

# THE SABLE LORCHA

By HORACE HAZELTINE

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self no longer. Before the slowly spoken sentence was complete I had sprung up, restless with impatient indignation, my blood throbbing in my temples, my hands itching to throttle an honest man's traducers.

"That," I cried, hoarse with exasperation, "is a damnable lie!"

If I expected retaliation I was disappointed. Yip Sing's seamed yellow face continued an immobile mask for whatever emotion he may have felt, and Chen Mok placidly consulted his memorandum.

"Robert Cameron," I went on, my passion whetted by their indifference, "has been a gentleman of leisure and fortune always. Of all men in the world he is the last to be accused of such a crime as this. A seafaring man! A smuggler of coolies! It is too preposterous even for discussion. And I want to tell you now, Mr. Yip, and you, too, Mr. Chen, that I shall leave no stone unturned to bring to justice those who are guilty of having made this unthinkable mistake. Hitherto I have been unable to get a clew. But what you have said tonight does away with that difficulty. Both of you shall answer, now, to the authorities."

As I spoke I edged toward an electric push-button, at the side of the chimney-piece, and at the last word, I pressed it.

That Checkabeedy, following my instructions, had remained within close call was demonstrated by his prompt appearance.

"Telephone the police station," I commanded, "to send two officers here at once."

CHAPTER XXIII.

A Tattoo Mark.

Though I spoke in my ordinary tone, the visiting Celestials gave no sign that they heard me. I had expected protestation. I should not have been surprised had I been forced to restrain them—to make them prisoners, in fact, until the arrival of the police. But neither of them either moved or spoke, until the silence, in my nervously excited condition, becoming unbearable to me, I demanded:

"By what right, Mr. Yip, do you make the assertion that my friend and your enemy are one?"

With a supercilious arrogance of manner that maddened me to the limit of self-control, he made reply.

"I was coming to that, Mr. Clyde, when you so unfortunately lost your temper. In stating the purpose of our visit I think I informed you that it was two-fold. In the first place, we came to give you what had asked for—information. In the second place, we came to request something from you—assistance. The motive of the threatened letters which Mr. Cameron received, I think I have made clear. For sixteen years my people, the kindfolk of the victims of the Sable Lorch, have searched the world for the fiend who brought upon them a sorrow beyond any that you of the Occident can understand. To us of the Celestial Empire the tombs of our fathers are very dear. McNish robbed these men not only of life but of decent burial."

"That is all very well," I exclaimed, impatiently, "but can't you see that a terrible mistake has been made? Why under heaven you should fancy that in Mr. Cameron, a gentleman to his fingertips, you have found this outlaw McNish is incomprehensible."

Once more Yip Sing smiled his icy smile and the Vice Consul made as if to speak, but thinking better of it, apparently, maintained his stolid silence.

"You were coming to that," I urged.

"The man to whom McNish boasted of his deed was the man who identified him. They had been partners in the Far East in the trade of smuggling coolies. The one, I have no doubt, was no better than the other; yet we believe that our informant was neither directly nor indirectly concerned in the particular piece of brutality of which I have told you. Eventually, he and McNish quarrelled and parted. For some years he lost all trace of him; and then by accident, one day he came upon him, here in America, living in a palace on Long Island Sound and masquerading under a new name."

"A resemblance!" I cried, in a passion of indignation. "A mere resemblance! And on that you and your people conspire to torment and abduct a purely innocent man. Was ever such an outrage heard of! Every one of you shall pay dear for this error."

I might have been the fire wood sputtering on the hearth for all the effect my vehemence had upon that precious pair of Mongolians.

"We understand," the spokesman resumed, "that your friend managed in some way to escape from his captors, and is now in this house."

"Yes," I resumed, hotly. "He's here, more dead than alive unfortunately; but he is coming around slowly and will be quite able to testify when the time comes."

"Mr. Chen Mok," he proceeded, calmly, "has communicated with the State Department at Washington, and the United States authorities are now only waiting our word to put your good, gentlemanly friend under arrest, Mr. Clyde, for the crime he committed on the high seas, sixteen years ago."

For a moment I stared at them in silent amazement.

"You're both mad," I exploded at length, "both crazy. Do you think for one moment I believe such rot as that? Even if what you say were possible—and it isn't—you would have to identify the accused by something better than the mere word of a man who hadn't seen him for years. Of what use would such an identification be against the testimony of Mr. Cameron's life-long friends?"



arrayed against it. Yet, thinking clearly now, I recognized fully the position in which I had placed myself. I had been willing to swear, to wager, there was no tattoo mark, and the best evidence—my own witness—had proved me wrong. Certainly I could expect no mild judgment from these Asiatics. Honest as I had been, they must believe that I had known, and had meant to deceive them. They probably thought that I had signalled to Bryan to endorse me in my lies, and that the nurse had either misunderstood or openly rebelled.

Before Checkabeedy had reached the door, I recalled him.

"On second thought," I said, "the officers need not wait. Tell them that it was a mistake. I shall not require them."

Turning to Yip Sing and his companion, I added:

"What Mr. Bryan has told you is the greatest surprise to me. Even yet I can scarcely believe it, unless the mark and the scar were obtained while my friend was a prisoner in the hands of your countrymen."

"Tattoo marks and scars show age no less than faces," the merchant replied. "Both of these are years old. Any capable judge of such things will tell you that. Possibly Mr. Bryan can tell."

"The scar is not a fresh one," said the nurse. "As to tattoo marks, I am not experienced; but I shouldn't think the mark on Mr. Cameron's arm was put there recently."

"Gentlemen," I said, making a final stand, "while I do not question Mr. Bryan's entire honesty in this matter, nevertheless I prefer to see those marks of identification, myself. If you will excuse us for five minutes, I shall not be longer."

At the foot of the grand staircase, Evelyn joined me. Bryan, at my suggestion, went to the elevator and ascended that way, while she and I slowly climbed the broad, velvet-carpeted marble steps to the floor above.

"I thought you were never coming out of that room," she declared, nervously. "Once, I was on the verge of going after you. The first time you rang for Checkabeedy, I mean. . . . What did you have him telephone for? He absolutely refused to tell me. Was it the two policemen? . . . What did you want them for? . . . What did you let them go away again? . . . Aren't those Chinamen ever going? . . . What on earth did you want with Mr. Bryan? . . . What are you going upstairs for, now?"

How tactfully I answered these questions and others I shall not attempt to decide. I know only that I set my teeth to guard the one problem which absorbed me, and which for worlds I would not have her know.

"It is all right, Evelyn," I assured her, over and over again. "There is not the smallest danger. . . . They came to give me information. . . . You must be very tired, little girl. . . . Go to bed, now, and forget it all until morning. . . . Yes, I'll tell you everything, then."

I wonder how many women there are who, burning with curiosity as she was, would have obliged me as she did! Is it pardonable, then, if again I say that throughout all this trying experience she proved herself a girl of a thousand?

Bryan was waiting for me in the passage outside Cameron's door.

"I left him sleeping," he explained, "and, if possible, I don't wish to disturb him; so we'll go in quietly, together."

Slowly and with infinite care lest he make the least noise he turned the knob. Quite as cautiously he opened the door, and tiptoeing softly, we entered.

It was the first time I had been in the room since the day of that terrible outburst, and it still held for me an atmosphere as ghastly as that of a tomb.

Only one lowered light burned, over a tall, antique bureau between the darkly curtained windows; the chamber was in semi-gloom. But scarcely had I passed Bryan, who stopped to close the door with the same adroit silence with which he had accomplished its opening, than a stealthily moving white figure defined itself, issuing, apparently from a massive carved wardrobe, which stood against the wall opposite the hood, tattered bed.

The spectacle was at least arresting. I know I halted abruptly as if stricken all at once with total paralysis. For a heart-beat or two I think I stopped breathing. But my eyes meanwhile were strained fixedly upon the apparition, and seeing it pass with almost incredible swiftness beneath the one dim light above the bureau, I recognized Cameron.

At the same moment the room was flooded with a sudden glare. Bryan too, had seen, and had switched on the electric. Simultaneously he flashed past me and was at his patient's side.

"What does this mean?" I heard him say. "What did you want? Can't I trust you alone for ten minutes? I told you, Cameron, that you must not leave your bed unless I am with you."

I saw Cameron cower under the upbraiding. In his eyes I read terror, and all my sympathy was aroused on this instant. Bryan might be carrying out Dr. Massey's orders, but he appeared to me unnecessarily harsh.

"What were you doing?" he insisted; and then I saw him roughly grasp his patient's arm, and hold it up, revealing a tightly clenched hand.

"Mr. Bryan!" I cried in remonstrance. "Gently, gently. Remember—"

But the nurse paid small heed to me. He was busy opening the doubled fist.

I stood now where I could look Cameron squarely in the face, but my gaze was elsewhere. It was his left hand over which Bryan was engaged, and from his wrist to his elbow the sleeve of his white night robe had been pushed back, exposing a sinewy forearm, marked precisely as Bryan had described it.

Scrutinizingly I bent forward. The tattooing was indisputable, and, as the nurse had said, it bore no evidence of being recent work.

Up to that moment I had hoped against hope that in some way or other a misconception had occurred. I had hoped, I suppose, for the performance of some miracle which would exonerate this man. And now that hope was obliterated by those blue-prieked letters D. M. N. beneath an almost exact facsimile of the black smudge which had taken the place of signature on each of the three threatening letters—the black smudge, of which Cameron, wearing it then indelibly upon the cuticle, had dared to feign utter ignorance.

And yet, I asked myself once more, how was it that I had never noticed it before? Again and again I had seen that forearm bared. Surely I would have observed so odd a mark; certainly I would have been perplexed by those three unifying initials.

"There, now!" Bryan was saying. "Back to bed with you, Cameron. What did you want this letter for, anyway? If it was necessary for you to have it, couldn't I have got it for you?"

"Give it back to me!" Cameron was pleading, piteously. "Give it back to me! It is a private matter. Give it back to me, or destroy it before my eyes. Burn it, here, before me."

"Let me have it, Mr. Bryan," I asked, and turning to the unhappy gentleman I said: "You'll trust me, won't you, Cameron? I'll destroy it, unread, if you wish it."

"No, no, no," he objected, earnestly. "Give it back to me."

But even as he demanded it, Bryan put it in my hands; and spreading it out—for it had been crumpled to a pellet in the invalid's clutch—I was about to humor him, when the superscription caught my eye and held it.

The envelope bore the name and address: "Donald McNish, Taylor's Hotel, New York City, U. S. A."

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

## FOR BETTER ROADS

### BUILDING OF PUBLIC ROADS

Old Idea That Highways Should Be Constructed and Maintained by Farmer is Disappearing.

The movement for federal participation in highway construction is not confined to motorists, but it is also being agitated by the farmers, is one of the most hopeful indications of its ultimate success.

On this point the recent convention of the National Grange, Patrons of Husbandry, the oldest and most influential of the farmers' organizations, took a decidedly favorable stand. Hon. Oliver Wilson, Master of the National Grange, in his annual address stated: "The public highway is a matter of general concern. The old idea that the country road should be constructed and maintained by the farmer has disappeared. It is now recognized that good roads are of as much importance to the consumer as to the producer, as anything that lessens the cost of transportation is a benefit to the consumer. The Grange stands for and advocates federal aid for road improvement. There can be no good reason given why the government should not appropriate money for the maintaining and the improving of the public highway, the same as for our public water works. Seventy-five per cent. of the product of our country must pass over the public highway before it can be transported over our railway or water systems. While the government has spent millions of dollars for highway improvement in our foreign possessions, it has never appropriated one dollar to be used on the highway in continental United States.

"The Grange membership is unanimously in favor of congress making suitable appropriations for highway construction and maintenance. This appropriation should be expended by a national highway commission or board, working in conjunction with similar commissions from the states.

"The legislative committee of the National Grange should be instructed to use all the influence of the Grange upon congress for the passage of a bill appropriating a sufficient sum under proper regulations for the improvement of our public highways."

### HIGH VALUE OF GOOD ROADS

Sufficient to Justify Construction as Rapidly as Possible Under Economical System.

No one questions the statement that good roads have a high money value to the farmers of the nation, and it may be said that this alone is sufficient to justify the cost of their construction as rapidly as practicable under an efficient, economical equitable system of highway improvement.

The big point in favor of this expenditure is the economy of time and force in transportation between farm and market, enabling the growers to take advantage of fluctuations in buying and selling, as well as enhancing the value of real estate. It is estimated that the average annual loss from poor roads is 76 cents an acre, while the estimated average increase resulting from improving all the public roads is \$9.

The losses in five years would aggregate \$2,432 for every section of land, or more than enough to improve two miles of public highway. The necessity of good roads is obvious, as is would enhance the value of each section of land about \$5,760, or more than double the estimated cost of two miles of improved highway, which constitutes the quota for 640 acres of land.

Making of Mudholes.

For want of a good culvert, several rods of road is often converted into a mudhole and remains a mudhole until the sun and wind dry it up. It is poor policy to do a good piece of road grading, then spoil it by neglecting the culverts.

Benefits Universal.

Good roads benefit every class and every section.

Mortgage Lifters.

Hens are helping to lift a good many mortgages nowadays.

Iowa farmers are making a fight to get appropriations from their state legislature to erect serum stations for the fighting of the hog cholera, which this year is expected to cost them \$12,000,000. Iowa raises more hogs than any other equal section of the world, nearly twice as many as any other state, and the farmers insist that their interests should be guarded.

An Economic Consideration.

Fair Visitor—I suppose you find constant inspiration in the flowers of the field, the sighing of the breezes, and the singing of the birds, and for that reason prefer to live in the country? Post—Not at all, madam. The real reason is that board is cheaper out here and postage costs no more.

## FOR BETTER ROADS

### BUILDING OF PUBLIC ROADS

Old Idea That Highways Should Be Constructed and Maintained by Farmer is Disappearing.

Costs Less Than a Two-Cent Postage Stamp

An average of less than a cent and a third a pair is paid for the use of all our machines in making two-thirds of the shoes produced in the United States—assuming that all our machines are used. The most that can be paid for the use of all our machines in making the highest-priced shoes is less than 5¢ cents a pair. The average royalty on all kinds of shoes is less than 2-3 cents a pair. From this we get our sole return for the manufacture and use of the machines, for setting them up in factories and keeping them in order. You pay two cents for a postage stamp or a yeast-cake and five cents for a car fare and don't miss it. Where do you get more for your money than in buying a machine-made shoe?

Write us and we will tell you all about it. The United Shoe Machinery Company, Boston, Mass.—Adv.

Not the Same.

They were strolling through the woodland.

"Yes," the youthful professor was saying, "it is a very simple matter to tell the various kinds of trees by the bark."

She gazed at him soulfully.

"How wonderful!" she exclaimed. "And can you—er—tell the various kinds of dogs that way?"—Lippincott's.

Parcel Post Adventure.

"I had a tough time delivering the mail yesterday," declared the postman.

"How was that?"

"Had a bulldog and a chunk of liver in the same delivery."

Suffer Little Children.

"He says he loves little children."

"Ho ought to. He employs about 2,000 of them and they are making him rich."

Red Cross Ball Blue will wash double as many clothes as any other blue. Don't put your money into any other. Adv.

When a woman runs after a man he tries to lose her, but when she flees he is quick to pursue.

## Get "In the Game"

but remember you must be strong and robust to win. A sickly person is the loser in every way; but why remain so?

## HOSTETTER'S STOMACH BITTERS

will aid digestion and help you back to health and strength. Try a bottle today. Avoid substitutes.

## Your Liver Is Clogged Up

That's Why You're Tired—Out of Sorts—Have No Appetite.

CARTER'S LITTLE LIVER PILLS will put you right in a few days. They do their duty. Cure Constipation, Biliousness, Indigestion and Sick Headache. SMALL PILL, SMALL DOSE, SMALL PRICE. Genuine must bear Signature.

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IS HIGH AND SO THE PRICE OF CATTLE.

For years the Province of Alberta (Western Canada) has been the Big Ranching Country. Many of these ranches today are immense grain fields and the cattle have given place to the cultivation of wheat, corn and flax; the change has made many thousands of acres of land, which were once plains, wealthier, but on these prairie lands the price of live stock. There is splendid opportunity now to get a

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