

My Strangest Case

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PART I.



AM, of course, prepared to admit that there are prettier places on the face of this earth of ours than Singapore; there are, however, I venture to assert, few that are more interesting, and certainly none that can afford a better study of human life and character. There, if you are so disposed, you may consider the subject of British rule on the one hand, and the various aspects of the Chinese question on the other. If you are a student of languages you will be able to hear half the tongues of the world spoken in less than an hour's walk, ranging, say from Parisian French to Pigeon English; you shall make the acquaintance of every sort of smell the human nose can manipulate, from the sweet perfume of the lotus blossom to the diabolical odor of the Durian; and every sort of cooking from a dainty vol-au-vent to a stuffed rat. In the harbor the shipping is such as, I feel justified in saying, you would encounter in no other port of its size in the world. It comprises the stately man of war and the Chinese junk; the P. and O., the Messagerie Maritime, the British India and the Dutch mail boat; the homely sampan, the yacht of the globe-trotting millionaire, the collier, the timber ship, and in point of fact every description of craft that plies between the barbarian east and the civilized west. The first glimpse of the harbor is one that will never be forgotten; the last is usually associated with a desire that one may never set eyes on it again. He who would, of his own free will, settle down for life in Singapore, must have acquired the tastes of a salamander and the sensibility of a frog.

Among its other advantages, Singapore numbers the possession of a multiplicity of hotels. There is stately Raffles, where the globe trotters do mostly take up their abode, also the Hotel de l'Europe, whose virtues I can vouch for; but packed away in another and very different portion of the town, unknown to the wealthy G. T., and indeed known to only a few of the white inhabitants of Singapore itself, there exists a small hostelry, owned by a lynx-eyed Portuguese, which rejoices in the name of the Hotel of the Three Desires. Now, every man, who by mischance or deliberate intent has entered its doors, has his own notions of the meaning of its name; the fact, however, remains that it is there, and that it is regularly patronized by individuals of a certain or uncertain class, as they pass to and fro through the gateway of the further east. This in itself is strange, inasmuch as it is said that the proprietor rakes in the dollars by selling liquor that is as bad as it can possibly be, in order that he may get back to Lisbon before he receives that threatened knife thrust between the ribs which has been promised him so long. There are times, as I am unfortunately able to testify, when the latter possibility is not so remote as might be expected. Taken altogether, however, the Hotel of the Three Desires is an excellent place to take up one's abode, provided one is not desirous of attracting too much attention in the city. As a matter of fact, its patrons, for some reason of their own, are more an evidence after nightfall than during the hours of daylight. They are also frugal of speech as a rule, and are chary of forming new acquaintances. When they know each other well, however, it is surprising how affable they can become. It is not the smallest of their peculiarities that they seldom refer to absent friends by their names. A will ask B when he expects to hear from Him, and C will inform D that "the old man is now running the show, and that, if he doesn't jump from Calcutta inside a week, there will be trouble on the floor." Meanwhile the landlord mixes the drinks with his own dirty hands, and reflects continually upon the villainy of a certain American third mate, who, having borrowed five dollars from him, was sufficiently ungrateful as to catch typhoid fever and die without either repaying the loan, or, what was worse, settling his account for the board and lodging received. Manuel, for this was the proprietor's name, had one or two recollections of a similar sort, but not many, for, as a rule, he is a careful fellow, and experience having taught him the man-

ners and idiosyncrasies of his customers, he generally managed to emerge from his transactions with credit to himself, and what was of much more importance, a balance on the right side of his ledger.

The time of which I am now writing was the middle of March, the hottest and, in every respect, the worst month of the year in Singapore. Day and night the land was oppressed by the same stifling heat, a sweltering calidity possessing the characteristics of a steam laundry, coupled with those of the stokehole of an ocean liner in the Red sea. Morning, noon and night, the quarter in which the Hotel of the Three Desires was situated was fragrant with the smell of garbage and Chinese tobacco; a peculiar blend of perfume which, once smelled, is not to be soon forgotten. Everything, even the bottles on the shelves in the bar, had a greasy feel about them, and the mildew on one's boots when one came to put them on in the morning, was a triumph in the way of erysipaceous fungi. Singapore at this season of the year is neither good for man nor beast; in this sweeping assertion, of course, I except the yellow man, upon whom it seems to exercise no effect whatsoever.

It was towards evening, and, strange to relate, the Hotel of the Three Desires was for once practically empty. This was the more extraordinary for the reason that the customers who usually frequented it, en route from one end of the earth to the other, are not affected by seasons. Midwinter was to them the same as midsummer, provided they did their business, or got their ships, and by those ships, or that business, received their wages. That those hard-earned wages should eventually find themselves in the pocket of the landlord of the Three Desires was only in the natural order of things, and, in consequence, such of his guests as were sailors, as a general rule, eventually boarded their ships without as much as would purchase them a pipe of tobacco. It did not, however, prevent them from returning to the Hotel of the Three Desires



"I HAD MADE UP MY MIND THAT YOU WERE NOT COMING," HE SAID, AS THEY SHOOK HANDS.

when next they happened to be that way. If he had no other gift, Manuel at least possessed the faculty of making it comparatively homelike to his customers, and that is the desideratum not to be despised even by sailor men in the far east.

As I have said, night was falling on one of the hottest days of the year, when a man entered the hotel and inquired for the proprietor. Pleased to find that there was at last to be a turn in the tide of his affairs, the landlord introduced himself to the stranger, and at the same time inquired in what way he could have the pleasure of serving him.

"I want to put up with you," said the stranger, who, by the way, was a tall man, with a hawk's nose that was not unlike the beak of the same bird. "You are not full, I suppose?"

Manuel rubbed his greasy hands together and observed that he was not as full as he had been; thereby insinuating that while he was not overflowing, he was still not empty. It will be gathered from this that he was a good business man, who never threw a chance away.

"In that case, I'll stay," said the stranger, and set down the small valise he carried upon the floor.

From what I have already written, you will doubtless have derived the impression that the Hotel of the Three Desires, while being a useful place of abode, was far from being the caravanserai of the luxurious order. The stranger, whoever he might be, however, was either not fastidious, or, as is more probable, was used to similar accommodations, for he

paid as little attention to the perfume of the bar as he did to the dirt upon the floor and walls, and also upon the landlord's hands. Having stipulated for a room to himself, he desired to be shown to it forthwith, whereupon Manuel led him through the house to a small yard at the back, round which were several cabins, dignified by the name of apartments.

"Splendid," said Manuel, enthusiastically, throwing open the door of one of the rooms as he spoke. "More splendid than ever you saw."

The stranger gave a ravenous sort of croak, which might have been a laugh or anything else, and then went in and closed the door abruptly behind him. Having locked it, he took off his coat and hung it upon the handle, apparently conscious of the fact that the landlord had glued his eyes to the keyhole in order that he might, from a precautionary point of view, take further stock of his patron. Foiled in his intention he returned to the bar, murmuring "Anglish peeg" to himself as he did so. In the meantime the stranger had seated himself upon the rough bed in the corner, and had taken a letter from his pocket.

"The Hotel of the Three Desires," he reads, "and on March the fifteenth, without fail." There was a pause while he folded the letter up and placed it in his pocket. Then he continued: "This is the hotel, and to-day is the fifteenth of March. But why don't they put in an appearance? It isn't like them to be late. They'd better not play me any tricks or they'll find I have lost none of my old power of retaliation."

Having satisfied himself that it was impossible for anyone to see into the room, either through the keyhole or by means of the window, he partly disrobed, and, when he had done so, unbuckled from round his waist a broad leather money belt. Seating himself on the bed once more he unfastened the strap of the pocket, and dribbled the contents on to the bed. They consisted of three Napoleons, 15 English sovereigns, four half sovereigns and 18 one-franc pieces. In his trousers pocket he had four Mexican dollars and some cosmopolitan change of small value.

"It's not very much," he muttered to himself after he had counted it, "but it ought to be sufficient for the business in hand. If I hadn't been fool enough to listen to that Frenchwoman on board, I shouldn't have played cards, and then it would have been double. Why the deuce wasn't I able to get monsieur ashore? In that case I'd have got it all back, or I'd have known the reason why."

The idea seemed to afford him some satisfaction, for he smiled, and then said to himself as if in terms of approbation: "By Jove, I believe you, my boy!"

When he had counted his money and had returned it once more to its hiding place, he buckled the belt round his person and unstrapped his valise, taking from it a black Tussa coat which he exchanged for that hanging upon the handle of the door. Then he lighted a Java cigar and sat down upon the bed to think. Taken altogether, his was not a prepossessing countenance. The peculiar attributes I have already described were sufficient to prevent that. At the same time it was a strong face, that of a man who was little likely to allow himself to be beaten, of his own free will, in anything he might undertake. The mouth was firm, the chin square, the eyes dark and well set; moreover, he wore a heavy black mustache, which he kept sharp-pointed. His hair was of the same color, though streaked here and there with gray. His height was an inch and a half above six feet, but by reason of his slim figure, he looked somewhat taller. His hands and feet were small, but of his strength there could be no doubt. Taken altogether, he was not a man with whom one would feel disposed to trifle. Unfortunately, however, the word adventurer was written all over him, and, as a considerable section of the world's population have good reason to know, he was as little likely to fail to take advantage of his opportunities as he was to forget the man who had robbed him, or who had done him an ill turn. It was said in Hong-Kong that he was well connected, and that he had claims upon a viceroy now gone to his account, that, had he persevered with them, might have placed him in a very different position. How much truth there was in this report, however, I cannot say; one thing, however, is quite certain; if it were true, he had fallen grievously from his high estate.

When his meditations had continued for something like ten minutes he rose from the bed, blew a cloud of smoke, stretched himself, strapped his valise once more, gave himself what the sailors call a hoist, that he might be sure his money belt was in its proper position, and then unlocked the door, passed out, relocked it after him, and returned to the bar. There he called for certain curious liquors, smelt them suspiciously before using them, and then proceeded deliberately to mix himself a peculiar drink. The landlord watched him with an appreciative surprise. He imagined himself to be familiar with every drink known to the taste of man, having

had wide experience, but such an one as this he had never encountered before.

"What do you call it?" he asked, when the other had finished his preparations.

"I call it a 'Help to Reformation,'" the stranger replied. Then, with a sneer upon his face, he added: "It should be popular with your customers."

Taking the drink with him into the veranda outside, he seated himself in a long chair and proceeded to sip it slowly, as if it were some elixir whose virtue would be lost by haste. Some people might have been amused by the motley crowd that passed along the street beyond the veranda rails, but Gideon Hayle, for such was his name, took no sort of interest in it. He had seen it too often to find any variety in it. As a matter of fact the mere sight of a pigtail was sufficient to remind him of a certain episode in his career which he had been for years endeavoring to forget.

"It doesn't look as if they are going to put in an appearance to-night," he said to himself, as the liquor in the glass began to wane. "Can this letter have been a hoax, an attempt to draw me off the scent? If so, by all the gods in Asia, they may rest assured I'll be even with them."

He looked as though he meant it! At last he rose and, having returned his glass to the bar, donned his topee, left the hotel and went for a stroll. It was but a short distance to the harbor, and he presently found himself strolling along the several miles of what I have already described as the most wonderful shipping in the world. Knowing the spot where the British India boats from Calcutta usually lie, he made his way to it, and inquired for a certain vessel. She had not yet arrived, he was informed, and no one seemed to know when she might be expected. At last, tired of his occupation, he returned to his hotel, and in due course sat down to supper. He smoked another cigar in the veranda afterwards, and was on the point of retiring for the night, when two men suddenly made their appearance before him, and accosted him by name. He immediately sprang to his feet with a cry of welcome.

"I had made up my mind that you were not coming," he said, as they shook hands.

"The old tub didn't get in until a quarter to nine," the taller of the two newcomers replied. "When did you arrive?"

"This afternoon," said Hayle, and for a moment volunteered no further information. A good poker player is always careful not to show his hand.

"I suppose this place is not full?" inquired the man who had last spoken.

"Full?" asked Hayle, scornfully. "It's full of cockroaches and mildew, if that's what you mean?"

"The best company we could possibly have," said the taller man. "Cockroaches and black beetles don't talk and they don't listen at keyholes. What's more, if they trouble you, you can put your heel on them. Now let's see the landlord and see what he's got to offer us in the way of rooms. We don't want any dinner, because we had it on board the steamer."

[To Be Continued.]

TEAM WORK AMONGS SQUIRRELS

What One Is Unable to Carry Others Aid in Getting Away With.

A party of young people who were tenting in a grove near a glen at a Northfield conference witnessed an incident which seems to show a friendly understanding among squirrels. The Deerfield Valley Endeavor tells the pleasing story.

An out-of-doors dinner had just been finished and the party was still sitting at the table, when a red squirrel, with glistening, eager eyes, came creeping down a tree which stood near the table. He crept nearer and nearer, and finally leaped upon the table.

The lady who was presiding said: "Yes, help yourself to anything you want!"

Upon this invitation the little fellow made bold to creep up to a loaf of bread from which only a slice or two had been cut. He seized it and dragged it to the side of the table, and somehow managed to scramble down the side with it to the ground. He then fixed his teeth in the crust and dragged it away and down the steep-sides of the glen.

But when he reached the bottom and confronted the steep rise on the other side it was too much for him. Then he gave a sort of call, which seemed to be understood, for soon squirrels were seen coming from several directions. They crowded round him, and after a little conference all took hold, and with tug and strain they managed to bring the loaf to the top of the hill and disappeared with it in the woods beyond.

Riches of Mind.

A rich mind will cast over the humblest home a radiance of beauty and wholesomeness which an upholsterer or a decorator can never equal. Emerson says: "There is no beautifier of complexion, form or behavior like the wish to scatter joy, and not pain, around us."—Success.

MOVED THE HOLE.

The Dutchman's Frau Obeyed His Instructions and Hans Was Cleverly Outwitted.

"We're having our own troubles with the trolley octopus upon my way just now," said the suburbanite, according to the New York Mail and Express.

"It is laying tracks and putting up poles for a new line. There's a Dutchman, Hans Geisler, out there, who owns a little seven by ten place on the line of the new trolley route. The workmen began to dig a post hole in front of his dwelling the other day, and it didn't suit Hans a little bit, so he came out and forbade them to continue work. They explained that they had authority from the proper officials, but this didn't pacify Geisler, who made up his mind that he could not, would not and should not have the nuisance in front of his house.

"After a good deal of wrangling the foreman declared they couldn't waste their time in gabbing, and ordered his gang to set to work. Thereupon the Dutchman called his wife, and, with a dexterous and unexpected movement, succeeded in flinging over the hole the men had begun a heavy plank, upon which he established his frau.

"Now, Gretchen," says he, 'dot ish vare you standst till I comes me back mit ein injunction,' and with many charges to her not to move from the board till his return, he departed on a fast trot. The stolid frau stood like a statue, hands on her hips and defiance painted on her face. But no sooner had the old man disappeared than the foreman directed his men to take the board, with the woman on it, and lift it from its place. It was a heavy tug, but it was accomplished, and with perfect politeness the corpulent lady was set to one side, as if she had been a fat tea urn on a salver.

"The digging then went merrily on, and while the old lady held to the letter of her husband's command with silent fidelity, the men set up the pole. It was well in its place when Hans returned in breathless haste, waving in his hand the coveted injunction. When he came paunting up and saw what had been done, he was overcome with astonishment first, and then burst out in wrath:

"Vy you not stood on dot hole, al-retty?" he demanded of his wife.

"It vas on dis board dot you puts me, ain't it?" she answered, with confidence.

"He looked at her in helpless indignation for a moment and then cried: 'I vas not meant you standst on dot board ven dot hole vas carried away!'"

Open to Conjecture.

It is not quite clear whether the following excerpt from a recent speech of Ashbel P. Fitch, ex-comptroller of New York, should be considered as a sociological fact, or an ingenious attempt to push the bald-headed man still farther to the fore. Said Mr. Fitch:

"While I was comptroller of New York I thoroughly investigated the subject of baldness, and I reached the conclusion that it is an index of intellect. In the last year of my incumbency as comptroller my curiosity impelled me to inquire as to the hair of the paupers that had been sent to the county poorhouse. Out of 8,793 paupers who had come under the charge of the county that year, there was only one bald-headed man, and he had been scalped by the Indians.—Youth's Companion.

THE GENERAL MARKETS.

Kansas City, June 17.	
CATTLE—Beef steers	35 00 @ 7 25
Native stockers	3 50 @ 4 80
Texas and Indian steers	2 80 @ 5 10
HOGS	5 25 @ 7 00
SHEEP	2 50 @ 4 85
WHEAT—No. 2 hard	62 1/2 @ 70 1/2
No. 2 red	72 @ 72 1/2
CORN—No. 2 mixed	50 @ 60
OATS—No. 2 mixed	41 @ 41 1/2
RYE—No. 2	51 @ 57
FLOUR—Hard wh't patents	3 45 @ 3 95
Soft wheat patents	3 50 @ 3 75
HAY—Timothy	6 00 @ 12 50
Prairie	4 00 @ 10 00
BRAN	72 @ 74
BUTTER—Choice to fancy	18 @ 19
EGGS	14 1/2
CHEESE—Full cream	11
POTATOES	75 @ 85
ST. LOUIS.	
CATTLE—Beef steers	4 65 @ 7 75
Texas steers	3 40 @ 6 20
HOGS—Butchers	7 20 @ 7 55
SHEEP—Natives	4 20 @ 4 80
FLOUR—Red winter patents	3 60 @ 3 70
WHEAT—No. 2 red	73 @ 75 1/2
CORN—No. 2	61 1/2 @ 62 1/2
OATS—No. 2	44 1/2 @ 45 1/2
RYE	65
BUTTER—Creamery	18 @ 22 1/2
DRY SALT MEATS	10 75 @ 11 00
BACON	11 50 @ 11 75
CHICAGO.	
CATTLE—Steers	5 00 @ 7 90
HOGS—Mixed and butchers	7 10 @ 7 45
SHEEP—Western	4 75 @ 5 50
FLOUR—Spring patents	3 50 @ 3 80
WHEAT—No. 2 red	70 1/2 @ 84
CORN—No. 2	61 1/2 @ 62 1/2
OATS—No. 2	44 1/2 @ 45 1/2
RYE—July	50 1/2 @ 55 1/2
LARD—July	10 15 @ 10 25
PORK—July	17 40 @ 17 62 1/2
NEW YORK.	
CATTLE—Steers	5 40 @ 7 75
HOGS	7 50 @ 7 55
SHEEP	2 75 @ 4 75
WHEAT—No. 2	78 1/2 @ 80
CORN—No. 2	67 1/2 @ 68 1/2
OATS—No. 2	46