which brought the letter, but learning at the last moment that the society was on my track, I abandoned the intention. I discovered that two Chinamen had taken passage by the same ship. Wooching, who had been apprised of my intention to come home, paid his visit accordingly.

"And now one last word. Do not lull yourself with false hopes. The society is rich and powerful and will spare neither trouble nor expense to achieve its end. Its influence is far-reaching; it has agents everywhere. It is a powerful protector, but an implacable enemy. At the first glance things seem hopeless for you, but in reality I think they are not. This vengeance upon me and mine is chiefly a personal matter, for there was much between Kung and me of which I need not speak. Wooching perhaps not unnaturally, considers me guilty of his father's death. If he and Kung were removed the vendetta would end. The other chiefs of the society have not that personal interest in our destruction which urges on those two to vengeance.

"Should you, therefore, ever entertain the idea of bearding the lion in his den, go to Hongkong and find Koon-Si, the carpenter. You will know him by the slit in his left nostril. Tell him that the writing of Kung is once more seen in the land. He will know what you mean.

"And so I repeat once more: Wooching must die. You must kill Kung."

CHAPTER XIII.

WHAT HAPPENED IN LEICESTER SQUARE.

The long silence which followed the reading of this manuscript added a grewsome impressiveness to the narrative. My uncle, sitting low in his easy chair, pulled away at his pipe, a gloomy frown straightening his brows and adding a look of grim intentness to his face. My brain tossed and tumbled like a chaos of waters, amid the roar of which I heard a voice crying: "Wooching must die. You must kill Kung." Again I saw the little man as he opened our gate at Windsor on that fateful day, the politest cutthroat in the world. I could hear the soft, throaty accents, so deferential and full of deep respect, as he made his inquiries. I read now the meaning of that look as he put the question, "Are you Captain Kingston's son?" I saw my mother as she stood that evening in the porch and waved a last farewell to me. The impulse which prompted me to run back and throw my arms about her neck was a warning, if I could only have read it. What an escape had been mine! I looked at my Uncle Jim and thought of that night in Maidenhead and the bone clapping Christy. How strangely it had all worked out.

Presently Jim laid aside his pipe and rose to his feet.

"Well, Davie," he said, "what do you make of it?"

Truth to tell, my brain was in such a whirl that I could not marshal my ideas. I only knew that the tale was horrible and that it affected me horribly. But I replied: "Everything that's bad. My father has left me a fine heritage."

"Aye," he answered, "but let us not talk of that. I think there is no reason why we should doubt the veracity of the story."

"None, I am sorry to say. I have seen too much during the last two years."

"Well, then, we must set our house in order, unless"— He stopped and looked me up and down, a singular, penetrating expression playing about his eyes.

"Unless we follow out his wish?"

"Precisely."

"But we cannot kill."

"Neither can we allow ourselves to be killed. You would not hesitate to shoot a wild beast that threatened you. These men are worse than wild beasts, for they have human intelligence and the resources of civilization to aid them. One thing is certain, they know neither pity nor fear. It is not enough for them that they have punished the traitor. They mean to wipe out the traitor's brood. It matters nothing that you or your mother never did them harm. You must pay bitterly for the sins of others. Now this is an iniquity which should be put an end to, and that can only be accomplished by the suppression of Kung. How we are to bring about such a consummation I haven't the least idea, but of one thing I am certain—the world is not big enough for the three of us."

It was horrible, but perfectly true. I felt it. I had seen too much of the doings of the Society of the Hidden Meaning. I knew with what tenacity they clung to the work in hand, and I had no hope whatever of their abandoning the enterprise, no matter what obstacles there were to be surmounted. The result then would be a life somewhat similar to my father's, a death which could not be prolonged indefinitely.

"What do you propose?" I asked.

"It is evident," said he, "that one of two things must happen—either we kill Kung or he kills us. I gather from what your father says that the death of Kung, coupled with that of Wooching, will probably end the feud, as they are the only two chiefs left of the original council who take a personal interest in the vengeance. Wooching is probably here in this country. If we could lay our hands on him, the law would relieve us of all moral responsibility concerning him. With Kung it is different. He is in China and apparently beyond the reach of any law. If we want him, we must look for him in his native land."

"Go to China?" I gasped.

He smiled. "Why not?"

"But surely that would be to court instant annihilation."

"Not necessarily. It is just possible that it may be safer than this. Kung not improbably will credit us with the wish to avoid him. The matter is very serious, Davie. I, as you know, am a man of peace, but if peace is denied me, then I have no objection to war. We each have a personal debt to pay—an obligation which it is our bounden duty to fulfill. I know your mother was good enough to forgive the hand that struck her down, but, you see, the vengeance does not end there. As sure as we are living men our turn will come, unless we make ourselves masters of the situation."

I had no doubt that he was right, though I shrank from such a foolhardy enterprise as seeking Kung in his native land. If we could not guard against his emissary in our own country, surrounded by police and the appliances of civilization, how could we hope to succeed in the very stronghold of the yellow fiends? My uncle admitted the apparent soundness of my argument, but the idea of penetrating into the enemy's country had taken possession of him, and nothing that I could say made him waver in his design.

"At all events," I said, "we cannot be sure that these men mean to continue the vengeance. It is just possible that my father in his hatred and fear of Kung may have overstated his case. Ought we not to wait for some sign, watching always? What if they are satisfied?"

"It matters nothing," he replied. "I am not. Are you?" This rather bitterly, I thought.

I did not answer, but looked at him in a way that was more effective than words.

"Sorry," he said apologetically. "You know what I mean. But nothing can satisfy me until I have brought Lucy's murderer to book. I believe the old man to be right. He knew what he was talking about. We shall have to settle with Wooching and Kung."

Deep in my heart I was of the same belief, but if the truth must be told I

With a cry I sprang forward, but the crowd impeded my progress.

had some of my father's horror of the society, and I would not have been ill content to forget. But that was not to be, as I was presently to know.

That night my uncle and I dined at his club in St. James street, and afterward we looked in at a so called palace of pleasure on the north side of Leicester square. Perhaps it was rather early days for music halls, and I ventured to suggest as much, but Jim (for I had already reached that stage of intimacy which permitted the use of the Christian name) protested that we had supped enough of horrors and that it was sometimes advisable to forget. He was like that, not much given to sentimentalisms, and I have found that it is not your puling, whining man who feels the most, though he usually commands the most sympathy. Jim made but a small bubble with his excitement, but I, who read his face like a book, could tell by his mouth or the look of his eyes how much he felt.

As usual the Empire was very full that night, and as we moved about among the crowd, the lights, the bustle, the well dressed men, the gaudy women, all made such a complete change that I congratulated myself upon coming and my uncle in insisting upon his wish. Indeed, wedged in the gay throng, I forgot for a time the Society of the Hidden Meaning and the shadow that hung over me. Kung was a bad dream which I had dispelled; Wooching a yellow phantom that had passed from before my eyes.

But I was not permitted long to enjoy this sweet hour of forgetfulness, for as we left the theater I, looking around as one will in a crowd, saw a man standing on the curb, who arrested my thought even though my eyes swept past him. Back they came instantly, and I recognized in a moment Wooching, the man with the strange eyes.

With a cry I sprang forward, but the crowd impeded my progress, and after nearly knocking down two men a third brought me up with an oath. I stammered an apology which, unless my memory fails me, was received with another unflattering adjective. But, unheeding this, I sprang out on to the road and was immediately almost run down by a hansom, the driver of which loaded the air with a further contribution of choice billingsgate. But after rushing wildly for a dozen yards or so I pulled up, nonplused. The man was nowhere to be seen.

Here my uncle joined me, and, laying his hand on my arm, he gasped out, "What is it?"

"I saw him. He was here a moment ago."

"He?"

"The man with the strange eyes."

Jim ground out an oath.

"Which way did he go?"

I pointed along Coventry street.

"I would have had him, too, if the crowd had not blocked me."

"You are sure it was he?"

I was so sure that I did not take the trouble to be emphatic, even though every nerve of me was a-thrill with excitement.

"Then let us follow."

We moved westward among the people, who were now very numerous, owing chiefly to the emptying of the theaters in the neighborhood. But, though we intently peered into each face, we failed to encounter the object of our search. Then we stood for a time at the corner of the Pavilion, just where Shaftesbury avenue empties itself into that ocean of light and life which people call Piccadilly circus—the brightest, gayest, saddest spot in the whole world.

In such a place one might as well search for the proverbial needle in the bundle of hay, as expect to find an insignificant little personage who had every intention of not breaking cover. But still we stood watching the people, the bewildering rush of cabs and carriages, the honest citizen hurrying home to bed, the young dandy with the immaculate shirt front and hat tipped saucily on one side, who is a little weak at the knee perhaps, but who is 'seeing life,' don't you know; the gray haired roue, the dawdling vagrant. These, with the rattling of vehicles, the laughter and curses of men and women, the hoarse shouts of the newsboys, make up a babel unapproachable in any other capital.

After a time, to the infinite risk of life and limb, we ventured to cross the circus. Then, eyes open, ears alert, we continued our journey homeward, reaching our rooms without encountering anything that might be termed suspicious. It was with a feeling of relief, and yet with a relief which did not dissipate my fears, that I heard the front door close. For the moment no doubt we were secure, but the man rose threateningly before the mental vision, a sign and a symbol which could not be blotted out.

However, nothing happened that night, and on the following morning I for one had lost many of my fears. My uncle was still very grave, and I could see that the shadow of Wooching was making life for him absolutely intolerable. But he said nothing, and we descended the stairs together, and so out into the street. Then, as I gently pulled the door to, I saw something just below the number which made me start. I looked again and could no longer doubt.

It was the elliptical sign of the Hidden Meaning.

My uncle, who had passed some paces down the street, finding I was not by his side, here turned and beckoned me to him. I, however, called to him instead, a movement evidently betokening much mystery, for he quickly retraced his steps, his face eagerly asking the question, "What is it?"

For answer I pointed to the door, and as his eyes encountered the sign I saw a startled look leap to them. He stepped up closer to it and peered at it intently. Then he surveyed me with a wondering look, in which I detected alarm and a profound anxiety.

"Let us go in," he said.

He opened the door and rang for the porter, and him he subjected to a searching examination concerning the lodgers and the would be lodgers. But the man could give us no satisfactory information. The rooms were full—they had been for some time previous to our arrival, and, though many people had called to make inquiries, he could not recollect any one in particular resembling our description of Wooching.

My uncle then nodded to me without speaking, and together we mounted the stairs to our rooms. Throwing his stick and gloves on the table with a bang, he turned and faced me, and I saw that his eyes had grown hard and desperate, and I knew that his blood ran wickedly. His fair skin wore a dark, ominous flush which only visited it in moments of intense anger.

"Well," said I, "what's it to be—fight or fight?"

"Fight," he answered grimly. "To fly would be to live your father's life and eventually to meet his death. No; we must stand our ground and meet Mr. Wooching with his own weapons. He has very kindly warned us. If we neglect the warning, we shall deserve to suffer."

"Why should he have warned us?" I asked.

He was silent for a few moments, during which he walked the length of the room. Then he said, "I don't know, unless it's vanity."

"Vanity!" Surely this was the strangest form vanity had ever taken!

"Yes; of a kind—that is, supposing he did it, which is not probable."

"Then you think he does not work alone?"

"I am sure of it. That sign may be merely a warning to his associates. Remember what your father said. The society has agents all over the English speaking world. We shall be shadowed day and night. Come here."

He had been standing by the window peering into the street, and as I approached him he drew suddenly behind the curtain and waved for me to do likewise. Unhesitatingly I obeyed, though ignorant of the reason. I took up a position on the other side of the window and peered out into the street, but seeing nothing unusual there I turned inquiringly to him. "What's the matter?"

"You see that man in the billycock hat and the gray trousers?"

"Yes."

"Watch him."

The person thus described, who seemed an everyday individual of the better class artisan or shopman type, would, in an ordinary way, have attracted no attention in the streets. One would meet thousands of such men in a walk from Charing Cross to the bank. I myself, gazing upon him, would have seen him with my eyes only. The brain would have retained no impression of his unimportant personality. But now I looked at him with other eyes, with eyes which were full of suspicion, and I saw that he loitered in a way which was uncommon with people of his class in Dover street. I saw, too, that his eyes were fixed upon one object, and that object was our house. Though his hat was pulled well over his forehead, I could see his eyes glancing up in our direction from under the brim.

Slowly he passed along the street and at the second lamppost up he stopped. Against the farther side of it he leaned; but, though he occasionally glanced about him, I could see that his attention was really engrossed by our end of the street. And yet further to add to the mystery, if mystery there were, he suddenly left his lounge against the lamppost, and we saw him disappear around the corner of the next street.

More puzzled than ever, I looked at my uncle for an explanation, and I saw a grim smile play about his mouth. His eyes had come back to the Piccadilly end of the street, and, following the direction of his gaze, I saw it center upon a burly policeman who rolled with lordly nonchalance along the pavement.

Quickly putting two and two together, I turned to my companion for confirmation. He nodded approvingly, as though he read my thoughts.

"Quite right. I believe that man to be there for no good purpose. His sudden exit into Stafford street, just as the constable appears, is, to say the least of it, a trifle suspicious. Of course it may be merely a coincidence, but we shall see. If I am not mistaken, he will return by way of Albemarle street and Piccadilly."

"But this is an Englishman," I began. "Surely he"— and then I stopped, feeling very foolish. I was going to suggest in the face of my father's confession that Englishmen would not mix themselves up with the Society of Hidden Meaning.

Jim saw the hesitation and smiled.

"My dear Davie," he said, "you must not imagine that we have only Wooching to fight. The society is rich. There are always plenty of men ready to earn good wages. One has only to go into the streets and look at the faces of the people to imagine how easily the society would gain recruits."

With a sigh I assented. With so much murder and robbery rife for problematical gains, how very easy it would be to find workmen when the wage was assured. It seemed to me that the ground beneath us was slipping more rapidly than ever.

We accordingly set ourselves to watch, Jim stationing himself at one side of the window, I at the other. I saw the spy slowly enter our street from the Piccadilly end. We watched the man walk on until he reached the end of the street, and there he took up his stand and began slowly to fill a pipe. Then my uncle picked up his gloves and cane.

"We had better go now," he said. "That fellow saw us enter. He must see us go out again or he may suspect us of watching. I must go and see Waring. We shall certainly lose that fellow in the crowd. Quick, there's an empty hansom coming along the street just now!"

I snatched up my hat and gloves, and together we bundled down the stairs, opening the door in time to hail the cab. With a nonchalant step we crossed the pavement.

"Bank," said my uncle as he balanced himself on the step.

I, following, took a leisurely look up the street. The man with the billycock hat had left his stand and was hurrying in our direction. I caught a last glimpse of him as we shot round the corner into Piccadilly. He was still a good hundred yards behind.

CHAPTER XIV.

A DESPERATE EFFORT.

To know that you are a marked man, the object of a hatred which nothing but your death can appease, is to be saddled with the companionship of horror and fear. To sit with locked doors, to know no moment of respite waking or sleeping, forever to feel the contact of the revolver in my hip pocket, to distrust every man in the street who brushed against me—this was my life, and little wonder if I found it intolerable and sought for change among men who merely sought for pleasure.

And thus it came about that I invariably dragged my uncle to one of the pleasure houses within the vicinity of Leicester square, for there, amid the glitter and the hum of life, I always felt safe and had some chance of partly forgetting the doom that was laid upon me.

On this particular evening, after dining in the vicinity, we strolled into the Empire and mixed with the well dressed nondescripts who patronize that temple of art. Here, as usual, we met acquaintances to whom we merely nodded or passed a brief good night, as the case might be. But one, a stockbroker friend, came and buttonholed my uncle, and, seeing that they wanted to talk business, I strolled on. When I returned, he was nowhere to be seen. This in itself was not a very alarming matter, but a fruitless search from one end of the promenade to the other caused some slight misgivings. What had become of him? Where had he gone?

I walked up and down for some time, peering to right and left, but the min-

He immediately apologized with a quite unnecessary vehemence.

utes ran on, and still he put in no appearance. Then I really began to feel nervous, for his going away like this was in direct opposition to an arrangement into which we had entered—that of keeping together while out of doors. No doubt he was somewhere within the precincts of the house. Of that I almost succeeded in convincing myself. But where?

Not daring to leave the promenade for fear he should return during my absence, I went to the bar at the far end and ordered a drink, which I well remember receiving from a weary, worn creature whose pallid face proclaimed an intimate acquaintance with the least delightful side of life. Ground around the bar were about a dozen men of various ages, some with the youthful bloom still on their faces, others, of the mottled, flushing stamp whose features are an unfailing index to their lives.

To be continued

THE HOME DOCTOR.

An excellent gargle for sore throat or hoarseness is made by boiling a teaspoonful of pure honey in a cup of water.

Cinders or any of the particles that seek lodgment in the eye are best removed by first closing the eye until it is filled with tears. Next turn the lid back and use the edge of a handkerchief or a looped hair to remove the cinder.

Common, everyday earth is a cure for many an ache or pain. In the case of a burn from an acid the chief thing is to apply an alkali to neutralize the acid. This may be done by gathering a handful of earth and laying it on the injured part, for the earth contains alkali enough to render it very efficacious. Soda may be used for an acid burn.