



THE SILK ENIGMA

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"ZORA, THE INVISIBLE,"
"DEATH IN THE STALLS," &c.

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CHAPTER XXII INSIDE INFORMATION

Sen Yat Soh was not in the best of tempers. Last night's failure to discover anything of value among the Suchow silk at Oxtons had been distressing to his mind. He realized now that the forces pitted against him in this intricate battle of wits and tactics must have been gaining ground. What he could not understand as he sat sulking in his apartments was that, according to the most reliable information the secret of the silk was to be found in a consignment that had already arrived at Oxtons.

The girl Varley had told him that little had been sold of that new consignment. He believed that she was speaking the truth. On the other hand he was not prepared to be over sure about Miss Lennard. He had made something of a fool of himself over Miss Lennard. He realized, now, that he had told her too much. He had whetted her ample appetite to such an extent that he could no longer now be quite sure whether Miss Lennard had actually bought Suchow silk from Oxtons or not. Miss Varley had supplied the address. That, to Sen's mind, was significant. If Miss Varley was not telling the truth, how did she know that Miss Lennard lived at that address in Battersea she had given him.

Yet he had searched the flat high and low for the missing length of Suchow silk. So far as the expert searching had gone, it wasn't there. Miss Lennard had suggested that, provided she was turned at liberty she would find the piece for him, but the Chinaman knew that, once either of these girls was set free, his own liberty would be immediately imperilled.

Wu Ti had done well in going back to Oxtons last night, but once again he had fallen into trouble. He had met someone in the shop and had been compelled to leave him trussed up. Wu Ti had learned his lesson. Sen Yat Soh had decreed that there must be no more killing, and thanks to that decree Philip Slater was still alive, for Wu Ti himself was partial to quick dispatch. He operated on the principle that dead men tell no tales, but so long as Sen Yat Soh wanted no more trouble with the police, that was well. It did not occur to the strange mentality of Wu Ti that by going back to Oxtons to search for silk he might be running his neck into a noose. The fact that he had murdered Nesscue did not affect him in the least. Killing was a nasty necessity sometimes, like having a tooth extracted. In short Wu Ti was an excellent example of a philosopher.

But Sen Yat Soh was not such a fool as to believe that because Wu Ti had not been caught that the police had given up the hunt. It was their very inactivity that alarmed him; that, and the fact that the secret of the silk at Oxtons was as carefully guarded as ever.

To any man other than Sen Yat Soh the position would have been abandoned and he would have made his exit as gracefully as he might. Not that Sen Yat Soh's line of retreat in the event of emergency was not well covered. Ten miles distant there was an aeroplane—a small and very fast machine on which he had an expensive option for six weeks. But the Oriental had no desire to utilize the services of that plane unless he had in his possession the secret he had come to London to obtain.

Ling Foo had received no further information concerning the operations of their rivals in the hunt for the secret, and to Sen Yat Soh's way of thinking no news was good news. He was growing anxious. He wanted to know who it was Wu Ti had met in the store last night. It was wise, of course, for Wu Ti to clear out as quickly as possible with the silk in his possession, but Sen Yat Soh had an idea that the man in the store might have been on a mission similar to that of Wu Ti and it was a pity his identity was not known.

That morning too there had been the visit of a young man inquiring for the late tenant. Ling Foo had not been sure, but he thought that the young man resembled one of the assistants at Oxtons—the one who had chased him from the store.

TORTURE CHAMBER

Sen Yat Soh instructed Ling Foo to watch and report on the young man's movements. It was possible that the young man—if it were one and the same person—was looking for the girl. But if that were so how did he come to be making inquiries in this part of the world? How did this young man know where to look? Life was becoming highly complicated for the sagely philosophical Sen Yat Soh.

Ling Foo had given an order to the little Tartar who had been sent to warn Peter Oxtan that he must shadow the young man who had just called.

The Tartar had never liked coming to England. Life was too circumscribed, and since a strain of banditry ran rough-cut through his nature he was impatient to be back again in the East. He accepted Ling Foo's order with ill grace. Nevertheless, he left the house discreetly and saw a young man answering to Ling Foo's description sauntering along the lane. The Tartar was

an adept at concealment. He wriggled his lithe yellow body along the ground like a snake and Philip was totally unaware of the man's presence.

The sight of that face at the small barred window had disturbed him. Phyllis Varley had disappeared. There was a definite Chinese association between the death of Nesscue and succeeding events. What if Phyllis was incarcerated in this house? It certainly had not been Phyllis' face, but what of that? Philip felt that he must make a desperate bid to gain access to the house without the occupant's knowledge. At first he toyed with the idea of telephoning Superintendent Beck and giving him the "lowdown," but he would have time enough for that later, when he had solved the mystery, and Philip was quite convinced that he was going to do that.

It was now midday and Philip felt hungry. He realized that it would be senseless to attempt to enter the house in daylight and that he must wait for the cover of dusk.

With this thought in mind he retraced his steps to the main road, watched by the unseen eyes of the Tartar, and made his way back to the village. At the little old-world inn he lunched well and drank local-brewed nut-brown ale from a pewter pot.

During the afternoon he wandered about the neighbourhood asking casual questions from field and farm workers concerning the present tenants of The Beeches. All the information he gathered was that some foreigners—yellow fellows—had taken the place, and that little, if anything, was ever seen of them. One farm hand confessed that since he had to pass that way at night he had frequently seen a big black saloon car coming and going London-wards at all sorts of hours. As for the house, only an occasional light showed there after dark.

Before returning to the vicinity of The Beeches Philip paid another visit to old Bob Prentiss in his general store, and he surprised the old man by asking him to do him a favour.

"I know it will sound unusual to you, Mr. Prentiss," he said, "but if I don't head up here again by midday tomorrow I want you to hand this letter to the village policeman. You'll see it is addressed to Superintendent Beck of Scotland Yard. He's a friend of mine, and I want you to impress the village policeman with the fact that I want the contents of that note telephoned to Scotland Yard immediately. It may be a matter of life or death."

Bob Prentiss blinked unbelievably. "You mean that you are likely to be in danger from them yellow-skinned?"

"I may be," Philip smiled, "but I'm sorry I can't tell you more just yet. I just ask you to trust me."

"I'll trust you all right, young sir, and what's more, if I were a year or two younger I'd be along side o' you; specially if there's a chance of a scrap. I did a bit of that in my young days, sir."

Philip thanked him and departed. The blanket of dust had drawn itself around the house, and the night was incredibly still. He had previously marked a point where he felt it would be easy to gain access to the grounds over the wall with the aid of an elm whose branches tipped the top of the wall.

He climbed the tree without difficulty, and the next moment he had jumped lightly down into the grounds of The Beeches.

Not a light was showing, but the house itself loomed blacker than the night ahead of him. He had noted a window on the ground level almost opposite the elm tree, and he felt that it ought not to be difficult to force this open.

The window, however, needed no forcing. It was obligingly unlatched. Silently Philip pushed up the lower half of the sash frame and scrambled over the sill. The torch he had picked up in Oxtons the previous night was still in his pocket. Cautiously he switched it on, and in the light saw that he was looking into a small stone-flagged room whose floor was below ground level. It had probably been used at one time as a flour store, for there were several empty sacks in the far corner. He lowered himself into the room and closed the window behind him. The door stood ajar, and opening it wider he found himself confronted by a narrow flight of stone steps. That same peculiar sense of fear swept him again, but he fought down the emotion and stole silently up the stairs, having removed his shoes and left them beside the window of the room he had just left.

moment he stood there horrified. He remembered the woman's face he had seen at the window. The time for action had come.

Discarding caution as if it had been a cumbersome coat Philip dashed towards the stairs and raced upwards. He had not the smallest idea where he was going or into what danger. Reaching the first landing he paused, listening. The scream had not been repeated. He found himself faced with four doors. He placed his ears to each, but heard nothing. On the second landing he fared better. The landing was in darkness and from beneath one of the doors came a faint ribbon of light. He waited for a moment uncertain how to act. His mind was immediately made up by the sound of another heart-rending scream and there was no mistaking the direction. It came from the door opposite him.

Philip flung the door open without hesitation and stood staring at a strange sight. A woman was lying fully clothed on what appeared to be a small wire mattress on the floor. Beside the mattress stood an evil-visaged Chinaman while beside the opposite wall, one hand controlling a master electric switch, transformer and rheostat, stood the man who had answered his inquiry at the door that morning. Philip understood the significance of the scene. It was a modern form of Eastern torture. These fiends had sought the assistance of electricity and the woman on the wire frame was being subjected to various forms of electric shocks.

"You swine," cried Philip, launching himself into the room like an arrow from a bow.

The man bending over the woman had turned at the sound of the door being flung open but his face during those seconds remained inscrutable. Whether he had been anticipating Philip's attack it was impossible to tell but he was not quick enough to prevent the young man's fist crashing against his unprotected jaw. Sen Yat Soh, spun sideways like a top, but the fact that there had been little resistance to the blow was fatal for Philip who, unable to control his momentum, found himself falling on to the electric torture frame on the floor.

Ling Foo at the wall switch saw his opportunity. He swung the rheostat handle sharply over. The woman on the frame uttered another piercing scream before she passed into unconsciousness. Philip felt as if a dozen mules had kicked him in the head simultaneously. He felt utterly incapable of movement and looked up into Sen Yat Soh's evil face without hope.

(TO BE CONTINUED)

Plan for Social Security and to Retire Public Debt

From Globe and Mail
Whether in the fulness of time it flops or flops not, the grandest fool-proof plan ever devised and started on its uncertain way on this continent is now being discussed at Washington and some day it will be big news in Canada. Its grandeur can be measured by its breath-taking objectives, which, quite simply, are to buy back from the public all Government bonds and debentures and at the same time to provide a fund for old-age pensions and unemployment insurance on an adequate scale.

It cannot be done in a day or a year, of course, but by simple arithmetic they are showing in Washington how the three bugbears of modern States—economic insecurity in old age, recurring unemployment, and growing public debts of monumental sizes—can be disposed of completely in 30-odd years.

Now, how is Washington to dispose of its \$37,000 millions of national debt? Even its \$12,000 millions of gold do not supply more than a partial answer and in the plan itself they do not figure at all.

The plan, or theory about the plan, came about this way. Congress, swayed by President Roosevelt, found a new and a good way to spend money. The way was to provide for old-age pen-

sions and unemployment insurance, two laudable objectives if ever there were two, that is if the money can be got.

But the money is being got. The contributions from employers and employees exacted by the new law are reaching \$75 millions a month and promise to reach \$1,000 millions yearly in 1938. Invest that in Government 3 per cents, and invest the growing amounts received every year for more than 30 years and there you have \$43,000 millions of United States Government debt, all held by one Government department.

What are the advantages? First, the Government could finance in a sure market within its own household without direct recourse to banks or public; second, maturities and redemptions would not in that event be a matter of overhauling the public market for securities at various intervals; and, third, there would be progressive steps every year toward giving comfort to the aged and temporary help to the man out of a job.

The disadvantages? First, it will be inflationary in effect, taking away from banks and institutions their gilt-edge securities and replacing them with one billion dollars yearly for which investment must be found; 2nd, the presence of such vast sums of money will be a constant temptation toward reckless Government expenditure which will cause many dishonest arguments that such moneys received should be entered into the general fund and be available for all purposes; 3rd, vast projects financed by money from this fund would also throw so much money on the market that the inflation resulting would be uncontrollable.

The plan is both mama and dynamite; mama if such a fund is administered with strict honesty and sense of trusteeship; and sure dynamite if it

isn't, especially if Government grows reckless in spending and forget that balancing the budget and economy will still remain desirable and sound principles to follow.

When Will Boys Stop Fooling with "Caps"?

This Time It's a Haileybury Lad Who Loses Three Fingers from Explosion of Detonator.

The Advance and other newspapers in the North have had innumerable warnings against fooling with detonators, otherwise known as dynamite caps. It would be thought that parents would warn their children against playing with these dangerous things if they find any. The companies and stores dealing in explosives are usually very careful in handling these caps and in seeing that none are left around where they may cause harm. The mines also are very careful in the matter. The chief trouble seems to be with those using explosives just occasionally. The law provides for the punishment of anyone leaving these detonators or other explosives where harm may result. There is no law on the statute books to punish boys for playing with these dangerous things. But all who monkey with these "caps" are liable to be very sternly punished. The loss of fingers and arms, not to mention blindness, are among the milder punishments. At least in the interests of the parents themselves and the safety of their children, all parents should pass along warning against any fooling with these detonator caps.

The latest case of injury from fooling with these caps was at Haileybury some days ago. The Haileyburian last week tells the story in the following front-page paragraph:—

"Kenneth Laronde, aged twelve years, has a badly injured hand from which three fingers have been amputated, as a result of the explosion of a detonator, or dynamite cap, which he held over a lighted match while at play near his home on Little Street late last week. Several of the detonators were found by Kenneth's sister, it is said, in a ravine near the home and the children were using them as whistles. Later the boy lit a match and held the cap over the flame, with the explosion resulting. How the detonators came to be thrown in the ravine remains a mystery, so far as the authorities are concerned. Chief of Police MacGill stated that he could discover no clue as to who might be responsible and there is apparently no way of stopping the dangerous practice of leaving the explosives around loose."

"This is not the first case of a similar accident in Haileybury, but in spite of repeated warnings these using explosives will be careless. There had been no blasting inside the town's boundaries for a long period and it is supposed that someone simply discarded the detonators."

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