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NEMAH, NEBRASKA.

THE OLD HOUSE.

Mid a scene of desolation
 Stands a house of sombre gray,
 And beneath its roof, for shelter
 From the storm, I stood one day.
 Every darkest nook and cranny
 Spiders claimed for dim retreat.
 On the floor a velvet carpet
 Turned to dust beneath my feet.
 Broken windows partly boarded
 Helped me grudgingly to see
 All the prints of Time's firm fingers
 Working here so ceaselessly.

Wilder rose the storm each moment;
 Swiftly fell the summer shower.
 Ere I knew it slumber bound me
 In that lonely place and hour.
 As I slept the old house wakened
 From its dream of death and mold,
 And through every lace-hung window
 Sunshine filtered, as of old.
 Gave the dusk from web-hung corners,
 All the threads were brushed away,
 And the air was sweet with laughter
 Of the children at their play.

I could see them all: The father,
 With a wee one on each knee,
 While the mother bent in beauty
 Over her darlings tenderly;
 Out among the summer splendor
 Stroiled a lad and lassie fair,
 With a wreath of crimson roses
 He had decked her curling hair.
 Eyes of brown and blue are meeting
 In an ecstasy of bliss;
 Tender hearts and lips together
 Seal their troth in that first kiss.

Slowly then the shadows deepened
 Round the stair step where I lay.
 As I wakened from my slumber,
 Storm and dream had passed away.
 —Farm and Home.

My Strangest Case

BY GUY BOOTHBY.

Author of "Dr. Kikola," "The Beautiful White Devil," "Pharos, The Egyptian," Etc.

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CHAPTER II.—CONTINUED.

"Our case is as follows," he began. "As I have told you, we have been in China for several years, and during that time we have had the good fortune to enroll not a few well-known names among our converts. To make a long story short, we were so successful as to be able to persuade even the mandarin of the province to listen to our message. He was an enormously rich man, one of the richest, perhaps, in China, and was so impressed by the good news we brought to him that, on his death-bed, he left to us for the benefit of the mission all his wealth, in gold, silver and precious stones. It was a princely legacy, and one that would have enabled us to carry on our mission with such success as we had never dreamed of."

"But if you were so lucky and so much in love with your profession, how does it come about that you are in England now?" I inquired.

"I will tell you why," he answered, leaning toward me and tapping with his fingers upon the edge of the writing-table. "It is a sad story, and the mere telling of it causes me more pain than you would believe. You must understand that at the time of the mandarin's death an English traveler, who had been passing through the western provinces, reached our city and took up his abode with us. Needless to say, we were overwhelmed with grief at the loss of our patron. The treasure he had presented us with we took to the mission and deposited it in a safe place. We had no suspicion of any sort of treachery. I fear my companion and I are not men of the world, that is to say we do not go about suspecting evil of our neighbors."

"I think I understand," I said. "You brought the treasure home, put it in what you considered a safe place, and one day awoke to find your estimable guest missing and the treasure gone with him. Have I guessed correctly?"

"You have hit the mark exactly," Kitwater replied. "We woke one day not only to find the treasure gone, but also ourselves and our mission seriously compromised. The relations of the dead man not only accused us of having alienated him from the faith of his forefathers, but also of having robbed him of his ancestral treasure. We could not but admit that we had been presented with the wealth in question, and when it was demanded of us we could only explain that we had lost it in our turn. You can imagine the position for yourself. At the best of times the foreigner is not popular in China, and our situation was particularly unpleasant. Situated as we were in one of the wildest portions of the empire, and accused of the basest sacrilege, that is to say of violating the home of a dead man, we could hope for but small mercy. The man who had robbed us had entirely disappeared, and no trace of him could be discovered. To attempt to offer any explanation, or to incriminate him, was out of the question. We could only suffer in silence."

He paused and heaved a heavy sigh. "And what form did your punishment take?" I inquired, for I was beginning to be interested in their story.

"Can you not see for yourself?" the man answered. "Can you not see that I am blind, while my companion is dumb? That was what they condemned us to. By that man's villainy I am destined never to look upon God's earth again, while my companion will never be able to converse with his fellow-men, except by signs. We are in the world, yet out of it."

I looked at them both in amazement. Their tale seemed too terrible to be true. And yet I had the best of evidence to show that it was correct.

"And why have you come to me? What do you want me to do? I cannot give you back your sight, nor your friend his power of speech."

"But you can help us to find the man who brought this misery upon us," Kitwater replied. "That is what we have come to ask of you. He must not be permitted to enjoy the wealth he stole from us. It is sacred to a special duty, and that duty it must perform. We are not overburdened with riches, in fact, we are dependent upon the bounty of another, but if you can help us to recover the sum that was stolen from us, we will gladly pay whatever you may ask! We cannot say more than that."

"But this is a most unheard-of request," I said. "How do you know where the man may be at this moment?"

"We do not know, or we should scarcely have asked your assistance," Kitwater replied, with some show of reason. "It is because we have heard of your wonderful powers in tracing people that we have come to you. Our only cause for attending the trial at which you saw us was to hear the evidence you gave and to draw our own conclusions from it. That those conclusions were complimentary to you, our presence here is evidence of. We know that we could not put our case in better hands, and we will leave it with you to say whether or not you will help us. As I said just now, my companion is dumb, while I am blind; we cannot do much ourselves. Will you not take pity upon us and help us to find the man who betrayed and ruined us?"

"But he may be at the other end of the world at this moment?" I said.

"That does not matter," he returned. "We know that, wherever he may be, you will find him. All we ask you to do is to bring us face to face with him. We will manage the rest. It will be strange then if we are not able to get him to a proper way of thinking."

This was the most unusual case I had had to do with, and for the moment I scarcely knew what to say. I turned to the blind man once more.

"Have you any idea where the man went after he robbed you?"

"He crossed the province of Yunnan into Burma," he replied. "After that he made his way through Rangoon, and shipped on board the steamer Jemadar for London."

"When did the Jemadar reach London?"

"On the 23d of June," he answered.

"We have made inquiries upon that point."

I made a note of this, and then continued my inquiries.

"One other question," I said. "While we are on the subject, what do you suppose would be the total value of the treasure of which he robbed you?"

"That is very difficult to say," Kitwater replied, and then turned to his companion and held out his hand. The other took it and tapped upon the palm with the tips of his fingers in a sort of dot-and-telegraph fashion that I had never seen used before.

"My friend says that there were 93 stones, all rubies and sapphires; they were of exquisite luster and extraordinary size. Possibly they might have been worth anything from £170,000 to £250,000."

I opened my eyes on hearing this. Were the men telling me the truth, I asked myself, or were they trying to interest me in the case by exaggerating the value of the treasure?

"What you say is almost incomprehensible," I continued. "I trust you will forgive me, but can you substantiate what you say?"

"When we say that we are willing to pay your expenses in advance if you will try to find the man, I think we are giving you very good proof of our bona fides," he remarked. "I am afraid we cannot give you any other, seeing, as I have said, that we are both poor men. If you are prepared to take up our case, we shall be under a lifelong gratitude to you, but if you cannot, we must endeavor to find some one else who will undertake the task."

"It is impossible for me to decide now whether I can take it up or not," I said, leaning back in my chair and looking at them both as I spoke. "I must have time to think it over; there are a hundred and one things to be considered before I can give you a direct reply."

There was silence for a few moments, and then Kitwater, who had been holding his usual mysterious communications with his friend, said: "When do you think you will be able to let us have an answer?"

"That depends upon a variety of circumstances," I replied. "It is a matter difficult to answer. In the first place there is no knowing where the man is at present; he may be in London; he may be in America; he may be in any other portion of the globe. It might cost £500 to find him, it might

cost £3,000. You must see for yourselves how uncertain it all is."

"In that case we should be prepared to give security for the first-named amount, or pay you half in advance," Kitwater replied. "I hope you do not think, Mr. Fairfax, that we are endeavoring to play you false? You can see for yourself that our injuries are permanent, and, as far as they go, are at least evidence concerning the truth of our story. You can also see for yourself how this man has behaved towards us. He has robbed us of all we hold valuable, and to his act of treachery we owe the mutilations we have suffered. Can you wonder that we are anxious to find him?"

"I do not wonder at that at all," I said. "My only feeling is that I must regard it as an entirely business matter."

"We cannot blame you," Kitwater replied. "Yet you must surely understand our anxiety for a definite and immediate answer. The man has had a considerable start of us already, and he has doubtless disposed of the jewels ere this. At whatever price he sold them, he must now be in possession of a considerable fortune, which rightly belongs to us. We are not vindictive men; all we ask is for our own."

"I quite agree with you there," I replied. "The only question in my mind is, who shall get it for you? Let me explain matters a little more clearly. In the first place I have no desire to offend you, but how am I to know that the story you tell me is a true one?"

"I have already told you that you will have to take our word for that," he said. "It will be a great disappointment to us if you cannot take the matter up, but we must bear it as we have borne our other misfortunes. When we realized the way you managed those bank people we said to each other: 'That's the man for us! If anyone can catch Hayle he's that person.' It naturally comes to us as a disappointment to find that you are not willing to take up the case."

"I have not said that I am not willing," I answered; "I only said that I am not going to commit myself until I have given the matter due consideration. If you will call here at four o'clock to-morrow afternoon, I shall be able to give you a definite answer."

"I suppose we must be content with that," said Kitwater, lugubriously.

They thereupon thanked me and rose to go.

"By the way," I said, "does this man Hayle know that you are in England?"

The blind man shook his head.

"He thinks we are lying dead in the jungle," he said, "and it is not his fault that we are not. Did he suspect for a moment that we were alive and in the same country as himself, he'd be out of it like a rat driven by a ferret from his hole. But if you will give us your assistance, sir, we will make him aware of our presence before very long."

Though he tried to speak unconcernedly, there was an expression upon the man's face that startled me. I felt



"GOOD MORNING, MISS KITWATER," I SAID. "THIS IS AN UNEXPECTED VISIT; WON'T YOU SIT DOWN?"

that, blind though he was, I should not care to be in Mr. Hayle's place when they should meet.

After they had left me I lit a cigar and began to think the matter over. I had had a number of strange cases presented to me in my time, but never one that had opened in such a fashion as this. A man robs his friends in the center of China; the latter are tortured and maimed for life, and come to me in London to seek out their betrayer for them, in whatever part of the globe he might be. The whole thing seemed so preposterous as to be scarcely worth consideration, and yet, try how I would to put it out of my mind, I found myself thinking of it continually. The recollection of the blind man's face and that of his dumb companion haunted me awake and asleep. More than once I determined to have nothing to do with them, only later to change my mind, and vow that I would see the matter through at any cost to myself.

Next morning, however, saner counsels prevailed. An exceedingly remunerative offer was made me by a prominent trust company, which at any other time I should have had no hesitation in immediately accepting. Fate, however, which is generally more responsible for these matters than most folk imagine, had still a card to play upon Messrs. Kitwater and Codd's behalf, and it was destined to overthrow all my scruples, and what

was more to ultimately revolutionize the conduct of my whole life.

CHAPTER III.

Towards the middle of the morning I was sitting in my office, awaiting the coming of a prominent New York detective, with whom I had an appointment, when my clerk entered to inform me that a lady was in the outer office, and desired to see me if I could spare her a few minutes.

"Who is she?" I inquired. "Find out that, and also her business."

"Her name is Kitwater," the man replied, when he returned after a moment's absence, "but she declines to state her business to anyone but yourself, sir."

"Kitwater?" I said. "Then she is a relation, I suppose, of the blind man who was here yesterday. What on earth can she have to say to me? Well, Lawson won't be here for another ten minutes, so you may as well show her in." Then to myself I added: "This is a development of the case which I did not expect. I wonder who she is—wife, sister, daughter, or what, of the blind man?"

I was not to be left long in doubt, for presently the door opened and the young lady herself entered the room. I said "young lady," because her age could not at last have been more than one or two-and-twenty. She was tall and the possessor of a graceful figure, while one glance was sufficient to show me that her face was an exceedingly pretty one. (Afterwards I discovered that her eyes were dark brown.) I rose and offered her a chair.

"Good morning, Miss Kitwater," I said. "This is an unexpected visit. Won't you sit down?"

When she had done so I resumed my seat at the table.

"Mr. Fairfax," she began, "you are the great detective, I believe?"

I admitted the soft impeachment with as much modesty as I could assume at so short a notice. She certainly was a very pretty girl.

"I have come to talk to you about my uncle."

She stopped as if she did not quite know how to proceed.

"Then the gentleman who called upon me yesterday, and who has the misfortune to be blind, is your uncle?" I said.

"Yes! He was my father's younger and only brother," she answered. "I have often heard my father speak of him, but I had never seen him myself until he arrived in England a month ago with his companion, Mr. Codd. Mr. Fairfax, they have suffered terribly. I have never heard anything so awful as their experiences."

"I can quite believe that," I answered. "Your uncle told me something of their great trouble yesterday. It seems wonderful to me that they should have survived to tell the tale."

"Then he must have told you of Hayle, their supposed friend" (she spoke with superb scorn), "the man who betrayed them and robbed them of what was given them?"

"It was for that purpose that they called upon me," I answered. "They were anxious that I should undertake the search for this man."

[To Be Continued.]

WANTED MONEY, NOT MORALS

Story of the Cynicism of the Late Li Hung Chang Told by a Well-Known Promoter.

The late Eugene Stanislas Kostzka de Mitkiewicz used to tell a story of the cynicism of Li Hung Chang, says the New York Times. Mitkiewicz, a professional "promoter," spent some of the best years of his life in an unsuccessful attempt to engineer the establishment of a great Chino-American bank. Millions were involved, and it was necessary to secure the favor of Earl Li. Mitkiewicz obtained an interview with him, and explained his scheme. The Chinaman listened gravely.

"It is a philanthropic plan, is it not?" he said at length. "You desire by means of this bank to bring about moral and social reforms in my country, I suppose. You wish to civilize us, to save our souls."

"We wish to do nothing of the kind," answered the adventurer. "This is simply and solely a commercial enterprise. We don't care a rap for your morals, and I may say for myself, personally, that it is a matter of supreme indifference to me whether any of your souls are saved or not."

Li's almond eyes twinkled. "Ah," he said, "you are not like other Europeans who come to China. They are all interested in our moral well being. You say you want merely to make money. It is strange. I have heard of such men before, but till now I have never met a European who had not the spiritual good of China at heart."

How He Felt.

A certain chief justice of the supreme court in one of the western states was noted for his disinclination to admit that he was ill, as well as for his roundabout method of expression.

One day he was approached by the state librarian, who courteously asked after his health.

"William," said the judge, cautiously, "I am not well, but I am better than I was when I was worse than I now am."—Detroit Free Press.

MUNICIPAL SCANDALS.

Mayor Ames, of Minneapolis, Decides to Resign and Also to Get His Brother to Do the Same.

Minneapolis, Minn., Aug. 1.—Mayor A. A. Ames, now at West Baden, Ind., has decided to resign his office, the resignation to take effect September 6. The letter will be read to the common council at its next meeting. The mayor postpones his nominal retirement to save the city the expense of a special election which would have to be held if the resignation took effect earlier. The mayor has also agreed to secure the resignation of his brother, Col. Fred W. Ames, superintendent of police. He was brought to these terms by the visit to West Baden Wednesday evening of Police Capts. Charles R. Hill, who will be acting superintendent, and John Fichette. He does not have the power while out of the city to perform the functions of mayor, but he wired Acting Mayor Fred M. Powers to secure the removal of the chief and wired the chief himself advising resignation. Alderman Powers has agreed to carry out the wishes of the mayor.

This is the climax of the police corruption scandals which have agitated the community and occupied the grand jury and the courts for two months. Mayor Ames is in failing health and may not return to Minneapolis at all, unless forced to do so by the courts.

PUBLIC OWNERSHIP PARTY.

They Hold a State Convention at St. Louis and Make Nominations—A Long Platform Adopted.

St. Louis, Aug. 1.—The state convention of the public ownership party, held here yesterday, referred the nomination of candidates for the supreme court to the executive committee of the party, with instructions to name the three judicial candidates of the republican party as the choice of the convention, provided such action would not jeopardize the legal status of the party for future elections. The convention unanimously nominated L. P. Caldwell, of Kansas City, for railroad commissioner for the long term; T. W. Hackett, of St. Joseph, for the office of railroad commissioner for the short term, and Alfred S. Green, of St. Louis, for state superintendent of public schools. A long and sweeping platform was adopted.

A FOREIGN MINE HORROR.

An Explosion Causes a Heavy Loss of Life at Wollongong, N. S. W.—Twenty-Seven Bodies Recovered.

Sydney, N. S. W., Aug. 1.—An explosion resulting in heavy loss of life has occurred at the Mount Kimbla colliery at Wollongong, a port 40 miles from here. Twenty-seven bodies have been recovered. The buildings at the mouth of the pit were wrecked. One hundred and forty-nine miners were rescued, but 100 are still entombed. It is feared their release is hopeless. A portion of the colliery is on fire.

The Benders Located Again.

Topeka, Kan., Aug. 1.—The notorious Bender family has been located again. This time it is in Montana. Sheriff Edwards, of Labette county, received a letter from a former resident of that county, now living in Montana, stating that the Benders live in his community and can be apprehended easily if the Kansas authorities want them. He says he is positive that the people are the Benders, as he used to know them when he lived in Labette county. Sheriff Edwards will investigate the matter.

A Family Tragedy.

Kansas City, Kan., Aug. 1.—Fred Folkinburg, a former employe of the Argentine smelter, shot to death his wife, Addie, who was sleeping on a mattress on the floor of their home, 217 South Eleventh street, Argentine. Then the husband went into the back yard, turned the still smoking revolver to his own head and fired two shots. The woman died almost instantly and Folkinburg was taken to St. Margaret's hospital, where he is hovering between life and death. Jealousy was said to be the cause.

Report Crops Good.

Chicago, Aug. 1.—The monthly crop report of the Chicago, Burlington & Quincy Railroad company shows that in Iowa, Nebraska and northern Kansas the corn is rank and green, but a little late for the season. "It will almost certainly be the largest crop ever grown in the west." Wheat in the same territory is very heavy and will yield not less than 30 bushels per acre average. Oats are a good crop. The heavy rains have done little damage.

Caught in the Knives of a Reaper.

Clare, Ia., Aug. 1.—William Kiehm and his daughter Viola were fatally injured by being caught in the knives of a reaper. Kiehm was repairing the machine when the horses became frightened and ran away, catching the father and daughter in the knives.