



THE FATAL STAR.

A Fourth of July Story.



It is Fourth of July in San Francisco. The clear, blue sky, like a mammoth bowl cut from one great turquoise and turned over the town, is a background for thousands of flags floating from the roofs of public buildings and windows of private patriots. All the flags are big. Everything is on a large scale in California, the fruit that is exposed for sale, the great roses that enamored youths are buying for their adored ones. The children are playing in the streets with mighty torpedoes, that make an explosion calculated to deafen one. Large men, with ample ladies on their arms, may be seen in every direction. Immense baskets are being borne to the doors of their customers by grocers, butchers and confectioners. Immense suppers are to be given tonight, and many happy returns of the glorious Fourth will be drunk in rivers of champagne. Everything is on a large scale but the Chinese, whose small figures and alert movements are in marked contrast to the bulk and size of everything else on which the eye falls.

Yet little Washy-Washy balances on his head a clothes-basket that would serve him for a cradle, or in his kitchen for a favorite cook with California housewives—stirs a pot in which he might easily be boiled himself. In the arms of San Francisco sleeps Chinatown, the curious offspring of old China, of which Americans think that they know all that is to be known because they can visit the shops and go into all the strange places, and, if they are in the humor, make themselves sick with an opium-pipe among opium smoking Chinamen.

Lin Ham is an ordinary dealer. He keeps no shop. He executes orders for the favored few. In each he puts a surprise—an invention for the day. His are the curious boats, all made of colored fire, moving on the water, apparently by means of a stream of fire at the stern, manned by little men in blue and gold and crimson, and all going off in a wonderful flash and whiz and sputter at last. His are those cylinders which, rising into the air, discharge wonderful sprays and stars and jewels skyward, while at the same time fiery little acrobats let themselves earthward by golden ropes and only vanish as they touch the ground. His was the great green dragon that coiled and darted moonward, and wrote "July"



BLINKS UP AT THE FACE OF A TALL MAN. across the sky before it changed into the flag of our nation, which every one so admired last Independence Day. At present something that smells very curiously is smoking and steaming in queer fashion, in what looks like a little furnace, and Lin Ham, while still busy with his hands, twists his head about and blinks up into the face of a tall man in a curious, theatrical costume, who stands with his bare arms folded on his chest, and looks down upon him. The man wants Lin Ham to invent a fatal trick. "Such things are costly," he says. "I do not say that I have anything of the

sort, but if I had, you would not buy them, Min Toko."

They are speaking in Chinese, for Min Toko, though not a child of Chinese parents, has been brought up by them. You can believe the story that his father was a Russian and his mother a Tartar when you look at him.

A little Chinese boatwoman took him from his dying mother's arms and nursed him with her own, somewhere near those quarters where there are English warehouses and the barbarian comes to traffic in tea and porcelain, and he starved and played and swam about with her own, and early in his boyhood came to San Francisco. There he dwelt in Chinatown, and became renowned amongst the showmen of San Francisco for his acrobatic feats. Tonight he is engaged to assist in a performance on the lawn before the mansion of Benson Blashfield, Esq. Mr. Blashfield will have fireworks and a great supper, the crowning feature of which will be the feats of Min Toko, who, amongst other things,



"COME TO ME ALL YE BUTTERFLIES."

throws a rope into the air, where it is caught by some unseen power, sends a kitten up its length until it vanishes from sight, sends a monkey to find it, follows himself and draws the rope up after him, and ten minutes after is heard calling from the inside of a great lacquered box to be let out, and there he is, indeed, coiled up like a great serpent. Oh, there is nothing Min Toko cannot do, and no one ever discovers how he does anything.

Now he laughs. "I know you have what I want, or can make it in a twinkling, Lin Ham," he answers. "As for money, I am richer than you think. Name your price. I have told you what I want—to kill a man without a knife or a blow or poison—to kill him so that it seems to be done by the hand of Fate; so that no one can suspect me."

"Is he a Chinaman?" asks Lin Ham. "He is an American," said Min Toko. "He has taken the woman I love from me. This rich man, to whose house I go to-night, has a daughter. I love her. Why not? I am handsome; I am no Chinaman; I am famous; I am a favorite with the ladies, and she smiled on me. You grin again! Of course, the rich man would say no. I did not mean to ask the rich man. If she loved me, that was enough. I could spirit her away where they would never find us. That is what I mean to do."

"You are mad!" says Lin Ham. "No," says the acrobat. "She could be won. She can be still, if I can kill this man."

"Do you mean her father?" cries Lin Ham. "No. To-night they celebrate her marriage," said the acrobat. "To-morrow the bridegroom will take her away. To-night I must kill him. She will be a widow for a while; afterward, mine."

"It is the dream of a madman," says Lin Ham. "Does it matter to you?" asks the acrobat. "I know that it was you who made the toy the rich tea merchant gave to his wife when he found she was false to him. The little bird that perched on her wrist and sang and bit her fingers like a real bird, and of the bite she died. I know it was you who—"

"No more reminiscences!" cries Lin Ham. "I admit that I have another toy that, with a slight addition, I could

make in ten minutes would wipe your rival out of existence. But of what avail would it be? Rich American ladies do not marry such as you. Her relatives would kill you if you touched her hand."

"I have kissed it thrice when we were alone," says Min Toko. "Yes, I have kissed her hands three times. The next time it should have been her mouth. Let me kill this bridegroom so that she cannot suspect me, and it shall be yet. Look!" He thrusts his hand into the bosom of his tunic and draws forth a pouch. "See!" he whispers, piling bank notes before Lin Ham. "How much for that toy?"

The eyes of the old man glitter. He gathers up the heap in his claw-like hands, and says, slowly:

"This sum makes me have enough with which to return to China and live there happy for the rest of my life. After all, what does one more dead barbarian matter? But I will tell you this: Unless you can make your rival take the toy in his own hands, it is useless."

"I can manage that," Min Toko replies. The old Chinese goes to a little recess in the room, before which hangs a beaded screen, and comes back, holding in his hand a curious kite.

"You fly it like any other kite," he explains. "When at its full length, you begin to call: 'Come down, butterfly!' A butterfly descends the cord and flies away. 'Follow rose!' you say. A rose glides down the string and drops to ashes. 'Come down, pretty mouse!' you call next. The mouse descends and runs up your shoulder and is gone. Then you call for a blue bird, for a white bird, for a red bird, for a yellow bird, a green bird. Thus it might end with the applause of the people. But let me work upon this kite ten minutes longer and add one trifle more, and then there will be something else to see. Then you may call aloud: 'Come to me out of the sky, bright star.' And far above you you may see a star shine, bright as any in the heavens. At this moment, he whom you wish to kill must hold the cord, for that star brings death. As it touches the man's breast life departs from him. Mark me well, the other things that come down the cord are innocent as drops of dew. The star is fatal."

"I understand," replies Min Toko. "Hasten with your work, Lin Ham."

A little later the old Chinese puts into the hands of the younger man a paper box covered with shining roses, butterflies and birds, and says to him: "Min Toko, the great performer, you have bought of me a pretty kite, which brings down from heaven the birds of the air, and the flowers the spirits pluck. For all I know, you may coax the stars down its cord also. It is well

"I DIE FOR YOU." made. If any accident happens, that is the fault of others, not mine. I am not responsible."

"I absolve you from all responsibility, Lin Ham," replies Min Toko. He throws about him a cloak that covers his theatrical costume, and carries the box downstairs, where a carriage containing the paraphernalia used in his exhibition awaits him, and is driven to Mr. Blashfield's residence. There they celebrate not only the glorious Fourth but a wedding.



Early in the evening, the rich man's daughter, Rosabel Blashfield, had been married to Mr. Arthur Ware, the son of another California magnate. There has been the usual reception, the usual display of gorgeous presents, a fine band has been playing, professional dancers have done their part; now they are ready for Min Toko and his performances. The whole lawn is flooded with electric light, and, in mighty tents, all decorated with roses, they are setting forth a feast. The bride and bridegroom sit upon a sort of throne that seems made of orange blossoms. Tiers of seats, occupied by people in evening dress, surround the lawn, leaving a walkway through which the performers enter. It is opposite the bridegroom; and, as Min Toko passes through, bowing and smiling, his eyes meet those of the bride, and he seems to give her special greeting. Standing in the midst of the circle, he begins to gather, from heaven knows where, white roses, of which he makes a mighty ball, how, no one can guess. This he throws toward the throne. As it floats in the air it opens and forth flies a little pink Cupid, who flings kisses abroad and flies skyward and is gone. Thunders of applause follow this compliment to the bride, and then the little boy-in-waiting on Min Toko brings in the chairs, the tables, the fans, the wands, the boxes, and the show begins. It is sufficient to say that the man seems to be able to overcome the laws of gravitation, to stand upon nothing, to fold himself up like a foot-rule, to put himself away in spaces that seem impossible; and to do all this gracefully, with beautiful accessories. The bride's eyes never leave him. Min Toko did not boast falsely. Though his position and residence in Chinatown seem to her to place him as far beneath her as though she were an empress and he a serf, she has always admired him intensely, and she knows that he is in love with her. She has often wished that he were of her race and kind. He has been made a sort of pet amongst the Californians before whom he has performed, and he has had opportunities to speak a few words to her and, as he said, to kiss her hand thrice. To-night she feels that she bids him adieu and to-night he fascinates her strangely. When at last, as usual, he inquires if any two of the audience will assist him in some closing performance, she whispers to her bridegroom: "Come, Arthur, let us go." And the young man replies. "Awfully bad form; but if you wish it, be of course."

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It is a look that Min Toko has given her that makes her do this thing, and the bridegroom hands her down into the center of the lawn, and they three stand together there. "Will you be pleased to help me fly this kite, sir?" says Min Toko to the bridegroom, as he flings into the air the thing we know of. "See, this is how!" The kite darts upward swiftly in a moment. Its brilliant breast is no longer visible. Only a long copper-colored cord shimmers in the air from Min Toko's hand moonward. "Come to me all ye butterflies!" he cries. "Come! Come!" And down the cord sweep a myriad butterflies and cover the performer's bosom and vanish. "Little mouse!" he cries. "Come, little mouse!" and whistles exquisitely. And the little gray mouse creeps down, sits on his shoulder and is gone. "And now, sir," Min Toko says, with a bow to the groom and a smile to the bride, "if you like you may call a blue bird and a white bird, a red bird, a yellow bird, a green bird, and after that one of the stars from heaven." And he puts the cord into the bridegroom's hand, who calls loudly:

"Here, you blue bird, come if you can!" And there is a blue bird and amidst shouts of merriment, and while the bride claps her little palms and showers smiles about her, the birds of all colors come down.

The green bird has arrived and disappeared, when suddenly the bride puts forth her hand playfully and snatches the cord from the bridegroom's hand. "You shan't have all the fun," she says, with a pretty pout. "I intend to call the star down myself. Ah, how the cord pulls! No, you shan't touch it. I will do it alone. What do you say, Min Toko? 'Brightest star of heaven come to me!' Is that right?"

She beams on him and lifts her sweet, shrill voice and calls aloud, and far up in the sky appears a great diamond star, that shimmers and glows as it comes earthward. And, with one wild spring, Min Toko snatches the cord from the bride's hand, saying something that she only hears as he does so, and pushing her fiercely from him so that she falls into her bridegroom's arms.

Then the star is upon Min Toko's breast and he lies upon the ground, and the gaudy kite flutters down and lies beside him; and those who gather about him see that he is dead, with the fearful burn of electricity upon his bosom. The kite must have attracted it, they say. Plainly, when he snatched it from the bride's hand, he saw that there was danger. Poor fellow! How brave! How noble!

There are no more festivities that night, of course—no feast, no fireworks. All night the bride weeps bitterly, and when, in the morning, her bridegroom bears her away, she is still broken-hearted.

The words that Min Toko whispered as he snatched the fatal cord from her are still ringing in her ears. She will never repeat them to any one, but she can never forget them. They were: "Adieu, my love! I die for you!"

Look Out for Your Boys. Giant firecrackers this year are fourteen inches long, and contain powder enough to break a plate-glass window when exploded on the curb. Small boys will not only have to look for their fingers on the Fourth, but parents will have to look for their boys.—Kansas City Journal.

BLOOD CURDLING ISN'T IT.

Oath Used by Peaceful Goshens When They Are Real Wicked.

When the country about Fort Jervis, N. Y., was excited about the Snyder poisoning case the other day a long, lean, leather-visaged chap went into Goshen to buy some things "at the store," says the New York Herald. The clerk was discussing the tragedy with another customer and gave a most exaggerated account of the case, winding up with the remark: "And they say she looks like Mrs. Halliday, who killed her husband over to the foot of the Shawangunk mountains."

The lean chap was from "over Shawangunk way" himself, and he understood the comparison. He listened, open-mouthed, and then, slapping his off leg, he exclaimed suddenly: "By—ginger—spruce!"

It may look very simple, but to hear the expression in peaceful Goshen with that lean chap's emphasis is enough to give a man a turn. Upon inquiry I learned that the oath, or whatever you may choose to call it, is a popular one in the country about there, being the proper thing to say under most circumstances, if emphasized properly.

Thus by getting the pressure upon the proper word or the proper syllable of the proper word a man can express joy, sorrow, amazement, anger, disdain, irony and so on.

It is history in Goshen, for instance, that when Case Salome was chosen constable he pricked up his ears and exclaimed, "By—ginger—spruce!" with the force on the "ginger," and that when Aleck McLeod's Mary accepted Zed Tompkins he cracked his heels together and said the same thing, the emphasis increasing right up to "spruce" and hanging on there till Zed lost his breath.

Perhaps I cannot illustrate better the popularity and force of this expression than to relate that when a stereopticon went to Goshen a short time ago and gave a show "up in the hall" each picture was greeted by a united "By—ginger—spruce!" from every man, woman and child present, the showman having elicited an outburst of delight and amazement unequalled there since "Silly Bill" Askin got some money from an uncle out west and treated every one to an oyster supper.

THE "INDEPENDENT THEATER."

Devoted to the True Interests of the Drama—in Russia.

The organization of the Free theater was a notable event in our dramatic life, says Novoye Vremya (St. Petersburg). Early last year the first attempts were made to produce literary and artistic plays, and although there was no regular company, the degree of success attained was gratifying. Among the plays produced were "Henry IV," and other Shakespearean dramas, Gerhardt Hauptmann's "Hannele" followed and had to be given thirteen times, the audience being large and enthusiastic. Encouraged by this sign of public favor, the managers leased a theater, organized a regular company and inaugurated a series of remarkable productions of Russian plays, new and old. Tolstol's "Power of Darkness" was given, and this alone was a great service to art as well as literature. The play was discussed widely and thoroughly and created a sensation. The Free theater also secured special permission of the local authorities to produce a play by Potekhin. It is safe to say that neither of these plays would ever have been staged by private managers. A number of great foreign plays followed—by Ibsen, Sudermann, Maeterlinck, Victor Hugo and others. In all seventy-two performances were given, and the average receipts were 802 rubles (said to be unusually large for Russia). Considering the great financial and artistic obstacles which the movers in this enterprise had to overcome, the record of the first year is excellent. The public willingly patronized the Free theater, and at all events there remains the fact that a new private theater has been established which subordinates all considerations to the true interests of literature and the drama.

State Rivalry in Ex-Governors.

The death of ex-Gov. Robinson of Chicopee leaves Massachusetts with only five ex-governors living. Connecticut can do better than that. She has seven to show in ex-Governors Hawley, Ingersoll, Andrews, Harrison, Waller, Lunsbury and Bulkeley, and they will average up quite as well as those of the Bay state in point of ability and character also.—New Haven (Conn.) News.

Creme-de-Menthe.

He looked not upon the wine when it was red, But with an eye on creme-de-menthe was often seen; And this because he'd always heard it said That above the red old Ireland puts the green. —Philadelphia North American.

Never.

Cunliffe—"Did Roarer ever realize any of his political ambitions?" "No, poor fellow; he never got any higher than the position of a favorite son." —Philadelphia North American.

Somewhere.

"Don't you know it is wrong to fish here on private grounds?" "Well, sir, the line must be drawn somewhere." —Yonkers Statesman.

Never.

An English professional cricketer's yearly income is on the average \$750, which is less than the wages of the better class of workmen.

Trans-Mississippi Inventions.

OMAHA, Nebraska, June 27, 1896.—Amongst the Trans-Mississippi inventors who received patents the past week, Messrs. Sues & Co., United States Patent Solicitors, Bee Building, Omaha, Nebraska, report the following: Daniel Harmon, Davenport, Nebraska, road grader and ditcher; Clarence H. Judson, Council Bluffs, Iowa, card shooter; George Lamos, Fort Madison, Iowa, gas engine; George D. Foster, Preston, Iowa, portable corn shock press; John H. Nelson, Omaha, Nebraska, drink mixer; George R. Perkins, Schuyler, Nebraska, photographic tank; Hans H. Stiel, Millard, Nebraska, improved combination cart, and Conrad Stroebel, Omaha, Nebraska, reversible plow.

Amongst the curious inventions issued the past week are found the following: a machine for weaving cross wires in wire fences; an electrical energy indicator; a fodder bundler; a button hole sewing machine; an anti-train robbery apparatus; an improved pencil for arc-lamps; a mechanism for converting continuous rotary motion into alternate rotary motion; a pneumatic fire alarm; a bicycle skirt comprising attached bloomers; and a spring actuated saddle post for bicycles. A copy of any of the above patents will be mailed upon receipt of 10 cts.

The Blackwater State.

Nebraska has been termed the Blackwater State. The explanation of this poetical nickname is found in the fact that the water of the principal streams is as dark as that of the rivers flowing from the bogs of Ireland. The soil of Nebraska is very rich and loamy, and it is said there are peat beds in the state, the statement being apparently confirmed by the color of the water, which is caused by the presence of organic matter.

An empty head and a rattling tongue go well together.

Econo-

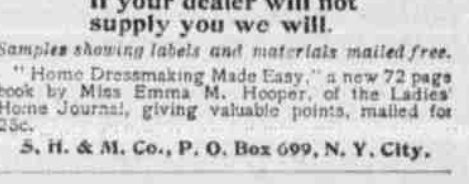
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